

# Along the Trail

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE FRIENDS OF THE MOHAWK-HUDSON BIKE-HIKE TRAIL

## Helpful, friendly faces on the trail

### New Canalway Trail Ambassador program kicked off last summer in Niskayuna

On a hot morning in July of last year, my husband Herb and I were on our way to work when we spotted two cyclists stopped at the corner of Route 7 and Vly Road in Colonie. They were in a classic lost cyclist pose: off their bikes and perusing a map. We stopped to see if they needed help.

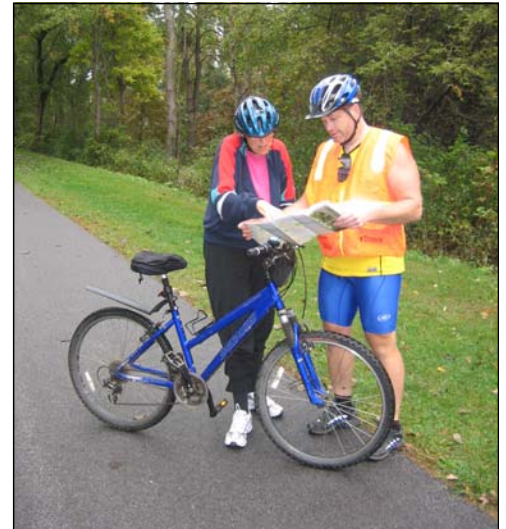
Mike Kincaid and Kathy Benson were on day seven of a 31-day journey from Maine through New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York to Toronto, then back through Canada to Maine. They had been on Route 7 since leaving Troy and said they were not enjoying it at all, and they were looking for a more scenic route, or at least something with better shoulders.

They were in luck... less than a quarter mile away was Lions Park, home of the historic Niskayuna Train Station and one of the most popular access points to the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail. Herb and I pointed

them in the right direction and told them how to get into Schenectady, find the library, where they wanted to update the Web log\* of their journey, and then find the Scotia Post Office, where they would be picking up a package. We read later on the blog that they enjoyed a pizza in downtown Schenectady and stopped at Adirondack Bicycle in Scotia for some mechanical help.

Two days after meeting Mike and Kathy, I was back at Lions Park to officially kick off a two-month pilot of the Canalway Trail Ambassadors program, but I felt like we'd really started our work that hot summer morning on our way to work.

The stated role of Trail Ambassadors is to "assist and inform trail users, monitor the trail and conditions along it, and to promote trail courtesy, safety and awareness of the trail as a valuable public resource."



Trail Ambassador Howard Halstead shows a map to a fellow trail user.

But, in a way, all that really means is that our role is to be nice and to be helpful. Be nice to trail users and encourage them to be nice to each other. Help trail users make the most of the trail so they'll use more of it and use it more often, which in turn will make the trail safer and encourage municipalities

*(Continued on page 2)*

### Get in touch

Write to Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, 141 Willowcreek Ave., Schenectady, NY 12304 or e-mail [mhbway@yahoo.com](mailto:mhbway@yahoo.com)  
We're online at <http://www.geocities.com/mhbway>.

## National Trails Day cleanup June 6

Join us for a morning along the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail in Schenectady to celebrate National Trails Day. This event is part of a statewide Canalway Trail Celebration being sponsored by Parks & Trails New York, the New York State Canal Corporation and the Canalway Trails Association New York with many events along the bike-hike trail from Albany to Buffalo. We plan to do general trail maintenance from garbage cleanup to trimming brush.

We provide tools, refreshments, T-shirts for the first 24 people, and door prizes. You bring your smile; work gloves, sunscreen, bug spray and long

pants are recommended.

The project is being done with the Schenectady Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club and with the cooperation of the City of Schenectady. Eastern Mountain Sports (EMS) is proud to partner up with us to sponsor this event.

To signup, contact Stan Stoklosa at 383-3066 or [Stanstok89@aol.com](mailto:Stanstok89@aol.com). For questions, contact Howard Halstead at [halstead@ieec.org](mailto:halstead@ieec.org).

Location: Van Vranken Avenue to Anthony Street, to where the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail intersects Anthony.

Time: 9 a.m. to noontime

# One cyclist's cautionary tale

New trail ambassador Stan Stoklosa writes:

On the beautiful fall evening of October 17, while bicycling on the Colonie Bike Path, I suffered a compound fracture to my arm. The accident was caused by an unleashed dog and an inattentive owner who let the dog wander into the path of my bike. Several weeks of lost work and rehab were in my future.

