



The Official Publication of the Montour Trail Council

MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

Volume 18 Issue 1

January/February 2007

The Making of Another Connection...

The Montour Panhandle Connector: Part 2

by Charlie Beaumariage, Project Manager

For your consideration

If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant: if we did not sometimes taste of adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome.

Anne Bradstreet

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MTC Web Address
Visit the Montour Trail
web-site at:
www.montourtrail.org

Creating new trail mileage, even on solid ground where no bridges are needed, can involve surmounting a wide range of challenges. This article focuses on what the Montour Trail Council has had to do in order to build a trail surface at the Montour-Panhandle Connector during the summer and fall of 2006.

A quarter-mile of the one-mile-long connecting trail west of the Robinson Run Bridge is in a lowland area prone to flooding. Bordered by mounds of mine waste and three large storm drains from Noblestown Road, makes drainage of ground water after heavy rain a serious threat. One large drainage pipe under the trail already existed, but it had to be lengthened by installing a 12-foot-long piece of steel pipe, 4 feet in diameter. Trail Council board member Frank Ludwin donated the pipe, performed the excavation with his backhoe, and supervised the volunteers during the drainage installation and trail surfacing. In addition, five 18-inch and 24-inch drainage pipes, totaling approximately 50 feet in length, were installed and backfilled with aggregate. Then another 650 feet of open ditching was excavated to carry the runoff away from the trail.



The author checking over Frank's ditch work.

Before leveling the trail's path with the Council's grader, Frank had to remove many old railroad ties still embedded in the ground. After pulling out and disposing of these ties, we still had to watch carefully for discarded rail spikes that could puncture the grader's tires.

Next came the laying of the millings—that is, recycled asphalt pavement. Over 1,000 tons of millings were used to make the trail base 12 feet wide and 6 to 10 inches thick, as well as to lay the base surface for a large parking lot. This work

was accomplished by attaching a spreader box (which Frank had built) to the front of the grader. The Council's highway roller was then operated back and forth over the millings to compact the trail's base.

The finished surface of the trail consumed 458 tons of #10 limestone, which was loaded into the council's truck and dumped into a drag paver. The truck then pulled the paver to provide a top layer 4 to 6 inches thick. Volunteers shoveled extra material at voids and raked in the sides before the roller was run back and forth over the limestone. When the work was complete, we had installed a finished trail surface approximately one foot thick 10 feet wide, and about a mile long!

(continues on page 4)





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The Prez Sez

As the first real winter weather is upon us, and trail usage for the non cross country skiers and less hardy among us is something to look forward to in the spring, I find myself writing my first communication to our newsletter readership as your new president. Along with Bill Orr, the new vice president, Judy Thompson, treasurer, and Phyllis McChesney, secretary, I want to thank our outgoing president Dennis Pfeiffer for his fine leadership over the past three years. I hope to be able to continue the fine leadership he has provided during his tenure. I also want to thank our two parting board members, Ned Williams and Dick Wilson for their past and continuing service, welcome new board member Kevin Smith, and re-welcome Bill Capp back to the board of directors.

For those of you who don't know me, I'm a relatively recent retiree from a local engineering software development company, and have been involved with the Montour Trail as a volunteer since the late 90's. Besides my being an avid bicyclist, I suspect that my desire to help the aims of the Montour Trail Council is very similar to many of your own motivations. I love the trail, I appreciate all the benefits it brings to our community, and I want it to be here for many years to come for my children (and perhaps someday grandchildren, but let's not rush things!) to enjoy.

I'll be trying to absorb as much as Dennis can teach me about the duties of the president in the coming weeks and months, but as your vice president for the last three years and observer of the work he did, I think I have a good idea of what the job entails. I need to do whatever it is I can't get anyone else to do! Fortunately, the MTC has always been blessed with many devoted and energetic volunteers who are the lifeblood of our organization. Without your support and volunteerism, we wouldn't be as far along toward our goal of completing the trail as we are. With your help, I will make every effort to ensure that we continue steady progress toward finishing the trail and operating it to most benefit our user community.

