

PEOPLE

Places, Profiles, Family News, Features

INSIDE . . .

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY 2B

Anniversary..... 3B

Novel Ideas 4B

The Missourian
Weekend,
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B



Donna and Patrick Gaffney, O'Fallon, shown here approaching the Dutzow trailhead from Augusta, are regulars on the Katy Trail. Donna typically rides it three times a week. She likes that it's flat, smooth and full of beautiful scenery.

Missourian Photo/Karen Cernich.

Bike, Run, Relax

■ 30 Years in, Katy Trail State Park Is More Popular Than Ever

By Karen Cernich, Missourian Feature Writer

Parking lots for the Katy Trail at Marthasville, Dutzow and Augusta have been filled to capacity many weekends over the last several months, no doubt people looking to stretch their legs amid the social distancing rules and work-from-home situations created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It's been the same scenario for all 240 miles of the trail, from Machens to Clinton. Most people are riding bicycles on the trail, but it's also popular with runners and walkers too.

"We have been seeing about double our normal visitation at all of our trailheads," Melanie Smith, Katy Trail coordinator for Missouri State Parks, said, noting normal visitation is around 400,000 a year.

No one would be happier to know that than the late Edward (Ted) Jones, the St. Louis area businessman who, along with his late wife, Pat, spearheaded the creation of the trail in 1990.

"Ted Jones' dream was for the Katy Trail to accomplish two primary things. One, provide a way for people to connect with nature and experience the Missouri countryside, and two, bring new life and activity to the small former railroad communities along the Trail," said Dan Burkhardt, who with his wife, Connie, owns Peers Store and Treloar Mercantile, both located on the Katy Trail. "I think he'd look at the first 30 years of the trail's life as a great step in doing both of those."

Smith said park rangers often hear from people who are planning trips to the Katy Trail.

"It's kind of a bucket list item for a lot of folks. They want to be able to say they rode the trail from end to end, all 240 miles," she said.

"They do that in a variety of ways. Some do it over the course of a week, piece by piece. If they are local, they might do it over the course of a few weekends."

Doug and Debbie Conger, who live in Eureka, bring their bikes to ride the Katy Trail almost every weekend. They like to start in Dutzow or Treloar.

Donna and Patrick Gaffney, O'Fallon, are regulars too, often riding 20 to 30 miles round trip. Donna said she probably rides her bike on the trail three times a week.

"I like that it's flat, smooth and has great scenery," she said, after getting off her bike for a moment before crossing Highway 94 at the Dutzow trailhead.

Then there are out-of-towners like Duane Edwards, Paducah, Ky., who last week met up with his friend Jeremy Roberts from Metropolis, Ill., to ride the Katy together. They stopped in Treloar and enjoyed the shade of a 100-year-old cottonwood tree.

As one of the longest bicycle trails in the country, the Katy has been a boon for Missouri tourism for years.



Peers Prairie Days This Weekend

Peers Prairie Days, sponsored by Magnificent Missouri, will be held this weekend June 27-28 to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Katy Trail. Live bluegrass music will be played on the porch of the historic Peers Store, 16011 Concord Hill Road, Marthasville, from noon to 3 p.m. Prairie experts will lead discussions, and in the theater room, visitors can watch the Nine Network special "Rivertowns: 100 Miles, 200 Years." Ice cream treats will be available.



Outside of Peers Store, 16011 Concord Hill Road, near Marthasville, a prairie is blooming along the Katy Trail. Above is monarda (bee balm). Below, from left, are Indian blanket, wild carrot, black-eyed Susans and red clover. Peers Store is open Saturdays and Sundays May through October from noon to 4 p.m. for trail riders and locals. Missourian and Submitted Photos.

An economic impact study released in 2012 found that trail-related expenditures made by customers in 2011 generated nearly \$18.5 million a year in economic impact for the state, and supported 367 jobs with a

payroll of \$5.1 million, Smith said.

"The overall economic impact to the local trail communities from visitor spending is \$8.2 million. For every dollar spent by Missouri State Parks to operate Katy Trail State

Park, Missouri's economy saw an \$18 return on investment," the Missouri State Parks website reads.

Before Cyclists, There Were Trains

Before it was a trail for cyclists and runners, Katy Trail State Park was the path of the former Missouri-Kansas-Texas (MKT) Railroad, nicknamed the "K.T." or "Katy." The tracks ran from Parsons, Kan., to St. Louis and south to Galveston, Texas.

When the railroad ceased operation in 1986, the Department of Natural Resources acquired the right-of-way through a 1983 amendment to the National Trails System Act, according to moststateparks.com. In 1987, the department was issued a certificate of interim trail use to begin using the corridor as a recreational trail.

