

Inside this Issue

- DNR Update Pg. 2
- Have You Heard? Pg. 3
- Association Announcements Pg. 4-5
- The Back Page Pg. 6



Through the Gateway

Volume 29 Issue 1

Spring-Summer 2021

President's Letter

by Beth Hayden

The sun of summer brings a refreshing sense of renewal.

This year particularly offers a renewal of social connections and spirit. And in the months ahead, we look forward to a renewal on the trails as well.

Our DNR crew is back to full capacity and working aggressively to catch-up on maintenance and enhancement projects that were forced to pause last year. And thanks to special contributions from many of you, work will include re-striping on the Gateway Trail! Also this fall, thanks to a special habitat restoration grant from the Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota, we look forward to hosting a gathering of volunteers to assist with prairie restoration projects at Lansing and Manning Avenues (pandemic permitting).

The beauty you enjoy along the trail is in part thanks to a mighty crew of volunteers who clear rubbish, call in maintenance needs, manage kiosks, remove invasive species, paint over graffiti, call legislators, monitor bluebird houses, and so much more. Our trails are a beautiful gem, and over 70 fellow trail lovers are working behind the scenes to make it the best possible experience for all.

I hope you enjoy many new memories on the trails this summer, and that time you spend surrounded by nature brings each of you a fresh sense of renewal.



Gregg Nagel and Wren, a Girl Scout with Mahtomedi Troop 57761, were unexpectedly caught in the act of cleaning up the debris of a fallen tree on the Gateway. Thank you, Gregg and Wren!



From right to left, Judy Novak, Gina Pitera, and Louise Watson of Sustainable Stillwater help Board Member Dennis Lindeke (far left) with bluebird houses on a chilly day in April.

As we transition from a chilly spring to a sunny summer, there are plenty of exciting updates on the trails!

Trail Striping

Thanks to generous donations from Trail Association members along with DNR funds, we will be able to re-stripe a little more than 11 miles of the Gateway State Trail and the Hadley Ave parking lot. Keep your eyes open for the fresh stripes sometime in June!

Bench Installations

Last year before the pandemic started, the Association built 4 new benches to be placed along the Gateway. Those will be installed sometime in June, with plaques acknowledging the work by the Association.

Arlington Community Gardens

Very exciting news! Urban Roots has agreed to take on administration of the Arlington Community Gardens at the Arlington St. trailhead, which have been dormant the last few years. They are very excited to start cleaning and begin working with the surrounding neighborhood.

Other Major Projects

The L'Orient Street reroute (west of 35E) and the Westminster Bridge replacement have both been delayed a bit. We anticipate the projects will be put out for bids this fall, and major construction will begin next spring.

Gateway Extension

The DNR and local partners continue to work on purchase of private land easements south of William O'Brien State Park. There are a number of easements currently in the real estate acquisition process.

Staffing

- In 2020, Tim Voss retired after spending many years maintaining the Brown's Creek and Gateway State Trails. The DNR recently hired Matthew Eiler for the open position. He is very excited to start working on the trail.
- For the next 6 months, Linda Radimecky will pursue a DNR "work out of class opportunity". She will be the Assistant Manager at Afton State Park. As a result, there will be no DNR interpretive events on the trails this summer.

Thanks to the Association for all the great work they do, and I hope to see you on the Trails.



Check out the continuing series "What's That Plant" sponsored by Sustainable Stillwater. Look for signs along Brown's Creek, or visit their website: www.sustainablestillwatermn.org

More Than Just a Good Time

by Steve Kahn

Next time you are enjoying a beautiful day on the Gateway or Brown's Creek Trail, you might actually be doing a lot more for yourself than you think. A growing body of scientific literature has documented the good news.

- Spending two hours in nature (such as parks, woodlands and beaches) per week is associated with more people reporting good health.
- Six hours over two days can increase virus-fighting cells and anti-cancer proteins and decrease stress hormone levels.
- Weekly group nature walks are linked with lower depression, less perceived stress and enhanced mental health and well-being.
- Time in nature can decrease anxiety, negative thoughts and improve moods.
- Walking in a tree-filled natural setting (versus along a busy city street) can even improve performance on memory tests.

Of course, those of us who are out regularly on our beautiful trails already know this.

In fact in the future, you might even get a prescription for 'time out in nature' when you are at the doctor's office! Several organizations, most notably Park Rx America, are encouraging doctors to use a special notepad and write a prescription for their patient to "spend two hours a week at a nearby park." And their website includes information about parks that both doctors and patients can access.

Thanks to Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota for permission to summarize their good work. Here is a link to the entire article on their website, <https://www.parksandtrails.org/category/uncategorized/>. Scroll down to January 19.



Have you heard?

Earth Day 2021 Trail Event

by Steve Kahn

Earth Day was a lot of fun on the trails this year. Great art and lots of smiling faces. Check out more photos on our Facebook page and website.

We saw some folks picking up trash and wondered: Maybe organize a trail clean up for Earth Day 2022? Thoughts? Email us at www.gatewaybrowns creektrail.org.



