Lincoln Trail-A-Thon
A great outdoor challenge for all ages

Lots of events have been postponed or cancelled due to COVID-19. We are happy to say Lincoln Trail-A-Thon is still going strong because it is individual-based. We have almost 460 people participating. All proceeds from Trail-A-Thon will go to help build the connector bridge between the Rock Island Trail and the Jamaica North Trail.

Trail-A-Thon was developed in partnership with Bo Bryson of Trinity Chiropractic. It was his idea and we were lucky that he decided GPTN was a great cause and asked us to participate.

Thanks Bo! The Trail-A-Thon challenge is to walk, jog or run all 78 miles of trails in the City of Lincoln. Anyone can participate and we have a nice schedule highlighting a section of trail each month with maps and some trail descriptions and history. In this issue, we cover the first four trails of the year.

Often times we frequent the same trails that are convenient, but Trail-A-Thon is here to get you to try something new. It was also created to get people out and moving. We’ve received some wonderful comments from participants:

Stephanie Hoffman posted on Facebook – My kids and I have been having fun with this, we printed the list of trails and highlight each one as we complete it.
I am so grateful to have signed up for the 2020 trail-a-thon because it has been a consistent adventure for me. Even though I grew up in Lincoln with a bike practically attached to my feet, I have never actually taken the time to explore the amazing Great Plains Trails Network—They thought of everything: there’s a featured trail each month, social media challenges, a potential for high fives (well, waves or elbow bumps right now) when you bump into friends on the trail, and a souvenir t-shirt too! Plus, your registration fee will support all the trails, including that new favorite one you will discover this year. 10/10 would recommend. (Loveva G)

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Trail-A-Thon participation is at your own pace. Register at gptn.org/lincolntrailathon. GPTN wants to remind you to follow the restrictions set by the City of Lincoln and be aware of your physical distancing while enjoying the trails.

Continued on page 4.
Great Plains Trails Network

since 1988
dedicated to the goal of developing a network of commuter and recreational trails within Lincoln and Lancaster County

2020

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Great Plains Trails Network

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A Note from the President

Here we are in the middle of an historic event: COVID19. Almost every aspect of our lives have been changed, postponed, put on hold, or approached with a high level of awareness, care and consideration. GPTN too has reviewed our usual schedule of events and adapted to the circumstances. We cancelled our board meeting in March, and in April we met virtually – all of us in our own space, but together on the computer screen. It worked. It’s different but we were able to conduct our business as necessary and all in all, we just keep on supporting trails like we have for 30 years.

Of course, we have had to make some changes: Our Tour-de-Lincoln rides in May are postponed and we don’t have a date for those but are considering the fall or as restrictions ease up. Trail Trek, scheduled in June, will be held September 13. The first order of GPTN jerseys will be delivered to you, (or you may already have it by printing) rather than gathering at Jayne Snyder Trails Center to pick it up. The second order is ongoing, you can still get it for late delivery. Trail-a-thon has been... NOT cancelled OR postponed! People keep on signing up, and participating in the trail a month event. It not too late to join up at GPTN.org. Go get people moving Bryson – what a great idea for an event – people love it!

If you’ve been on the trails recently, you might have noticed there seem to be more people than usual using them. The instruction to stay at home and stay safe during COVID, but very real need to be out and exercise to stay well, has brought some additional awareness to the importance of our trail network. You’ve all been supporters, and I think now, even those who had not thought much about them are recognizing how much we need this well developed, well maintained, safe trail system in our city. Kudos for your work and support!

If you’ve been south on Rock Island at Denmore Park, or along the Jamaican Trail, you may have noticed construction equipment. Yep – that’s going to be a new bridge to connect Construction has begun. That will be exciting to watch. If you are so inclined, we are still raising some funds for that project. Wink, wink.

I wish you all the most wonderful spring you can make it under COVID. Stay safe, be well, enjoy the trails!

Greg Rosenboom

GPTN NEW & RENEWING MEMBERS

January 2020 to April 15, 2020


Best Ways to Preserve Nature While Hiking
By Rachel Gaffney

If you want to get healthier and reduce stress hiking is one of the best ways to do that. More than 30 million people every year will take at least one hike. Hiking controls your blood pressure, help manage the symptoms of depression, and decrease your risk of having a heart attack. But, as more and more people hit the trail in an effort stay healthy, trails and adjacent lands are becoming damaged. Here are some easy ways that you can do your part to preserve the environment when you’re hiking:

Invest In A Reusable Water Bottle

Plastic bottles are terrible for the environment and won’t hold enough water to keep you hydrated on the trail. If you bring a plastic bottle of water, please recycle it or dispose of it in the bins that are usually located at trailheads.

