

# Trail Connections

Fall 2011

The Quarterly Newsletter Published by the Linn County Trails Association



## *President's Message:*

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The LCTA Vision is to have “neighborhoods and communities connected by trails providing safe, healthy, family friendly recreation and transportation”. In other words we want to have trails that GO SOMEWHERE. The Cedar River Trail has connected Cedar Rapids and Hiawatha for several years. The trail continues as the Cedar Valley Nature Trail connecting the communities of Robins, Lafayette, Center Point and cities beyond. The Hoover Trail now connects Cedar Rapids and Ely. However, the two largest Linn County cities, Marion and Cedar Rapids, are not connected by any trail system!

LCTA has initiated a project to acquire abandoned railroad right-of-way within Cedar Rapids just north and east of Blairs Ferry Rd / C Ave NE intersection. This property will connect to the Lindale Trail which extends along the same right-of-way from Lindale Drive west to the Marion City limits. We expect to complete the purchase from the railroad around the first of the year and will donate the property to Cedar Rapids. Marion is continuing the trail east of Lindale drive and eventually will extend it all the way to Highway 13. This will be an important bicycle commuting route between the two cities.

The CEMAR Trail is another proposed connection between Marion and Cedar Rapids and has been on the drawing board for many years. A half mile Cedar Rapids segment has been completed and Marion is extending the trail from Thomas Park to Highway 100 (behind Menards). The trail will cross 1st Ave East either under, over, or at grade between 29th and 32nd Streets NE. It will continue from 1st Ave East to Highway 100 near Menards to complete that connection. Another CEMAR segment within Cedar Rapids will connect to the Cedar Lake Trail. Trail construction is difficult and time consuming. There are property acquisition issues on some segments. This project must remain a high priority!

Another important connection is Ely to Solon to North Liberty and Iowa City. LCTA met with the Johnson and Linn County Conservation Boards to discuss the project. Ely-to-Solon is the critical link. Again, there are property acquisition issues, but it does look promising, and both Conservation Boards are actively working on the project. Fairfax is the other major city in the Metropolitan Area without a trail connection. These are all important connections that must be completed!

Cedar Rapids has been working on their Comprehensive Trails Plan. Hopefully it will come before the City Council for adoption in January 2012. This is an important step to develop consistent funding sources for trails and provide for staff time to adequately address trail issues. The Plan will also support the City's application for Bicycle Friendly Community recognition from League of American Bicyclists. Three Iowa cities now have Bronze recognition; Des Moines, Cedar Falls, and Iowa City. Cedar Rapids did receive Honorable Mention in 2009. Please ask your Council Members to support the Comprehensive Trails Plan. The draft plan is available at [www.shive-hattery.info/CRTrails/](http://www.shive-hattery.info/CRTrails/).

I hope you will continue to support LCTA with your tax deductible annual contribution.

Happy Trails,

  
\_\_\_\_\_

## LCTA Officers

### **President**

John Wauer

### **Vice President**

Steve Hershner

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Keith Sutherland

### **Secretary**

Brad Mullin

### **Past President**

Geoff Eastburn

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Pat Healy

Mike Heffern

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Eric Penne

Mike Wilson

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(Linn County Conservation)

Dennis Goemaat

(Linn County Conservation)

Ron Griffith

(City of Cedar Rapids)

Kesha Billings

(City of Marion)

Daniel Gibbins

(Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation  
Department)

Adam Lindenlaub

(Corridor MPO)

Tom Neenan

(Iowa Trails Council)



## Upcoming Events

### LCTA Board Meeting

Monday, January 9, 7:00pm

Location: United Way of East Central Iowa  
317 7th Avenue SE,  
Cedar Rapids, IA

### LCTA Board Meeting

Monday, February 13, 7:00pm

Location: United Way of East Central Iowa  
317 7th Avenue SE,  
Cedar Rapids

### LCTA Board Meeting

Monday, March 12, 7:00pm

Location: United Way of East Central Iowa  
317 7th Avenue SE,  
Cedar Rapids

*All meetings are open to the public.*

Sign up to receive recent updates on trail news and events,  
visit the Linn County Trails Association's website at

