



The Official Publication of the Montour Trail Council MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

Volume 17 Issue 6

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2006

Breaking Ground for the Cecil-Peters Connection *story and photos by Ned Williams*

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



President Dennis Pfeiffer accepts the check from Congressman Tim Murphy

Closing the largest gap in the Montour Trail has begun.

It's by far the biggest hole in the Trail, according to our users who are stranded on either side; its nearest road bypass is bike-unfriendly, with a very steep grade; and, at two miles in length, it is the longest unbuilt stretch on the whole Montour Trail. Thus, the beginning of construction to fill this hole called for a celebration.

So members and supporters of the Montour Trail gathered for a ground breaking on Sunday, October 22. Held at St. Petersburg Center in Peters, the ceremony highlighted the prolonged efforts of many people to close the trail gap in Peters and Cecil Townships.

As is typical of Montour events, umbrellas were folded as threatening skies held off. Keynote speaker and

Congressman Tim Murphy described the Montour Trail's importance to our region. As a longtime trail user and advocate, Mr. Murphy well understood that the seven missing bridges in and near western Peters Township were the Montour's biggest financial challenge. As a result, he took the lead in securing over \$2 million in federal funds to get us started. Congressman Murphy presented a check for the final portion of these funds; Sen. Rick Santorum, who had also helped to secure this appropriation, was represented in remarks by Mr. Jay French.

Other dignitaries present were Washington County Commissioner J. Bracken Burns, Peters Township manager Michael Silvestri, and Matt Campion, avid cyclist and chief of staff for State Sen. John Pippy. They praised the Montour Trail Council's vision and persistence and pledged their continued support of this endeavor.

The Montour Trail's own volunteer construction crews also got some well-deserved limelight. They have committed themselves to building all the trail sections situated between the missing bridges. This enormous undertaking involves nearly two miles of trail that had been heavily overgrown, was strewn with three decades of debris, and were blocked at one point by a large landslide. Volunteers have been working on this section since July, explained Council Vice President Mark Imgrund, who is managing the project with board member Gil McGurl. Imgrund thanked Peters Township for its assistance and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources for financial support. (continues on page 4)



From left to right: Mark Imgrund, Tim Murphy, Jay French, Mark Campion, Mike Silvestri and J. Bracken Burns

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



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MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

304 Hickman Street
Bridgeville, PA 15017

Or E-mail to:

newsletter@montourtrail.org

All other trail correspondence should be addressed:

MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL
P.O. BOX 11866
PITTSBURGH PA. 15228-0866

MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL
PHONE NUMBERS:

For information: 412-831-2030

**For administration
and business:** 412-257-3011

Fax: 412-257-3016

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The Prez says...

I trust that you have enjoyed your warm summer and early fall and have spent many happy, carefree hours enjoying the Montour Trail. The trail has truly become a valuable community asset for Western Pennsylvania and is especially cherished by all of the municipalities it passes through.

This is the last "Prez Says" article I have the pleasure of writing. My three years as president end in December, and a new president will be chosen to serve you next year. The Montour Trail Council has accomplished much in three years, and the organization continues to evolve and flourish. It has been a joy and privilege to work with such a dedicated and talented group of volunteers.

We now have three major trail building initiatives in progress, with the possibility of two more to be added next year. Hopefully, we will enjoy a few ribbon cuttings next year in our continuing quest to complete the remaining trail gaps. Some of us have been involved with this quest since 1989 and have fielded literally thousands of questions during that time relative to the trail's anticipated completion. To keep people from having to ask us repeatedly how long it will take to finish the trail, our Engineering and Construction Committee has provided a consistent answer with its new motto: "As always, we're just three years away."

I want to close by highlighting the tremendous efforts of our "Friends of the Trail" organizations. We always seem to be discussing new trail-building projects, but meanwhile we are responsible for 43 miles of completed trail. These miles are maintained in spectacular fashion by the very dedicated efforts of our Friends groups. If you are looking for some good exercise, wonderful camaraderie, and a great outdoor working venue, please hook up with one of our six fun-loving Friends groups—Airport Area, Fort Cherry, Cecil, Peters, Bethel Park, or South Hills—for a work party. Contact information can be found on page 3 of this newsletter.

