



The Official Publication of the Montour Trail Council

# MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

*Celebrating 32 Years*

Volume 32 Issue 2

March-April 2021

## Announcement for the Food Drive

The Pandemic has hit some of our neighbors in ways that were never imagined a year ago.

The Montour Trail Council is teaming up with the Greater Pittsburgh Area Food Bank and the Washington County Food Bank to collect nonperishable foods. There will be four separate collection sites on the four separate dates listed below.

Please help us help our community by bringing your donations of nonperishable food items, paper products, household and hygiene items to the locations on the dates below. Monetary donations will NOT be accepted. No glass containers, please.



Greater Washington County  
**FOOD BANK**

**May 15 Robinson area to be announced**

Rain date May 16

**May 22 Hendersonville Trailhead, Cecil by Tandem Connection (mile 27.1)**

Rain date May 23

**June 5 Piney Fork Road at Waste Treatment Plant, South Park Twp. (Mile 37.8)**

Rain date June 6

**June 19 Irishtown Road Trailhead, Bethel Branch**

**(Bethel Branch mile 0.2)**

Rain date June 20

The collection will be held between 8:30 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. at all locations on the above dates

Please watch the Website for any changes. These changes will also be posted on the Montour Trail Enthusiasts Facebook site.

## Inside this issue:

Food Drive Early Survey Results	1
The Prez Sez	2
Friends Groups Remember When	3
South Park Update Volunteer Email Link	4
Scout Project Coordinator	5
Montour Railroad: National #2 and #3 Mines	6
New Members	7
<b>Trail Map</b>	<b>8</b>

## Trail User Survey Results Are In

The Montour Trail Council Board of Directors received a preliminary overview of the 2021 Trail User Survey at its March 15th meeting.

John Dorman, a longtime trail volunteer who has been analyzing the survey results, described the response as quite strong, with more than 1,000 trail users completing the questionnaire that asked about their Montour experiences. The survey sought responses from mid-January through mid-February 2021.

Survey results will help the Trail Council better understand users' concerns and help guide its priorities. A comprehensive analysis of the survey will appear in the May-June issue of the Montour Trail-Letter.

The previous Montour Trail User Survey was completed in 2018. This year's survey was staged to align with the Trail Council's three-year strategic planning cycle

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



### MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Deb Thompson	President
Phillip Torrez	Vice-President
Braden Ditch	Treasurer
Fran Hensler	Secretary

Fran Hensler	2021-2023
Dave Jackel	2021-2023
Mark Modispacher	2021-2023
David Oyler	2021-2023
Tom Prezel	2021-2023
Julian Wolfe	2021-2023
Jen Mosesso	2020-2022
Jim Richter	2020-2022
Dave Tetrick	2020-2022
Don Thobaben	2020-2022
Deb Thompson	2020-2022
Braden Ditch	2019-2021
Patricia Friedsam	2019-2021
Mark Imgrund	2019-2021
Dennis Pfeiffer	2019-2021
Phillip Torrez	2019-2021

#### THE MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

Is published every other month January through December.

All Trail-Letter correspondence should be addressed to:

[newsletter@montourtrail.org](mailto:newsletter@montourtrail.org)

All other business related trail correspondence should be addressed:

[MTCoiffice@montourtrail.org](mailto:MTCoiffice@montourtrail.org)

Other Trail Contact information:

<https://montourtrail.org/contact-us/>

We are going digital, if paper correspondence is necessary:

#### MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL

Suite #3 2nd Floor  
304 Hickman Street  
Bridgeville, PA 15017

PHONE NUMBER 412-257-3011

#### NEWSLETTER EDITORIAL TEAM

Dennis Sims, managing editor

Mark Imgrund

Dennis Pfeiffer

## The Prez Sez...

by Deb Thompson

Hi, everyone! We've had a changing of the guard here, which is why you're hearing from me for the first time. Thanks so much to Ned Williams for his leadership over an unprecedented eight non-consecutive years. Enjoy your time off, Ned! Thanks also to departing Board members Dave Borrebach and Peter Kohnke. Trail trivia: Peter can be counted among the founders of the Montour Trail, back in 1989!

As we roll into the Trail's thirty-second year, one thing on everyone's mind is *Covid-19, Part II, The Frustration Continues*. We have hope as the vaccines are becoming available while cases appear to decline, but we don't yet know what this year will bring. We're holding off on finalizing plans for most events, while we watch to see whether we can congregate safely. Meanwhile, please observe social distancing, maintain a safe distance from other trail users, wear masks while in groups, practice good hygiene, and remain optimistic. We will be providing portable toilets with increased cleaning frequency again this year. Because the MTC does not control most of the drinking fountains, we do not yet know what their status will be – so carry water with you.

