



TRAIL NEWS

ISSUE #9

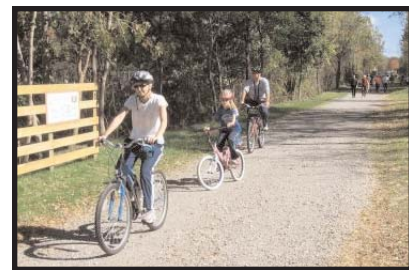
HURON COUNTY, OHIO

SPRING 2008

NORTH COAST INLAND TRAIL

NOW TWICE THE TRAIL !

NEW MONROEVILLE TRAIL OPENING DOUBLES OUR MILEAGE



October 21, 2007 was a great day for Firelands Rails to Trails and Huron County, when 3.25 miles of new trail, from Route 99 in Monroeville to Sand Hill road in Lyme Township, was formally opened. This was the culmination of 28 months of work that began when Mallory Clemons began removing brush and ties on July 1, 2005. Since then, several contractors and dozens of volunteers put in countless hours cutting brush, setting posts, putting up signs and adding benches, mileposts, railroad artifacts and other trail enhancements.

The ribbon cutting honors were performed by the Myers family: Linda, John, son Jon and Rudy the dog (as seen above, center). We are also indebted to this family who lives adjacent to the trail for their cooperation in resolving some routing issues between Jackson Street and Route 547.

The Grand Opening Day was near perfect - breezy, warm, sunny, and lots of people enjoying themselves in the outdoors. A shortage of hot dogs was the only hitch! If you haven't been on this section yet we urge you to enjoy it as soon as weather conditions are to your liking. It is a lovely tree-lined trail which opens up to wide vistas just west of Williams Road. A beautiful, tranquil stream crossing completes the scene as the trail nears Sand Hill Road.

FRTTI members and volunteers will now turn their attention to a couple of major goals for 2008 - to construct a trail head parking lot on the east side of Route 99 in Monroeville to serve the new trail; and to construct and open a 1.6 mile section of trail in Collins. In addition there are now twice as many miles to operate and maintain. We look forward to continued development of all trail sections with appropriate amenities - mile posts, benches, historical artifacts, kiosks, and tree plantings. Hoping to see you on the trail! -Gordon Oney, FRTTI President

**IN
THIS
ISSUE:**

Local Scout builds a New Kiosk at North West Street.....	2
5K Race Planned.....	3
“A Perfect Fall Day” defined	4
Collins Progress.....	5
Meet “The Wheeling”.....	5



NEW KIOSK

Firelands Rails to Trails has long had a dream for a kiosk at the North West Street Trailhead. FRTTI was approached by Eagle Scout Elijah Coe and he delivered!

Elijah put dozens of hours into this heavy duty and attractive kiosk complete with shingle roof and hinged front panel. Elijah and his dad installed the kiosk in December with the help of FRTTI Vice President Stan Bernhardt. Stan oversaw the design and coordinated the installation with Elijah.

Elijah is 17 years old and is a student at Western Reserve. This project was part of Elijah's Eagle Scout badge process.

Our main trailhead now has a prominent and protected place to display notices, upcoming events and general information about the trail.

A big round of applause to Elijah Coe for a project well done! *Stan Bernhardt Photo*



MORE NEW BENCHES



Trail Users Find Rest

A trail bench is the perfect place to pause and rest during your trail experience. Placed in just the right picturesque spots, these are great places to soak in some sun and observe some wildlife or flowers. You may notice some new benches along the trail in the next few months. Constructed at home by a local Boy Scout and other FRTTI volunteers, the benches will be sunk into the ground when spring thaw arrives.

Participation in small construction projects like these are good ways for fathers and sons to do projects together for the community, and excellent ways for members who do not have heavy equipment to get involved. - Joe Missler

2008 ANNUAL MEETING

By Rick Schaffer The dream of riding a bicycle on old railroad corridor across much of northern Ohio is becoming more and more of a reality. That was the message at the eighth annual meeting of the Firelands Rails to Trails on February 7th.

"The linkages that were pie-in-the sky dreams a few years ago are now coming together," said Steve Gruner, director of the Sandusky County Park District and keynote speaker at the dinner-meeting at Berry's Restaurant. Currently, The North Coast Inland Trail is completed in sporadic segments in Sandusky, Huron and Lorain counties. But trail will continue to grow in 2008, with more expansion planned for 2009 and beyond.

Firelands Rails to Trails, an all-volunteer organization, is the driving force behind the Huron County portion of the trail.

