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Friends of Haystack Complete Fund Raising Campaign and Close on Summit

PAWLET, Vermont – January 2013. Just over a year since **Friends of Haystack** made it their mission to secure the property that includes the summit of Haystack Mountain, the group has closed on the 65.56 acre parcel. Motivated by the importance of protecting the region's scenic natural landscape, maintaining perpetual public access for recreation, and preserving rare habitats for the community's long-term benefit, Friends of Haystack successfully raised the necessary funds to purchase the parcel from the seller, David Barrow of St. Albans, who had previously entered into a purchase agreement with the group. "I am delighted to see the depth of support and how much the mountaintop means to the local community," says Barrow. "Since it has been in our family for generations I am glad it is going to be so appreciated and used by so many as it has been over many, many years!"

"We want to thank the Barrow family," says Alan Calfee, a Friends of Haystack board member and the Project Coordinator. "Not only for being such great partners in this conservation effort, but also for their many years of great stewardship of the mountain and generosity in sharing it with everyone who wanted to explore her beautiful summit."

The distinctly-shaped summit, which is a cherished landmark for residents of Pawlet and the many neighboring towns from which it is visible, is also home to a number of rare species and habitats.

Completing the purchase allows Friends of Haystack to preserve this unique piece of land for perpetuity. Additionally, the effort caps off a broader move to preserve the North Pawlet Hills Natural Area, alongside the Vermont Land Trust (VLT) and the Nature Conservancy (TNC), who together own or hold conservation easements on 1000 plus acres of surrounding land. This road-less tract is of key significance for rare wildlife and natural habitats, family farms, and local recreation. It includes dry oak and pine forests and is home to bobcats and a known nesting location of the previously listed peregrine falcon. VLT and TNC aim to increase this parcel to 2000 acres of conserved lands by purchasing adjacent parcels.

The Friends of Haystack are delighted that this popular peak and hiking trail will remain forever accessible and untrammeled. “This is a historic moment for the Mettowee Valley,” says Calfee. “So much hard work and funds have gone towards conserving Pawlet's productive farms, and unique natural areas. This project protects the scenic icon of the valley and an important recreational area for the community and visitors alike. All of the community should be proud of what they have contributed to make this happen. The Friends of Haystack raised all the money from local donors without any State or Federal funds.”

The Friends of Haystack has created a stewardship endowment and will maintain the summit trail for the enjoyment of community hikers and visitors with improvements scheduled to begin over the summer. The group also plans to identify several other routes around the land for day hikes of varying degrees of difficulty. The conservation easement on the land will be held by the Vermont Land Trust.

Friends of Haystack is non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. To become involved in the project, please visit www.friendsofhaystack.org. Donations may be made on the website or mailed to Friends of Haystack, PO Box 201, Pawlet, VT 05761.

PHOTO CAPTION: The Friends of Haystack and donors celebrate closing on the Haystack summit parcel at the Station in Pawlet last month.

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