

The MILEPOST

Mon Yough Trail Council's Yough River Trail Newsletter

December 2013

Volume 22, Issue 3

"The work goes on, the cause endures, the hope still lives and the dreams shall never die."

Edward Kennedy



That Dam Ride to Confluence 2013

by Tim Banfield

If you missed the fifteenth annual **That Dam Ride** on September 7th & 8th of this year, you missed a great weekend! The ride-at-your-own-pace event took place along the Youghiogheny River Trail portion of the Great Allegheny Passage from Boston PA to Confluence PA.



Participants, volunteers, and sponsors once again enjoyed each other's company and renewed old acquaintances.

On the first day participants started the ride at a chilly 48 degrees, but as they biked along, the temperatures rose to the mid-70's and stayed there throughout the day. The night remained warm and riders started day two in the low-60's finishing the

ride in the mid 70's. It was just a beautiful late summer ride.



Elyse Branam entertains campers

That Dam Ride continues to be one of Mon/Yough Trail Council's (MYTC) most successful fundraising events, raising thousands of dollars for MYTC and other participating non-profit organizations. This year nearly 250 cyclists, from novice to expert, participated. One hundred of the riders chose the 69-miles-a-day option from Boston and return and the other 150 riders chose the 30-miles-a-day option from Connellsville and return.

Participants received gear transport, rest stop nourishment, meals, camping at the Youghiogheny Dam, and an event T-shirt. On Saturday, ride support was provided by **West Newton Bicycle Shop** and **Bikes Unlimited**. Many riders camped in tents at the Dam while other riders found B&B's more to their liking. Everyone enjoyed the hospitality of Confluence,

including a great homemade spaghetti dinner prepared and served by **Confluence Trinity Lutheran Church**. Following dinner, the evening continued with prize drawings including a \$180 gift certificate from **West Newton Bicycle Shop** and many other surprises from our generous sponsors. After the drawings, singer and acoustic guitarist Elyse Branam entertained the group at camp. As in the past, Elyse delivered a great performance to the enjoyment of all!

Bike repairs by **Confluence Cyclery** had the riders ready to get back on the trail for their return on Sunday morning. The return ride was all downhill and everyone had a relaxing journey back to their starting points.

Successful week-ends like this don't happen without a lot of planning and support from many. We want to acknowledge and thank the **Major Sponsors** for their generosity:

- ✚ LEVIN Furniture
- ✚ Monongahela Valley Hospital
- ✚ Equitable Gas
- ✚ Atlas Resource Partners, LP
- ✚ West Newton Bicycle Shop
- ✚ Confluence Cyclery
- ✚ Mueller Appraisal Services
- ✚ The Medicine Shoppe of Natrona Heights
- ✚ Big Bang Bicycles
- ✚ Biofreeze

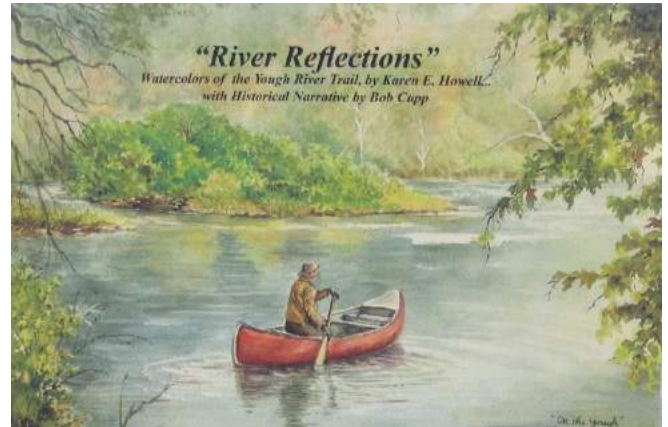
We also want to express our gratitude for the contributions of numerous participating non-profit organizations. And finally, we want to recognize all of the participants and volunteers. Each contributed to the success of this year's That Dam Ride and a big THANK YOU goes out to all!



Mark your calendars now for the sixteenth annual That Dam Ride which is scheduled for Saturday and Sunday, September 6 & 7, 2014. Don't miss it!

"River Reflections" Watercolors of the Yough River Trail

by Bob Cupp



Hundreds of people have made contributions to the development, maintenance and promotion of the Yough River Trail. Elizabeth Township's Karen Howell has made a unique contribution by capturing the essence of 24 beautiful scenes along the Yough in her new book, "*River Reflections, Watercolors of the Yough River Trail.*"

Development of this trail has had a positive influence on the lives of thousands of people in southwestern Pennsylvania and far beyond. This impact has occurred in many different ways, including: providing a perfect environment for biking, hiking and cross-country skiing; helping people to appreciate the natural beauty of the region; enabling access to remote fishing spots; promoting the heritage of the Yough River Valley's industrial past; and facilitating the sighting of a wide variety of wildlife.

