

Becoming a Hike Leader (Part 1) “From the Frying Pan to the Trail!”

BY: JOE D'AMORE

I've been a volunteer cook at Cardigan's Winter Schools (both January and February) and Spring School (April) for the last 3 years.

Even though I transitioned out of the catering business 24 years ago into my career as a financial advisor, there was a bit of a kitchen crisis one evening at the Spring School 3 years ago and I launched into action to assist.

Funny how the career I was in from my teens to age 40 provided a surge of nostalgia and the ability to deploy my skill to help support the legendary food service at the Cardigan School.

Since this is only my 3rd year of serious hiking (officially, I'm "new to hiking" and started "late in life") I never thought I would be an aficionado of winter hiking. Therefore, volunteering for the winter school kitchen duty was a way to experience a lodge-based weekend hiking adventure and help out a critical area.



Top: The "Croo" Winter Hiking School 2023

Right: Joe D'Amore with son Nick.

Eastern Mountain Sports (EMS), REI and Amazon have benefited financially from my well-appointed purchases of "gear". My wife Yola (who also volunteers in the kitchen) has publicly decried that I am fit to be a guest on National Geographic. Though I am well geared, winter hiking to date was simply a brief flat surface snowshoeing excursion not more than ½ mile from the Cardigan Lodge.

Everything changed when my CROO (AMC speak for crew, staff) gifted me with time off at the January Winter School and I joined leaders Steve Zimmer and Luann Laquerre on a snow shoeing hike to South Peak (a stone's throw from Cardigan). Steve, his wife Beth whom I've also hiked with and Luann are consummate leaders, mentors, accomplished and experienced in matters of outdoor excursions.

I never "climbed" with snowshoes and I fell in love with my "televators" which were never used in flat terrain.

The breathtaking beauty of the forest, challenges of working through wind and snow and receiving instructions from Steve and Luann resulted in a pivotal event for me. I came back from the hike, put on my apron and promptly announced to the CROO, "...I am going to be a hike leader".

I also excitedly called my son Nicholas to share the news. Nick advised me many years ago to venture out into the wilderness. He is a genuine outdoorsman with many years of leadership and management experience with AMC's August Camp.

At this tentative stage in my fledgling hiking phase of life I envision becoming a sought-out leader of people that are terrified of being in the woods or show up at winter school with pup tents from Walmart, their kid's plastic snow shoes and sleeping bags the size of my old 1984 Toyota Corolla.

Steve and Beth, who I've recently hiked with on "animal tracking" stints, and Luann have supported my decision declaring to a hiking group "Joe is going to be an amazing leader! He is so good with people!"

My wife is more sanguine; "oh yeah, he has the gift of gab."

Admittedly, my wife is surprised but supportive of this new outdoor-oriented epiphany and she is making tentative forays in the wilderness with me too.

So here I am folks. I will distance myself from the frying pan next January when I participate in the prerequisite Cardigan Winter School. This is a full-weekend "Leadership Training" lead by long-time AMC-NH leader Rick Silverberg. Between now and then I will continue accumulating the experience of 24 peaks and engaging with over 20 leaders on various excursions. In subsequent writings in this series, I will share

my experiences with hiking excursions along with a fantastic cadre of AMC hike leaders who continue to inspire me.

This is a series to be continued throughout the rest of 2024 and into 2025 to not only document my progress but also share official AMC information. Information about becoming a leader directly from the AMC is presented on the following page.

If you have any interest at all, please consider becoming a leader. There is a need for leadership and passion to converge in leading others to discover a love for the outdoors. If you would like to contact me, my email is damorecos@gmail.com



Excursion Leader Qualifications

AMC-NH CHAPTER EXCURSIONS COMMITTEE TRIP LEADER REQUIREMENTS

Universal Prerequisites for All Leader Candidates before beginning Leadership Mentoring

All leaders must:

