

The Allegheny Valley Trails Association 2016

More AVTA Progress

This year, AVTA is moving ahead at a little better pace than last year. Thanks to Deb Frawley for writing a grant to the PNC Charitable Trust for two projects for AVTA, and one project for Two Mile Run Park. One of AVTA's grants was for refurbishing the parking lot in Brandon Acres. That grant was completed last fall by Louis Heath Excavating.

The second grant was for construction of a switch-back between the Allegheny River Trail and the Sandy Creek Trail. This project is much more complicated because it has to be done on a parcel that we do not own. We had surveying done last fall and had an appraisal of the parcel done. Unfortunately we could not reach an agreement with the property owner.

Plan B was to revamp the steps, but that plan would not allow us to move our equipment between the trails. Plan C was to utilize some of the old abandoned township road and build a new road to the trail, but again the property owner and AVTA could not reach an agreement. Plan D was to construct a road on AVTA's 75 foot right-of-way. We had some more surveying done, and the bid came back much higher than expected. We certainly haven't given up yet. We will continue to work out a solution to this problem.

Last year I stated that we were close to executing a grant from DCNR to repave from the Belmar Bridge to Brandon Acres. Well, with much help from Kim Harris, and Oil Region Alliance this will be done this year. Bids are due back by April 15th. At that time a bid will be awarded with paving to start in June. So if you see Kim or you visit ORA in Oil City, take time to THANK them for their help.

We continue to work on the Right-of-Way between Emlenton and Foxburg. Progress is ever so slow, but we keep working forward in hopes of securing Right-of-Way.

We have started working on securing an abstractor to determine ownership between Parker and Upper-Hillville. There are over 140 property owners in this 7.8 mile section. This will be very interesting to do.

When we secure ROW between Emlenton and Foxburg, and between Parker and Upper-Hillville we can connect to the Allegheny Land Trust. This would give us a continuous trail of just over 100 miles, from Titusville to Rosston. If this could be accomplished in the next 5 to 8 years, Jim Holden's dream of the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail would be much closer to realization.

As in every year the Board of Directors would like to THANK all the volunteers who help maintain the trail system. Your work and dedication is GREATLY appreciated. We have the best trail system in the state and that is because of all of you.



Again THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!!!!!

Bill Wilson

Annual Spring Clean up Set for April 23!

Get your gloves and tools ready for the annual trail cleanup day set for Saturday, April 23. Beginning at 9 am, volunteer crews will be working to remove debris and trash, clear fallen trees or branches, cut back brush and clear all drainage areas. Bring pruning shears and work gloves, and we'll have trash bags, light gloves and vests. Volunteers are needed at parking lots in Rockland, Belmar, Brandon, Deep Hollow, Sandy Creek Trail by the tunnel and Slab Furnace Road.

For more information, or to volunteer, check with Steve Schenck at schenck102@verizon.net or check the AVTA website. Or, just pick a place on the trail nearest you and go to work!

The AVTA Endowment

AVTA has had an endowment for some time with the purpose of establishing a fund sufficient to maintain our trail system. Grants are available to construct, but seldom to maintain. This will require a principle amount in excess of one million dollars to yield interest of \$75,000/year. AVTA has partnered with the Venango Area Community Foundation, an affiliate of the multi-county Bridge Builders Community Foundations to manage the Foundation and AVTA now has an active Endowment Committee. We have had some recent donations to the fund in memory of loved ones, which is encouraging. There also is a lot of buzz about pipeline leasing, which would provide significant funding. Estate Planning is another important key to developing a significant fund. Keep us in mind.

Annual Members Meeting - May 11

The Annual Members Meeting will be held Wednesday, May 11, at the Christ United Methodist Church at 1135 Buffalo Street in Franklin.

6:00- 6:30	Social Gathering
6:30 - 7:30	Buffet Dinner
7:30 - 8:00	Business Meeting
8:00	Program

The program will be presented by Bob and Linda Steiner, well known, award-winning travel writers who will talk about their many adventures, some on waterways and many on bike trails all across the country and around the world. Join us for this interesting presentation.

Please make reservations by contacting Karen Counselman before May 2 at kcounselman510@verizon.net or 814-437-3203 or 814-673-2286.

Cost for tickets: \$15

Vegetarian meals available upon request.

Officers for 2016-2017

President:	Bill Weller	Secretary:	Karen Counselman
Vice President :	Matt Lehman	Treasurer:	Judy Hanninen

Board of Directors for 2016-2017

Bob Barber	Caryl Holden	Paul Kentzol
Maryann Porterfield	David Przybylek	Larry Puleo
Steve Schenck	John Sims	Sally Vereb

The Friendly Face at the SaltBox

When the flag is out and the door is ajar, you know that the SaltBox Visitor Center is open – and most likely the person who will greet you upon entering is our Volunteer of the Year, Daryl Myers.

