
Spotlight: Lucia Zachowski

By Sandra Diamond Fox

When Lucia Zachowski moved to a home right on Gorham's Pond's shore in Darien in 2012, she became instantly fascinated by the beauty of this pond.

She immediately became involved with the Friends of Gorham's Pond, a nonprofit organization made up of about 70 people who want to restore, preserve, and protect the Gorham's Pond Watershed.

She is now president of this organization.

Gorham's Pond is "the final pond before that watershed empties into Long Island Sound," Zachowski said. "It's the terminus of all of the water that comes down

See Lucia on A8



Sandra Diamond Fox / Hearst Connecticut Media

Lucia Zachowski is involved in Darien nonprofits. She is president of Friends of Gorham's Pond, a nonprofit organization whose goal is to restore, preserve and protect the Gorham's Pond Watershed.

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through Darien from New Canaan before it empties into in Long Island Sound.”

Gorham's Pond has been filled in by sand runoff from I-95, according to Zachowski.

In the past, sand was used to give traction to people's vehicles to drive through snow and ice.

“The Department of Transportation put tons and tons of sand on the highways, and when the snow melted, it would wash down through the culverts into the Goodwives River, the Stony Brook River and ultimately into Gorham's Pond,” she said.

This went on for 40 years.

When I-95 was built in the 1950s, through 2008, a sodium chloride solution has been used to melt the snow and ice. Although sand is no longer used, it's still in the watershed and is impeding the free passage of the water, according to Zachowski.

“Sixty-five percent of Darien's land mass drains through those watersheds, so if the watershed at Gorham's Pond is clogged, that means further up, there is flooding where there has never been flooding,” she said. “That's because we don't have this free and quick flowing passage of water through these rivers.”

The goal of the Friends of Gorham's Pond “is to raise the funds to accomplish an efficient restoration of the pond, which means dredging all of that sand out of

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Lucia Zachowski

there and then maintaining it.”

This would mean dredging every four or five years, she said.

Restoration has already taken place at the upper pond.

“We dredged 800 tons of sand and sediment and installed a fish ladder, which for the first time in 40 years, allows alewives and other river fish to travel upstream to spawn,” she said.

She added that this has created a new food source for wildlife in the area.

“We have seen the return of bald eagles to this watershed,” Zachowski said.

While Friends of Gorham's Pond has raised enough money to restore the first section of Gorham's Pond, other sections still need to be restored.

The next section of the project, which is \$600,000, now needs to be dredged. There are four sections in total.

The organization raises money through private donations and fundraising events such as art and fashion shows. To donate to Friend of Gorham's Pond, or for more information, visit friendsofgorhamspond.org/.

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sigh at the beauty I see in that area of Darien,” Zachowski said. “It is a gift even just to be able to walk there and see this gorgeous landscape. I find it soul-refreshing to be there, and it just breaks my heart to not care for it.”

Beautification Commission

Zachowski just became co-chairman of Darien's Beautification Commission with town resident Juliet Cain.

Prior to being appointed to the Beautification Commission, she had served as a commissioner on Darien's Environmental Protection Commission for three years.

According to Zachowski, the original mission of the Beautification Commission is planting and placing baskets on the lampposts in town. However, she said she hopes to expand that mission to include a focus on the environment.

“If approved by RTM, we hope to focus on environmental issues such as pesticide spraying and planting of native species,” she said.

BYO Darien

Zachowski is co-chairwoman of

BYO Darien (Bring Your Own) Darien, which fought to get the legislation to pass the ban on plastic bags.

“Our first intent was to help manage the plastic bag problem,” Zachowski said. “Now that that has been accomplished, we would like to focus on Styrofoam and straws.

“When the Styrofoam breaks up, the birds eat it, thinking it's food,” she said. “They feel full and they won't eat and starve to death.”

She further said the straws impale animals. “The edges get worn down by the action of the waves and they become very sharp,” she said.

“I'm so heartened to see that almost all businesses in town have been using paper straws now of their own accord,” she said.

Instead of Styrofoam, Palmer's Market is using bamboo trays or compressed recycled cardboard, according to Zachowski.

Family

Zachowski, who is 57, grew up in Chappaqua and Manhattan, N.Y. She also lived in New Canaan.

She received a bachelor's degree in political science and economics from McGill University in Montreal, Canada.

She was previously vice president of marketing of a financial information firm in Manhattan.

When living in New Canaan, she was involved with the New Canaan Nature Center and served on its Planning and Zoning Com-

mission.

With her husband Matt, who owns a marketing and public relations firm in Manhattan, she has two children and two grandchildren.

Zachowski has had to take time off from work to help care for her daughter Alexandra, who has a rare form of arthritis called Ankylosing spondylitis.

This is an inflammatory autoimmune condition that creates inflammation in the spinal joints and causes chronic back pain and stiffness.

“It affects all of her joints,” said Zachowski, who is looking to bring awareness to this condition. “She has periods of inflammation where the body fuses the joints.”

Hobbies

Zachowski owns six horses on her farm in Vermont. She used to be a competitive horseback rider but now rides for recreation.

“I go there in the summer and twice a month on the weekends,” she said.

She plays flute, piano, and sings with the Fairfield County Chorale in Norwalk.

“We have a performance twice a year,” she said.

“I feel very proprietary about this town,” Zachowski said. “It's a gift to be able to live here. The environment is very important to me. There is no Planet B. We need to take responsibility and have good stewardship of this wonderful place we get to live in.”

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