

DECEMBER 2023

TRAIL TRACKS

Friends of the Fred Meijer Heartland Trail Newsletter
<https://www.fredmeijerheartlandtrail.org>

Banquet and Fundraiser Returns

BY FMHT BOARD & VOLUNTEERS

After a three-year pandemic hiatus, the 2023 Friends of the Fred Meijer Heartland Trail Banquet and Fundraiser exceeded expectation! Don & Karen Stearns were recognized for their numerous volunteering positions since the beginning of the Trail; Dianne Wilson once again organized a great silent auction; volunteers were recognized (including many new to the group); and the live auction was a fun addition! The new caterer, , was also a hit.

Article con't on p. 7



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Memorials and Gifts

SORENSEN MEMORIAL

by Jane Hemenway

A bike repair station in memory of Ron Sorensen was placed in McBride at a trail head of the Fred Meijer Heartland Trail on Tuesday, September 26, 2023. Sorensen, who passed away in 2022, was a long-time community member who helped develop and maintain the Trail. Cyclists riding along the Trail may use the station for quick repairs.

Ron played an important role in the Trail’s early development. He designed and built all the kiosks along the Trail. He also built a form of the logo and got permission to have it imprinted in wet cement at the road crossings during some of the construction projects. He was involved in the development of the maintenance policy for the Friends of the Fred Meijer Heartland Trail. Ron also found and marked the Continental Watershed Divide on the Trail, near Neff Road at Edmore. Sorensen spent hours volunteering on Trail projects and hours on his bike on the Trail, looking for things that needed attention.

Sorensen was an engineer by trade, but he was interested in everything--a true lifelong learner. He had a wry, witty sense of humor and was a good listener who always had time to sit down with people. Ron was always prepared and shared freely. He and his wife, Sharon, served for years as volunteer lighthouse docents, staying in several of the State's lighthouses.

Ron enjoyed working with wood, rocks and rock hunting, birds, riding his bike, and was an avid reader. He was in tune with God's creation and enjoyed developing and walking his 40 acres in Lakeview.

Ron’s impact on his community will be felt for years to come, and this memorial reminds others of his impact.

Memorials con’t on page 3

SAVE THE DATE!

2024 ANNUAL
FUNDRAISER,
SILENT AUCTION,
RAFFLE, AND
BANQUET

SATURDAY,
MAY 4, 2024

SILENT AUCTION
DONATIONS CONTACT
DIANNE WILSON
AT 989-268-5143





HORTON BENCH DONATION

by Dianne Wilson

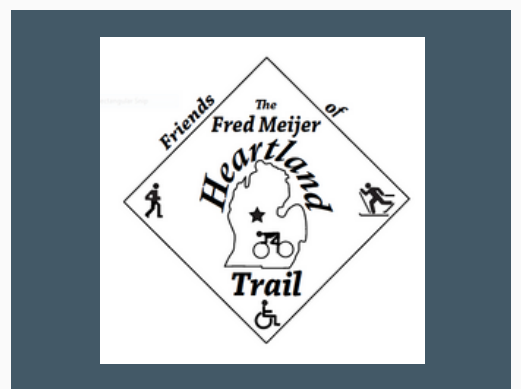
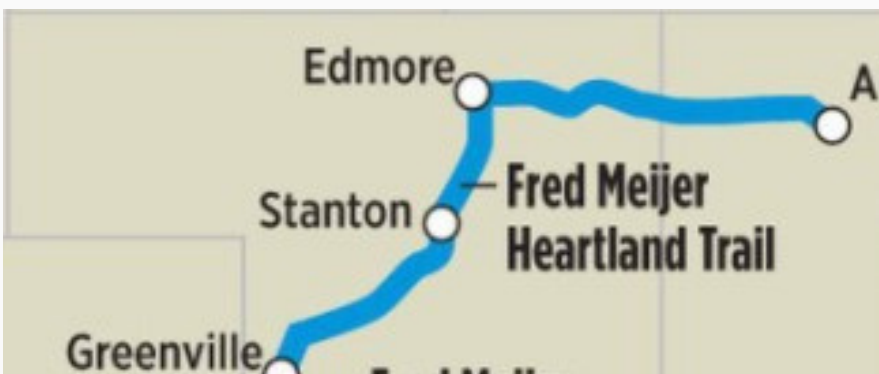
On Christmas of 2022 Craig and Isabel Horton's daughters Bianca, Kathy, Carol, Lori, and Trudi gave them a Trail bench, located east of the Vestaburg Depot. Craig and Isabel have been supporters and users of the Trail through Vestaburg from the beginning to the present. They enjoy the seasonal gifts of nature and the benefits of physical exercise while walking! Thank you to Craig and Isabel for their long-time support and to their girls and families for honoring them through the donation of this Trail bench.



