



The Official Publication of the Montour Trail Council

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Annual Meeting: Trails Bring in the Bucks

The Montour Trail is an economic driver for the region and for this reason the Washington County Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Promotion Agency continues to promote the trail in its robust marketing efforts, noted the organization's president, Jeff Kotula, speaking at the Montour Trail Council's annual meeting Nov. 5.

Those efforts use various advertising vehicles including digital platforms as well as traditional media such as TV, radio and travel guides. The chamber also helped plan and finance the Southpointe Connector trail, which links the Montour Trail in Cecil Twp. to the Southpointe business park in Canonsburg.

The MTC's annual meeting was held at the Loft Conference Center in Southpointe in recognition of the Southpointe Connector, which held its grand opening last June.

Among the chamber and tourism efforts is the site WashCoTrails.com, launched last year with the tagline "Get Your Tail on the Trail," that promotes rail and water trails, Kotula said. Next year, the site will add trail widgets (such as chat buttons and feedback forms) and mapping capabilities. *Continued on page 5*

Greer Tunnel Reopens



Top of the Greers' Eastern portal (photo: Nick Koman)

The Greer Tunnel has reopened after a four-month closure. The 235-foot-long tunnel, at mile marker 28.5 of the Montour, was closed to trail users in mid-July and reopened November 10 after a permanent steel ceiling-liner system was installed at the tunnel's eastern portal. The 120-foot-long lining stabilizes the existing concrete structure.

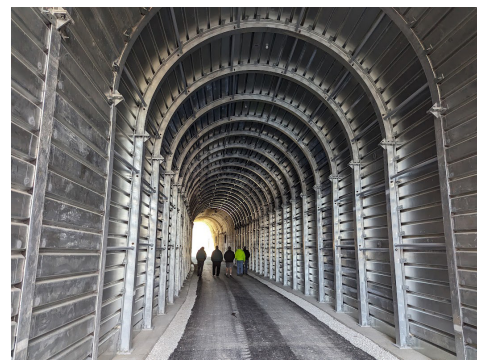
"This is one of the most significant infrastructure projects ever completed by the Montour Trail Council in the history of the 34-year-old trail," said Ned Williams, president of the nonprofit Council that owns and operates the 60+ mile trail in Allegheny and Washington counties.

Cost of the project is in excess of \$1 million, he said. Swank Construction of New Kensington completed the tunnel project.

The Trail Council was able to hold down costs through the work of volunteers, including the project manager for the Greer project, design engineer Nicholas Koman.

"We want to acknowledge the patience of our trail users after we started this vital rehab project, but we know they appreciate that the Montour Trail Council is committed to providing a safe and enjoyable experience for all those out on the trail," Williams said.

Continued on page 5



Tunnel walk-through (photo: Nick Koman)



Just Released: New Trail Safety and Etiquette Guide

The Montour Trail Council has updated its Trail Safety and Etiquette Guide, which encourages all users – walkers, runners, folks with dogs, and cyclists – to use the trail in a considerate, safe manner.

The new edition is generously sponsored by Public Lands, the one-stop shop for outdoor gear, apparel, classes and events that's located in Cranberry Township.

"We are delighted to sponsor the Safety and Etiquette Guide," said Scott Webb, the store manager. "The Montour Trail is a great community resource, and we all can enjoy the trail best if we're kind and safe users."

Trail Council board member John Dorman was a member of the team responsible for the revision. "One of the major revisions focuses on the use of motorized vehicles and devices," he said. "Generally, powered devices are not allowed, with exceptions for emergency and maintenance vehicles and for powered mobility devices and e-bikes that meet the MTC's transportation policies." *Continued on page 4*



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newsletter@montourtrail.org

To contact our office:

MTCooffice@montourtrail.org

Montour Trail Council
2589 Boyce Plaza Rd., Suite 4
Pittsburgh, PA 15241

PHONE: (412) 257-3011

Phillip G. Torrez, editor

Amy Martin and Mary Torrez, design

Editorial Board:

Mark Imgrund, Dennis Pfeiffer, Fran Hensler
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Prez Sez: I Can Do That!