Most of these benefits are obvious; others aren't quite so apparent. I discovered a personal benefit in 1997 at Youghtoberfest, the MYTC's annual fall festival held in Boston for a number of years. Taking a tour of the arts and crafts booths, I stopped dead in my tracks when I saw the beautiful watercolor prints displayed by Karen Howell. Although art appreciation was never one

of my strong qualities, I found something special in Karen's Yough River Trailside paintings.

Karen has been an artist since she was an elementary school student. In 1975, she set up a home studio, concentrating on the study of wildlife and rustic architecture, such as barns and covered bridges. She does commissioned work, and has painted for various art galleries. Although Karen works with acrylics and pen and ink, she readily admits that her favorite medium is watercolors.

Biking exposed Karen to the beautiful sights along the Yough River Trail, even before the trail was built, inspiring her to capture these scenes in a series of watercolor paintings. She would pack up her camera and field box, and ride until she found just the right place for a new painting.

Some of the scenes depicted in these inexpensive watercolor prints include the Buddtown rail car, Dead Man's Hollow, an afternoon stroll at Cedar Creek Park, ducks on the Yough and a young couple taking a break at the Blythedale Tastee Freeze. Karen often adds a personal touch to her paintings; for example, the boys in a fishing scene at Cedar Creek Park are her grandsons.

At first Karen didn't realize there would be a market for her Yough River Trail paintings; she painted for the pure enjoyment. Not only is she doing what she enjoys most; she also derives a sense of satisfaction because she's sharing her talents with the Yough community.

I've taken hundreds of pictures of the Yough River Trail – both before and after trail construction. I thought I had done a pretty fair job of capturing the essence of the trail until I saw Karen's paintings. A picture may be worth a thousand words, but a painting says it all. Although I'd never had an interest in collecting art, I knew these watercolor prints were for me.

I lobbied Karen for future paintings, such as the old Federal Supply Company Store in Van Meter, and Dravo Cemetery, my favorite trail rest stop

near Buena Vista. Now I proudly display 14 of Karen's paintings on a wall in my family room. The scenes constantly remind me of what I'm missing when I can't get out on the trail, and what I have to look forward to when I can.

A couple years ago, Karen told me she was going to create a calendar, displaying a different watercolor print for each month. She asked me if I'd be willing to provide brief historical narratives to accompany the paintings. Of course, I agreed to do that because of my admiration for Karen's work, as well as my love of the Yough River Valley's rich history.

Well, as often happens, "life" got in the way and Karen got sidetracked from completing the additional paintings she needed for the calendar. She contacted me again in October, 2012, ready to complete the project, but, by then, the calendar idea had transformed into a book. She said, "It's what I wanted to do in the first place, but it seemed like it wasn't the right time until now." So I dusted off the narratives I'd already written for the calendar and added a little more information. Then I wrote additional narratives as Karen decided what other scenes she was going to paint for the book.



Bob Cupp (Narrator) and Karen Howell (Artist)

My task was easy! I've been writing historical articles for the MYTC newsletter for the past twenty years, so I'd already accumulated most of the historical information I would need. There's an abundance of history in the Yough River

Valley and I've thoroughly enjoyed writing about its people, industries, communities and historic events.

Now it's possible to enjoy 24 of Karen's beautiful watercolor prints in a single 9" by 6" book. Yough River Trail enthusiasts who've seen the book have a sincere appreciation of the preservation of these images. In years to come, it won't matter if the views change or the structures have disappeared. "*River Reflections*" will remind people of "the way things used to be" along the Yough River Trail.

"*River Reflections*" can be purchased for \$15. For questions or purchase information, contact Karen Howell at kehowellart@gmail.com. Signed copies are also available for purchase at The Boston Shoppes near the YRT's Boston trailhead and at the West Newton Station Visitor's Center.

A Life That Touches Others Goes On Forever A Remembrance of J. Terrence Farrell

by Christine Farrell Zacharia

September 28, 2013 was a perfect day for a bike ride, a beautiful fall day. The trees were colored an array of golden yellow to vibrant red. This day would have been the 16th annual McKeesport Lion's *Bike for Sight*; instead, it was a day of remembrance and celebration for my father, Attorney J. Terrence Farrell.

