

Friends of the Kal-Haven Trail 2022 Annual Report

Friends of the Kal-Haven Trail 2021-22 Annual Report

Introduction:

The Friends of the Kal-Haven Trail formed in the early 1980s with the goal of purchasing the abandoned (1970) Penn Central line to turn it into a pedestrian and bicycle trail that stretches from Kalamazoo to South Haven on a railroad bed laid originally in 1869-70. Monies were raised and the project was moving forward when the State of Michigan stepped in and, on a cooperative agreement, purchased the



railbed and turned it into Michigan's first linear State Park with the Friends intimately involved in the establishment and development of the trail as a regional tourist draw and attraction. The Friends and DNR staff worked cooperatively on the placement of kiosks, major parking lots, the placement of benches and outhouses and other aspects of the trail's development.

This past year has been quite momentous for the FotKHT. Shortly after losing long-time Director *Ron Stolk*, and this past spring we lost our current Chair, *Randy Hay*. Due to their passing, the organization



underwent a new beginning that has reinvigorated the FotKHT to something more akin to the active organization it was in the 1980s. We have significantly increased our public exposure on the trail and in the communities through which the trail passes. We now have a presence on **Facebook, Instagram and Twitter** and our website [kalhaven.org] received roughly 3000 visits *per month* during the June - September tourist period this year and 12,000 in this past fiscal year. Though those numbers will drop off now, come the first snow our social media pages and website will see a clear uptick in visitors as tourists and locals clamor for a taste of snow deep enough to use the trail for their sleds.



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2022 Financial Statement:

Our financial health is excellent. From October 1, 2021 to September 30, 2022 the Friends spent \$3,478.57 and brought in \$5,993.86 giving us a fiscal year balance of \$2,515.29 and a total bank balance of \$23,134.08 and a savings account balance of \$20,536.02 for a total on hand of \$43,670.10.



Our trail side donation boxes brought us \$1,257.22

South Haven	\$381.60
Grand Junction	\$161.33*
Gobles	\$167.58
Oshtemo (10 th Street)	\$546.71

* There were donations of either 1, 2 or 0 dollars from December through June so we changed the locks this summer. In August we earned \$52 and in September \$33. We did not report the thefts.

The Friends began to attend community events, fairs and shows this year and that has netted us \$220.73 in donations. Private donations through other means amounted to \$3,828.39 which includes several \$500 donations and a steady trickle from Benevity, a corporate giving entity.

The Friends of the Kal-Haven Trail is a registered 501(c)(3) organization and donations to the Friends are deductible up to the limit allowed by law.

Status and Accomplishments:

The Friends of the Kal-Haven Trail (KHT) continue to advocate for, and improve the State Park working as cooperatively as possible with the current DNR staff. In the last year we've;

- Installed a series of boot brush stations,
- Installed **Clean! Play! Go!** signs in both English and Spanish.
- Installed a bicycle repair station at Bloomingdale, graciously donated by Bloomingdale. Communications through a grant from the Allegan Community Foundation.
- Repainted the kiosk at Gobles.
- Participated with the *South Haven Public School system* with their annual Education Day on the trail.
- Worked on finishing plans for the refurbishing of the caboose at Bloomingdale.



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- Attended and participated in trail cleanups in Covert, South Haven and Grand Junction.
- Repainted and restored the map kiosk at Bloomingdale.
- Enhanced wildflower recording west of 48.5th Street.
- Planned for new mileage signs along the **Van Buren Trail State Park**.
- Planted a memorial grove of redbud trees for Director Donita Keely at Mentha after her passing.
- Expanded the 12-year old Wildflower Restoration Project to the 10th St Caboose Garden and *Mentha Heritage Mint Bed*.
- Produced a children's coloring book containing original artwork by Board Director *Carol Harris*.
- Replaced the locks at our trail side donation boxes.
- Held two "Trail Magic" days. One at 71 1/2 Street and the other at Grand Junction and interacted and assisted more than 200 guests.
- Purchased wrist-bands as giveaways at events.
- Updated and passed new Bylaws based on the *Friends of State Parks Handbook*.
- Attended the Annual Meetings of the **SWMLC** and the **Van Buren Conservation District**.
- Worked with the **Bloomingdale Area Historical Society**.
- Sponsored and provided volunteer hours for **Girls on the Run ~ Kalamazoo**.
- Sponsored an information table at Goblesfest, the Oktoberfest in Bloomingdale and the Labor Day Arts Fair in South Haven.
- Participated in an invasive species walk and two trail cleanups held by the Van Buren County Conservation District. *Alex Florian* and *Jacob Diljak* were instrumental in these events.



Volunteers

Not-for-profit organizations cannot survive without their volunteers *and we depend on ours*. In total this year our volunteers have put in more than **650 man-hours** among a variety of projects from wildflowers to trail cleanups. This amounts to **more than \$13,000 in benefits to the Kal-Haven and Van Buren Trails State Parks**.

