

PRAIRIE TRAVELERS



Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2021

Dear friends,

The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting social distancing orders created challenges for Prairie Travelers, as it did for all of us individually. However, it also showed us how important our work is. The Prairie Sunset Trail instantly became a very important and active resource that provided our community with a feeling of “normalcy” and a safe place to be physically active. Our Board and volunteers immediately responded and went to work to maintain and enhance the trail so that our trail users would have a safe and stress-free environment to cope with the many pandemic induced constraints we all faced.



We’re excited to share with you some of the updates from the trail in 2021, as well as our plans for 2022.

For over a decade we have been active in the effort to save the railroad bridge over the Big Ditch (MS Mitch Mitchell Floodway). This bridge as well as a proposed tunnel under the I-235 interchange would connect the Prairie Sunset Trail to the City of Wichita planned bikeways as well as existing bike trails. At the October Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Board meeting, Assistant City Engineer for Public Works Paul Gunzelman updated the board about bike/ped projects including addressing design issues critical for the connectivity of the bridge crossing to the Prairie Sunset Trail, and that it was moving forward with KDOT and FHWA input. Bike/Ped Advisory Board has been instrumental in the success of this joint goal of “saving the bridge.”

What’s next? The Board of Prairie Travelers is fully committed to see the Prairie Sunset Trail extended to Murdock, Kansas, an added distance of approximately 14.5 miles. We plan to work on this in earnest in 2022.

When we achieve our goal of connecting the Prairie Sunset Trail from Garden Plain through Wichita bike paths to the Redbud Trail all the way to Augusta (in the works), we will have 50 miles of trails. If we are successful extending the PST westward an additional 15 miles the 65-mile trail would attract visitors from many adjacent communities as well as other states.

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Your contributions and support can help us achieve this mission! Please consider a year end tax deductible contribution to Prairie Travelers today, www.prairiesunsettrail.org.

With gratitude,

Larry Hatfield, President
Rick Sroufe, Vice President
Ruth Holliday, Secretary
and Prairie Travelers Board of Directors

Fundraising Updates

Partnerships work, especially when organizations have aligned visions. Together with our sister organization in Butler County, the Andover Augusta Rail Trail Initiative (AARTI), we sponsored our two annual fundraising bike rides this year. Proceeds were split 50/50 between our two organizations.



The **Oz Wicked Wind 100K and virtual auction** in May was very successful, although early morning rain and a stormy forecast kept many away. It ended up being one of the most pleasant Wicked Wind rides ever, with no wicked wind nor rain during the event. Both road and gravel options were offered. We raised \$4700 for each trail, thanks in large part to the virtual auction items. Thank you to participants, donors & volunteers!

The **Walnut Valley Metric** at the end of Sept was very windy but pleasant. We had close to 180 participants, and three route options (including a popular gravel option). All riders had lunch at the Liberty Schoolhouse, which is a one-room schoolhouse last used in the late 1950's. This year we moved the lunch tables outdoors to make sure we followed proper COVID safety protocols, as we also did with our May event. The event raised \$4,400, which we split with AARTI.

We are very grateful to **Jimmy John's** for donating lunch for the WW100 and a huge discount for the WVM, the donation of fruit from **Sprouts** for both events, and the support of **Steve Richards** of **Blendrich Nutrition** for providing drinks. Volunteers and bicycle shop support help make these events possible. Huge thanks to **Bicycle Pedaler** (WW100 & WVM), **Heartland Bicycle** (WW100), **Apostle Bikeworks** (WW100) and **Free State Cycle Works** (WW100).

Our December 2020 **"Bid to Ride"** online auction netted close to \$5,000 split between the **Prairie Sunset Trail** and **AARTI**. A huge thank you to our donors which included **Robert Houston** and the families of **Wanda Groves & Janice Mowat**.

Mark your calendars for next year:

- **May 15th, 2022:** Oz Wicked Wind 100K (Lake Afton)
- **Sept 25th, 2022:** Walnut Valley Metric (Starts in Winfield)

Adopt a Mile Program

The Prairie Sunset Trail is a community effort, and perhaps nothing reflects that more than the Adopt a Mile Program. New signage with the names of those who have adopted a mile will be installed before the end of 2021. Want to help? Several miles are available still.

