

Slate Valley Trails hires first employee

The Mountain Times, MAY 16, 2019

By Katy Savage



POULTNEY—After four years, the nonprofit Slate Valley Trails has hired its first employee.

Silvia Cassano starts her position as program manager on May 20 to coordinate volunteers and spearhead fundraising opportunities.

Cassano, who lives in Bennington, studied parks, recreation and tourism at the University of Maine, Orono. She's served on the board of many outdoor groups, including the Green Mountain Club, MA Appalachian Trail Committee, the Appalachian Trail

Community program, Disabled Sports Eastern Sierra the Bennington Area Trail System.

"This position is everything I am looking for professionally. I am personally very passionate about this work," Cassano said in a press release. "The SVT mission is in my blood."

Slate Valley Trails in Poultney formed in 2015.

"Maintenance is one thing that's becoming a bigger and bigger task for us... It's all volunteer and it's hard to make things go forward," said Slate Valley Trails President Andy Vermilyea.

Vermilyea hopes Cassano alleviates that pressure. Cassano was selected among 40 applicants.

"Silvia came to the front because she's trained in not-for-profit management," said Vermilyea.

Slate Valley has a network of more than 30 miles of trails and it continues to expand. Slate Valley's long-term vision is to create 50 miles in the area to benefit the community of Poultney and beyond.

"To help bring in tourism is a big part of our mission," Vermilyea said.

Cassano formerly worked as a ghostwriter representing the Vermont Woodlands Association out of the Rutland office. Cassano regularly got to mountain bike after work.

"I love the trails in the Rutland and Killington area," she said. "I am excited to begin this position with Slate Valley Trails.

Cassano started mountain biking when she was 14. In her free time she also likes everything outside. She's an active kayaker, backpack and hiker. Last year Cassano hiked the Long Trail and two years ago she finished the Appalachian Trail in Vermont – a longterm goal of hers.

"I look forward to exploring trails, meeting new people, and digging in and getting work done," Cassano said

Funding for Cassano's position is coming from membership fees and donations.

"It's a good time to engage the community," said Vermilyea. "She can be that person to connect the community to Slate Valley.