



# The Official Publication of the Montour Trail Council

## MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

Volume 20 Issue 6

November-December 2009

### 20 Years, A Celebration

The Montour Trail Council celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary on Sunday, November 1 at the Airport Marriot with food and song. The evening commenced with a happy hour where trail friendships were renewed. Some of our members were hard to recognize dressed in their Sunday-best as we most often see them in cycling or working apparel. During happy hour those in attendance could browse the many offerings to be had in the silent auction. Successful bidders could win a plane ride above the trail, an extended stay at a lakeside cabin, cycling accessories and meals from several eateries.

Bill Flanagan, serving as the master of ceremonies, introduced several distinguished guests including Congressman Tim Murphy and Allegheny County Councilman Mike Finnerty who presented letters from their respective governmental bodies recognizing the Trail's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

Following dinner, some light entertainment was provided by Tim Killmeyer and President Mark Imgrund bringing back the Johnny Carson skit, Carnac the Magnificent, except it would be Kurnick, the Magnificent. Trail historian Bill Metzger took us down the MTC History Trail from its inception in 1989 to the present as only Mr. Metzger could do. Several members of the council shared their memories of trail involvement. Mark Hall, the son of Cecil Trail ambassador Hoyt Hall described his father's contributions to the Cecil Friends and the Council.

The Newlanders closed the evening with music and song. They are self-described as "The contemporary, urban, roots, twang, blues, harmony, industrial, Appalachian, oral history, a cappella, folk band."



*Co-founder Stan Sattinger welcomes everyone. A Dave Oyler Photo.*

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A tip of hat to the Gala organizing committee: co-chairs Stan Sattinger and John and Berenice Hooton, Janet Berbach, Dave Hajnik, Fran Hensler, Mark Imgrund, Phyllis McChesney, Dennis Pfeiffer, Don and Jackie Thobaben, Judy Thompson, John Wasco, and Ned Williams for a successful event.

### Crossing Venice: The Thousand-Yard Stair as told by Ned Williams



*Ned addresses those gathered to mark the stairs completion. A Dennis Sims Photo*

The stairway at Venice was opened to Montour Trail users on Sunday morning, Sept. 13, 2009. Travel was heavy all afternoon, with lots of walkers and bicyclists out enjoying the warm sun. Most seemed grateful for their much-reduced interaction with cars, and were downright excited to be using the stairs on Opening Day.

Actually, opening day had been several weeks earlier on the companion project of the trail ramp, across the road on the south side of Route 50. Managed by Charlie Beaumariage, a crew led by Frank Ludwin, Bill Capp, John Kozak and many others had labored through the latter part of the summer. They had cleared trees, moved dirt, and carved away a steep, rock-filled embankment. After mobilizing an impressive array of large equipment and a huge pile of crushed limestone, they created a five hundred foot stretch of beautifully smooth new trail. Gates, fencing, and signage were carefully placed to create a small parking area and to keep our trail users safe.

The Montour Trail had been completed to Cecil Park in 1992, to Venice in 2001, and from the north side of Route 50 to McDonald in 2003. That left a half-mile gap along very busy Route 50, and its treacherous intersection with Route 980. Trail users, those with enough determination to travel through, had to jump into the stream of fast-moving cars and trucks, stay calm, pedal hard and straight, and make a left turn in traffic to get through the gap. (continues on page 4)



*The Venice Railroad Bridge in January 1996. A Dennis Sims Photo*

Visit the Montour Trail Web Site at:  
[www.montourtrail.org](http://www.montourtrail.org)

To Converse, join the Yahoo Group at:  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Montour-Trail/>



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### NEWSLETTER EDITORIAL TEAM

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## Prez Sez – My Final Column

The Montour Trail Council by-laws impose a three-year term limit on its presidents. For those of you who attended our recent 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration, you may have some possible insight into where this term limit came from. After all, when many of the original founding fathers of the MTC thought the trail could be built in three years, why would there be any need for a longer term? My own twist on this is that every MTC president is given the chance to finish the trail in his three year term. Since I couldn't do it, now it is time for another to try! I am joking about the rationale of course, but it is time for a transition in our leadership. I'm confident that, come January, we will find and elect a capable board member willing to take up the presidential reins and continue our mission to complete the trail.

