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On a bright and chilly October morning, there was a celebration at the east end of the new Valleybrook 3 Bridge over Valleybrook Road. The celebration was highlighted by a ribbon cutting, opening the newest section of the Montour Trail. Washington County Commissioner J. Bracken Burns served as the emcee introducing speakers that included commissioners from Peters and Upper Saint Clair Townships, fellow Washington County commissioners, Montour Trail and State Officials and finally, Congressman Tim Murphy. Bryan Seip was introduced as the President of the Montour Railroad Historical Society welcoming the X-1 Crane, an original piece of Montour Railroad rolling stock, back home. Also, present were the Daily Brothers of the Burgh’s Pizza and Wings, who presented a $20,000 check to the MTC representing the proceeds from their 10K Run and Walk held in April.

Mark Murphy (no relation to Tim) of Cecil was presented with the ceremonial first ride shirt as winner of the drawing held by the Peters Friends for the First Ride with the Congressman. The ribbon was cut by the dignitaries and the gate raised allowing the Murphy’s to lead the “First Riders” across VB3 westward to Chartiers Creek.

Following the festivities, lunch was available in the party room of Tom Robinson. Thanks to Tom for allowing us the use of his party room and his property (TAR Storage) for the event.

Construction has finally begun on miles 38.3 to 39, from Triphammer Road to Piney Fork Road, South Park Township. Mingo Creek Construction was awarded a contract to begin the first phase of construction of the 0.7 mile of trail on October 16. The contract is to construct the abutments of a bridge across Piney Fork Creek just east of Triphammer Road. The accompanying photo shows the state of construction on November 10.

It has been a long and difficult time coming. The original funding for the bridge construction was obtained from grants from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and the Allegheny County Regional Asset District (ARAD) in 2004. However, before the money could be used, the Montour Trail Council had to convince two land owners to exchange property to provide a trail right-of-way, obtain approval from South Park Township for the project, align the trail to avoid a wetland protected by the Pennsylvania DEP, design the bridge and its abutments and prepare a bid package for the construction contract. At the beginning of 2008 none of those things had been accomplished when the (continues on page 5)
The Montour Trail Council is an all-volunteer organization founded in 1989 to convert the abandoned Montour Railroad right of way and the abandoned Peters Creek Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad into a 55 mile recreational trail for non-motorized activity regardless of physical ability or financial wherewithal.

**The Prez Sez**

**Annual Dinner: State of the Trail & Volunteer Recognition**

There’s nothing more appropriate for my column this issue than a short summary of the state of the trail report given at our recent annual dinner and a recap of the volunteers who were recognized in 2008 for their outstanding support of our mission.

**The State of the Trail**

The Montour Trail is in a state of growth and well-being. We made great progress in trail building and trail improvements this year, crowned by October’s West Peters project ribbon cutting event for the most picturesque two miles of trail we ever opened (Phase 16 and Phase 18). We also paved the National Tunnel in Cecil, eliminating the surface erosion problem that was a safety concern for many years.

We broke ground on the first part of Phase 8E3, the Piney Fork Creek Bridge in South Park Township, with a notice to proceed being issued mid-October. The foundations for the bridge abutments over Piney Fork Creek have started. This project was many years in the offing. In Venice, we made some progress on our temporary crossing at Rt. 50, but didn’t finish it because of a stream bank collapse where the base of the stairs was to be located.

The J.R. Taylor Memorial Bridge over Clifton Road is getting close to having all the I’s dotted and T’s crossed to enable the project to go out to bid. I reported nearly the same thing last year, but this time “I really mean it”! We also have started on the Cliff Mine Road crossing project (and may finish before the end of the year) and lastly, we repaved about 1-1/2 miles of trail in East Cecil Township.

We had a good year for receiving and submitting grants. Seven grants were awarded to the MTC in 2008 totaling $320,150, including:

1. a $90,000 DCNR grant for Phase 20, resurfacing of mile 14 – mile 17 and drainage maintenance in trouble spots between mile 9 and mile 17;
2. a $173,400 DCNR grant for Phase 19, final design of the Georgetown and Morganza Road bridges;
3. a $10,000 WCTPA grant for paving the National Tunnel;
4. a $15000 DCED grant for improving the safety of the crossing at Park Manor Drive;
5. a $25000 DCED Grant for Piney Fork, Phase 8E;
6. a $3500 Trail Volunteer Fund Grant from The Pittsburgh Foundation for the Route 50 temporary crossing; and
7. a $3250 Trail Volunteer Fund Grant from The Pittsburgh Foundation for trail resurfacing in East Cecil Township.