Mark Imgrund

Late News Update

Cecil Township will assist the Montour Trail in constructing a drainage pipe from the Trail downhill to Brookside Drive and into the adjacent stream this spring. The Trail will be responsible for the pipe from the Trail to Brookside Drive and the Township will set the pipe from Brookside to the stream. This project is in response to the slump that occurred on the trail in January 2004 between Ridgewood Drive and the Muse Bishop Bridge after heavy rain, which was then made worse by the rains of Francis and Ivan in September of the same year. The pipe will take drainage water away from the Trail and also from neighbors below the Trail, and hopefully preventing a recurrence of the slump.

The University of Pittsburgh Medical Center Sports Medicine will underwrite the costs of printing the next Trail Guide and Brochure due out this spring. Thanks to Board Secretary, Phyllis McChesney for working out the arrangement and Charlie Beaumariage for getting all the pieces together to update the guide and brochure prior to printing.

The Montour Trail Council is an all volunteer organization founded in 1989 to convert the abandoned Montour Railroad right of way and the abandoned Peters Creek Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad into a fifty-five mile recreational trail for non-motorized activity regardless of physical ability or financial wherewithal.

Friends' Meetings and Work Parties

MTC Board Meeting,

every third Monday of the month - 6:00 p.m. at 304 Hickman St., Suite 3, Bridgeville, PA. Turn right off of the Bridgeville exit of I-79. Turn left at the next light, go straight at next light and make left turn onto Hickman St. just after the Post Office. Call Mark at 724-941-6351 for more information or to get on the agenda.

Cecil Events:

Friends of the Trail meeting, every fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. From May-August, meetings are held at the Kurnick Access area along the trail off Cecil-Henderson Road; other months meet at the MTC Offices, Call 412-257-2553 for more information. Work & Clean-up party, every third Saturday of the month - 9:00 a.m. (Subject to change; check information boards.) Meet at the Kurnick Access Area Garage. Call 412-257-2553 for more info.

Airport Area Events

Friends of the Trail meeting, the Wednesday before the second Saturday of the month at 7:00 p.m., at the Forest Grove Fire Department. Anyone from the communities of Moon and Robinson are encouraged to attend. Call 412-859-3020 for more information.

Work & Clean-up party, every second Saturday of the month - 9:00 a.m. Call 412-262-3748 for more information and location.

Bethel Park Events:

Friends of the Trail meeting, every first Tuesday of the

month at 7:30 p.m. in the Bethel Park Municipal Building Council Chambers. Anyone interested in the Bethel Park Trail segment is encouraged to come. For Clifton Road Bridge Committee meetings, contact Peter Kohnke at 412-854-1835 for more information.

Work & Clean-up party, every second and fourth Saturday of the month - 8:30 a.m. Call Bob O'Connell at 412-833-6259 for location and information.

South Hills Friends of the Trail

Meeting first Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Jefferson Hills Borough Building. Work and cleanup parties the first Saturday of the month. All volunteers are welcome. For more information, call David Oyler at 412-831-9288, davidoyler@verizon.net, or Paul McKeown at 412-835-6692, mckeownp@adelphia.net

Fort Cherry Friends:

Friends of the Trail Meeting, second Wednesday of the month at McDonald Borough Bldg., Council chambers at 7:00 p.m. Work & Clean-up parties, scheduled as needed. For more information, contact Ray Johnston at 724-356-2621.

Peters Township Friends:

Friends of the Trail Meeting, first non-holiday Monday of the month at Peters Township Parks and Recreation Center at 7:00 p.m. For more information on Work & Clean-up parties, please contact Mark Imgrund at 724-941-6351 or by e-mail at markimgrund@comcast.net.

Trail Dust from the Editor's Desk

As a member of several railroad-related Yahoo Groups, you occasionally get referred to some interesting web pages by members who are researching former rights-of-way. Recently, a web page that displays black and white aerial photographs taken in the late 1930s and early 1940s was introduced. The web site:

<http://www.pennpilot.psu.edu/> was created by the Center for Environmental Studies at Penn State, the Pennsylvania Geologic Survey and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

It is quite interesting to download one of these pictures and then compare it to more recent imagery from Google Maps or Windows Live or even TerraServer to see how the land use has changed over the past 70 years. There are images of the environs surrounding the Montour Railroad available to view. Many of the mines that the MTR served can be seen and in some cases, trains operating on the MTR are visible. Included here is a view of the connector (front page story) between the MTR and the Pennsylvania Railroad at McDonald in 1939.

