



## Elkhart County Park Department receives TEA-21 grant



The Elkhart County Park Dept. has received a \$565,420 grant from the Indiana Department of Transportation to build the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail from York Dr. in Middlebury to the LaGrange County line—a distance of approximately 2.4 miles. The grant—one of 31 funded this year in Indiana for a total of \$18 million—was announced by Governor Kernan Sept. 7.

“The high quality of life is one thing businesses mention when they decide to locate their companies in our state,” Kernan said in a press release about the grants. “This \$18 million

Walkers enjoy a fall stroll along a portion of the Pumpkinvine corridor between Middlebury and Shipshewana for which the Elkhart County Park Department received the TEA-21 grant from the Indiana Department of Transportation.

investment will bring an added vitality and beauty to our communities by enhancing our streets, greenways and walkways. These projects are good for business, and they are good for the state of Indiana.”

The grant comes from the section of the Federal Highway program (TEA 21) called Transportation Enhancement. These funds that are set aside for transportation projects like the Pumpkinvine that emphasize alternatives to motorized transportation, among other things.

The grant is an 80/20 proposition, with 20 percent of the cost coming from the local community. The Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, Inc. will donate the corridor to the Elkhart County Park Dept. to cover the 20-percent local match.

A number of steps are required before construction can begin, according to Larry Neff, superintendent of the Elkhart County Park Dept. Those steps include historical, archeological and environmental assessments, appraisals, preliminary engineering, and letting of bids, all of which could take a year to complete.

The town of Shipshewana applied for a similar TEA-21 grant for the four miles of the Pumpkinvine corridor in Lagrange County, but their application was not successful this year. The town plans to resubmit the grant for the next funding cycle.

*We sent an announcement of this grant to everyone on our e-mail list. If you did not receive it, we don't have your e-mail address. To receive up-to-the-minute reports from the Friends concerning work days and important news about the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, send your e-mail to: [friends@pumpkinvine.org](mailto:friends@pumpkinvine.org).*

## Board of Directors

### Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, Inc.

John Yoder, President  
533-4943  
jdyoder@attglobal.net

Larry Neff, Vice President  
534-8223  
chlneff@juno.com

Merritt Lehman, Treasurer  
264-1444  
mdleh@juno.com

Robert Carrico, Secretary  
Trail Operations Manager  
266-1362  
rjcarrico@cs.com

Jim Smith  
Executive Director  
533-7862  
kneesrus@comcast.net

Bob Hatch  
262-1739  
RHatch4723@aol.com

Larry Hahn  
862-2588  
HahnsMule3@aol.com

Quinn Holdeman Jr.  
825-7258  
Kathieh1@juno.com

Galen Kauffmann  
534-0101  
gkauffmann@aol.com

Myron Yoder  
533-2305  
yodermd@juno.com

John McKee  
Liaison to Middlebury  
Park Board  
825-3900  
johnlyndamckee@aol.com

---

Danny Graber  
Bike Ride Chair  
266-4265  
danny.sg@get.net

---

Dee Birkey  
Newsletter Design  
dee@bydesigndirections.com  
www.bydesigndirections.com

## From the president



Recently I heard a familiar criticism of our efforts to recycle the Pumpkinvine corridor as a linear park: we didn't start the process soon enough. Because adjacent landowners had already claimed the corridor, it was fragmented beyond repair.

Let's examine that claim.

First the history: From the beginning of our efforts in 1990, we were very concerned with the corridor's physical integrity. One of the first things we did was to have a title company research all the railroad's deeds to see if they had solid title. We found that for the vast majority, they did.

Second, we walked the corridor to determine its physical condition. Because some areas were fenced off and difficult to walk, C.J. Yoder, Chuck Lehman and I flew over the entire corridor in small plane (with a video camera) to see what it looked like from the air. The plane ride showed us a remarkably intact corridor 11 years after the last train ran. You could look from Goshen to Middlebury or Middlebury to Shippshewana and easily see the tree-lined corridor.

