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# Circleville Herald

## Roundtown Trail officially open

- By Steven Collins Senior Reporter

Jul 11, 2017

CIRCLEVILLE — The rain mercifully held off Tuesday afternoon, allowing Circleville’s Roundtown Trail to be declared officially open in the presence of city and county officials. The trail connects Ohio Christian University’s campus to the Pickaway County Family YMCA behind Circleville City Schools.

Dan Fouts, chair of the Roundtown Trail Committee helped marked the occasion with a ribbon cutting and some background information on how it all got started.

“This process took almost seven years; we had lots of setbacks, lots of frustrations, lots of positive thinking, and we never gave up,” he said. “What we have behind us here and going beyond to the YMCA is amazing. If you haven’t already used it, I cannot wait for you to have the opportunity.”

Fouts thanked the members of the committee, whom he called “The Team,” for making the trail happen. “If you need to get something done...these are the people you want on your team, and I appreciate every one of them,” he said.

Chris Mullins, Pickaway County Engineer, said the trail is 1.5 miles long with two bridges; the one near OCU is a 16-foot steel truss bridge, and at the other end is a 12-foot pre-cast concrete structure. “From the engineer’s office, it’s an honor to be involved in this project,” he said. “It’s a unique project for us. Typically we’re building roads and bridges, but this is a quality-of-life project and it’s something I don’t reckon we’ve ever been involved in. I hope we do more of these in the future.”

Mullins noted the project cost about \$500,000. “The great thing about it is about 20 percent of that was local funds,” he said. “That speaks to the local group that was just standing here and our community. We always tend to support ourselves, and to get that money to do the project is a big undertaking. “This trail, with some careful planning, is one of a network that will grow from this point forth,” he said. “I know we look forward to working with the Park District and that group in the future.”

Tim Colburn, president and CEO of Berger Health System, joked after having walked the trail that “there are a lot of sweat and calories to be lost on the trail” now that it’s officially open.

“We might not all agree on what makes a successful community, but we might find a few things in common,” Colburn said. “A park system, a rails to trails program, a good university, and—I’m a little biased—a good hospital, define things about a good, vibrant community. A healthy community starts with things like this.” Looking across the field to Mary Virginia Crites Hannan Park, Colburn noted how that park, “and deeper areas in Pickaway County,” might one day connect to the Roundtown Trail.

State Representative Gary Scherer (R-Circleville) presented the Park District with a resolution from the Ohio General Assembly. “We commend Pickaway County Park District for the grand opening and ribbon cutting of the Roundtown Trail, on July 11, 2017,” Scherer read from the resolution.

Brian Stewart, Pickaway County Commissioner, then spoke about the importance of community involvement in getting the project off the ground.

“This is the best kind of project because it’s a community project, that government has the opportunity to step in and assist getting it over the finish line,” he said. “It started with the folks in this community and the idea started with the residents and that’s something to be proud of.”

Stewart said that beautification projects like the Roundtown Trail are what people are looking for when they consider moving to communities like Circleville. “This is what residents want; it’s no longer a perk, it’s more of a necessity,” he said. “The surveys bear that out. As we attract jobs to the city, we want every one of those people that come here to work to also come here to live, to bring their kids to our schools and to patronize our local businesses.”

Don McIlroy, Circleville’s mayor, said quality of life is important to the growth of the community. “We have many examples of the progress we have made with leisure time activities, and this is nothing but a new example of that,” he said. “If you have not been on this trail, you need to be on it. It’s a wonderful example of what people can do together for the betterment of all.”

Ryan Scribner, director at Pickaway Progress Partnership (P3), gave the details on how the funding for the trail came together.

“We’ve accessed two programs for the first time in this community, the ODOT Transportation Alternative Program and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Clean Ohio Recreational Trail funding,” he said. “The folks in Columbus, the bureaucrats, were very accommodating. We are in a situation where we were able to match the federal money, the ODOT TAP money, with the ODNR Clean Ohio Moneys and whittle down that local share to a five-to-one ratio and increase the buying power.”

Scribner noted the original trail was far less than the full paved trail is today. “It wasn’t what you see behind us,” he said. “It was a gravel trail at one point that was about a half-mile shorter than this and a little narrower. As we secured additional pots of funding, we figured out a matrix to whittle down the local share and we ended up with what we have here, which is just a beautiful facility.

“It’s really a great testament to being creative here locally and leveraging a little bit of local resources with great support from the state,” he said. Scribner noted that what happens next is up to the community.

“We’ve got a big community and a lot of places and people left to connect,” he said. “The good news is we have the blueprint. A little bit of local creativity, collaboration, determination, some local investment, and you partner with our friends in our state agencies and the general assembly.”

Tom Davis, director of the Pickaway County Park District, said cooperation was key in bringing the project to fruition. “It would not have been possible without Ohio Christian University, The YMCA, and Circleville Schools,” he said. “We have easements, the Park District does not own any property here, and that took a while. I have a special thank you to those entities.”

Davis concluded by stating the Parks and Trails Committee is seeking support for their .5 mil park levy that will be on the ballot in November. “There will be a Park District levy, a county-wide levy to support the Pickaway County Park District. Currently, the Park District does not have a permanent funding mechanism,” he said. “We’ve been blessed by the Pickaway County Commissioners with some funding until we can find that permanent mechanism.

“The board of directors voted to put the levy on the ballot this November that will provide about \$600,000 to \$700,000 a year to do more of this,” Davis said. “If you want to see more things like this, then vote for the levy in the fall.”

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