



HOLIDAY GATHERING:



We have worked hard throughout the year, mowing, cutting trees, attending meetings, problem solving. The list could go on and on, but it is time to take a break. We invite you to our annual Holiday Gathering, to

be held at **7 PM on Tuesday December 6th**, with holiday treats to eat. We are honored this year to have author Janice Dauber. Janice accomplished one great feat; she biked across the United States. She grew up in and currently lives in Tyrone. She and Catherine Grigor, of Boalsburg, left on the 100 day adventure from Yorktown Virginia and ended in Astoria Oregon. She stated that they only rode 4,100 miles and that they were “self-supported” meaning they carried their own shelter, clothes and food. This sounds like an experience of a lifetime. Plan to come and hear of Janice’s adventure and feel free to bring a friend.

The gathering will be held at the Hoss’s Corporate Offices in Duncansville behind Marzoni’s, at **7PM**. Please use the **REAR ENTRANCE** at the back of the building.

HOSS’S COMMUNITY FUNDRAISER:



December 6th is not only the Holiday Gathering, but also the day Rails to Trails is again partnering with Hoss’s Community Fundraising Program. All you have to do is clip the coupon from Page 3 of the *Trekker* and go to Hoss’s on

Patchway Drive in Duncansville. Present your coupon when ordering lunch or dinner and Hoss’s will donate 20% of the cost of your group’s meals to Rails to Trails. Now how easy is that? You get a great meal and help out Rails to Trails at the same time.

You can eat at any time during the day. If you plan to come to the Holiday Gathering, just allow enough time to eat and then come over to the Corporate Offices, (which are located just behind Marzoni’s restaurant.) We will be using the REAR entrance at the back of the building.

ASH TREE REMOVAL PROJECT COMPLETED:

If you have been down on the trail, you will note that there are many stumps, firewood and a great deal of woodchips. Ernest Ebersole from Lofty Heights Tree Care and the Conservative

Anabaptist Service Program did a fantastic job removing the Ash trees along the trail.



These young men worked long days beginning at the eastern end of the trail and working westward during the month of October. We apologize for the inconvenience if your ride or hike along the trail was cut short. This was a massive

undertaking and we feel Ernest and his crew worked at making the least impact possible for our trail users. It is sad to see all of these trees gone but because of the Emerald Ash Borer Beetle they had to be removed.

THANK YOU TO REI:



REI employees presented a \$10,000 check to President Ed Donahoe and former president Ethan Imhoff on November 1, 2016. These funds will go towards trail development connecting Canoe Creek State Park to The Lower Trail. (left to right Cayt Lusk, REI Outreach Specialist, Tina Molski, REI Director of Operations, Ed Donahoe RTT, Ethan Imhoff, RTT, Greg Lang, REI Manager of Operations).

TIME TO GET READY FOR THE WARM SEASON:

By Dave Hurst, (2016 Hurst Media Works)

The scene before me is a warm one: a group of 18 people cozily gathered in a rude room, standing together or seated at three long tables. Some are wearing ski jackets, others are in vests, and all are listening to a woman wearing a white ball cap and a black National Ski Patrol vest.

Here's another warm scene: Three cross-country skiers are stopped and posing for a camera shot underneath arching, snow-laden evergreen boughs. There's about a foot of white powder on the ground and a touch of red on the skiers' cheeks.

Doesn't sound warm? You should see the smiles on their faces.

Here we are at the end of October, with green leaves still on some trees and frost yet to appear in many places, so why am I talking about winter? Because cold temperatures and snow will be settling in before long; and because you should think about the season ahead before the wind begins to howl, the thermometer plummets and the temptation to hunker down becomes overpowering.

The Alleghenies are beautiful places to be outside during these transitional and cold months to come. Our slumbering hardwoods become special places of serenity and peace, which can be enjoyed in solitude or in the company of others.

Now's the time to prepare if you don't have the proper wear. A good insulating layer of breathable (wicking) microfiber is essential. It moves with you, keeps your skin dry and helps to prevent both chilling and overheating.

Assemble layers of outer clothing that work together and can be added or removed as the conditions and temperature dictate. And make sure you have warm gloves (mittens are better), socks, some type of a hood and a hat that also protects your ears.

Properly layered, you can handle all but the most-extreme weather the Alleghenies are capable of producing. But why should you?

