Construction between CR 33 and CR 20 enters final phase

Workers with Pulver Asphalt and Paving are scheduled to put the final touches on the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail between County Road 33 and County Road 20 this spring. Construction on the trail surface stopped in December due to the cold weather, but workers were able to install a small railroad bridge over the south fork of Pine Creek during the winter, according to Chris Chockley, landscape architect with JPR, the consultants who are managing the project. The old railroad bridge had deteriorated too much to be saved.

Pulver has about five weeks of work remaining, Chockley said. “What needs to happen now is to prepare the trail surface for paving by putting down another layer of #53 gravel, landscape the shoulders of the trail, finish the parking lot at County Road 35 and install fencing and vegetation screening in several areas.”

One immediate goal for construction is to make the new trail usable by the time of the 2019 Pumpkinvine Bike Ride on June 15. Chockley said that was quite attainable. “The asphalt plants typically open up around April 15th,” he said. “As of right now [Feb. 25] I can see any reason why the trail will not be complete before June 15th.”
From the president

Transitions can be opportunities

In May 2018, I attended the Mid-America Trails and Greenway Conference in Columbus, Ohio and went to a workshop titled “Building and Maintaining Sustainable Organizations” led by the first consultant the Friends of the Pumpkinvine ever had, Rory Robinson, from the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program in Cleveland, Ohio. One of the questions discussed in the workshop was, “How do trail groups remain viable for the long term and retain new younger members to continue to support the management and promotion of constructed trails?” That question brought forward in my thinking thoughts of retirement that I’d been considering for some time, and in January at our annual retreat, I told our board that 2019 would be my last year as president of the Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, Inc.

While there is no perfect time to retire, I think January 2020 makes sense for me and the Friends organization. I would love to remain on the board until we close the three gaps in the trail, but we are close enough that I’m convinced they will be done soon. The gap in the trail between County Road 33 and County Road 20 will be completed in the next few months, the gap between County Road 20 and County Road 35 is in the final stages of negotiation, and the town of Shipshewana is working on closing the gap between County Road 850W and downtown.

As for the board, one way to remain a viable organization for the long term is to welcome new ideas, and those ideas frequently come from new board members and new leadership. That’s what I mean by a transition being an opportunity. So, taking that assumption to heart, our board has made a conscious effort in the past five years to recruit younger members. And on a regular basis, we’ve been asking ourselves: as the construction of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail comes to a conclusion, what direction will the Friends of the Pumpkinvine take?

Most critical for this transition is the fact that our board of directors includes many capable people who have a vision for building and maintaining the trail. And the board has a year to work on a plan for succession, a process they have already begun.

I look back on the past 30 years with great satisfaction at having been part of helping create the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail. It’s been a wonderful experience to see the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail grow, phase by phase, between Goshen and Shipshewana, and then to see spurs branch off from it, e.g., the Abshire Trail, the Monroe St. Trail and the Ridge Run Trail. Through some engineering magic, it connected to Elkhart via the MapleHeart Trail.

I cherish the board members, supporters, trail users and friends who have encouraged us the past 30 years. In particular, I’m grateful for the support of my wife, June, and daughter, Mandy, who saw value in the trail for the community and made space for me to advocate for it.

I’ll still be around to consult with the board as needed, but the time has come to let others take the reins. This change is an opportunity for the Friends of the Pumpkinvine to move in new directions. I look forward to seeing what the future will bring for the trails of our area.
Negotiations to close trail gap between CR 20 to CR 35 continue in good spirit

Discussions about a route for the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail between County Road 20 and County Road 35 in Elkhart County continue in a positive direction, according to Brittany Short, a member of the Friends negotiating team. The negotiations involve four families along the proposed route.

“Even though the discussions about the best route have taken longer than we anticipated, the encouraging thing is that everyone involved sees the value of closing this gap,” Short said. “We want the trail to be finished so that bikers can avoid County Road 35 where there is heavy and fast traffic,” one resident said.

The Friends applied for and received a $250,000 grant from the Community Foundation of Elkhart County to build the trail in this section. The Friends of the Pumpkinvine still need $68,000 from donations, sponsors and the Pumpkinvine Bike Ride to build this section.

