



The Official Publication of the Montour Trail Council

# MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

The 2017 Pennsylvania Trail of the Year

Volume 28 Issue 2

March-April 2017

## Allegheny County Congratulates MTC

Allegheny County Council officially congratulated the Montour Trail Council (MTC) for being named the 2017 Pennsylvania Trail of the Year by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Council Representatives Sue Means and John Palmiere co-sponsored the resolution, which was joined by the entire Council.

MTC President Ned Williams accepted the resolution on behalf of MTC members at the County Council's February 21, 2017 meeting.

The resolution read in part "...we thank the hundreds of dedicated volunteers who contributed tens of thousands of hours over the course of the Montour Trail Council's 28-year history, helping Pennsylvania emerge as a national leader in the rail-trail concept."



MTC President Ned Williams accepts congratulatory resolution from Allegheny County Council along with members of MTC and Allegheny County Council

## The National Tunnel 10K and 5K and 2 Mile Family Walk

Mike "the Workhorse" Bruno has been asked by the Montour Trail Council to take over as race director for the National Tunnel 10K and 5K. Mike will have just run the Boston Marathon on Monday, April 17. Mike, who is the volleyball coach at Point Park University and an avid long-distance runner, will be assisted by Dave Poe, one of the proprietors at Tandem Connection and also a long-distance runner. The "old race" located 20 minutes outside of the "Burgh," was known for having one of the best post-race parties. It is our intention to conduct a quality event and bring back the allure of the best post-race party around - Bringing back the Wing to Cecil Park. Please support the trail and join us for a great day on Sunday, April 23.

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There will be music and an emcee. We are working on securing a food vendor to provide a buffet style post-race meal. Wings, pulled pork/chicken, pasta, etc. are what we envision. Beer, water and Gatorade will be provided. Additionally, Perry's ice cream cones will be part of it as well. This is all tentative as of now. We will keep you posted with details as we finalize contracts.

The 10K and 5K Runs course details: An out and back course (completely on the Montour Trail) with one turnaround for both 5K and 10K. The race starts on the trail at the top of the access path from Cecil Park to the Trail and heads east towards the National Tunnel. The 10K run goes through the National Tunnel, with the turnaround about 1/2 mile east of the Tunnel portal. The 5K race turnaround is prior to the Tunnel.

The finish line is on the trail near the start line. The course contains a very light uphill grade from the starting line to a peak at the Tunnel followed by a very light downhill grade to the 10K turnaround.

The trail is about 10 feet wide and has a packed limestone surface. The course is USA Track & Field Certified. Water and sports drink will be provided to participants during the race.

The 2K Family Fun walk also starts on the trail at the top of the Cecil Park access path and heads west, continuing to a turnaround past the Route 50 & 980 bridge.

After the event a lunch is served along with beer, sports drinks and water.

Visit the Montour Trail Web Site at:  
[www.montourtrail.org](http://www.montourtrail.org)  
 To converse go to:  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/43518292159>

or

<http://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/Montour-Trail/info>



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## The Prez Sez

Happy Springtime to you; the real thing, finally. Not that any of us minded getting out for a stroll on the trail in that brief early warm spell in February. It was a rare and fleeting glimpse into the season ahead, flowers and all.

Being named Trail of the Year for 2017 has opened a different sort of look ahead, for everyone involved in the Montour Trail. It started right after DCNR's announcement, with lots of requests from the press for information. After that came waves of congratulatory letters from fellow trail groups, and from other organizations related to trails. Now, an ever wider swath of the public has heard of the Montour; they want to see it and to know more.

Everyone interested in recreation and the outdoors has been energized by that early shot of springtime, and this year they're especially eager to get out and start doing things. We'll see these high spirits permeating the Trail Summit at REI on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April, at which fifteen trail groups will have tables and representatives, drawing lots of recreation enthusiasts, whom we hope to turn into trail users and supporters. It seems a pretty safe bet that being Trail of the Year will draw more first-time people to Montour this year than we have ever seen before. This is a great opportunity to show them what a well-conceived, carefully constructed, and meticulously maintained trail system looks like. It's our chance to deliver that "Wow" experience that'll bring them back, with their friends.