Chalk art at the intersection of the Gateway and Vento trails.

River Market Co-op Sponsors the GBCTA in May – BIG Results!

Readers might recall that the Association was named May round-up partner at the River Market Community Co-op in Stillwater. Folks were asked to add a donation to their total shopping bill up to the nearest dollar, with all proceeds going to the GBCTA. Well, guess what? The final amount raised was \$3,371.15!! A sincere THANK YOU to Co-op staff, Customer Experience Manager Kaitrin Halvorson, and to all who participated by donating. We will update our membership on how these funds get used.



Hadley trailhead and parking lot was a busy place on National Trails Day, and even hosted tailgating events!



FB Manager and Trails Day volunteer Jon Stock at the table by Flicek Park.



A happy biker after filling out a Trails Day survey and receiving our new reflective logo sticker.

National Trails Day, Saturday June 5th 2021

by Liz Stejskal

Beautiful weather brought out the crowds this year for National Trails Day, and GBCTA Board member volunteers were excited to *finally* be out in person to greet everyone! The Association hosted 3 sites; two on the Gateway at Flicek Park and the Hadley Trailhead parking lot, and one on Brown's Creek at Neal Avenue. We came loaded with snacks, water, juice, and annual surveys to find out what trail users had to say. Over 100 surveys were completed. We will share the data when it's been collated.

We saw bikers, runners, walkers, families with strollers and dogs, bladders, and even a skateboarder or two. There were lots of appreciative comments about how people enjoy both trails. But we also heard some common concerns.

- **Safety:** The trails are multi-use, and that means people are moving at very different speeds.
 - Bikers would like people with children to take extra care and keep them close by, and for dogs to be on leashes and also kept close.
 - Walkers and runners feel nervous when being passed by fast bikers, and would like them to announce their approach, and to control their speed when passing, and in congested areas.
- **Signage:** There seems to be a lack of signs on the west end of the Gateway closer to St. Paul, especially between Cayuga and Arlington.
- **Trail surface:** Many people gave feedback about rough patches and cracks on the Gateway that they would like to see fixed.

Thanks to all trail users, and to everyone who volunteered. Enjoy summer and stay safe out there!

Gateway Browns Creek Trail Association Updates

New Cycling Scandia Representative:

by Robert Zuzek

My name is Robert Zuzek, and I live in Scandia. A while ago I stumbled across a post from Janie O'Connor, the chair of Cycling Scandia. She was recruiting new members to the group. I thought it was time for me to give back for all the years I had enjoyed biking in the area, so I joined.

Cycling Scandia is a non-profit organization established to promote community through cycling in and around Scandia. One goal of the group is to assist in extension of the Gateway Trail into Scandia and on to William O'Brien State Park. As we all know, nothing happened last year on that front.

Now to current times: I have taken on the role of Cycling Scandia chairperson from Janie O'Connor, and succeeded her as a GBCTA board member. With things opening back up for fun events, I am extremely excited that both groups will have an active year. The cycling group is planning a few rides in 2021, and wants to put together a safety bike rodeo for early 2022. We will also work with the GBCTA to relaunch lobbying efforts for next year's bonding bill to get funds for the Gateway Scandia extension and trailhead.

Until then you will see me on the Gateway Trail or roads of Scandia as often as possible.

Membership: Looking Good!

by Kerri Kolstad, Membership Chairperson

Thank you to all of our members who took advantage of purchasing NEW GBCTA logo gear. This was an exclusive offer for our members, and a portion of sales went to the Association. We hope to see you on the trail showing off your new shirts, hats, and vests. Look for more gear and offers this fall.

Thanks, Kerri



Board member Liz Stejskal models a polo shirt from the new line of GBCTA logo gear.

GBCTA Website Update:

by Andre Bessette

I joined the GBCTA Board as Webmaster this year after decades of enjoying the Gateway, and more recently Brown's Creek Trails. My closest access point to the trail is near Lake McKusick in Stillwater - a great area to hop on the Brown's Creek Trail and pedal a few miles to the intersection with the Gateway at Duluth Junction.

Access to these trails adds so much to my enjoyment of the area and the community, and plays a major role in deciding to live and play here. It's an honor to be able to give something back in this capacity.

We are currently working to make our website even simpler for visitors to quickly locate the information they are seeking, and to provide some additional information about the Board. Take a look!

GBCTA Volunteer Update:

by Liz Stejskal, incoming Volunteer Liaison

After many years of service, Barb Wahman has stepped down as Volunteer Liaison. Barb was instrumental in recruiting a network of folks who adopt one-mile segments of the Gateway and Brown's Creek trails to watch over and help keep clean. A big THANK YOU to Barb for the work she did.

Spring cleanup along our own one-mile trail segment in North St. Paul was satisfying. We filled multiple garbage bags, found a few "interesting" items that had been deposited over the winter, and had to remove a few ticks. But it felt good to get out there and prepare for the coming season. In my own travels along both trails over the last few weeks, I can tell that our hardy volunteers have also been out getting things spruced up for spring.