It's very easy to kill time on an inclement day sitting in front of the computer visiting these historical web sites and learning some history as well.

Thanks for taking the time to read the Trail-Letter. This begins the 18th year of the Trail Letter that was first published in the winter of 1990 by this editor when the Trail was still just a vision in the minds of several people. Next month, look for more details about the Burgh 10K Run and 2 Mile Family Fun Walk and National Trails Day Activities such as the Party on the Trail and Tails for Trails III.

Submissions for the next Trail-Letter are due March 5th, 200

Dennis



Making Another Connection continues from page 1

Some work remains on the Montour-Panhandle Connector, such as planting grass and trees; erecting a Fort Cherry Friends bulletin board; providing benches and picnic tables; installing fencing with a trail gate at the parking lot; and placement of Montour Trail maps, rules and directional signs.

The total cost of building this mile of trail will reach \$23,000, and the Montour Trail Council wishes to thank the following contributors:

- Cecil Township, McDonald Borough, Robinson Township, and Washington County Parks and Recreation, for their equipment assistance.
- Buddy Gregg, Inc. of Eighty-Four, Pa., who donated 110 tons of stone for stream bank protection at the Robinson Run Bridge.
- Brad A. Regner of Lane Construction Corp. and the Allegheny County Department of Public Works for their support in obtaining millings.
- The Washington County Tourism Promotion Agency (Mark Tallarico, Executive Director) for its \$5,000 grant.
- The 28 Montour Trail Council volunteers who contributed more than 700 hours of sweat equity, including over 300 by the indefatigable Frank Ludwin.



Some of those 28 volunteers stop to pose for a group portrait while spreading the final surface.

Look for a Connection celebration this coming spring.

Bethel Friends Build Shed *by Bill Capp*



Bethel Friend Bob O'Connell checks on the staining being completed by the writer.

of 260 volunteer hours. Bethel Park municipal workers advanced the project by removing large trees from the chosen site. Only the excavation and the blockwork were done by paid professionals.



The inside floor will be poured and finished in the spring. Then the Bethel Park Friends will be able to move their mowers and other trail maintenance equipment and supplies out of rental storage and into the new facility. Some might call it a

“garage,” but officially it is a “shed” because of its size (16 by 20 feet) and its lack of utilities or a paved driveway. The shed is located adjacent to the Irishtown Road trailhead, less than 1/4 mile from the north end of the Bethel Branch.

Hollywood on the Trail *by John Hooton*

Our Trail garage now sports a microwave oven of distinction. It used to belong to actress Sarah Jessica Parker! We don't harbor delusions about what this appliance will mean to Trail development, but it is kind of fun to have it. To explain a bit, Friend of the Trail, Bill Hooton, served recently as a production assistant to the movie company *Smart People*, which stars Dennis Quaid and the aforementioned SJP when they were filming in Pittsburgh this past fall.

One of Bill's jobs was to outfit the actors with comfort items such as small refrigerators and microwave ovens. Of course when the filming is finished, there isn't much use for these appliances that get left behind. The movie company sells them at half price, so for \$160, the Trail got a very usable 36" fridge, microwave oven, and even a 14" color TV with built-in DVD player. The latter we can use at public events to show our public programs of interest.

That's not the end of the story. A few other buyers stepped forward at that time to claim these “star-blessed” appliances at no cost. So, we were refunded our \$160. Thank you Hollywood!

Editor's note: This is not the first Hollywood connection to the Trail. The pedestrian bridge that connected the Court House to One Mellon Centre in the thriller *Desperate Measures* starring Michael Keaton is in storage along the trail for use as a bridge at a location to be determined.

Attack on Invasive Plants

by Peter Kohnke

Wanted: Volunteers to slow the spread of non-native plants in our area, including those alongside the Montour Trail. These invasive plants include Japanese knotweed and multi-flora rose. For more information, visit the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources web site, www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/wildplant/serious.aspx.

Many of these plants were introduced with good intentions, but then started spreading on their own. Why should we care? Because, they crowd out the native plant species, and the animals that depend on these native plant species.

