

# Wheels, feet and paws hit the trail during Hike and Bike in Hazleton

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*JAMIE PESOTINE/Staff  
Photographer Alice Hoffman and  
Henry Shafer walk along the trail.*

Greater Hazleton Health Alliance lasted until the Hike and Bike ended at 2 p.m.

"I had a burger before. I needed the energy," Alice Hoffman said after walking about a mile and a half along the trail with her friend, Henry Shafer. "Now I could have another."

Andrew Pedri, 15 months old, covered the whole trail while riding in a stroller that his father pushed.

"Any time a dog went by, he wanted to get out and walk," Andrew's father, David, said.

With two dogs on leashes, Gene Babula took his first walk on the trail. He expected to see old railroad ties ripped from the bed and stashed along the path. Instead he found gravel, rolled to a smooth surface winding through the woods.

"It's nice walk," Babula said as his girlfriend's grandson walked up to him while clenching a turtle borrowed from a reptile display called Creation Station.

At another display, children planted seeds in egg cartons.

Scott and Christine Herring of Hazle Township planned to take

For the eighth annual Hike and Bike on Saturday, families took to the Greater Hazleton rail-trail on foot, on bicycle, with strollers or GPS devices or, in the case of one family, on a bicycle built for three.

Rob and Shanell Gould of Drums rode the trail on a tandem bike with their 2½-year-old son, Will, riding in back on the child seat. The Goulds have tried out their triple-seater on beach boardwalks since Will was born, but they rode along with members of the swim team that Rob coaches at the Hazleton YMCA and YWCA. "We brought up the rear," he said.

There was no need to hurry.

The 4-mile trail offers places to pause and look at the Dreck Creek Reservoir or the mountain laurel that bloomed on time for the event. Children seeking diversions found playground equipment like a new sandbox excavator, while older hikers tested their fitness at exercise stations.

Free food at a picnic spread that the Greater Hazleton Rails-to-Trails Committee provided along with the



*JAMIE PESOTINE/Staff  
Photographer Robert Gould talks  
about his experiences riding on his  
tandem bicycle with his wife and son  
during The Greater Hazleton Area  
Civic Partnership's Rails to Trails  
held their annual Hike and Bike  
Saturday.*

their family swimming, but the overcast skies, threatening a repeat of Friday night's thunderstorm, persuaded them to hit the trail. Scott took the walk with three bicycle helmets bobbing on straps hooked to his backpack. The helmets were free for children, and the Herrings received one for each of their 8-year-old triplets: Brianna, Matthew and Ryan.

Christine's cousin, visiting from Delaware, used her GPS device to try geocaching, a challenge in which participants follow latitude and longitude coordinates to find hidden items along the trail.

After walking or pedaling the 8-mile round trip to the endpoint on the old Beryllium Road and back to the starting point at the trailhead on East Broad Street, folks could sit for a massage, provided by students from the McCann School of Business. They could browse at booths such as those staffed by Edythe Gozdiskowski of the Frances Dorrance Chapter of the Society for Pennsylvania Archaeology. Her display included wampum beads, a fragment of a bowl drilled from soapstone by a pick of harder rock and arrowheads.

Tim Ference of Friends of the Nescopeck, a group that encourages efforts to reduce acid mine water flowing into the Nescopeck Creek from the Jeddo Tunnel, said people were surprised when they looked at the map showing the expanse of the creek's watershed.

"There's pristine forest to abandoned mine land all in the same watershed," Ference said.

Boy Scouts like brothers Austin and Mitch Muir of Troop 207 in Conyngham helped set up booths for the archaeology society and Creation Station.

"We like reptiles," Austin said.

Boy Scout Executive Paul Oswald of the Minis Trails Council pointed out that Eagle Scouts installed exercise stations and helped build the environmental display alongside the trail through their service projects.

The trail, Oswald said, suits the needs of scouts from of 7-year-old Tiger Scouts who need a safe place to hike to satisfy badge requirements to a Venturing crew for boys and girls 14 to 21.

Oswald wants the Venturing crew to become stewards of the trail and developers of new trails in the area "to get them on the trail and be more environmentally minded."

Bob Skulsky, leader of the Greater Hazleton Rails to Trails, hopes by next year to add two miles of trail between Ashmore and Hazlebrook and enter contracts to blaze trail from Weatherly to the Lehigh River.

"By this time next year if we could have one done and one under contract, that would be wonderful," Skulsky said.

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