By Ned Williams

Greetings to all of you in the Montour Trail community. We hope that you were able to enjoy a productive and enjoyable Fall, although it certainly seems to have gone fast. Soon enough the winter holidays, and their associated weather, will be coming up.

I have in the past perhaps tended to spend too much space in this column on trail construction. Although major projects are a huge effort and there's a lot of construction going on, I shall leave that story to the other fine articles in this newsletter. Instead, allow me to cast some well-deserved limelight on the groups of people who work daily to make the Montour Trail a better place.

Foremost among these are the Friends Groups, with a particular focus on their local area of the trail. Not just friends in name, the Friends for the most part really enjoy each other's company, which, more often than not, makes it fun for them to get together to keep up their section. These volunteers find great satisfaction in each person doing what they can to make the trail a really nice place, a great part of the neighborhood. Every day, the Friends show that they're enjoying what they're doing out there. It's a fine way to draw in new folks who may talk to them on the trail.

To accomplish what they do on the trail, the Friends Groups have to be pretty well organized. And they are – for starters, see the listings of their contacts and meeting information on the next page. They create an annual plan and meet every month to keep it on track. They keep minutes and track of volunteer hours and a treasury, and occasionally throw a picnic lunch. They plan trailside work not only among themselves, but also with the Boy Scouts, corporate work parties and municipal endeavors and coordinate with the larger Montour Trail Council on drainage, surfacing and construction projects. All this and a great deal more takes a lot of planning, management and phone calls.

But mostly, they're out on the trail keeping it in good shape for our users. Grass cutting, brush trimming, fallen branch and tree removal and surface repairs require frequent attention, as do fencing, gates and signage. Oversight and upkeep of the trailheads, picnic and camping areas, water fountains, porta john monitoring, and other trailside amenities are in the purview of the Friends, too. They are out doing these and many other things all the time as volunteers. They have brought the trail to a high level of service to our users, and the reputation of the Montour Trail throughout the region. And well beyond; just look at the license plates in our parking lots. We cannot thank the Friends volunteers enough.

The Friends Groups know that to keep volunteers happy and effective, they need good tools. Over time, they've amassed hand and power tools, chainsaws, mowers, small and large tractors, and trucks. They have built sheds and storage facilities to keep this stuff dry and organized. It all needs to be maintained and requires batteries, fuel, sharp blades, bearings, and parts. Of course, all tools, especially power tools and mowers, get such heavy usage that they wear out and need to be replaced at intervals. The Friends keep tabs on their equipment, plan for this investment, raise the funds, and strongly engage in maintaining their fleet in good order.



Jeff Kotula, Washington County Chamber head, and Ned Williams at the MTC annual meeting on Nov. 5 (photo: Lance Letterio)

Continued on page 3

Trail Friends' Meetings and Work Parties

MTC Board Meeting:

Every third Monday of the month at 6:00 p.m. at 2589 Boyce Plaza Road, Suite 4, Upper St. Clair. Turn at the traffic signal on Boyce Road between the railroad and the creek. 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)

Friends of the Trail meeting, every second Wednesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at the MTC Western Corridor Garage, 450 Cliff Mine Road, North Fayette Township, PA 15108. New volunteers are always welcome. For more information call Mark Modispacher at 412-266-1544. Work parties are scheduled as needed. For more information call 412-262-3748.

Fort Cherry Friends (MM 12.6 to 20.7)

Friends of the Trail meeting, every 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 parties are scheduled as needed. For more information, contact Tim Thomassy at 724-926-4617 or Chuck Hughey at 724-926-9436.

Cecil Friends (MM 22.0 to 28.5)

Friends of the Trail meeting, every fourth Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Kurnick Access area along the trail off Cecil Henderson Road. Work parties are scheduled as needed. For more information, contact Bob Mihalco at 786-910-5575 or ramihalco@icloud.com.

The Montour Railroad Historical Society:

For more information, email mrhs@montourrr.com

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

Friends of the Trail meeting, the first non-holiday Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at various locations depending on weather and time of year. Work parties on the first Friday and third Saturday of every month at 8:30 a.m. For more information on meetings or work parties please email us at petersfriends@montourtrail.org.

