

January 12, 2009

Trailblazer News Update

One of the biggest problems that we face as a club of volunteers, is dissemination of information to our members. While our website serves us well, especially in the forums, it seems that we come up short when trying to update our membership with club news. And there is a lot of news to share...

To begin with, you may know that we are in the midst of our yearly membership drive. In January and February, we encourage club members to renew their membership. This way, we can budget our funds for the upcoming year. And it simplifies the process of when a member is due to renew.

The executive board recently added new membership giving levels. We did not raise the basic rates of membership, instead we have added to them and are offering an enticement to raise your contribution. The 2009 membership structure:

Basic Membership	\$20
Fat Tire Family	\$25
Middle Ring Supporter	\$40
Trailbuilder	\$60
Big Ring Supporter	\$100
Corporate Singletrack	\$200
Corporate Big Air	\$500
Corporate Mojo Sponsor	\$1,000

Contributions at or above Middle Ring (\$40) will receive a voucher for a Trailblazer t-shirt. You can register on-line from our homepage or mail in your registration, also available online.

As in all things voluntary, we sometimes have a bit of a lag in getting updates and / or upgrades to our website. There may be a few issues with online contributions at certain levels, but our membership director, Emily Sardonas can be reached at membership@tarheeltrailblazers.com. Emily can help you through the process.

That said, what happens to our raised funds? Well, recently we have rebuilt our Ditch Witch track machine, purchased two trailers to move our heavy equipment (which includes the aforementioned Ditch Witch, a BobCat, and a Volvo mini-excavator. In addition we have an enclosed trailer that houses our Suzuki 4 wheeler, dump trailers, chainsaws and countless trail tools). Just keeping our fleet of mechanized machinery up and running can be a task in and of itself.

Recently (at our December meeting) the club voted to approve the spending of \$10K to hire Trail Dynamics (www.traildynamics.com) to punch the trail corridor of Phase IVa at Lake Norman State Park. This new, advanced level trail will be a departure from the feel of the existing Itusi trails (Hawk, Hicks Creek, Norwood and Monbo), as a more narrow corridor and naturally occurring obstacles will elevate the skill level. The corridor will be roughly 3.25 miles in length. This phase will intersect a fire road that will join to a second trail to complete the loop. Next year (2010) we will venture across the fire road (Phase IVb) and complete the loop. The total trail length of Phase IV will be +/- 7 miles, bringing the total available trail at LNSP to approximately 20 miles!

This is the first time (other than the point trail at the USNWC) that the club has paid to get trail on the ground. But we feel it is the wave of the future for the Trailblazers.

So much so, that Jeff Archer has submitted a Recreational Trail Program grant application to the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources for \$75,000 for Phase V at LNSP. 255 acres and upwards of 11.5 miles of additional trail awaits us in this Phase. Once again, the Trailblazers would hire a trail construction company to blast the corridor and then rely on the Trailblazer faithful to groom and apply the finishing touches to the trail. It's a scene that will become more familiar to club members in the future.

At Southwest District Park, club member Brian Malec has laid out a beautiful 3 mile trail in a distressed neighborhood off of West Blvd. Recent moves by the Charlotte Housing Authority call for the razing of Boulevard Homes (on adjacent property) and in its place constructing a mixed use community. The new trail will be one of the first amenities to the park that will also include ballfields. These will complement the Southview Recreation Center, already on site. This is a tremendous opportunity for the club to be in on the ground floor of a community in renaissance.

The Trailblazers have received grants totaling \$10K (a \$5K, NCDENR, Adopt-A-Trail grant and a \$5K grant from REI) to construct the trail corridor, once again through a trail construction company. Then we'll rely on the Trailblazer faithful to finish the trail. Sound familiar? The work Brian and other members have already provided to lay out the trail easily exceeds 200 hours total to date.

The Lakewood community has long been forgotten as the construction of I-85 and Hwy 16 has cut it off from easy community access. Trips for Kids, a non-profit organization aimed at getting at risk youth on bicycles has a major foothold in the community. TKF, along with local community groups have banded together to link parcels of land to provide these under privileged kids with a trail to ride within their community.

Lakewood in the 1910's – 1920's was Charlotte's, Six Flags. Soldiers would ride the train to the park that included a beautiful lake, boardwalk, Ferris Wheel, food, recreation and relaxation. The park died in the late 20's as a tornado ripped apart the dam, draining the lake and ruining forever the excitement of the area. To this day, beautiful stone bridges still stand as a testament to the park and an era, gone by.

The Lakewood Community and TFK's were recently awarded a grant through REI that will amount to \$12.5K to construct a trail in this community. This is the feel good project of the year! Once again, the Trailblazers will oversee the construction of the trail corridor by a trail construction firm and then rely on you, our faithful membership to groom the trail. Sounds like a broken record, I know, but it's the wave of the future for trail construction in our area. The community sits on the edge of a proposed CMP&R Greenway and will provide connectivity that the community hasn't enjoyed in ages. And we're all a part of it, each and every member of our club...

Edward Autry has recently submitted an application for an Adopt-A-Trail grant to NCDENR for the construction of a trail corridor at Park Road Park. The \$5K grant would once again allow us to hire some level of trail corridor construction. The new trail would connect with the Little Sugar Creek Greenway. In addition to adjacent trails in the immediate area, this project could result in approximately 12 to 15 miles of stacked loop mountain bike trail in the heart of Charlotte with connectivity to a major greenway.

We have recently been contacted by Charlotte Mecklenburg Park and Recreation and informed that our trail at Jetton Park is going to be nominated for a National Association of Counties Achievement Award. The 1.1-mile trail, constructed to allow the physically challenged the opportunity to enjoy the sport of mountain bike on specially designed off road hand cycles, is located in Cornelius. A

grant of \$10K from Transamerica Reinsurance provided the funding necessary to purchase two of the cycles that are housed at the Cycle Path in Cornelius. We will be providing information to assist P&R with the application process.

So in closing, I would like to thank you, our members for your hard work, dedication, donations of time and money as we together are making a difference, a HUGE difference in our community. Our economic times our tough, what better way to help us through it than to contribute to the betterment of the Metro-Charlotte community.

It's membership time.

Think about it.

Sincerely,

Tom Mathews
Past President
Tarheel Trailblazers

Posted At : 11:04 AM. | Posted By : tom