

New hiking trail alert: Cool two-mile loop spins around Cape Cod Community College

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WEST BARNSTABLE – You never know where the Trail Wizard will strike next. While the rest of us are eating peanuts and daydreaming about comfy sweatpants, Lev Malakhoff and his merry band might be pushing a lawnmower through the woods, carving out new places to bike and hike.

Still, it was a bit of a surprise when an email splashed down from Lev with the subject line "What if you wanted to walk over two miles in the woods around the CCCC campus?"

How did he know that campus circumnavigation was third on my bucket list, right behind sheep shearing and learning to play the flugelhorn?



Lev's communiqué continued: "My hardworking volunteers and I have recently completed the loop trail system entirely around the campus of the Cape Cod Community College. The only time you interact with pavement is when you use one of the crosswalks to connect to the next segment. Let me know if you'd like a guided tour some time."

This was thrilling news. I have hiked all over Cape Cod, gotten lost and covered with ticks in some of the finest places known to humanity. But I've never received a VIP invitation to tour a brand new trail. I felt like a Kardashian!

Even though it was midnight, I couldn't wait. I immediately drove to Lev's house and started throwing pebbles at his window. When that didn't work, I lit up the spotlight and cranked Pavarotti on my boombox. Then I realized I had the wrong address, so I wrote out a fat check to an irritated family.

OK, OK, that didn't happen. But I was champing at the bit. I knew when Lev and other members of the Cape Cod New England Mountain Bike Association group put their brain and brawn power into trail projects, they turned out great. And since Lev is a former senior transportation engineer with the Cape Cod Commission, he knows how to work with state and local agencies to get things done.



So I whistled for the Curious Prius, but it wasn't there! Then I remembered my wife had taken it to work, so I had to settle for the Ravishing RAV . We zoomed down to the college and came to rest in parking lot #00, out back by the tennis courts. There's an easy trail access point where the entrance road and parking lot meet.

Lev popped out of his electric car with clippers in hand for maintenance along the trail, and off we went. The trail is divided into sections with names like "Foxtrot," "Scrub Forest" and "Home Run." You could see right away how cool

this loop will be for students and staff at the college who want to get some exercise as part of their day.

And it's a nice choice for regular folks who want an easy-to-access leg-stretcher that runs about two miles. Hiking and mountain biking are allowed. Most of the trail runs through the woods, and Lev talked about the tricky business of carving new paths in the wilderness – figuring out the best layout and clearing the trail with a lawnmower and volunteer toil.



He took me up on a section of trail called "King's View." I figured it must have had some connection to an epic historic event like a royal clambake from the Q̄ æs. Not exactly. Lev said the trail got its name because you could look through the trees and see Burger King at the service plaza. I briefly

harrumphed, but the aroma of flame-grilled burgers was too intoxicating to stay irked.

We spun by large boulders and the remains of a disc golf course. We saw stone walls and walked along the edge of a playing field with a ghostly dugout filled with weeds. The hum of the college and Route 1 were around us, but it still felt like an adventure.

I've always been a big fan of Cape Cod Community College, because it offers so much to students at a reasonable price. And now, thanks to Lev and his pals, there's a wicked awesome trail that runs around it. There are also ways to connect to longer trails that run in the area, perhaps a topic for another day.

I was tempted to do the loop twice, but unfortunately I had a pressing appointment with a Whopper. But that's the cool thing about this trail – it's so convenient, you can always "have it your way."

Eric Williams, when not solving Curious Cape Cod mysteries, writes about a variety of ways to enjoy the Cape, the weather, wildlife and other subjects. Contact him at ewilliams@capecodonline.com. Follow him on Twitter: @capecast.