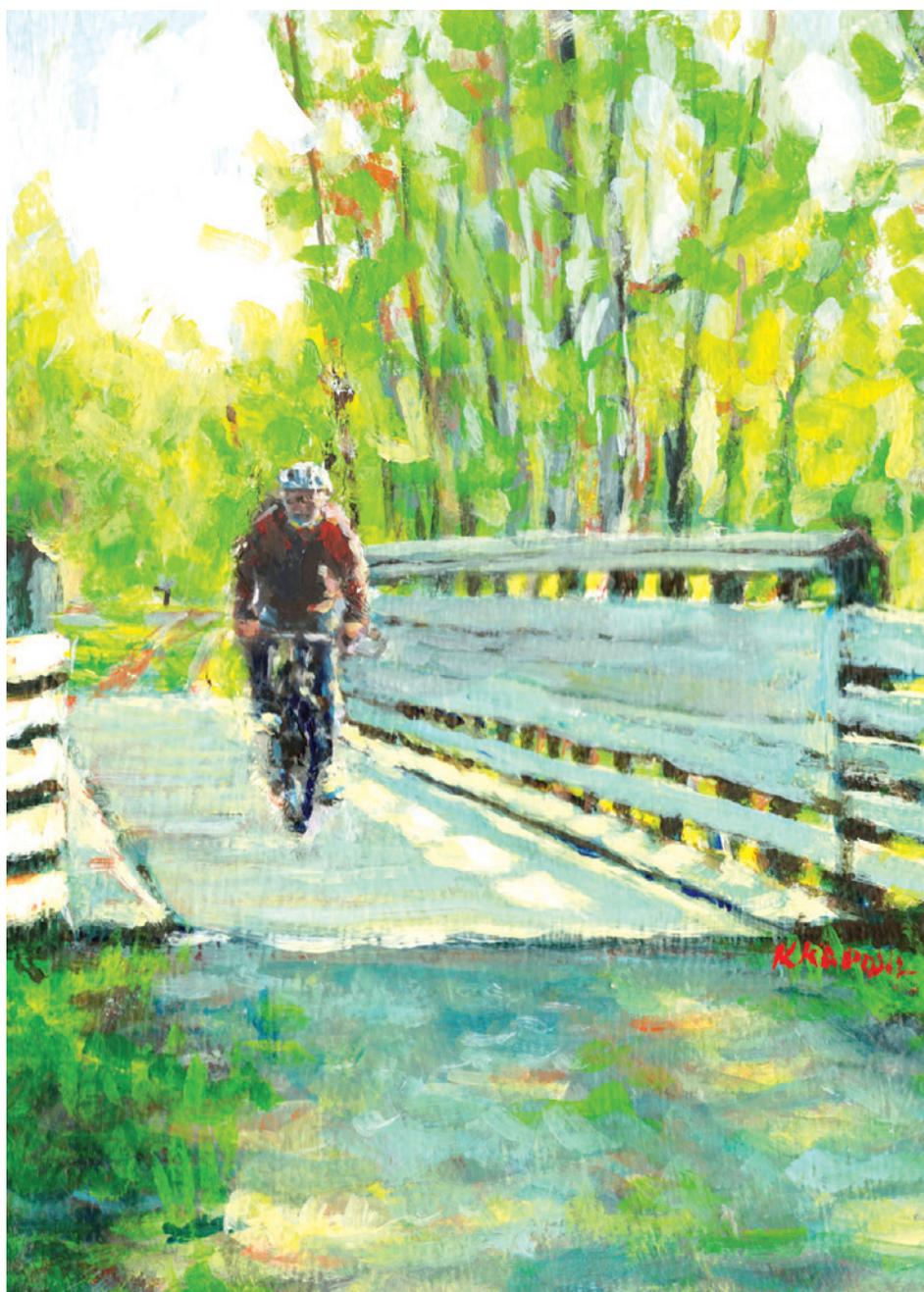


A Celebration of Trails

Two and a half decades ago a small group of committed individuals with a vision sat down together and created a plan to build a network of trails. Today we can look back and say thank you for creating something that touches the community in such profound ways.