Around the same time, Ted Jones made a trip to Wisconsin where he rode on a rails-to-trails path and was inspired to bring that experience to Missourians, said Dan Burkhardt, who worked with Jones at his investment company, Edward Jones.

"As fate would have it, right at that time, the Katy Railroad announced it was going to abandon the right-of-way, so Ted began a five-year effort to turn the old Katy Railroad into the Katy Trail," Burkhardt said. "He did this with his personal money. Edward Jones, the company, didn't pay for it. Ted Jones, the person, paid for it."

"I remember him saying, 'I could spend three years trying to raise the money for this, and by that time, the opportunity would be gone.'"

The Joneses initially donated \$200,000 to the Conservation Federation of Missouri Charitable Trust to be used to acquire the railroad right-of-way and later donated an additional \$2 million for construction of the trail from Machens to Sedalia.

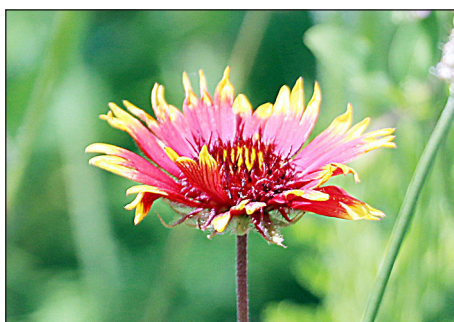
The first section of the Katy Trail opened in April 1990 between Rocheport and McBaine. The section from Augusta to just northeast of Defiance opened in August that year.

"The rail corridor from St. Charles to just past Sedalia was developed by 1996. Through a donation from the Union Pacific Railroad, the department then extended the trail to Clinton, opening the section between Sedalia and Clinton in September of 1999. The last 12-mile section between St. Charles and Machens was opened in 2011, completing the 240-mile Katy Trail," the Missouri State Parks website reads.

As much as the Katy Trail is loved today, it's important to note that not everyone was excited about its opening, Smith said. There were a good number of neighboring property owners who were against its development or at least had concerns about trail users trespassing on their land.

"There were lots of folks who were

•See Katy Trail 3B



Katy Trail Turns 30

• Continued From 1B

for it, but there were as many who were unsure," Smith said. "We don't hear as much anymore. For the most part, people who visit the trail are pretty courteous. We have boundary signs on both sides of the trail that tell people to stay within the right-of-way. "If there is an issue, we try to have our rangers take care of it right away."

Everyone Has a Favorite Trailhead
Today the Katy Trail is recognized as one of the most successful rail-to-trails conversion projects in the United States, Smith said. Over the years it has garnered many accolades, including:

It is the longest non-motorized section of the Lewis and Clark Trail.

It's in the Rail to Trail Hall of Fame.

It is considered an American Discovery Trail, "a system of recreational trails and roads which collectively form a coast-to-coast hiking and biking trail across the mid-tier of the United States."

Regular users of the Katy Trail have favorite trailheads or sections that they like to see, Smith said. She likes the areas that pass through Bernheimer and Gore, where the trail runs right along the Missouri River.

In this area, Dut-zow, Marthasville and Augusta are popular starting points and offer great scenery and wildlife sightings, but Peers and Treloar should not be missed.

"We only have four depots that remain on Katy Trail State Park, and in Marthasville they have a small rural depot there adjacent to the trailhead," Smith said.

"In the other direction, Augusta has the wineries and a lot of cool community events there, so planning your ride around one of those events would be a fun thing to do."

The Burkhardts, who are co-founders of Magnificent Missouri, a nonprofit advocacy organization that supports land conservation, historic preservation and economic development within the last 100 miles of the Missouri River Valley, and the Katy Land Trust, describe the 3 1/2 miles of trail between Peers and Treloar as "the country store corridor" because of the two historic storefronts at those trailheads that were built for the arrival of the Katy Railroad and are still standing strong today.

The Treloar Mercantile isn't open to the public, but Peers Store is open May through October, Saturdays and Sundays, from noon to 4 p.m., to offer a respite to Katy Trail users who may want to use the rest room or grab an ice cream treat from the freezer.

"Once the doors are open, you cannot keep people out of here," Dan Burkhardt said. "There are very few places on the trail like this. That's why we had to save it."

Inside, visitors will find the story about what the Burkhardts want to accomplish with Magnificent Missouri and the Katy Land Trust.

A series of posters explain the mission, and a sign near the front notes that every dollar spent at the store is used for conservation, planting trees, protecting lands and maintaining prairies.

