



The Official Publication of the Montour Trail Council

MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

Celebrating 32 Years

Volume 32 Issue 5

September-October 2021

2021 Annual Meeting and Dinner

In spite of the barriers thrown in our way – from the continuing COVID pandemic to flooding to delayed construction plans – the Montour Trail Council will celebrate its 2021 successes during the annual meeting and dinner on Sunday, November 7, at the Airport Marriott in Coraopolis. We'll start at 5 p.m. with a social hour featuring a cash bar. A plated dinner will be served at 6 p.m., with the business meeting following at 7 p.m.

Fred Zelt, a Bethel Park native, retired geologist and cyclist living in Pittsburgh, is our keynote speaker. He'll address "*The Best of 5 Million Pedal Pushes*." Fred's insights are based on cycling thousands of miles while reflecting about the special nature of the Montour Trail as a shared connection, a part of a network, and a path to well-being. He will share stories from cross-country bike trips, lessons learned about successful fundraising for charity bike rides, and wisdom gleaned from watching over a global online community that has shared 80,000 cycling photos in 18 months.

Fred has cycled in most U.S. states, Norway, the Netherlands, and Brazil including riding 4,295 miles from Maine to Seattle with a group raising funds and awareness for multiple sclerosis. During the pandemic, Fred created the Social Distance Cycling Club Facebook group, an online community with 7,600 members in 69 countries.

To mitigate the impact of COVID, all participants must demonstrate a completed COVID vaccination or a negative COVID test taken within 48 hours of the event.

Make your reservation now using the form attached to this Trail-Letter. Reservation requests must be received by Saturday, October 30.

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

MTC Board Nominees

The Montour Trail Council Board of Directors has nominated the following members for election to the Board for the 2022 – 2024 term. Each Montour Trail Council member is entitled to vote for the nominees. Results will be tabulated and announced at the annual meeting on Sunday, November 7 at the Airport Marriott (see separate form, attached).

Dave Borrebach was MTC Vice President in 2019, has been Chair of the Nominating Committee since 2016, and is a member of the Membership & Community Outreach, Finance, and Operations Committees. A retired human resource consultant, Dave lives in Ohio Township with his wife Margaret.

Mark Imgrund is a retired software executive and is currently working with a Pittsburgh tech start-up company in an operations role. He began volunteering with MTC in 1997, has served on the board for six three-year terms, and was the MTC president in 2007-2009. He's the founder and current vice president of the Peters Friends' group, is Co-Chair of the MTC Operations Committee, and a member of the IT, Real Estate, and FGEEC committees. Mark lives in Peters with wife Tina, and enjoys biking, hiking, hunting, and good craft beer (though not necessarily, he says, in that order).

Peter Kohnke is a founding member of the Montour Trail Council and served as MTC President from 2001-2003. Peter is currently active on the Engineering & Construction and Real Estate Committees. He has been President of the Friends of the Montour Trail in Bethel Park since its founding in 1997 and is currently working on acquiring right-of-way to enable the Bethel Branch to extend into other parts of Bethel Park. Peter lives in Bethel Park within sight of the trail.

Phillip Torrez is the current MTC Vice President. He and his family have been members of the Montour Trail Council since 2014. Phillip is a longtime cyclist and has been active as a volunteer with bicycling organizations since 1985. He is a member of the trail's Westland branch friends and has worked with the Tour the Montour committee for the past three years. Phillip worked as a newspaper reporter for more than a dozen years and *continues on page 4.*



MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

| | |
|----------------|----------------|
| Deb Thompson | President |
| Phillip Torrez | Vice-President |
| Shirley Ulaky | Treasurer |
| Fran Hensler | Secretary |

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

THE MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

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Other Trail Contact information:

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

We are going digital, if paper correspondence is necessary:

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PHONE NUMBER 412-257-3011

NEWSLETTER EDITORIAL TEAM

Dennis Sims, managing editor

Mark Imgrund

Dennis Pfeiffer

The Prez Sez - Recalling Trail Events

OK, let's try for a change of pace this time, and do something just for fun. Here's some Montour Trail trivia to impress your friends!