More Miles. More Smiles.

2016

3.75 miles Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail

.9 miles Buffalo Ridge Trail

9 miles Boardman River Trail

2015

3.5 miles Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail

2014

10.5 miles Boardman River Trail

1 miles Boardman Lake Trail

2013

1 miles Leelanau Trail

2012

6.5 miles Leelanau Trail

9.5 miles Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail

1.25 miles Buffalo Ridge Trail

TOTAL

46.9 miles of new trail on the ground over the past five years thanks to your support!



Julie Clark
Executive Director

T·A·R·T
TRAILS



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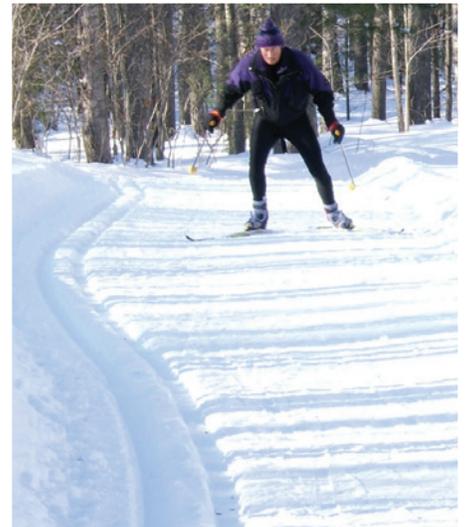
// LOOKING DOWN THE TRAIL

Over the past two months we've engaged in an internal scan of the organization – looking at what has been accomplished since our inception back in 1998. The effort presented an excellent opportunity to reflect on what's been accomplished as we begin to plan for what lies ahead. What's clear from the data compiled so far is an impressive upward trajectory. For example, since 2012 alone, we've helped get nearly 45 miles of trail on the ground, including completing the gap in the Leelanau Trail that sent ripples of trail users into our surrounding communities. Volunteer hours and donations, the fuel of TART Trails, have tracked in a similar fashion. What's also pretty clear is the way the past, present and the future are intertwined. Trails aren't built overnight. They often start as a spark in someone's eye

and they take a champion, and ultimately a community, to move forward. Without those early champions we wouldn't have the incredible network of trails we enjoy today. Without the present community of volunteers, donors and voices of support, that network would not look, feel, or function as well as it does. With your support, there are connections to make between people and places. Visions 30 years in the making are moving forward and will only happen with your continued support. Our past and present is what you made it. And the future? Well, it is both 30 years in the making and still a spark in someone's eye, but with your support we know it can build more and better connections.

// A WINTER WONDERLAND

Back in the early 1980's a small but committed group of visionaries began organizing the North American VASA Ski Race. While the event grew in popularity and participation, it did not have a permanent course, creating a challenging situation for organizers every year. To solve this problem, volunteers worked with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to develop over 35 kilometers of well-marked cross country ski trail in the Pere Marquette State Forest just east of Traverse City. Thanks to the huge support of trail users we now can all enjoy a world class network of winter trails that has grown to include a winter single track trail, a Fatbike Trail groomed by the Northern Michigan Mountain Biking Association and a snowshoe trail that is accessible from the VASA Pathway trailhead. Furthermore, TART Trails volunteers groom nearly 13 miles of the Leelanau Trail from Cherry Bend all the way to Suttons Bay. This winter trails program continues to grow and expand thanks to the support of so many of you!



Winter is just around the corner — [we hope to see you out on the snow this year!](#)

// THE LEELANAU TRAIL

When the official purchase of the trail corridor that is now the Leelanau Trail was completed there was a vision for how this old rail-line would become an active and valuable non-motorized corridor for recreation and transportation. Thanks to the help of our trail counters and a group of committed volunteers who have helped collect user surveys, we are gaining a better sense for how the community really does use and value the trail.

Over 100,000 Trails visits per year!

Benefit to public health: 4 out of 5 trail users say yes, they are more physically active as a result of the trail.

