

## HILLCREST, BOCES AND JULY 7TH

Weather permitting, we will visit Hillcrest on Monday morning, July 7, following the July 5 All Class Reunion.

For the third time since the Norwich Board of Education purchased the 53 acres on top of West Hill in 1951, Hillcrest is up and running. This time it is thanks to the Delaware/Chenango/Madison/Ontario Counties Board of Cooperative Education System (DCMO BOCES) and the Norwich Board of Education.

From 1952 to about 1964, The Hillcrest Conservation Park, as it was known then, attracted the attention and work of perhaps 1,000 Norwich High School students and faculty, students and faculty from other schools in Chenango County such as Sherburne Central High School, and the Girl Scouts. Then changes in key school administration personnel, the availability of the new Kurt Beyer swimming pool and Norwich High School pool, and vandalism led to the Park being almost forgotten.

In the 1990's, Norwich Middle School English teacher Earl Callahan, with students Jason Lawrence and Chris Snow and others led an extensive revival which lasted about five years. The park was renamed The Hillcrest Environmental Studies Center. Extensive coverage of both periods can be found on the website [www.hillcrestenv.org](http://www.hillcrestenv.org).

The third and current period began in 2010, with Pat Scott's Evening Sun column of Aug. 5, followed by my "Letter to the Editor" of Aug. 19, and Stan White's of Oct. 7. A front page story on Feb. 21, 2011 described the Board of Education positive response. Local leaders include Don Windsor, owners on either side of the property Nick DeRensis and Bill Smith, Cara Sefchick when she headed Americorps, and of course Superintendent of Schools Gerard O'Sullivan and School Board Member Perry Owen. BOCES Conservation Instructor Jaan Aarismaa has been crucial in leading the students.

We hope that the refurbished access road from Manley Road will be passable for cars on Monday, July 7, following the Saturday July 5 All Class Reunion of Norwich High School. Local 1955 Class members Mary Lou McAvoy, Harris Manwarren and Stan White are working with Aarismaa and O'Sullivan, and probably won't know if we can visit, until we have a few dry weeks in late June and a favorable weather report for Monday, July 7. We plan on having a single page available at the table of each class on July 5th with a map of the park and a short outline. Whether we can travel through the park to the outlook of Norwich at the Stone Quarry will be determined by the availability of ATV's or some other kind of transportation from the new pavilion at the park.

We suggest that people car pool to lessen the traffic on the access road. We plan on meeting for breakfast at Denny's about 8:30 am and using the parking lot behind Ho-Jo to car pool, if we get permission to open the locked gate at Manley Road and use the access road.

May the All Class Reunion and a visit to Hillcrest Environmental Studies Center remind us of how blessed we are in Chenango County!

(Father) Harry Winter, NHS 1955