**[www.linncountytrails.org](http://www.linncountytrails.org)**



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*Trail Connections is the quarterly publication of the  
Linn County Trails Association.*

*It is published January, April, July and October*

*Articles may be submitted as an MS Word or text file.*

*Typed, printed or clearly handwritten articles are also accepted. Photos can be prints or can be submitted digitally and saved with a resolution of ideally 300 dpi and a size of 6x8 inches. The deadline for each issue is the first day of the month prior to publication. Please send pictures,*

*stories, and ideas to Brad Mullin:*

*[mullinb1427@yahoo.com](mailto:mullinb1427@yahoo.com)*

# Current Metro Area Trails

## Open For Use

### Fall 2011



Separated Trails	Miles	Surface	Remarks
Bowling Street Trail	1.8	Asphalt	From 50th Street SW to Wilson Avenue
Boyson Trail	2.4	Crushed Limestone	Follows Indian Creek, Marion
Cedar River Trail	13	Asphalt	Cedar Rapids and Hiawatha (ADT)
Cedar Valley Nature Trail	20.5	Asphalt/Crushed Limestone	Linn and Benton Counties (ADT)
CEMAR Trail	0.6	Asphalt	From 20th to 29th St. NE
CRT Lake Loop	1.6	Asphalt	Around Cedar Lake
Ellis Trail	3	Asphalt/Concrete	From Ellis Park to Downtown
Grant Wood Trail	8.5	Natural	Through Eastern Linn County in 3 segments
Hoover Nature Trail	2.7	Asphalt	76th Ave. SW to Ely Park (ADT)
Kirkwood Connector Trail	1.2	Concrete	From Ely Rd. to Kirkwood Campus
Lindale Trail	1	Crushed Limestone	From Lindale Dr. West to Marion City Limits
Robins Trail	0.7	Asphalt	Along Main St, Robins. Connects to CVNT
Sac and Fox Trail	7.1	Crushed Limestone	Along Indian Creek and Cedar River (NRT)
Park Trails	Miles	Surface	Remarks
Beverly Park Trail System	5	Natural	SW CR: Singletrack Mountain Bike trails
Cedar Greenbelt Trail	4.7	Natural	Near Indian Creek Nature Center/Sac and Fox Trail
Cherokee Park Trail	1	Crushed Limestone	West Side: Edgewood to Wiley Blvd.
Cherry Hill Park Trail	0.8	Crushed Limestone	NW Cedar Rapids: Cherry Hill Park
Fay Clark Memorial Trail	0.7	Asphalt	Hiawatha: Fay Clark Memorial Park
Fross Park	1.2	Crushed Limestone	NW Center Point
Huston Park Trail	0.11	Asphalt	SE Cedar Rapids
Jackson Park Trail	0.4	Crushed Limestone	NW Cedar Rapids near Jackson Elementary School
Lowe Park Trail	0.5	Asphalt	Marion: N. 10th St to 35th Ave
Matsell Bridge Natural Area Trail System	8.4	Natural	NE Linn County, near Viola
Morgan Creek Trail System	3.8	Natural	NW Cedar Rapids
Nixon Trail	0.75	Crushed Limestone	NE Cedar Rapids: Around Nixon School
Noelridge Park Trail	0.8	Crushed Limestone	NE Cedar Rapids: Noelridge Park
Pinicon Ridge Park Trail System	12	Natural	Five park trails near Central City
Prairie Park Fishery Trail	2	Asphalt	SE Cedar Rapids: Prairie Park Fishery
Reed Park Trail	0.25	Crushed Limestone	SW Cedar Rapids near Taylor Elementary School
Squaw Creek Park Trail System	4	Natural	Located within Squaw Creek Park plus 1 mile singletrack mountain bike trail
Thomas Park Singletrack	2	Natural	Singletrack mountain bike trail
Van Buren Park Trail	0.5	Crushed Limestone	SW Cedar Rapids near Van Buren Elementary School
Wickiup Hill Outdoor Learning Center Trail System	5	Natural	5 mile network near Toddville

