On October 23, 2019, the Friends of the Pumpkinvine signed purchase agreements with two landowners between County Road 850W and State Road 5 in LaGrange County, making it possible to define a continuous route for the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail from where the trail currently ends into downtown Shipshewana. Earlier the town had gained ownership of or was promised most of the land where the trail would be built, but they lacked two parcels to make a continuous trail. The Friends of the Pumpkinvine served as intermediary to acquire those remaining two parcels. After the Friends take ownership of the two properties, they will donate them to the Town of Shipshewana.

Acquiring the right to purchase these parcels will make it possible for the Town of Shipshewana to apply for the governor’s NextLevel Trails grant program. One of the requirements of that grant is that all the land for any proposed trail be owned or promised to the grant applicant.

“The Town of Shipshewana is happy to report the pending filing of the NextLevel Trails Grant 2019,” said Bob Shanahan, Shipshewana town manager. “The Town has secured the rights to construct the trail from County Road 850 West to County Road 735 West. The estimated cost of construction is approximately $1.25 million with the town giving around $250,000 in matching funds.”

If the grant application is successful, “we would expect to start the engineering and bidding process as soon as possible,” Shanahan said.

“Norm Kauffmann, former Shipshewana Town Manager and Friends of the Pumpkinvine board member, was a key player in making this deal possible,” said John Yoder, Friends president. “He came out of retirement and used his negotiating skills to make it happen.”
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Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, Inc.

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See back issues of this newsletter at:
www.pumpkinvine.org

Email contact: Friends@pumpkinvine.org

facebook.com/Pumpkinvine

Follow our blog, Along the Pumpkinvine:
http://fopvnt.blogspot.com/

@FOPNT

YouTube.com/user/FOPVNT

Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, Inc. are cyclists, hikers 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 Shipshewana, Ind.

From the president
The Friends of the Pumpkinvine are in good hands

In January 2019, I informed the Friends of the Pumpkinvine board that I intended to retire from the board at the end of the year. My two goals for my last year were to make as much progress as possible on closing the remaining two gaps in the Pumpkinvine and to do everything possible to ensure that the Friends of the Pumpkinvine would continue to be a strong organization and partner with the agencies managing the Pumpkinvine.

The two gaps were a half mile from County Road 850W into Shipshewana and a half mile between County Road 20 and County Road 35. (Construction on the third gap between County Road 33 and County Road 20 was underway last fall, so we knew it would be done this year.)

As it turned out, closing those two gaps has been more of a challenge than we anticipated, though not unlike past experiences negotiating for a trail route through land we did not acquire from the railroad in our 1993 purchase of the Pumpkinvine corridor from Penn Central. Like those previous negotiations, closing these gaps takes many meetings, multiple scenarios and an abundance of patience. Even when all the parties agree that the Pumpkinvine is a wonderful community resource and that it provides a safe place for transportation and recreation, it still takes time to sort through all the landscaping issues, drainage implications and the privacy concerns.

The good news of the year is that the gap between County Road 850W into Shipshewana (as the story on page one of this newsletter indicates) passed a major hurdle when the Friends of the Pumpkinvine signed purchase agreements for the two parcels needed for a continuous route into town. Those agreements gave the Town of Shipshewana the green light to apply for a NextLevel Trails grant from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources and make construction of that section possible next summer, provided they receive that DNR grant.

Discussions to close the remaining gap in the trail between County Road 20 and County Road 35 continue but will likely not be resolved by the end of the year. While that is disappointing, the good news is that the Friends of the Pumpkinvine has a great team in place to continue those negotiations into 2020, if necessary.

That’s the central message of this, my last newsletter column: my second goal has been realized. The team Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, Inc., is in good hands going forward. Brittany Short, in her role as transition coordinator, has done an outstanding job in managing all phases of the change in organizational leadership. In addition, I believe that we have a board with experience in negotiating complex land transactions, expertise in raising funds, strong leadership, and most importantly, a vision for how the Friends of the Pumpkinvine can continue to be a champion and partner for the future well-being of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail.

Finally, I want to thank all those who contributed time, talent and funds to the Friends of the Pumpkinvine in the past 30 years. It is your support that has made it possible to turn an abandoned, overgrown corridor into a wonderful linear park. Your patience in this long process has been extraordinary. The community will be forever grateful for your vision of what could be.
Friends of the Pumpkinvine board prepares for leadership transition

By Brittany Short, transition coordinator

It is no small task to navigate the transition when an organization’s founder leaves. Over the last 10 months, the Friends of the Pumpkinvine board of directors have worked to ensure that the Friends enters 2020 vibrant and functioning well. John Yoder has been a constant source of leadership inside and outside of this organization for 30 years. He has volunteered countless hours to the Friends, and this year will retire along with 17-year legacy member Chet Peachey. Bud Wulliman, who has served on the board for 10 years, also plans to retire sometime in 2020. Together, the sum of volunteer hours and expertise that they bring to the Friends are irreplaceable.

