Coming of Age: The Trail Matures

The Montour Trail has been a popular recreational asset for thousands of southwestern Pennsylvania residents and visitors since its first four miles in Cecil Township opened in 1991. But 2003 saw the trail enter an advanced stage of development, thanks to significant increases in uninterrupted mileage and the addition of new events to the trail's annual calendar.

**Landmark trestle, 5 more Trail miles open**

Nearly 1,000 trail fans turned out to celebrate the opening of the 963-foot McDonald Trestle on September 6. The impressive span, featuring stunning views of the nearby valley and hills, and the five new miles of trail south of the trestle extend the trail's longest continuous section to 22.3 miles, from Coraopolis to Venice.

This crowning achievement capped a year filled with important trail openings. A May 3 ceremony in Large officially opened the easternmost portion of the Montour Trail, from the park-and-ride lot off Route 51 to the Route 837 trailhead in Clairton. On June 28, the opening of a new 0.7-mile segment in Peters Township connected the Montour Trail's Bethel Park branch with the Arrowhead Trail, creating an unbroken 6.5-mile corridor convenient to thousands of South Hills trail users. Over 40 miles of the Montour Trail are now available to the public.

**Engineering efforts plan for the future**

The MTC's Engineering and Construction Committee made significant progress on several of the trail's remaining unfinished portions. A 1.4-mile section from Library Junction in Peters Township to the county line and the 0.6-mile connector to the Panhandle Trail beneath the McDonald Trestle should be constructed in 2004. Also, engineering is nearly complete on 0.9 miles of trail from the county line to Pleasant Street in South Park Township, including the imposing Library Viaduct over Route 88.

The requirement to replace the bridge over Muse-Bishop Road in Cecil Township will unfortunately cause work on the section from Chartiers Creek to Valley Brook Road in Peters Township to be delayed for about a year. Engineering is also taking place between Triphammer and Piney Fork roads in South Park Township, including the Piney Fork Creek bridge.

**“Tour the Montour”**

The Montour Trail Council took advantage of its extended western corridor by inaugurating the “Tour the Montour” ride on September 27. Despite rainy weather, over 100 bicyclists participated in rides of various lengths, from 6 to 44 miles. Sponsorships and fees enabled this first-time event to garner $1,400 in revenue for the trail.

**More events**

The Montour Trail's two established long-distance events both hit all-time participation highs. The IKEA/Montour Trail half-marathon, 5-kilometer run and walk on September 13 attracted 1,280 participants, while the Burgh's Pizza and Wings Run on April 27 had 262 finishers. The two events combined to raise $32,000 for the trail.

The Montour Trail also hosts various smaller events during the year, such as the December run that raised funds for the U.S. Marines' Toys for Tots program. Due to the growing number of requests for group trail use, the MTC board has adopted a policy governing such events. The MTC feels strongly that the trail is a public resource and should be available to the public at all times. Trail closures have been approved only for the trail's two biggest races, and other events will not normally be approved unless the general public will still be able to use the trail during the event.

**Farewell to Dick Quasey**

The MTC lost one of its most esteemed leaders when Dick Quasey died suddenly on September 4, having just seen the McDonald Trestle project to completion. Tireless and talented—especially in inspiring others to volunteer their time—Dick is best remembered by trail lovers for engineering and managing the all-volunteer construction of the beautiful Quicksilver Bridge in Washington County. The MTC is planning a suitable memorial to remember Dick and his irreplaceable contributions.

A garage is imminent

Thanks primarily to the never-give-up determination of board member Frank Ludwin, the MTC will

CONTINUED P. 4
Membership Contributions—2003

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Alfred B. Anhaus,
Byham Charitable Foundation
Robert Cressman
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Hernandez-Landin & N. Lauer
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Ronald L. & Sara A. Henry
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Mackin Engineering Company
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Jim Quasey
Vince Szilagyi
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CONTINUED P. 3
“Trail Matures” from p. 1

soon have a garage for its maintenance vehicles. Frank located an affordable prefabricated garage now awaiting installation (ready, volunteers?) near the Kurrick trailhead on Cecil-Henderson Road. It will house three vehicles, including the new tractor with attached mowing arm purchased in 2003 with help from PNC Advisors, the Allegheny Regional Asset District, and the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

**Membership Continues to Grow**

The MTC enjoyed its fourteenth consecutive year of membership growth, with the current number of dues-paying members approaching 1,000. Our membership renewal rate was a stellar 86 percent, thanks to our loyal supporters and the diligent work of MTC membership co-chairs Jerry and Stefani Agin. Our members sustained the trail’s maintenance and operations not only with a record $62,399 in financial contributions, but also with well over 10,000 hours of volunteer time. These plus in-kind contributions bring the total value of all member-donated support to well over $200,000.

The MTC continues to enjoy excellent trail maintenance assistance from its local Trail Friends groups, including the Peters Township Friends of the Montour Trail, founded in August 2003.

“We've tried to thank all our contributors in this annual report. If you or your organization was omitted in error, please let us know.

**2003 MTC Board of Directors**

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