



*Cambria County Conservation & Recreation Authority*

# Friends of the Trails

*Ghost Town Trail ▪ Path of the Flood Trail ▪ Jim Mayer Riverswalk Trail*

[www.cambriaconservationrecreation.com](http://www.cambriaconservationrecreation.com)

Fall 2017

## GTT Extension *Stritty's Way* Now Open

Over 130 people attended the Grand Opening of Stritty's Way, the 8 mile Ghost Town Trail Extension that extends from Belsano to Cardiff, on Tuesday, Sept. 26th. The Cambria County Conservation & Recreation Authority (CCCRA), along with the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and project partners, held the trail dedication and ribbon cutting ceremony at the Vic Miller Rd Trailhead in Belsano. Several dozen people took part in the 16 mile bike sojourn and open walking tour following the ceremony. Special thanks to the Strittmatter family for providing refreshments and take-away gifts.

This 8 mile section is Phase I of a multi-phase project to complete the entire 15.5 mile extension along the C and I railroad corridor. Once the remaining 7.5 miles of the extension are completed, the Ghost Town Trail will have the first continuous loop rail-trail in the eastern United States, according to the Rails to Trails Conservancy.

The completed extension will include a 32 mile loop and a 16 mile loop so cyclists and trail users no longer only have an "out-and-back" option. The extension will eventually connect the extension back onto the Ghost Town Trail in Revloc near the Rt. 219 overpass. The CCCRA is currently seeking funding for this 7.5 mile section.

Tom Sexton, Director of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Northeast Regional Office, was the featured speaker of the event. He participated in a bike sojourn of the C and I railroad corridor before it was a trail back in 2011 as part of the RTC Rail-Trail Sojourn Series.



*(Left to Right) Tom Sexton, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy; Suzanne Mead, daughter of Tom Strittmatter; Ashton White, PA Outdoor Corp; Jeff Strittmatter, son of Tom Strittmatter; Julie Doyle, Up-N-Running; Judy Strittmatter, wife of Tom Strittmatter; Cambria County Pres. Commissioner Tom Chernisky; Jean Hansen (sister to Tom Strittmatter) and Ralph Hansen; Tom Kakabar, CCCRA Board Chairman; and Cliff Kitner, CCCRA.*

Other speakers included Judy Strittmatter, wife of Tom Strittmatter for whom the extension is named, Mike Burk, President of the C and I Trail Council; Julie Doyle, co-owner of Up-N-Running; Ashton White, PA Outdoor Corp; Cambria Co. Commissioner Tom Chernisky; and Tom Kakabar, Chairman of the CCCRA Board of Directors.

The extension, which follows the C and I railroad corridor from Belsano to Cardiff, was funded through a PennDOT TAP Grant, with funding assistance from the Community Initiatives Fund and the Penelec Fund for the Future of Greater Johnstown through the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies.

This project included the restoration of the Rt. 422 underpass trail section, which was originally built in the 1990s but has since deteriorated, as well as two large bridges. This 422 underpass section connects the Rexis Branch spur to the new 8 mile extension by way of a short connection on Vic Miller Rd. The 422 underpass restoration was funded by a \$2,000 grant through the Robert Waters Economic Development Fund within the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies, a \$5,000 grant from the REI Foundation, \$3,000 from Cambria County, and the remaining funding was through the Friends of the Trails program.

The trail extension is named "Stritty's Way" in memory of 20+ year CCCRA Board Member and trail advocate Tom Strittmatter. Trail users will be able to park at the new trailhead parking areas at 227 Vic Miller Rd. in Belsano and North St. in Cardiff. The two bridges near North St. will be completed by the end of October.



*Andrea Miller, a Cambria Co. resident who grew up on Vic Miller Rd., participates in the bike sojourn of Stritty's Way following the grand opening ceremony.*

# Rich Fitzgerald Bikes Ghost Town Trail

Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald visited Ebensburg on July 26th, as part of the 'Bridge to Pittsburgh' initiative between Cambria and Allegheny Counties. A press conference was held outside of the Ebensburg courthouse where Fitzgerald stressed the importance of multimodal transportation, trails, and connectivity in the region as an avenue to attract a younger, more diverse, population. Cambria County Commissioner Tom Chernisky discussed the County's work with Fitzgerald and the action plan that is in place to extend Pittsburgh businesses into Cambria County.

Officials also discussed how the 'The Building a Bridge to Pittsburgh' effort would deepen the supply chain, develop business relationships, and bring more job opportunities to rural areas. They stressed the great quality of life in Cambria County due to its many recreational opportunities.

CCCRA Board & Staff and local officials then took a 14-mile bike ride in the afternoon with representatives from Indiana County, Conemaugh Valley Conservancy, LHORBA, and the Young People's Community Center. The group traveled on the Ghost Town Trail from the YPCC in Ebensburg to the Vintondale Trail Head with a stop at the Eliza Furnace.

The group discussed historic highlights of the trail, the trail's economic impact in the region, and how the 'Bridge to Pittsburgh' effort would affect recreational, regional, and economic growth in the area. More plans are already underway to continue the Bridge to Pittsburgh effort this fall.



The group takes a break from the ride in front of the Eliza Furnace along the Ghost Town Trail in Vintondale on July 26, 2017. (Left to Right): Brad Clemenson, CCCRA; Rich Fitzgerald, Allegheny County Exec.; Sherene Hess, Indiana Co. Commissioner; Jarrod Bunk, City Cycle; Cliff Kitner, CCCRA; Linda Gwinn, Blairsville Community Dev. Auth.; Dan Maher, LHORBA; Tom Chernisky, Cambria Co. Pres. Commissioner; Lisa Rager, Gtr Johnstown/ Cambria Co. Convention & Visitors Bureau; Rick Bloom, Conemaugh Valley Conservancy/CCCRA; Dirk Johnson, YPCC; and Leanna Bird, CCCRA.