The truth is that much of the major encroachment didn't happen until 1990, after the public learned that we had suggested to the area park departments that the Pumpkinvine become a linear park. (The Pumpkinvine was already in the master plans of the Goshen and Elkhart County Park departments at that time, but no one was pushing the concept.)

Trail opponents along the corridor apparently thought that if they occupied it they would make it look disconnected and hence impossible to put back together, discourage any attempt to do so and, if we tried, make it expensive. Some tried to get it through adverse possession, i.e., occupying or fencing it off.

In other words, trail opponents were engaged in a form of self-fulfilling prophecy. They said the corridor was fragmented and then worked to make that statement a reality.

For the past 10 years, the Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, Inc. have been working hard to clean up the legal and physical barriers in those six miles. First the court ruled that we owned any disputed properties between Middlebury and Shippshewana. Then we cleared all physical barriers that had been erected on the corridor and defended our title (again) against claims of adverse possession.

The news that the Elkhart County Park Dept. has received a half million dollar grant to build the trail from Middlebury to the LaGrange County line is the culmination of a 14-year process save the Pumpkinvine corridor. It puts to rest the claim that the corridor is too fragmented to save. Preparing the corridor for funding took a long time, not because the corridor was actually fragmented and had reverted to adjacent landowners, but because some people wanted the public to believe it was fragmented and it had reverted.

Thanks to all of you for the time, talent and money that will soon make it possible for us to present this magnificent section of the corridor to the Elkhart County Park Dept.

But the job is not finished. This year Shippshewana will reapply for transportation enhancement funds for the 4.8 miles in Lagrange County. Then, with your help, we will tackle the six miles between Goshen and Middlebury. Persistence is paying off.

— John D. Yoder

Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, Inc. are cyclists, hikers, equestrians and naturalists who are working with area park departments to create a linear park and greenway on the former Pumpkinvine corridor between Goshen, Middlebury and Shippshewana, Ind.

Learn more about the Pumpkinvine and Rails to Trails issues, or see back issues of our newsletter at: [www.pumpkinvine.org](http://www.pumpkinvine.org)



## Friends' website redesigned

The Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail website has been revised. The major change is that now Pumpkinvine events will be posted on the website through a link on the home page. Members with e-mail will be informed of most events by e-mail, but if you lose the announcements, you can find the information on the website: [www.pumpkinvine.org](http://www.pumpkinvine.org).

Suggestions for the website improvements are welcome. Send them to [friends@pumpkinvine.org](mailto:friends@pumpkinvine.org).

## Friends receive CIBA grant

The Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, Inc. have received a \$2,500 grant from the Central Indiana Bicycle Association (CIBA) to appraise the Pumpkinvine corridor between Goshen and Middlebury. For the TEA-21 federal grants that the Lagrange County and Elkhart County park boards applied for, the Friends provided the 20 percent match with the value of the Pumpkinvine corridor. In a similar way, this appraisal will tell us how much the corridor will leverage for the development of these six miles.

## October closing in Lagrange County removes major encroachment

Agreements with two landowners have cleared up a challenge to the Friends' ownership of the Pumpkinvine corridor in LaGrange County.

On Oct. 13, 2004, the Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, Inc., signed the agreements that resolved encroachments on the Pumpkinvine corridor. Negotiations had begun about 18 months ago but were unfortunately interrupted when the landowners hired legal counsel and challenged the Friends' ownership of the corridor as it passed through their properties.

The Friends then filed suit to clarify the title late in 2003 and for several months not much happened. Negotiations began again about mid-2004 when the landowners decided to drop their ownership challenge.

The resulting agreements provided for a swap of land for one landowner so that the corridor moves away from his house. Two easements across the corridor were also provided. For the second landowner, the issue was resolved by granting two easements across the corridor.

The closing required 10 legal descriptions, four quit-claim deeds, four easement agreements and a warranty deed. Who ever said this job was simple? This closing removed the last major obstacle in Lagrange County to the corridor.