# Mayors' Ride 2011

On September 5th, just over 300 riders participated in the 2011 Linn County Trails Association Mayors' Bike Ride. The annual event allows Linn County residents to show their support for area trail and bicycling efforts. The ride navigated through the streets of Cedar Rapids and incorporated a couple trails. Pre-ride nourishment was provided by the Blue Strawberry and Linn County Cattleman's Association provided post-ride ride hamburgers and drinks. The local band KantiRocks entertained participants with live music. Dan Arndorfer, of Marion, was the winner of the \$50 gift certificate to Northtowne Fitness and Cyclery.



The 2011 ride featured almost a quarter of the registered riders under the age of 18. While three-quarters were from Cedar Rapids, other Linn County towns had representation with some riders coming for Fort Dodge, IA and Minneapolis, MN. The Linn County Trails Association would like to thank all of the volunteers who help in the organization of this year's ride. Next year's ride will be Monday, September 3, 2012.

## 2011 Mayors' Ride Partners

*City of Cedar Rapids*  
*Cedar Rapids Bicycle Advisory Committee*  
*Northtowne Fitness*  
*Hall Bicycle*  
*KantiRocks*  
*Iowa Cattleman's Association*  
*Blue Strawberry*  
*Cedar River Landing*  
*Parlor City*  
*Jules Bakery*



2011 Mayors' Ride Elected Official  
Participation

*Rob Hogg (Iowa State Senator: District 19)  
Linda Langston (Linn County Supervisor)  
Ron Corbett (Mayor: City of Cedar Rapids)  
Ian Cullis (Mayor: City of Robins)  
Paula Gunter (Mayor: City of Palo)  
Kris Gulick (Cedar Rapids City Council)  
Monica Vernon (Cedar Rapids City Council)  
Bill Grove (Ely City Council)  
Don Norton (Robins City Council)  
Marc Magers (Fairfax City Council)*



2011 Mayors' Ride Volunteers

*Steven Sandstrom  
Mike and Ester Wilson  
John Chaimov  
Gerald Falta  
Bruce Nesmith  
Mike Yakos  
Rob Schneider  
John and Mary Wauer  
Lindsay Dick  
Steve Hershner  
Jan Dvorak  
David Turzai  
Gary Palmer  
Dick Mundy  
Bob Brewer  
Sue Henderson  
Chuck Johnson  
David Dvorak  
Lisa Paulos  
Rose Sullivan  
Kari Lammer  
Brad Mullin  
Joe Clark*



*Thank you to all those who  
helped!*

*All photos: Brad Mullin*

## ***Iowa's Healthiest State Initiative Could Benefit Area Trails*** -Brad Mullin

In August 2011, Governor Terry Branstad announced the Healthiest State Initiative. The Healthiest State Initiative is a privately led public initiative intended to inspire Iowans and their communities to improve their health and happiness. The goal of the plan is to make Iowa — currently ranked 19th — the healthiest state by 2016. The Healthiest State website, [www.IowaHealthiestState.com](http://www.IowaHealthiestState.com), contains a wealth of information about the Healthiest State Initiative and resources to help Iowans improve their own health and well-being.

On Friday, October 7, as a first step to becoming the Healthiest State, 291,000 Iowans participated in the Start Somewhere Walk. At noon, communities, neighborhoods, schools, businesses, churches and other groups across the state walked one kilometer (0.62 miles, or about 7-8 blocks) to show their support for the Healthiest State Initiative. Several local organizations used area trails as part of their walks.

