

# Improving access to Drumlin Farm

By Geoff Moore

Correspondent

Drumlin Farm has long been known as a destination that provides a welcoming and inclusive environment for all visitors. For people living with mobility issues and their families, however, access to programs at working farm and wildlife sanctuary has often been limited.

Now, in a new partnership with the Central Massachusetts Limb Loss Support Group (CMLLSG), Drumlin Farm is working to improve accessibility for all who visit the Lincoln sanctuary.

"We want to create programs that aren't just specifically for people of varying abilities, but are also for them to enjoy with

their families as a whole," said Anneke Nordmark, visitor education coordinator for Drumlin Farm.

Nordmark said Drumlin Farm plans to work with CMLLSG members to create a pilot program for evaluation by August with a target to offer the program to the public at-large in the fall. The assessment will provide feedback on not only whether the person with mobility issues was fully included, but also how enjoyable and worthwhile they found the program.

CMLLSG President and Founder Rose Bissonette said that she had welcomed the approach for input from an intermediary on behalf of Drumlin Farm and had already toured the facility. Bissonette said she was

impressed that while some areas are still very difficult to navigate for people with mobility issues, "the good part is they are willing to find ways to change that."

Nordmark said that some exhibit locations are flat and have good surfaces suitable for wheelchairs. She added that the Mass Audubon Society, of which Drumlin Farm is a part, is constantly looking for ways to provide better access to their facilities. Supported by a community statement from CMLLSG, Mass Audubon and Drumlin Farm are in the process of writing a grant for funding new improvements, Nordmark said.

Both Nordmark and Bissonette see  
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this first step of a mutually beneficial long-term partnership that will make it easier for all families to spend time exploring and enjoying new experiences together.

"The key to this and why I am so excited to work with them", said Bissonette, "is that the main focus is to incorporate the families and friends. For a person with mobility issues, at times, especially in Massachusetts, there are very few outdoor activities that they

can do together — actually do actively with their families and friends. What we are hoping for as each program is developed, is that Drumlin Farm will be one of the few places in the state of Massachusetts where a whole family can go, and if you have a mobility issue, you can still participate together."

Although the specific program for the pilot has not been selected, Nordmark said that she will work with Bissonette's members to choose one that is

appropriate and she welcomed the opportunity to adapt programs based on what she termed "real time feedback."

Nordmark said the ultimate aim is: "Families being able to spend time together no matter what their ability level."

Bissonette said she planned to announce the partnership and call for volunteers at the group's third anniversary celebration, which was due to take place on Tuesday, May 8.

The group provides support to members in communities

from Boston to Springfield, including amputees, their families, caregivers and healthcare professionals. Supported entirely from member contributions, craft sale events and voluntary donations, Bissonette described the group as "a grassroots organization and the only one available in central Massachusetts to provide support for amputees."

CMLLSG meets on every second Tuesday of the month at Clinton Hospital in Clinton, about 21 miles west of Lincoln.