Some streamside sections of the Montour Trail are being overrun by Japanese knotweed, which covers the ground so completely that it prevents anything else from growing there. So that leaves only the knotweed and a few larger trees. When those trees die, there will be no young trees to take their place, leaving only a monoculture of knotweed.



Japanese knotweed in bloom. It is sometimes called Japanese Bamboo.

Groups seeking to hold back the spread of these invasive plants are springing up around the country. For example, a group in the state of Indiana calls itself the RIP Squad, for "Remove Invasive Plants." In Murrysville east of Pittsburgh, a lady has started her own group, recently described in an article in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette: <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/06341/744067-56.stm>.

If you would like to help in forming or to join a RIP-style group, contact me at 412-854-1835 or at pkohnke@libcom.com. I envision carrying out work projects along the trail, as well as in other places where we are invited, as time and energy permit.

In the same way as the American Youth Hostel spawned the Montour Trail Council in 1989, perhaps the Montour Trail Council can spawn off a new organization in 2007 to fight invasive plants.

Montour Trail Events in 2007

Burgh's Pizza & Wing Pub 7th Annual 10K Run & 2 Mile Walk

Sunday, April 22, 2007 10:00 AM

Location: Cecil Park, 3655 Millers Run Road Cecil, PA 15321

Directions: Cecil Park is located 15 minutes from Pittsburgh. Take I-79 to Bridgeville, Exit 54. Then turn onto Route 50 West and proceed for approximately 6.5 miles west to Cecil Park.

Proceeds benefit the maintenance and expansion of the Montour Trail <http://www.montourtrail.org/events/index.html>

IKEA / Montour 12th Annual Half Marathon, 5K Run & 5K Walk

Saturday, September 8, 2007 7:45 AM

IKEA of Robinson Twp 2001 Park Manor Blvd Robinson Twp, PA 15205

Proceeds benefit the maintenance and expansion of the Montour Trail. <http://www.montourtrail.org/events/index.html>

Tour the Montour 5th Annual Fisher Scientific Bike Ride

Saturday, September 22, 2007 8:15 AM

Bike Rides of 44, 24, 12 or 6 mile family ride

Location: Mile "0" of the Montour Trail off of Route 51 Coraopolis, PA 15108

Proceeds benefit the maintenance and expansion of the Montour Trail. <http://www.montourtrail.org/events/index.html>

Friends of the Montour Trail Events in 2007

May 12: Airport Friends Penny Day at the intersection of the Trail and Park Manor Boulevard

June 2: National Trails Day

Cecil Friends Trails for Trails III at the Kurnick Plot on Cecil Henderson Road. 9:00 a.m. to Noon.

<http://www.montourtrail.org/events/index.html>

Bethel Friends Party on the Trail the length of the Bethel Section

To be Announced:

South Hills Penny Day

Peters Twilight Walk

Keep your eyes peeled to the Trail Newsletter and Web Site and postings on the Trail for more events and further details to these events that support the Montour Trail.

Applications for the Montour Trail events will be included in this Newsletter before the event.

Looking for a Valentine Gift for that special Trail Someone.... Then visit the Montour Trail Store at <http://www.montourtrail.org/store/store.html> or while you are out visiting your favorite stores, stop by Imagine Threads at 501 Valleybrook Rd. Ste 104 in McMurray to see the Montour Trail Items in person.

MONTOUR RAILROAD HISTORY BY BOB CIMINEL

Montour Beginnings

The Montour Railroad was incorporated in either 1877 or 1878 as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Imperial Coal Company, depending on the source. The railroad's function was to bring coal from the coal company's mines located between the town of Imperial to the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad interchange at Montour Junction on the south bank of the Ohio River at Coraopolis.

The original officers of the railroad were William McCreery, president, L. M. Jenkins, treasurer, and F. L. Shallenberger, superintendent. These men were also affiliated with the Imperial Coal Company, and Shallenberger was the superintendent of both companies.