As 2008 ends, we have four pending grants totaling $749,031:

1. $221,500 for Phase 8E/6 submitted to DCNR
2. $50,000 for Phase 8E requested from the Laurel Foundation
3. $58,000 grant request submitted to ARAD for the Airport Connector.

continues page 3

The Montour Trail Council is an all-volunteer organization founded in 1989 to convert the abandoned Montour Railroad right of way and the abandoned Peters Creek Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad into a 55 mile recreational trail for non-motorized activity regardless of physical ability or financial wherewithall.
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

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

The Prez Sez continues from page 2

4. $419,531 from the Washington Co. Local Share Account for Phase 19, Morgantown and Georgetown Rd. Bridges

Financially, the MTC’s operating budget health is good. Membership and donation income is on track for 2008, and we had three successful major trail fundraisers this year, including the Burgh’s Race in April (thank you Daily brothers!), the MTC/IKEA Half Marathon & 10K Race in early September (special thanks to Race Director Laura Orr!), and the Tour the Montour Ride in late September with record attendance (special thanks to Event Director Sam Hvitfelt!). We have some challenges ahead for 2009 from a capital trail building perspective. Phase 19 and Phase 8E, in order to proceed, are going to require some favorable outcomes on our grant requests, so keep your fingers crossed!

Organizationally, of note is the new ad hoc strategic funding committee chaired by Ned Williams to plan our path forward financially in these challenging times. Also, our membership, volunteer, and donor committee has made some breakthroughs in making our membership database processes run like clockwork again. Thank you to chairman Stan Sattinger and the entire MVD committee, with special thanks to Phyllis McChesney for her dedicated administrative work, and to Dave Hajnik for his software improvements that made it happen.

Looking forward to 2009, we anticipate at least one ribbon cutting – for completion of the temporary Rt 50/980 crossing (early summer) – and hopefully a groundbreaking or two, or three – for Phase 19 (pending grant success) and possibly for the JR Taylor Memorial Bridge. If we’re very lucky, maybe we’ll be able to start some work on the Airport Connector, too. To summarize, we’ve had a very good 2008, thanks to all of you reading this message, and we hope for an even better 2009.

Volunteers Par Excellence

The Montour Trail is blessed with a great group of volunteers, and we recognized the contributions of a few of them at the annual dinner. We recognized Volunteers of the Year from each of our six hard-working Friends Groups. This year’s recipients were: South Hills – Dave Oyler; Bethel – Bob O’Connell; Peters – Sue Headley; Cecil – Frank Ludwin; Ft. Cherry – Ray Johnston; and Airport Area – Dave Murphy. Thank you and congratulations to all.

We also recognized six recipients of the MTC Trail Blazer (aka - golden spike) award this year, for their outstanding volunteer service to the MTC. A couple of them weren’t present at the dinner, so I hope we catch up with them all in person before they “read about themselves in the paper”. This year’s Trail Blazers were Rich Blaskiewicz, Dave Hajnik, Phyllis McChesney, Bill Orr, Dennis Sims, and Ed Taylor. The varied contributions from this distinguished group of volunteers ranges across the board -- from trail building to database work to administrative excellence to newsletter production to finance to engineering and project management. We have a diverse and talented group of volunteers, which is just what the organization needs.

We value the contributions of all our volunteers, and it is important to note that our recognizing the above individuals also represents our sincere appreciation for all the thousands of hours given by our hundreds of other MTC volunteers. Thank you!

Mark
6th Annual Tour the Montour – Record-Breaking Number of Riders
by Sam Hvitfelt, Ride Director

For those of you who could join us, the Sixth Annual Tour the Montour on Saturday, September 20th, 2008 was a perfect day for riding! A mix of sun and white fluffy clouds with just the right riding temperatures and it was a ride not to be missed!

In fact, many local riders thought so also! The 6th Annual Tour hosted our largest number of riders yet – 326 participants (up 34% over last year’s record-setting 244 riders)!! 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. In fact, our sponsors Jabby Joe’s, Brothers Grimm, Anthony’s Original Wholesale Produce, Shaffer’s Pizza-Bakery and Mediterra Bakery kept everyone’s energy levels up with their yummy food. This was the second year for our most unique rest stop … 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 Collector’s Edition 6th Annual Tour T-shirts were extremely popular again this year. Our record number of 272 pre-registered participants enjoyed the shirts (which were only guaranteed for pre-registered riders), and for those folks who registered on the day, the sartorial benefits of pre-registration were apparent. The classic black, modern design seemed to be our most popular shirt yet!