Adopting a mile means you agree to help Prairie Travelers regularly with:

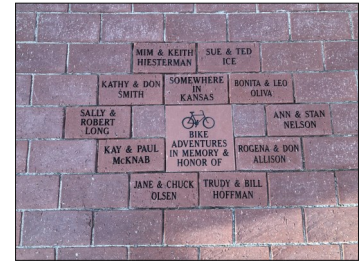
- Picking up and disposal of trash
- Trimming grass, weeds, brush and trees back 8 feet on each side from the center of the trail
- Trimming grass and weeds from road right of way and around bollards
- Contacting Prairie Travelers if there is any damage to the trail or missing signage
(We estimate the time commitment per year will be approx. 40 hours)

The following is a list of our adoptees and sections available to adopt:

- **Open:** Hoover to Ridge Rd
- **Open:** Ridge Rd to Tyler Rd
- **Ken & Angie Locke:** Maize Rd to 119th St W
- **Koray & Christy Wilkes Family:** 119th St W to 135th St W
- **Michael & Valarie Gomm Family:** 119th St W to 135th St W
- **Kelly Wenz:** 135th St W to 151st St W - "Muerto Bicycle Club"
- **Wade Blankenship:** 151st St W to 167th St W (Blankenship Family)
- **DeBolt Family:** 167th St W to 183rd St W
- **Boy Scout Troop #776, chartered by Goddard Lions Club:** 183rd St W to 199th St W
- **City of Goddard:** 199th St to Walnut
- **Larry, Jean & Christian Zimmerman:** Walnut to 215th St. W.
- **Waltanna Flyers:** 215th St W to 231st St W
- **Open:** 231st St W to 247th St W
- **Jon & Katelyn Covey:** 247th St W to 263rd St W
- **Mike & Karen Walsh Family in honor of Bobby Thompson:** 263rd St W to 279th St W
- **Mike & Karen Walsh Family** – 279th St W to 295th St W

Memorial Brick Park

Surrounding the Cecile Kellenbarger Memorial in Goddard is a brick memorial park in which we can honor your children, commemorate loved ones, remember a special friend or pet, promote your business, or mark a special event in your life. The memorial brick park is a fundraiser for improvements, maintenance, and future expansions of the Prairie Sunset Trail. So far, we have sold a total of 53 bricks with size and design options to choose from. Prices range from \$100 to \$280. Visit www.prairiesunsettrail.org for brick order form.



Memorial benches & Eagle Scout Project



Our **sixth Eagle Scout Project** on the **Prairie Sunset Trail** was completed this fall by **Tanner Crego**. Tanner installed two benches adjacent to each other in remembrance of **Janice Mowat and Wanda Groves**. Two good friends with a 30 years age difference who seldom missed going together to see a WSU women's volleyball or basketball game. One bench is yellow and the other black! Memorials in their honor from avid bicyclists, BAK veterans, WOW members and PST supporters made this possible. Join us for the bench dedica-

tion in their honor on **Wednesday, January 26th at the Goddard picnic shelter at 12:00 noon.**

Redbud Trail Extension Update

Imagine waking up and riding to Augusta for breakfast! That may soon become a reality following several "work sessions" this fall with the Augusta City Council (outcomes were shared with the Butler County Commission). Twice the Augusta City Chamber was packed with over 50 trail supporters. In subsequent City Council meetings, the City Council members voted in favor of extending the Redbud Trail into Augusta. The goal now is to have BUCO transfer the NITU (Notice of Interim Trail Use) directly to the City of Augusta with AARTI committing to help build the limestone section and the City of Augusta working with KDOT and grants to install the two bridges we would need to cross over Kellogg and the Whitewater River. Josh Shaw, City Manager for Augusta, has helped lead this endeavor with patience, diligence and a lot of research. Kim Austin, AARTI president, has also spent many hours behind the scene working closely with state agencies and local groups. Shawn Davis, owner of Free State Cycle Works in Augusta, has been instrumental in recruiting businesses and residents in support of this endeavor.

In 2021, Augusta completed the Redbud Trail section from City Hall to behind Walmart (adjacent to the Whitewater River) with the support of a matching grant from Sunflower Foundation. A playground at the trailhead by City Hall was also built. With this section's completion, we have just four miles more to go!



Trail usage in Butler County has gone up following the opening of the Wichita section of the Redbud Trail up to the city pathways along Highway 96. A summer survey recorded 520 users on the Andover paved section on one day (July 5th) and a definite increase on the limestone section from the previous year. A pump station and work stand donated by Bicycle Pedaler has been installed at the trailhead by the gazebo in Andover where a restroom will soon be installed.