Last year's restrictions made for some interesting changes. Ridership was far higher than in previous years, and this effect seems to have persisted even in foul weather. Increased ridership translated into increased membership and donations. I also observed that there were far more families with children out on the Trail. A strange new sound could also be heard around the trail – the long-lost sound of kids playing outdoors. Perhaps the pandemic has spawned a whole new generation of trail users! There can be an up-side to anything.

No matter what happens, we're looking forward to a productive year for the MTC. We will continue to whittle away at the shrinking gaps in the Trail. A short-term solution to the Route 51 crossing in Clairton is within view. An ad-hoc committee to improve handicap accessibility has been convened. We have put in place a Scout Project Coordinator ([scouts@montourtrail.org](mailto:scouts@montourtrail.org)) to streamline access for Eagle Scout and Golden Awards (Girl Scouts) projects. A new email address, [volunteer@montourtrail.org](mailto:volunteer@montourtrail.org), has been created to simplify access for new volunteers. Because we know that the past year has been tough for many in our community, we will also be conducting food drives along the Trail. Watch this newsletter for more details on all of these.

*In times like these, it helps to recall that there have always been times like these. (Paul Harvey)*

by Deb Thompson

## Tentative schedule of Trail Events

Twilight Trail walk in Peters Twp: Friday, July 30 at St. Petersburg Center.

Tour the Montour. Saturday, September 25.

## 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 Mark Modispacher at 412-266-1544 for more information. Numerous "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 6:30 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 22.0 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 Friday 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 Wayne Pfrimmer at 724-747-9766 or by email at waynepfrimmer@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 Caucus Room behind the 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 Bill Capp at 412-833-5928 for location and information.

### South Hills Friends: (MP 35.4 to 46.6)

Meeting second Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at South Park Township Community Room or the Township Library located at the Township Building at 2675 Brownsville Road, South Park, 15129. Work and cleanup parties on the second Saturday of the month. For more information, contact David Oyler at 412-831-9288, davidoyler1950@gmail.com, or Paul McKeown at 412-835-6692, mckeownp@comcast.net

### The Montour Railroad Historical Society:

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

### The Westland Friends: (MP 21.0 to 21.9, and Westland

**Branch)** Standard meeting schedule is third Thursday of the month at 1:30 PM at MTC Office in Bridgeville. During Pandemic, meetings have been moved outside to Galatit trailhead pavilion. For more information contact Dave Hajnik at 412-498-3854 (text enabled) or [dave@theneonweb.com](mailto:dave@theneonweb.com)

**Note:** Many of these meetings are being held virtually these days due to the pandemic. Please contact the appropriate individual to verify physical or on-line meeting specifics!

## Remembering when.....

**30 years ago, 1991:** Allegheny County is awarded nearly \$340,000 for five projects including \$150,000 towards Montour trail right-of-way acquisition. The money arrives as a grant under the Recreational Improvement and Rehabilitation Act (RIRA)

**25 years ago, 1996:** MTC begins volunteer construction work in Robinson Twp. (Allegheny County) April 6.

**20 years ago, 2001:** The first annual Burgh's Pizza and Wing Pub 10K Run and 1 mile walk was held at Cecil Park on April 22.

**15 years ago, 2006:** Trail construction between Georgetown Road and Charters Creek commences.

**10 years ago, 2011:** Preliminary work was underway to construct the Westland Branch. The branch would be a side-by-side trail and railroad spur to MarkWest's Houston Gas Plant.

**5 years ago, 2016:** National Tunnel reopens after winter closure

## South Park Township Trail Construction Update 2021

by Dave Oyler

I wrote a short history of and predictions for three South Park trail construction projects for the January/February 2020 Montour Trail – Letter. A year later it's time to look back at the 2020 progress, see how I did and give my predictions for 2021.

The three construction projects were Pleasant Street to Wood Street (Phase 34), Wood Street to Stewart Road (Phase 35) and along Piney Fork Road (Phase 8F). For brevity, they will be referred to in this article by the phase numbers, 34, 35 and 8F.

Construction of Phase 8F had already begun in late 2019 and was on winter shutdown over the winter of 2019 -2020. The Trail-Letter reported on Phase 8F in the November-December issue. As predicted last year, the 0.45-mile Phase 8F trail along Piney Fork Road was completed and opened to trail users in 2020; on September 17.