First, for the fresh air and exercise; do you really want to be cooped up for months? And, second, well, do you remember those warm scenes?

Some may challenge me on this assertion, but I believe people become friendlier – especially in the woods – as the weather becomes colder. Most people aren't outside in the wintertime, so those who are have something in common.

People we might simply pass by with a nod or "Hello" during a summer stroll become fellow enthusiasts to engage in extended conversations when encountered on a winter day. Perhaps it has something to do with the isolation that winter tends to impose. We crave the warmth of companionship.

Of course downhill ski enthusiasts know all about this and have no problem finding places to go or people to spend time with. If the ski slopes aren't for you, though, where can you go?

State parks are always a good bet. Often, park staff will schedule special events such as guided hikes, snowshoe or cross-country ski outings along with other special nature programs.

Rail trails, such as the Armstrong, Great Allegheny Passage and Lower trails, are excellent places for a winter walk or ski outing – especially for walkers who don't want to risk the hazards of uneven surfaces and skiers who don't want to deal with hills. Then there are cross-country ski trails at Blue Knob and Laurel

Ridge state parks and the Forbes State Forest trails on Laurel Summit.

On Laurel Summit, there's a bonus for those who want to be more active: You can join one of the Laurel Summit Ski Patrol's volunteer programs and become ski patroller, a "mountain host" or a patrol volunteer in the warming hut. For more information on these programs, e-mail LS_warminghut@yahoo.com.

If you are wondering what the bonus is of getting involved with one of these programs, well, I'll give you a hint: those were smiling Laurel Summit volunteers in those warm scenes.

JANURARY UPCOMMING ELECTION:



Each year in January, we must elect five members to the Board of Directors. Rails-to-Trails of Central Pa Inc. is managed by 15 elected members in good standing in the corporation. Board members serve a three year commitment with five being elected each year. The Board members whose terms are up this year are: Fred Ciocca, Sarah Gonsman, Karl King, Joe Lansberry and Bruce Sheehe

You may ask, "What does being a Board member entail?" Article III. A. of our by-laws states: "The ability of the Organization to successfully accomplish its purpose as defined in Article II is contingent on the active interest and participation of its Board Members. 1. This entails involvement in the planning, organization and carrying out of scheduled activities throughout the year. 2. Board members are encouraged and expected to attend scheduled meetings on a regular basis." To keep this organization strong and moving forward, it is vital that board members are able to fulfill the two objectives listed above.

If you feel you meet these criteria and are interested, or know someone who is, please consider running for a position on the Board. Do not always assume someone else will do it. The Lower Trail is a GREAT trail but we need committed people to keep the organization strong. To nominate someone for the Board, contact Ethan Imhoff at, email, ethanimhoff@gmail.com or call 814-262-5722 and leave a message.

WILD FLOWER WATCH: NODDING THISTLE

By Bob Richers



While hunting in the spring, near the wind farm above Altoona watershed, I noticed an abundance of black berry bushes growing alongside of the access road. I made a return visit in early July on my mountain bike but discovered that I failed to take into account that at that elevation the growing season lags my home garden by about 3 weeks. The berries weren't ripe yet! I didn't waste the trip however because I did pick a fresh bouquet of wild flowers. I also got some nice pictures of a Fat Timber Rattlesnake crossing the access road. As the scout motto states, I wanted "to be prepared" by wearing leather boots and blue jeans for protection from snakes and the poison ivy and insect repellent for ticks that are in the area. I did return a month later to claim a bucket of berries.

My wild flowers included a thistle that I did not recognize. It was a Nodding Thistle with really neat purple flowers that looked like something out of Dr. Seuss. Unlike most of the other thistle flowers it was completely in bloom and lasted in water for over a week.

Nodding Thistle is an introduced plant from Eurasia and unfortunately is considered a noxious weed mostly everywhere that it grows. It spreads rapidly in dry meadows and pastures and prefers neutral to acidic soils. Plowing, flooding or any other land disturbance results in the plant's rapid expansion. Depending on the growing environment this plant will produce 1 to 50 flowers, which in turn contain 1,200 seeds. These light seeds are dispersed by the wind and remain viable in the soil for 10 years!

Nodding Thistle is biennial and usually has a 2-year reproductive cycle. Plants emerge throughout first year in a rosette form and the following season produce a multi-branched flowering stem. The flower head is 1" to 2" and contains hundreds of tiny flowers. The attractive flower head is a reddish purple and droops 90 degrees or more.