We are very proud to report that this year’s event raised $9,700 – our highest contribution to the Montour Trail to-date! We could not have achieved that milestone without the financial support of our present ing sponsors, Thermofisher Scientific, and all our other wonderful sponsors (Trek of Robinson, REI, Chairman of the Boards, ADP, Lanigan Massage Therapy, Gordon’s Terminal Service, OrangeYouActive.com, Park West Supply, Signal Graphics, and Wojanis Hydraulic Supply, Napoli’s Restaurant, and Metso Minerals)!!! You’ll find all their names and businesses proudly emblazoned on our T-shirts.

Don’t forget to mark your calendars for the 7th Annual Tour The Montour on September 26, 2009, where we’ll be celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Montour Trail by working to make a Metric Century Distance option a reality! We’ll look forward to seeing you there!

On behalf of the Tour the Montour Planning Crew (Phyllis, Tim, Mark, Frank, Dennis and Linda), we’d like to thank all of the 6th Annual Tour’s volunteers, sponsors and participants and for riding with us! We’ll see you all next September!

South Hills Counting Their Pennies

The Pennies for the Trail Day on October 13 was quite successful. The Peters Friends collected an even $700, the South Hills Friends (South Park, Jefferson, and Clairton) collected $1070, and the Bethel Friends $868, for a total of $2638! This is less than last year’s total of $3530, but given the state of the economy this year, it may represent people actually digging a little deeper in their pockets. Thanks to all the volunteers who made it happen.

Volunteers Help Deliver Pittsburgh 250 Proclamation. Washington D.C. to Pittsburgh in 24 Hours by Bill Orr

“We are ahead of schedule. Be at the Maryland Train Station and ready to ride by 1:30 A.M.,” said PNC Legacy Relay Ride coordinator, Seth Gernot during a 10:30 P.M. phone call to Jeff Curry, owner of OrangeYouActive.com, a Tour the Montour Trail Ride sponsor. We were waiting at the Holiday Inn, downtown Cumberland, too anxious to nap before the ride.

The logistics of the ride, being the biggest challenge, Jeff and I decided to stick together for both of our legs. I was riding with Jeff from Cumberland to Frostburg, and Jeff was riding with me from Frostburg to Deal. Once at the Cumberland Train Station, the team from the previous leg greeted us. Seth handed Jeff the proclamation, and we were off into the night. We made the 25 mile trek up Big Savage Mountain, surviving 1900 feet of climbing, a broken light, seeing spots from riding in the dark so long, wildlife running in front of us, and a 10 degree drop in temperature to keep the Relay Ride on pace to arrive in downtown Pittsburgh by 1:30 P.M. on Saturday, October 4. What is this Relay Ride all about you ask?

The Relay Ride began in Washington DC on the C&O Towpath, continued along the Great Allegheny Passage to McKeesport and finishing with an escorted ride to the Point in downtown Pittsburgh. The goal: to deliver a proclamation in commemoration of Pittsburgh’s 250th Anniversary from Congress to Pittsburgh – in 24 hours! The Relay Ride course was broken into legs with 6 riders participating in each leg, led by a captain who carried the proclamation, a satellite phone and a GPS tracker in a backpack. Relay Riders from the Montour Trail Council are pictured above and from left to ride Gil McGurl, Tim Killmeyer, Mark Imgrund, Ned Williams, Bill Orr, Troy Bogdan, and Charlie Beaumariage. Missing from the photo are Lance Loterio and Mark Mendelsohn. The MTC volunteers spent several weeks prior to the event participating in training rides to get in shape to ride at the required pace of 15 mph to ensure the proclamation was delivered within the 24 hour time frame. Everyone involved was excited to be a part of this historic ride, and would do it again in a heartbeat.

The Montour Trail will be celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2009. Look for announcements regarding special events.
New Trail Surface for East Cecil
by Charlie Beaumariage

The Engineering and Construction Committee refers to the trail between Morganza Road, M.P. 27 and the Chartiers Creek Bridge, M.P. 29, as East Cecil. Many new cyclists and walkers would be venturing west from Peters Township to Cecil Township on the two new miles of trail, over three new constructed bridges and a tunnel. Thus, it was imperative to improve the trail in East Cecil.