With that in mind and to carry out some of the crucial tasks they have performed for the Friends over the years, the board has hired Cheryl Kiser as a part-time administrative assistant. She will operate out of office space at Pumpkinvine Cyclery in Middlebury and will be overseen by the board’s executive committee.

The need for this change in the way the Friends operates is proof of the dedication and sacrifice of these individuals and others who donate their time and energy to the Friends organization for the benefit of our community. While our, until-now, all volunteer organization is undergoing some changes, we are confident that those changes will lead to a strong and vibrant Friends of the Pumpkinvine for many years to come.

21st Pumpkinvine Bike Ride will be on June 20, 2020

Mark your calendar now for the 21st Pumpkinvine Bike Ride on June 20, 2020. Participants will enjoy rides on county roads through the scenic countryside of Elkhart and LaGrange counties and on the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail. Marked rides of 22, 37, 50 and 100 miles are available for all ages. Rest stops (SAGS) are available on all routes, offering cycling-friendly food and drinks. Enjoy pie and ice cream at the end of the ride at the Elkhart County Fair Grounds. Money raised from the ride go toward trail maintenance and closing gaps in the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail.

Also, consider enjoying one of two Amish-cooked thresher’s dinners on June 19, the evening before the bike ride: transportation to one dinner is by bike and to the other by car. The menu for both dinner sites is similar: home-made bread, mashed potatoes, green beans, broccoli salad, noodles, dressing and gravy, two meats, ice cream and unique, local pies. Past registrants have raved about the meals. One dinner will feature a 10-mile bike ride to and from the dinner and for the other you arrive by car.

More details of the 2020 ride will be released in mid-February, with registration opening soon thereafter. Watch our social media feeds for official announcements or see www.ride.Pumpkinvine.org.

Cyclists can enjoy a delicious Thresher’s Dinner June 19, the evening before the Pumpkinvine Bike Ride: either with a 10-mile ride to and from the dinner or a drive to a second venue.
Doug VonGunten and Phil Mason join Friends board

At its October board meeting, the Friends of the Pumpkinvine elected Doug VonGunten and Phil Mason to the board of directors. Both bring important skill to the board in a time of transition.

Doug VonGunten, a native of Elkhart County, received a degree in business administration from Manchester College and has been a project manager in the commercial construction industry for 24 years, the last 13 with Ancon Construction in Goshen.

His interest in the Friends of the Pumpkinvine is personal and also for what it brings to the community. “I love spending time on the Pumpkinvine cycling, jogging, and walking,” he said. At the same time, he believes the Pumpkinvine “is a very important asset to our community, and I wanted to get involved to help continue it and preserve it. I believe the trail along with the other trails it connects with have improved our community and is a key factor in attracting people to live or visit Elkhart County.”

“Doug’s construction experience will be a major asset to the board as we look at completing the gaps in the trail and for long-term maintenance,” said Brittany Short, who headed the board recruitment committee.

He also has board experience from serving on other boards, including Goshen Noon Kiwanis Club, Ryan’s Place (current board chair), the Associated Builders and Contractors – Northern Indiana and board member of Ancon Construction.

Phil Mason got involved with the Friends of the Pumpkinvine three years ago by helping with the Pumpkinvine Bike Ride, and in 2018, he became a co-leader of that ride with Tim Drescher. He had begun biking on the Pumpkinvine when he returned to Michiana in 2013. “I greatly value the beauty and safety it provides walkers, runners and bikers,” he said.

Phil grew up in Hesston, Kan., and received a business degree from Goshen College and an MBA in sustainable business from Green Mountain College, Poultney, Vermont. He is currently vice president of business development for Hertzler Systems, a local software company. Previously, he worked in technology for non-profits, as a consultant and as a college professor. His volunteer work has included serving on the boards of Chain Reaction Bicycle Project, Hesston Community Foundation and the Goshen College Alumni.

“I see great value in public goods like the Pumpkinvine,” he said. “We can all benefit from getting out of the house, off our devices and into nature. The trail provides this natural space. It also uniquely links numerous communities, Goshen, Middlebury, and Shipshewana benefit as well as the Amish who use the trail to travel between districts. It up to people that value these types of things to support them.”