On this day, more than one hundred family members and friends gathered on the trail at the Frew Memorial Pavilion to unveil the memorial bench dedicated to my Dad. Many of the guests rode their bikes in honor of my Dad. For those who didn't, a shuttle was provided by the Mon-Yough Trail Council from the Buena Vista trail access point.

The memorial started with a blessing by Father Richard Terdine of Pittsburgh, Pa. His blessing

reflected on Dad's love of nature and his generous heart. Boniface Igba, spiritual coordinator for Auberle, said a few words in honor of his friend, my father.

It was time for me to read to the audience the words I couldn't write without crying. I asked my father for strength because I knew nobody could recite the words the way I needed them to be delivered. As I stood before the onlookers, a calm came over me. There was a strong gust of wind; my father was there. I shared intimate moments, a bit of his humor, and some of his life's anecdotes to express what he meant to me and how much he is truly missed. Some laughed, many cried, and all understood the great loss that not only my family, but also the community, has suffered.



Among a group assembled at the Attorney J. Terrence Farrell Memorial Bench are daughter Christine Farrell Zacharia (standing, far left) and wife Belinda O'Keson (kneeling, right)

Belinda O'Keson, my father's wife and best friend, played two songs following my speech. The first song, "You Are My Sunshine", was the song Dad would sing to his beloved Pekingese, Pokey. She was Dad's riding companion. Pokey would sit in her pet carrier, on Dad's back, and together they rode over 3,000 miles - many of those miles originated on the Boston Trail. I'm sure many can still visualize Pokey's white, fluffy head peeking around his shoulder.

"Red, Red Wine", the second song, was a song Dad requested to be played at his funeral. Since it couldn't be played on June 8th, the memorial

service on September 28th allowed Belinda to grant his request. The rest of the day was a celebration of his life. I met many of Dad's dear friends who shared so many wonderful stories about him.

I remember years ago, at my grandparent's 50th wedding anniversary, my grandmother, Estelle K. Farrell, gave a speech. She said, "The goal in life is to make friends and to keep them". My father's funeral and bench dedication were proof that he reached that goal.

Dad believed in McKeesport. He lived his entire life and practiced law for the last 30 years in that city. He has been quoted saying "McKeesport is one of the richest places to grow up and practice law in. I have always been proud of my old neighborhoods. I don't think I would trade my growing up in McKeesport for any other community." He spent much of his spare time involved in community organizations for the betterment of the McKeesport area.

Dad sat on the board and was the past president of the Carnegie Free Library of McKeesport and Friends of the Library and was active in many of their fundraisers. He also took part in their plays and dressed as Andrew Carnegie. He was later appointed to the board of the Allegheny County Library Association (ACLA).

As a member and past president of the McKeesport Lions Club, he orchestrated the *Bike for Sight* fundraiser for 14 years, raising thousands of dollars for the blind. The *Bike for Sight* took place along the Mon-Yough Trail. I would like to see it carry on in remembrance of my father and his belief in supporting this cause.

Dad believed in preserving the history of McKeesport. He was the past president of the McKeesport Heritage Center. He was instrumental, along with Cynthia McClain from Elizabeth Township, in encapsulating the "McKeesport Little Red School House" into the building in which it stands today.

Dad was also a member of the Mon-Yough Trail Council. Fellow Council members have commented on his generosity in support of the trail. As the Attorney for the Frew Foundation, along with the executrix, Linda Johnson, he was influential in the donation of the Frew Pavilion located on the Boston Trail by the Dravo Cemetery.

My father left his footprint, not only on McKeesport, but on the hearts of all those that knew him. When I sit on the memorial bench under the oak tree and take in the beauty of the surrounding area, I know it is the perfect place to remember my father.

During Mass yesterday, we were asked by Father, "If you had the opportunity to say one last thing to your loved one, what would it be?" I would tell my father, I was proud of him and proud to be his daughter. If I have a quarter of his friendships, part of his sense of humor and a fraction of his generosity and integrity, I'll be a blessed woman.

New Pavilion at Queen Aliquippa Camp

by Dan Piesik



The campground at Dravo is now officially known as **Queen Aliquippa Camp**. The name change, approved at the MYTC Board meeting in October, 2013, reflects the history of the area and should spur greater interest in the Native American heritage of the region.

Queen Aliquippa Camp is approximated 12 acres in size and lies between the Youghioghny River and the bike trail at the site of the historic Dravo cemetery. Amenities include fresh water, bathroom facilities (SST's), raised campsites for 25 – 30 tents, an abundance of free firewood and

two pavilions. The camp also offers walking paths through a meadow of native grasses.