The AARTI Board is very thankful for the support we have received from our biking community, non-profit partners (Prairie Travelers, Bike Walk Wichita, "GO! Augusta" and Sunflower Foundation) and neighbors in Augusta, Andover and Wichita.

Want more AARTI updates? Follow AARTI online:

www.facebook.com/AARTIRedbudTrailEast

www.redbudtrail.org

aartitrail@gmail.com

Upcoming events & meetings

Workdays: 2nd Sat of the month, 8:00 am at the trailhead in Goddard for work details

Meetings: 2nd Wed of the month 7:00 pm via zoom or at the Goddard picnic shelter, east side (www.prairiesunsettrail.org for updates on location)



Prairie Travelers Board of Directors:

Larry Hatfield, *President*
Rick Sroufe, *Vice-President*
Ruth Holliday, *Secretary*
Matt Moore, *Treasurer*
Renee Boyd
Larry DeBolt
Tony Flax
Matt Freund
John Moore
Kelly Wenz
Larry Zimmerman

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We exist because of supporters like you: your donations and your volunteer labor. Please join us in making Kansas trails accessible to everyone. Use the enclosed membership form and envelope for a tax deductible contribution. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Contact Us

Larry Hatfield,
316-253-1807
Ruth Holliday
316-641-4030

Prairie Travelers, Inc.
P.O. Box 781033
Wichita, KS 67278-1033
www.prairiesunsettrail.org
prairietravelers@yahoo.com

The mission of Prairie Travelers is to develop, maintain and promote the Prairie Sunset Trail. Our vision is that the Prairie Sunset Trail connects neighbors and communities; promoting healthy, active lifestyles, stewardship of nature and appreciation of the region's history.



*facebook.com/
prairietravelers*

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P.O. Box 781033

Wichita, KS 67278-1033

PLACE
STAMP
HERE

In Memoriam

Bob Lavelle, Prairie Travelers Trail Manager and “Superstar”, passed away on April 26, 2021 after a long and devastating fight with health issues. He will be greatly missed. We not only lost a good and dear friend, we lost a kind and gentle soul. If you met Bob on the trail, you likely remember him working - he may have been on a mower, trimming tree limbs or filling low spots in the trail. He probably stopped you with his infectious smile and friendly greeting. Immediately you were probably impressed by his enthusiasm for the outdoors and “the trail” in particular. We plan to honor our friend and “Superstar” by creating a butterfly garden and bench on segment of the trail that Bob thought was unusually picturesque and peaceful.



We also lost **Don Yoder** this year. Don was the owner of the grass airstrip who became an ardent trail supporter and paid for the tunnel to enable the Prairie Sunset Trail to work hand in hand with his vision for the expansion of his “Yoder Airpark” development. He was a retired podiatrist and private pilot that was known for his July 4th fly in’s. The tunnel will be named in honor of Don and his late wife Janet.

George Hanson, retired mechanical engineer, avid bicyclist, and trail supporter, was killed while riding his bike the day before the Walnut Valley Metric. He had helped us prepare for the event and donated hand-made wooden jewelry boxes for our spring auction. His tragic death highlights the need for safe places to ride, and we rode this year’s Walnut Valley Metric in his honor.



In May we remembered late Prairie Travelers volunteer **Bill VanderWall’s** commitment and work to make the **Prairie Sunset Trail** a reality by dedicating a bench in his honor facing the Cecile Kellenbarger Memorial and brick park at the Goddard Trailhead. Bill passed away in December 2019. Bill and his neighbor opened the first mile at Garden Plain and kept the Goddard Park mowed for years as we worked mile by mile on the rest of the trail.

Spotted on the trail



Goddard Cross Country High School Team (*see photo*), Garden Plain Cross Country Team, Friends University and Kansas Newman Cross Country Teams!



Women of Wednesday bicycling group poses by the memorial benches for Wanda Groves and Janice Mowat.

Prairie Travelers Outstanding Service Awards

Prairie Travelers is blessed with many dedicated volunteers. This year, we want to recognize three individuals who have gone above and beyond to help make the **Prairie Sunset Trail** successful.

Lifetime Achievement Awards



Over the past two years, our social media presence has been a vital tool to keep supporters informed about our workdays, meetings, zoom calls and questions that may arise online. **Rick Sroufe & Donna Carrell** have filled that need, and gone above and beyond.