How you can help close this gap

Donate to the Campaign to Close the Gaps
Contributions of any amount are welcome. Individual, families and organizations that contribute $1,000 between Jan. 1, 2017 and June 30, 2019 will have their names displayed on a plaque in this section.

Contributions of $10,000 or more will be honored with their name on a stone placed along the trail.

Mail contributions to:
Friends of the Pumpkinvine, P.O. Box 392, Goshen, IN 46527

Past Friends of the Pumpkinvine newsletters are now online.

Need to catch up on the history of the Friends of the Pumpkinvine? Now you can. All 63 Friends of the Pumpkinvine newsletters published between 1992 and 2013 are online at drive.google.com/drive/folders/1HREzuhyvptgLr2p9xF_2-THZPTA1-Py?usp=sharing

Newsletters from 2014 to the present can be accessed from our website: pumpkinvine.org/about/newsletter/ where you can also find an active link to the older newsletters.
Getting Fit and Healthy on the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail Is a Family Affair

By Karen Boyer

Last spring, I decided to make some changes to improve my health. My doctor had been nagging me to lose weight and to get my sugar level and blood pressure in the normal range.

At 60, I thought, “What else is there to do after the kids are gone?”

My husband of 41 years and I have five children and 16 grandchildren, but now we only have an 18-month-old brindle boxer named Belle at home.

I went out and bought a Fitbit.

Slowly, and I mean very slowly, I started walking at Fidler’s Pond. For several weeks, I walked one lap per day. After starting a low-carbohydrate diet, I was soon completing two laps. Now, if you’ve walked Fidler’s Pond, you know that going in circles gets boring pretty fast, so it was soon time for a new path.

I had ridden my bike on the Pumpkinvine with my kids when they were young. (They always groaned when I made them ride up the “hill.”) Since I was already familiar with the trail, why not walk on the Pumpkinvine?

That’s what I did. I bought a good pair of shoes and started walking the trail. At first, my route was to start at Abshire Park, walk to “Mount Pumpkinvine” and then back to Abshire Park. After a while I decided that the view from “Mount Pumpkinvine” was so grand, that I had to see the backside as well. Milepost 3 was just a bit farther. I just kept gradually upping my distance. Today I can walk 10 miles.

Somewhere along my journey, I convinced my husband, Skip, to walk with me.

Next, my daughter, Brooke Keplinger, started joining me after she dropped her kids off at their schools. We pushed Brooke’s two-year-old (Jubal) in a stroller.

The first big snow of the fall caught us off guard. Every 50 feet we traded off who pushed the stroller through the snow. It was grueling. After that, I bought a jogging stroller with big wheels and that did the trick.

To keep baby Jubal warm, Brooke heats up a rice bag and tucks it in his fleece bag. He usually sleeps most of the way.

Almost daily we see up to a dozen deer, lots of squirrels and turkeys, sandhill cranes, cats, dogs and some really friendly folks.

From flats to hills, mud to asphalt, leaves or black ice, every day is new.

We have named some of the places we pass on the trail: The Meadows, The Avenue, The Swamp, Plymouth Rock and, of course, Butts Lake.

I give glory to God that we were (are) able to stay the course and get healthy. Not only have I lost 70 pounds, my husband has lost 75 and my daughter has lost 47!

My goal is to walk from Goshen to Middlebury after the trail is finished. Just recently, we walked from Shipshewana to Middlebury and Middlebury to the Pumpkinvine School. It is always fun exploring the next hill and turn.
We’re pleased to invite you to the 18th Annual Friends of the Pumpkinvine Dinner – an opportunity to meet other trail supporters, celebrate the progress of the past year and learn about plans for the next.

This year the dinner will be Tuesday, April 23rd at the Crystal Ballroom on the upper floor of the Lerner Theatre, in downtown Elkhart. Doors will open at 6 p.m. and the dinner will begin at 6:30 p.m.; dress is casual. The Friends’ President, John Yoder, will be the evening’s speaker, revealing recent progress made to close three gaps in the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail. He will also discuss the Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail organization, and its plans for the future.