After all this time working at it – three decades, now! - the spotlight is really on us this year. Allow me to ask everyone on the trail to step up and do what you can to make the place shine for our company who's coming to see us. Tree down? Let's clear it. Something broken? Find how we can fix it. Trash on the trail? Pick it up. Hey, we're all volunteers; we do this stuff because we believe it's important – plus, we like it! THAT's why the Montour Trail is the jewel that it is, and why it was an easy choice for them to pick us for this honor. It's just natural that we will continue to carry on as we have all along, and our beautiful trail will make a strong impression on all those first time visitors.

Accolades for the Montour have been forthcoming from several highly visible sources, as well. We were exalted at some length by Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald at a February gathering of 200 business leaders. Also, led by member Sue Means, Allegheny County Council at their February meeting issued a formal "Proclamation congratulating the Montour being named '2017 Trail of the Year' by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources". (This was at the same meeting at which they also issued a Proclamation congratulating Allegheny County Airport Authority, upon Pittsburgh International Airport being named "2017 Airport of the Year" by Air Transport World Magazine. It seems like, with both ends of our Airport Connector being lauded, we should do a celebratory ride event!) And in a March meeting the Washington County Commissioners, led by Chairman Larry Maggi, gave us a Certificate of Recognition for the Montour Trail as a special destination and asset to Washington County.

Of course, we want to have our own celebration as well. With the chance to draw a lot of outside attention, it made sense to recognize recent and upcoming achievements. So, our Trail of the Year event will feature two ribbon cuttings: one for the Library Viaduct and west side trail re-build, and the other for the Pleasant Street trail section. These public rollouts are well due; it's hard to believe that their dual groundbreaking was in May of 2014. We will also embrace the future, by breaking ground on the next piece of trail to be built: the Consol section over on the east side of Pleasant Street. The event will be held on Friday, June 2 at 2:00 PM, at the Viaduct end of the Pleasant Street trail. Mark your calendars! (It's the day before National Trail Day, Saturday June 3.) More information will be forthcoming, and there will be a call for volunteers to help make the event go smoothly.

We have the whole season ahead of us, with every expectation that it will be the best ever for the Montour and everyone associated with it. Thank you all for your dedicated time and talents, for being the vital energy that has made and keeps this trail the best one around. Have a great Springtime!

*Ned Williams*

## 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 the Montour Trail Office for more information or to get on the agenda.

**Airport Area Friends: (MP 0 to MP 12.6 and the 6.3 mile Airport Connector)** The Airport Area Friends of the Trail meet every second Wednesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at the Forest Grove Fire Hall, 2044 Ewings Mill Road, Robinson Township, PA 15108. New volunteers are always welcomed. Contact Phyllis McChesney at 412-264-6303 for more information. Numerous Saturday "work parties" are held during the season. Please call 412-262-3748 to lend a hand at the work parties.

### Fort Cherry Friends: (MP 12.6 to MP 20.7)

Friends of the Trail meeting: Second Wednesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at the McDonald Trail Station, 160 S. McDonald Street, McDonald, PA 15057 (adjacent to the Panhandle Trail). Work and cleanup parties will be scheduled as needed. For more information contact Tim Thomassy, 724-926-4617 or Chuck Hughey, 724-926-9436.

### Cecil Friends: (MP 20.7 to MP 28.5)

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 (with the exception of November and December) meet at the MTC Offices. Work and cleanup parties are scheduled as needed. Call 412-496-4308 for more information, or email densimwx@comcast.net

### Peters Township Friends: (MP 28.5 to 30.4, Library Jct to near MP 35 and part of the Bethel Branch)

Friends of the Trail Meeting, first non-holiday Monday of the month at Peters Township Community Recreation Center and varying locations during warmer weather at 7:00 p.m. Work and cleanup parties on the first Wednesday and third Saturday of every month at 8:30 a.m. For more information, please call Jim Robbins at 724-941-6132. For monthly meetings contact Mark Imgrund at 724-941-6351 or by e-mail at markimgrund@gmail.com