# Cen. Cambria Student Builds GTT Bridge



Luke Lockard, a senior at Central Cambria High School, completed a 50 ft. bridge construction project on the future Ghost Town Trail extension as part of his Eagle Scout

Project this summer. He had the help of his father and 15 other volunteers, including 6 youth and 9 adults. Lockard worked with the CCCRA, who manages the trail, throughout all phases of the project. Funding was provided by the Penelec Fund for the Future of Greater Johnstown through the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies.

The bridge is located in Revloc on the 7.5 mile section of the GTT that still needs to be developed. The initial 8 miles of the GTT extension, from Belsano to Cardiff, were recently completed.

"The most rewarding part of the project was being able to complete a bridge that will be used by people in the future as well as helping Cambria County out as a whole to expand the trails," Lockard said.

Pre-construction planning for the bridge started during the spring of 2016. During construction in the summer, Lockard and volunteers laid down 2x12s on the sides to use as a foundation for the decking. Then, they installed a criss-cross pattern of 2x4s and 2x8s

for the decking foundation. Railing posts and the railings were then installed. The project construction took a total of eight hours of work on-site.

Lockard thanked the many volunteers who donated their time, equipment, and services to help with the project. Lockard's uncle donated a quad to use for hauling project material. Kevin O'Brien provided a chainsaw to help clear the trees blocking the undeveloped trail. Ron McCuster, who is a local private contractor, also donated much of his personal time towards helping the project.

"More people should get involved with community service and projects like this one," Lockard said. "You can give back in so many ways, whether it's building a bridge or planting a garden. It's a great way to give back to the community."

Lockard has been a Boy Scout since the 1st grade and was awarded the Eagle Scout award earlier this fall. After graduating next year, Lockard plans to attend college for business administration.

**"You can give back to the community in so many ways, whether it's building a bridge or planting a garden."**

# Local Students Hit the Trails

In an era of increased screen-based activities and record obesity rates amongst children, it is more important than ever for kids to get outside. Here are some snapshots of local high school students hiking and biking the trails as part of outdoor classroom experiences this past summer.

**Top Right:** CCCRA Intern Gina Spinner and local high school students who were crew members on the Johnstown/Altoona PA Outdoor Corp this summer took a hike on the Ghost Town Trail with the CCCRA to learn about careers in the outdoors.

**Bottom Left:** Youth Philanthropy Interns of the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies took a hike with the CCCRA on the Path of the Flood Trail to discuss the impact of trails on community and economic development. They then picnicked at the Staple Bend Tunnel.

**Bottom Right:** Students from Forest Hills High School (Sidman, PA) NASA environmental education club took a bike ride the Ghost Town Trail in Nanty Glo early this fall.



## 2017 Friends of the Trails Membership

If you believe that great trails make great communities, we ask for your support to enhance and expand our regional treasures, the Cambria County Trails. The three major community trails that we manage include the Ghost Town Trail, the Path of the Flood Trail, and the Jim Mayer Riverswalk Trail. **With your tax-deductible membership donation, we can deliver projects that will enhance and expand our trails, making them even better for generations to come.**

**Renew or begin your Friends of the Trails membership today!**



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401 Candlelight Drive, Suite 240  
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You can also become a *Friend of the Trails* by visiting our website:  
[www.cambriacconservationrecreation.com](http://www.cambriacconservationrecreation.com).

### Friends of the Trails - Membership Levels

Please check one:

- Senior/Student (\$10) - Standard
- Individual (\$20) - Standard
- Family (\$35)  
Standard + 4 stickers
- Friend (\$50)  
Standard + 5 stickers
- Patron (\$100)  
Standard + 5 stickers
- Silver Business Sponsor (\$150)  
Standard + 5 stickers
- Gold Business Sponsor (\$250)  
Standard + 5 stickers

# Jim Mayer Trail Family Fun Run



The Jim Mayer Trail Family Fun Run was on September 9th and was the last event of the 2017 Cambria County Trails Series. This event was a 5K run/walk out-and-back course along the original, newly resurfaced section of the Jim Mayer Riverswalk Trail in Johnstown.

Kids, ages 8 and under, participated in the Kids' Trail Trot presented by MedExpress. All Trail Trot participants received a medal and a chance to win a free bike. Thanks to MedExpress, two free bikes were given away to participants Lamont Schuster and Sarah Elena Munoz. All proceeds from the Jim Mayer Family Fun Run benefit the enhancement and expansion of the Cambria County trails.

*(Top photo) Maia Dahlin and Lamont Shuster help lead their dad Tom Schuster to the 5K finish line. (Bottom left) 5K award winners left to right are Lisa Janosik, Shawn Bell, Grant Cruse, and Davonte Wilson. Stephanie Daniels and Gina Dansak not pictured. (Bottom right) Chris Bragg, Elizabeth Mayer, and Ty Bragg walk the 5K with their dog Luna.*



## Thank you to our 2017 Sponsors!

- MedExpress (Kids' Trail Trot sponsor)
- The EADS Group, Inc. (Silver Level)
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- North American Hoganas (Bronze Level)
- CamTran (Bronze level)
- "Rec the Alleghenies," an initiative of Community Foundation for the Alleghenies (Bronze Level)
- Family Dentistry Associates of Johnstown P.C. (Patron Level)
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\*Special thanks to the Jim Mayer Family\*

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