- Be a member in good standing of the Appalachian Mountain Club.
- Have successfully completed an approved AMC-NH Chapter leadership training class. Current approved classes are Class 3 Leadership Training (Class 3 only), Leadership and Mountain Skills at AMC NH Winter and Spring Workshops, Mountain Leadership School (MLS) and Advanced Mountain Leadership School (AMLS). Both MLS and AMLS must include the “Bridge” course offered by AMC.
- Have participated in at least 5 officially published AMC-NH Chapter excursions, each with a different Trip Leader.
- (Participation in a non-Leadership class at any Cardigan Winter or Spring Workshop may count as one hike, irrespective of the number of classes taken.)
- (Participation in a Winter Hiking Series (WHS) hike may count as one hike, irrespective of the number of hikes done with the WHS.)
- Inform an Excursions Co-chair of the intent to enter the mentoring program.
- Provide Excursions Co-chair with contact information, including name, phone number(s), street address, email address, AMC membership number, chapter, date of leadership class, date/leader/destination of 5 AMC chapter excursions, prerequisite list of peaks/hikes as required, and class of leadership applying for.

Class 1 Trip Leader

Scope: A Class 1 Trip Leader for NH Chapter Excursions Committee may lead excursions ...

- Of any length,
- Of any duration,
- To any destination,
- At any time of year,
- That are within the limits of the Excursions Committee’s scope of operation.

Required Qualifications: A Class 1 Trip Leader must...

- meet the universal prerequisites described above.
- have successfully climbed at least one half of the NH peaks on the official White Mountain 4000 Footer list (Part 14 of the Leader Handbook) in the calendar winter season. Equivalent peaks not on this list may be accepted subject to approval by the Trip Leader Board.
- have successfully completed the NH Chapter’s Mentor Program requirements for Class 1 Trip Leader Candidates in the calendar winter season, with good recommendations from the hike mentors.
- be approved by the Trip Leader Board of Acceptance.

Class 2 Trip Leader

Scope: A Class 2 Trip Leader for NH Chapter Excursions Committee may lead excursions ...

- Of any length,
- Of any duration,
- To any destination,
- In the calendar spring, summer, or fall seasons only,
- Only where winter conditions are not likely to be encountered,
- That are within the limits of the Excursions Committee’s scope of operation.

Required Qualifications: A Class 2 Trip Leader must...

- Meet the universal prerequisites described above.
- Have successfully climbed at least one half of the NH peaks on the official White Mountain 4000 Footer list (Part 14 of the Leader Handbook). Equivalent peaks not on this list may be accepted subject to approval by the Trip Leader Board.
- Have successfully completed the NH Chapter’s Mentor Program requirements for Class 2 Trip Leader Candidates with good recommendations from the hike mentors.
- Be approved by the Trip Leader Board of Acceptance.

Class 3 Trip Leader, Non-winter

Scope: A Class 3 Trip Leader for NH Chapter Excursions Committee may lead excursions ...

- No longer than 8 miles in total length,
- That start and finish on the same day,
- To elevations no higher than 3,200 feet above sea level,
- From May 1 to October 31,
- Only where winter conditions are not likely to be encountered,
- That are within the limits of the Excursions Committee’s scope of operation.

Required Qualifications: A Class 3 Trip Leader, Non-winter, must...

- Meet the universal prerequisites described above,
- Have successfully climbed any 24 peaks from the official White Mountain 4000 Footer list and/or the list of additional lower peaks from the approved list in Part 15 of the Leader Handbook. Equivalent peaks not on this list may be accepted subject to approval by the Trip Leader Board,
- Have successfully completed the NH Chapter’s Mentor Program requirements for Class 3, Non-winter Trip Leader Candidates with good recommendations from the hike mentors,
- Be approved by the Trip Leader Board of Acceptance.

Class 3 Trip Leader, Winter

Scope: A Class 3 Trip Leader, Winter, for NH Chapter Excursions Committee may lead excursions ...

- No longer than 8 miles in total length
- That start and finish on the same day
- To elevations no higher than 3,200 feet above sea level
- Any season of the year
- That are within the limits of the Excursions Committee’s scope of operation

Required Qualifications: A Class 3 Trip Leader, Winter must...

- Meet the universal prerequisites described above,
- Have successfully climbed any 24 peaks from the official White Mountain 4000 Footer list and/or the list of additional lower peaks from the approved list in Part 15 of the Leader Handbook in the calendar winter season. Equivalent peaks not on this list may be accepted subject to approval by the Trip Leader Board.
- Have successfully completed the NH Chapter’s Mentor Program requirements for Class 3, Trip Leader Candidates in the calendar winter season, with good recommendations from the hike mentors.
- Be approved by the Trip Leader Board of Acceptance.