FRED CLARK BENCH DONATION

by Sarah Avery

A bench in memory of Fred Clark has been donated by his wife, Yvonne, and was installed in Stanton. Yvonne, pictured at the right, says she and her husband put hundreds of miles on their recumbent trikes in the past several years between Edmore and Stanton. She says, "We really enjoyed that section of the Trail."





Maintenance and Meetings

PAVEMENT RESEALING

by Karen Stearns

Trail resealing covered a large area this summer, from Epley Road to Briggs Road, Cannonsville Road to Wyman Road, and Lake Road to Miller Road, all in Montcalm County. Resealing costs nearly \$7000 per mile. Please respect this surface! A BIG thank you to everyone who donates to the Friends through raffle sales, the annual banquet, and annual membership dues. You make Trail improvements possible. Thanks a ton!

A special thank you to the Mid-West Michigan Trail Authority for their significant annual funding for Trail maintenance. This organization's funding is the MAJOR reason we are able to continue to keep the Trail surface maintained.

Did you know that Trail property extends 50 feet from the center of the Trail on both sides? Thank you for helping us care for this cherished resource.

2024 MEETING DATES



Miss Lola says Friends of the FMHT meetings can be fun, and welcomes the public to attend. Meetings are monthly on the fourth Tuesday at 6:00pm at the First Congregational Church of Stanton, 305 North Camburn Street, Stanton, from January through October, unless otherwise indicated on the Trail website and Facebook page. Because of holidays, the last meeting of the year is usually held at the beginning of December and is a combined Nov-Dec meeting. Check the Trail website and FB page after the October meeting for the exact date.





Volunteers ARE the Friends of the FMHT

ALMA COLLEGE VOLUNTEERS

by Don & Karen Stearns

Alma College Athletes volunteered on the Trail on October 10 cutting brush and spiffing up the Trail in Gratiot County from Luce Road west to Osborn Road. Shoutout and thanks to the approximately 60 Alma College Football players and 25 Alma College Cross Country Team runners.



DITCH MOWING

by Karen & Don Stearns

A new ditch mowing team mowed the complete Trail in October. Zach Perrin and Jacob Cesar from The Stump Guy were contracted by the Board of Directors to cut vines and brush back five feet or so and generally prepare the Trail for the winter. They mowed around signs at each road crossing and cut miles of grapevine using the Trail ditch mower as well as their own chainsaws and hand equipment. Many thanks for their commitment to doing this big job--more than 80 total miles of mowing and trimming!

TRAILSIDE MOWERS

by Karen & Don Stearns

Nearly 20 volunteers mow the sides of the Trail every few weeks to help keep invasive plants and vines in check, giving the FMHT a neat, trimmed look. Braving heat, bugs, the weeds, and sometimes, the rain, they keep our Trail a pleasing ride. Please thank the mowers if you meet them on the Trail.

The Friends organization is an all volunteer group. Please let us know about downed trees and brush, vandalism or damage, or anything else that is amiss.

The trail is at its best when everyone participates.

If you see something amiss, please say something. Thank you.



WOULD YOU LIKE TO VOLUNTEER?

by Sarah Avery

Here are several ways you can informally volunteer:

1. If you're walking, pick up trash as you see it and dispose it in the bins provided at some street crossings.
2. If you have the ability and materials, patch a hole or two.
3. Answer a call for volunteers on the Trail FB page.
4. Donate money or become a member. Every little bit helps!
5. Donate something in memory or honor of someone; the Board will have a list of needs with potential locations and cost.

