Good, but still improving

“The state of the trail is very good,” said Montour Trail Council president Mark Imgrund in his message at the Council’s fall 2007 annual dinner. But it could still be better. We are fulfilling our mission of providing a safe, attractive recreational facility for hundreds of thousands of users. At the same time, we continue to strive for further improvements, some of which our clientele have been anxiously awaiting for more than a decade.

Closing the unpopular gaps

Some day soon the trail section from Route 19 in Peters Township west across Chartiers Creek and into Cecil Township, which winds through a wooded landscape south of Valleybrook Road, will be one of the most popular on the Montour Trail. Up to now it has been our most unpopular gap, thanks to the less-than-ideal bicycling conditions on Valleybrook and the winding steep grade heading west into the community of Lawrence.

In 2007, the Council took major steps toward filling this gap by completing the clearing, the rough grading and the drainage improvement parts of construction of 1.65 miles of trail and by awarding a contract for rehabilitation of two bridges, installation of one new bridge span and renovation of the Greer Tunnel. These steps set the stage for one of the most picturesque trail photos in years, the placement of girders for the bridge crossing Valleybrook Road (which actually happened in February 2008).

Less dramatic action took place on several other fronts. Preconstruction work continued for an important span in South Park Township, a bridge over Piney Fork Creek. Preconstruction and engineering work also moved along for the J. R. Taylor Memorial Bridge, which will close the gap along the Bethel Park branch by crossing Clifton Road.

Our own “interchange”

We don’t have the fancy ramps, signage, or multimillion-dollar costs of highway interchanges, but we now have our own four-way trail intersection. The “Function at the Junction” festival in June 2007, well attended by Washington County dignitaries, formally opened the connector between the Montour and Panhandle Trails west of McDonald. Not only can bikers and hikers travel a ramp—along the path of the Montour Railroad’s transfer track—between trails, but the Panhandle now offers 16 miles of trail from this interchange. The Panhandle is completed going east from McDonald to Collier Township and west to Joffre, with only a scant one-plus mile section missing on the way to its ultimate destination of Weirton, W.Va.

Solid support from special events and members

The Montour Trail’s three annual signature events continued to prosper. The Burgh’s Run, ably guided by the Daily brothers of Burgh’s Pizza and Wing Pub, drew 350 runners and walkers and raised $26,000 in event fees and sponsorships for the trail. The IKEA half-marathon, 5K run and walk welcomed more than 900 participants and netted $18,025 in revenue. And the Tour the Montour group bicycle ride registered 244 riders and raised $9,000.

The new guard

In another sign of the Council’s organizational maturity at age 18, longtime volunteers handed over the reins to competent newcomers—for the most part. Laura Orr took over as IKEA race director, Angela Cubbison as race registrar, Sam Hvitfelt replaced Tour the Montour director Bill Orr, who in turn filled the shoes of retiring treasurer Judy Thompson as 2007 ended. And Jerry Agin completed 18 years of service as membership chairman, turning that task over to—well, to no one person in particular. Jerry’s encyclopedic knowledge of the Council database has proved too great to transfer to any single individual, and several volunteers are sharing what was once Jerry’s job while Stan Sattinger and his Membership, Volunteer and Donor committee develop a more permanent solution.

No lost members

Happily, the shift of membership database responsibilities has not significantly “misplaced” any members, although the responsibility transfer at the membership chair position has made it necessary to estimate the exact number of members on December 31, 2007. We’ve also struggled a bit reconciling our members who give through the United Way or the Combined Federal Campaign, but now have a better handle on accounting for their donations. Our membership at the end of 2007, which has remained stable or grown slightly over the last several years, is estimated to be 1059. Members’ financial contributions during 2007 exceeded $73,500 (about $2000 more than in 2006), providing indispensable support for ongoing trail operation and maintenance activities.
Volunteers – our organization’s lifeblood

With no paid staff, we rely solely on the willingness of our members to donate their time to our cause, and many do so in large doses. As Table 1 indicates, about $50,000 worth of donated volunteer time was invested in trail construction projects in 2007, and with the additional time spent by our members managing the trail, maintaining the trail, and fundraising or organizing trail events, the total number of volunteer hours spent in 2007 exceeded 8,000. A special note of appreciation is extended to our volunteers who give of their time in so many ways.

Financial wellness

The MTC board’s continued fiscal prudence has kept the organization in strong financial health. Table 1 shows that our operational inflows exceeded our outflows in 2007, and that our largest expense once again was for trail maintenance. You can also see that our construction funding from various grant sources was more than sufficient to meet the needs of our ongoing trail building projects.

As few of our grant sources cover maintenance needs, the Council continues to pursue development of our endowment fund. As of the end of 2007, the fund balance stood at $54,108. Our ultimate goal is to reach an endowment exceeding $1 million so that interest proceeds can substantially fund ongoing maintenance.

And challenges continue

You know how Interstate 79 is always under construction; a recreational trail is no different. Maintenance efforts are needed, for example, to improve safety at Cliff Mine Road in Findlay Township (where the trail has a dangerous at-grade crossing) and for reconstruction along trail sections in Cecil and (both) Robinson Townships. State funds will assist with the Cliff Mine project, but most maintenance needs are funded solely from donations.

So we remain grateful for the faithfulness of our members. We attempt to recognize in this report all who have donated to the Montour Trail Council this year. Please let us know if we have omitted you or someone you know. Thank you, and see you on the trail!