Bethel Park Friends (The 2.75 mile Bethel Branch and a short piece of main line trail around MM 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 parties, every second and fourth Saturday of the month at 8:30 a.m. For more information call Bill Capp at 412-833-5928.

South Hills Friends (MM 35.4 to 46.6)

Friends of the Trail Meeting, every second Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at South Park Township Community Room or the Township Library located in the Township Building at 2675 Brownsville Road, South Park, 15129. Work 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.

Westland Friends (MM 21.0 to 21.9, and Westland Branch)

Friends of the Trail meeting, every first Wednesday of the month. For more information, contact Deb Thompson at intrepidscout@theneonweb.com

Peters Friends Go Green

The Peters Friends group has installed a solar power system at their Brush Run storage building. The system is powered by four rooftop solar panels, and it is off-grid with power storage using Lithium batteries. Power produced will be used to charge batteries for the power equipment, provide lighting in the building and power small appliances when needed. In this location on the trail, going solar was a more cost-effective solution compared with a connection to the local energy company.

(photo: Wayne Pfrimmer)



Continued from page 2 - **The Prez Sez: I Can Do That!**

The great thing is that the Friends Groups are all very different, due largely to the people involved, but also to the nearby neighborhoods and the trail usage patterns in their section. Other factors include terrain, wooded vs. open surroundings, adjacency (or not) to streams and even the nature of the local municipality. But it's clear that while each Friends Group does a great job taking care of their section, each is especially good at some specific task or trailside maintenance technique. As the groups talk to each other, there is a real opportunity in sharing good practices, to the benefit of the whole trail.

The seven Friends Groups draw a certain degree of strength from a variety of activities of the overall Montour Trail Council. The several MTC committees and the Board, along with various other people, work together to keep the overall organization functioning smoothly, not the least of which is to support the Friends Groups' role of serving as the ground troops. It's always good to encourage a climate in which ideas and best practices are routinely shared. Ideas for raising funds, techniques with equipment, interactions with people on the trail, and especially ways to recruit new (maybe younger) volunteers to the Friends Groups – these are only a beginning of the possible range of discussion.

Fred Rogers famously advised, "Look for the helpers." It's our trail volunteers that really make it happen out there. They get to savor the enjoyment of a job well done, something that everyone associated with Montour can appreciate and taste, too. Thank you for being there, one and all.



photos: Dave Borrebach, Lance Letterio and Doug Riegner

Pedaling for the Montour

More than 400 cyclists rolled out for the 21st annual Gateway Engineers Tour the Montour bike ride on September 23. The Tour is the Montour Trail Council's signature fundraiser, which attracted more than \$31,000 in sponsorships from area companies and local businesses. Over 40 companies and businesses participated as sponsors and donors for this year's Tour. All proceeds benefit the nonprofit Montour, which owns and operates the trail.

The Tour returned to its starting point at mile zero this year, and riders had the option of riding 20 miles, 40 miles or 60 miles (aka a metric century). Because the Greer Tunnel was closed for a rehab project, the turn-around for the longest distance was at Tandem Connection in Hendersonville and cyclists rode up and back on the trail's Westland branch to get in their miles.

The Tour received plenty of accolades from participants, and its success can be attributed to tremendous teamwork from all of the Trail Council's friends' groups and other volunteers, from the stellar trail maintenance crew led by Bill Capp, stalwart work by the Airport Area Friends group, including organizing the parking lot crew, and from many Montour supporters that pitched in during the build-up to the bike fundraiser. Nine members of the Montour Trail Patrol were on bicycles to provide support and aid to riders during the Tour.

A special thanks from the Tour leadership goes to Katie Neu, a project manager of Gateway Engineers who provided key assistance, especially in the week leading up to the ride; to H&K Equipment and its manager Pete Cicero III and his staff; and to Mike Karkalla of the Forest Grove Sportsmen's Club, which hosted the post-Tour lunch and grilled plenty of food.