1. The Trail passes through two Robinson Townships, one in Washington County and one in Allegheny County.
2. The Montour Railroad Company, which would eventually be repurposed as the Montour Trail, was organized in September, 1877. The railroad was closed in 1984.
3. The unequivocally best anagram of Montour is "unmotor."
4. The first port-a-johns were placed on the Trail on May 5, 1995. We now have a toilet, on the average, every 2.22 miles.
5. The first section of Trail to open was a 4.4-mile stretch near Cecil Park, on October 10, 1992.
6. The first 9½ miles of trail surface and base were destroyed by Hurricane Ivan on September 17, 2004. Not to be kept down, volunteers had the Trail ready for a grand reopening on September 16, 2005.
7. There are currently 16 members on the Board of Directors.
8. Horses are permitted only in Cecil Township, between Morganza Road and Rt. 980.
9. Maintenance is performed by seven volunteer Friends Groups.
10. The first issue of this very newsletter was issued in April 1990. Dennis Sims was the editor, and still is today, though he took time off in the middle.
11. The Gazebo near mile 4 was donated to the trail by the Borough of Coraopolis in 1996, having originally been built as a parade float. It has been the setting for at least one marriage proposal, in 1997.
12. Out of the original 13 trail founders is 1989, four are still active volunteers.
13. The first Tour the Montour was held in 2003, when some 100 riders braved the rain to ride up to 44 miles. Expansion of the trail made a metric century an option for the first time in 2009.
14. The oldest Friends Group is Cecil. The newest is Westland.
15. There have been at least three weddings on the Trail.

There, now you get to feel smarter all day.

- DEB THOMPSON

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

Note: Some of these meetings are still 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: Signing ceremony for the agreement to purchase 38 miles of the Montour Railroad Right of Way from the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad for \$220,000 on September 14

25 years ago, 1996: The first annual Ikea/Montour Trail ½ Marathon, 5K run and walk held on the Airport section.

20 years ago, 2001: Montour Run Streambank project completed.

15 years ago, 2006 Construction begins on Peters Township section of trail west of US 19.

10 years ago, 2011: JR Taylor Bridge over Clifton Road is completed.

5 years ago, 2016: Pleasant Street Construction is completed with a springtime ribbon cutting.

Montour Run Bridge Project

Underway by Phillip Torrez

Construction of a 200-foot bridge across Montour Run that will connect Montour Woods to the Montour Trail began August 23. The \$500,000 project of the Hollow Oak Land Trust is expected to be completed in November.



Sean Brady, Hollow Oak's executive director, describes it as "a perfect project" to connect one of the region's largest

The Hollow Oak Land Trust is building a bridge similar to this one that will connect its Montour Woods to the Montour Trail.

conservation areas, owned by the land trust, with the Montour Trail. As part of the project, a connector is to be built at about mile 1.4 of the Montour Trail to the bridge.

"This bridge will bring more folks to the Montour Woods conservation area and encourage people to experience this beautiful greenspace," Brady says.

He notes that it's the largest project in the 30-year history of the Moon Township-based land trust, which owns more than 400 acres of woodlands and wetlands in Moon, Kennedy, Robinson, North Fayette, and Franklin Park.

Ned Williams was president of the Montour Trail Council in 2017 when the Montour Run bridge project was conceived, and he and other MTC volunteers have worked with Hollow Oak on the plan since then. "This project reflects the great partnership between two like-minded organizations in our shared goal to get people outdoors to enjoy our trail resources," says Williams.

Brady says that a majority of the project cost, \$400,000, comes from the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, with the balance funded by the Allegheny County Regional Asset District, Moon Township, the Rockwell Foundation, and Hollow Oak.

Board Nominees continues from page 1

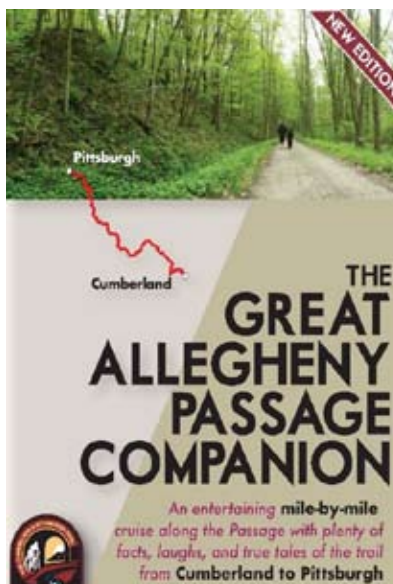
later as publications manager for the University of California president's office. He serves on the boards of two other local nonprofit organizations.