I have enjoyed my tenure as your president for the last three years, and want to thank the supporting cast of talented and energetic board members, officers, committee chairpersons, and the many MTC volunteers who helped me advance the trail and the organization forward. As we enter into our second twenty years, the issues and challenges we face are different than those faced in the MTC's infancy, and their number increases. We have active construction projects in the townships of South Park, Cecil, Peters, and Robinson (Washington County), and others waiting for their turn. We have numerous fundraising efforts underway that run the gamut from trail events to grant writing to leveraging trail property assets into leasing agreements that benefit the Trail. It is not a trivial task to keep these and other initiatives all progressing forward while maintaining and operating the existing trail, and I will be there to help my successor keep things moving.

As I said at the November dinner, the Montour Trail is a "success in progress". As we enter 2009, I hope you will join me in renewing a commitment to continuing the support and effort needed to keep our progress moving forward.

Passing on your left for the last time,

*Mark*



Montour Trail President Mark Imgrund playing Kurnick the Magnificent while Tim Killmeyer gives him the answers at the 20th Anniversary Gala.

## 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 Friends:

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](mailto:densimwx@comcast.net)

### Airport Area Friends:

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, Robinson, North Fayette, and Findlay is encouraged to attend. Call 412-859-3020 for more information. Work and cleanup party, every second Saturday of the month - 9:00 a.m. Call 412-262-3748 for more information and location.

### Bethel Park Friends:

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:

Meeting second Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Jefferson Hills Borough Building. Work and cleanup parties scheduled and advertised as needed. For more information, contact David Oyler at 412-831-9288, [davidoyler@verizon.net](mailto:davidoyler@verizon.net), or Paul McKeown at 412-835-6692, [mckeownp@comcast.net](mailto:mckeownp@comcast.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 and cleanup 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 and cleanup parties, please contact Jim Robbins at 724-941-6132, or for monthly meetings, Mark Imgrund at 724-941-6351 or by e-mail at [markimgrund@comcast.net](mailto:markimgrund@comcast.net).

### The Montour Railroad Historical Society:

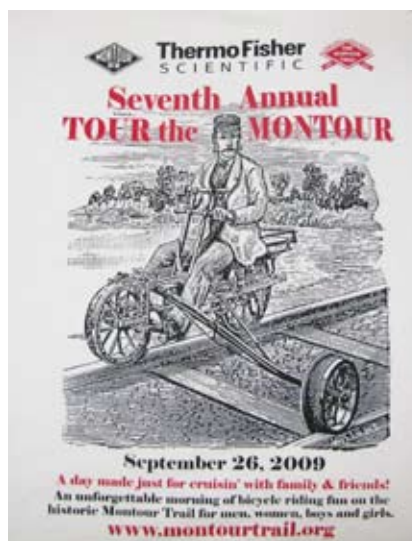
The newest Friends group. For more information send email to [mrhs@montourrr.com](mailto:mrhs@montourrr.com).

## 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Tour The Montour – Record-Breaking Number of Riders! By Sam Hvifelt, Ride Director

For those of you who could join us, the Seventh Annual Tour the Montour on Saturday, September 26, 2009 was not for the faint of heart. Those who braved the inclement weather were rewarded with a messy and fun ride. Kudos to all the riders who completed our new Metric Century Distance Ride – a true sign of commitment to the ride on a rainy day!

The 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Tour hosted our largest number of riders yet – 333 participants (another record year)! Thanks to our wonderful group of volunteers and generous sponsors, riders were well-supported - from parking their car in the wee, dark hours of the morning to enjoying a tasty variety of lunch items after the ride (good luck finding another organized local bike ride that serves ribs and haluski!). In fact, our sponsors Brothers Grimm, The Cooked Goose Catering Company, Anthony's Original Wholesale Produce, Shaffer's Pizza-Bakery and Mediterra Bakery kept everyone's energy levels up with their yummy food. Again this year, the Enlow Station ice cream

shop provided free cones for riders who pedaled out to Mile 8 and beyond – a treat no other local ride can boast.



Tim Killmeyer's Collectors' Edition 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Tour T-shirts were extremely popular again this year. Again, shirts were only guaranteed for pre-registered participants, and the return to a retro trail design was appreciated by the riders who missed the retro rail theme.

We are very proud to report that this year's event raised over \$9,000 – which is testament to the commitment of our riders and sponsors to the Montour Trail, especially in this tough economy. We could not have achieved that milestone without the financial support of our fantastic presenting sponsor, Thermo Fisher Scientific, and all our other wonderful sponsors (REI, Chairman of the Boards, Lanigan Massage Therapy, Gordon's Terminal Service, Holy Trinity Knights of Columbus, Niko's Coffee House, Orangyouactive.com, Park West Supply, Signal Graphics, and Wojanis Hydraulic Supply) ! You'll find all their names and businesses proudly emblazoned on our T-shirts.