A key element of the Healthiest State Initiative is the Blue Zones Project™. Wellmark

Blue Cross® and Blue Shield® will financially support the transformation of 10 selected Iowa communities into Blue Zones Communities™ over the next five years. Iowa communities were required to submit a statement of interest by Oct. 28. In Linn County, the cities of Cedar Rapids Marion and Mt. Vernon submitted statements. Those communities that meet the minimum criteria must submit a formal application by Jan. 4, 2012. Finalists will be notified on February 10, 2012 with the first two to three communities chosen as Blue Zones announced in May 2012. The selection of the ten communities heavily depends on the number of its citizens who sign the online Blue Zones Personal Pledge. To support your local community sign a pledge at [www.bluezonesproject.com/citizens/signup](http://www.bluezonesproject.com/citizens/signup).

The ten communities selected as Blue Zones Communities™ will have demonstrated the greatest passion, interest and ability to bring their community together. Those communities will receive assistance from national experts to develop and implement a blueprint

for making environment, policy and social network changes that will transition people into healthier behaviors.

Any infrastructure changes are funded by those communities themselves. The communities selected will become demonstration sites. Some initial ideas include connecting trails to make it easier to bike or walk to work, and setting up “walking school buses” where senior volunteers ensure that children can walk safely to school. The motto of the Blue Zones Project™ is to make the active option, the easy option.



“Blue Zones” is a phrase coined by Dan Buettner, an author and researcher who studied why people in some areas of the world live longer, healthier, happier lives than others. A Blue Zone is a region of the world where people commonly live active lives past the age of 100 years. Scientists and demographers

***Support your hometown's effort to be one of the Blue Zones communities at [www.bluezonesproject.com](http://www.bluezonesproject.com). While you're there, complete a Blue Zones Personal Pledge to define specific steps you can take to improve your personal health.***

have classified these longevity hot-spots by having common healthy traits and life practices that result in higher-than-normal longevity. Common

characteristics include an importance placed on family, non-smoking lifestyle, consumption of a diet where the majority is derived from plants, moderate physical activity and significant social engagement of all members of the community.

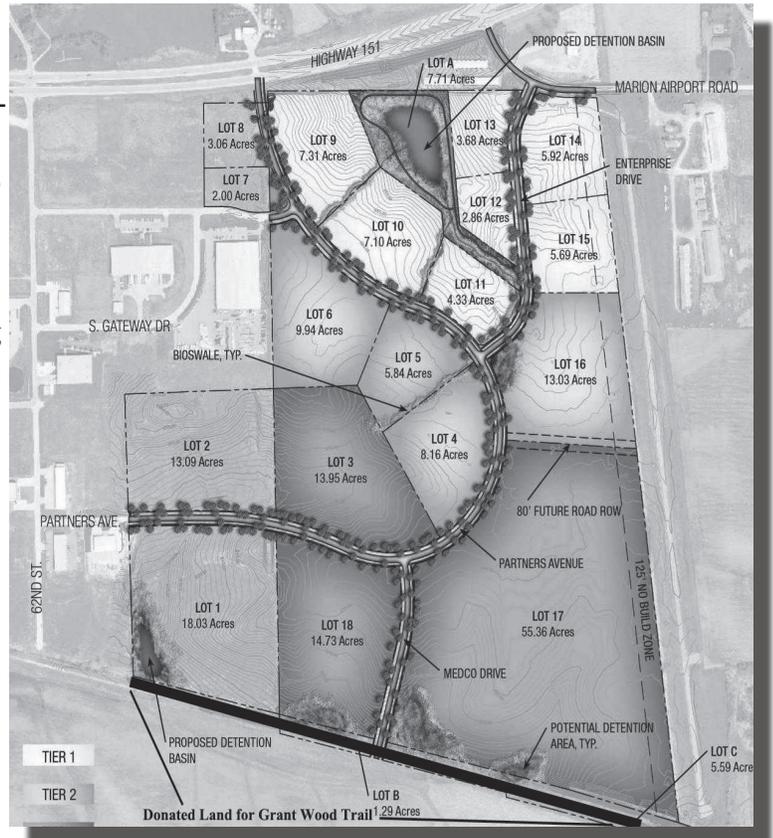
Ultimately, all Iowa communities can become Blue Zones Communities™ by leveraging innovative tools accessible to all Iowans, attending the Blue Zones Institute to obtain knowledge, and participating in professional forums to share best practices from across the state. The Blue Zones Project™ will help employers and communities achieve greater well-being, which should lead to lower healthcare costs, higher productivity and increased economic viability. In 2009, 10-month Blue Zone pilot project in Albert Lea, Minnesota, resulted in residents increasing their projected life expectancy by 2.9 years. In addition, employers in that city reported a decline in healthcare claims cost and a drop in absenteeism.

