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## Connecticut Adoption & Family Services

Allyson Foerster has been with Connecticut Adoption & Family Services (CT-AFS) since 2002. She graduated from the University of Connecticut with a BS in Human Development and Family Relations.

Allyson is very involved with CT-AFS's signature program: **Project Connecticut's Child**, in which the agency licenses individuals, couples (non-discriminatory) and families to adopt children from Connecticut state foster care. Allyson conducts home studies to license families for private newborn adoption as well as foster care adoption. Allyson is also a community educator for CT-AFS and conducts monthly informational sessions at the **Borders Books & Music Seattle's Best Cafe** in Waterford on the first Thursday of each month. She works in the **Southeastern Connecticut** and shoreline areas helping to create families.

Connecticut Adoption & Family Services workers are available 24/7 to provide comprehensive services for many types of adoptions including: Domestic Infant Adoption; Foster Care Adoption; International Adoption; Step-Parent Adoption; Co-Parent Adoption; Identified Adoption; and Embryo Adoption Home Studies.

The mission of Connecticut Adoption and Family Services is to create, strengthen and support families through the permanent placement of children in safe and loving homes. Connecticut Adoption & Family Services supports birthparents and places special needs and foster children in safe and nurturing homes through the adoption process. For more information on Connecticut Adoption & Family Services, please visit the website at: [CTAdoptions.org](http://CTAdoptions.org) or contact the New London office at 860.444.0553 or via e-mail at: [administrator@CTAdoptions.org](mailto:administrator@CTAdoptions.org).

2 Union Plaza, Suite 300, New London  
860.444.0553 • [www.CTAdoptions.org](http://www.CTAdoptions.org)



Allyson Foerster

## Whit Davis, A Conservationist



*A Sturdy White Oak for a Sturdy Yankee*

Whit and his wife, Velora, ceremoniously touch the newly-planted white oak with dignitaries gathered in his honor (l-r) Stanton Simm, Chairman, Stonington Conservation Commission and Land Trust, Whit Davis, Rep. Diana Urban, Jim Spellman, Sr., former Stonington First Selectman, Stonington Selectman George Crouse, Velora Davis and Stonington First Selectman Ed Haberek

story & photos  
by Alexis Ann

On a chilly December 8th, John "Whit" Davis, a local farmer in his mid-80s, was honored by numerous state and local dignitaries for a lifetime of dedication to land and resource conservation in a ceremony held outdoors at his farm, the **Stanton-Davis Farm, Pawcatuck**. Sponsored by the **Stonington Conservation Commission and the Stonington Land Trust**, the ceremony included the dedication of a white oak tree, the presentation of a plaque from the **CT General Assembly**, reminiscences from attendees and spirited comments from Whit with his wife, **Velora**, at his side.

One of the oldest farms in the state and the last working farm in Stonington, Whit's waterfront tract of more than 300 acres of farmland was first occupied in 1652 by **Thomas Stanton**, one of the founders of Stonington. For almost 370 years since then, the farm has been actively worked by 12 generations. Whit, a descendant of the Stantons, is the current

overseer and devoted protector of this remarkable natural resource.

A modest man, Whit didn't understand what all the fuss was about. "I still don't see what all the hullabaloo is about... I'm just a country boy, just a farmer."

**Stanton Simm**, Chairman, Conservation Commission, quickly set the record straight by outlining Whit's amazing lifetime achievements dedicated to conservation efforts: Serving for 25 years on the inland wetlands and conservation commission; preserving his waterfront farm with a 258 acre conservation easement so it can never be developed; donating 10-acres of the farm's **Continental Marsh** to the **Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc.** (The Marsh supplied hay to the **Continental Army** during the **Revolutionary War**.); and, leading the efforts to turn his family's 17th century farmhouse into a museum.