Don’t Forget A Trail Map

Trail maps should be part of your hiking gear because GPS may not always work. Staying on the trail will keep you from damaging vegetation and causing soil erosion.

Clean Your Boots

As you hike your boots pick up bits of soil, seeds, and bacteria in the soil. Make sure that you hose off or wipe off your boots between hikes so that you’re not transferring seeds and bacteria from one place to another.

Use Trail Shelters And Picnic Areas

Using designated picnic areas or trail shelters can minimize impacts. Pack out leftovers since wildlife shouldn’t be eating human food.

Leave Wildlife Alone

Enjoy seeing wildlife from a safe distance but don’t try to get close to them or see if they will come over to you.

This article was created by Personal Injury Help (www.personalinjury-help.com), an organization dedicated to providing the public with information about personal injury and safety information. Nothing in this article should be construed as legal advice, and it is intended for informational use only.
BicycLincoln is a community group that supports and promotes bicycling in the city of Lincoln. Our mission is to provide information and a unified voice for bicycle advocacy in an effort to make cycling in Lincoln more friendly, safe, easy, accepted, and "so that more people bike and bike more often."

Check them out at http://bicyclincoln.org/

Bike Walk Nebraska cultivates and supports safe and accessible active transportation across our state by leading sound policy and advocating for best practices. We work across sectors in partnership with elected officials, municipalities, and organizations to ensure that biking and walking - whether for transportation or recreation - works for all Nebraskans.

Become a member at:
https://www.bikewalknebraska.org/

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Bridge Update!
Help Us Close the Final Gap

We are getting closer to completing the fundraising for the Rock Island—Jamaica North Trail Bridge. The cost of the bridge is $2.2 million and the cost is being split 50-50 between public sources (the City of Lincoln and the Railroad Transportation Safety District) and private donors.

The bridge is under construction with a completion date set for Fall 2020. Periodic closures of the Jamaica North Trail will occur through fall while the project is under construction. Obey closure barricades when they are in place. The Rock Island Trail will remain open until the final stages of the project.

In March, the Acklie Charitable Foundation generously provided a $50,000 grant to support this keystone project. We are sincerely grateful for their donation and the amazing support from our other numerous donors. The current funding gap is now reduced to $61,000. We are in the home stretch.

Please consider a donation to help us get to the finish line for this legacy project. Give to Lincoln Day on May 28th is a great opportunity to donate to this project. When completed, this bridge will be a jewel in the crown of Lincoln’s trail system.

Construction at the Rock Island—Jamaica North Trail Connection—Looking east towards Denman Park.

NEW!
GPTN Bike Jersey Now Available

For the first time, GPTN will be offering our own bike jersey for sale. Place your order between April 1 to May 15. For more information and ordering, go to www.gpta.org

and the project was adjacent to Wilderness Park. Aside from getting everyone on board there was money to be raised. The trail was finally dedicated in 2002.

When the park was originally planned, the east entrance was supposed to have a vista opening to the then new state capitol but funds weren’t available so for decades the park looked out to corn fields. With the Bison Trail project this plan could finally be realized—the trail stretches out toward the capitol as planners had envisioned. But the Bison Trail hasn’t been trouble free. The original trail used the old Van Dorn road bridge over Haines Branch Creek, orphaned when the West Bypass was built. The massive floods which devastated Wilderness Park wiped out most of the supports for the bridge and the county engineer, fearing immediate collapse, closed the bridge to bikes and pedestrians. After 3 and ½ years a new pedestrian/bike bridge replaced the old trail. GPTN lobbied for the project and raised $50,000 in private donations.

Helen Boosalis Trail

The Helen Boosalis Trail was born in 1980 as the Highway 2 bikeway. Of course that was before there were really trails as such. It was more of a glorified wide sidewalk from 56th Street to 27th Street. West of there it was not even that—just a left over asphalt path leading to the highway department parking lot. But in 2005 the trail acquired its present name in honor of Helen Boosalis Lincoln’s first female mayor who served from 1975 to 1983. A plaque and bench on the route were dedicated that November, designed to be a tribute to her unwavering community spirit.