## County Conservation Board Receives Portion of the Grant Wood Trail:

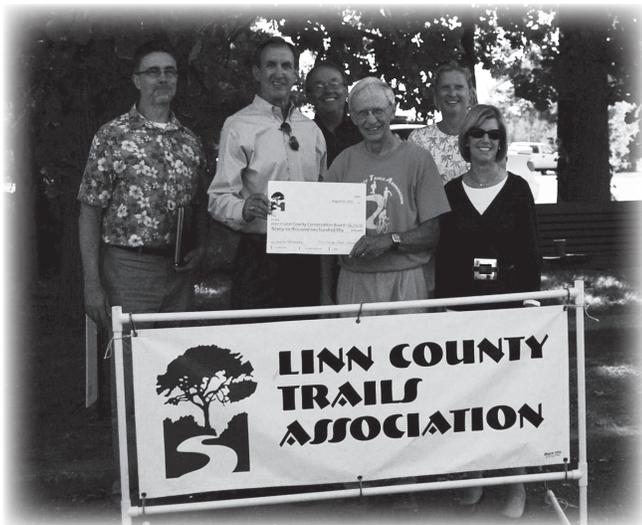
In October 2011, Marion Economic Development Company (MEDCO) donated 7.2 acres of land to solidify the Grant Wood Trail under ownership of the Linn County Conservation Board. The donated land is about 120 feet wide by 2,613 feet long. Since the Grant Wood Trail's existence, it has crossed the land under a non-permanent easement held by the conservation board. The transfer of ownership guarantees the existence of the trail corridor from here on out regardless of any development adjacent to it.

Incorporated in 1984, MEDCO's mission to the Marion community is to coordinate economic development activities by working to retain and expand the existing business base. In addition, it encourages new industrial and commercial endeavors that will benefit Marion. MEDCO will build a 184 acre new industrial park on the north side of the trail and east of the Marion Airport. Plans include the creation of a recreational trail system following streets through the new development. When they are connected to the Grant Wood Trail, the industrial park will be among one of the first industrial parks in the state connected to a trail system.

Currently, the Linn County Conservation Board has control over about eight miles of the former Chicago, Milwaukee, St Paul and Pacific Railroad. Plans are progressing for the construction of a tunnel under Highway 13 beginning next year. The conservation board plans to relocate the trailhead parking lot and resurface sections of the trail east of Highway 13 in the near future. Efforts continue to acquire right-of-way for the missing portions of the trail east of Marion.



Proposed MEDCO Development along Grant Wood Trail (Map courtesy of MEDCO)



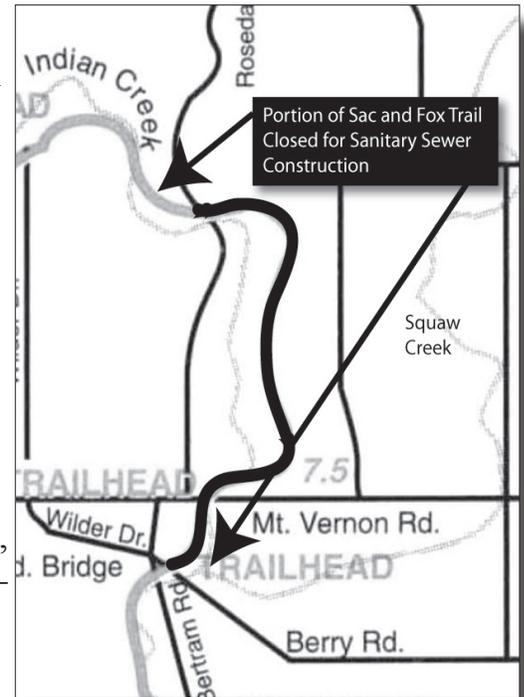
**John Wauer presented the \$96,250 check to the Linn County Conservation Board for the paving of the Cedar Valley Nature Trail. Construction is scheduled to begin in the Spring 2012.**