So long for now. I hope that, with your support, our next president might be able finally to put the Engineering and Construction Committee motto to rest.

Happy trails!

Dennis Pfeiffer

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 Peter at 412-854-1835 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, Work & Clean-up party scheduled for, every third Saturday of the month - 9:00 a.m. (Subject to change; check information boards.) Meet at the Kurnick Access Area Garage. Call Dennis Sims at 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 clean-up 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 mcimgrund@adelphia.net.

Trail Dust from Editor's Desktop

In my previous column, a question was posed to the readership asking them for their preferred method of receiving the Montour Trail-Letter, electronically, or in their mailbox. This question was also posed to the Yahoo Montour Trail group. I have to admit the response between the two groups was disappointing with 56 out of 636 possible responses on the Yahoo group, and 14 out of the 1300 plus newsletter recipients responding. From these 70 responders, 70% would prefer to read their newsletter electronically.

The Newsletter Committee will be asking the MTC Membership Committee to ask each individual member via their renewal application as to how they would like to receive their Newsletter. This is the easiest way to develop the database that would contain the information regarding how each member receives their newsletter. Ideally, those who wish to receive it electronically would be notified via e-mail that the newsletter is ready for download, and for those who want the hard copy in their mailbox, can still look forward to receiving it early in the even numbered months. We thank those who responded.

Some other bits of dust from the Trail include a message from Judy Thompson, the MTC Treasurer. She will be seeking bids for the services of an auditor for the Trail's 2006 audit. If you, or someone you know who might be interested in performing this audit, please contact Judy at thompsonjet@yahoo.com for further information.

Next issue of the Trail-letter will feature tidbits from the Annual Meeting, as well as introductions of the incoming members of the Board of Directors. The deadline for the next issue will be January 5, 2007. Please fill free to contribute to the Trail-letter.

Happy Holidays
Dennis

Pennies Roll In *by Peter Kohnke*

On Saturday, October 14, the Bethel Park, Peters Township, and South Hills (South Park, Jefferson Hills, Clairton) Friends of the Montour Trail joined for a fall "Penny Day" fund-raiser. The three groups asked trail users to visit collection locations along the trail and donate their pennies to support trail maintenance.

The Peters volunteers collected \$677.18, Bethel Park snagged \$745.60, and the South Hills group pulled in a whopping \$1076.43, for a grand total of \$2499.21.

Of course, when you get bags of pennies, you sometimes get a few unexpected items. This year, along with the usual bunch of Canadian coins, we received a coin from Barbados, three marbles, and a Chuck-e-Cheese token.

The Montour Trail is maintained solely by volunteer workers and donated funds. Monies are used to provide crushed limestone for



trail repair, storage rental for mowers and other equipment, equipment maintenance, vandalism repair, paint, and trail signs. Thanks for helping us to keep your trail in excellent condition, and please start your penny collections for next year!

The Connection continues from page 1

President Dennis Pfeiffer thanked the Daily brothers, of Burgh's Pizza and Wing Pub in Bridgeville, who in recent years have donated \$100,000 to the Trail.

Speakers concluded by donning hard hats and shoveling a pile of Montour Trail earth into the bucket of a backhoe. Equipment manager Frank Ludwin then dumped the earth into the Montour dump truck to the applause of all.

Mary Ellen McKenna and the Cecil Friends hosted a delightful "MonTober Fest" picnic afterwards. Suffice it to say that no one came away hungry.

Among the many who worked so hard to put this event together,



Dennis Pfeiffer accepts the proceeds of this year's Burgh 10K from Tom and Frank Dailey of the Burghs Pizza and Wings restaurant in Bridgeville.

we wish to thank Mark Imgrund for arranging the site, refreshments, and many other details; Frank Keppel for his successful deployment of our new sound system; Dave Oyler for the maps; Frank Ludwin and others who brought in our earthmoving equipment; and Dennis Pfeiffer and colleagues who erected the canopies.

Volunteers take on knotweed

by Stan Sattinger

If you walked or rode the Airport-area section of the Trail this summer, you may have noticed some encroachment by trail-side clusters of Japanese knotweed, an aggressive invasive plant species that is literally "taking over." The tall stalks of knotweed defeat desirable species by blocking out sunlight. When cut down, they grow back in a matter of weeks. If pulled out by the roots, they send out new root runners and come back in spades.