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| * includes 15 misc. categories
Membership Contributions for 2007

$100 and up
Anonymous
Leslie J. Brogie
Sam Hvitfelt
Louise & Vida Komer
John & Sandy Newman
Dennis Pfeiffer
Judy & Tom Thompson
Roy Weil & Mary Shaw
Robert & Teresa Williams

$500 to $999
Aldo Angelo
Catherine Eagon
Giant Oaks Garden Club
Kathy Grant
Amy Harkins
John & Jeff Steigerwald
E. Steven White
J. A. Wunderlich, III

$250 to $499
James M. Bradley
Greg & Juliann Brzozowski
David & Carol Eibling
Jon W. Erder
Paul Even
Jacobus A. Foster
Louis-Goetz & Jacques B. Foster
Jon W. Erdner
David & Carol Eibling

$100 to $249
Bob & Susan Allen
Anonymous
Martha Bagdes
Tim Baker
Gay & Donn Barger
Mr. L. Barnes, Charles Beaumargie, Jr., BKG Industries, Inc.
Kevin & Susan Boehme
Jeff Bradby
Jerry D. Brand
Dennis F. Carlin
Jan & Albert Cooksey
Charles Edward Coughlin
Jan & Leslie Czechowski
Norman DeWitt
Joseph E. Donovan
V & Bob Dooley
John Dorman
Tom & Sara Dougherty
Roger C. DuBois
Ken Eitschlag
Bill Engert
John Falavoito
Dale Fisker & Deb Esia
John Falavoito
Mr. & Mrs. Sigo Falk
Charles L. Foley
Dianne & Jesse Forquer
Patricia Friedsam
David Friend
Mary Gallagher
Garden Club of Allegheny County
Melanie & Alfred Gerstel
Marco Gerwig
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas W. Golightly
Joe & Claudette Gray
Kathleen Hafey & Lee Cambria
Tom & Marilyn Hamilton
Paul Hartigan
Caner Henkel
Daniel D. Herchenroether
Richard P. Herberager
Sharon Hicks
William H. Holt
Mark F. Horan
Mark & Tina Imgrund
Patrick Jefferson
Dick & Becky Jones
John S. Karkt
Kurt P. Kearcher
Jeffrey W. Kertis
Kim Kifer
Fred Kissell
Jim Kurtanich
James M. Kuzy
Larry Laude
Lenonn, Smith, Soulexer Engineering, Inc.

$50 to $99
Mr. George N. Kovatch
William Knapp
Margaret Kester
Cross
Kathleen Kellinger & David
Jeanne G. Kaufmann
Roy Johnson
Dennis Jones
John A. Kautman
Jeanne G. Kauffmann
Kathleen Fellinger & David
Margarite Kester
John C. Kirby
Charly & Charlie Krawczewski
William E. Kukul
Mary Ellen & Tony Kura
Kristina Kushmerzhek
Daryl Lacy
Charles & Tracy Lamb
Mark Langenhofer
Bob & Joan Lewis
Lanny & Jan Liggott
Jett Lloyd
Richard & Rebecca Lindner
Jeff Lloyd
John J. Lopinsky
Charles Martin
Joanne Josephetti
Brian Matjascik
Gilbert McGill
John R. McElveen
Pete Mether
Paul Meile & family
Dawn Morrison
Richard S. Mosser
Michael & Cynthia Mullins
Rich & Ginny Oakes
Bob & Dorothy O'Connor
Sylvia O'Donovan
Nancy Lampessi U'Areni
Carolyn Palmer
Robert F. Ferencic
John & Barbara Ansee
David Pitts
Jim & Debbie Pratt
Iron & Linda Prezel
Thomas Prine
Mary Quasey
Frank & Karen Quan
Matthew E. Quinlan
Paul Rankin
Gary L. Rine
Judy Rici
Karen & Jim Robbins
George Hoeschenlehmer
Mike Rogan
Michael & Pattie Romzy

Byron & Deed Ruth
Richard Schmitz
Chris Seigh
Brayon Seigel
Jerry Shumate
Allmad Smith
H. Snyder Steel Corp
Mary Ellen & John Slaib
Mike and Lynn Spataro
Cynthia & Keith Stewart
Mary Ellen & John Staib
Robert & I. Betty Stewart
Cynthia & Keith Stewart
David W. Sullivan
Dit Sweet
Vince Szollego
Denise Tancredi
Gerald Taylor
Ed Taylor
Penny & Dick Thomas
Alice & I'm homassey
Borroughs & Thompson
Jim & Charles & Turner
Berthoud

$1000 and up
Aldo Angelo
Lennon, Smith, Soulexer

Membership Contributions for 2007

Janet & Gordon
David F. Hajnik &
Lewis-Goetz &
Jacques B. Foster
Jon W. Erdner
David & Carol Eibling

Brzozowski
J. A. Wunderlich, III

Williams

Anonymous
$1000 and up

Membership Contributions for 2007

Gene & George A. Angers
Blaine F. Aikin & Family
Anna & Dan Alexander
John & Linda Stalagowski
Laurel Banas
Janet Barger & Betzi Barger Girou & Nancy Varon
Ed & Joyce Bashitch
Martin Beck
Norman L. Beesey
Janet Barbach
Hal & Cindy Bernstein
Ken Berry
Samantha & Anne Humphreys
Sam Benhalen
Suean, Scott, & Nate sty
Charles Boburka
Christine Bock
Isanton W. Blockoven, Jr.
David R. Bologna
Denny Brua
Uuki & Annette Bryant
Denis M. Burke
Dennis M. Caffey
Andrew Cattlefan
Donald C. Campbell
Curtis S. Campbell, Jr., & Dr.
David E. Cagan
Ioddi & Valerie Cantore
Peter Casillo
Kevin Cecchi
Karl & Joan Leyrelos
Jean Condo
Lynd & John Cost
HCOMP. Jostanza & Helen M.
Howell
Harold Cramer
Thomas F. Crawford
Joseph & Donna Czarny
Alice & Jack Doug