



www.michigantrails.org

P.O. Box 27187
1213 Center St.
Lansing MI 48909

Phone: 517-485-6022

Fax: 517-347-8145

December 11, 2009

Dear Trail Friend,

As I sit down to write you this season, I want to let you know how important this letter is and how important you are to us. Once in a very great while, we are presented with an opportunity to support something that we not only love, but something that can change lives and transform communities. This is where we find ourselves at the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance. And that is the opportunity I implore you to seize.

This past year has been tough for everyone in Michigan. But in the midst of all the bad news, here are some powerfully positive things to consider:

- Because of our collective work, Michigan has more than 2,000 miles of multi-use trails.
- These trails impact the health, prosperity and quality of life in unimaginable ways.
- These trails are an amazing asset as we move forward to build a better Michigan.
- We are on the brink a connected trail system that can have an even more profound impact on our state.

Please read on. Whether you decide to contribute or not, I want to share a few stories that will change the way you look at trails – forever.

The best of trail times – look around you.

In the midst of this recession, Michigan trails are demonstrating their benefits, every day. Trail use in Michigan is at an all-time high. No wonder – from “staycations” to day trips to family adventures, trails offer convenient, low-cost, close-to-home recreation. Yes, in Michigan we enjoy one of the most robust trail systems in the nation. But it can be so much more.

As I write you, MTGA is on the verge of a wonderful opportunity to connect existing trails to create our first cross-state trail. The Michigan Airline Trail will travel 240 miles from Lake Michigan to Lake St. Clair. A grant from the Kresge Foundation has set us on our way. Kresge’s generosity funded three part-time trail ambassadors to begin completing the gaps along this route. It will take many conversations, many meetings, many agreements, and lots of hard work to make it happen. However, getting to an approved route and taking steps toward implementation is just the beginning. We must plan ahead to develop marketing tools and strategies to make people aware of it. Michigan is a leader in trails, but this evolving “super-trail” which connects eleven existing trails (each unique and outstanding in its own right) is a monumental task. This is an effort to connect communities, provide opportunities, and drive tourism – which will benefit all of us. We need your help to build this trail.

Great trails in Detroit and a toolkit for all of us.

Affiliated with The Michigan Fitness Foundation



Down in Southeast Michigan, the Detroit Greenways Coalition is moving full steam ahead as well. This past year, MTGA and Detroit Greenways led a coalition to secure \$1.25 million in funding for Detroit urban trails. We worked with individual trail groups to overcome hurdles, held countless meetings with decision-makers at all levels of government, and incorporated Detroit trails and greenways into every discussion about urban revitalization. The result: Detroit citizens are taking ownership of this emerging trail system with more miles of completed trail, more users, more connections, and more programs, every month.

Your help has also allowed us to complete the Trailway Toolkit with over 150 online resources. Now every community will have ready access to the knowledge they need at every step in the quest to plan, build, operate, and maintain their trails. Check out the tools we have assembled on our website. So the work of planning and building trails in Michigan is going strong. Momentum is on our side. But there is so much more to the story of trails in Michigan.

A healthier Michigan? It starts right here.

Trails help citizens to maintain good health, which means a higher quality of life and a healthier bottom line for our state. Many folks cannot afford a gym membership so they take to the trails. Others simply prefer exercise outside and trails are waiting. Athletes use trails. Seniors use trails. Children use trails – which can provide safe routes to school as well as great places to simply be outside and play. I don't need to remind you of the multiple epidemics – from diabetes to childhood obesity – that plague us. Trails make getting outdoors accessible, easy, rewarding, and communal. They nourish our whole body, which in turn, nourishes our spirit. Trails can do this, but only with your help.

A more prosperous Michigan? We're on the right path.

Trails help enhance a community's economic value by preserving greenspace, which time and time again has proven to increase nearby property values. Trails are an important generator for new small businesses to service the needs of trail users engaged in a variety of uses – running, walking, bicycling, rollerblading, horseback riding, snowmobiling and other activities. Plus, the knowledge-based employers and workers that will fuel our 21st Century economy most often choose to live in places with a high quality of life, and trails rank high in the criteria that define where people want to live.

Just last month I heard a story about a talented 30-year-old professional who was being recruited by a Michigan marketing firm. This top candidate was brought up to visit Michigan from Atlanta. He had previously worked in New York and Kansas City. When he came for the final visit with his family, the company asked a real estate agent to show them around the area and visit some neighborhoods. But the first thing they asked to see were parks and trails. The offer was accepted. We have a new talented Michigander in our midst. And, a part of the decision rested with greenspace, livability and trails. This story rings true in communities across our state. Indeed, communities currently updating their master plans indicate that when they seek public input, trails rank as one of the top features people want to see more of.

How can you use a trail? Bet you can't count all the ways.

Yes, there are more trails on the ground, under construction, and being planned than ever. But Michigan is more than a leader in trails. We are a leader in innovative ways to use them. Across the state, organizations are learning that the best way to share the many benefits of trail use with those who have not had the trail experience is trail programming.



The Kalamazoo Valley River Trailway (KVRT) is a new trail segment connecting the Kal-Haven Trail with downtown Kalamazoo. Here's a partial list of what was going on the KVRT this past summer and fall: Father-Daughter Walk Together Day, Local History Walks, Tales on the Trail for children ages 3-5 and their families, Interpretive Nature Walks, Mutt Strutters (a dog walking group hosted by certified trainers from PetSmart), Self-Guided Scavenger Hunts, a Running Club, a Walking Club, Nordic Walking Clinics (hosted by a local sporting goods store), Fall Colors Walk, Senior Golf Cart Fall Colors Tour, Outdoor Photography Workshop.

In Detroit, The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy offers programs which take advantage of the unique nature of the trails they operate, including programs in collaboration with the new urban chapter of the Audubon Society geared to school-aged kids, a Second Saturday program with the Detroit Symphony, and urban gardening along the trail corridor. Many of these kinds of events are led by a non-trail person – a naturalist, historian, or storyteller – and each brings along a new group of trail users. What a tremendous resource a trail can be to the entire community. Such is the power of trails! Our goal is to work with groups, including the Michigan Recreation and Parks Association, to duplicate this kind of programming on trails across Michigan. We need your help to make this a reality.

Our work cannot exist without you.

This is the time of year for reflection – about what's important, about what we can do to make a difference. It's also a time to count blessings. So in these difficult times, I ask you to support us. And I promise that every dollar you send will work, and work hard, to continue our singular mission – to connect Michigan. If you want a healthier, friendlier, more inviting, and more prosperous state, there's no better place to start.

Please open the enclosed trail guide and take a look at the fruits of our efforts, together. Then ask yourself if you want this work to continue. We are counting on you today to help us, and we are committed to the trail ahead. Please send us your donation today.

Sincerely,



Nancy Krupiarz
Executive Director

P.S. We are here everyday working to make sure Michigan makes the most out of its trail system by connecting them to more communities and to each other. We need YOU to help us make it happen. Please respond today with your donation.

