

New Life For Downed Trees



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Winding Trails Uses Wood From '11 Storm To Build Structure

For many of us, the October snowstorm of 2011 is a bad memory: Power was out for days and thousands of trees were toppled or damaged.

Winding Trails, a nonprofit organization offering recreational programs and day camps in Farmington, was one of many hard-hit places.

The storm damaged or felled hundreds of trees across much of the organization's 380-acre property.

Rather than dispose of all the dead wood, Winding Trails incorporated much of the fallen white pine and oak into its new educational building, its first new structure in years.

Winding Trails teamed up with E.R. Hinman and Sons, one of the oldest sawmills in the state, and recently completed a timber frame building known as "Nature's Porch" along the banks of Walton Pond.

The building will function as a classroom and community gathering center as people walk across oak flooring and stare at walls made of white pine, all from trees recycled from the storm.

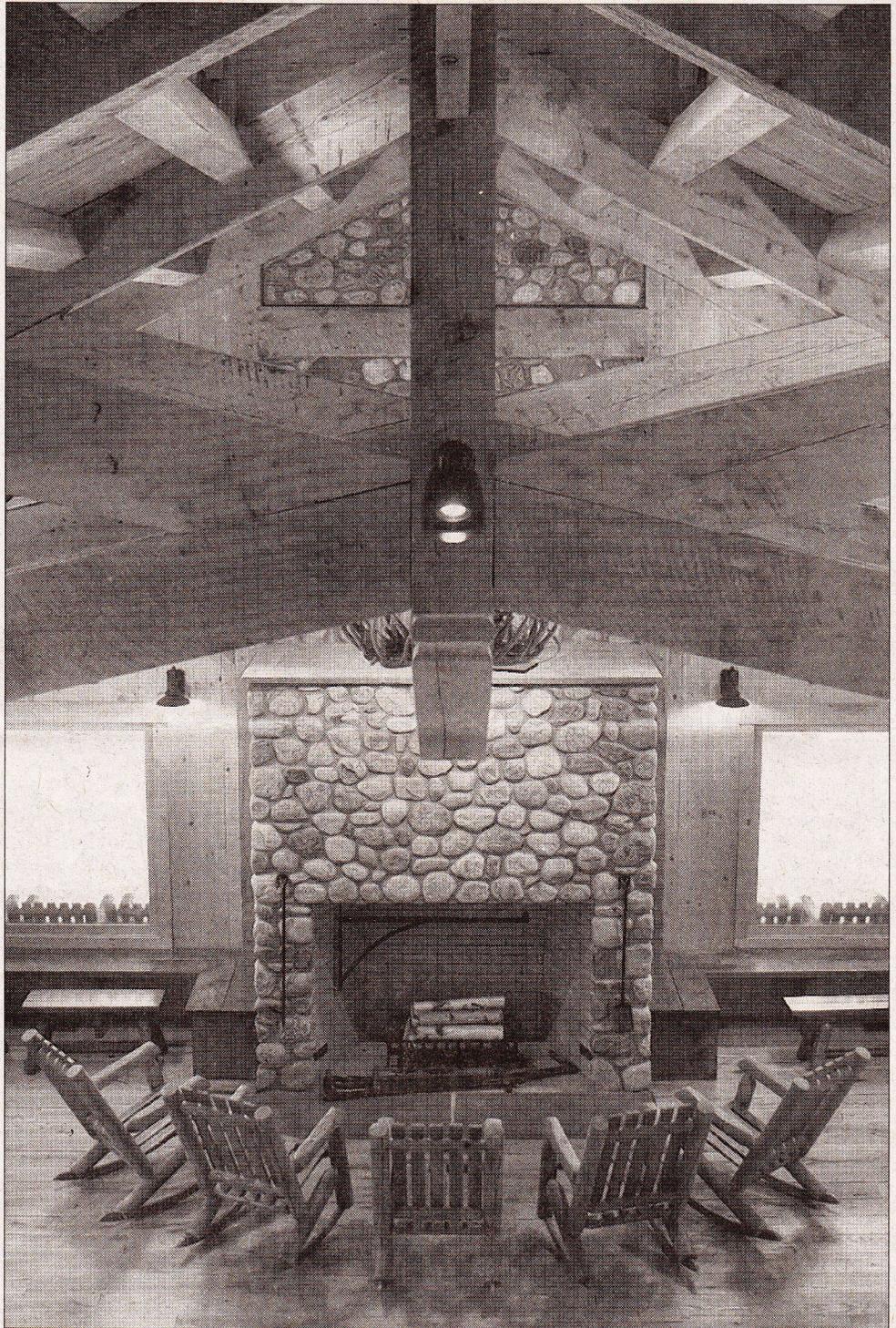
"It's a building you can tie back to nature and the whole idea of sustainability," said Trails' naturalist Judy Witzke. "We are making use of something that was lost and giving it new life. It's a wonderful concept to come away with."

Jared Braddock, the general contractor for the project, said the main frame of the building, secured with huge oak pegs, is native hemlock taken from a wood lot in Andover. With the additional wood from the forests of Winding Trails, the building is nearly 100 percent Connecticut-grown.

The state has 17 million forested acres — about 60 percent of its land area — according to the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, making it one of the most heavily forested states in the country.

"The sawmill is very involved in sustainability," Braddock said of the Burlington mill that dates back to 1830. "It was the first sawmill to participate in the 'Connecticut Grown' program. They have a licensed forester and are always looking for responsible ways to harvest trees while preserving the forest that remains."

Several years ago, Walton Pond was re-



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THE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER, called "Nature's Porch" was built in the timber-frame fashion, in which large posts and beams are fitted carefully and joined with large wooden pegs. Winding Trails, a nonprofit family outdoor activity association, is putting the finishing touches on the 30-by-55-foot building, which sits on the banks of Walton Pond.

✱ For more pictures of the new "Nature's Porch" education center in Farmington, visit courant.com/windingtrails.

stored after it had been filled with sedimentation. Prior to draining the pond and excavating it, campers and family members relocated more than 17,600 mussels, frogs, turtles and fish.

"It's always about a community of everyone around here," Trails Education Director Mark

Dale said. "Everything is connected. We call this our environmental center. It is meant to bookcase the hands-on, environmental experience campers get. I'm sure we will also be incorporating exactly how this building was constructed, too."

Go to erhinman.com and windingtrails.org for more information. Peter Marteka may be reached at 860-647-5365, at pmarteka@courant.com or at The Courant, 200 Adams St., Manchester, CT 06040.