



**The Friends Network 2013 Volunteer of the Year Award
Recognizing Mike Penko
Volunteer
Friends of Upton State Forest**

Nominee: Mike Penko, Volunteer, Friends of Upton State Forest

Nominated by: Marcella Stasa



Bill Taylor (from left to right), Marcella Stasa, Ellen Arnold and Mike Penko, Keystone Cooperators from the Friends of Upton State Forest.

There are volunteers, and then there are VOLUNTEERS. Mike Penko is a VOLUNTEER.

If Mike is asked to assist with anything, be it a lift, help on trails, updating the web-site or slogging through paperwork, if he's available, his answer is always "yes". He is among the rare individuals who have a commitment to service and giving back, and truly lives it.

Mike probably works harder than any of us but he keeps it under the radar and spends most of his volunteer time behind the scenes. He created and maintains the Friends of Upton State Forest web site, has helped with historical resource

documentation by getting GPS points and has mapped them. He's the go-to guy for perspective on land issues, and his wealth of knowledge means that questions on many topics are quickly answered and, if necessary, researched.

One often only knows of his efforts by hearing from someone else because he's very modest about his contributions and frequently shares the credit with those of us who give just a fraction of what he does—it's as if he regards his generous acts as part of his daily routine, like brushing his teeth.

In addition to his contributions to the success of the Friends of Upton State Forest, Mike serves on the Board of Directors of the Metacomet Land Trust, is a member of the Upton Conservation

Commission and its two sub-committees, where his contributions of time, skills and effort are equally generous.

It's important to recognize Mike, despite his modesty and likely embarrassment, not only to acknowledge and thank him, but also to give the rest of us motivation. He sets the bar high and inspires others, but we need to be made aware of his work.

Mike has added so much to the success of the Friends of Upton State Forest. If not for him, our Friends group would never have progressed as much as it has.