Don't forget to mark your calendars for the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Tour The Montour on September 25, 2010 – the metric century distance was very popular and looks like it's here to stay!

On behalf of the Tour The Montour Planning Crew (Linda D'Angelo, Phyllis McChesney, Tim Killmeyer, Dennis Pfeiffer, Frank Keppel, Don Thobaben and Mark Imgrund), we'd like to thank all of the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Tour's volunteers, sponsors and participants. Thanks for riding with us and we'll see you all next September!



## The One Thousand Yard Stair Continues from Page 1

But many just didn't; they'd get to the gap and simply turn around. A short study of the traffic was enough to convince them that they did not want to subject their families and themselves to such hazards. So their experience of the trail was cut off; all of the enjoyment of the beauty and the interesting things to see that lay on the other side were out of reach. This is why we're working so hard to close all of the trail gaps that we can, as soon as possible. But it isn't easy.

Unable to build a new trail bridge until after PennDOT realigns the Route 50 / Route 980 intersection sometime in the future, the Montour Trail Council determined to do what it could to make the Venice crossing less onerous. One span remained of the former railroad bridge, which would get the trail across Miller's Run, but it ended fifteen feet above ground level. Plans were developed for a two-flight stairway that would get walkers and bicyclists up there from the ground; a stair, instead of a thousand yards on a busy road. A Dave Wright-drafted plan for a standard at-grade crosswalk was eventually approved by PennDOT, and finally we were cleared to proceed.

We started in the summer of 2007 by – what else? – clearing brush and trees. After erecting temporary safety railings to protect our volunteer workers, the rail and some ties were removed from the old bridge. The permanent railings were constructed and attached to the remaining ties, as were deck support stringers. On a memorable October Saturday, a large square landing was built, hoisted into position, support posts attached and encased in volunteer-mixed concrete. Located about halfway up, this landing would later join the upper and lower flights. Ed Zupancic, Rich Blaskiewicz, Roger McIlheny, Charlie Beaumariage, Bill Capp, John Kosek, Dave Wright, Tom Prezel, Frank Ludwin, Gil McGurl, John Becker, Marty Howsare, Keith Williams, and many others worked long and hard in that first year.

Spring rains the next year dealt a setback. Right where we were going to build the stairs, a large concrete wall and long section of creek bank all collapsed into Miller's Run. The whole thing had to be excavated, and a new volunteer-built wall constructed of large rock-filled wire cages ("gabion baskets"). Again, numerous volunteers



responded to the call, ranging from Trail founder Stan Sattinger, former president Dennis Pfeiffer, current president Mark Imgrund, to Cecil neighbor Eric Hofrichter. (And Jean Mahramus, owner of Muck's Lunch, who kept us all fed; it could not have been done without her nearby kitchen!) Finishing the wall and solving a host of associated problems pretty much wiped out the year.

Well, third time's the charm. In early 2009 the lower stairway was redesigned to swing it away from the creek. With survey data from Dave Oyler, we laid out the lines and excavated for the concrete pads and protective bollards. With formwork built and reinforced, on May 12 concrete was poured, under the clear skies of Dennis Sims and the supervision of Ed Strmisa. He's a local cement contractor, but volunteered to work with us to manage the pour that day!

After that the major carpentry work started in earnest. Crafted by volunteers Bud Halpin, Brad Smith, Dennis Sweeney and many others, support posts and stairway stringers sprouted from the nice new concrete pads. Pretty soon the lower stairway emerged; and it not only "walked" comfortably, but its gentle slope made it fairly easy to get a bike up as well. Hordes of bicyclists visited the worksite to ogle the progress and cheer us on.



The upper flight would pass directly between the historic bridge girders, so they were painted to show off their still-perfect 1914 riveted construction. To these girders were attached all of the supporting members for the upper stairway and its railings. The process was extremely painstaking, as all of the brackets had to be custom fabricated for each location. But, it was after all a summer in Venice. How to not enjoy? Plus, with all the trail users stopping by, we were encouraged beyond words. And by Frank Keppel, who had, smilingly, 'suggested' completion for the September 26 Tour the Montour event.