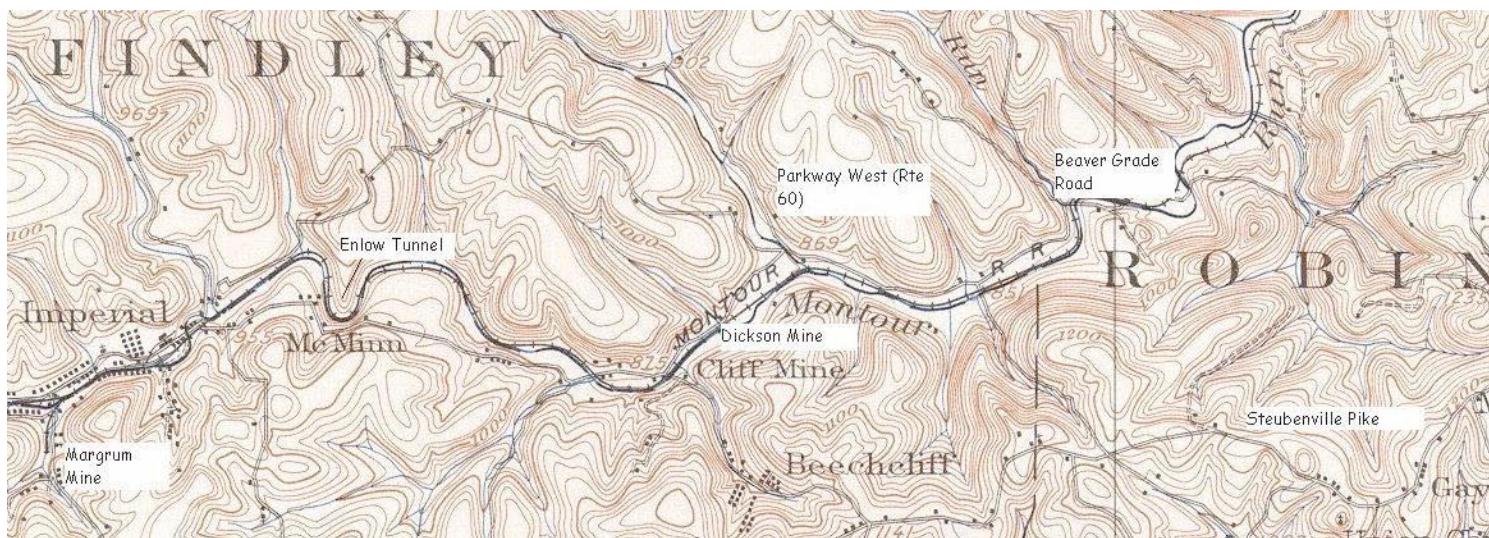
The historical sites in existence when the Montour Railroad was built were Ewings Farm, Guys Mills, Jeffreysville, and Valley Church. Ewings Farm was located approximately where the Montour Trail makes a sweeping curve to the left near trail milepost 1. After purchasing the farm, the Imperial Coal Company built a large bank of 120 coke ovens on the site. The street serving the small cluster of homes across Montour Run from the trail at that location is called Coketown Road.

William Guy operated a grist mill where Montour Run and Meeks Run converge at Hassam Road, approximately where the sewage treatment plant is located today. Ewings and Guys Mills were two of the original stations on the Montour Railroad.

The first two coal mines opened by Imperial Coal Company were the Dickson Mine, located on the ridge on the south of the trail milepost 6, and the Margrum Mine also located on the hillside to the south of trail milepost 8. Dickson Mine began shipping coal on the Montour in 1879 and the Margrum Mine around 1878 after the tracks reached Imperial.

The railroad was extended to North Star to service the new Partridge Mine located just east of trail milepost 10 in 1879. The Imperial Coal Company owned and operated the Montour Railroad until 1899 when the Pittsburgh Coal Company was created and purchased 75 independent coal mines in the Pittsburgh area.

As the new coal company grew, its owners recognized that the recoverable coal reserves along the Montour would be soon be exhausted. In 1912, the principles of the coal company and railroad organized the North Star & Mifflin Railroad to construct a 35-mile extension from North Star Junction to Mifflin, which allowed the coal company to access 70,000 acres of coal lands and increase competition among the railroads by offering multiple connections to every railroad serving the Pittsburgh industrial areas. The extension was officially completed in 1914, and new mines were opened at Southview (milepost 21), Cowden (milepost 23), Hendersonville (milepost 27), and Hills (milepost 30).