Phase 34 was expected to be on hold for much of 2020 while the Montour Trail Council (MTC) waited on the developer, Mero South Park Ventures, to complete grading of a trail embankment on roughly a quarter mile of the right of way between Summit Drive and Wood Street. The developer began their grading work in mid-July and constructed the promised embankment for the eastern 1,400 feet of trail in mid-September. Once the embankment was complete, trail volunteers were free to construct a temporary trail surface between Summit Drive and Wood Street. The temporary trail was opened to trail users on October 14. The MTC's trail engineering firm confirmed in the fall that Mero had obtained the permits necessary for trail construction, removing a major hurdle from trail construction. Since the end of 2020 our engineering firm has been working on a scope of work for trail construction and a bid package to put the construction out to bid for a contractor to complete construction of the trail section. Although a portion of the permanent trail will have to be rerouted, I am confident that the MTC should be able to complete this trail section in the summer of 2021.

The PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources gave approval for the MTC to begin spending grant money on Phase 35, between Wood Street and Stewart Road, in February 2020. The MTC immediately gave its engineering firm approval to begin work on trail design and permitting. Almost immediately the MTC was informed that extending a drain pipe draining into a short tributary of Piney Fork that the trail will have to cross over, would require a permit that would take a year or more to obtain. In order to reduce the permitting time, the MTC chose to go with a bridge; a more expensive option. The wisdom of this choice has been confirmed by the fact that the permits for the bridge option, expected to take only two months, were not obtained until early January 2021. During the summer and fall of 2020 the engineering firm also continued work on the trail plans and applying to South Park Township for project approval. The approval, with conditions, was obtained at the November Township Supervisors meeting. The conditions include the permitting (now completed), preparation of a Minor Land Development agreement with the Township and a highway occupancy permit (HOP) from PennDOT for the trail to cross Stewart Road. At the time of this writing the MTC still needs a Minor Land Development agreement with the Township, the highway occupancy permit and completion of the contract scope of work and bid package, all of which are currently

being worked on. The highway occupancy permit is currently the most serious issue preventing the start of construction and is the item most out of the control of the MTC.

Looking at my 2020 predictions, I guessed that the Piney Fork trail (8F) would be completed and it was, Phase 34C, Pleasant to Wood Street, would not be completed, but progress would be made in 2020 leading to construction in 2021 and that appears to be the case and that Phase 35 had a chance to go to construction in 2020, which it did not. So, I went 2 for 3.

Looking ahead to 2021, of the two remaining projects, I believe that Phase 34 (actually only a portion of the project since construction on the western end of the trail section was completed in 2019) will be completed in 2021. But Phase 35 is more difficult to predict. Most of the project work items are under the control of the MTC and the actual construction could be completed in 2021. However, the HOP may not be under the control of the MTC and if it is not obtained, that could prevent completion of the trail section in 2021.

As of January 2021, the finished trail in South Park Township directly connected to the rest of the Montour Trail has now been extended to milepost 36 (at the east end of the Port Authority Park & Ride). A temporary off-road trail now extends from MP36 to MP36.5. After a 0.3 mile on-road detour the off-road trail now extends from MP36.7 (Stewart Road) to MP39.5 (along Piney Fork Road), where there is another 0.38 mile on-road detour to MP39.9. The trail then continues off-road in South Park Township and Jefferson Hills Borough to Gill Hall Road at MP40.7.

## New Volunteer Email

The Membership and Community Outreach Committee has introduced a new email for those who want to volunteer for the trail. Volunteers may still go directly to the individual Friends' groups to become volunteers. However, we have found that many do not know how to volunteer. This new email has been posted on the Website as well as on the Montour Trail Enthusiasts' Facebook page. We have had many write to us already to volunteer. Each potential volunteer receives a phone call from a MCOC member. The volunteer receives a welcoming call and his or her interests are ascertained. The appropriate Friends' group or committee is notified. A month later the volunteer is called back to determine whether they have been contacted and if they feel this is a "good fit". We hope that we are able to connect with more volunteers in this way. We intend to have an orientation site with abbreviated history and overview of the Trail available soon. Our new email is [volunteer@montourtrail.org](mailto:volunteer@montourtrail.org). We will keep you posted.



## Scout Project Coordinator for the Montour Trail

By Jackie Wesche-Thobaben

In order to improve communications on Eagle Scout (Boy Scouts) and Golden Award (Girl Scout) projects, the MTC has put in place a Scout Project Coordinator. This is a newly created trail position that we hope will make things easier for Friends Groups and Scouts to connect.