This portion of trail was originally constructed in 1995, with re-cycled surface material from the Meadows Racetrack. It had seen little use because it dead-ended at the west side of the Chartiers Creek bridge and had been neglected to the point of being overgrown and no-longer ten-feet wide. The removal of the overpasses at Morganza and Georgetown Road impeded its use. Presently, the engineering designs for the two new bridges at these locations are on the “drawing boards” and we hope to have them constructed next year, if funding is in place.

However, it was challenging to find the the money for the new limestone trail surface material. Three funding sources enabled us to complete this $10,000 project. Funding was obtained from a scrap rail project lead by Bill Capp, a grant from the Trail Volunteer Fund of Mary Shaw and Roy Weil, and the remainder from the Trail Council general funds. Many thanks to the sixteen MTC volunteers who did all the work, contributing 340 hours of labor over four days:

Charlie Beaumariage
Rich Blaskiewicz
Dave Blistan
Lou Caley
Bill Capp,
Joe Decker
Paul Dickson
Dick Ellis
Paul Eversen
Andy Glaid
Mark Imgrund
Frank Ludwin
Tom Prezel
Terry Tischler
Nick Varina
John Wasco

Ikea-Montour Trail ½ Marathon, 5K Run and 5K Fun Walk
by Laura Orr

374 men and 316 women were among the 690 participants completing the 13th annual Ikea-Montour Trail ½ Marathon Saturday, September 6th helping us to achieve the status of the largest ½ marathon in Western Pennsylvania for 2008.

Overall winners Eric Shafer, (m) 39, 1:13:48 and Robin Garber (f) 27, 1:31:21 competed among a field of runners of all ages and levels of experience from our youngest runner, Elisa Varlotta of Pittsburgh, age 10 finishing with a time of 2:46:58 to our oldest runner, Steve Gerovac, of Buffalo, New York, age 81 with a finish time of 3:07:26. At the finish line, all half-marathon finishers were applauded with a finisher medal recognizing their accomplishment – a welcomed addition to this year’s event.

The 5K run was equally competitive. Our winners Jay Dolmage (m) age 30 of Morgantown, West Virginia finishing in 14:46, nearly breaking the course record of 14:44 set in 2005, and Christine Keck (f) age 27 of Rochester, New York finishing in 18:36 lead the pack of 235 runners, 115 male and 120 female, which included the youngest runner Nathan Marvich age 6 of McDonald, Pennsylvania and the oldest runner Elmer Gasperage 76 of Carnegie, Pennsylvania.

With the partnership of Ikea, store manager Terri Noble and the many volunteers, who all deserve a huge personal thank you, participants were welcomed, registered and supported throughout the course.

The sponsors are also a huge part of the event. Dicks Sporting Goods, The Mall at Robinson, Robinson Town Centre and Comcast are all appreciated for their continued support. New this year, Ed Sickmund of My Way Storage was on hand providing coffee in the morning and bottled water for the finish donated by My Way Storage.

Kevin Smith, Elite Runners and Walkers, allowed us to utilize his store for the pre-race packet pick up, he produced the long sleeved technical shirts that were given to the pre-registered ½ marathon runners, and he was on hand to assist with race day announcements, instructions, and finish line photography.

A well-organized event enjoyed by all, netting the Montour Trail $16,720.00 for maintenance and amenities such as port-a-johns and water fountains along the trail for all users.

A link to race results, event pictures, as well as information for next year's Montour Trail ½ Marathon, 5K Run and 5K Fun Walk to be held on Saturday, September 12, 2009 can be found on our website at

Pinney Fork continues from Page 1
Montour Trail Council realized that both the DCNR and ARAD funding for the project, over $100,000, would be lost at the end of 2008. Both grants have an expiration date of December 31, 2008. For several members of the Council 2008 has been a race to put the grant money to work before the end the year.

As of November 10, Mingo Creek has mobilized to the abutment sites, cleared the abutment locations and access to both sites, drilled the holes, poured the nine concrete caissons of the bridge foundations, excavated a hole for the concrete foundation pad of the west abutment and poured the west abutment foundation pad. Mingo Creek had planned to pour the east abutment foundation pad and both abutments during the week of November 10 to 17. Completion of the project is expected before Thanksgiving.
The Mingo Valley Trail – Another Trail That Might Have Been

The Mingo Valley Railroad Company (MVR) was organized in 1913 to build and operate a railroad running north from the Pennsylvania Railroad’s Monongahela Division at Courtney, PA, near New Eagle, to a connection with the B&O Railroad near Eighty Four, PA. Eventually, the railroad intended to connect with the Montour Railroad Extension somewhere between Hendersonville and Hills Station (Lawrence). At this time, the Montour was owned by the Pittsburgh Coal Company, which also owned many coal mines along the Monongahela River south of Pittsburgh.

