



## MTC Announces Westland Branch Plans with MarkWest



*V. Pres. Gil McGurl answers questions regarding the Trail with this project. Dennis Sims photo*

The Montour Trail Council along with the Cecil Friends of the Montour Trail hosted a town meeting at the Cecil Township Municipal Building on December 7 to publicly announce their agreement with MarkWest Liberty Midstream & Resources to lease the Westland Branch of the Montour Trail. The purpose of the lease is to construct a railroad to service their Houston Plant. There were about 75 attendees at the meeting including adjacent property owners. Following the announcement in the meeting room, attendees were asked to move to Generations, the multi-purpose room at the municipal building. There they could visit with representatives of Mark West, the Montour Trail Council and the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railroad, who will be operating the railroad. Many good questions were asked of these parties regarding property issues, rail operations and most importantly, safety.

The lease agreement with MarkWest includes building a trail adjacent to the railroad, a trail with rails, if you will. There are several of these currently in existence, including the Allegheny Highlands Trail which shares part of its right-of-way with the Western Maryland between Cumberland and Frostburg, Maryland. The railroad will be separated from the Trail by a fence.

The railroad will connect with the W&LE at Southview near the location where the Montour had a connection with W&LE forerunners Norfolk and Western, Pittsburgh & West Virginia Railway and the Wabash. It will then parallel the main line trail from near Galati Road to Gilmore Junction where it will then follow the Westland spur to Westland. A rail yard is to be constructed on the site of the old Westland Mine to store empty and filled tank cars with product from the plant. See page 6, Montour History to learn more about the Westland Branch.



*MarkWest Reps set up before the meeting. Dennis Sims Photo*

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Some creative engineering will be required to complete this project. The project will need to accommodate the railroad, the Trail and a service road, especially in the cut where the Johnston Road Bridge once stood and the creation of the rail yard that will be needed to be level.

## Preliminary Work Begins on the Westland Branch by Gil McGurl and Photos by Gene P. Schaeffer.

In December, MarkWest began preliminary work along the Westland Branch of the Trail. The first effort involved having the center line of the Trail cleared of brush and small trees using a large articulated, track mounted vehicle (see photo, right). After the clearing, drill rigs were brought onto the Trail to perform geotechnical work. During these operations, several areas were found that are considered to be wetlands and these areas will have to be managed in accordance with DEP regulations. The most significant wetland is in the deep cut just north of Johnston Road. Because of the wetland, the Johnston Road cut has not yet been entirely cleared.



A yard sign was found near Westland (see photo left) and several rails have been found in the right of way. The MRHS will remove and preserve the sign, as well as the rails.

The geotechnical work will facilitate the continuation of the design for the rail and trail. The design work will be ongoing for several more months. Look for updates to be provided in this publication.

We know many of our friends are anxious to see what is happening on the Westland Branch, but at the present, there is only one public access point to the Trail, and that is where Johnston Road crosses the Trail. All other access points are on private property, and we urge everyone to be respectful of private property along the Trail. On days other than Sunday, workers for MarkWest may be working along the trail using large equipment and it is inappropriate to disturb them.

It is possible to walk along the Trail from Johnston Road toward Westland, but because the cut is not cleared, walking the other way is quite difficult.

Visit the Montour Trail Web Site at:  
[www.montourtrail.org](http://www.montourtrail.org)

To Converse, join the Yahoo Group at:  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Montour-Trail/>



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## The Prez Sez

### When You Look, it Was a Ten

Montour's 21<sup>st</sup> annual member meeting and dinner was a very nice affair, thanks to Karen Robbins and the Cecil VFD. Right in that hall was where the first construction meeting was held, leading to the first section of trail opening in 1992. The evening was ripe for a glance at where the trails have been leading over the past year.

Regionally, the successes along the Great Allegheny Passage have literally been front page. Led by the Steel Valley bridges and the deal with Sandcastle, trails have been in the news and in the mind of the public. Nearly everyone you talk to has heard of, or been out on the GAP, or another of the local trails. Healthy recreation is a bright spark in tough times.

