Notes from the Woods

Thanks to Lisa and Ryan Mundy for organizing the guided walk in Omick Woods at Rocktown Preserve in mid-April. Scouts of Troop 65, including the grandsons of VIP Editor Sue P., and her daughter Kirsten, walked the trail, learned something about the history and the changing ecology of the area, and enjoyed the blooming early ephemerals such as trout lily, spring beauty, and bloodroot. Local historian John Allen and I provided commentary and will do so again on May 14 on behalf of a D&R Greenway walk. If interested check their website for details and rsvp to them. They strive to keep numbers manageable. Trail info at http://njtrails.org/trail/omick-woods-at-rocktown-preserve/.

A brief article in the NY Times Science Section of April 19 begins "Living near greenery may help you live longer." A serious research effort studied 108,630 women over an eight-year period. Death rates (cancer and respiratory illness) for those living close to greenery were noticeably lower than those living in greenery deprived areas. The study areas were the immediate proximity to residences, roughly 50'. Most of us in East Amwell have control of those areas, so here's another reason to upgrade their greenness. Plant trees and shrubs and reduce the size of the lawn, which does not do as much for air quality.

A second brief in the same paper is titled "Cleaner Air's Lasting Effects." That study was of children in southern California, and examined respiratory symptoms, especially asthma. Not surprisingly better air quality led to much lower rates of these symptoms. Here in Jersey, the children living in Trenton, a transport hub and close to a coal-fired power plant, have much higher asthma rates than kids out of the city. We are stuck in the middle of the Northeast corridor, so the general background air quality is not good. But most of us control our local environments. Plant some greenery between your house and the road. Keep your windows closed during rush hour traffic. Run or walk in Clawson Park or in the woods somewhere, not on a road. Enjoy your spring!

Toni Robbi