## Sac and Fox Trail Improvements Funded:

The Sac and Fox Nature Trail is one of the oldest trails in the Metro Area. Since the 1960's, the trail has had a close relationship with the Cedar River and Indian Creek. In March 2012, a county wide sanitary sewer replacement project will initiate. New development in several communities has nearly outpaced the capacity of the current sewer system. A total of 16 miles of sanitary sewer line is scheduled for replacement and enlargement in the next 15 to 20 years at a cost of \$40 to \$45 million. The replacement line will follow Dry Creek and then Indian Creek from Robins to Hiawatha, Cedar Rapids, Marion and a piece of Linn County as it makes its way to Cedar Rapids' Water Pollution Control facility along Bertram Road and the Cedar River at Highway 13.

As many trail users are unaware, a several portions of the current sanitary sewer run parallel and underneath the Sac and Fox Trail. The initial 1.2-mile segment of sewer work — from Indian Creek's confluence with Squaw Creek north, under Mount Vernon Road, to the west of Rosedale Road — is the first of 20 segments. Most recently, the Sac and Fox Trail's close proximity to Indian Creek in this area has led to closure and continued maintenance, at a cost of \$35,000 each time, of this section of trail due flooding. Several meetings were held early this year and a consensus was reached that the trail should be realigned during the sewer construction project. The trail move will position most of the half-mile stretch of trail above the 100-year flood plain to protect against flooding. The new segment of sewer line will require a 100-foot-wide right of way and the new trail alignment something less wide.



2009 flood damage to the trail in the future construction zone  
Photo: Brad Mullin

In October 2011, the city of Cedar Rapids received a Iowa Department of Natural Resources Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) City Parks and Open Space Grant. The \$173,503 grant will fund the new alignment of the Sac and Fox Trail during the 2012 sanitary sewer construction. Removal of trees and vegetation will result from the sewer and trail construction. Improvement to the Bertram Road parking lot is also part of the trail work. The Parks and Recreation Department will mark a detour around the closed section so that trail users can use the rest of Sac and Fox trail during construction.

## *LCTA Aids in Prairie Seed Collection for Prairie Park Fishery*

**O**n Saturday, October 8, 2011, the Linn County Trails Association, Cedar Rapids West Rotary, Indian Creek Nature Center and the City of Cedar Rapids partnered in gathering wild flower and grass seeds from the prairies near the Indian Creek Nature Center. The Nature Center has approximately 30 acres of well-established prairie with the Cedar Greenbelt trails meandering through them. Volunteers collected two large bags of seeds to be planted along the trail within Prairie Park Fishery.

With equipment on loan from the Linn County Conservation Department, the city of Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department was able to harvest even more seeds. In all, about 200 pounds of seeds were collected. If the seeds had been purchased the total cost would have been close to \$4,000. The first signs of the seed plantings at the Prairie Park Fishery won't occur for about a year. The establishment of a prairie, such as the one near the Nature Center, may take seven to nine years. The grass seeds collected include big bluestem grass, Indian grass and switch grass.

Many of the wildflower seeds gathered include a multitude of species such as yellow coneflower, purple coneflower, blazing star, butterfly milkweed, bee balm and Virginia mountain mint. Many of these species also populate other areas along metro area trails throughout the year.