Final touches were the handrails, welded up by Frank Ludwin, and the bicycle tracks, fabricated by Jim and Mike McMillen of Houston, PA. Fittingly, Ed Zupancic, who had been there on the very first day in 2007 and many since, got to be the first to roll his bike down the lower track on Friday, October 30. A little opening ceremony was held on Saturday Oct 24 to thank all those who had helped.

Speaking for all those who were associated with the project, we are quite happy to have had the opportunity to put together this safety improvement for the Montour Trail community. We hope it helps make the trail experience better and more enjoyable for all of you. Now you can set your sights on all those interesting destinations that are on the other side of the Venice Crossing!

**Montour Trail gear makes great Christmas gifts! Shop our Trail Store!**

## Boggs Trailhead Improvements at Mile 11.4 by Dennis Pfeiffer

Ken Gregory thought it was in the year 2006 that the subject of improving the trailhead at Boggs Road (mile 11.4) first materialized. The trail at the time came right through the middle of the parking lot. Cyclists, who have a nice downhill ride from mile 12, were dodging cars, runners were dodging cyclists and dogs were dodging everything. I guess you get the picture. Ken, a retired school teacher from Aliquippa, had discussions with some other Airport Area Friends and decided to work on improving the trailhead. Ken, who created and maintains the impressive garden at the site, developed



plans for the trailhead that would basically separate the Trail from the parking area. Retired engineer Bill Luxner worked with Ken to formalize the plans. The

plans were presented and approved by the Airport Friends and the MTC Engineering & Construction committee.

The project started the week of October 19, 2009 with Frank Ludwin leading the way along with volunteers, Bill Capp, Roger McElhaney, Ken Gregory & Ted Weidner during the first and second phases of the Boggs Trailhead Improvement Project. Phase One work consisted of grading the area, laying millings and rolling them in place. Phase Two was laying a new trail of crushed limestone at the edge

of the site, which shifted the trail away from the parking area. A big thanks to those above, who did such great work.

Phase Three commenced on October 31 and continued on November, 1 and 8. Installed on those three long days were 25 parking stops, 340 feet of split rail fencing, the rule sign, a twenty-foot long gate, bollards and locust posts. The project was to be completed on Sunday, November 15 with the installation of 80 more feet of fencing and three more bollards. A big thanks to Jack Peth who lead the efforts to install the long gate at the southern end of the parking lot. Also thanks to Ken Gregory who lead our Phase Three efforts at the site and the other Airport Friends volunteers who worked with him.: Jack Peth, Pete Merther, Ted Weidner, Allen Prevendoski, Jerry Bates and Dennis Pfeiffer.

The trail users should now experience a much safer and relaxing experience when passing through the trailhead. No more dodging! We hope you enjoy the new experience at the Boggs Trailhead.



*Phase 3 volunteers Left to Right - Ken Gregory, Jerry Bates, Pete Merther, Dennis Pfeiffer, Allen Prevendoski, and Jack Peth*

## Scenes from the 20th Anniversary Celebration photos by Dave Oyler



Attendees enjoy the presentation.

Board members past and present.



President Imgrund accepts Congressional letter from Congressman Murphy.



## MONTOUR RAILROAD HISTORY BY BOB CIMINEL

## Pittsburgh Terminal Coal Corporation Mine No. 8, also known as the Coverdale Mine or "H" Mine

The Coverdale Mine was located along the Montour Railroad between Library Junction and Brightwood. The mine's surface facilities stretched along what is now Industrial Boulevard in Bethel Park, a suburb of Pittsburgh.

The mine began operation in the Twenties and operated until 1947. It appears that the hoisting shafts and tippie were completed in 1922. Coverdale had one of the largest "patches," called Coverdale Village, in southwestern Pennsylvania. There were over 250 individual land lots, in addition to a large bunkhouse.

Geologically, the mine was located on the McMurray Syncline, or underground valley, where the normally easy-to-reach Pittsburgh Coal Seam was 340 feet beneath the surface. Mines located on either side of the syncline could reach the coal through simple drift entries dug into the nearest hillside. The Montour No. 10 Mine, located south of Coverdale in Library, reached the Pittsburgh Seam through drifts driven into the valley walls of Piney Fork. On the plus side, mines that operated at the bottom of the syncline usually found a thicker coal seam. The seam at Coverdale could have been eight feet thick.



A Penn-Pilot Image

In 1922, the Coverdale Mine complex was considered state-of-the-art because of the modern electrical system, hoisting equipment, and coal processing system installed.

