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Scene and Herd: English footpaths lead Abrams down his path

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LEXINGTON

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While studying in England, Rick Abrams developed a fondness for English footpaths.

"Waking on a Saturday morning I'd find a path along a river and just follow it. I'd stop at a pub for lunch and then continue. It really hooked me," he related.

When his son Archie (now 27) was on Lexington High School's track team, he showed Rick the paths through woods and meadows the cross country team ran as practice routes. That set Rick on a plan to make Lexington a healthier walking community resulting in ACROSS Lexington (Accessing Conservation land, Recreation areas, Open space, Schools and Streets in Lexington) and leading walking tours through the recreation department and senior center.

You can experience the results if you participate in Lexington's second annual Bike Walk 'n Bus Week (BWB) starting tomorrow and running through May 18 and/or the Boston Greenbelt Walk, a 30-mile trail walk going through Lexington May 17. As a member of the Greenway Corridor Committee, Rick will lead a group walking 11 miles to Newton leaving the center at 1 p.m. He helped plan both events.

New BWB events this year include a:

- Women's bike ride geared toward building riding confidence 10 a.m.-noon Saturday at the library
- SilverSneakers walk leaves from the Senior Center at 10 a.m. Tuesday
- Walk on the newest ACROSS Lexington route leaves the Bow Street parking lot at 3 p.m. May 15
- Commuter Breakfast at the Depot for everyone walking, biking or taking transit to work or school 6:30-9:30 a.m. May 16, followed at 9:45 a.m. by a historic walk leaving from the Depot.

- Bike to the BBQ bike corral as part of the Lexington Battle-Green Barbecue Festival, 1557 Mass. Ave. at Woburn Street 11 a.m.–7 p.m. May 18, admission \$5/under 13 free. Food costs vary.
- Bike Smart safety course for 5th graders May 15.
- Lexpress will be free all day Wednesday.

For a complete schedule visit www.lexbikewalkbusweek.org.

"For Lexington to continue to a relevant model suburban community it must offer visitors and new residents green space to walk and safe route to bike. Many people want to be within walking distance of downtown -- and using the trails they are," Abrams commented.

"Our town is a science natural resource for our kids," he points out. "For example, Lexington is the source of three different watersheds."

He was instrumental in developing the new ACROSS map, which includes historic sites along Massachusetts Avenue and points of interest along ACROSS routes. (Abrams' favorites include the tree farm and Cotton Farm.)

Within Lexington, Rick is also a member of Sustainable Lexington and the Battle Road Historic Byway Committee.

He is especially interested in the health effects of walking including recent findings that walking helps focus the mind and improve productivity. In the many talks he gives, he points out that walking, biking or running 30 minutes a day five days a week is a wonder drug.

Abrams himself has a rare form of incurable thyroid cancer. But like everything else that he gets involved in, he has delved into it resulting in being the only patient on the International Thyroid Oncology Group's board. When these specialists met in April, Rick was the only patient speaker. (You can see him discussing his cancer at ITOG.org.)

As he read and talked to researchers about his disease, he realized the importance of supportive therapies and now includes tai chi and qi cong on his list of hobbies -- and joined Ramel Rones' health and wellness organization's board.

"It's lots of fun and a wonderful mindfulness-based stress reducer," Rick said.

Professionally Abrams, now retired, co-founded an educational technology publishing company, later acquired by Scholastic Inc. It is not surprising he is a Wheelock College trustee and serves on the boards of the Concord Consortium, a digital learning for science, math and engineering, and the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute.

Rick always makes time for his family. In addition to Archie, Rick and spouse Susan Kenyon have Stan, 24, and Sydney, 19. And he finds time for cooking, photography and reading.

Abrams himself is a dynamic resource for Lexington!

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