This year our door-prizes will take place as raffles and include donations from area bicycle shops, restaurants and service businesses. Each dinner registration includes five raffle tickets. Additional tickets will be available for purchase at the dinner.

The primer prize, a Trek FX 2 Disc bicycle donated by Lincoln Avenue Cycling, valued at $640, will be raffled at the end of the evening. The FX 2 is a versatile hybrid bike with reliable disc brakes that let you “stop on a dime and ask for change, even when the weather isn’t cooperating.” It is available in men’s or women’s frames. All proceeds from the raffle will directly benefit the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail Maintenance Fund.

Please join us for this important event. Registration may be found online at: pumpkinvineannualdinner.eventbrite.com. We welcome you to invite family members, friends, neighbors and any others who would be interested in learning more about the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail. The cost per person, including tax and gratuity, is $37. If you cannot attend the meeting, please consider sending a tax-deductible donation in your place. For questions, do not hesitate to contact us at friends@pumpkinvine.org or call 574-849-5825.
A brief history of the ride
The first Pumpkinvine Bike Ride was held in May 2000. The ride started at Abshire Park in Goshen, and 210 bicyclists participated. That year the newly built Pumpkinvine Nature Trail from Abshire Park to County Road 28 was opened for public use.

In recent years 900 to 1,100 bicyclists registered annually for the ride. When parking space at Abshire Park became too small to accommodate all of the vehicles, a second registration and starting location was opened in 2011 at the Shipshewana Flea Market where parking space was abundant. A few years later the ride organizers decided that volunteers could be used more efficiently on ride day with one start location, and the start moved to the Elkhart County Fair Grounds in 2016. The facilities there have plenty of parking space, rest rooms, refrigeration, showers and lots of indoor space for registration and serving the traditional pie and ice cream at the end of the ride. The Monroe Street and Abshire Trails provide a direct connection between the fairgrounds and the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail.

Danny Graber proposed an annual ride to the Friends of the Pumpkinvine board in 1999, and the board thought it would be an excellent way to showcase the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail. Danny was the ride chair from 2000 to 2012 and again in 2015. The other chairs have been Evan Bontrager (2013-2014), Tim Drescher (2016-present), Phil Mason (co-chair 2018-present).

New trail
The Friends of the Pumpkinvine have been working for six years to close a 0.9-mile “gap” in the trail between County Road 33 and County Road 20. Construction on this gap began in July 2018 and should be rideable before the 20th Anniversary Ride.

Ride proceeds
The Pumpkinvine Bike Ride is a fund raiser for building and maintaining our trail. Meanwhile, we are working to close a .5-mile gap in the trail north of County Road 20, and any income from the bike ride will go toward finishing that section of trail.

Saturday Ride
When, where & registration –
All ride routes start at the Elkhart County Fairgrounds, 17746 County Road 34, Goshen, Ind. Enter the fairgrounds at Gate 1. You can start at your convenience on June 15 between 7:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.

Registration will be available at the fairgrounds on June 15: however, we prefer that bicyclists register early online because that helps us plan food and logistics. A link to the registration page is available at ride.pumpkinvine.org.

Registration fees are:
- Early registration through May 15 is $30 per person
- May 16 through June 10 is $50 per person
- June 11 through June 15 is $65 per person
- Children 13 and under participate for free
- 2019 t-shirts are $15 each

Ride routes
- **Trail route (22 and 37 miles)** - The 22-mile route will follow the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail to the Middlebury SAG and return to Goshen. One mile of the route will be on county roads where there is a gap in the trail. The 37-mile route continues on to the Shipshewana SAG and then return on the trail to Goshen. Four miles will be on county roads.
- **50-Mile route** – This route will use county roads between the fairgrounds and the Shipshewana SAG. Then it will return to the fairgrounds on the trail providing access to the Middlebury SAG along the way. A mini-SAG between Goshen and Shipshewana will replenish drinks and stock energy foods.
- **100-Mile route** – The 100-milers will accompany the 50-milers to the Shipshewana SAG. Then they will head west to the Bonneyville Hills and return to Shipshewana. From there they will follow the trail back to the fairgrounds with an opportunity to stop at the Middlebury SAG along the way. Two mini-SAGS will refresh drinks and energy foods.