Since the Great Allegheny Passage has opened, the camp has seen more cyclists set up camp for overnight stops on the way to and from Washington, DC.



MYTC volunteers Bob Hoffman (left), Don Baker (right) and John Eisenbarth (on ladder) work to complete the Kenneth Frew Memorial Pavilion in the Queen Aliquippa Camp

The latest addition to the campground is the beautiful **Frew Pavilion** that was completed this summer by the talented and hard-working MYTC volunteer crew. Funds for materials to construct this haven for campers and trail users were supplied by **The Kenneth Frew Foundation** and the **Trail Volunteer Fund**.

When you are out for your first ride of the spring, stop for a rest at The Dravo Cemetery and enjoy the area and ambiance. Explore the campground and new pavilion and take a walk in the meadow. Enjoy one of the finest facilities in the area and give a thought to the volunteers who continue to maintain this campground in addition to the 15 miles of bike trail in the most beautiful of areas.

Many cyclists who have used the camp for overnight stays remark that the Queen Aliquippa

Campsite is one of the finest facilities they have encountered anywhere. They stress the beauty of the park and the quietness and safety of camping there.

Thanks to the benefactors who provided the funds for the materials for the new Frew Pavilion and to the tireless volunteers of the MYTC who constructed the building. The Frew Pavilion is the latest star on the Yough River Trail section of the Great Allegheny Passage and a welcome addition to this fine campsite.



Boston Harvest 10K Run/ 5K Run or Walk

by Shane Brunazzi



Now in its second year, Boston Harvest 10K/5K Run/Walk provided an opportunity for runners to enter a race that raised money to offset expenses for Rex Timko, a 5-year-old Forward Township boy who is living with Batten's Disease – a life limiting disease with multiple sensory and motor impairments. More information about Rex can be found on his website www.rallyforRex.com

This year's race was held on September 21, 2013 and had over 200 participants. It was a beautiful rain-free fall day. Participants received tech shirts, custom medals and great food from local businesses. There was even a live band! Comments from participants indicated that this was "an awesome race", a "great event with a good cause" and "well organized".

More than 35 volunteers helped me make this day a reality. Some of these volunteers included the local Lions Club, the Elizabeth Forward High School Interact Club, friends and family.

I devote a great deal of time to make sure that this event is well organized and fun for the participants. At day's end, we can all agree that the help provided to Rex Timko is the reason we run this race.

A huge thank you goes out to the many sponsors who supported this fine cause.



Rex Timko and his family

Watch for information about next year's event which will be held again in the fall.

Race results and listing of the sponsors for 2013 can be found at www.youghtrailrunner.com.

King Coal in the Yough Valley

by Dan Piesik, Story Teller

There are many stories, legends, and tragedies in the coal mines and coal patches up and down the Yough Valley. Let's examine some of the history that can help us understand how and where this coal era region began and ended.

The settlers in the area of what is known today as Greenock, along the Yough River, discovered a coal vein that was very rich and accessible.

One would think that this discovery would start this wealthy resource on the way to being tapped.

SAVE THE DATE

April 19, 2014

4th Annual Boston Trail

Half Marathon & 5K Run/Walk



Watch for details in January

www.thebostontrail.com

But in those early days of the beginning of the 1800's, wood was so plentiful, cheap, and easy to obtain, that the coal seam was overlooked until later in the century.

A short time later, the growing village of McKeesport was developing a greater need for fuel for heat and use in the new-fangled steam engines. This led to the mining of a steady seam of coal directly across the Yough River in Port Vue. This coal was used for the local village and some was shipped down river to other villages that were also experiencing growth. As a matter of fact, Port Vue was named for being a "coal port" with a magnificent view of the meeting of the Youghiogheny River as it pours into the Monongahela River.

Industries developed in the area because of the proximity to coal. As industry increased, more people moved into the valley for jobs. The homes of these people were heated almost exclusively with coal. As the demand for coal increased in industry and homes, the search for more coal seams proceeded up river to other locations

eventually tapping the entire Yough Valley. Many mines were established and many men and boys earned a living mining the rich coal seams of the valley. The majority of these mines were closed by the 1950's with a few small ones in production for a few years after that.

During the 1950's, Allegheny County eventually forbade the burning of coal for house heat because of health concerns. In 1955, the Clean Air Act was passed and air pollution control efforts began. The supply of quality low sulfur coal dwindled and home heating moved to natural gas so that basically finished the coal industry in the Yough Valley.



