

Fun and Fitness On Foot

ON ANY GIVEN DAY YOU MAY FIND Jay Prassel and his wife hiking the Citizens Park walking trails accompanied by their small dog, Chloe. “We come out to the trails at least once a day, it’s a perfect time to wind down – it’s always great to get some fresh air,” said Prassel. “The trails have something for everyone from small children to adults,” he added.

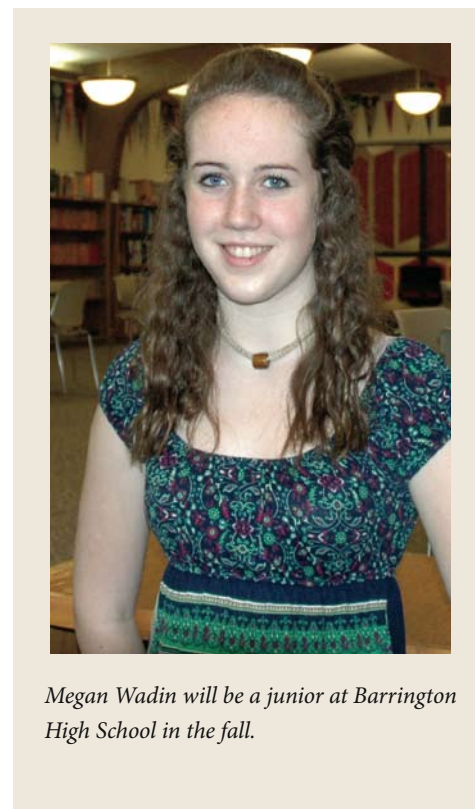
THE BARRINGTON PARK DISTRICT’S AWARD-WINNING CITIZENS PARK gives people a chance to find time to escape their daily lives by providing winding paths through a forest filled with deer, coyotes, birds, and several small ponds. Barrington Park District and Lake County Forest Preserves joined the spaces of Cuba Marsh and Citizens Park with a trail that links the two. This quaint retreat of walking trails ranges from a half-mile power walk through the winding forests to a two-mile trek to and from Cuba Marsh.

Patrick McCord, Barrington Park District Manager of Planning and Development, said that while the trail’s design was tricky, its main objective was clear. “The major design factor was connectivity, for connecting the various features and elements of Citizens Park,” said McCord. The team hoped to build a trail that would be accessible to all. Despite the initial protests over the purchase of the historic Jewel Tea property, many of the residents are grateful for what the park district has done with the area. Ken Busch and his young children grab their tennis shoes and hit the trails at least two or three times a week. You may find them conquering the Pepper Family Tree House, on the lookout for animals, or taking advantage of the new playground equipment. “It’s great to come out here. The kids always tire themselves out,” said Busch. Closer to Cuba Marsh, two ambitious young runners, Caroline and Bessie, jog

the trails in training for the Dash to Cure Diabetes 4-mile trail run, held on May 30. “It’s our little refuge, we love the quietness of it all,” said the two sixth-graders. The Barrington High School Cross Country team has also taken advantage of the trail’s tranquility while training hard for future meets. “We love to practice at Citizens Park, it’s a nice change from our usual course,” said one team member.

The trails can offer fitness and improve overall well-being for many non-athletes as well. Walking can be one of the best ways to stay in shape according to the Diabetes Prevention Program. Several studies conducted for this program showed that walking only 150 minutes a week and losing 7 percent of your body weight can reduce your risk of Type 2 diabetes by 58 percent. Walking has also been shown to strengthen your heart for both male and females. A total of 72,488 women in the Nurse’s Health Study who walked three hours or more each week reduced their risk of heart attacks by 35 percent, as compared with women who did not walk.

Walking has also been proven to improve brain function. In a study on walking and cognitive function, researchers found that women who walked the equivalent of an easy pace at least 1.5 hours each week had better cognitive function than women who walked less than 40 minutes per week. Walking has also been shown to allevi-



Megan Wadin will be a junior at Barrington High School in the fall.

ate symptoms of depression. Walking for 30 minutes, at least three times each week for 12 weeks reduced symptoms of depression by 47 percent. Weekly walks have also been shown to decrease bone loss, and reduce the risk of breast and colon cancer. “My kids love the nature and wildlife here, and we always enjoy the open spaces,” said Busch. For most, these added health benefits are only a part of why so many local walkers choose Citizens Park and its walking trail system that connects to numerous park amenities and Cuba Marsh. “There’s no other place like it in Barrington,” said Prassel. For more information on the Barrington Park District trail system, please visit www.barringtonparkdistrict.com or call 847-381-0687. U