Stanton explained why this ceremony was happening so late in the year. "We wanted to have this ceremony earlier, but we looked everywhere for a **Connecticut White Oak**. They're only dug in spring, not the fall. It was important to

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# Before Conservation Was Cool



John "Whit" Davis shows an ear of his farm's corn making it clear that it is the same as the corn grown in 1654, saying, "It's not a newfangled, genetically modified corn."

locate a white oak because it's Whit's favorite tree and it's a sturdy old Yankee, like Whit."

**Representative Diana Urban, D-North Stonington**, commented, "We are looking out at a vista that is very close to what it was in Colonial times. It's very rare to be able to do that." She presented Whit with a citation from the CT General Assembly honoring his accomplishments regarding conservation and "for his generosity, hard work and vision of what we can not lose." She closed saying, "Whit has tried so mightily to keep our connection to the land. When he walks around, I think **Mother Earth** smiles with every step he takes."

Whit then regaled those assembled with tales related to his farm and his life journey to protect precious natural resources. He showed off an ear of his farm's corn making it clear that it is the same as the corn grown in 1654 (and before that grown by **Native Americans**). "It's not a newfangled, genetically modified corn."

He then pulled **Jim Spellman, Sr.**, former Stonington First Selectman, to the front of the group and recounted stories from the past regarding their joint conservation efforts.

When the **Southeastern Connecticut Regional Planning Agency (SCARPA)** tried to turn the area south of **Greenhaven Road** into a trailer park, Jim handled the political side while Whit quickly gathered 800 signatures against the plan. Presenting his petition to the SCARPA Director, he asked, "How much more of a beating do you need?" Whit summed up the outcome with a victorious, "We never heard another word about it."

Another time, Jim asked Whit to represent Stonington on the **New England River Basin Commission**. He went to a meeting at the **University of Rhode Island** and learned of plans to pump water into **Rhode Island** from a brook in **North Stonington** and the **Anquilla** aquifer. Once again, Whit mustered local support. Groups from Stonington and North Stonington attended the next meeting of the Commission. Their vociferous opposition to the plan led the



*The Entire Davis Family Cares About Conservation*

Whit proudly displays his citation with Velora, their son, Larry, and niece, Rae-Jean Davis.

**Providence Journal** to dub them "the militant group from Connecticut."

Today, Whit's efforts are coordinated with **Stonington First Selectman Ed Haberek**. Citing Stonington as the "only town in Connecticut with three farmers' markets," Whit says, "Haberek has taken over where Jim left off."

He closed by thanking everyone for coming. And, then Whit fired a parting shot. "We lost 9,000 acres of farmland in Connecticut last year. If that continues for the next ten years, it's 90,000 acres. You people with computers, figure it out. How many tons of potatoes, sweet corn, apples, and vegetables can you grow on 90,000 acres? Somebody's got to do some thinking about that and do something. Somebody's got to have a little foresight around here."

Well said, Whit. But wait. The ceremony wasn't quite over as **Senator Andy Maynard** helped to put the Stanton-Davis Farm in perspective. "We were out here looking around Whit's property regarding salt marshes and colonial ditches and Whit identified

a parcel by saying, "We bought this parcel from the Indians."

Andy queried, "Wow, you never had a land plan on that?"

Whit said, "No. No. We bought it fair and square."

Andy responded, "Yeah, but you know about the **Federal Indian Land Claims** and all the Acts related to that?"

Whit quickly set the record straight, proclaiming, "We did this before government!"

Whit concluded with the philosophy he developed with **Louis Bayer**, the man who started **Barn Island**. "Put an older head on a younger pair of shoulders so that when that younger pair of shoulders gets to be our age, they can add on to what we left them."

That's sage advice, Whit. We encourage people, young and old, to pay attention to your message. More importantly, we hope many take up the mantle of conservation and "add on to what you left them." Congratulations, friend.

To post your comments, visit: [www.theresident.com](http://www.theresident.com)



*"Within this last year I started a new job, which I enjoy. My children and I also moved into a better home which is a blessing. Yet none of this could have been possible without the generosity and support of Good News Garage and the family that donated this vehicle."*

Tironda, GNG Client

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