This summer, Eagle Scout candidate Justin Kramer carried out a carefully designed project in the Cliff Mine area to evaluate concentrated vinegar as a low-cost alternative to costly glyphosate-containing herbicides for controlling knotweed. He found that, in summertime applications, the vinegar was quite effective in killing knotweed foliage, but not its roots.



Eagle Scout candidate Justin Kramer and fellow troop members carrying out a trial procedure for killing knotweed using concentrated vinegar

Recently volunteers with the Montour Trail Council and the Montour Run Watershed Association, working near Hassam Road, began trying the "cut and treat" method, whereby small quantities of herbicide are brushed onto freshly cut stumps of the knotweed in the fall. An important criterion is that the herbicide used must not be soluble in water. This evaluation will continue in the coming year.

Eagle Scouts Candidates Busy in Cecil

The Cecil Friends assisted in two Eagle Scouts projects over the past several months. Eagle candidate Brandon Zawicki of Troop 1393 will be repositioning and replacing the mile markers between MP 22 and MP 34 which includes the Cecil Section. The Cecil Section mile markers have been repositioned. The Cecil Friends have been trying to find out who installed the beautifully handcrafted mileposts this summer at the former locations of 28 and 29 near Papp Road and Hendersonville, respectively. If anyone knows, please e-mail the newsletter editor.

Ross Volkwein, who is also a member of Troop 1393, has been busy landscaping the trail side of the "Burgh Garage" at Kurnicks giving it a more natural look for his Eagle Project. He has planted ornamental grasses and other plantings to complement the two benches he constructed and placed. Ross's brother Ian, constructed the shelter and picnic table on the other side of the Trail at the same location as part of his Eagle project several years ago.

By spring of next year, there will be dog waste stations placed at the Trailheads on the Cecil Section. Eagle Scout candidate Brian Nicholson is the architect. At these stations, there will be plastic bags to collect your dog waste for proper disposal, in the event you forgot yours.

A Montage of Recent Montour Happenings



The 2006 Ikea/Montour Trail 1/2 Marathon and 5K Run and Walk in Pictures

Thanks to Tony Wright and John Hooton for being the photographers on Ikea Race Morning and providing the images of the festivities and thanks to the many volunteers and sponsors who make the Ikea/Montour Trail 1/2 Marathon and 5K Run and Walk a great success.



Many thanks to Jesse Forquer who is retiring as the Race Director after 5 years of service. Laura Orr will succeed Jesse in this capacity for the 2007 event. Laura has been the registrar for the race over the past several years



Jesse starts the 2006 race



Laura barking directions

The Panhandle Connector

The Editor paid a visit to the Panhandle Connector the day after Election Day to photograph the action as asphalt millings were being spread on the trail to serve as a base for the crushed limestone. With help from dump trucks provided by Robinson Township and Washington County Parks and Recreation and volunteer labor, the base was completed. Look for a complete write up on this project in an upcoming Trail Newsletter.

News Flash!! As the newsletter goes to the printer, Charlie Beaumariage, project manager is announcing that the crushed limestone topping will be placed the week of Thanksgiving to provide the finished riding surface. With the help of these and other volunteers, they expect it will take about two days to place the 400 tons of material.



Still looking for that last minute Christmas gift? 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

This Issue The McDonald Viaduct

On July 1, 1913, the Pennsylvania Railroad granted the Montour Railroad overhead crossing rights at Panhandle milepost 19□ feet. The PRR could terminate the Montour's rights on 30 days' notice if the covenants were violated. It is interesting that the PRR authorized the Montour to build a bridge wide enough for two tracks. Perhaps the Pittsburgh Coal Company projected a lot more traffic on the Montour than ever materialized.



McDonald Viaduct was located at Milepost 18.4 on the original Montour track charts. Eastward, the tracks descended on a 0.2 percent grade until reaching the western abutment at elevation 1,043 feet above mean sea level (MSL), at which point eastbound trains were faced with a 1.2 percent ascending grade across the viaduct. The viaduct was 962 feet long and crossed the four main tracks of the Panhandle.