The objectives of this project are to:

1. Centralize Scout projects
  - This provides a way for Friends Groups and Scouts to easily connect with each other, preventing Scouts from getting lost
  - This provides guidance to Scouts on proposed projects to support completion and select projects that are most beneficial to the Trail
2. Show appreciation to Scouts for completing Trail related projects via newsletter and other recognition.
3. Develop and maintain a list of completed projects.
4. Create a 'Wish List' of Friends' Group needed/desired projects

An e-mail link, [scouts@montourtrail.org](mailto:scouts@montourtrail.org), is now established on the Montour Trail website. This will be directed to my personal e-mail. Scouts can click on this link to send an e-mail when they have an interest in completing a Scout Award project. The Scout will then be contacted, and it will then be determined which Friends' Group might work best, with the Scout, to complete their project.

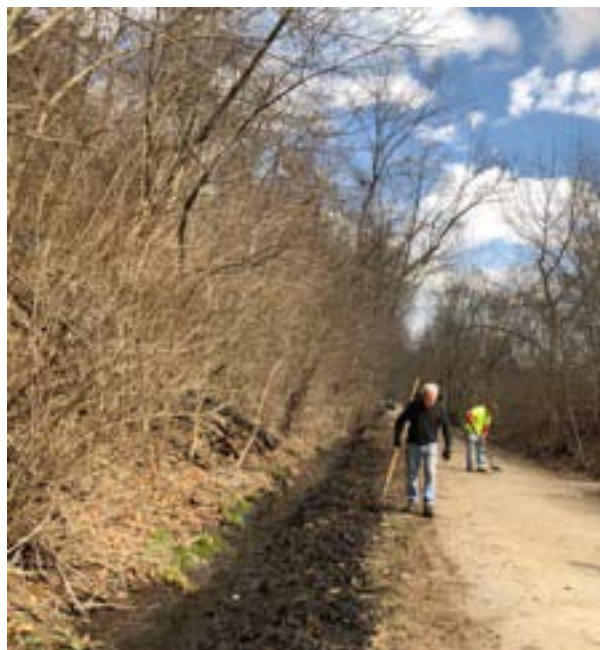
Once projects are finished, they will be added to the list of completed projects. We will also be connecting with the Boy Scout and Girl Scout leaders in the area to provide awareness of our interest in supporting Scout Award projects. In the not to distant future, we will have a list of Scout Award projects that have been completed in the past. We also hope to create a place on the Montour Trail website, where photos of completed projects can be viewed. If you have questions, contact me at [scouts@montourtrail.org](mailto:scouts@montourtrail.org)



Dave Hajnik installs the trailhead sign at Galati Road. Photo courtesy of Philip Torrez.

## Ditch Improvements at Tandem Connection

Bill Capp led volunteers on Tuesday, March 16 taking advantage of the early spring weather to improve the ditch and water flow from the fish pond eastward. The construction crew also trimmed back the large tree that has fallen just west of Georgetown Road. Before is on top and after is on the bottom. Photos courtesy of Julian Wolfe.



## MONTOUR RAILROAD HISTORY

**National Mines #2 and #3****By Bryan Seip - Montour Railroad Historical Society**

The National Mining Company, a subsidiary of United States Steel, opened its National No. 1 mine near Bridgeville in the early 1900's. As the mine advanced westward, additional mine portals were opened to reduce the distance coal had to be hauled before being brought to the surface for shipping. National No. 2 was opened in Cecil Township, with records showing it operating as early as 1905.



Loading tippel at National Mine No. 3 in Muse, PA.  
Photo courtesy U. S. Steel Company

Very little information is available for National No. 2. In its early days, it was probably accessed through the Mine No. 1 entries. When the Montour Railroad completed its Mifflin Extension in 1914, a tippel was built for National No. 2 to load coal on the Montour. This mine entry was at trail mile 25.6, just behind the current Kurnick Trailhead site. The mine tracks connected with the Montour main line east of Papp Road and west of Tarr Heights Road. The stone bridge abutments at Papp Road show a second track just a few feet away from the trail bridge, which was the Montour main line. West of Tarr Heights Road, remnants of a concrete bridge can be found crossing a small creek near the trail.