Magnificent Missouri
This year is a celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Katy Trail, but every year is a celebration of the landscape



Connie and Dan Burkhardt, owners of Peers Store and the Treloar Mercantile, pose with one of the new trees planted by Magnificent Missouri outside of the Treloar Mercantile along the Katy Trail. In the background is the stump of a 100-year-old Elm tree that the couple had carved into an ear of corn.

Missourian Photos/Karen Cernich.



The historic grain elevator at the Treloar trailhead on the Katy Trail features banners with artwork by Bryan Haynes, Washington.



Duane Edwards, Paducah, Ky., left, and Jeremy Roberts, Metropolis, Ill., rest underneath the 100-year-old cottonwood tree at the Treloar trailhead Wednesday, June 17.

and the small communities along the trail for Magnificent Missouri, the Burkhardts said. "The Katy Trail experience is nothing without the landscape and the countryside the trail passes through. What people remember is what they see along the way and we want to protect and enhance that view by conserving

land, removing invasive species and encourage planting native trees, wildflowers and grasses," Dan Burkhardt said. "We want Magnificent Missouri and the Country Store Corridor to do projects that leave the land along the trail better than we found it — by planting species

and conserving the landscape. We educate landowners about how they can permanently protect their land by using conservation easements. This allows them to farm and use the land as they always have but prevents future development."

Five years ago Magnificent Missouri planted a prairie in an area of land that sits between the Katy Trail and Peers Store. And this year, it has planted native Missouri oak and pecan trees outside of the Treloar Mercantile. "The Peers Store and Treloar Mercantile symbolize what Magnificent Missouri wants to achieve — recreation along the trail, conservation of the landscape by tree and prairie planting, and preservation of local culture and history," Burkhardt said. "The Peers Store gets visitors from the trail, but a lot of our neighbors stop by with children and grandchildren for an ice cream."

To date, Magnificent Missouri has planted 15 trees between Dut-zow and Treloar. Plans are to plant another 15 for a total of 30 trees to celebrate and mark the 30th anniversary of the Katy Trail.

"When I left Edward Jones in 2005, I wanted to do something to make the trail better," Burkhardt said. "It's a great gift to Missouri. There is nothing like this in America. Nothing like a 280-something-mile long trail that starts in the biggest city in the state and runs through the countryside."

So while his friend, Ted Jones, was a driving force behind establishing the trail, Burkhardt is carrying that mission forward.

And he and Connie like to have fun with the effort whenever they can. When they had to cut down a dead 100-year-old elm tree outside of the Treloar Mercantile, they didn't just leave it as a stump. They brought in a chain saw artist from Pacific to carve it into Missouri's "biggest ear of corn."

It attracts attention and is a big "selfie" spot, which is exactly what the Burkhardts want.

"The idea is to use the whole thing to talk about native trees, preservation, prairies, conservation, that whole story we are trying to get people to pay attention to, because it's easy when it's in your own backyard to overlook it," Dan Burkhardt said.

Anniversary



Sandy and Richard Langenberg

Langenberg 40th Wedding Anniversary

Richard and Sandy Langenberg, Washington, are celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary. Mr. Langenberg and the former Miss Franks were united in marriage June 28, 1980, at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Rosebud.

Their children are Lisa Harman, Marthasville, Laura Glastetter, Leeann Pennington, both of Washington, and Lance Langenberg, Rolla. They have nine grandchildren.

Literacy Group to Hold Backyard Book Fair

July 11, 9 a.m. to Noon

The Community Literacy Foundation will hold a Backyard Book Fair Saturday, July 11, from 9 a.m. to noon at Neighborhood Reads bookstore, 401 Lafayette St., in Downtown Washington.


Paperback copies of chapter books, teen and adult books will be available for a \$1 donation. Hardback copies of past Book Buzz Picks may be available for a \$5 donation.

All proceeds will benefit the Community Literacy Foundation, a non-profit group organized last fall to promote reading in the community.

Current programs include the One More Page initiative to have this area named the best read in America and Book Buzz, the youth literacy project that provides children's books each month to local schools and public libraries and invites area students to write reviews of those books.

For more information, go to community-literacyfoundation.org.

Celebrate! **OTT JASPER**



100th Birthday

Drive-by Parade at Washington VFW
July 1, 6:15pm

- ★ World War II Tank Gunner
- ★ First to breach Germany's Siegfried line
- ★ Awarded two Purple Hearts
- "A HERO AMONG US"

Birthday cards for Ott can be sent to:
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813 S. Jefferson St.,
Washington, MO 63090



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