The Association, the DNR, and the Board **appreciate** what you do! Thank you for making the Gateway and Brown's Creek trails welcoming to everyone who uses them.



New GBCA Newsletter Editor:

The GBCTA welcomes Steve Kahn as our new newsletter editor. He is a retired psychologist and frequent biker on our beautiful trails. He hopes to continue the "trail-blazing" work the outgoing editor Liz Stejskal has been doing for 13 years, and is appreciative of her mentoring and that she will help out when needed.

The Back Page-continued from Page 6

2019 - 2020: A fountain, a bench, and some creative thinking

With a plan in place, the Runners group began drawing up the fountain project bid document. They even set up a "Go Fund Me" page to help raise project funds. Runner Randy Boler, captain of the Lady Chateau Boat Tour Service, proposed putting a bench near the fountain in memory of Gauss Rescigno, a longtime SCVR member who died of cancer in 2018. He was a world citizen, humanitarian, and dedicated runner. All were in favor of adding this to the plan.

Concurrently, Stillwater Public Works Director Shawn Sanders recognized the asset a fountain would be at this location. When the Neal Ave. N. road reconstruction project was approved, he included prices for certain fountain work tasks in that bid, reducing overall scope of work costs for the fountain bid. Stillwater Public Works Superintendent Tim Moore and Shawn reviewed the draft bid from the runner's group, walked the site, and made recommended changes.

In July 2020, the fountain bid was sent to Miller Construction, who had won the Neal Ave. road project. Stillwater Councilman Mike Polehna and former Councilman Tom Weidner requested the fountain bid be included in the Road project bid. And remember the "Go Fund Me" effort? It had been coordinated by Patti Isaacs, Gauss Rescigno's wife, and raised \$1,500 in just 5 days, and the St. Croix Valley Runners donated those funds for the bench. With everything in place, work began quickly. On September 15, 2020 the water fountain was completed, and shortly after that the bench was in place as well.

This project provides needed refreshment and beautifies the park for all trail users and park visitors. Thanks to the City of Stillwater, and everyone who helped make this possible!



Site preparation for the concrete slab and water fountain.



Installation complete for the concrete pad and water fountain!



The Gauss Rescigno memorial bench.

2021 Gateway Brown's Creek Trail Association Board / Association Officers					
President	Beth Hayden	Treasurer	Laurie Mainquist		
Vice President	Cecily Harris	Newsletter Editor	Steve Kahn		
Secretary	Kerri Kolstad	Officer at Large	Liz Stejskal		
Association Board of Directors					
Lorrie Beaulieu (Equestrian Liaison), Andre Bessette (Website Manager), John Kimberly, Rob McKim (Community Liaison), Dennis Lindeke (Trail Extension, Legislative Advocate), Pam Meyer (Graffiti Removal Captain), Ed Sanderson, Jon Slock (Facebook/Social Media), Liz Stejskal (Volunteer Liaison), Barb Wahman, Kim Weber, Bob Zuzek (Cycling Scandia)					
Honorary Board Members and Liaison					
Judy Drew (Equestrian Liaison), Noreen Farrell, Bob Hagstrom, Doug Schwartz, Peter Seed, Vik Wilson					
DNR Parks and Trails Supervisor	Rachel Henzen	DNR Trail Naturalist	Linda Radimecky	DNR Acquisition/ Development Specialist	To be determined

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Go to our website, click on 'Contact Us', then send us your
preference.*

The Back Page



Timeline for a Water Fountain

by George Vania

Editor's note: We're so excited about the water fountain at Cold Water Station on Brown's Creek Trail! Read on to see how much time, dedication, and work it took to finally make that happen. Our author, George Vania, was involved from the very beginning.

2014: An idea

As a member of the St. Croix Valley Runners (SCVR) since 1982, I always wondered why a fountain had not been installed near the park at Neal Avenue during construction of Brown's Creek Trail. It seemed especially appropriate since that trail center was named "Cold Water

Station." The park had a water main and fire hydrant, which I realized could be tapped for a line to a fountain. But as a member of the Stillwater Water Board at the time, I was not able to promote the project.

2018 – 2109: The plan comes to life

In November 2018, I was finally able to propose and convince the Water Board to consider the idea. The Board asked Stillwater Water Dept. General Manager Robert Benson for a first concept cost estimate from Miller Construction. That came in at \$24,500 based on core drilling under the trail for a fountain on the north side. But using the existing water main and locating the fountain on the south side of the trail reduced costs.

An enthusiastic group from the SCVR began meeting to draft a water fountain project plan. Many ideas were discussed. John Kimberly contacted Dennis Lindeke and Rob McKim from the Gateway Brown's Creek Trail Association to get additional support for the proposal. The final plan was presented to the Stillwater Park and Recreation Commission in August 2019, and was approved!

Continued on Page 5



Tapping the existing water main for the fountain at Neal Avenue Park.