SUMMER HIKING SPECIAL

Q&A with Jamie Gillon and John Williams co-chairs of AMC-NH Excursion (Hiking) Committee

Jamie and John manage an extensive Excursion program for AMC-NH with over 100 publicized and private trips annually. They agreed to answer a few questions for Mountain Passages:

- **Why an AMC hike? What makes AMC hikes special?**
Well qualified leaders and a great group of fellow hikers that you'd otherwise never meet. Hike leaders are experienced hikers and past participants on chapter hiking trips. Training involves a weekend long workshop that covers gear, group dynamics, planning, participant screening and accident scene management. After completion, leader trainees run hikes with experienced leaders who evaluates them.
- **How many people are involved with the AMC-NH excursion team? How can members get involved?** We have over 90 leaders and leaders in training. If you want to volunteer or get involved please contact Jamie Gillon or John Williams at excursionsnh@amc-nh.org.
- **How do you decide what hikes/trips to sponsor?**
Once someone becomes a leader, they largely plan their own trips.

- **How long is the hiking season for activities?**
Year round.
- **Are the hikes open to the general public or AMC members? Does AMC charge for its hikes?** We generally do not charge for day hikes, but do charge if the event is overnight or if there is some sort of equipment rental. Hikes are generally open to everyone.
- **Do you have some favorite hikes/trips to recommend?**
The winter and spring workshops at Cardigan Lodge.
- **What is the web link to find out more about the available hikes and schedule?**
www.outdoors.org/activities
- **What are your biggest issues in a given year?**
The biggest issue is coordinating a large group of people. To lessen the load, we have a handful of sub-committees, including "Over 55," "Leader Enrichment," "Family Group" and "Leadership Review Board" that focus on topics like leader review, and leader recognition.

Becoming a Hike Leader- 2nd Part in a Series

BY: JOE D'AMORE

Nestled in the embrace of Mount Washington, along the Cascades of Ellis River just behind the Pinkham Notch/AMC Center, I attended a definitive prerequisite to leadership at the Joe Dodge Center.

The course, which has operated since 1974, has evolved into a highly engaging two day format where our instructor Amanda Fisher-Katz-Keohane taught a practical applications course including CPR. Amanda is certified as a Wilderness EMT, a consummate teacher and experienced outdoor leader.

The program known as Wilderness First Aid is delivered by Stonehearth Open Learning Opportunities (SOLO) of Madison, NH. The SOLO course, which was first called Mountain Rescue Seminar and then Backcountry Medicine, was launched by founders Frank Hubbell, DO, and his wife Lee Frizzell. Frank and Lee are genuine pioneers in this field and continue to refine, develop and share best practices.

WFA/SOLO is recognized by the American Camping Association as a requirement for camp counselors and hike leaders of all varieties. For more advanced hike leaders such as expedition/multi-day level mountaineering, the course is popular. The course is also much sought after for those pursuing SOLO's Wilderness First Responder and Wilderness Emergency Medical Technician certification programs.

Anyone can avail themselves of this program. You do not need to be on a track to be a leader or technician to gain the skills and knowledge offered by the course.

From 8:30-4:30 the two days were filled with outstanding instruction. The application of course content through field exercises for assisting outdoor enthusiasts who find themselves in a compromised state and far from a hospital or a clinic was engaging. Oftentimes, our instructor shared her experiences and added practical advice for helping others in difficult outdoor conditions according to WFA/SOLO operating principles.

This was my first WFA course in my quest to become an all season, Class 3 hike leader. The course is often repeated by experienced outdoor leaders and enthusiasts.

Many reading this are involved in a variety of activities with some focused on just one activity such as hiking, climbing, skiing, kayaking, canoeing, or sailing. The WFA applies to all of these and works from the altruistic principle of the "Good Samaritan".

As I continue this series I will share other experiences in the hopes of encouraging many of you to consider wilderness leadership with AMC!