There are many stories and legends that exist today about those who worked the mines. Mining was a dangerous job with many lives lost to cave-ins, fires, and methane gas (but that's a story for another time). Those miners who survived the many mine tragedies often suffered lung disease that hastened death. We are indebted to these men and boys who supplied the heat for many of our homes growing up and for providing the energy for the mills that employed many of our families.

As we review the history of our area, we cannot forget the role of coal in our growth and development as a large industrial center of the world. The abundance of coal seams that were accessible and could be mined, attracted industries to come into the area and that led to the great influx of people seeking jobs. Coal provided the mechanism that helped to move us from several small villages to bustling communities full of people. That is the reason why I believe that coal is the 'king' of the Yough Valley.

The Yough Valley started as a very sparsely populated farming and lumbering area. The mining of coal brought wealth but turned the

peaceful valley into a very ugly place. Coal tipples lined the valley with extensions to the railroad and river. Gob pies burned day and night choking the air with acrid smoke. The rivers were polluted and few fish survived.

Today the Yough River Valley is once again peaceful and more beautiful than can be remembered. The rivers teem with fish; herons and otters are seen again. King coal no longer reigns.

As Charlie Brown once quoted "it is not how it started, but how it ended up". And that is the rest of the story. Happy Trails!

Westmoreland Heritage Trail Grand Opening Ceremony

by Bob Cupp



Ribbon cutting officially opens the Trail

The second phase of the Westmoreland Heritage Trail has been completed. This 3.7-mile extension through Salem Township continues west from Route 819 in Slickville to Delmont, providing a total of 8.7 miles of completed trail, connecting Saltsburg with Delmont. New access points include the Slickville Lions Club Ball Field and the John G. Rangos and James Peretto Family Trail Access Area, located near the intersection of Athena Drive and Lauffer Mine Road, just northeast of Delmont. The project was made possible by a significant land donation by the

Rangos and Peretto families to the Regional Trail Corporation in 2002. They purchased the right-of-way from the Penn Central Railroad 50 years ago.

The Westmoreland Heritage Trail Chapter of the Regional Trail Corporation held a Grand Opening Ceremony on Saturday, October 5, 2013 at Slickville. The celebration included a dedication and ribbon-cutting, as well as a special bike/run/walk event. Speakers included the Westmoreland County Commissioners, Malcom Sias, Westmoreland County Parks & Recreation Director, Judge Jill Rangos, speaking on behalf of the John G. Rangos family, Roy Lenhardt, Vice Chairman of Westmoreland County Parks and Recreation's Citizens Advisory Board and Father Salvatore Lamendola, St. Sylvester Parish, Slickville.



Malcom Sias addresses the crowd at the Opening Ceremony

Development of the Westmoreland Heritage Trail began with the Saltsburg to Trafford Feasibility Study, completed in 2002, which evaluated the possibility of constructing a trail across northern Westmoreland County from Saltsburg on the Indiana County border to Trafford on the Allegheny County border, a total distance of 22 miles. The first five miles of trail from Saltsburg to Slickville was opened in 2008.

The trail is constructed on the original rail bed of the old Turtle Creek Branch of the Penn Central rail line (formerly the Pennsylvania Railroad). The heritage of the corridor includes numerous

coal and salt mining, gas and oil well sites. At the western end, Trafford, founded by George Westinghouse, is the site of his second Westinghouse Electric plant. Saltsburg, at the eastern end, was an early salt mining town and canal stop along the Pennsylvania Main Line Canal.

Malcom Sias talked about future plans to extend the trail through Export and Murrysville to Trafford. He announced that an agreement has been signed to purchase the Turtle Creek Industrial Railroad's right-of-way between Export and Trafford for \$915,000; the process of acquiring the property is underway.

In 1982, after Conrail decided to abandon the rail line, Export's Dura-Bond Industries, Inc. purchased the railroad in order to maintain the rail service. Originally known as the Turtle Creek Valley Railroad, they renamed it the Turtle Creek Industrial Railroad and continued to transport steel beams and pipe to their Export coating and fabricating plant. Yes, that's the same "Dura-Bond" as the one along the Youghiogeny River Trail north of Boston. The "Dura-Bond bypass" was constructed around that pipe coating facility in order to allow the trail to connect with McKeesport.

Until recently, the primary obstacle to completion of the trail was that the rail line remained active between Trafford and Export. However, in 2009, the Turtle Creek Industrial Railroad (TCKR) was severely damaged by a flash flood, leaving the railroad's future in question.