Whether you are a bicyclist, roller blader,

or walker, please remember these rules posted at path access points:

- 1 Stay to the right
- 2 Pass on the left
- 3 Use a bell, whistle, or voice as you approach other users
- 4 Dogs must be on a leash. (A short leash)

Use common sense and common courtesy and we can all share and enjoy this great recreational resource

— Stan Stoklosa



## AMBASSADORS: Making the trail a nicer, safer place

(Continued from page 1)

to invest in improvements. Help keep those municipalities aware of areas on the trail that need attention. We're also there the help thru-cyclists – people like Mike and Kathy who are using the trail as part of a longer journey – to find resources they need in local communities, which helps both them and local businesses.

During our two-month pilot last summer, ten volunteers rode sections of the trail in Niskayuna, with some overlap into Colonie and Schenectady. They logged a total of 58 patrols and reported providing direct assistance to 21 individuals on 12 different occasions. Assistance included

giving directions, providing trail information, distributing maps, providing first aid (a band-aid for a toddler who'd fallen from her bike) or mechanical supplies (an allen wrench for a mirror adjustment) and just discussing the trail with users.

One ambassador patrolled almost exclusively in the city of Schenectady, mostly while commuting to and from work, and reported doing trail cleanup on a regular basis.

As warmer weather arrives, the Canalway Trail Ambassadors will be back out on the trail. With the success of last year's pilot, we've recruited more volunteers and officially expanded the program into the cities of Schenectady and Cohoes and the towns of Rotterdam and Colonie. Someday we hope to be active along the section of trail in Watervliet and Albany also.

The only cost for the program is the cost of the safety vests volunteers wear to make them highly visible on the trail. Last year, funding was provided by the L.L. Bean store in Colonie. This year, funding is being provided in part by the



Photo by Gillian Scott  
The Canalway Trail Ambassadors got help kicking off from Canal Corporation's Director Carmella Mantello and Wally Elton of Parks and Trails NY. Ambassadors are, from left, Arden Rauch, Betty Engler, Jeff Oswald, David Lee Pratt, Howard Halstead and Fred Thompson.

### How to help

If you're interested in helping the Canalway Trail Ambassadors, contact volunteer coordinator Gillian Scott at 372-8478 or send an e-mail to [adklookout@verizon.net](mailto:adklookout@verizon.net).

If you'd like to help fund the program, donations are gladly accepted. Checks, made payable to Parks and Trails NY, can be mailed to:

**Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson  
Bike-Hike Trail  
141 Willowcreek Ave.  
Schenectady, NY 12304**

Be sure to write "Canalway Trail Ambassadors" on the memo line.

Schenectady Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club (which participates in Trails Day each year on the Schenectady section of the bike-hike trail), and by a grant from Assemblyman Bob Reilly.

The Canalway Trail Ambassadors program was developed by the Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail with the assistance of Parks and Trails New York. Many thanks to Wally Elton at PTNY for all this help, and also to the town of Niskayuna for their enthusiastic participation in our pilot last year.

\*You can find Mike Kincaid's tale of his trip with Kathy Benson at <http://www.crazyguyonabike.com/doc/canadalooop2008>.

— Gillian Scott

## News roundup: Trail through city under construction

The Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail from Maxon Road Extension to Seneca Street in the city of Schenectady is currently closed. The city is in the process of improving drainage in the area, which suffered chronic flooding. The path will be repaved when the work is done, probably by July. A map of the detour is available at <http://www.bikely.com/maps/bike-path/Schenectady-Bike-Path-Detour>

### Other local news:

The County of Schenectady is one step closer to establishing a new multi-use path through the city. The new path would run from Central Park down Bradley Street to Brandywine Avenue, down Brandywine to Vale Park and through Vale Park to Nott Terrace. From there, it is only a few blocks to downtown on-road sections of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail.

A planning meeting for the new trail was held in late March to help determine the features of the trail — whether it should be on-road or off-road, what road crossings at Brandywine and McClellan would look like and what the trail would look like in Vale Park. Members of the project team, including Schenectady county Economic Development and Planning, Barton and Loguidice, P.C., M J Engineering and Hartgen Archaeological, will take the input provided during the planning meeting to help develop the preliminary design plans.

A public information meeting is slated for May and construction on the new trail could begin as early as August of this year.

The new trail is just one part of the Bicycle Master Plan developed for the city several years ago.

