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Here and There

Betsy Bates,
 June 2, 1999

A GIFT FOR TOPSFIELD

MIT's latest gift to the town of Topsfield, MA, is the assurance that 500 acres of prime open space are permanently protected from development.

The land is part of property left to MIT by William A. Coolidge, a former member of the MIT Corporation. Another part of the property, Wheatlands Hill ("Sledding Hill") was donated to the town in 1997. Like Wheatlands Hill, the 500 acres will be protected by an easement or property restriction given this spring by MIT to Greenbelt, a private, nonprofit land trust that holds more than 100 conservation acres throughout the region.

"MIT believes that by placing conversation restrictions on the parcels in question, this land will forever remain as open space, which certainly is in keeping with the wishes of our great benefactor, William A. Coolidge," said Senior Vice President Emeritus William Dickson.

"The scenic, agricultural and ecological significance of this property as well as its size make it one of the most important open space projects throughout the region in many years," said Ed Becker, Greenbelt's executive director.

Specifically, the 500 acres links a conservation corridor stretching along the Ipswich River, connecting other protected land. It also protects important habitats along the river and in freshwater wetlands, forested uplands and open fields that host a variety of wildlife.

"The town of Topsfield will be forever grateful to MIT for preserving and protecting this extraordinary historic and scene property," said Board of Selectmen Chairman Janet Kmetz. "Later this year we will begin celebrating Topsfield's 350th anniversary, and this wonderful gift is certainly something to celebrate."

ALL-SCHOLASTICS

Two members of USA Today's All-USA High School Academic First Team, announced May 13, will be freshmen at MIT next fall. They are Alexander Wissner-Gross, 17, of Great Neck, NY, and Natalia Toro, 14, of Boulder, CO.

Ms. Toro is the youngest winner ever of the \$50,000 first prize in the Intel Science Talent Search, formerly the Westinghouse Science Search (MIT Tech Talk, March 17, 1999). Like several other members of the team of 10 women and 10 men, while she was in high school, she did summer research at the Institute as part of the MIT Research Institute. She worked on oscillations of neutrinos under the supervision of Professor Edmund Bertschinger of physics.

Both Ms. Toro and Mr. Wissner-Gross are National Merit Scholars. He came in 10th in the Intel competition with his research on fabricating molecule-sized circuits in bulk. Team members each received \$2,500 checks from USA Today.

HERE COME THE JUDGES

A group of 25 Superior Court judges from Massachusetts spent two days in April at the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research studying genetics in the hope

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that better understanding of the field will help them as they write the rules. "Genetic testing information is ultimately going to be filtered to society in part through the courtroom," David Page, a Whitehead geneticist, told the Associated Press. "History tells us that much of the policy will be shaped by court decisions."

The program included lectures, discussions and a lab exercise in extracting DNA evidence. Until then, Judge James McHugh III said that when he heard the term "cutting DNA," he wondered if knives were used. He said the time at Whitehead was well spent. "It's as intellectually challenging and stimulating a two days as any of us have had in a long time."

TEACHING TEACHERS

Bay State teachers of grades 5-9 will focus on "The Design Process: Light, Color and Energy" during the 80-hour Summer Institute, sponsored by the MIT Museum in collaboration with Cambridge public schools. The workshop, which is free and limited to 25 participants, is one of the summer Content Institutes accredited by the state Department of Education.

Participants will draw on the museum's exhibitions and MIT resources to study strobe photography, holograms and the design of automated underwater vehicles.

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[news office](#)
[room 11-400](#)

77 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139-4307

617-253-2700
newsoffice@mit.edu