The Gateway Engineers Tour the Montour returns for its 22nd edition on Saturday, September 21, 2024.

Continued from page 1 - Just Released: New Trail Safety and Etiquette Guide

"E-bikes are permitted, but are limited to devices that are operated only in pedal-assist mode, have a power rating under 750 watts, weigh under 100 pounds, and are less than three-feet wide. No bike, powered or not, should go faster than 15 mph," Dorman added.

Professional photographer and designer Jeanine Leech (jeanineleech.com) once again created the brochure layout, which looks great.

The safety guide can be found in Montour Trail brochure boxes at trailheads or can be reviewed online by clicking the link found at montourtrail.org.

The MTC's initial safety brochure came out in 2018 through funding provided by the state's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources after the Montour received its "Trail of the Year" award.

Fun Fact

The section from Church Hill Road down to the Library Viaduct was the steepest grade on the Montour Railroad, at 2.4% for almost two miles. Loaded coal trains from Montour #10 in Library (Summit Station) often had to be broken into two or three sections to climb the hill to Library Junction (horse farm).

~ Deb Thompson



Q&A with an Original

Stan Sattinger, a retired engineer, avid cyclist and railroad enthusiast, was instrumental in the creation of the Montour Trail. He served as the first president of the Montour Trail Council, formed in 1989. Sattinger now lives in Minneapolis. He recently returned to town for a few days, enjoyed a Fall bike ride with “old” trail volunteers and later took a glance back at the Montour with the *Trail-Letter*.

1. **Thirty-four years later, how do you look at what has become this 60+ mile Montour Trail?**

With great pride and satisfaction.

2. **How did this trail happen?**

Love built the Montour Trail – love of the outdoors, of nature, of recreation, of railroad history preservation.

3. **What’s the one thing that impresses you most about the Montour Trail?**

The willingness of our volunteers to have done what it takes through the years to build a first-class recreational facility.

4. **What do you believe to be the lessons of creating the Montour Trail?**

Work with your neighbors, political entities and agencies in win-win fashion. Credit them for their contributions.



Stan Sattinger (in green shirt), flanked by (left to right) Dino Angelici, Tim Killmeyer, Paul McKeown, Dave Wright. Angelici was the first Trail Council vice President, and Killmeyer, McKeown and Wright were key volunteers in creating the trail at the beginning. (photo: Phillip Torrez)

5. **In what way, if any, did the creation of the Montour Trail influence or affect other rails-trails?**

The way we approached the PA Public Utility Commission on the preservation of rail-over-highway bridges may have served as a model for procedures established during Gov. Tom Ridge’s administration.

Continued from page 1 - Greer Tunnel Reopens

The heavily-used Greer Tunnel, constructed by the Montour Railroad Co. in 1913, is on one of the most scenic sections of the Montour Trail. The tunnel ceiling had been slowly deteriorating, with debris falling from the ceiling.

Swank began the construction work by excavating near the tunnel walls to cast and form the concrete foundations, which are designed with a drainage system to collect and carry water out of the tunnel and towards the slope. The concrete foundations have structural steel beams mounted to them and form the “ribs” of the tunnel’s liner.

The tunnel’s re-opening is the completion of the second of a three-phase program to upgrade and refurbish the Greer. The final phase, slated to begin in Spring 2024, will stabilize the western portal. The Trail Council plans a formal ribbon-cutting ceremony after the completion of the final phase.

Significant funding for this project was generously provided by the Redevelopment Authority of Washington County. The Montour Trail Council, in addition, launched its own grassroots fundraising campaign for the Greer Tunnel project. While we still have a funding shortfall, trail users have been very generous, contributing more than \$32,000 thus far to the campaign. If you would like to contribute, please click the Greer Tunnel donation link on montourtrail.org.

Continued from page 1 - Annual Meeting: Trails Bring in the Bucks

Approximately 110 folks registered for the annual meeting, which President Ned Williams said was among the best attended.

