

EverGreen Legacy Voices: Heather Mae Breau



Heather Mae Breau has never gone too far from home.

Born and raised in West Kingston, she grew up surrounded by the woods, vernal pools, fields, and open spaces that define South Kingstown. She attended West Kingston Elementary, South Kingstown High School, and URI, where she met her husband, Frank, through the university's snowboarding club. Even after briefly living out of state, **Rhode Island pulled her back.**

"I just love it so much. It really has everything I ever needed."

For Heather Mae and her family, "everything"

means beaches and hiking trails, dense forests and salt marshes—all within a short drive of one another.

Mostly, it means connection: to the outdoors, to community, and to a deep sense of belonging: ***"I love being able to look out my window and see cows and turkeys instead of condos."*** That connection to place eventually led Heather Mae to the South Kingstown Land Trust, though not in the way most people expect. ***"It was a wedding present," she laughed.***

In true Rhode Island fashion, a friend—and SKLT board member—gifted Heather Mae and her husband an SKLT membership when they were married in 2013, and soon after encouraged her to join the board. Looking back, Heather Mae says she had no idea what she was signing up for, but over 10 years later she wouldn't change a thing. Monitoring was her first real glimpse into SKLT and became a defining experience of her time here. ***"Monitoring will always be the thing that really sucked me in."***

Before digital systems, monitoring meant paper folders, handwritten notes, and long walks across conserved properties. Through that work, Heather came to know South Kingstown's landscapes intimately—not just as preserves, but as living places worthy of protection.

"It really connected me to every property."

That sense of connection is something she returns to often. ***"I love watching people come in for the first time and become lifers too."***

Whether through volunteer work, her daughter's Girl Scouts or stewardship projects, Heather Mae sees SKLT as a place where people connect—not only to land, but to each other. ***"There's something for everybody here, People find what they need here. They heal here."*** That same philosophy guided her decision to include SKLT in her estate plans as a member of the EverGreen Legacy Society. To Heather Mae, legacy giving felt less like a grand gesture and more like a natural extension of care for the place she loves.

"Leaving money to the Land Trust is the least we can do. We're not going to need it anymore."

More than anything, she hopes future generations inherit a South Kingstown that still feels recognizable: open fields, protected forests, accessible trails, and a community that values stewardship. She also hopes younger generations continue to feel connected to the land—and empowered to care for it. Her daughter Piper has been part of SKLT from the beginning, attending Monitoring Day at just nine days old.

"There's no way I could totally step away from this," Heather said. "She feels so connected here too."

Although Heather Mae's term as Board Chair is coming to an end, she makes one thing clear: she is not going far: ***"I'm an SKLT lifer."*** And for Heather Mae, that lifelong connection to South Kingstown, its landscapes, and its community is exactly what legacy is all about—perpetuity for her daughter, for the land, and for the wildlife that call it home. **- TSM**

Learn more about the Evergreen Legacy Society on our website at sklt.org.

Are you an EverGreen Legacy Member and would like to share your story? I'd love to hear from you! Contact tasha.sussman.moss@sklt.org.