Beginning his third season, Daryl has been happily greeting visitors almost daily. He spends time there just about every day, depending upon the time he devotes to the care of his family. But over the past two summers, Daryl has become the face of the Visitor Center. Regular daily trail users expect to see him, and he's come to know them by name. He looks forward to greeting those who come by every day, and knows to look for the groups that come regularly, such as the group of older men who come to ride once a week.



What does he like best about this volunteer position? “The people – the great people who come here.” Daryl reports during the summer of 2015, there were visitors from 38 states and four foreign countries, from Europe and Australia. He’s met riders who come regularly and those who are completing cross-country trips. He’s asked them how they’ve found our trail. Google “Best Trail in Pennsylvania” and this trail system pops up, he says.

Daryl makes sure that the Visitor Center is well equipped for riders. There is water, and lots of information, including trail maps and distance charts, brochures of other local sites, and books. , A wide variety of items are available for purchase such as t-shirts, sweatshirts, hats and backpacks. Daryl also has on hand a very well-equipped tool kit for bike repairs including cables, chains, tubes and the lubricants and pumps to get bikes up and running. Visitors can also sign up on the spot to become members of the Allegheny Valley Trail Association, which Daryl encourages.

Daryl has handled a variety of medical emergencies over the past couple of years, too. A big first aid kit helps him quickly treat injuries from falls and other minor concerns. His professional background helps him to stay calm and focused, as Daryl was a teacher at Victory Elementary for 34 years, the last ten years of which he was head teacher. His education and experience help him interact with and remain attentive when he’s working with visitors. His academic background includes two master’s degrees and a PhD.

After he retired, Daryl was looking for some opportunities that would be satisfying and rewarding. Once he came by the Visitor Center a few times and talked with volunteers there, he knew that he wanted to be there. He says he’s so glad to see the trail being used so often, both by local residents who come often, and by visitors from so many other places. Many local business people come by almost every day, to walk during a lunch hour or to have a mid-day break at the pavilion. He enjoys the people, the chance to spend some quiet time on the porch watching the Allegheny River flow by, and by talking with the many interesting people who have become part of his life.

“I enjoy it too much to give it up for a paying job.”

Don't forget to like us on **facebook**

www.avta-trails.org

Looking for Ways to Help?

AVTA relies on volunteers in many ways. Perhaps you've thought about how you can contribute to the work of the all-volunteer trail association. Thanks for asking! Here are a few ways we could use your help:

First of all, join AVTA. Fill out the membership form in this newsletter and get it sent off.

The SaltBox Visitor Center. In the summer days between Memorial Day through Applefest, we try to have the center open for at least part of the day. Many trail users stop in to pick up a map, find out about a place for lunch or dinner and learn more about the trail system. Volunteering there puts you in touch with people from around the area and from many other places far and wide. Riders from Pittsburgh, Ohio and New York state stop in. A visitor last summer was a man on his return trip from California. The summer before he'd ridden across the country from east to west. On this trip, he was back to Pennsylvania on his way back to his original starting place in New York. Send an email to Karen Counselman (kcounselman510@verizon.net or stop by and ask Daryl to give you some training.

The Trail Patrol. AVTA's Safety Patrol is a loosely knit group of volunteers who patrol on their own schedules. They wear yellow safety vests or red t-shirts marked with Safety Patrol and provide an official "presence" on the trail. Patrollers assist other riders by answering questions about anything from the trail's history to directions to the nearest trail head or coffee shop. Patrollers carry packs with necessary equipment to fix a flat tire, a spare tube, a first aid kit to aid with any minor cuts and scrapes, extra fluids and energy bars. They also carry trail maps and membership information. They are ambassadors of good will for the visitors to our trail system, and are often the first to find any problems and get them reported so that they can be quickly corrected. To join the Safety Patrol, contact Steve Schenck at schenck102@verizon.net.

Trail Maintenance. If you come upon a downed tree or a plugged drainage ditch, it is always helpful for us if you notify an officer or board member. But it's also wonderful if you are able to take care of it yourself. Check with Steve (see above) about regular maintenance tasks like painting bollards, trimming back brush and tree branches alongside the trail, and many other tasks that need to be done on a regular basis. We are grateful for so many already doing this work. This work can be done on your own time when you're out for a ride. Others like to schedule an outing to the trail for a specific purpose such as trimming back brush or painting bollards.