“Phil has had a broad range of work experiences that that will be helpful to our board,” said Short, including marketing, management and strategic planning.
Debi Riegsecker has completed a three-year term with the Friends of the Pumpkinvine board of directors in July. Riegsecker, a faithful cyclist of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, “raised a major portion of the funds we need to close the gap in the Pumpkinvine between County Road 20 and County Road 35,” said John Yoder, Friends president. “Her wide network of contacts in Elkhart County made her a superb fundraiser.”

“Three years ago when I was asked to join the board, I was honored,” Riegsecker said. “It seemed to be a great fit. I love the trail and use it almost daily in the summer. It has been very rewarding to help raise funds to complete the gaps in the Pumpkinvine between County Road 35 and County Road 20. I look forward to the day when the trail is completed to downtown Shipshewana. I think the trail is one of the crown jewels of our area—a resource to be treasured.”

When you see Debi on the trail, let her know you appreciate her efforts to make the Pumpkinvine a continuous off-road trail.

Riegsecker retires from Friends board

Peachey to retire He served on board for 17 years

Chet Peachey, one of the founders of the Friends of the Pumpkinvine organization, is retiring from the Friends board at the end of 2019. On Dec. 4, 1989, Peachey joined Ervin Beck, Norm Kauffmann, John Kolb and John Yoder at the first meeting to discuss the possibility of turning the abandoned Pumpkinvine railroad into a linear park. That group evolved into an ad hoc committee and finally an incorporated non-profit in 1992. Peachey retired from the board in 1995 but rejoined it in 2009.

Chet enjoys riding the Pumpkinvine in the day of distracted drivers. “The Pumpkinvine has contributed to my overall health by being able to ride bicycle safely on a trail and avoid most busy, and many times dangerous, traffic on county road,” he said.

Through the years, Peachey has held several positions with the board, including as secretary, a member of a land-purchase negotiating team and as merchandise coordinator, where he was responsible for introducing the Friends of the Pumpkinvine caps, pens, license plates and the popular jersey. For many years, he and his wife, Ruthann, staffed the T-shirt table at the bike ride and assisted with the Thresher’s Dinner ride for 10 years.

“To have had Chet as a board member all these years has been an incredible joy,” said John Yoder, board president. “His ability to analyze a complex decision was amazing, and his understanding of people and process was invaluable. We missed his wise council when he wasn’t on the board and were thrilled to welcome him back in 2009. He defines what it means to be a friend of the Pumpkinvine.”
Walking in nature inspires
Brett Mitchell

Most of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail is built on an abandoned railroad that was nicknamed the Pumpkin Vine. In the early 1980s, operations ceased, and the rails were removed in 1982. The Friends of the Pumpkinvine purchased the railroad corridor in 1993 and the rest is history.

Brett Mitchell, a Goshen resident, is one person who vividly remembers seeing the trains rolling by his East Goshen neighborhood in the ’60s and ’70s.

“The Pumpkinvine Railroad was a short walk from my home. I spent many hours wandering the corridor, from Rock Run Creek to Butts Lake, including the sledding hill just north of Lincoln Avenue,” Mitchell says.

After high school, Mitchell joined the Air Force and left the area for four years. When he returned to the area, the railroad had shut down and there were talks about a trail being constructed where the railway once existed. He was interested and attended some of the early meetings.

Mitchell’s life and career took precedence over his interest in the trail for a while. He worked at Kem Krest for many years – until he noticed that something was wrong. Standing was really bothering him.

In 2011, Mitchell was diagnosed with Spinocerebellar Ataxia, a genetic condition that causes incoordination of gait. Despite that diagnosis, Mitchell still walks the Pumpkinvine regularly. In fact, nature walks are one of his favorite activities that he can still do. He’s even attended Elkhart County Parks’ Hiking Club for the past five years.

“Time has changed me more than it has the Pumpkinvine corridor,” says Mitchell. “I need a mobility aid now, but it has not stopped me from enjoying the trail. If anything, I appreciate it even more than before, especially since more trail areas have opened up. We all need exercise and to connect with nature. The Pumpkinvine offers an excellent place to do both.”