A piece of the U. S. Geologic Survey 15 minute topographic map from the May 1906 Carnegie Quadrangle To see additional maps check out the following web site: <http://historical.maptech.com/>

Bob Ciminell is the founder of the Montour Railroad Yahoo group (http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/montour_rr/). There are currently 146 members from across the country. You are encouraged to join. There is a wealth of information about the Montour Railroad at this location and you can pose questions of its membership, from which you are sure to get an answer.

Welcome New Members

The Montour Trail Council would like to welcome these new members and thank them for their support. We would also like to thank all our members who have renewed their membership and remind all that a growing membership is one of the criteria foundations look for when we apply for grants.

New Members

William & Barbara Andrews
Richard Barnes
John M. Becker
David Borrebach
Jeff Bradley
Donald C. Campbell
Mark L. Colussy
Keith Conover
John Eisenbarth
James G. Ellison
Gerard J. Gerardi
Stanley Glickstein
John Hemington
John Hensler
Stephen M. Hudspeth
Sharon Juli
Rick Kazman
Richard H. Kraeuter
Paige Palombo

Ronald Piroli
Mr. & Mrs Ronald J. Ponist
Robert R. Smith, Jr.
Caron Springer
David W. Sullivan
Dave White & family

Leader's Circle

John & Sandy Newman
Dennis Pfeiffer
John and Janet Swanson

Benefactors

James M. Bradley
Jeffrey S. Burket & Maria Dimbra
Marshall Fausold
Laura & Gary Graf
John & Berenice Hooton
Dennis J. Lesko
Andrew & Janice Poole

This article is being rerun at the request of Bill Orr

Pad Your Resume as an Event Volunteer

Want to help the trail, but don't like getting your hands dirty? There are many other great ways to get involved. The Montour Trail Council is currently seeking volunteers for the following positions:

Director, Tour the Montour Bicycle Ride. This job entails organizing and leading the Tour Committee for our annual bicycle ride in late September. Must have good organizational skills and work well with others in a committee setting. Knowledge of charity bicycle rides is a plus, but not necessary.

Sponsorship Committee Members. This newly formed committee will be working to establish relations with the business community and collaborating with the various special event committees to recruit and retain sponsors. Must be well organized and work well within a group environment. If you enjoy interacting and networking with the business community, this committee is for you.

Registration Director, IKEA Half-Marathon Race Committee. The registration director is a key member of the IKEA Race Committee. Responsibilities include tracking and collecting registration fees for over 900 participants. Computer skills are a must, including Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Access. Must also be comfortable working in a fast-paced environment on race day in early September.

IKEA Race Committee Members. Help us plan and organize the Trail's largest fund-raising event, the IKEA Half-Marathon. We are seeking energetic, creative people who can work within a group environment. If you have participated in the race in years past, now is your chance to express your ideas to make it better.

If you are interested in volunteering for any of the above positions, please contact Bill Orr at 724-695-2638 or william.orr@fishersci.com.

Yes, I want to help build the Montour Trail!

- ☐ I want to spread the word. Please send me additional flyers.
- ☐ I have written my Legislator and County Commissioners asking them to support the trail.
- ☐ My organization would like to provide a letter of endorsement.
- ☐ I know a group interested in a presentation.

<input type="checkbox"/> STUDENT / SENIORS	\$15
<input type="checkbox"/> INDIVIDUAL	\$25
<input type="checkbox"/> FAMILY	\$35
<input type="checkbox"/> SUPPORTING	\$50
<input type="checkbox"/> SUSTAINING	\$100
<input type="checkbox"/> BENEFACTOR	\$250
<input type="checkbox"/> LEADERS CIRCLE	\$500 + up

- ☐ I wish to become a member of the Montour Trail Council. **(Membership is tax deductible)**
- ☐ I wish to make an additional tax deductible contribution of \$ _____ to the Montour Trail Council to help make the Montour Trail a reality. (Make your check payable to the Montour Trail Council)

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE (daytime) _____ (evening) _____

E-MAIL _____

By applying for membership in the Montour Trail Council, I indicate my support of its goals.

SIGNATURE _____

A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling tollfree, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Please fill out this application and return it with your check to:
MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL
P.O. BOX 11866
PITTSBURGH PA. 15228-0866

DON'T FORGET! The Montour Trail Council may be designated as your United Way Contributor Choice option #3308, or Combined Federal Campaign Contributor Choice option #9308, where you work.



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