Clean-up Day. April 23 will be the organized trail clean-up day. Our website lists all of the areas where work crews will meet at 9 that morning. You'll need gloves and small hand tools. This workday prepares our trails for the summer season by cleaning up trash, clearing drainage ditches, sweeping debris from the trail surface, moving downed branches, and otherwise getting the trails prettied-up for the spring and summer. You can sign up for a particular site or just show up ready to work. Guess who to contact? Right - Steve Schenck.

Applefest. AVTA meets and greets many visitors to Franklin at its Applefest Booth. Taking a two-hour shift in the tent handing out brochures and maps, answering questions and selling AVTA merchandise is a great way to help. Don't worry - we provide information so that you'll be able to answer questions accurately and appropriately. We also need help setting up and tearing down the tent and tables. Contact Sue Hilton (hilton@clarion.edu) to sign up.

Thank You!

Become a Business Partner with AVTA

A critically important support for AVTA are its Business Partners, who pledge \$100 a year, and earn a spot on the Business Partner Recognition sign located at the Franklin Trailhead. Your support helps to provide a piece of reliable income for use in trail maintenance and other expenses not attainable through grant funding. Having your name visible at the trailhead means that our many trail users will see it every day. It also indicates to your customers or clients that you value quality of living in our region. Please consider this partnership. Contact Karen Counselman to make your pledge. kcounselman510@verizon.net. Thank You!

AVTA Membership - We NEED You!

Membership in the Allegheny Valleys Trails Association is an easy way for trail users and supporters to help the organization maintain and develop trail. Folks can become members at an individual or family membership, or opt to one of the higher categories. Membership offers access to the annual meeting, this newsletter and receipt of the minutes of the Board's bi-monthly meetings. It's a benefit to both AVTA and its members who learn about activities and efforts of the organization.

Currently there are 164 memberships, but almost 80 percent of the membership are people from outside the Franklin and local area. Many of the people we see out using the trails on a regular basis are local people who simply don't know how the trails appeared there. We need to spread the word that we need the support of people in Venango County. Please help us by talking to trail users about joining AVTA.

We believe that many more trail users and supporters are out there. If you know of someone who is a trail user and believer, invite them to become a member. Check out the membership options at our website or cut out the membership form below and send it with your check to AVTA, P.O. Box 264, Franklin, PA 16323. Annual dues are payable now as well. THANK YOU ALL!

Membership Registration Form

Allegheny Valley Trails Association
P.O. Box 264, Franklin, PA 16323

Name: _____

Address: _____ City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Select membership category:

_____ Individual \$20; _____ Family \$25; _____ Advocate \$50;

_____ Benefactor \$100; _____ Lifetime \$1000.

TIME to RENEW your AVTA MEMBERSHIP. You can do it at the Member's Meeting, online or by mailing your check to AVTA at P.O. Box 264, Franklin, PA 16323. Check out the details at our website at www.avta-trails.org

History on the Allegheny River Trail

If you've ridden south on the Allegheny River Trail from the SaltBox Visitor Center (and we certainly hope you've done that often) you'll notice one of the first historic markers notes the location of the oil lease owned in part by John Wilkes Booth.

It's true that in the two years prior to his infamous act against President Abraham Lincoln, Booth lived part of the time here in Franklin, getting attention as an oilman and an actor. He performed in plays and shows here and in surrounding areas, and many residents of Franklin found him charming and handsome.

He lived in Mrs. Weber's boarding house located on the corner of Buffalo Street and Thirteenth, site of the current Elks Club. Few people here knew of his political leanings or his activism. In 1863 he formed with two colleagues the Dramatic Oil Company, which operated a lease on the far bank of the Allegheny River from the trail. That property is now under the Allegheny River, which has slowly changed course. While Booth lived here, nothing resulted from the drilling. Instead, he left here for Canada, where he conspired with others, whose original plan was to kidnap Lincoln. Booth then traveled to Washington, where he assassinated the President on April 15, 1865.

Rumor has it that the well came in a few months after Booth left town. One can only wonder what might have happened in American history if the well had hit just a few months earlier.



A Message from Maryann

Once again, it's time to get out and enjoy our beautiful trails. If you are starting out in Franklin, cross the Eighth Street Bridge on US Route 322 east and stop in at the Saltbox Visitor Center and trailhead. Here you'll find t-shirts, sweatshirts, hats, backpacks, and new maps for trail users. With our map, you can easily find other trailheads, parking areas and river access landings for canoes and kayaks. Please sign our guest book – we love to see how far our visitors have come. Check out our Allegheny River book, available for purchase, along with other books and guides. There are many pamphlets about other points of interest in the area. We also have patch kits and an air pump in case any of our visitors have a flat tire. First aid materials and water are there, too. AVTA memberships are available so that our visitors can join with us in supporting our trail system. HAPPY TRAILS TO YOU!

Maryann Porterfield, AVTA Board of Directors

Allegheny Valley Trails Association
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