**Bethel Park Friends: (The 2.75 mile Bethel Branch and a short piece of main line trail around MP 35).** 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. Work and cleanup 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: (MP 35.4 to 46.3)

Meeting second Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at South Park Township Community Room, located behind the Township Building at 2675 Brownsville Road, South Park, 15129. Work and cleanup parties scheduled and advertised as needed. For more information, contact David Oyler at 412-831-9288, davidoyler@verizon.net, or Paul McKeown at 412-835-6692, mckeownp@comcast.net

### The Montour Railroad Historical Society:

For more information send email to mrhs@montourrr.com.

## Montour Trail Events for 2017

April 1: Trail Summit at REI

April 23: National Tunnel 5k, 10k and 2 Mile Family Walk at Cecil Park

June 2: South Park - Ribbon Cutting for the Library Viaduct and Pleasant Street, and ground breaking ceremonies for the Consol Section

June 3: National Trails Day

June 3: JR Taylor 5K Memorial Run- Bethel Park Friends

July 28: Twilight Trail Walk - Peters Township Friends

September 9: The Montour ½ Marathon and 5K

September 23: The Tour the Montour

October: Peters, Bethel Park and South Hills Penny Day

November: The Annual Meeting.

Most of these events will require the assistance of numerous volunteers to successfully execute them. Contact the trail office or the local Friends' group to see how you can volunteer.

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## Announcements

Would you rather go green and receive your newsletter by email? Pictures are in color and that may give you some incentive to switch.

Send your name to [enews@montourtrail.org](mailto:enews@montourtrail.org) to be moved to email delivery.

**The bi-monthly photo contest is taking this month off. If you have posted a photo for consideration, it will be considered in the next round. Thank you!**





Here is the poster DCNR created to honor the Montour Trail as the 2017 Trail of the Year. We submitted a total of 20 photos, taken by 15 different photographers.

Congratulations go to Jeremiah Fountain, Ryan Eckenrode, Dave Oyler, and Johnny Airesman, who had both of his pictures selected.

Thanks to all of you for participating!

## New course for J. R. Taylor 5K on June 3

For the first time, runners and walkers participating in the J. R. Taylor Memorial 5K race and walk--scheduled for Saturday, June 3 at 8:30 a.m.--will cross the Taylor Bridge not once but twice.

The newly adjusted course starts and ends 800 feet north of the bridge, adjacent to the parking area of Washington Elementary School, 515 Clifton Road, Bethel Park. By placing the race start and finish at the same location, the realignment enables all participants to get precise chip-based times. Walkers will start with the runners this year so that they can get official times if desired.

Gift certificates from the **Fleet Feet** running store will once again be awarded to the top three finishers of each gender. Other race sponsors are **Brentwood Bank**, **Highfield Crossing Apartments**, **Century Steel Erectors**, **KOB Solutions**, and **Al's Cafe**.

The early registration fee of \$20 makes this one of the lowest-priced 5K races in Pittsburgh. T-shirts are guaranteed to early registrants, with medals for the top three in each age group.

You can register online through [www.montourtrail.org](http://www.montourtrail.org) or at [runsignup.com](http://runsignup.com), or contact race coordinator Bruce Barron ([bruce.barron0@gmail.com](mailto:bruce.barron0@gmail.com) or 412-260-8797) for an entry form. Also, contact Bruce if you are interested in an evening training group in April and May to prepare for the race.

*The start of the 2016 race, below.*



## No Ribbons For You! (Unheralded Maintenance.) By Dennis Pfeiffer

The MTC's 28<sup>th</sup> year of building the Montour Trail has commenced with only about 2.5 miles left to complete. The MTC has been excellent over the years in celebrating new trail openings with well attended public ceremonies including a fun "ribbon cutting" topping off the ceremony.

However, maintaining the Montour Trail is accomplished without fanfare and certainly there are **"no ribbon cutting ceremonies"**. When you are using the trail it's hard to imagine all of the work accomplished by the maintainers to make your visit a pleasant event. Probably not noticed by many is the grass cutting, ditch cleaning, fence mending, downed tree removal, surface patching, trail head trimming and general improvements performed by these maintainers.