The railroad along Turtle Creek has gone from hauling coal a century ago to hauling pipe for the petroleum and chemical industries. Now the old railroad right-of way is transporting bicyclists from Saltsburg to Delmont and someday in the foreseeable future through Export and Murrysville to Trafford.

Sias explained that many challenges remain, including the need to obtain some additional right-of-way between Delmont and Export, as well as

funding. Grass roots support is required in order to obtain funds from private foundations. Very little money comes from the county. Another challenge is to safely allow cyclists and walkers to safely travel over or underneath Route 66 just north of Delmont.

The dream is to someday extend the Westmoreland Heritage Trail from Trafford to connect with the Great Allegheny Passage. For those who may say, "That will never happen," supporters of the Westmoreland Heritage Trail respond, "WHY NOT?" In the not too distant past, the same doubts persisted about completion of the Great Allegheny Passage from Pittsburgh to Cumberland!



Attendees examine maps at the Opening Ceremony

For the Westmoreland Heritage Trail's official web site, go to:

<http://www.co.westmoreland.pa.us/index.aspx?NI D=1010>



"It is only in the giving of oneself to others that we truly live"

Ethel Andrus

Welcome to all New Members

Membership helps the MYTC maintain our section of trail from Boston to Sutersville. We can't meet our responsibilities without your support ~ Thank you and welcome to our newest members!

Rich Kundman
Membership Chairman

Jennifer Callear
Daryl Cecchini
Pat Depoe
Lori Demus
Linda Grant
Joseph Hlista
Cynthia Hoffman
Karen Howell
Ken & Linda James
David & Sharon Kish
Gary J Kocsis
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David C Walls
Dan Whitt
Mary Williams
David Wilson
Yough Riverware Co.

Council Directory

Mission Statement

In 1991, the Mon/Yough Trail Council was founded to promote the rail corridor conversion to public access trails along the Youghiogheny River. Today, MYTC remains a non-profit, 501(c)3, all volunteer Pennsylvania corporation dedicated to sustaining trail maintenance and operations in order to encourage multi-purpose recreational use.

2013 Officers

President

Bill Hall

Vice President

John Eisenbarth

Treasurer

Mary Reid

Secretary

Tim Banfield

2013 Directors

2011-2013

Cathy Bartley

Bob Hoffman

Judy Marshall

Pam Magyar

Mary Reid

2012-2014

Tim Banfield

Dan Piesik

Bill Hall

2013-2015

John Eisenbarth

Marlyn Mendicino

George Sievern

Rich Kundman

Meetings

You are welcome to attend informative monthly meetings, held 6:30 pm, the second Thursday of each month at the Greenock Fire Hall in Elizabeth Township.

Contact us:

MYTC

P.O. Box 14
McKeesport, PA 15135

Phone: 412-754-1100

www.TheBostonTrail.com

MYTC WORK PARTIES

Every Saturday
weather permitting.

Meet at the end of
Locust Grove, Greenock.

Call 412-754-1100
for current schedule

Membership Application

Yes, I want to be a member of the
Mon Yough Trail Council

Membership Level	Contribution
------------------	--------------

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> General | \$20 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Associate | \$25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting | \$50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining | \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate | \$250 |

Please check here if renewal

In addition, I would like to contribute
\$_____ to the MYTC.

Please print:

Name _____

Address _____

Home Phone _____

Cell Phone _____

Email _____

Age ____ Occupation _____

Signature _____

Required

____I would like to be contacted to volunteer.

____I would like to receive a membership card.

Please make checks payable to and
mail to:

MYTC Membership

P.O. Box 14

McKeesport, PA 15135

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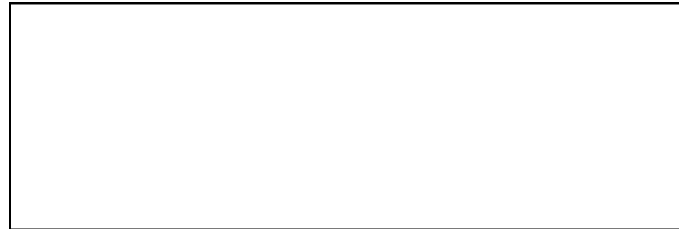
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*Mon Yough Trail Council's
Yough River Trail Newsletter*



*The following businesses have generously supported the Mon/Yough Trail Council..
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Jefferson Hospital
Jim Shorkey Family Auto Group
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