With all this good news as backdrop, Montour has many achievements to crow about:

- We completely re-built three miles of trail, from McDonald to Quicksilver, plus a redesign and reconstruction of the Quicksilver trailhead, in Robinson;
  - We signed the first half of the route that will, when complete, connect Montour (near Five Points) to the Pittsburgh International Airport, in Findlay;
  - We held our best publicized and best attended groundbreaking ever, for the J. R. Taylor Memorial Bridge over Clifton Road in Bethel Park;
  - We completed work on the 16<sup>th</sup> and final crossing of the 2001 P.U.C order, by removing a small Montour RR concrete bridge over Burnside Road in Cecil;
  - We have completed preconstruction work on the Georgetown and Morganza bridges in Cecil, and (deep breath now) hope to be out to bid this Spring.
- And, in the new frontier of Montour Trail development in South Park and Jefferson Hills:
- We committed to a bold new initiative to gain control of the Library Viaduct project, and now have a plan and a schedule in place for moving it forward;
  - We placed the rehabbed Piney Fork Bridge on its abutments, and got it decked;
  - We are developing a plan to connect this bridge to the existing open trail segment at Triphammer Road.

Our major trailwide and Friends Group fundraising events did well, considering the difficult economy. Private donations are up, a measure of public trust in what Montour is delivering. And grants were awarded from several sources, another indicator of the trail's value in the region. The largest of these, from PA DCNR, will allow us to start the design of the sorely needed Valleybrook #1 bridge, located just west of Route 19 in Peters.

*Continues on page 3*

## Friends' Meetings and Work Parties

### MTC Board Meeting:

Every third Monday of the month - 6:00 p.m. at 304 Hickman St., Suite 3, Bridgeville, PA. Turn right off of the Bridgeville exit of I-79. Turn left at the next light, go straight at next light and make left turn onto Hickman St. just after the Post Office. Call Ned at 724-225-9856 for more information or to get on the agenda.

### Cecil Friends:

Friends of the Trail meeting, every fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. From May-August, meetings are held at the Kurnick Access area along the trail off Cecil Henderson Road; other months (with the exception of November and December) meet at the MTC Offices. Work and cleanup parties are scheduled as needed. Call 412-496-4308 for more information, or email densimwx@comcast.net

### Airport Area Friends:

Friends of the Trail meeting, the Wednesday before the second Saturday of the month at 7:00 p.m., at the Forest Grove Fire Department. Anyone from the communities of Moon, Robinson, North Fayette, and Findlay is encouraged to attend. Call 412 264-6303 for more information. Work and cleanup party, every second Saturday of the month - 9:00 a.m. Call 412 262-3748 for more information and location.

### Bethel Park Friends:

Friends of the Trail meeting, every first Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. in the Bethel Park Municipal Building Council Chambers. Anyone interested in the Bethel Park Trail segment is encouraged to come. Work and cleanup party, every second and fourth Saturday of the month - 8:30 a.m. Call Bob O'Connell at 412-833-6259 for location and information.

### South Hills Friends:

Meeting second Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Jefferson Hills Borough Building. Work and cleanup parties scheduled and advertised as needed. For more information, contact David Oyler at 412-831-9288, davidoyler@verizon.net, or Paul McKeown at 412-835-6692, mckeownp@comcast.net

### Fort Cherry Friends:

Friends of the Trail Meeting, second Wednesday of the month at McDonald Borough Bldg., Council chambers at 7:00 p.m. Work and cleanup parties, scheduled as needed. For more information, contact Ray Johnston at 724-356-2621.

### Peters Township Friends:

Friends of the Trail Meeting, first non-holiday Monday of the month at Peters Township Parks and Recreation Center at 7:00 p.m. For more information on work and cleanup parties, please contact Jim Robbins at 724-941-6132, or for monthly meetings, Mark Imgrund at 724-941-6351 or by e-mail at markimgrund@comcast.net.

### The Montour Railroad Historical Society:

The newest Friends group. For more information send email to mrhs@montourr.com.

## Letters to the Montour Trail-Letter Editor

Dear Editor,

Having previously talked about a possible move to be nearer to both of our daughters, my wife Jerry and I left Pittsburgh and became residents of Minneapolis in the Fall of 2010. I'm writing to ask you to deliver a message to my many wonderful friends within the membership of the Montour Trail Council.

That message is that it has been great being involved with everyone, developing the Trail around a shared dream. It has been my pleasure to work side-by-side with many of you for over 20 years on a project that was meant to be. I've been amazed at the number of times that doors have been opened to us - agreements struck, funding granted, support of every imaginable kind offered.