The MTC has a volunteer heavy equipment construction unit headed by Bill Capp that operates out of the central maintenance building in Cecil Township. The more routine maintenance is expertly completed by our quiet, hard-working and very friendly six Friends groups.



*Airport Friends at work on the Coraopolis Extension.*

To give you an idea of what's involved in behind the scenes maintenance, as a member I have briefly summarized the 2016 Airport Friends work completed

and their costs. In 2016 the Airport Friends had their 1<sup>st</sup> "fun" work party on April 30 and their twenty third work party on November 18. In addition, there are individuals out working on various projects almost every day of the week including using the larger John Deere tractor (955) to cut grass along the trail.

The twenty three work party's breakdown are as follows: Fix fencing (5); Remove trees (2); Trimming grass at trailheads (4); Offset vehicle gate (1); Coraopolis Extension work (5); Move equipment to two new sheds (1); Montour Street improvements (5). A total of **\$10,161** was spent in 2016 by the Airport Friends on gas, oil, diesel, equipment, materials and water for workers. 2017 will be the 24<sup>th</sup> year the Airport Friends has performed the maintenance on the first 12.6 miles.

As you may be aware, the Regional Industrial Development Corporation (RIDC) on August 15, 2016 donated 12 acres along Enlow Road to the MTC in North Fayette Township near the trail for a MTC Western corridor maintenance garage. In the future, this facility will be an essential addition for the MTC to continue maintaining the Montour Trail in it's quiet, hard-working manner.

## Addition to Beaver Grade

By J. Peter Merther



Through the efforts of Scout Henry Pearce, Troop 238 sponsored by St. Bernard Church in Mt. Lebanon and his fellow scouts and an Airport Area Friends' Volunteer, a new addition was made at Beaver Grade Road. A picnic bench with a roof was constructed during the past summer for all to enjoy. The sub-structure was constructed by Scout Pearce while the roof was provided by the Airport Area Volunteer. In addition to the shelter, the two flower beds in the area were also refurbished to bring added beauty to the area. Henry earned his Eagle for this project.

## New Brochures

The new 2017 Montour Trail Council brochures were printed in February and are making their way into trailhead boxes. The cover of the 2017 version prominently displays the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources 2017 Trail of the Year logo.

In addition to the trailhead boxes and distribution at various trail-related events, the Council also renewed contracts with VisitPittsburgh and the Washington County Tourism Promotion Agency. The two organizations distribute brochures at visitor centers in Allegheny and Washington Counties, respectively.

As they have since 2009, UPMC Sports Medicine is once again sponsoring the 2017 brochures.

David Tumbas, the Manager, Business Development Athletic Training at UPMC Sports Medicine, said "We are proud to congratulate The Montour Trail Council on being named Trail of the Year 2017. UPMC Sports Medicine has been honored to sponsor the trail brochure for members and those who stay active on the trail by biking, running, and walking."

UPMC Sports Medicine has several programs to benefit trail users, including comprehensive medical care and rehabilitation, bike fits, and sports nutrition. They can be reached at 1-855-93-SPORT (77678) or <http://upmcsportsmedicine.com>.

## Seeking Volunteer Patrol Members



The photo was taken at one of my favorite places on the Trail near Mile 29, in Peters Township.

Wanted: We need a few good men and women interested in becoming MTC Trail Monitor Patrols. Our Patrols are there to provide a presence and help people! They are also ambassadors for the trail. Our current group is made up of people from all walks of life. The group is made up of walkers, runners and bikers. The one thing they all have in common is that they love the Montour Trail. If you are interested in finding out more about our Patrol Program please contact me via email at : [jjforquer@comcast.net](mailto:jjforquer@comcast.net).