*Blazing Star*



*Yellow Coneflower*



*Bee Balm*



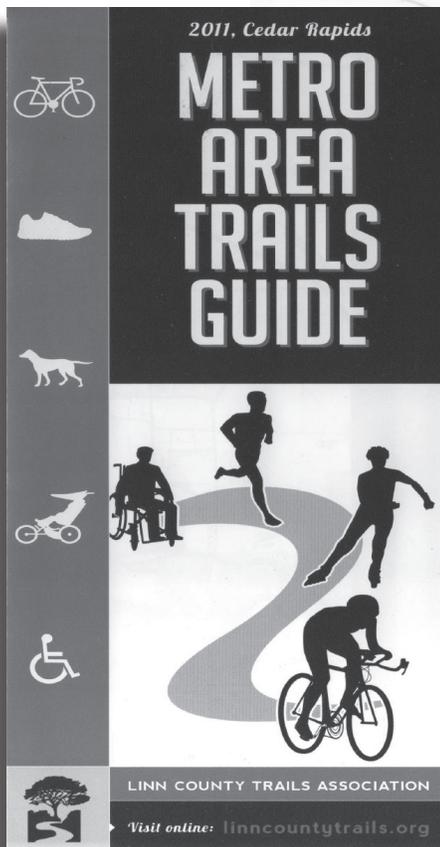
*Virginia Mint*



Photos: Lijun Chamidia

## *Cedar Valley Running Association Donates to LCTA:*

On November 6, over one hundred participants took part in the Fairview Farm Trail Run and Walk at Beverly Park. The course used the single track mountain trails constructed and maintained by members of Linn Area Mountain Bike Association. The event featured a 5 mile run, 3 mile run and 3 mile walk. The Cedar Valley Running Association (CVRA) was the principal sponsor of the event. At the November 14th LCTA Board meeting, Lisa Paulos presented as \$596 check the LCTA to be used for future “runner-friendly” trail development. After covering the cost of events, the CVRA donates excess funds raised to local non-profit organizations.



**NEW**  
***METRO AREA TRAILS GUIDES ARE NOW AVAILABLE!***

***LOOK FOR THEM AT KIOSKS AND BOXES ALONG AREA TRAILS.***

# LCTA SUPPORTER FORM

## Why would I want to support LCTA?

1. Your support will count you among the hundreds of enthusiastic trail advocates who make up the Linn County Trails Association.
2. By becoming a supporter you will have already begun to play an important role in building a network of connected trails in Linn County and the surrounding area.
3. 95% of all money raised through donations and grants goes directly to build more trails or to improve existing trails. LCTA has been able to multiply this financial support by providing matching funds to secure significant grants.
4. As a supporter, you will receive our quarterly newsletter. Here you can read about trail vacations, upcoming trail events, opportunities to volunteer, and issues that are important to trail development.
5. Supporters are not expected to attend meetings and no one will call you. Of course, if you want to get involved, we will welcome your help.

Learn more about LCTA by visiting our website at [www.linncountytrails.org](http://www.linncountytrails.org)

### Information required: (fill out if not on label on other side)

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Please print the information CLEARLY

### Donations to LCTA are Tax Deductible

- |                         |                          |        |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------|
| TRAIL BLAZER            | <input type="checkbox"/> | \$100* |
| TRAIL PARTNERS (Family) | <input type="checkbox"/> | \$ 35  |
| TRAIL SCOUT             | <input type="checkbox"/> | \$ 20  |

\* At the Trail Blazer level, supporters also receive the "Advocate," the newsletter of the Iowa Trails Council.

Please consider an additional donation for NEW TRAIL DEVELOPMENT \$ \_\_\_\_\_

If you provide your email address, we will send future reminders via email and will add you to the LCTA email distribution list, which is used to provide information on trail-related events to supporters.

Mail donations to:  
**Linn County Trails Association**  
PO Box 2681 Cedar Rapids, IA 52406

*Please check your mailing label for your  
Support Renewal Date.*

*If you renew without our sending you a  
reminder, it saves us time & money.*

*So PLEASE - Renew in a timely manner. All donations are  
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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**

*If you are not already a supporter, please consider helping us.*

Linn County Trails Association  
P.O. Box 2681  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52406-2681

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*Why would anyone carry a perfectly good bike? Earlier this fall, cyclists negotiated obstacles during an Hawkeye Bicycle Association cyclocross race using the trail system within Morgan Creek Park.*