The mine received alternating current (AC) electrical power at 22,000 volts from the transmission lines and reduced it to 2,300 volts using transformers. The power then went to the main switchboard where it was either converted to direct current (DC) for use underground, or distributed to the various surface facilities, such as the main hoist, auxiliary hoist, mine fan, and tippie.

To produce DC power, the mine had two motor-generator sets that used a 2300-volt AC, 433-horsepower motor to drive a 275-volt DC, 300-kilowatt generator. Underground power went down the shaft in two cables encased in metal conduit where one circuit fed the overhead trolley wire and the other supplied power to the coal cutting machines. In 1922, the mine was still using mules to haul the coal from the working face to the shaft, but the electrical system was designed for the eventual installation of rail haulage using electric locomotives.

Coverdale used an auxiliary hoist installed over the main air intake shaft driven by a 250-hp motor. Safety features include a speed limiting system, a switch to prevent over-winding the hoist and a recording system to show how the hoist was being operated.

The fan house was a brick building that contained the 200-hp, variable speed fan motor that drove the huge exhaust fan. As the mine grew and expanded, plans were already in place to upgrade the fan to a 300-hp motor. A small diesel engine could also be connected to the fan to operate it during power failures. Continuous ventilation to sweep methane gas out of the mine was one of the most important facets of mine safety.

The main hoist had its own generator to supply DC power directly to the hoist motor. A flywheel and strict regulation of current to the hoist motor allowed the hoist to operate at almost constant speed regardless of the load on the hoist. The main hoist only handled coal and slate and was rated to raise 5 tons of coal or 8 tons of slate (equivalent to two mine cars) using a 1.75-inch wire rope. The hoisting system was designed to handle 600 tons per hour, which equated to 240 mine cars an hour. The hoist could make a round trip in about 50 seconds.

The main shaft was rectangular with semi-circle ends and lined with concrete from the landing blocks to the shaft collar. It was topped by a 65-foot steel head-frame over the two hoisting compartments, which each contained a self-dumping cage capable of holding two 5,000-lb capacity mine cars side by side.

The Coverdale tippie was constructed of steel and concrete. The two pit cars that come up on the main hoist automatically dumped onto a scale at the top of the tippie. From the weigh pans, the coal either went to a screening table or was diverted to the run-of-mine loadout. The use of circular picking tables was unique to the Coverdale Mine, but they saved a lot of space compared to the rectangular tables used at most mines. Slate and rock were sent to a storage bin through air-operated gates and then taken out to the mine dump on an electrically-driven larry car.

*Bob Ciminell is the founder of the Montour Railroad Yahoo group [http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/montour\\_rr/](http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/montour_rr/). There are currently 276 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.*

## 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

John Auth  
Mark Benson  
Daniel Bracey  
Chuck Brownfield  
Todd Carroll  
John & Joan Clites  
Ciny Coe-Verschage  
Stephen & Linda Cordle  
John Holzapfel  
Chelsea Jones  
Greg Kalinoski  
Mike LaFata  
Bill & Sandy Macek  
Dennis & Ellen Mavrich  
Richard & Mary Jane McAteer  
Stephen & Linda Moll  
Gerard Myers  
Tim Parsons  
John Petrichko

Matthew Smith

Laura Stentz  
Toni Sulkowski  
John Tarcson  
Jim Tiano  
Betsy Wolfe  
Hong Yi

### Benefactors

Dick & Annette Bryant  
Jim & Wendy Homerosky  
Dave & Veronica Mattson  
Wayne & Cindy Pfrimmer  
Gerald E. Rhine

### Leader's Circle

Anton Knaus  
Tim Parsons

## MTC Classifieds

**Wanted:** Volunteers to work next year on the Montour Trail Phase 20 renovation between North Star Road and the Montour Panhandle Connecting Trail north of the McDonald Viaduct. Volunteers have come forward to lead the physical labor part of the work, however additional volunteers are still needed to perform the administrative and record keeping tasks associated with this work. No previous experience required. For further information, please send an email to [info@montourtrail.org](mailto:info@montourtrail.org)

\*\*\*\*\*

Our heartfelt thanks go to Laura Orr, who for the past three years was the Race Director for the IKEA-Montour Trail ½ Marathon 5K Run & 5K Fun Walk. Prior to being named Race Director she was the Registrar for the event for three years. Laura's expertise and leadership has made this event one of the premier races in the area. Laura is stepping down as Race Director (but will still be volunteering!) and the Montour Trail Council is looking for someone to take on her duties.