Economic Impact: Over 1/3 of trail users are spending money in the local economy as part of their trail experience and 1/2 of the trail users are spending at least \$25.00 per outing.

Thanks to your support and help 9 out of 10 trail users are extremely satisfied with their experience on the trail. Thanks to our volunteers and all of their work over 90% of the trail users express that the trail is extremely well maintained.

What the trails means to YOU!

We asked trail users what the trails mean to them and here are the words they shared:



// SMART COMMUTE WEEK

Smart Commute Week is an annual week-long celebration and promotion of choosing healthy and “smart” transportation options held the first full week of June. During this week an exciting, energizing and noticeable transformation in transportation takes place in Traverse City and beyond as people get around the region in different fun and healthy ways. Folks walk, bike, bus, carpool and more to get to school, work and to run errands.

In the early years it was known as Bike to Work Week. The first one was held in May, 1995. A core group of dedicated commuters huddled under a small tent set up between Brick Wheels and McLain Cycle.

That first year it was so cold that hot oatmeal was the big hit at daily breakfasts. The next year it was changed to the first week of June to better fit the northern Michigan climate.

In 2001, TART Trails began managing the event and the Challenge was added. Smart Commute Week has grown ever since with increasing numbers of sponsors, partners and participants. All are encouraged to participate from students and professionals to retirees. Our vibrant community has long embraced active and healthy lifestyles through alternative transportation and are proud to host the longest running event of its kind in Michigan. Smart Commuting is a tradition that folks here continue to improve upon to make our community the place we all want to live.



Tent Craft employees scooter-pool their way to work.

“ I love it! I think it’s a great event and I wish that there was a way to expand it to more companies and individuals and for an even longer period of time. ”

–Traverse City Smart Commuter



Above: A healthy spread at Higher Grounds smart commute breakfast.

smart**t**commute bike. walk. bus. share.

2016 saw record breaking numbers in participation!

- Over 100,000 miles were commuted, off-setting 50 tons of CO² pollution!
- Eight locations served over 1176 complimentary breakfasts to smart commuters
- Fifty-five teams comprised of 1,292 individuals competed in the Smart Commute Challenge, a week-long competition to encourage folks to consider alternative ways of getting around.

Your support of our work contributes to healthy lifestyles and Smart Commute Week is a testament to this. Save the dates June 5th - 9th for Smart Commute Week 2017 and start to rally your friends, family and co-workers for a friendly competition.

// SNOW REMOVAL: KEEPING TRAILS OPERATIONAL ALL YEAR LONG

Year-round usable and accessible trail infrastructure for outdoor recreation and non-motorized transportation is needed and desired by the community. Providing reliable services allows access for those who rely on non-motorized transportation, including transit users accessing stops, and provides opportunities for trail users wishing to maintain a more active lifestyle benefiting their health, environment and our community's health and well-being.



TESTIMONIALS

"Our businesses in East Bay Township and the Traverse City community are extremely fortunate to have a unique transportation and recreation asset like the TART Trail. It's an important trail in our community that provides an alternative pathway for both our guests and our employees."

TART Trails, Inc. is dedicated to year-round access along the trail network, and, this winter, the Cherry Tree Inn & Suites contributed to snow removal efforts along the trail in East Bay Township. Supporting our community for our guests and for our employees is extremely important: it shows our care and concern for a guest's ability to stay active in the winter months and for our employees who require the access to provide income to their families."

—Jonathan D. Pack, General Manager, Cherry Inn & Suites

"The east side of the TART is a flurry of activity all winter. More and more trail users are choosing to commute year-round and the snow removal efforts have been such a great boost to people looking to stay active and use alternative transportation to get to work, school, or explore Traverse City. We need to show that our trails are consistently clear, safe and enjoyable to use. The committed snow removal last year let me ride to work most days, which is by bike. Seeing my familiar group of fellow commuters, even when it gets cold, really brightens my day, and truly helps support a community of healthy, happy trail users in our town."

—Cody Sovis, Einstein Cycles

An average increase of 28% winter trail usage per year!