The name was also designed to give the trail a new identity as major upgrades were undertaken. The Great Plains Trail Network addressed a major issue—the trail’s eastern end was 56th Street. It did not connect with the new Old Cheney Trail. The gap was only a block or two but it required runners to traverse the shoulder of Highway 2 dodging vehicles turning north onto 56th Street, a scary prospect. The project was surprisingly challenging in part because the terrain required retaining walls and curves and slopes because the elevation change. Today the connection is heavily used.

The Lincoln Trail Club sought an upgrade of the trail from 48th Street to 20th, part of the first loop of the Lincoln Marathon. The old trail was a bottleneck forcing runners onto the grass and mud. LTC persuaded city tourism officials to partially fund a new, wider trail allowing them to raise the number of entrants to the marathon. Today’s event which can accommodate 10,000+ runners is the result. Left out was the trail west of 20th Street and north to Burnham Street and the Indian Hills neighborhood. The city finally replaced the old asphalt with the new surface in 2017. Today a neighborhood association is pressuring the city to find a safe crossing over 9th/10th Street to connect the Boosalis Trail to Van Dorn Park and the Bison Trail. Will it happen? Stay tuned.

Finally when you run the eastern part of the trail you will notice an ongoing flood control project along the Beal Slough. This area has been plagued by chronic flooding so major drainage work is being done on both sides of Highway 2. A new trail bridge over the Beal Slough will be constructed.

Lincoln Track Club Membership Application

The Lincoln Track Club, Inc. was established in 1975 by an eager group of track enthusiasts. Although our title contains the reference to track, we have become a distance oriented club. Our membership includes some of the nation’s finest road racers as well as a great number of fun runners.

In essence, our club is a nonprofit community service organization, established to promote running throughout this area and provide educational assistance for its runners. Our quarterly newsletter has become an informational running publication for local runners. The LTC is a member club of both the Road Runners Club of America (RRCA) and USA Track and Field.

The Lincoln Track Club is not just about running. It’s also about volunteering. This is the one ingredient that makes LTC work. The whole organization is made up of volunteers and we can always use more.

Please consider joining one of Nebraska’s finest volunteer-run organizations. LTC members receive entry forms for all LTC races, FastTimes (our newsletter, which is e-mailed quarterly), an invitation to our annual meeting, and a discount of an entry fee for a single LTC road race. All memberships expire at the end of the calendar year (December 31).

To join the Lincoln Track Club: www.lincolnrun.org

Support Lincoln Trails

By donating to the Nebraska Trails Foundation through the:
TRAIL TREK NOW SEPTEMBER 13

By Dena Noe

With the City of Lincoln under a health directive due to COVID-19 the Great Plains Trails Network made the decision to move Trail Trek from June 21 to September 13. We are very thankful to our vendors and sponsors for supporting this change 100%. We also want to thank those that registered early and their willingness to make this change with us. If you haven’t registered for Trail Trek 2020, please think about doing that today by visiting gptn.org. If Trail Trek is cancelled due to COVID-19 in September, we will offer all participants a full refund. Our no refund policy for weather, etc. will still be enforced.

All proceeds from Trail Trek go to expand the trails in Lincoln and Lancaster County. This year the funds will go towards building the connector bridge between the Rock Island Trail and the Jamaica North Trail. The cost of the bridge increased substantially and we still have a $61,000 funding gap. Trail Trek proceeds will help us with this need.

At this point all routes advertised will stay the same, but our packet pick up will now take place at the building in Bethany Park at 65th & Vine Streets on Saturday, September 12 from 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Trail Trek couldn’t happen with support from our local businesses, so please if you can give them some love we’d appreciate it: Bike Rack, Cycle Works, Pepsi-Cola of Lincoln, Hy-Vee, Olson, Kidwell, LES, Bryan Health, Alpha Media, UBT, Good Life Fitness, Sutton Dermatology & Aesthetics and the University of Nebraska Federal Credit Union.

Dietrich and Murdock Trails

Constructed in 1985, the John Dietrich Trail is one of the earliest trails built in Lincoln. It is named after a trail advocate and bicycle shop owner in northeast Lincoln. The trail begins in Lintel Park near 21st and Holdrege and ends at 48th and Fremont. Created on abandoned land once intended for a highway, the Dietrich Trail was part of the Radial Reuse Project. This multi-year effort created a four-mile linear park that revitalized the area and served as a buffer between industrial and residential land in the Clinton, Malone, and University Place neighborhoods. Framed views of grain elevators, trains, and parks are scattered along this winding trail.