Friday Evening Dinner Ride
We are offering a choice of two Friday evening dinner options this year. (You must be registered for the Saturday ride to participate in the Friday dinner rides):

**Bicycle to The Carriage House**
- Friday June 14, 2019, 4:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
- Meet at Woodlawn AM Church, 62861 County Road 41, Goshen, Ind., at 4:30 p.m.
- Bicycle 10 miles to The Carriage House
- You must be able to bicycle at 10 mph for one hour

**Drive to Yoder’s Homestyle Cooking**
- Friday June 14, 2019, 6:00 p.m.
- Drive to Yoder’s at 10525 W 325 S, Shipshewana, IN. Arrive by 5:55 p.m.

Cost for either dinner: $60/person ($30 for dinner ride + $30 for Saturday ride). Limit: 100 people for each dinner. Registration ends May 15.
Volunteers needed

Each year 100-150 wonderful people volunteer to help with the Pumpkinvine Bike Ride. Participants frequently comment that our volunteers are a highlight of the ride because they are so friendly and helpful.

If you’d like to add your name to our possible volunteer list, go to this webpage to complete a form (one per person): ride.pumpkinvine.org/volunteer

Resources

Register and help us celebrate the 20th-anniversary ride. Our routes feature the popular Pumpkinvine Nature Trail along with on-road routes through small towns and Amish countryside. See ride.pumpkinvine.org and facebook.com/Pumpkinvine for more information. A link to online ride registration site is at ride.pumpkinvine.org.

Ride support

• Roving Support & Gear (SAG) vehicles will assist with flats and minor repairs.
• Water, Gatorade, and organic and locally-produced foods will be served at rest stops.
• Cold cut sandwiches will be served at Middlebury and Shipshewana SAGs.
• Locally produced pie & ice cream will be served at the end of the ride.
• Showers will be available at the fairgrounds.
Poets on the Pumpkinvine

We are pleased to announce the winners of the second annual Pumpkinvine Poetry Contest

First prize
Four tickets for the annual dinner or Pumpkinvine Bike Ride.

The Trace
By Don Yost

Where once were leaves and unturned earth
Now called, not sent, we pray with feet,
A path from past to walking birth.

We wend the way where deer went first
Then arrow heads and pumpkin seeds
Where once were leaves and unturned earth.

A trail of tears, a plowman’s curse,
Then iron laid to sooted heat.
A path from past to walking birth.

Torn up ties, a stony berth
Past briar and berry, through jimsonweed
Where once were leaves and unturned earth.

We take our stick, our wheels, our girth
And call, not send, a pilgrim’s reach.
A path from past to walking birth.

We quit the march for lock and purse
To pass near trees where titmice meet
Where once were leaves and unturned earth
This path from past to walking birth.

Second prize
Three tickets for the annual dinner or Pumpkinvine Bike Ride.

Greetings On The Pumpkinvine From Andromeda
By Matt Lind

With the promise of Leonid’s celestial show
I strap my lawn chair on back
And cautiously roll along the trail
Double-darkened from midnight and forest,
To the hill (you know the one);
There, to unfold my chair,
And lie back, draped in blanket
And filled with expectation
(Like that night, barely four years old,
When, suddenly awake,
I pad from my bed to stand Before the picture window
And watch the Pennsylvania hillsides
Wrapped in the moon’s silvered net)
Now, a streak across the northern sky,
And another, and the spectacle unfolds.
But then, my eye is drawn
To a more distant drama:
Above, Cassiopeia, with Schedar,
The Queen’s fiery heart,
Points the way to that dim spiral of light,
One trillion stars: Andromeda.
Celestial rays that sprang from unknown suns
Two and a half million years before now.
Did they, like Pheidippides,
Intend a message—
As they hurl into the
Surrounding abyss of space,
While the first of our genus
Step out onto this Earth;
As they hum through the vast Intergalactic void,
While woolly mammoths stand staring from this hill;
As they near the outer reaches of the Milky-Way,
While the Potawatomi tend their maize in the field below;
And as they finally streak through this November sky
While I lie by this winding path—
To pierce my eyes with their ancient cipher
On this distant alien soil.
Comment by Ervin Beck, contest judge

The increased number and quality of poems submitted in 2018 led us to give third-prize to two poems. All of them enhance our experience and understanding of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail.