Shirley Ulaky has been using the trail regularly for both biking and hiking for over 15 years. Newly retired as Accounting Manager for R.G. Brewton, she is looking forward to volunteering her time and skills as MTC Treasurer and in support of the Westland Branch. She lives in Strabane with her family and is particularly thankful for the opportunities the trail has provided to get outdoors and relax in the difficult year of the pandemic.

Ned Williams served as MTC President for six years and is active in just about every area of the MTC's activities. Ned is a member of the Executive, Engineering and Construction, Finance, Membership & Community Outreach, Operations, and Real Estate Committees. Ned is the Director of IT, Quality Assurance and Safety at Washington Tool and Machine Co. He and wife Mary live in Washington, PA.

Hot off the Press

The Great Allegheny Passage Companion Cumberland to Pittsburgh



Bill Metzger is one of the founding board members of the MTC. He has written what Rails-to-Trails co-founder Peter Harnik calls, "flat-out the best, most ambitious, most educational, and most just-plain-fun rail-trail guidebook ever written, complete with great historical photos and crystal-clear maps."

Bill takes you along the completed GAP Trail mile-by-mile

through the 150 fascinating miles from MP 0 in Cumberland to Pittsburgh's Point State Park. Humor blends with serious scholarship in this look at the railroads, industries, people, geology, conflicts, sounds and even amusements that went into the trail's development. No matter when your trail adventure and the book come together, the goal of the Companion is for you to understand what has mostly become a tunnel of trees.

The Companion asks:

What will I see when I get there?

What am I looking at now that I'm here?

What did I see when I was there?

Order it at: www.greatalleghenypassagecompanion.com

New Kurnick Sign



The Cecil Friends replaced the weather beaten Kurnick sign this summer. The 1.5 acres plot was donated to the trail by Elizabeth Kurnick in the name of her late husband in 1995. Members of her family were in attendance when the sign was erected.

New Memorial Bench On Trail

Pictured: Shirley Ulaky sits on the memorial bench with family members behind her.



For years, Shirley Ulaky and her late husband Rick regularly hiked and biked on the Montour Trail. After Rick passed away last February, Shirley wanted to commemorate his appreciation of the Montour Trail and his love of the outdoors. She approached the Westland Branch friends group about a memorial bench along the trail. Westland friends' president Dave Hajnik shepherded the project over the summer, and the bench was installed in August near mile marker 21.5. Shirley's involvement in the endeavor led to her joining the Westland friends as treasurer and becoming even more involved in the MTC when she was appointed treasurer of the board. Before her retirement in 2020, the Strabane resident was accounting manager for a local firm for 20 years.

Alfred Benesch & Company Corporate Work Party, August 7, 2021 by Dennis Pfeiffer

L to R - Dean Morrison, Tyler Blonski, Matt Pierce, Mike Ewalt , Robbie Wilston, Carson Pierce

On Saturday, August 7, we held a corporate work party in the Airport Area with six volunteers from the Alfred Benesch & Company. They completed grass trimming along the trail at intersections and trailheads.



We have been very fortunate to work with employees of Alfred Benesch & Company in this their fifth year of donating time. A big thanks to Tyler Blonski who again set up the work party with the employees. Indeed, a great hard-working group.

Note: Alfred Benesch & Company celebrating its 75th year is an engineering firm with an office in Cranberry. In addition to its Cranberry Office, they have 39 other offices with 750 employees nationwide.



Butterfly Garden – Cliff Mine Trail Head – Mile 5.9

In the July-August newsletter there was a photo of twelve (12) girl scouts (Troop 36617 and 601750) standing in front of one of the three newly planted butterfly flower boxes that they planted. The flowers in the three planter boxes have done very well. Please see photo left of the beautiful fully mature flowers in one of the planter boxes. Thanks to trail user Maggy Guerrero posing for the photo.

MONTOUR RAILROAD HISTORY

The Mine Whistle

Bryan Seip – Montour Railroad Historical Society

Many of the coal mines served by the Montour Railroad had a steam whistle which was used to regulate the miners' workdays. The following is an account of life at National Mine #3 in Muse but was very similar in other mining communities as well. A steam whistle at the main shaft building could be heard about 5 miles away. A system of signals was established to keep the miners and their families informed of activities at the mine. The whistles were exact to the minute and possibly the responsibility of the Hoisting Engineer, one of which was on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



The bad news for miners checking out at the end of their shift is No Work Tomorrow.