Mitchell expressed his love of walking and his connection to nature in a poem:

Ramblings of A Disabled Nature Lover

Floors of malls
And big box stores
They are no fun for me
My legs like them no more
I like the outdoors
Sun overhead
Grass beneath my feet
Breezes flowing through the trees
You can have your concrete
I do better on a dirt path
Through the woods
Or next to a body of water
Parks – city, county or state
Are where I like to be
I may need something
To keep myself upright
But I’m still walking
Getting exercise
For my muscles
Vitamin D for my bones
No screens to stare at
Nature all around
I may be disabled
But yet I still feel free

Say hello to Brett Mitchell the next time you see him. He is usually on the trail near Abshire Park or on the CR-35 to CR-37 section.
Walk promotes health and benefits the Friends of the Pumpkinvine

By Julia Gautsche

Downtown Goshen, Inc. hosted the 11th annual Maple City Walk, September 21st. The 10K, half marathon, and marathon walks started and finished at the Elkhart County Fairgrounds, continued on the Maple City Greenway and connected with the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail. Again this year $5 of the registration fee was donated to Friends of the Pumpkinvine for help with closing gaps in the trail and for trail maintenance.

Seventy walkers enjoyed a beautiful fall day on the Pumpkinvine: 36 for the 10K; 27, the half marathon and seven for the marathon walk. For the first time, the marathon walkers were able to use the new section of the Pumpkinvine between County Road 33 and County Road 20 on their way to the halfway mark outside Middlebury.

Many thanks to our premier sponsors: Everence and the Community Foundation of Elkhart County. Other sponsors were WNIT Television, Cripe Septic and Cleaning Service, Elkhart County Parks and Recreation Department, Goshen Parks and Recreation Department, Hawkins Water Tech, Kercher’s Sunrise Orchards, Inc., Maple City Market, and Woldruff’s Footwear and Apparel. Thanks also to our volunteers from Goshen High School Key Club, Goshen College Nursing Department and community members from the “Acts of Service” website.

The Pumpkinvine Nature Trail is part of a system of trails with linkage to the Maple City Greenway, the MapleHeart and the Winona Trails. These trails are valuable community resources that promote sustainability, community and a healthy lifestyle.

This annual walk was planned by the Maple City Walk Committee: Julia Gautsche, Brenda Hess, Vivian Schmucker, Cheryl Hochstetler Shirk, Elisabeth Vukovich, Doug Yoder.
Share your trail experience in the third Annual Pumpkinvine Poetry Contest

Last year the second Pumpkinvine Poetry contest yielded poems that gave us insights into four unique experiences of the trail. They were printed in the March Trail Talk newsletter and read at the Friends of the Pumpkinvine annual dinner in April.

The challenge this year remains the same: to help trail users understand how you experience the unique relationships and qualities of this linear park in a poem.

Here are a few guidelines. The poem should:

1. Be inspired by the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail.
2. In some way make clear that it is about the Pumpkinvine.
3. Should be no more than 40 lines.
4. Be original.

The winning poems will be printed in the Trail Talk newsletter, posted on our website and read at the annual dinner.


Send your poem to friends@pumpkinvine.org by January 31, 2020.
- The first-place winner will receive four tickets to the Friends of the Pumpkinvine annual dinner or the Pumpkinvine Bike Ride.
- The second-and third place winners will receive two tickets to the annual dinner or Pumpkinvine Bike Ride.
- Friends of the Pumpkinvine board members and families are not eligible.

Parking lots at CR 35 and CR 43 will close in November

Parking lots on the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail at County Road 35 and County Road 43 will close sometime in November. The exact date of the closing depends on the temperature and weather conditions, according to Nick Steele, Tail and Safety Coordinator for Elkhart County Parks.

“T use my best judgment when it comes to closing them for the season,” Steel said. Because the gravel used as a base at County Road 43 is round and not a crushed limestone, it cannot be plowed efficiently, and therefore, would be plowed into piles with the snow.

The lot at County Road 35, however, “has little to no gravel base and becomes extremely muddy and hazardous,” Steele said. “So, from a maintenance standpoint, it’s much easier to close the lots (at County Road 35 and County Road 43) down once the weather turns nasty.” (This parking lot will remain unfinished until there is definite word on how the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail will cross County Road 35.) The County Road 37 parking lot, however, is paved and is maintained throughout the winter months.

Other factors that impact the decision to close the parking lots are that Elkhart County Parks no longer have seasonal, part-time staff to maintain all the parks nor the equipment necessary to keep everything open and well maintained.

Steele also noted that the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail is the last trail in the Elkhart County Parks system to be plowed in winter. “If the snow becomes too intense or we feel it’s unsafe to maintain, it will be closed,” he said.
Additions were added to the new trail section this summer

The new section of the Pumpkinvine between County Road 33 and County Road 20 that opened in June was rideable but not finished. Several additions were installed over the summer. Recognition of donors who contributed $1,000 or more toward closing gaps in the trail is yet to come.

