

Thank you to everyone who has come out this afternoon, on what would have been Doreen's 50th birthday, to help us celebrate and honor a woman who touched us all.

I'd like to begin with an excerpt from F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.

"She was beautiful, but not like those girls in magazines. She was beautiful, for the way she thought. She was beautiful, for the sparkle in her eyes when she talked about something she loved. She was beautiful, for her ability to make other people smile, even when she was sad. No, she wasn't beautiful for something as temporary as her looks. She was beautiful, deep down in her soul."

Doreen worked at the East Granby Public Library for over 6 years, serving as our Library Director for 4. Her friendly smile, generosity, and devotion to her community touched the lives of so many people. She served our town with pride and dedication. She was passionate about making the Library a place where everyone was welcome, creating a safe and warm place for all to come with no expectation of anything in return. Everyone she interacted with was treated with kindness and respect.

Doreen was loved by so many and she took every opportunity to show those around her how much she cared for and loved them. She had an ambition to help others and did so with her graceful style of encouragement and positivity, helping others to be better versions of themselves. Words barely convey the magnitude of her impact on those she loved and served.

After Doreen's death, we were all reeling. Because she shared her love and light so generously, we were searching for ways to honor her memory in a way that not only felt like her but that would have a lasting impact on the community she loved so much. Joe Spirko, Sharon Moson, Bridget Stone, and I were walking around the library one morning before the library opened and we stopped by the windows in the Children's Department overlooking the pond. While staring out at the woods, we started talking about Doreen's love of nature and the outdoors. Between her daily runs, hikes in the mountains, and days spent at the beach, she always loved fresh air and sunshine. We wondered about the possibility of cutting a trail through the woods for the town to enjoy. Though intimidated by the possibility of dreaming too big, I loved the idea and said I would make some inquiries. I reached out to Amanda Thompson, the President of Traprock Ridge Land Conservancy, to see if the trail might be a possibility. The first words out of her mouth were, "Well, yes, that's possible. Doreen and I had talked about the idea." I couldn't believe we had stumbled onto an idea that Doreen had already thought of.

As soon as we heard the idea was hers, we knew it was meant to be. And we had our memorial.

To get the ball rolling, library board member Joe Spirko and the Land Conservancy started with a site walk (which was actually a bushwhacking expedition) to see if they could find a path that would be feasible. Once deemed possible, we reviewed maps of the area to ensure there were no wetlands involved and got permission from the land owners, the Town of East Granby and Galasso Materials; both of whom generously agreed.

With permission granted and a plan for the nature and story trail, we put out a call for volunteers. I will never get over the support we received from our community. From brush cutting to gravel and mulch spreading to bridge and bench building, our community contributed not only with physical labor but also with monetary donations and messages of encouragement.

The list of thank yous I have is long but they cannot be understated.

Thank you to every single volunteer who showed up for our work parties. Without you, this trail would have taken us years to complete. But we had hundreds of you show up to help.

Thank you to Doreen's friend, Alex Youmans, who designed and donated all the signs for the trail. They are perfect.

Eagle Scout Bubba Herbek built one of our larger bridges for his Eagle Scout Project.

Boy Scout Troop 70 had put in steps at Newgate Prison, so we contacted them in hopes they could give us some instructions for building our own. Instead of leaving us to our own devices, they stepped in and built these beautiful stairs. They are far beyond anything we could have hoped for.

Not only did Galasso Materials allow us to cut a trail on their property, but they generously donated gravel and wood chips needed to make walking more pleasant.

The Town of East Granby has been tireless in its assistance. They've brought countless loads of wood chips, they not only moved this beautiful statue into place for us but went above and

beyond by fixing it for us when it was delivered in less-than-perfect condition.

We couldn't have done any of this without the enthusiasm, expertise, and manpower of the Traprock Ridge Land Conservancy.

Our nature and story trail are extraordinary due to the generosity of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving - East Granby Greater Together Fund. We knew that Doreen's memorial needed to be something that gave back to the town she loved and they saw the value in what we proposed.

This last thank you is the biggest and most personal. I don't know how to express the depth of gratitude I feel for Joe Spirko and Bela Ramos. They worked harder than I've ever seen people work. Hours upon hours they've spent on this trail bushwhacking, removing poison ivy, and trimming. They built this gorgeous handrail and all the benches around the trail. They poured the concrete base that is under this statue and they built the beautiful wood frame around it. Joe climbed a ridiculously tall ladder to hang these beautiful signs. Bela fought the worst case of poison ivy I've ever seen. Every single idea was met with a smile (maybe a couple of eye rolls), but always a "Yes, we can do that." Without these two, this trail would have taken years to complete. When I say we couldn't have done it without them, it is not an exaggeration.

Thank you for coming out to celebrate Doreen and to dedicate this trail in her honor. She left footprints on our hearts and we will never be the same. We invite you to walk and enjoy the trail. We

have luminaries lighting the inner trail until 9 o'clock tonight. We intend to light the trail every year on November 16th.

I would like to close with a poem by Jonny Hathcock titled

“I Do Not Think My Song Will End”

I do not think my song will end
While flowers, grass and trees
Abound with birds and butterflies
For I am one with these.

And I believe my voice will sound
Upon the whispering wind
So long as even one remains
Among those I call “friend.”

I shall remain in hearts and minds
Of loved ones that I knew,
And in the rocks and hills and streams
Because I love those, too.

So long as love and hope and dreams
Abide in earth and sky,
Weep not for me, though I be gone.
I shall not really die.