First Prize: Don Yost considers the Trail within a disciplined, classic poetic form, the villanelle, which is very difficult to write. 3-line stanzas with 2 end rhymes, each using one entire line from Stanza 1; at the end, 4 lines using 2 lines from Stanza 1. Regular 4-beat lines. We can use lines from this poem as mantras as we walk or wheel down the trail.

Second Prize: We may need to look up a few mythic and astrological terms to fully appreciate “Greetings on the Pumpkinvine From Andromeda” by Matt Lind, our 2018 poet laureate. But he has given us an ambitious poem that persuades us of the value of that pesky hill and opens our view from the grand rural landscape to starlight from 2.5m years ago.

Third Prize (tie): Supporting those thoughtful poems is Jennifer Ann Hueber Miller’s “My Pumpkinvine,” which (like Psalms and Walt Whitman) lists, in parallel, the images that create our sensuous experience in nature. Every user could make a different list.

Third Prize (tie): Ashley Jager’s “Footprints” is unified by seven first-person descriptions of her run on the Trail. It reminds us that, in addition to individual pleasure, the Trail offers camaraderie as we notice signs that connect us with others who have come and gone.

It’s not too early to write a draft of the poem you will submit for the third contest, due in January 2020.

Third prize

1 ticket for the annual dinner or Pumpkinvine Bike Ride.

My Pumpkinvine
By Jennifer Ann Hueber Miller

My Pumpkinvine rejuvenates me with joy, beauty, and peace; Here are unpretentious sights and memories: Simple bikes parked against the Amish schoolhouse, Huskies watching me with deep, soulful eyes, A farm boy standing on a plow behind horses, Crunchy leaves, snow, or ice underfoot, Purple mulberries staining my shoes, A rotten tree stump holding a hidden geocache, Bunnies hopping across the trail, The new shelter, built by an Eagle Scout, A rosary dangling in a tree, a relic of someone’s prayer, Brilliant red berries and cardinals against the shimmering snow, Calves and foals affirming new life in the spring, Squirrels with bushy tails running along the railing, A silent blue heron standing like a statue in the water, Ducks and swans floating together near the shore, Strong, majestic bison like Yellowstone Park, Colorful laundry hung out on the line. My Pumpkinvine. Saturated with God’s creation and the harmony of nature, I am strong, vibrant, and tranquil.

Footprints
By Ashley Jager

I run alone. Cold air fills my lungs as I breathe in deep, the beauty that surrounds me. I escape the noise and enter an archway of delicate branches laced in white, on the Pumpkinvine Trail. Quiet nature beckons me forward into my own sense of wild peace. I focus my gaze into the distance that seems to echo with each crunch I take. I run alone, but I follow a trail of footprints, and leave my own steps to be discovered by another, tomorrow.
What members like about the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail

In our fall fundraising letter, we asked people to tell us what they appreciate about the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail. Here is a sample of their responses.

The varied scenery along the way and the people you meet along the way. The trail is so nice and well used that it started a “trail movement” in our area. —Mike Bontrager

I appreciate the way that we can enjoy cycling along a serene and bucolic path and not have to worry about auto and truck traffic. —Fred Cain

The most cherished moments of our year are our rides on the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail. We witness the cycle of life as the seasons change and have a greater appreciation for God’s amazing creation. It’s a glimpse of what heaven must be like. —Joe and Shelly Nycum

The fact that we will not have to ride on the road anymore! —Louis and Carolyn Frick

The sensation of going back in time to a slower pace, away from the roadway rush and traffic. —Lynn Schram and Mary Michalak

The diversity of the landscape (only one hill). Benches for resting and plenty of parking areas if you don’t want to do the entire trail. It appears to be well maintained. —Robert and Lorrraine Pflederer

