Welcome to Amherst

Amherst is an incredible town, that in some places feels like a big community—everyone is welcome here! The fall festival, celebrated with food samples, jugglers, and singing in the streets, shows how welcoming Amherst is. Some things are changing, development is happening, but at the very heart of Amherst you will find what brings us all together: community.

A characteristic of New England is the town common, which originated in England. Here in Amherst, we have two—Fiddler’s Green and the one downtown. Although smaller, Fiddler’s Green hosts the 4th of July parade. Although I have never won a prize for decorations and costumes, I have had a lot of fun dressing up and biking in the parade. I also love playing games such as the “penny drop” and the sack race. If you were to visit our downtown common in August, you could see a Mister G show! He is a well-known children’s performer with his wife, Mrs. G, who play songs in Spanish and English about the Earth. Come in June, and lights flash at the carnival! On Saturdays, you can stroll through the colorful farmer’s market, or visit booths of tie-dye clothes and woodworkers at the craft fair.

A notable symbol of Amherst is the house of the poet Emily Dickinson. There is a festival there called the Children’s Circus, which has many old-fashioned games like stilt-walking and hoop-rolling. We also wrote poems in memory of her. You can take a tour of her bedroom and parlor and see the desk on which she wrote her poems, the bureau in which she kept them, and the window through which she sent cookies to the neighborhood children. But in my opinion, the flower garden is the best feature of her homestead. It is a real place of peacefulness.
Our public library looks like any other at a glance. It is actually a very interesting building with oil paintings, spiral staircases, and many hidden rooms. Some of these serve as craft rooms for the many fun activities the library has, such as Lego club, where you can build and display creations, and chess club, where you can learn moves with our teacher Andy. My favorite librarians are Jessica, Claire, and Mia, who have helped me find so much knowledge in books.

One unique feature of our town is the Hitchcock Center, a building filled with people dedicated to teaching how to respect nature and our planet. The building has solar panels, a rain barrel, and composting toilets, which save water by using bubbly foam in them instead. Hitchcock has many fascinating and educational critters in its library, like Cob the corn snake, Terra the box turtle, and Emma the painted turtle. I love walking the labyrinth of trails that tangle their way through meadows where crickets chirp, ferns where ladybugs hide, and rocks under which salamanders hibernate. I have been taking classes here my whole life, and I love learning things from teachers Katie and Colleen on our walks. They have really helped me see nature in a whole new perspective—wonder!

A place that I go almost every week is Groff Park. In spring, it has been my tradition to look for the baby bluebirds that nest in a box, but sadly that was bulldozed with the rest of the playground. Now there is a sprinkler park and a new, more modern playground in its place. There are many beautiful mussels that I collect on my wades in the Fort River behind the park, but you have to watch out for crayfish lurking among the rocks! On Wednesdays, there is games class on the grass, which is led by Trevor the Games Man. He is 65, but very agile! I love chasing him when we play tag. It would be strange not to see him bike up to the park, as I’ve seen him do for the eight years I’ve been going.
Amherst is a town of variety. Some parts of Amherst are unique, others are traditional but intriguing, and we have some historical places, too. This is what combines to make Amherst a great town and an awesome place to live.