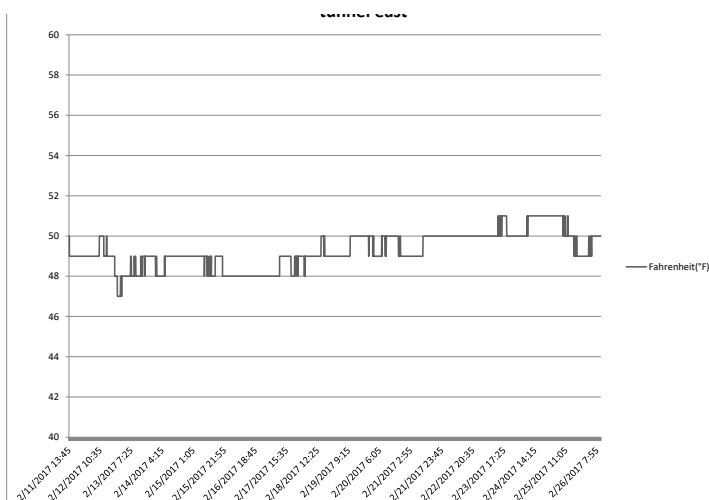
I look forward to hearing from you,

Jesse J. Forquer

Director of Montour Trail Security

## The National Tunnel Experiment, Year 2

The experiment continues to go well. Temperatures in the tunnel have remained within a three degree spread throughout the winter. It has been a mild winter with temperatures well above normal, so its being considered to run the experiment again next winter with the same set up. The graph below is a sample of the data collected from the sensors inside the tunnel during February. As you can see, there is very little variation. This is similar to what you would see in a cave or a mine. By the time you read this, the doors should have been removed.





## MONTOUR RAILROAD HISTORY

**The Muse Branch****By Bryan Seip - Montour Railroad Historical Society**

Travelling along the Montour Trail in Cecil Township at Mile 24.2, at the end of the curve east of the yellow bridge over the Muse-Bishop Road, you can see an old right-of-way which diverges from the main trail and curves up behind the houses along the road. This was Muse Junction, the start of a branch line which ran 1.6 miles toward the town of Muse to service the coal mine located there.

The Muse Branch was constructed in 1921, to reach the loading tipple of the National Mining Company's Mine #3. National Mining was owned by U. S. Steel and Mine #3 would tap 2,199 acres of coal plus added an additional 1,500 acres of coal reserves belonging to near-by National #2 when that mine closed in 1928.

Typical of deep coal mines in the area, National #3 dug two shafts into the coal seam, which was about 230 feet below ground level. One shaft was located on top of the hill to the north of Muse, along with a bath house for the miners, storerooms and the mine offices. This shaft took men and supplies into and out of the mine as well as moving slate and rock waste out of the mine, which was spread over the surrounding hillsides. The other shaft was located several hundred yards to the east and was used to bring coal out of the mine and up into the loading tipple.

The Montour Railroad came into the mine complex and rails went under the tipple and beyond, with the loaded car yard running down the hill along the east side of the town, toward the school. There were no other rail served businesses along the branch at the time.

Miners and mine employees were the only people allowed to live in the company houses in Muse. It was a planned community. The H. C. Frick Coke Company, a U. S. Steel subsidiary, owned all the houses and took care of their maintenance. The company charged a modest rent for the homes and withheld the payment from the miners pay. The town featured several modern (in the 1920's) amenities. Muse was the first coal mining town in Western Pennsylvania with indoor plumbing and treated drinking water piped into every home. Concrete sidewalks, street lights, fire hydrants and backyard service alleyways completed the scene. A company store with a gas station, a post office, school, several boarding houses and businesses were built in Muse to serve the community. A ballfield in the center of town was one of the main social gathering points. Many coal towns supported community baseball teams and if you were a good ball player, you usually had no problem finding a job in the mines.



Each day at five o'clock, the miners would listen for the fire whistle at the mine to sound. This was the signal that there would be work at the mine the following day. If there was no whistle, no work and thus no pay.

In 1942, the H. C. Frick Coke Company took over operation of the mine and ran it until at least 1947. Operations later were transferred to U. S. Steel, who ran the mine until it was closed in 1954. The loading tipple and its yard tracks were then demolished and the mine shafts were filled and sealed.