Rick and Donna are active in both **Prairie Travelers** and the **Andover Augusta Rail Trail Initiative**, with Rick serving as Vice President of both organizations. Together they create Facebook posts that helps keep our name prominent and visible. They were also the driving force behind the Memorial Brick Park in Goddard - coming up with the idea and coordinating all aspects of creating it. Rick and Donna follow up with new volunteers and guest speakers, give feedback on legislation, interact with WATCO, and generally keep track of all trail related news!

Rick and Donna are involved in many local organizations, and attend meetings of others as representatives of the Prairie Travelers and AARTI. They stay busy! The following are groups that they are members of or attend meetings (some are presently via zoom) to stay informed:

Prairie Travelers

Prairie Travelers (Rick is VP, 2020/2021)
Bike Walk Wichita (BWW)
Bike Pedestrian Advisory Board meetings
Garden Plain Chamber of Commerce
Goddard Chamber of Commerce
Kansas Trails Council (KTC)
Rails to Trails Conservancy
State Rail Trail Organization Meeting (Sunflower Foundation & KTC) 2019/2020
Sunflower Foundation: 2022 Trails Cohort

Sunflower Rails-Trails Conservancy (SRTC)
WAMPO
Wichita Chamber of Commerce (past)

AARTI (Andover Augusta Rail Trail Initiative)

Andover Augusta Rail Trail Initiative (Rick is VP, 2020/2021)
Andover Chamber of Commerce (AARTI selected non-profit of the year for 2021)
Augusta Chamber of Commerce
Go! Augusta

Green Thumb Award



A **special thank you** to Board Member **Kelly Wenz**, who has gone beyond the call of duty helping maintain the 15 miles of the PST, filling in the void left by the passing of our trail manager Bob Lavelle. Owner of **Eco Outdoor Management**, he has the contract with the City of Wichita for mowing the section from Hoover to 167th and successfully petitioned to increase the contract from 4 to 10 mowings per year to help protect the trail from overgrowth.

Kelly is the driving force behind most of our workdays, in addition to spending countless hours cutting limbs, trimming, filling in ruts, grading the trail when it gets rough, and mowing the sections not covered by Goddard and Garden Plain's commitment with us. He has also been maintaining our Hustler X-One and goes beyond the call of duty when needed. The wealth of energy and knowledge he has brought to Prairie Travelers has been tremendous.

Kelly is also active with Bike Walk Wichita and attends Bike Pedestrian Advisory Board meetings. This year he has also adopted a mile in the name of the "Muerto Bicycle Club," which he also leads.

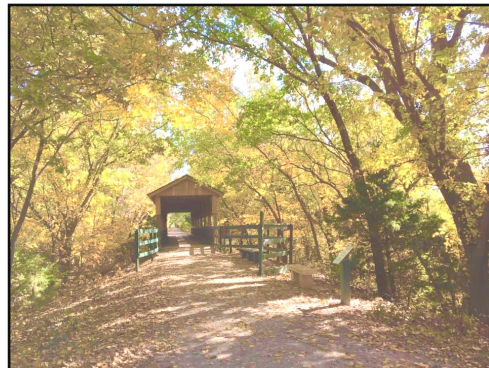
Prairie Travelers Membership Form

****Please consider an end of the year tax deductible contribution to Prairie Travelers****

Just imagine a network of interconnecting trails in Kansas available to anyone for walking, bicycling, and jogging. You would discover a world of wide-open skies, rolling prairie, wildflowers, forests, and wildlife. Envision traveling from town to town, exploring Kansas' natural and historical heritage. With your help, this and more can be realized.

Check dues level below:

- New Renewal
- \$25 Pathfinder (student or limited income)
- \$50 Wanderer
- \$100 Trail Explorer
- \$250 Trailblazer
- \$500 Life Saver
- Other gift \$ _____



This gift is in honor of _____
(Please include address if you want notification of gift sent.)



Donations can now be accepted online through PayPal!

Visit www.prairiesunsettrail.org and click on the "Donate" button.

Remember: Please note t-shirt size with donation of \$100 or more.

T-SHIRT SIZE: Unisex Women's
 XS SM MD LG XL XXL

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone number: _____

E-mail: _____

_____ ***Please include me on communications related to the Andover-Augusta Rail Trail Initiative***

YES! I would like to help Prairie Travelers in the development of rail trails in Kansas. Please send me more information on _____



Make checks payable and send to:

Prairie Travelers, Inc.
P.O. Box 781033
Wichita, KS 67278-1033

***Prairie Travelers is a tax-exempt 501(c)3 organization.
All contributions are tax deductible as allowed by law.***