Looking east at CR 1150 W in Lagrange County, where the Pumpkinvine will jog slightly to the north from the original corridor. This area (to the right of the road in this photo) is the land the Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, Inc. received (and where the trail will go) in exchange for a section of the Pumpkinvine corridor that ran through the Hochstetler farm near their home.



Kent Miller of Middlebury was one of the Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail who enjoyed a fall walk on the Pumpkinvine Oct. 17. A number of hikers walked the six miles from Middlebury-to-Shipshewana and back. (Photo by John McKee.)

## Volunteers help maintain the Pumpkinvine

Four work days were scheduled on the Pumpkinvine in 2004. The Friends of the Pumpkinvine thank the following volunteers who donated their energy and equipment for those work days. Their help is essential for maintenance of the Pumpkinvine corridor while work progresses toward trail construction.

Steve Pletcher	Jim Smith
Susie Neff	Buddy Dyck
Gordon Dyck	Larry Neff
Bill Minter	Ryan Minter
Janice Carrico	Robert Carrico
Bill Miller	Jim Martin
Frances Ringenberg	Randy Miller

Five members donated tractors with mowers and their time to mow cleared sections of the Pumpkinvine corridor during the summer. Their help keeps the corridor looking neat and ensures good relations with our neighbors.

Quinn Holdeman	CJ Yoder
Barry Newberry	Dana Snider
Rick Miller (Brethren Retreat Center)	



Frances Ringenberg, Bill Miller and Buddy Dyck were three of the volunteers who helped clear fallen trees from the Pumpkinvine corridor this year.

## Specialty license plate a possibility



The Indiana Bicycle Coalition (IBC) is considering applying to the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) for an Indiana “Share the Road & Trail” specialty license plate. The application process requires any group wanting a specialty plate to demonstrate a significant interest

before developing and offering a new plate to the public. The BMV has a minimum requirement of 500 plate sales statewide for any specialty plate program. The Indiana Bicycle Coalition needs to determine if there is enough interest in a “Share the Road & Trail” plate to make the application effort worthwhile.

Although the exact plate design has not yet determined, the plate would most likely have a white background and include the IBC logo along with the slogan “Share the Road & Trail.” The plate would cost \$40 with the BMV receiving \$15 and the remainder going to the IBC for various bicycle safety awareness programs, including funding of airtime for IBC’s “Share the Road” public service announcements for TV and radio. A \$40 deposit would be required in 2005 before the plate is offered for sale in January 2006. Should the IBC not be able to sell at least 500 plates by the deadline given by the BMV, the deposit would be refunded.

Please contact the Indiana Bicycle Coalition **by January 15, 2005** if you would be interested in a 2006 Indiana Bicycle License Plate by sending an email to [bxbebout@insightbb.com](mailto:bxbebout@insightbb.com) or [info@bicycleindiana.org](mailto:info@bicycleindiana.org). Please include your contact information and put “2006 Bicycle License Plate” in the subject line. You can also call the Indiana Bicycle Coalition at 317-466-9701 / 800-BIKE-110. Indicate whether you would “definitely buy,” “very likely buy” or “consider buying” a plate.

## Coming events

Put the following events on your 2005 calendar.

April 26, 6:30 p.m. – The annual meeting of the Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail will be at the Das Dutchman Essenhaus Conference Center on U.S. 20 in Middlebury.

June 18 – The sixth annual Pumpkinvine Bike Ride starting at Abshire Park in Goshen.



All funds go toward paying the day-to-day expenses of the Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, Inc. No officers receive remuneration.

## Don't forget your membership dues!

If the date on the label of this newsletter has passed, it's time to renew your membership in the **Friends**. Membership levels are:

_____ Individual \$20	_____ Family \$30	_____ Sustaining \$50
_____ Contributing \$100	_____ Patron \$250	_____ Benefactor \$500

Send your membership payment to:

**Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail • P.O. Box 392 • Goshen, IN 46527**

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