



For Immediate Release  
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### **Wilton Awarded AARP Community Challenge Grant for Riverwalk Gazebo and Senior Citizens Science Program**

WILTON, NH – The town of Wilton is delighted to announce that it has been awarded a \$17,000 Community Challenge grant from AARP. This grant will fund the creation of a shaded, handicapped-accessible gazebo on the Wilton Riverwalk, by the bank of Stony Brook. The gazebo will serve as a new gathering space in downtown Wilton, and serve as the home base for a new innovative Wilton Senior Citizens Science Program (WSCS).

Open to residents aged 50 and over, the WSCS program will train individuals to observe wildlife and catalog their findings for the Wilton Conservation Commission's Natural Resource Inventory. Research suggests that involving seniors in scientific activities has numerous benefits, including enhanced overall well-being and improved cognitive health. The program will also foster engagement with fellow nature-lovers and a sense of accomplishment through contributing to the community and receiving public recognition for the work accomplished.

This year's Community Challenge Grant process was the most competitive ever, with 3,600 applications and just 310 grants awarded nationwide. *"AARP is proud to support the town of Wilton and its commitment to fostering engagement and empowerment among its senior citizens",* said AARP New Hampshire State Director Christina FitzPatrick. *"The Riverwalk Gazebo and the Senior Citizens Science Program will undoubtedly create a meaningful and enjoyable experience for the residents, while also contributing to the conservation efforts in the area. We look forward to seeing the positive impact this initiative will have on the community."*

In addition to the grant from AARP, the Wilton Alliance ([www.wiltonalliance.org](http://www.wiltonalliance.org)), a non-profit organization dedicated to investing in the future of Wilton, will be contributing funds to support this program. Their collaboration with the town demonstrates a shared commitment to the welfare and growth of the community.

Chairman of the Wilton Select Board, Matt Fish, expressed his gratitude for the grant and the support received, stating *"The Community Challenge grant from AARP is a significant milestone for our town. This project will not only enhance our Riverwalk and downtown area but also empower our seniors to actively participate in scientific observation and conservation efforts."*

*We are immensely thankful to AARP and the Wilton Alliance for their partnership in realizing this vision. We are excited to witness the positive impact this program will have on the lives of our residents."*

The new gazebo will be the latest enhancement to the Wilton Riverwalk, a multi-year effort spearheaded by the Wilton Economic Development Team that began in 2017 and has resulted in new paths and benches along both sides of Stony Brook, a refurbishment of nearby Monument Park, and river view signs along Main Street. It will provide needed shade and a serene and welcoming space for residents to enjoy entertainment, connect with nature, engage with their neighbors, and contribute to the conservation of the town's natural resources. For more information on the Riverwalk, go to <https://www.wiltonnh.gov/riverwalk>.

The Wilton Senior Citizens Science Program is now beginning initial outreach and recruitment of participants. For more information or to sign up, please contact Jennifer Beck at [jenniferscottbeck@gmail.com](mailto:jenniferscottbeck@gmail.com).

For a short 90-second video describing the project click <https://youtu.be/wAeuCr3MY1Q>

#### About AARP

The *Community Challenge* grant program is part of AARP's nationwide Livable Communities initiative, which helps communities become great places to live for residents of all ages. View an interactive map of all of the *Community Challenge* projects and AARP New Hampshire's livable communities work at [www.aarp.org/livable](http://www.aarp.org/livable).

#### About Wilton

Wilton is a vibrant town nestled in the Monadnock region by the Souhegan and Stony Brook rivers in southern New Hampshire. Known for its natural beauty and community spirit, Wilton offers a rich history, picturesque landscapes, and numerous recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike. The town is committed to fostering a strong sense of belonging and supporting the well-being of its residents.

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