New gates and fences provide privacy and security where the trail divides a property.

This new entrance to the trail is for workers at A&R Machine Shop on CR 20, many of whom bike to work.

A fence gives privacy for the home beside the trail east of County Road 33.

Where the trail crosses a culvert for the south fork of Pine Creek, fences protect riders from falling into the creek.

A horse fence replaced the temporary fence used during construction.
**Cross-country skiing is best at county parks, not on the Pumpkinvine**

The best places to cross-country ski in this area are at the four Elkhart County parks where the trails are groomed: Ox Bow County Park has a 2.5-mile loop – trailhead begins at Fisherman’s Camp Shelter. Bonneyville Mill County Park has a 3-mile loop – trailhead at the main parking lot and Briar Patch Shelter. Cobus Creek County Park has a 2-mile loop – trailhead at the parking lot. River Preserve County Park has a 3-mile loop – trailhead at Benton Spillway. **None of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail is groomed.**

In addition, skiing on trails with an asphalt surface like most of the Pumpkinvine has the potential to damage the surface and the ski poles. Consequently, the only recommended place to cross-country ski on the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail is the limestone section of the trail from State Road 4 to County Road 28 north east of Goshen.

**Note:**
- You can rent cross-country skis at the Goshen Parks Dept., 524 E. Jackson, Goshen. Phone: 574-534-2901.
- Elkhart County Parks does not plow the parking lots at County Road 35 and County Road 37 and County Road 43.

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<tr>
<th>Pumpkinvine section</th>
<th>Here's how the managing agencies treat the trail when there is snow.</th>
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| **Goshen Park and Recreation** | • The city plows the Pumpkinvine one plow-width wide from State Road 4 to County Road 28 (the limestone section) and from State Road 4 to the water plant on 5th St. That leaves the other half of the trail open for cross country skiing.  
  • The unplowed portion of the trail is not groomed for cross-country skiing.  
  • Plowing the trail is a low priority.                                                                 |
| **Middlebury**               | • The town plows half the width of the Pumpkinvine from York St. to the U.S. 20 tunnel.  
  • The trail is not groomed for cross-country skiing.  
  • Now that Ridge Run Trail is open, plowing the trail is a priority because it is part of Safe Routes to School.                                                                 |
| **Elkhart County Parks**     | Elkhart County Parks plows the Pumpkinvine:  
  • From County Road 28 to County Road 20. However, this section may not be plowed due to blowing and drifting snow.  
  • From the County Road 35 to the north side of the U.S. 20 tunnel.  
  • From York Dr. to County Road 1150W in LaGrange Co.  
  • The trail is not groomed for cross-country skiing.  
  • Plowing the trail is a low priority.                                                                 |
| **Shipshewana**              | Shipshewana does not plow the trail from County Road 850W to 1150W, and the trail is not groomed for cross-country skiing.         |
Contact information
Medical emergency on the trail: call 911.
Do not call 911 about trail conditions.

General information on the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail
Check: www.pumpkinvine.org
Email: Friends@pumpkinvine.org
Call: 574-535-6458

Use the following emails and phone numbers to contact the agencies that manage the trail. The areas the four agencies manage are identified by the color of the mile markers: Goshen (blue); Elkhart County Parks (brown); Middlebury (green); Shipshewana (red). If in doubt, call 574-535-6458.

Goshen Park and Recreation
State Road 4 to County Road 28
Weekdays: 574-534-2901
Weekends: 574-536-4543
ParksRecreation@GoshenCity.com

Middlebury Park and Recreation
US 20 to York Dr.
Tom Enright
574- 825-1499
Weekends: 574-533-4151
Parks@Middleburyin.com

Elkhart County Parks
County Road 28 to U.S. 20 and York Dr. to LaGrange Co. line
Weekdays: 574-535-6458
Weekends: 574-875-7422
nsteele@elkhartcounty.com

Shipshewana-LaGrange County
Elkhart Co.-LaGrange Co. to CR 850 W
Bob Shanahan
Medical emergency: 260-768-4310
Trail issues: 260-768-4743
townmanager@shipshewana.org

Kroger shoppers can support the Friends of the Pumpkinvine by using their Plus card
Kroger shoppers, who also are supporters of the Friends of the Pumpkinvine, generated more than $900 for the Friends of the Pumpkinvine in 2018 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: https://www.kroger.com/account/enrollCommunityRewardsNow/
Instructions for how to sign up are also at http://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 https://smile.amazon.com/ch/35-1871609 and link your account to the Friends of the Pumpkinvine.
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 ________________________________