The Murdock Trail connects to the east end of the Dietrich Trail at 48th and Fremont. It continues through the Havelock neighborhood and along the north edge of Mahoney Park. Named after a who donated the land to the City, the trail runs along a former Rock Island Railroad corridor established in the 1850s. From 56th to 70th it consists of a concrete trail and adjacent crushed stone path. GPTN and the Lincoln Track Club raised over $400,000 to support this trail renovation. From 84th to 112th, the trail transitions to the old rail bed and offers a scenic route through farmland.

Tierra Park Williamsburg Trail

I’m excited to have the opportunity to write this month’s trail bio for Trail-A-Thon. The Tierra/Williamsburg Trail is my favorite because it is my link for commuting to work. While I don’t get to do that every day, I’m very thankful for the people who came before me on the GPTN Board and fought to get this trail open.

While digging into the trails archives, I found the first mention of this trail was when it was presented for approval at the March 1996 City Council meeting. Planning and preparation started well before that, but the news coverage in the Journal Star began about this time. The Tierra/Williamsburg Trail was not without controversy, as the neighborhood thought the trail should only be a neighborhood trail and not the connector to the trails system that it is today.

In July 2002 the Tierra/Williamsburg trail opened to the public. This connection provided a direct link from the Rock Island Trail through Tierra Park south to Williamsburg. This beautiful wide trail follows the drainage creek through the Tierra neighborhood to Old Cheney Road. It then crosses Old Cheney and connects to the Williamsburg Trail. The trail splits just north of Pine Lake Road. Dena Noe

NEW GPTN BOARD MEMBER

Sue Ferguson

I am from Lincoln and work for HobbyTown in the corporate office as director of franchise accounting. FYI HobbyTown was started in Lincoln about 30 years ago and we have about 125 stores across the United States. When not working things that keep me busy are:

- I am a teammate, reading, of course husker athletic events, walking or riding my bike on the trails. I think I have been on most of them! Working out so we can try new restaurants and old favorites without guilt! I believe the trails are a very important part of Lincoln. I look forward to helping keep the trail system the gem that it is and getting more people to enjoy and support them. My favorite trail is probably the Rock Island.

We will introduce other new board members in the next issue of the GPTN Newsletter.

TRAIL UPDATES

Sanitary sewer and water and stream stability project: Wilderness Park trails on the east and west sides of Salt Creek at Old Cheney Road are rerouted via signs and the Jamaica North Trail. Periodic closures of the Jamaica North Trail will also be necessary. This project will continue into winter.

Timber bridge replacement in Wilderness Park: The horse and bike trails leading to the timber and cable bridge just south of Yankee Hill Road and east of Highway 77 are now closed. Signs will be posted at Old Cheney Road and the 14th Street trailhead. There are no reroutes. This project is scheduled to be completed this summer.

Bridge replacement of Wilderness South Bridge: The Jamaica North Trail is now closed from about Rokeyh Road to the project location about one-half mile north of Salthill Road. Wilderness Park trails in the immediate area are closed, but the trails north and south of the project remain open. This project is scheduled to be completed this summer.

South Beltway construction and utility relocation: The Jamaica North Trail will remain open during construction, but temporary and periodic closures will be required in the area one-half mile south of Salthill Road. Obey closure barricades when they are in place. This is a multi-year project.

Tierra/Williamsburg Trail corridor. Schemmer Associates is working on the design of bank stabilization and some associated trail replacement in the Tierra/Williamsburg trail corridor. Construction of this project is anticipated for fall of 2020

Beal Slough Trail from 56th to 70th St. Design work continues on the Beal Slough Trail. This project is shown in the NDOT schedule for construction in 2021/22.

CAN YOU CATCH THIS GUY?

Woudn’t it be fun to try?

Homestead Trail
Oak Creek Trail
MoPac East Trail

LOWER PLATTE SOUTH
natural resources district
www.1psnrd.org

Winter wonderland by Shelby Robison
Trail Safety & Etiquette During COVID-19 Pandemic

By Mary Torell and Ann Ringlein

GPTN Board members are thrilled to see the Lincoln trails system so full of bikers, runners, scooters, skaters, strollers and dog-walkers — many of them searching for an escape from coronavirus confinement. But along with the fun that the trails give us, we must be considerate of others during this time.