- Schenectady County received a \$145,000 federal Spot Improvement Program grant. Of that, \$17,600 will go to build information kiosks and trail markers along the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, with the county providing \$4,400 of the cost. The markers will be located on city streets from Washington Avenue to Jay Street, where there is a gap in the off-road section of trail, and at Nott Street,



A new sign at Lions Park in Niskayuna shows the distances to the two ends of the Canalway Trail system.

where the removal of a bridge over the road has caused some confusion for trail users. The city also received \$62,400 to improve the trail crossings at Seneca Street and Maxon Road. The city will provide \$15,600 to match. (Daily Gazette, Nov. 12, 2008)

### Regional trails news:

- The Clifton Park Town Board approved a proposal to design a trail linking the Clifton Park-Halfmoon Library with the Shenendehowa School District Campus. The trail, less than a mile long, would run from the library parking lot through fields and a short section of woods to reach school property. It would join 13 miles of trails that already connect various sites in the town's center. The trail's design will cost \$17,000, paid by the library; there is no estimate yet on the building cost. (Daily Gazette, April 9, 2008)

- Last summer, the town of Halfmoon applied for \$573,000 in grants to build almost two miles of off-road trail to add to its Brookwood Road trail along the historic Champlain Canal Trail. The new trail would lead to the property set aside for the future Hudson River Waterfront Park. (Aug. 1, 2008)

- The town of Wilton plans to build a new 1.5-mile paved trail from Northern Pines Road, along Carr Road and

Jones Road, to Gavin Park. The cost of the trail, estimated at between \$380,000 and \$500,000, will be partially offset by a developer, who agreed to build a section of the trail along Carr Road, bringing the cost to the town down to about \$70,000. No timetable was set for the construction of the trail. (Daily Gazette, Nov. 13, 2008).

- The village of Altamont was awarded a \$27,000 grant by the Capital District Transportation Committee to use to improve its walking and biking trails. Short-term goals in the village include improving safety and signage along existing trails, adding more bike racks and increasing the connectivity of walking and biking paths. Long-term goals include connecting Altamont to Voorheesville, possibly by connecting to the new rail trail from Albany to Voorheesville, and creating a historical walking tour of the village. (Spotlight Newspapers, Jan. 19, 2009)

- The Friends of the Rail Trail in Delmar received a \$2,000 grant from Parks and Trails New York to help pay for printing and mailing a membership brochure. The group advocates for the creation of a 9-mile trail along the old D&H rail corridor between Albany and Voorheesville. Albany County agreed to buy the rail line from the Canadian Pacific Railway in September for \$700,000 (transfer of title has not been finalized). Funding was provided by the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and Scenic Hudson. So far, funding for actually constructing the trail has not been finalized. (Times Union, Sept. 9, 2008 and Jan. 16, 2009). For more details on the trail, go to <http://www.albanycounty.com/railtrail/faq.asp>.

According to the web site, the east end of the trail is just south of South Pearl Street in the city of Albany. From there, it will travel westward through Delmar, Slingerlands, and the town of New Scotland before ending up in the village of Voorheesville. The county's goal is to eventually link to the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail. Construction is not expected to begin until 2010.

Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail  
141 Willowcreek Ave.,  
Schenectady, NY 12304

*Find us online at*  
[http://www.geocities.com/  
mhbway](http://www.geocities.com/mhbway)

## Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail

Our mission: To develop through public education and stewardship the historical, recreational and economic opportunities of the Mohawk-Hudson trail.

The Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail is a multi-use trail located along the Mohawk and Hudson rivers in Albany and Schenectady counties. The trail is part of the NYS Canalway Trail System and the Hudson River Valley Greenway Trail System.

The Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail works to ensure the long-term success of the trail and related trails. This includes integrating the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail as a key-stone, forging a link among three major state trail corridors: the Erie Canalway Trail, the Hudson River Valley Greenway Trail System, and the Champlain Canalway Trail. When completed, the Canalway Trail will span over 500 miles, making it one of the longest multi-use recreational trails in the country.

### WE ARE ACTIVELY SEEKING VOLUNTEERS!

We are looking for local people interested in participating in planning for the future of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail and/or in improvement projects along the trail. To become a member of the Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, complete and return this form to:

**Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail**  
**141 Willowcreek Ave.**  
**Schenectady, NY 12304**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

**To make a contribution to the Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, write a check payable to Parks and Trails New York (PTNY).** PTNY is the fiscal agent for the Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, and a non-profit, tax-exempt organization under IRS code 501(c)(3). Gifts may be tax deductible. Donations of \$25 or more made by current or retired GE employees are eligible for matching.