Awards were presented to recognize our volunteers for outstanding work in 2023 on behalf of the trail and the MTC. They were: **Dave Hajnik**, for his leadership with the trail’s Westland Branch Friends Group and project management in preparing the new MTC office in Upper St. Clair; **Leo Kennedy**, for his work on the MTC website; **Nicholas Koman**, for acting as project manager for the Greer Tunnel rehab project; **Mark Modispacher**, for his leadership of the trail’s Airport Area Friends; **Zachary Ordo**, for his leadership with trail real estate and IT/GIS issues; **Karen Robbins**, for her longtime service in assisting inquiries to the MTC office and other important trail matters; and **Dennis Sims**, for his years of service with the trail’s Cecil Friends and as longtime editor of the *Montour Trail-Letter*.

Also recognized were **Jeff Kotula**, for his leadership of the Washington County Chamber and Tourism Promotion Agency; **Matt Tinkey** of UPMC Sports Medicine, for its underwriting of the popular Montour Trail map; and **Roy Weil** and **Mary Shaw**, for their many years of promoting the region’s trails.

Completing the awards, MTC Vice President Julian Wolfe acknowledged Williams, whose latest term of president ends in 2023, for his many years of service with the Council. Wolfe noted that Williams has been engaged in practically every aspect of the trail over the course of his decades with the MTC, including nine years as president.

MTC board election results were announced at the meeting. Re-elected to the board: Fran Hensler, Dave Jackel and Julian Wolfe. Returning to the board: Don Thobaben and Deb Thompson, and elected for her first term: Tina Zottola.

Greer Tunnel

by Bryan Seip, Montour Railroad Historical Society



Montour diesels lead a train out of the east portal in 1979. (photo: Gene P. Schaeffer)

Greer Tunnel was one of three tunnels bored by the Montour Railroad during the Mifflin Extension project running from Imperial to West Mifflin in 1913-14. Bored through a rocky ridge along Chartiers Creek, it is the only Montour tunnel to have bridges at both ends. On the west, the railroad crossed over Chartiers Creek on a three-span open deck bridge and on the east side it crossed over an existing branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad on a through-truss bridge. The Pennsylvania had previously built its own tunnel through the ridge on a lower level, which is still in use by the current Pittsburgh and Ohio Central Railroad.

Many structures or features on railroads are named for a landowner or nearby community. The Montour's tunnel was located on farmland owned by the Bell family. However, the tunnel on the Pennsylvania RR was called Bells Tunnel, so another name was needed for the new Montour tunnel. Just to the south, land along Chartiers Creek was owned by the Greer family and their name was used for the newer tunnel.

A bit of confusion was added when a U.S. topographic map was published showing the Pennsylvania RR tunnel as "Greer" and labeling the Montour tunnel as "Montour." After the Montour had been shut down and abandoned for many years, some employees of the current Pittsburgh & Ohio Central RR call their tunnel "Greer" instead of "Bells," adding to the misinformation.

Greer Tunnel is 235 feet long, the shortest of the tunnels on the Montour. It is 18 feet wide, 21' 6" high with an arched ceiling and carried a single track. It has a slight curve as it followed the winding right-of-way along and through the hillside.

Like the other two tunnels of the 1913 expansion project, it was built with a wooden liner. It was considered a wet tunnel with groundwater often dripping inside. In 1922, a concrete liner and portals were poured with a brick facing installed on the arched ceiling. Thus, the date stamped on the portals reads 1922 even though the tunnel was

constructed nine years earlier.

The Montour Railroad used the tunnel until the end of 1980, when railroad operations were discontinued in this area. The main rails were pulled up and the line was abandoned.

Peters Township purchased all the Montour Railroad right-of-way in the township in 1985, with the intent of repurposing it into a linear park and recreational trail. The township developed and paved 3.5 miles of trail from Rt. 19 to Brush Run Road, naming it the Arrowhead Trail. The three remaining sections were left idle until the 1990s, when the Montour Trail Council entered an agreement with Peters to construct and maintain those unpaved sections, connecting them to the larger Montour Trail system. The mile-plus section along Chartiers Creek from Valley Brook Road to and through Greer Tunnel and into Cecil Township was finally opened for trail use in 2008.