After the mine closed, Chemicals & Solvents Company, an industrial waste reclamation operation, leased some of the mine buildings and operated on the site until railroad service in this area ended in 1982. Box cars of supplies and tank cars of chemicals were brought to and from this business, one of several non-coal customers on the Montour. As there was no place on the branch for a locomotive to run around its train, cars were shoved the length of the branch from the junction with the main line.



In April 1982, the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad, which owned the Montour at that time, had a surplus of box cars and a train of 82 cars was backed onto the Muse Branch for storage. The cars were removed in September, 1983 as abandonment proceedings were completed for the ten miles of track from Gilmore Junction in Cecil Township to Thompsonville Siding in Peters Township, including the Muse Branch. The tracks and ties were then removed, ending the railroad life of the Muse Branch.

Thanks go to Jim McCauslin and John Soma, both of whom grew up in Muse during the mine's operation in the depression years. They each published remembrances of life in Muse and supplied some of the notes used in this column. Mr. McCauslin published a booklet titled "My Hometown Muse", excerpts of which can be found on-line at [coalcampusa.com](http://coalcampusa.com) and Mr. Soma's memories can be found at [museslatedump.org](http://museslatedump.org)

*You can contact the Montour Railroad Yahoo group at [http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/montour\\_rr/](http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/montour_rr/) There are currently 355 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 whom you are sure to get an answer. There is also much information at <http://www.montourrr.com>*

## Welcome New Members

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

### New Members

Nancy Chauvet  
Shay Crow  
Mark DeJohn  
Robert Gray  
Jeffrey S. Irwin  
Dustin Krashna  
Doug Krings  
Mark & Barbara Murray  
William & Mary Ann Rose  
Cliff Snitzky  
Knowledge Center Enterprises, LLC

### Benefactors

Nancy Chauvet  
Cathy & Jeffrey Finch  
Donna Hoffman & Richard Dunn  
Charles & Joan Marsteller  
William & Mary Ann Rose  
Victoria & David Serafini

### Leaders

Thomas Levine  
Jay & Judy Shock Family  
Knowledge Center Enterprises, LLC

## Re-installing Sign



Thank you Mark Weiner, a trail neighbor who lives adjacent to the trail at Ridgewood Drive in Cecil Township, to seeing that the crossing sign was re-installed after last year's paving operation. A giant shout out and thank you to Bob Corson, Corson Custom Graphics for donating a code compliant pole section and Columbia Gas of PA and Banks Gas Services for making the reinstallation of the sign safe and helping as well!

Thanks, folks.

## I want to support the Montour Trail Council!



### Membership Level

- ☐ Leaders' Circle \$500 +  
☐ Benefactor \$250 - \$499  
☐ Sustaining \$100 - \$249  
☐ Supporting \$50 - \$99  
☐ Family \$35  
☐ Individual \$25  
☐ Student/Senior \$15

Contribution enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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**THE MONTOUR TRAIL**

**Join Us! Become a member of the Montour Trail Council**

As an all-volunteer organization that receives no tax-based funding for trail operation and maintenance, we rely on your generosity in supporting the trail.

Membership contributions pay for operating and maintenance expenses. Just a small sample:

- Crushed limestone for resurfacing (\$12,000 per mile for materials)
- Other materials for trail maintenance (\$40,000/year)
- Fuel for mowing tractors (\$1,600/year)
- Parts-jobs (\$16,500/year)

The physical trail is a reflection of the people who love it, support it and care for it.

Joining the Montour Trail Council helps to support a great community resource.

**We need you!**  
**JOIN THE MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL**  
(An all-volunteer organization)

Just fill out the form on the other side or join at [www.MontourTrail.org](http://www.MontourTrail.org)

Multiply your impact by submitting a matching gift request to your employer. You may designate the Montour Trail Council as United Way Contributor Choice option #1308.

Montour Trail Council is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. All donations are tax-deductible to the full extent allowable by law. A copy of the Montour Trail Council's official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free within Pennsylvania: 800-732-6889. Registration does not imply endorsement.