We can be safer than on a road! —Charlie Miller

We are so lucky to have this trail system! I love not paying for a gym membership and utilizing the trails for my health and for my family too. Thank you for the maintenance to keep it so nice. —Kyleen Miller

It is a great trail just to enjoy the natural world. —Elizabeth Jacobs

I appreciate that the trail gives us a way to connect with nature. —Lonnie Franks

When we meet bikers on other rails to trails, and we tell them we have the Pumpkinvine Trail, they always respond, “That’s the best”! —Bill Minter

The opportunity to exercise, walk, run, bike, stroll along a beautiful, safe, and peaceful path. —Wayne and Beth Morton

The connection between health and exercise is irrefutable. The Pumpkinvine provides us a safe and inexpensive avenue for regular exercise in an amazing environment. As an added bonus, the Pumpkinvine provides a place to socialize with friends! —Richard and Kay Rhodes

Although I no longer live in Shipshewana, I am pleased to have safer biking for our Amish community—and a way to introduce and share the community with others. —Carol Levick

I love being able to bike to Shipshewana and back without having to worry about pickup trucks and distracted drivers. I also love the peace and quiet of the wooded sections. —Douglas George

If I start by saying there is nothing to dislike about the trail now that the last and final stretch is being connected, it goes without saying really that I for one appreciate everything I know about it. I am one of the fortunate ones who can now cycle from my home in Dunlap all the way to Goshen, Middlebury, to Shipshewana on a bicycle trail and never dodge a vehicle. Enroute I can enjoy nature at its best, whether that is birds or dozens of verities, flowers of every color, squirrels darting about the bushes, deer and fawns, and even an occasional snake zigzagging its way across my path. That is something to appreciate and treasure. —B. Harry Dyck
Kroger rewards program benefits the Pumpkinvine

Kroger shoppers, who also are supporters of the Friends of the Pumpkinvine, generated more than $1,100 for the Friends of the Pumpkinvine in 2017 through the Kroger Community Rewards Program simply by using their Plus card when they shop. The Kroger Community Rewards Program donates a percentage of each purchase to the Friends of the Pumpkinvine when Kroger shoppers pick the Friends of the Pumpkinvine from a list of eligible organizations on the Kroger website: kroger.com/account/enrollCommunityRewardsNow/

Instructions for how to sign up are also at: pumpkinvine.org/donate/kroger-rewards-2/

AmazonSmile shoppers can support the Friends of the Pumpkinvine

If you shop at SmileAmazon.com, your purchases can support the Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, Inc. Go to smile.amazon.com/ch/35-1871609 and link your account to the Friends of the Pumpkinvine.

Giant spiderweb seen south of U.S. 20 tunnel. Photo by Andrea Thompson, Sept. 2018
Complete the form below to become a supporting member of the Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail or to renew your membership. Your tax-deductible donation will be used to build and maintain the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail and goes toward paying the day-to-day expenses of the Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, Inc. No board members receive remuneration. By showing your Friends’ membership card, you are eligible for discounts on specified purchases at the following area bicycle shops: Elkhart Bicycle Shop, Elkhart; Family Bicycle, Elkhart; Lincoln Avenue Cycling and Fitness, Goshen; House of Bicycles, Osceola; and Pumpkinvine Cyclery, Middlebury.

Has your membership expired?

You are receiving this newsletter because you have contributed to the Friends of the Pumpkinvine in the past two years. If the date on the label of this newsletter has passed, we hope you’ll consider renewing your membership in the Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail. Membership levels are:

- □ Individual $30
- □ Family $40
- □ Sustaining $60
- □ Contributing $100
- □ Patron $250
- □ Benefactor $500
- □ Benefactor Silver $1,000
- □ Benefactor Gold $2,500
- □ Benefactor Platinum > $5,000

Send your membership payment to:
Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail • P.O. Box 392 • Goshen, IN 46527

Name _____________________________________________________________
Address ___________________________________________________________________________________________________________
City __________________________ State ______ Zip code _________________________
Phone __________________________ E-mail __________________________