Volunteers come in all ages and sizes. There is a job for anyone who would like to help with the FMHT. Please call Don or Karen at 989-235-6170 or Dianne at 989-268-5143 if you would like to be on a mail list or phone list for Trail volunteers.

While on the Trail you may meet a “silent volunteer”--that unique human doing good, without formal recognition or participation on the “crew.” Among those who we met in 2023 included Michael Sharkey, Ted Kodek, Daniel Romej, and Rich Smalley. Please give everyone you see a thank you. These folks also enjoy the Trail and appreciate the shoutout.

2023 TRAIL USAGE

by Sarah Avery

The Trail was used by countless individuals (literally!) in 2023 to enjoy the outdoors and recreate. In addition, the Trail was used May 26 for the Rock Lake Christian Assembly Ride-A-Thon to raise money for camper fees; and the DALMAC used the FMHT from Alma to Vestaburg on Wednesday for the 5-day west riders and on Thursday for the 4-Day riders.

If your organization would like to use the Trail for an event, please visit <https://www.fredmeijerheartlandtrail.org/trail-events>. Located there are the Trail Rules and the Event Application. All Event Applications must be received by the Board at least 45 days in advance, along with a copy of the organization’s insurance certificate listing the FFMHT and the Mid West Michigan Trail Authority as covered entities. Please be aware that the FFMHT Board of Directors passed a resolution that no races will be allowed on the Trail. The Trail is too narrow to safely accommodate racing and general use together. Thank you for your understanding.

BANQUET CON'T.

Thank you to everyone who bought tickets and supported the FMHT 2023 raffle! Raffle winners were:

Small Point B&B, Mackinac Island--Steve Litwiller, Alma
Candlelite Inn B&B, Ludington—Bob Braman, Stanton
Northbay B&B, Presque Isle—David Bussema, Vestaburg
Electra Townie Bike, palm green, 7 speed—Betty Aubin, Alma
Giant Momentum Street Cruiser, 7 speed—Kevin Arnold, Greenville
Mystery Box - gift certificates, bike items, and more—Kathy Smith, Alma

Our banquet and fundraiser is successful because of the generosity of many businesses across the Trail's communities who donate services and other items such as printing and underwriting. If you occasion these businesses or know their owners, please thank them for their support of the Trail Banquet and Fundraiser:

Terry's Cycle
Roslund, Prestage & Company, PC
Bookwalter Chevrolet
3one3BoutiqueHotel
MTB Auto Body
Dennis Bicycle Shop
Michigan One Community Credit Union
Greenville Area Community Foundation
Mid-West Michigan Trail Authority at Michigan Trails Magazine
GFWC Edmore Women's Club
Meijer Foundation
Ranger Power based in Chicago, Illinois
Montcalm Area Intermediate School District



Other businesses help us raise money at the Annual May Silent Auction through financial donations and gift certificates. We hope you will choose to support and thank these businesses when in their area:

GRATIOT COUNTY

Braveharts Pub
China Buffet Inc
Classy Auto Wash
Helman's Meat Market
Meijer
NoBull Graphix
Tom Billig Flowers & Gifts
Twin City Landscape/Twin Lawn
Dr. Peter Tacia

BANQUET CON'T.

MONTCALM COUNTY

[3 D's Pizza](#)

[Country Pets Grooming Salon](#)

[Edmore True Value Hardware](#)

[Farmer in the Dell](#)

[Leona's Restaurant](#)

[Master's Touch Massage](#)

[McDonald's](#)

[Peasley Hardware & Carpet](#)

[Rolston Hardware](#)

[Randall's Old Mill Pet and Farm Center](#)

[Stanton Hardware](#)

The 2023 Banquet was the first Banquet to utilize compostable and re-usable materials. All dinner and dessert plates were composted in a local field. Kudos to all involved in this decision, and to those who made it happen.

A LIVE AUCTION premiered in 2023! Listed below are the volunteer auctioneer, donors, and auction winners:

Auctioneer Mark Sabin

Winner—All of us who attended!!