But many board members and city officials have noticed not only an increase of trail usage, but are noticing something else, too. Many of the users appear to be new to the trails, and not all of them know the traditional rules and etiquette — or appear to be keeping their social distance.

Our trails are our biggest asset to everyone right now and we want everyone to keep safety in mind. As the creators of trails, we don’t want to be responsible for having someone come down with the virus. During this pandemic, keeping social distance is one of the most important things we can do to stay safe, and make the experience more enjoyable for everyone else. Many of the users appear to be new to the trails, and especially. Anyone can be so involved in a conversation or other, too. Many of the users appear to be new to the trails, and only an increase of trail usage, but are noticing something they are passing from behind or approaching from the front.

The city tracks trail usage at certain sites, and traffic was up the week of March 23 compared with a similar weather week a year ago according to Kellee Van Bruggen, city transportation planner. On the Helen Boosalis Trail near the Rock Island junction, for example, the city counted 3,125 users over the week, a 57% increase. On the Rock Island Trail near Bishop Heights Park, 7,044 users, a 44% jump. The Billy Wolff Trail at N Street increased to 6,201 users, an 11% increase. The Helen Boosalis Trail near the Rock Island junction grew to 2,445, or 17%.

It’s clear the system is providing relief and turning off and will be for some time now. But many board members and city officials have noticed not all of them know the traditional rules and etiquette.

Here are a few guidelines for happily sharing the trails with fellow cyclists, joggers, dog walkers, and everyone else:

- **Ride right, pass left.** Trails are like highways. Act like a car in these situations. Stay to the right and pass on the left. And of course, obey all traffic signals.

- **Keep your distance.** You can carry on a conversation from six feet, so there’s no need to bunch up. But if you do, be kind to strangers: Get over to the right to give ample room when people are passing from behind or approaching from the front.

- **Make some noise before passing.** A bell is nice (and less startling) than a call out “on your left!” but either is preferable to no notice at all! Make noise—be sure you’re heard—well before you reach the person you’re passing. Then a “Thank you!” is always appreciated!

- **Slow down—and be prepared to stop—when there are others around.** It’s fun to go fast, but a bike path isn’t the place to speed. People are unpredictable. Kids and pets especially. Anyone can be so involved in a conversation or wrapped up in their own thoughts that they’ll make a bad choice even if they hear you coming. Slow to a walking pace and keep your hands on your brakes.

- **Look around (and signal!) before passing or stopping.** Just because you’re doing it right doesn’t mean everyone else is. Before you swing left to pass or hit the brakes to stop, give a hand signal, and take a look behind you for oncoming traffic.

- **Don’t stand, or sit on the trail.** Sometimes it’s nice to stop and look around and take a drink or visit with someone. Pull off the trail when you do so, otherwise you’ll block the way for everyone else.

- **Keep dogs on leashes.** And keep their leashes under control. Stretched across the trail, they can become tripwires! Bring some water for your dog – all the drinking fountains are turned off and will be for some time now.

- **Clean up after yourself—and your dog!** Take any waste with you if there’s not a receptacle nearby.

- **Don’t text and bike.** It’s way too dangerous. Pull off the trail to text.

- **Wear a helmet.** It could save your life!

- **Use lights.** If it’s getting dark, turn on both front and back lights, it’s the law!

- **No Spitting.** Spreading Covid-19 by spitting is possible and medical experts say that saliva could contain mucus from the lungs. Athletes should carry tissues for mucus and spit and dispose of them promptly. When spitting is unavoidable, do it discreetly and caution: Get to the side of the trail or street, make sure you’re six feet from others and don’t spit on the riding/running surface. To protect yourself if you’re going to exercise outside, follow these precautions when running or bicycling:
  - Don’t share water bottles.
  - Practice good cough etiquette by coughing and sneezing into your arm, not your hand.

- **Use lights.** It’s the law!

- **Consider bringing hand sanitizer or wipes to use after portable toilets.**

- **Cleanse hands with hand sanitizer or soap and water after any possible contamination.**

- **Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes from stray droplets.**

- **Be courteous.** This is so important and is just common sense. Treat people the way you want to be treated. Be friendly. Wave. Say hello.

Please, keep your distance and it will make all of our time on the trails a little more fun and safer during the pandemic! Remember, we’re all in this together!