"2008 and 2009 are going to be action packed," said Joe Mantey, Firelands Rails to Trails trustee. Last year, volunteers began clearing land in Collins, where a 1.5-mile trail will be opened later this year, said Stan Bernhardt, Firelands Rails to Trail vice president.

Also, a grant application to the Ohio Department of Transportation is being submitted to re-build the old railroad bridge over the Huron River in Monroeville just east of Ohio 99. The bridge would connect the two segments of trail currently open in Huron County. And further west, a separate grant application to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources is being made. That would be used to extend the trail from the current terminus at Sand Hill Road to Prairie Road, just east of Bellevue.

It will be the second half of 2008 before it's known whether the grants are approved. The grants have local match requirements, but Firelands Rails to Trails uses volunteers' work, instead of local tax money for the match.

"We've used 2,000 to 3,000 hours of volunteer work to build the trail we have," said Firelands Rail to Trails President Gordon Oney. "We don't deal with a large amount of money. One of our goals this year is to get more members of the community involved in trail work."

Meanwhile, Sandusky County will be opening more than 10 miles of trail from the west end of Fremont to Elmore in Ottawa County. Currently, trail there runs from Clyde into Fremont.

After the trail to Elmore is done, efforts will be stepped up to build trail from Clyde to Bellevue, Gruner said. Marc Weisenberger, Bellevue Parks and Recreation director, announced at the meeting that his city is finalizing a trail grant application. "This will help link the two trails from the east and west at the Bellevue Community Center," he said.

Article as contributed to the Norwalk Reflector.

Photos by Lisa Wendt.



Top: Steve Gruner was presented with a 100 year-old photo of a LS&MS train crossing what is now the NCIT trail bridge at Fremont. The photo was from the collection of Trustee Fritz Kuenzel and was presented to Steve on behalf of the FRTTI Trustees.

Bottom: FRTTI President Gordon Oney, Marc Weisenberger and Rick Schaffer discuss the future trail plans near the Bellevue Rec Center which will become an important link in the NCIT.

5K RACE ON THE NCIT!

Firelands Rails To Trails would like to invite you to participate in our very first "Bridge the Gap" 5K Run/Walk event on Saturday, May 17 at 9 a.m. Starting at the trailhead on NorthWest St. in Norwalk, runners and walkers will head down the Huron County section of the North Coast Inland Trail 1.55 miles toward Monroeville and then return. This is a beautiful, wooded section of the trail that crosses high above the East Branch of the Huron River near Norwalk on a stone arch viaduct with scenic views in all directions.



The "Bridge the Gap" 5K Run/Walk is a community event that will help to raise funds to construct a (hopefully covered) bridge over the West Branch of the Huron River in Monroeville, which will then close the gap in the 6 plus miles of trail presently open and in use.

T-shirts and ribbons will be given to all participants in the run and walk divisions. The top overall runner and walker will receive a unique railroad themed prize, and the top three in each runner age group will also be given an award.

Refreshments, door prizes and historical railroad memorabilia will be available for everyone to enjoy. This is where we need your help. As a non profit, all volunteer, 501(c)3 organization, Firelands Rails To Trails relies on the generosity of the local communities to build and maintain Huron County's section of the trail. We also need your help in making an event like the "Bridge the Gap" 5K Run/Walk a rousing success by asking you to become a sponsor by donating money to offset the costs involved, or donating items that could be given for door prizes or used as refreshments.

All sponsors will be displayed on the back of the t-shirts that every participant receives and we would be glad to hang your business's banner at the 5K Run/Walk if you have one to provide. Although there will be prizes for the top runners and walkers, the 5K Run/Walk is more about encouraging everyone to do their personal best than about winning. Firelands Rails to Trails hopes that this event will be a motivating factor toward developing healthy lifestyles that include exercise and the outdoors. Enclosed in this newsletter is a 5K Registration form. Hope to see you there.

Joyce Dupont, Firelands Rails To Trails, Inc. Trustee and 5K Event Coordinator

BEAR SIGHTING IN MONROEVILLE!



At the Monroeville Grand Opening in October, Rob Rouse sat in one of the lawn chairs at the trailhead and commented, "That stump would make a great bear!"

As the snow continued to fall in March, several trail users realized that Rob wasn't kidding around!

Thanks to his talented volunteer efforts, we now have an incredible trailside carving to welcome trail users from near and far. Just be sure to keep your snack bags closed tightly.

Area clean-ups are planned this spring.

NEW FRTTI MARKETING ITEMS

www.firelandsrailstotrails.org has taken on a whole new look thanks to the countless hours put in by volunteer Trustee Lisa Wendt. The site is bold and exciting and is being updated with news and new photos.