Yes, it's taken longer than 3 years. Who knew at the outset what incredible level of detail we would have to immerse ourselves in? But look at the payback!

I'll be too far removed to remain involved hands-on with the Trail, but we hope to make return trips on occasion and I will look forward to seeing as many of you as possible in the future. I take great comfort in the knowledge that the well-being of the Montour Trail is in the hands of a very strong and competent set of officers and Board members. Please keep support and enjoyment of the Trail high on your list of priorities.

All the best,

**Stan Sattinger**

MTC Co-Founder

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Dear Editor

Last year, I was walking Bella on the trail heading from Kurnick to Hendersonville and was almost run down by 2 individuals on motorbikes, one on a quad and one on a dirt bike. All who know me know that I get VERY irritated by things like this so I promptly took out my phone, snapped photos and called 911. Officer Herdman of the Cecil Police responded, took the information and we have kept in contact for over a year. I provided the photos to him, also.

Tuesday morning he called me to let me know the case had come up on the docket. I was not able to make it to court that day, but with his testimony (he had spoken with the individuals involved that day) and my photographic proof, they were found guilty and fined \$300.00 each for riding motor vehicles on the Montour.

Please, please...if you see this happening - do NOT hesitate to get your cell phone out, take the picture and call 911. We CAN stop this before someone gets hurt. We can also protect the surface of the trail the volunteers work so hard on maintaining.

If you see Cecil Police Officer Charlie Herdman, please thank him for his non-stop work on this. I know I appreciated it. He is truly one of the best!!

**Paula Meddings and Bella**

December 12, 2010

## Airport Area Friends of the Montour Trail By Dennis Pfeiffer, Phyllis McChesney and Tim Killmeyer

Last year we discussed with our newsletter editor Dennis Sims the possibility of featuring one of the hardworking Friends groups in each issue. Dennis Sims thought the idea was a good one and stated "Since there are six friends groups we can feature one group in each one of the 2011 newsletter issues." Dennis then stated, "Let's start at mile "0" and work towards mile 46".

The Airport Area Friends of the Montour Trail maintain the trail from mile "0" to mile 12.6 at the Allegheny and Washington County line. In the near future, 6.3 miles of the Airport connector will be added to this total along with 0.8 miles of trail that will be extended through the Montour Junction property to Coraopolis.

The Airport Area Friends of the Montour Trail currently has 22 members and is a very vibrant, fun loving, well organized and hard working group. Year 2011 is the 19th year that this group has been maintaining the trail and 2010 was the first year of our new President Phyllis McChesney's tenure. Our founding and only other President, Frank Keppel, is to be commended for his hard work that commenced in November of 1994 and continued through December of 2009. An award was presented to Frank at a holiday gathering in December as a small token of our appreciation of his excellent leadership and dedication. See photo below.



The Airport Area Friends group meets monthly at the Forest Grove Fire Hall to review the current trail status and to plan that Saturday's workparty. New members are always welcome. (See page three for meeting details.) In the January meeting, the 2011 plans were finalized and like all other friends groups, the plans were submitted to the Montour Trail Council for approval.

Each year, the largest task is to keep the grass trimmed along the entire length of the trail, at the various trail heads, at bridge locations, and most importantly at road crossings. There also is about two miles of fencing, signs, culverts, benches and pavilions to maintain. Last year was probably the busiest year for the Airport Area Friends, since the floods caused by Ivan in 2004 inflicted serious damage to the Trail. The heavy winter snows caused over 100 trees to fall, which were all removed in the Spring. Some of the other tasks completed were: 120 split rail fencing sections fixed; the parking lot at Old Beaver Grade was surfaced with asphalt; with MTC obtained funding, we coordinated Findlay Township work crews resurfacing of over one mile of trail.

In order to improve drainage, a 100 feet long, four feet deep and four feet wide trench was dug west of the Enlow tunnel. Last year we were very fortunate to have two all day work parties with the corporate community and to have had eagle scouts complete various projects. The joint corporate work parties in 2010 were with Deloitte & Touche and GlaxoSmithKline (GSK).