Although a survey of the proposed route is not available, two routes seemed plausible. The quickest route to Courtney would have been along what is now Bebout Road southward to Venetia. After crossing the B&O Railroad’s Wheeling Division tracks near Venetia, the right-of-way could have followed present day Sugar Run Road to Mingo Creek Road and then paralleled Mingo Creek to its mouth on the Monongahela River at River View.

However, if a connection with the B&O at Eighty Four was the railroad’s goal, the right-of-way would have left the Montour near Valleybrook Golf Course and perhaps followed the same route as that graded by the Chartiers Southern past Canonsburg Lake and down Linden Creek Road to today’s Route 519 and into Eighty Four. Eastward from Eighty Four, the railroad would probably follow Mingo Creek down to the Monongahela.

In February, 1922, the MVR filed an application with the Interstate Commerce Commission to construct the first phase of the railroad by building a 3.5 mile section of track from Courtney to River View and then up Mingo Creek to reach 36,000 acres of coal property owned by United States Steel and the Pittsburg Coal Company. The Coal Company was proposing to build a new mine with a daily capacity of between 2,000 and 5,000 tons at the end of the track. That mine eventually became the now abandoned Mathies Mine in Nottingham Township.

Previous articles in the Montour Trail newsletter described how the coal mines along the Montour Railroad were forced to interchange their coal shipments with the P&LE, PRR, P&WV, B&O, or URR, and all of that coal went by rail at exorbitant rates. An eastward connection to the Monongahela River would have provided the railroad an opportunity to deliver coal to the Pittsburgh Coal Company’s barge-loading facility at Courtney where it could be shipped down the Ohio River to the Midwest. The coal would have remained within Pittsburgh Coal Company’s own transportation system and not interchanged with competitive railroads. Needless to say, the Montour’s competitors fought tooth and nail to prevent the coal company from shipping by barge.

Unfortunately, the Mingo Valley Railroad never progressed beyond the proposal stage and the project was abandoned. Had the right-of-way been built, it would have made a great addition to the Allegheny Trail Alliance.

Bob Ciminel is the founder of the Montour Railroad Yahoo group [http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/montour_rr]. There are currently 240 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
Charles Albrighton  
George Boykin  
John Brobst  
John Buckley  
Susan Catanzarita  
Joe and Sonja DeGangi  
David Disheroon  
William Drago  
Richard Ellis  
Garrett Gentile  
Dennis & Sandra Johnson  
Gilbert Jones  
Margo Kessler  
Anton Knaus  
Drew McCabe  
John Nagle

Craig Nickerson  
Frank Petrich  
Carter Roth  
Sonarus Online  
James Taggart  
Charles Taylor  
Nancy & Tom Taylor  
Robert Walker  
Rick Weaver

Benefactors
Crafton-Ingram Rotary  
David & Carol Eibling  
Anton Knaus  
Daniel W. McKenna  
Wayne & Cindy Pfrimmer

I want to help complete the Montour Trail!

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

- Student/Senior $15
- Individual $25
- Family $35
- Supporting $50
- Sustaining $100
- Benefactor $250
- Leader’s Circle $500+

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Eagle Scout Project

A new shelter at the Robinson Run Bridge, located on the Montour Panhandle Connector was completed by Boy Scout Eagle candidate Drew Chidister of Troop 344, Wexford, Pennsylvania in October. Drew constructed the picnic table of Trex lumber with stainless steel supports. The shelter features a picture board depicting the various construction phases during rehabilitation of the bridge. Drew recently won the King of the Mountain road cycling competition in Clearfield, Pennsylvania. He is sponsored by Trek, and broke the old record for the age group 19 and under by 2 minutes and 30 seconds.

From left to right, Scoutmaster Drew Chidester Sr., Drew Chidester, and Charlie Beaumariage
Happy Trails and Happy Holidays from the Montour Trail Council.

Deadline for submitting articles to the January-February 2008 newsletter is scheduled for Monday, January 11 at midnight.