Child's bike donor—[White Pine District Library](#)

Winner—Mike Gilbert

Crossbow and accessories donor -Ned Edwards

Winner—Jim Duffee

Two nights at the [Zone3 Boutique](#) Hotel—Owner Ryan Smith

Winner—[Silver Spokes](#) member

Thanks to the Board members for their day-long set-up and take-down and the MANY pre- and post-efforts that go into this annual event! They are also volunteers.



2023 DONORS

TRAIL SUPPORTERS: \$1-\$99

Aldrich, Bill & Walkington, Barb
Alma Women's Club
Arnold, Kevin & Bos, Mici
Aubin, Betty A
Avery, Susan
Baldwin, Wilma
Bare, Fred & Connie
Barnes, Joseph & Jane
Bedlek, Richard & Diane
Beede, Louise & John
Bowers, Rob & Lynne
Boyce, Ruth
Bromley, Matt & Tanya
Bunting, Jan
Burr, Eileen & William
Charnley, Stephen & Cynthia
Christensen, David
Clark, Gerald & Patricia
Cox, Deborah
Degruise, Judith
Doerr, Thomas
Drobish, Linda & John
Durham, Patricia & John
Dykstra, Betty & Duane
Edwards, Ned
Ehle Builders
Fisher, Susan
Gallmeyer, Dan & Amy
Gilbert, Mike
Gladding, Barbara
Green, Evelyn
Gross, Lillian
Harvey, Gerry
Hayward, Jo Anne
Hemenway, Jane & Tim
Huyge, Timothy
Koeppke, Tom & Deb
Maatman, Kathleen & James
Main, Eva
McCormack, John
McKeown, Larry/MTB Autobody
Pearl, Jan & Jack
Peasley, Phil & Jan/Peasley Hardware
Piccolo, Nick & Jeri
Price, Joyce
Reed, Tom & Mary

Reno, Tim & Mary
Richards, Kay
Rockafellow, Brian & Deborah
Rogers, Tom & Susan
Saltarelli, William
Scripture, Reese
Simmons, Nellie Lou
Springsteen, Dorothy
Switzer, Gary & Gloria
VanDeWeghe, John & Linda
Vandlen, Geraldine
Ward, Robert
Wegner, Phyllis
Wesp, Heather
Wittle, Lawrence & Karen
Wood, James A & Shirley L

TRAIL CONTRIBUTORS: \$100-\$249

Abernathy, Jeff
Bussema, David
Baker, Irene
Barberi, Alison
Bogdanyi, Virginia & Andrew
Braman, Bob & Betty
Byron, Scott & Linda
Charnley, Michael
Davis, Sam & Trish
Dougherty, John & Linda
Fritsma, Mark & Kristen
Gibbs, George
Griffin, Denny & Tammy
Gruca, Paul & Pat
Harrell, Dick & Rhonda
Harrell, Linda
Harry, Joan
Heinlein, Joy & Tom
Hohlmuller, Sabine
Hoskins, Marilyn
Hunter, Susan, & Rayburn, Gary
Kehl, Karen
Kellner, Tim & Sharie
Krieger, Paul
Lang, Barbara & John
Lanning, Tom & Alice
Lowe, Laurie & Greg
Luetkemeier, Maurie & Patricia
Marshall, Dennis & Kathleen
Meyer, Edwin
Michlitsch, Nancy

Miller, Margaret
Miller, Marty & Shy, Janet
Morey, John & Roxanne
Nyman, Melvin & Arlene
Petersen, Mark & Trudy
Rockafellow, Patty & Craig
Rogers, Nancy
Rowland, Jim
Russell, Steve & Jan
Sorensen, Sharon
Springsteen, Dorothy
Stuner, Mary & Jeffrey
Williams, Ms. Rose

TRAIL SUSTAINERS: \$250 & UP

Arnold, John & Julie
Bain, Ralph
Christiansen, John Jr.
Hansen, Jeff & Connie
Hibbard, Larry & Murphy, Mary
Humm, Mary
Johnson, Walter L
Lambrecht, Tim & Anne
Painter, Dale
Phyllis Painter Estate
Schiffman, Marita & Randy
Simmons, Steve
Stearns, Don & Karen
Tacia, Victoria & Peter
Terry's Cycle