We look forward to humbly serving the trail user community again this year. A special thanks to a few individuals who have been with the Airport Area Friends, since the beginning. They are Jerry Bates, Dave Murphy, Frank Keppel, Pete Merther, Carolyn Lake, Tim Killmeyer and Dennis Pfeiffer.

The next issue will feature the Fort Cherry Friends of the Montour Trail who represent Robinson and Mount Pleasant Townships in Washington County.

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## South Hills Friends Clear Brush Under the Library Trestle



*From left to Wright (actually from Wright to right), Dave Wright, Jim Taggart, Rich Sahar, Peter Kohnke, Jack Swisher, Dan Ratkiewicz, Paul McKeown and Dave Oyler. Photographer Ned Williams.*

The South Hills Friends of the Montour Trail held a work party on January 8 to clear brush and small trees from beneath the Library Trestle in South Park. Cutting back foliage from around the trestle keeps the structural steel drier and slows down corrosion. The MTC and Allegheny County eventually will install a concrete deck on this trestle, which will enable trail users to cross above Route 88 and the light rail tracks. The Trestle will be an important trail connection between South Park, Bethel Park, and Peters Township.

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## In the Next Issue:

Fort Cherry Friends

The Burgh 5K, 10K and 2 mile Walk

Westland Update

Submissions will be due Monday, March 7, 2011 at Midnight.

## A Celebration of the Trail

While talk of the trail this time of year is primarily about cross country skiing, development projects and looking forward to the upcoming spring; preparation is also underway for the annual Montour Trail Council Half Marathon, 5K Run and 5K Fun Walk scheduled for Saturday, September 10, 2011.

In the time that I have been involved in this event: first as a participant, then volunteer and organizer; the event has grown from a fundraiser to a celebration of the Trail. Volunteers look forward to working with each other, runners get to remake acquaintances from prior year races and in the end all the funds raised go right back into the Montour Trail to ensure that the Trail continues to be part of the community. The race is also a great way to recruit new trail users, having run on the Trail and enjoyed their running experience. It's also a great way to challenge your running friends to see who is better that day in the race.

For anyone who has ever participated in, or volunteered for this event, there is a celebratory energy that is felt in the air. The challenge to get the runners ready and to the start, the runners waiting to take off, and the accomplishment of the finish, the feeling of achievement and the compliments received from the participants at the end of the event.

This annual event requires a herculean amount of volunteer hours, from finding sponsors to planning and organizing to race day activities and wrap up. If you can give a little or a lot, the committee and the event could use help.

Currently, the event is looking for the following volunteers:

**Assistant Race Director** – Assist the event Director in all aspects of the event including working with sponsors, race logistics and organization.

**Artistic Talent** – Race flyer design and shirt logo design.

**Public Relations Coordinator** – Work with advertisement and marketing of the event.

**Race Day Volunteers** – Registration, chip distribution, trail marshals, water stations, finish line and chip collection.

Let's make the 2011 event the best ever. Interested volunteers can contact Race Director, Bill Orr at: [race@montourtrail.org](mailto:race@montourtrail.org) or 724-695-2638

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## Prez Sez continues from Page 2

To bolster the long-term financial health and maintenance of the Montour Trail:

- After lengthy negotiations, we signed a lease agreement for Marcellus Shale rights, specifying that there will be no surface activities on Trail property;
- Negotiated a lease for the currently undeveloped Westland Branch, which has a bonus of getting that branch trail built for us as a rail-with-trail project.

It takes a lot of volunteer effort to continue to deliver a world class trail to the people of this region. Thank you to all that helped this past year; you know what you did, and how valuable it is to the tens of thousands of our trail users whose lives are better for it. And of value, too, to those users and volunteers who will just discover Montour this year.

Best of 2011 to Us All!

*Ned Williams*

## The MRHS Begins to Recover Railroad Artifacts on the Westland Branch

On Sunday, January 9, the Montour Railroad Historical Society hiked the Westland Branch between the Johnston Road Crossing and the former Westland Mine Yard searching for artifacts from the days when it was a working railroad.



*Dennis Sims Photo.*

We knew there was a yard marker, and that was one goal we accomplished. The location was documented and the item was recovered, but not after a long hard fight. Carter Roth with his truck, display the marker below and debates how to recover it above. The marker is comprised of quarter inch steel plate to form the "V" which was then welded to a stick of rail and planted about 4 feet in the ground. It will be restored and returned to its original location upon completion of the project. Several other items were found including sticks of rail and a mysterious steel slab which will be recovered later when the snow has melted. Who knows what we will find when the snow melts.