// A LASTING MEMORY

If you ride past Jupiter Park Gardens you may have noticed a man sitting on a new green memorial bench. Take the time to say hello and you will meet Nelson Leach, a Traverse City resident of 3 years. Nelson has spent time volunteering for TART Trails on the VASA Pathway. His years of experience farming and passion for the



Above: Nelson Leach

tractor bring expertise to the grading of the trail. Nelson and his wife Grace moved to Traverse City in 2013 after spending a lifetime in Richmond, Michigan, working the family farm. When Grace died last October the family decided to purchase a memorial bench and were able to place it in view from his home on Boyd Avenue.

When the days are warmer, Nelson takes a daily walk on the TART Trail and stops for a visit with Gracie on her bench. The bench provides a connection with Nelson's past and a connection with Traverse City residents in the present. You may find that, "You just like him."



Above: Four generations of the Leach family visiting Grace's bench.

// A SPECIAL THANKS TO

Tails to Trails participants, both two legged and four legged, volunteers and sponsors: **Bay Area Pet Hospital, D.O.G Bakery, Woofers on the Run, Pure Water Works, Platinum Sound, Heather Sills, Pet Sitters Network North, Northwood Animal Hospital, Pets and Peeps Photography, Great Lakes Pet Memorials, and Higher Grounds.**

Smart Commute program partners and sponsors: **Marty & Olivia Lagina, Cherry Capital Cycling Club, Networks Northwest, Michigan Blood, The Werner Family, Tom's Food Market, Red Mesa Grill, Oryana, The Kitchen, Bay Area Transit Authority, The Village at Grand Traverse Commons, Shape Up North, Ella's Fashion and Furnishings, Garan Lucow Miller, Munson Medical Center, Disability Network, Higher Grounds, Lake Effect, Pangea's, Harvest, Northwestern Michigan College, Bay Area Recycling for Charities, and Platinum Sound.**

The participants, volunteers and sponsors of Tour de TART presented by **Hagerty**. Also, thank you to **Blue Care Network of Michigan, Fox Grand Traverse, Fifth Third Bank, Gordon Food Service, VI Grill, Milk and Honey, Pure Water Works, Black Star Farms, Short's Brewing Company, Joey DiFranco, Monstrey MacDonald, Northwoods Soda, Platinum Sound, Grand Traverse Packaging, Timber Ridge, Brick Wheels, Norte!, Cherry Republic, Wunsch Farm, Bay Area Recycling for Charities, Morse Moving, Village of Suttons Bay, and Leelanau County Sheriff's Dept.**

Oktoberfest premier sponsor **Merrill Lynch, The Simonton-Hanosek-Mangum Team**. Also, thank you to **Lancaster Photography and Iceman**.

Cherry Capital Cycling Club and Ray Landfair for organizing the 33rd annual Leelanau Harvest Tour.

Ambassador Susan Thomas for collecting over 300 trail user surveys on the Leelanau Trail.

Pure Water Works for keeping us hydrated at all of our events.

Matt and Jennifer Ross for organizing Dune Dash and for planning the 8th annual Zombie Run to benefit TART Trails and to these sponsors:

Data entry volunteers **Gloria Veltman and Karen Mauro-Doren** who come in weekly.

Downtown Traverse City Merchants and shoppers who supported TART Trails on Shop Your Community Day - Nov. 12th.

TART Trails' **Sustainer's Circle Donors** for their continued support.

Flight Path Creative for newsletter layout and design. **Village Press and Hagerty** for helping cover printing costs.

Blue Cross, Blue Shield, Blue Care Network of Michigan for design and printing TART Trails brochures.

// TRAIL UPDATES



Above: Approved design plan for West Boardman Lake Trail.

Boardman Lake Trail -- Moving Forward

Last December, Grand Traverse County launched design of the final leg of the loop around the lake. The effort was funded through a grant from the Michigan Coastal Zone Management Program with matching funds from the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority. This was truly a team effort, with TART Trails working closely with governmental partners at the City of Traverse City, Garfield Township, and Grand Traverse County. This August, Garfield Township and the City of Traverse City unanimously approved the schematic design from 14th Street to South Airport that includes a curving boardwalk over the cove, amazing overlooks onto Boardman Lake, and connections to Logan's Landing, Medalie Park, NMC, and more.