If you are interested in learning more about the position of Race Director, please contact Mark Imgrund at 724-941-6351 or email [markimgrund@comcast.net](mailto:markimgrund@comcast.net). The 15<sup>th</sup> Annual IKEA-Montour Trail ½ Marathon, 5K Run & 5K Fun Walk will take place on Saturday, September 11, 2010.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Free:** Plywood tool box, with hasps, 24" x 24" x 80" Contact: Charlie Beaumariage at [cjbeau@verizon](mailto:cjbeau@verizon) or 412-531-6994

## I want to help complete the Montour Trail!

### I want to join the Montour Trail Council at this level:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Student/Senior	\$15
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*The Montour Trail Council is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. All donations are tax-deductible. You may also be eligible for matching funds from your employer. 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) 800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.*

### Don't Forget

The Montour Trail Council may be designated as your United Way Contributor Choice as option #3308.



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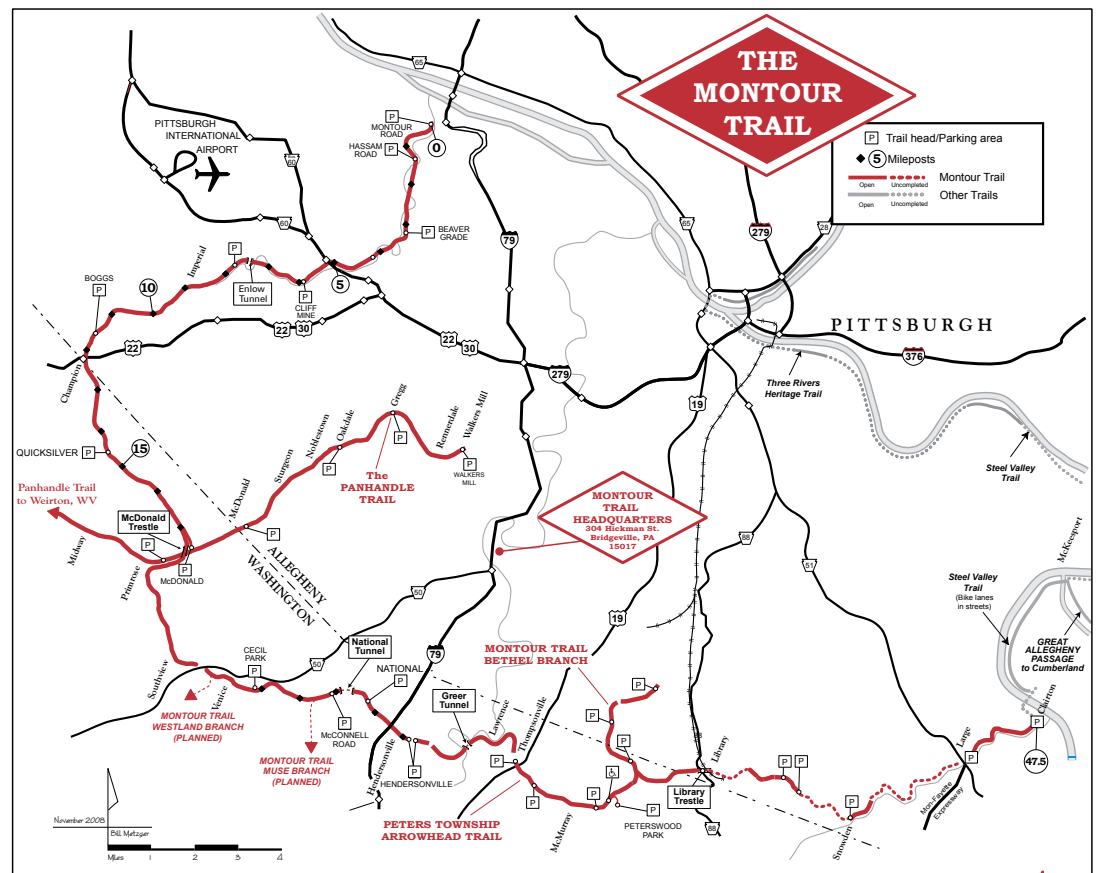
## The Electronic Newsletter

Beginning with this issue, more than half of the newsletter subscribers have chosen to receive the color electronic edition available through the Montour Trail website, while the remainder of the subscribers will continue to receive this publication in their mail box. If you wish to change how you receive this publication. Please send an email to:

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

By allowing subscribers to receive an electronic edition, the MTC will be able to save several thousand dollars each year in printing and postage fees.

Thank you.



**Happy Holidays from the Montour Trail Council**