In addition, Trustee Joyce Dupont (pictured with horse at the bottom of page 1) is creating a Power Point presentation for use at speaking engagements when FRTTI discusses the state of the trail and highlights local volunteer efforts. Joyce also handles all of our tax forms and filings at tax time!

FRTTI is so fortunate for volunteers like Lisa and Joyce who work on and off the trail and contribute to our overall success.

Please contact us if your organization is interested in a presentation on the state of the trail and future plans for Huron County.

XC SKIING & SNOWSHOEING ON THE NCIT

Lots of snow in the 2008 cross country ski and snowshoe season found many trail users gliding through our many miles of beautiful, scenic trail.

The Good Friday snowfall made for great skiing across the stone viaduct as skiers (top) headed west under sunny blue skies.

Snowshoers Tim and Lisa Freriks (bottom) enjoyed the fresh powder and covered Monroeville to Norwalk in no time at all.

Tim commented: "We have lived here twenty years and now have a great trail to run, bike, ski and snowshoe. With all this, how could we ever move away?"



2008 Happenings

2008 promises to be a busy year on the NCIT.

Some of the projects and outings include:

- 5K Race
- Night Bike Rides & Nature Walks
- Mileposts, benches and other improvements
- Local Power Point Presentations (see above)
- Monroeville / Rt 99 Trailhead parking lot construction
- Railroad History Outing
- Collins area construction and a grand opening of two miles of new trail
- Ongoing Trail Mowing and Maintenance
- Planning for more trail growth!



A really GRAND OPENING IN MONROEVILLE

The photos below define "A Perfect Fall Day". October 21 was just that - sixty five degrees and sunny with a slight breeze - a day to enjoy the new trail in Monroeville and take in the scenery. Nearly 400 people showed up to walk, bike, and gallop the 3.25 miles from Monroeville to Sand Hill Road. Attendees enjoyed refreshments, historical displays, saw some old friends and met some new ones. Several volunteers went above and beyond and brought their horses and provided pony rides for the kids. A perfect day in every aspect.



Photos by Joe and Kate Mantey



COLLINS PLANS AND PROGRESS

Volunteers spent many weekends in 2007 and early 2008 in the Collins community with hopes of opening a 1.6 to 2 mile piece of trail in the fall of 2008. The volunteers cut a lot of brush and contractors will perform grading between Derussey Road and Heartland Center Road where a trailhead will be constructed. Work will then push westward.

This stretch is tree lined on both sides and will make a very shady and scenic piece of trail. One of the scenic highlights will be the small stone arch viaduct over Old Woman Creek near Derussey Road as seen here. Stay tuned for more information as work continues.

WHY JOIN FRTTI? (What can my \$10 possibly do?)

A few of our trustees were out inspecting the new trail in Monroeville last fall when a passing biker who stopped to talk asked, "What could my \$10 membership fee possibly do? Anything?!" That's a good question with a better answer. Non profit groups like us rely on members to show local support for the trail project. That \$10 goes a very long way...

Potential grantors look very closely at our membership - the numbers and the growth trend - which is a direct reflection of our community support for the trail project. Grants are our major source of funding. No new members, no new grants, no new trail.

In addition to keeping your membership current, the most important contribution you can make to the success of the NCIT in Huron County is to tell some friends and neighbors about it and get them to join. If brush cutting and bridge building aren't really your cup of tea, your word of mouth marketing does even more to keep the trail growing.

Membership simply means you support the idea of this recreational trail. Firelands Rails to Trails will not call you during supper, put your face on a billboard, or send you junk email. Should you wish to join us on a work day, we would love to see some new faces and make some new friends. Our email notifications simply inform members of upcoming work days and events. All of our planning and communication is done via email. To find out what is going on, you must sign up. Then simply choose which events interest you.

So back to that \$10... Your \$10 (or more), combined with other memberships and donations, buys a lot of bolts, posts, and boards for mileposts, bridges and fences. It puts gas in mowers and prints the newsletters; but most importantly shows that you really enjoy the trail and want to be a part of the continued success of the North Coast Inland Trail in Huron County.

PRESERVING OUR RAILROAD HERITAGE



How many times have you biked the trail, been passed by an adjacent train, and wondered,

"Where is that train going?"

In this issue we'll meet our neighbor, the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railway.

The Wheeling & Lake Erie was constructed through Norwalk and Monroeville in 1882 as a route intended to link Wheeling area coal fields and the Great Lakes. It formed an X-shaped system connecting Toledo and Wheeling with branches to Cleveland and Zanesville. It earned the nickname "The Iron Cross" due to the shape of its system and the goods it carried.