*Ned Williams Photo.*

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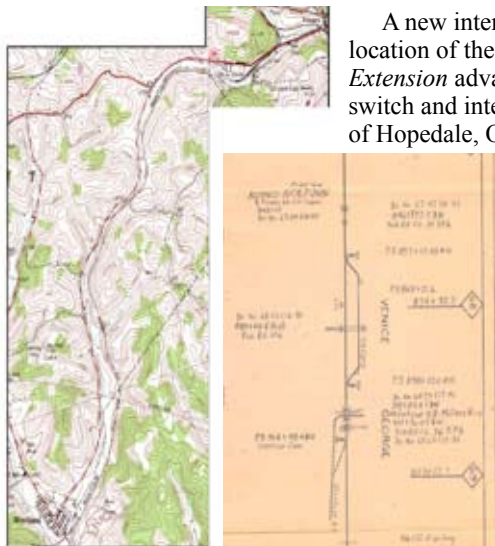
## MONTOUR RAILROAD HISTORY BY BOB CIMINEL COPYRIGHT 2011

**Westland Branch Redux: A Story 25 Years in the Making**

In the tear-it-down, throw-it-away society we live in today, many of us who witnessed the restructuring, downsizing and abandonments that Pittsburgh area railroads have undergone over the past 30 years never imagined that the former *Westland Branch* of the Montour Railroad could rise phoenix-like from the ashes and become an operating railroad again. At best, we thought the old roadbed between *Gilmore Junction* and Westland, PA, might make a nice addition to the Montour Trail. The Trail is all that remains of our "Old Friend," thanks to the "rails-to-trails" initiative. Most of us, however, overlooked one thing that could figuratively raise the dead: When there is money to be made, anything is possible. That "one thing" was a nondescript outcropping of shale 400 miles from Westland near the town of Marcellus, New York.

The MarkWest Liberty Midstream & Resources, L.L.C. cryogenic processing plant on Route 519 near Houston, PA needs the former Westland Branch to allow rail shipment of large amounts of propane the plant will produce as it increases processing the natural gas extracted from the Marcellus Shale in Washington County to 270 million cubic feet per day.

The plans for the new *Westland Branch* were revealed in December 2010. As I write this article, crews working eastward from Westland have already begun clearing brush from the old right-of-way for the surveyors. Rumor also has it that the Wheeling & Lake Erie (W&LE) Railroad is already planning how it will operate trains on the new branch, where train crews will be based, and motive power needs.



Left, Topo map showing the Westland Branch. Hornhead Road parallels the Branch after it swings away from PA 50. Right, P&WV track diagram showing George Station. East is up.

A new interchange will be constructed near Southview, Pennsylvania, west of the original interchange location of the Montour Railroad and the Wabash Pittsburg Terminal Railway (WPT). As the Montour's *Mifflin Extension* advanced eastward toward *Mifflin Junction* in 1914, the WPT, a forerunner of the W&LE, installed a switch and interchange track at Milepost 17.9 on its main line between Pittsburgh and *Pittsburgh Junction*, east of Hopedale, OH.

This is probably a good point to go over the history of the W&LE track that runs through the area of the new branch. The line was originally chartered as the Pittsburgh, Carnegie & Western Railroad in 1901, along with two other companies formed by George Gould to bring his railroad empire into Pittsburgh. In 1904, these three railroads were combined into the Wabash-Pittsburg Terminal Railway (by this time the U.S. Post Office had forced Pittsburgh to drop the "h."). After several years of mergers, bankruptcies and foreclosures, the railroad re-emerged as the Pittsburgh & West Virginia Railway in 1916. The P&WV was leased to the Norfolk & Western Railroad in 1964. N&W then became the Norfolk Southern in 1982 and transferred the P&WV lease to the W&LE in 1990. Interestingly, the original W&LE was around in 1901 and connected to the WPT at *Pittsburgh Junction*.

*George* was listed as a flag stop on the WPT's November 1914 public timetable and 14 trains a day went past the station. A flag stop is a station where trains only stop if passengers need to board or leave the train at that location. In the March 1918 public timetable, the bankrupt WPT had been replaced by the P&WV and only nine trains a day passed *George*. Although the Montour Railroad ended passenger service in 1927, the 1929 P&WV timetable shows eight trains a day passing the passenger platform at *George*.