During World War II, the McDonald Viaduct was considered a strategic bridge because, saboteurs could blow the bridge blocking not only the Montour, which was supplying coal for the war effort, but also the Panhandle, which at that time was a vital link in the transport of troops between the east and west coasts. According to Gene P. Schaeffer's book on the Montour, floodlights were installed to illuminate the bridge at night. Most likely the bridge was guarded, by either the military, the local police, or the PRR railroad police.

There were actually six tracks under the McDonald Viaduct. From south to north they were Track 1 for eastward freight trains, Track 2 for eastward passenger trains, and Track 3 for all westward trains. The fourth track was the No. 103 Secondary, which allowed westbound trains to overtake and pass a slower train. The fifth track was the McDonald Transfer track where the Montour and PRR interchanged coal cars. The sixth track served the McDonald mine, operated by the Carnegie Coal Company. The bony pile for the mine is visible from the west side of McDonald Viaduct, but the mine itself extended to the north on the other side of Noblestown Road. The mine entries actually passed under the Montour tracks west of the viaduct.

At the peak of World War II, from the McDonald Viaduct one could see as many as four trains moving on the Panhandle with the westbound trains blasting smoke and cinders high into the sky as they struggled to pull the wartime tonnage up Bulger Hill. The eastbound trains would be riding their brakes down the hill with blue smoke pouring from the cars, and in some cases, the wheels glowing red hot from friction. A Montour coal drag might be rolling slowly across the viaduct, mindful of the curves at each end. The engines would be drifting with their 80-car train, taking a break from the long climb up the hill between Cowden and Peacock. There would be a 2-8-2 Mikado on the front and another on the rear bringing another load of coal to the Champion cleaning plant. If the Montour was really busy, there could even be an eastbound train in McDonald Siding heading down the hill to the McDonald Transfer track with a train of coal for the PRR.



The continuing presence of the McDonald Viaduct, the Montour Trail's longest bridge, reminds us that today's trails are the result of yesterday's railroads.

Bob Ciminel is the founder of the Montour Railroad Yahoo group (http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/montour_rr/). There are currently 133 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

David E. Baldwin
 Ryan Bick
 Deborah Bradley
 Catherine Campbell
 Kevin Cook
 Gerald Cuddy
 Joseph & Donna Czarny
 Charles Gurchak
 Marilynn Hamilton
 Sam Hvifelt
 Lorraine M. Jacko
 Linda Lawler
 Gregory Ross
 Sunshine Sill
 Jill Simmons

Rick Wehan
 Martin Weirick
 Gerard & Nancy Weiss
 Stanley Zaslau

Leader's Circle

Catherine Eagon
 John & Berenice Hooton
 Jim & Brenda Quasey

Benefactors

Catherine Campbell
 David & Carol Eibling
 Janet & Gordon Jackson
 McMurray Rotary Club
 Gwen & Jeff Steigerwalt
 Gregory Walz

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.

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.



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Tour the Montour Keeps Growing

The Fisher Scientific Tour the Montour attracted an enthusiastic throng of 141 riders for its fourth annual ride on Saturday, September 23. The rain cooperated by quitting just before Congressman Tim Murphy sent the first riders out on their journey at 8:15 a.m.

Along the course, cyclists enjoyed rest stops stocked with fruit, water, sports drinks, and the always-favorite peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Our friendly rest-stop volunteers provided great conversation as the riders made their way along the trail.

Upon their return, the cyclists were treated to great food provided by Jabby Joe's Restaurant in Moon Township. Other great prizes were awarded, such as overnight stays at the Doubletree Hotel, Embassy Suites, and the Pittsburgh Airport Marriott.

Tour the Montour was supported by the following generous sponsors: Fisher Scientific, Trek Bicycles of Pittsburgh, PennAllergy.com, Coca-Cola, Signal Graphics, Lanigan Massage Therapy, Park West Supply, Chairman of the Boards, OrangeYouActive.com, Wojanis Hydraulic Supply Company, Inc., Jabby Joe's Restaurant, Shaffer's Pizza-Bakery, and Anthony's Original Wholesale Produce. Special thanks go to the Western Area YMCA who helped out by providing us chairs for the post-ride picnic.



We had a record-breaking Tour by raising over \$8,400 for the maintenance and expansion of the trail. We hope to see you at the fifth annual Tour the Montour in 2007.