After a century of existence, Mother Nature and her freeze-thaw cycles began to take a toll on the tunnel. Water dripping through the hillside eroded some of the rock and the bricks lining the tunnel roof became loosened, with bricks and rocks occasionally falling onto the tunnel floor, which was now the trail surface. Several years ago, plans were considered to fix this problem. A scaffold with a plywood top was installed to temporarily protect trail users from falling debris. Finally, a plan to install a metal liner inside the walls and ceiling was approved and the project was scheduled for the summer of 2023.

During preliminary inspections for this project, it was found that the eastern concrete portal had developed some separation from the bedrock of the hillside. This unstable condition forced the Trail Council to close the tunnel for repairs before the liner project could begin. Holes were bored through the portal into the bedrock to install anchors to keep the portal in place, with further repairs becoming a part of the liner project. The tunnel was reopened for traffic for a short while.

However, the liner project would involve heavy construction equipment using the trail as the only access to the tunnel and remaining at the site. Safety considerations forced another complete closure of the trail and tunnel until the liner project could be completed.



A 1950 view shows a loaded coal train westbound through Greer Tunnel and over the Chartiers Creek bridge. (photo: William N. Poellet, Jr.)

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 you'll find a wealth of information about the Montour Railroad and you can pose questions of its membership. You can also check at montourrr.com

I want to support Montour Trail Council!

Become a member now!

Go to [MontourTrail.org/help-us/join](https://montourtrail.org/help-us/join) or scan the Q-R code with a smartphone.



NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

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ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

<input type="checkbox"/> Leader's Circle	\$500+
<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor	\$350 - \$499
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining	\$100 - \$249
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<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$35
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$25
<input type="checkbox"/> Student/Senior	\$15
Additional donation	\$ _____
Total enclosed	\$ _____

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Mail to: Montour Trail Council
2589 Boyce Plaza Rd., Suite 4
Pittsburgh, PA 15241

MTC Use Only

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Taken by _____

Date _____

The Trail Can Use Your Help

The Montour Trail is a treasure for our community, and it couldn't exist without the support of you, other members, friends and neighbors. As you think about your love of the Montour Trail, please consider supporting it during this holiday season.

The Montour Trail is a place where people of all ages and abilities can enjoy the outdoors, get exercise and connect with nature. The Trail is also an economic driver for the region.

The Montour Trail Council has a proven track record of success. With your help as a member or donor, the MTC can continue to provide high-quality recreational experiences for everyone.

Donating to the endowment fund is a way to make a lasting impact. By making a legacy gift using cash, appreciated securities, or your will or living trust, you can help ensure that the Trail continues to be a vibrant and well-maintained resource for decades in the future.

You can learn more about ways to support the Montour Trail at: montourtrail.org/support-us/. Thank you!

To mark the 35th anniversary of the Montour Trail Council, the *Trail-Letter* in 2024 will publish a series of articles on ways to support the Montour Trail. The next one will focus on Qualified Charitable Distributions from those with IRAs.

Welcome New Trail 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 annual membership. Please note that foundations and other grant-making agencies often look at a strong membership as a criteria in their consideration of our funding requests. Not all new members have been entered as of our print deadline and will be listed in the next edition of the Trail-Letter.

New Members

Kevin Baden
Peter Bonadio
George Briggs
Kirke Brink
Kathleen Buzzard
Mark Cleland
Gwen Davis
Barry and Alyssa Dervin
Susan Drapkin
Marian Gregg
Amy Hart
Jeremiah Hoydich
Ellen Johnson
Andrew Jones
Pat Kalnas

Linda Kaplan
Marian Krulac
Mark Krulac
Gregory Locy
Joseph McKittrick
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Catherine Morgan
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Aaron Santik
Anne Schafer
Jim Slivosky
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Jane Lienhardt
Ralph H. Moore
Cathy Rogers

Leader's Circle

Randi Starr

Trail Blazer

Jim Starr

IN MEMORY

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Bellisario Dentistry
Richard Carlstedt
Gockenbach Family
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