

New Black Rock trail named for Sibyl Golden



(Photo by Jason Kaplan) - Following a ribbon-cutting ceremony, guests were invited to take one of five guided hikes up the new trail.

In late 2016, the first phase of a fully ADA-accessible trail, more than a quarter-mile long, officially opened at Black Rock Forest. Last week, the second and final phase of that project was unveiled to the public.

On June 6, a ribbon-cutting ceremony was held to celebrate the opening of the Black Rock Forest Visitor Access Pathway, to be commonly referred to as Sibyl's Path.

"The project is approximately 20 years in the making from conception to completion," Black Rock Forest Executive Director Bill Schuster said in his opening remarks. "It feels really good to be at the final completion stage."

The 0.6-mile path, which starts at the public parking area off Reservoir Road, reaches Mailey's Mill Bridge and connects to the forest's 25-mile trail network. It also serves as a bridge between Storm King State Park and Schunnemunk State Park.

The completed pathway offers breathtaking views of the Hudson Valley at about the mid-way mark. While it meets ADA standards, the second half can be a bit more challenging with grades of up to 10 percent. The pathway is wide and firmly compacted. Railings are located on the steepest parts of the course. There are also benches and sitting rocks along the way.

The trail opens with a new information kiosk at the base, as well as signage along the way to identify trails. A kiosk at the summit is still being completed.

The pathway was named for the late Sybil Golden. She was the daughter of William Golden, the founder of the Black Rock Consortium.

“She took over the role, from her father, with grace and dedication,” Schuster said. “She was a delight to work with. Black Rock’s most important accomplishments took place during her tenure.”

While serving as board chair of the Consortium from 2007 to 2015, and as co-chair from 2015 until her death in 2017, Golden helped initiate the project and was influential in obtaining a conservation easement over the entire forest.

“She understood the big picture and how you have to be dedicated and persistent to get really good things done,” said Schuster.

Among her other accomplishments, Golden established a long term fund for the forest – some of it for a permanent endowment for the forest and another part to support the work of scientists and students.

“The Black Rock Forest Consortium was my father’s idea, realized through the shared enthusiasms, hard work, and generosity of many,” said Pam Golden. “My dad believed Black Rock Forest could become a renowned research and educational facility. He would be delighted to see the forest today. My sister worked with similar devotion to extend the programs and the reach of Black Rock Forest. She served as co-chairman of the board along with David Redden, until her death. She attended every meeting by telephone and communicated by e-mail. She did so out of her own deep respect for the forest. It’s a particular honor that this special trail is named for Sibyl.”

Like the first phase of the project, the second was funded through a matching grant from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund, as well as private donations. The trail was completed by trail specialists at Tahawus Trails, as well as Matt and Ben Brady.

Following the ribbon-cutting ceremony, guests were invited to stroll up the path with one of five different experts. Each expert focused on a different aspect of the forest including: history, trees, plants and birds, wildlife, and ecology and geology.