Even if there was no coal mining being done on certain days, other jobs would take place while no miners were in the mine. Track gangs would repair or relocate the mine tracks used by mine motors and cars. Survey crews would plot out and map new areas to be worked. Other maintenance would be done while these chores would not interfere with the miners working at the coal faces. Thus, there was still traffic in and out of the mine on "non-work" days, necessitating a Hoist Engineer to be on duty at all times.

The most important whistle for the miners was heard at 5:00 a.m. This whistle would tell the miners that there would be work the following day. No whistle meant no work, which meant no pay. At many mines, especially those working multiple shifts, a chalk board sign at the Man Shaft entrance would be posted, listing "Work Tomorrow" or "No Work Tomorrow" for that shift.

On a workday, the whistle would be blown at 5:00 a.m. to wake the miners. At 6:00 a.m./the whistle would notify the miners that the mine car "Man Trip" would be leaving the bottom of the mine shaft to take the miners to the working face.

At 6:45 AM the whistle would alert the surface or "outside workers" and at 7:00 a.m., the whistle would signal the start of the outside shift. At 11:00 a.m. and Noon the whistle would signify the start and end of the lunch period for the outside workers. And at 3:00 p.m. PM it would sound to denote the end of the outside work shift.

The 3:00 p.m. whistle would also signal the start of "picking time". One of the chores for many of the miner's children was to go to the slate dump with a burlap bag and pick up chunks of coal which were mixed in with the slate dumped on the mine refuse pile. The families would collect the coal year round to be used for heating in their homes during the winter, storing it in a shed or coal bin at their home. The coal company was very strict about "picking hours" as they did not want any of the kids to be near the refuse pile while slate was being dumped during work shifts.

In some places, the whistle would also sound in the evening at 9 or 10 PM as a curfew signal for all children to be home and off the streets. In some of the miner's patches the curfew signal might be sounded by a siren instead of the whistle. One whistle signal no one wanted to hear was a series of short blasts, often accompanied by a siren, which meant there was an emergency in the mine. This called all employees to their duty stations in the event of a fire, explosion or cave-in at the mine.

Thanks go to the Cecil Township Historical Society for providing much of the information used in this column. For more information available on-line, go to ceciltwphistoricalsociety.org.



Miners crowd into mine cars at the start of their shift at Westland for the Man Trip to the working face inside the mine. John Collier, Jr. photos from Library of Congress

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!



Become a member now!

Go to MontourTrail.org/help-us/join
or scan the Q-R code with a smartphone



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Annual Membership Level

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

Contribution enclosed: \$ _____

Montour Trail Council
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304 Hickman Street
Bridgeville, PA 15017

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

Lisa Aletto
James Arena
Myra Aronson
Dee Bailey
Joe & Diana Becker
Cort Becket
Gross Beckmann
Brian Begly
Adrien Borovina
Colleen & Dan Buposh
Bonita Burchesky
Kate California
Tim Campbell
Carl J. Carlson
Rich Caruso
Lucy & Russ Christoforetti
Linda Cole
James Collins
Todd Conway
Alan Cowfer
M.W. Culleton
Susan Davis
Karolyn Davis
Mark Dooley
Robert Drewery
Jacob Dunn
Rich & Maureen Evans
Robert Ferguson
Joy Fern
Sheila Forester
Mark Frumkin
Shelli Glatz
Janet Gombar
David Hale
Alaina Hermanowski
Cheryl Hewih
Mollie Neuman & Paul
Impellicceiri
Janet James
Thomas Janci
Louis Kammermeier
William Kammermeier
Jim Kane
Heather Kim
Bill King

Jim Krzywiecki
James Lapecta
Karen Levin
Linda Levine
Dalene Malie
Daon Marraccini
Dina Marshall
Eleanor Mayfield
James McCalmont
John McCoy
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John Mincin
Raymond Mitchell
Wewdy Monaghan
Mark Muretsch
Chadan Nair
Shula Nedley
Dan Nery
Thomas Pakula
Mukeh Patel
Catherine Pigford
Donna Pomella
Michael & Michelle Porisi
Scott Radinovic
Nahan Rager
Chris Richards
Gary Ritacco
Carla Roehner
David L. Rovelli
Cheyl Schreiber
Eileen & Dave
Sha-baugh
David Shaughnessy
Stephen Shepard
Ed Sheranko
Catherine Sherbine
Lisa Siefer
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