According to the 1925 Montour public timetable, *George* was the P&WV's name for the interchange; the Montour called it *Southview*, and by that date Montour passenger trains only operated between the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railway station (Station Square on the Southside) and *Akleson*, three-tenths of mile east of *North Star*. However, *George* interchange remained an active freight transfer point on the Montour and when derailments occurred anywhere east of *George* the Montour could detour its locomotives by using the P&WV to get around the derailment.

We don't know what the W&LE will name the new connection at *George* or if the new branch will still be called the *Westland Branch*, but we know where it will go and how it will be constructed. The Montour built the original spur in 1922 between *Gilmore Junction* (named after the Gilmore Coal Company) and *Morris* mine on the other side of Route 50. In 1922 it was called the *Midland Spur*, which should have provided a clue that *Morris* mine would not long remain the end-of-track. The Montour began building toward Westland, Pennsylvania in 1927 and the new four-mile section of track became the *Westland Branch*.

It was not any easy section of track to build or operate trains on because there was not a level stretch of track on the entire branch. Leaving *Morris* mine at Milepost 0.5, trains bound for the *Westland* mine, faced a daunting 2% grade for the next 1.5 miles. After cresting the grade at Milepost 2, the trains descended for two miles on a 1.5% grade to *Westland* mine. But westbound trains were pulling empty hopper cars. Eastbound trains leaving the mine with loaded cars had to struggle up that 1.5% grade with 50-ton hoppers full of coal. It will be interesting to see if the W&LE modifies the original right-of-way. The Montour found that four SW 9 switch engines could handle *Westland Branch* coal trains better than two GP 38-2 road engines. We have to wait to find out if the SD 40-2 locomotives can do a better job with tank cars full of propane.

*Bob Ciminell is the founder of the Montour Railroad Yahoo group [http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/montour\\_rr/](http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/montour_rr/) There are currently 307 members from across the country. You are encouraged to join. There is a wealth of information about the Montour Railroad at this location and you can pose questions of its membership, from whom you are sure to get an answer.*

### Welcome New Members

*The Montour Trail Council welcomes these new members and thanks them for their support. We would also like to thank all our members who have recently renewed their membership and to remind all that a growing membership is one of the criteria foundations look for when we apply for grants.*

**New Members**

John Barbisch  
 Laura Chevalier  
 Jeane Criss  
 Dan & Joanne Karaczun  
 Patricia Kenrick  
 Sue Ann Langfitt  
 Rob Farmer & Nancy Martin  
 Bruce McElhattan  
 Robert Meyer  
 Richard J. Munsch  
 Tod & Mary Ann Pike  
 Friends of Raccoon Creek  
 Rick & Johnna Taggart  
 Kendall Welch  
 David Wheeler

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 Jim & Wendy Homerosky  
 Richard J. Munsch  
 Ronald Piroli

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Laura & Gary Graf  
 Anton Knaus  
 Daniel W. McKenna  
 John & Janet Swanson  
 Valleyview Charitable Foundation  
 Roy Weil & Mary Shaw

### Save the Dates for these Trail Events for 2011

**Sunday, May 1, 2011.** Burgh 5K/10K and 2 mile family Fun Walk at Cecil Park

**Saturday, May 8 2011.** Airport Friends Penny Day

**Saturday, To be announced.** Bethel Park party on the Trail

**Saturday, June 4, 2011** Cecil Friends Tails for Trails

**Friday, July 29, 2011.** Peters Friends Twilight Trail Walk

**Saturday, September 10, 2011,** The Montour Trail Council ½ Marathon, 5K and 5K Walk

**Saturday, September 24, 2011,** The Tour the Montour

**Saturday, October 8, 2011,** South Hills Penny Day

Look for more details regarding these events, as the date approaches in this newsletter.

## I want to help complete the Montour Trail!

### I want to join the Montour Trail Council at this level:

- Student/Senior \$15
- Individual \$25
- Family \$35
- Supporting \$50
- Sustaining \$100
- Benefactor \$250
- Leader's Circle \$500+

Make checks payable to the "Montour Trail Council"

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