Over the course of the 8 month design, nearly 300 people participated through public open houses, interviews, focus groups, or online comments. Your participation helped influence the beautiful design and sharing your excitement with your elected officials helped support their decision.

Our next step to bring the drawings to life is to work with our partners on construction engineering efforts. Once those are completed and the funding sources are in place, construction can begin. With your continued help we'll one day soon circle the five mile loop around the lake.

Buffalo Ridge Trail -- Continuing Connections

Construction of Phase II of the Buffalo Ridge Trail started in early July and was wrapped up with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on September 23rd. This one mile trail extension provides a fun and family friendly way to the YMCA and Creekside Drive which allows hundreds of residents in Stone Ridge and Creekside access to two miles of trail that lead to the Commons. Thanks to generous easement donations from Great Wolf Lodge, Oleson's Foods, and the YMCA, the new Buffalo Ridge Trail runs through former buffalo fields, over a tributary of Kids Creek, and ties into the existing trail behind West Middle School.

Garfield Township's leadership helped get the trail on the ground (and will keep it looking great) along with funding support from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and the Oleson Foundation. We are excited to continue to work together to develop trails that reach out and connect our communities.



Above: TART Trails board members staff and volunteers at the Buffalo Ridge Phase II ribbon cutting at the YMCA on Silver Lake road.



Traverse City to Charlevoix Trail -- Foundation for the Future

After nearly three years of hard work by many different individuals and organizations the Traverse City to Charlevoix Concept & Development Plan was completed in December 2015.

Your support for this trail has been terrific. To date, we've received 17 resolutions of support for the trail from local units of government and organizations along the proposed corridor. We're continuing to work with the townships, villages, and citizen groups to establish phases, roles, and next steps. Two initial phases of the trail are being currently proposed, Acme's Bayside Park through Deepwater Natural Area and Elk Rapids' first phase from the Village to Maple Bay Park.

The Traverse City to Charlevoix Trail (TVC-CHX) will connect communities across three counties in northwest lower Michigan and aims to link TART Trails' 28 mile trail system between Suttons Bay and Acme Township with Top of Michigan Trail Council's 26 mile Little Traverse Wheelway Trail starting in Charlevoix. Closing the 46 mile Traverse City to Charlevoix gap will create a 325 mile non-motorized transportation and recreation trail network in northern lower Michigan.

We'll be demonstrating this trail as a priority, based on your support, to Grand Traverse, Antrim, and Charlevoix counties in the near future. We're looking forward to working together to advance this trail!

Visit: traversecitytocharlevoixtrail.org



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// ANTOSH AND HEFFNER HONORED AS 2016 MUDGETT TRAIL PIONEERS

Two longtime trail luminaries were named this year's Jim Mudgett Trail Pioneers. Rick Antosh and Jim Heffner both have deep roots in trail planning, development, and stewardship. Both men have contributed greatly to the network of trails that define our region. Antosh, a founding member of the group 'Citizens for a Better Way' which is responsible for getting trail on the ground from Traverse City to Acme Twp., is credited with coining the name TART (Traverse Area Recreation Trail). Heffner, a self-described "Old Trail Grunt," was integral to the development of the VASA Pathway and is still active in trail development, including the VASA Snowshoe Trail and the expanding Boardman River Trail. There aren't many documents in the TART Trails' file cabinet that don't have a contribution from Jim. The leadership and passion for supporting local trails that both Antosh and Heffner have demonstrated make them well deserving of this prestigious award that honors the life of Jim Mudgett, a founding TART Trails board member whose legacy as a trail champion continues through the selfless actions of people like Rick and Jim who give tirelessly of themselves so that others can enjoy the many benefits of trails and healthy living.



Above: Jim Heffner (L) and Rick Antosh (R) receiving their awards at TART Trails Oktoberfest