Norwalk was home to a large W&LE locomotive shop complex which burned in 1908. The shop sat on the south side of the tracks about 1/4 mile east of the trailhead at North West Street. After the fire, the railroad moved its headquarters and shop to Brewster in 1910 where it constructed a yard and a big locomotive facility which was capable of building entire locomotives for the railroad and today rebuilds diesels.

The Wheeling was an integral part of rail tycoon Jay Gould's plan to assemble a transcontinental system. Gould controlled the Denver & Rio Grande, the Missouri Pacific, the Cotton Belt, the Wabash, the Wheeling, and the Western Maryland. His system was missing two pieces: A route into California, and a route through Pittsburgh. Gould almost succeeded, but high construction costs on his lines into Pittsburgh (Wabash Pittsburgh Terminal) and California (Western Pacific) bankrupted his Wabash Railroad and the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad, respectively.

After Gould's system collapsed, The Wheeling was leased to the Nickel Plate Road in 1947 and after 1964 was operated by Norfolk & Western and later Norfolk Southern (NS). In 1990, The Wheeling was spun off as a new regional railroad with its original name, serving its namesake locations on the original Wheeling route, plus the route of the original WPT (later Pittsburgh & West Virginia Railway) and the former Akron, Canton and Youngstown.

Trains originate at Toledo and Bellevue and head for Brewster, Mingo Jct., Wheeling, Pittsburgh and Hagerstown and vice versa. Traffic is interchanged with NS at all of the above locations as well as with Canadian National at Toledo and with CSX at Cleveland and other points. The Wheeling carries stone, coal, coke, ore, lumber, steel, grains, and finished goods. W&LE's attractive locomotives are painted a sharp black and orange while leased locomotives add to the color mix.

Despite the recent railroad mega-mergers, Wheeling's future looks bright as their customer base and carloads continue to grow. Meanwhile, we'll enjoy the show from our front row seat on the trail.

In the next issue we'll begin a five part in-depth look at the history of our former railroad upon which our trail sits. - Compiled by Joe Mantey and Fritz Kuenzel



Top: Wheeling #66 was delivered new in the spring of 1893. In October of the same year, #66 was involved in a head-on collision and ended up in the Tuscarawas River. The engineer, Chester E. Dooley (right) lived on Main Street in Norwalk. The fireman is unknown. Fritz Kuenzel Collection.

Bottom: Two three-thousand horsepower W&LE SD40-3's head east across the Huron River in sight of our trail. Fritz Kuenzel photo.

Membership Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Annual Dues:

____ New ____ Renewal

____ Individual \$ 10.00

____ Family \$ 15.00

____ Patron \$ 50.00

____ Business \$ 100.00

____ Donation _____

____ "Bridge the Gap" Fund _____

TOTAL _____

Membership fees and donations to
Firelands Rails to Trails
are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

I would also like to donate:

____ Labor _____

____ Equipment _____

Detach and Mail this section.
Please make your check payable to:

Firelands Rails To Trails, Inc.
44 East Main St.
Norwalk, OH 44857

TN9

The EXTRA BOARDThe latest news and information

NEW 100% COTTON T-SHIRTS

We are pleased to announce our new, comfortable, 100% cotton FRTTI T-Shirts!

Shirts are available at Excel Bike & Fitness, 44 E Main, Norwalk; or at any of our trail events.

The T-Shirt donation price is \$20. All proceeds from t-shirt sales go to the "Close the Gap" fund to link our two trail pieces.

We thoroughly tested the shirts under varying trail conditions and are sure you will be as pleased as we are. *Think spring!*



CONTACT US

Firelands Rails To Trails Inc.
44 East Main St.
Norwalk, OH 44857
bikedoc123@verizon.net
or contact us online!
www.firelandsrailstotrails.org

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- Cut and mail the form above or visit us online and print the membership form.
- Join FRTTI for as little as \$10
- Sign up for our Email News
- Join us on one of our Work Days
- Tell some friends about it!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sun, April 20: Work Day
Tues, May 6: Board Meeting
Sat, May 3: Work Day
Sat, May 17: 5K Race, Norwalk

Board Meetings are now held at the Norwalk Police Station @ 7pm.

TRAIL NEWS

Copyright 2008. Published by Firelands Rails to Trails Inc. (FRTTI) and mailed to all members.
Edited and Published by Joe Mantey and the FRTTI Trustees. Photos by Stan Bernhardt and Joe Mantey unless noted.



FIRELANDS RAILS TO TRAILS
44 E. MAIN ST.
NORWALK, OH 44857

PRST STD
U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

NORWALK OH 44857
PERMIT NO. 136