Further west National No. 3 was opened in 1921 to access additional coal land and the coal reserves remaining in National No. 2 were reassigned to Mine No. 3. A spur from the Montour main line was constructed to service the mine. The junction was just east of the yellow steel bridge at trail mile 24.1 and the Muse Branch ran along the edge of the current McConnell Trails housing development. The town of Muse was built to support the mine operation with miner's homes and rooming houses, stores, offices and a school. Muse was larger and newer than many mine villages in the area and boasted amenities not seen in other coal villages.

The coal seam at this point was 230 feet deep. The typical mine set-up was constructed with two deep shafts dug to the coal seam. One shaft was used for men and supplies to access the mine and for waste material to be brought out for dumping on the surrounding land. The other shaft was primarily for bringing the coal to the surface to be loaded into railroad cars.

Operation of National No. 3 was transferred from U. S. Steel to the H. C. Frick Coke Company in December, 1942, who operated it until at least 1947. When the mine was closed in 1955, it was again owned by U. S. Steel, but when that return transfer was completed is not known. In 1947, the coal company started allowing miners to buy their homes instead of renting them. This ownership helped the company by insuring the miners would stay in the community and thus work in the mine. It also eliminated the company's costs incurred by having to maintain the homes when the miners were only renting from the company.

National No. 3 was closed in July, 1954, putting over 600 employees out of work. As the tippel and tracks were being scrapped, the United Mine Workers Union insisted there were 5 million tons of coal remaining to be mined. Later reports state there were only 1.5 million tons of coal left. Because of public uproar and meddling by various government officials, U. S. Steel stopped dismantling the tippel in December, 1954, but the mine was eventually sealed and abandoned in 1955.

After the mine was closed, a chemical reclamation company leased some of the mine buildings and land until the Montour Railroad stopped servicing the site in 1982. When railroad operations ended, a train of 82 surplus box cars from the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie RR was stored on the Muse Branch from April, 1982 to September, 1983. Official abandonment of the branch was approved in 1983, the stored cars were removed and the rails were pulled up.



In June, 1980, Montour #73 pulls cars from Chemicals & Solvents Company in Muse. Gene P. Schaeffer photo.

*You can contact the Montour Railroad Historical Society through Facebook by searching for the Montour Railroad Historical Society. There are currently 425 members from across the country. 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>*



## I want to support the Montour Trail Council!

### Annual Membership Level

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

Total contribution enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make check payable to Montour Trail Council

Mail to: **Montour Trail Council**  
**Suite #3, 2nd Floor**  
**304 Hickman St.**  
**Bridgeville, PA 15017**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_

STATE \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_

#### Montour Trail Council Use Only

☐ Cash

☐ Check

Taken by \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

/ /

## 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. Not all new members have been entered as of print deadline and will be listed in the next issue of the newsletter.*

### New Members

Nicholas Colafella  
 Kevin Croke  
 Nina Federico  
 Jennifer Iagnemma  
 Michael Langiewicz  
 Andrea Linkowski  
 Joanne Martin  
 Donald McIntyre  
 Scott Powell  
 William Powers  
 Dennis & Elizabeth Puko  
 Michael Quinn  
 Joshua Scanlon  
 Nigel Barksby & Andrea Schriver  
 James Shea  
 Lynn Helbling Sirinek  
 Dan & Jeanie Slater

### Benefactors

Todd Carroll & Leslie Hartle  
 David F. Hajnik & Debora B. Thompson  
 John Graham  
 Donna Hoffman & Richard Dum  
 The Rosenthal Family  
 Geoffrey Tolley

### Leaders

Maryann Hoffman  
 Ronald Piroli  
 Joshua Scanlon

### In Memory of Jack Springer

Donation received from Virginia Riegner  
 Donation received from Robert Hershey  
 Donation received from Carol Salvucci  
 Donation received from Darlene Malzone  
 Donation received from Alberta Lloyd  
 Donation received from Barbara Kitner  
 Donation received from Koesters Rigging & Hauling  
 Donation received from Shirley Bianco  
 Donation received from Mr. & Mrs. Leo Carlin  
 Donation received from Karen Schaller  
 Donation received from Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Clark

### In Memory of Rick Ulaky

Donation received from Barbara Sedmak  
 Donation received from Kimberly Chuey  
 Donation received from Terri Rosen  
 Donation received from Rebecca Galanko  
 Donation received from The Pittman Family





**MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL**  
Suite #3 2nd Floor  
304 Hickman Street  
Bridgeville, PA 15017

**Address Service Requested**

NON-PROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
PITTSBURGH, PA  
PERMIT NO. 2524