Mature plants are 3" to 5" tall. The plant is further protected from grazing animals by spiny stems and leaves. The dark green leaves are smooth, waxy coated and coarsely bi-pinnately lobed. The flower veins are light in color and are wooly but less so closer to the flower.

Other names given to Nodding Thistle are Musk Thistle and Nodding Plumeless Thistle. Mechanical control methods are pulling or mowing in the budding or early flowering stage. Seeds dispense about a month after the flower emerges so enjoy the flower but cut it as soon as possible.

FALL LEAF TIPS:

*BY: George Wigal
Pennsylvania Certified Horticulturist*

Don't automatically rake or blow lawn leaves to the curb or worse yet stuff them in plastic bags for the landfill. Instead: Run over light leaf coverings with your mower and let the fragments lie. They'll decay and add nutrition and organic matter to the soil. If you have too many leaves, add them to your compost pile or use them as mulch in shrub beds and vegetable gardens.

What about leaves in landscape beds? There is no need to rake leaves out of landscape beds, the leaves are great for insulating the roots of perennial flowers and shrubs, for weed control next spring and for adding organic matter to the soil. The earthworms will thank you too.

So save your back. There is no need to get carried away raking all those leaves....by leaving some you may be doing your yard a favor.

Rails to Trails New Phone # 814-317-9728.

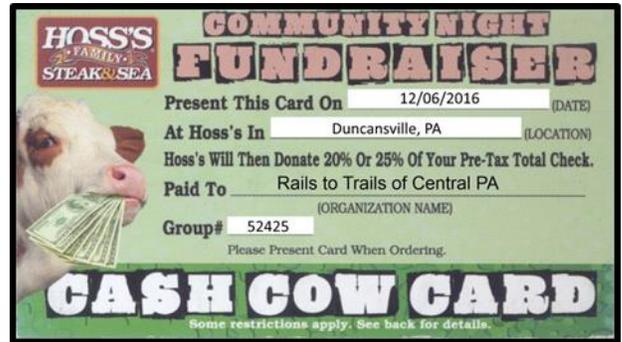
Our old phone service was costing the organization almost \$500 dollars a year and only used for voice messages. We now have a new local number for voice mail service that is free and with

new notification features. Please use it to contact our organization. Our email remains the same webhost@rttcpa.org.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

As we approach the Holiday Season and the close of another year, it is our hope that you take the time to enjoy your family and loved ones. Take the time to get out and enjoy all the beautiful sights and natural wonders we have around us. And most of all, have a safe and wonderful holiday.

Warmest Holiday Wishes from the Rails to Trails Family.



HOSS'S COMMUNITY FUNDRAISER COUPON

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone: (____)-_____

E-mail _____

_____ New Membership _____ Renewal

- _____ Individual \$15.00
- _____ Family \$20.00
- _____ Supporting \$50.00
- _____ Group \$75.00

I am interested in:

- _____ Horses _____ Hiking
- _____ Heritage _____ Bicycling
- _____ Nature Study _____ Jogging
- _____ Other

I would like to help by volunteering for:

Make checks payable to:

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Tuesday December 6th
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Tuesday January 10th

Hoss's Community Fundraiser event, Duncansville Hoss's
Holiday Gathering, 7 PM Hoss's Corporate Office, Rear Entrance.
Monthly Board Meeting and Election to the Board of Directors and 2017 officers.
7 PM.

TRAIL ETIQUETTE

With many people using the trail, we must all remember we do not have eyes in the back of our heads. No one likes to be startled, so if you are riding your bike and are approaching a slower rider, walkers or horseback riders PLEASE give notice. All that needs to be said is: "passing on your left", or "just coming up behind you".

KEEP YOUR ADDRESS CURRENT

This newsletter is mailed 3rd Class Bulk Mail. The Post Office will not forward 3rd Class Bulk Mail. If anything about your address changes, Route Number, Street Numbers, or Zip code, the Trail Trekker will not be forwarded to you. Please keep Rails-to-Trails informed of any address changes by using a post office change of address card or dropping us a note at the following address. **Remember, if your mailing address is Highlighted, your membership is about to expire. Please renew quickly and continue to support Rails-to-Trails. Thank You!**

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