For more information about WFA/SOLO please contact them at WFA/SOLO, p. 603-447-6711
email: info@soloschools.com

**Feel free to contact me
about leadership development
- Joe D'Amore**

Becoming a Hike Leader -- Part III

Map & Compass

BY JOE D'AMORE

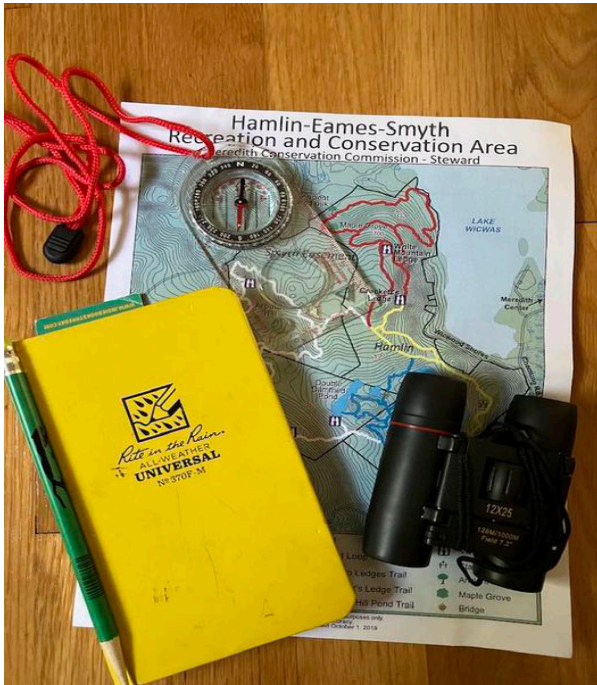


Photo Credit: Joe D'Amore

Per AMC's Mountain Skills Manual, "A map and compass make up two of the 10 essentials recommended for safe back-country travel, but they'll do little good if you don't know how to use them. Misuse could even turn a situation in which you're simply confused into one in which you're totally lost. The bottom line? Learn proper technique before your safety depends on it."

To gain these skills on my journey to becoming a Hike Leader I enlisted my Hike Mentor, Steve Zimmer, to tutor me on the ins and outs of navigating by compass and map. On June 21st Steve invited me to his home along with my hike colleague and terrific Hike Leader Andrew Papalegis for a "private", but official, map and compass lesson.

The course started at Steve's kitchen table and we spent one and one-half hours getting acquainted with the compass and learning about a lot of technical concepts such as "declination". (hint: Per the US Geological Survey the deviation of the compass from true north is an angle called "declination" or "magnetic declination").

We drew on maps using rulers and #2 graphite pencils. I reveled in the old-school aspects of this discipline. Steve is a highly experienced hiker and consummate leader. I've been on hikes with him and he always has a map and compass at the ready. He was passionate about imparting this concept to us.

After spending time at the kitchen table with him we plunged into the beautiful woodlands of the Hamlin-Eames-Smyth Recreation and Conservation Area. The sky was dark and rain poured in sheets. The bugs had the ability to bite through rain coats. Yet in this difficult condition, Andrew and I marveled as to how he could quite literally leave us in a dark forest

---off trail--- and challenge us to find our way out. We did. No rescue calls were made! Steve does not rely on electronic devices. Therein, is the most important lesson of all we learned: batteries fail, cell and internet connections can be spotty, but a good old map and compass with a pencil can navigate the path out of any wilderness.

As we were driving home, Andrew and I excitedly talked about our bushwacking experience. We felt a surge of appreciation for Steve and his tutelage and openly declared that we could never get lost in the woods again.

Let me conclude this report by suggesting you take a Map & Compass course a few times and practice it with commitment - on every hike - to be as skilled as Steve.

Leave your electronic devices at home in the process.

Joe D'Amore is chronicling his experiences and lessons on a quest to become a class 3, all season, hike leader.

Reflections Poetry

By Joe D'Amore

*On My Way To Chocorua
She sends her offspring with much fuss.
Gurgling rivulets, springs and brooks.
Cold streams to cross flow underfoot.
Put there by her to greet or stop us.*

*The watery source is finally found.
That mother's voice is oh, quite loud.
The plunging flows arrest the soul.
The quest to climb is not yet bound.*

*With bated breath, resolved to reach.
That rocky crown beyond the trees.
The limbs assaulted, senses blunted.
Roots, rocks and forest must all be breached.*

*Breathtaking views provide the prize.
Stark whispering pines and mountain etches.
Sun splashed and wind across our faces.*



*Encountering
Champney & Pitcher
Falls on the way to
Mt Chocorua by way
Champney Falls trail
from Kangamangus
Highway
Photo Credit:
Joe D'Amore*