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Active Zone passport to summer fun

Editor:

What a great summer we are having! There is still plenty of time to get outside and enjoy all of the great parks, trails and events that are part of the Keystone Active Zone Passport, a free program that encourages people of all ages and abilities to get active outdoors. This year's passport has more than 30 "passport stops" throughout Luzerne County. In addition to our four spectacular state parks, many other trails, parks and outdoor events are included on the passport.

You will find parks like the River Common in Wilkes-Barre, The Tubs Natural Area in Bear Creek and Louis Schiavo City View Park in Hazleton, to mention a few. Our fabulous local network of trails—rural, urban and one that is actually a water trail in the Susquehanna River—give passport participants a wide selection of places to walk, hike, bike, kayak or canoe.

And speaking of paddling, there are also family fishing days and paddling days scheduled throughout the county. History and nature buffs can learn more about our local flora, fauna and heritage on one of the Y Walk Wednesday guided walks or with the Luzerne County Historical Society's self-guided tour. You can enjoy a hike at the YMCA Camp Kresge, a day on the river at the Pittston Riverfest or walk in the footsteps of our Native American ancestors on the Warrior Path, a North Branch Land Trust conservation property in Shickshinny.

It is easy to participate. Just visit the Keystone Active Zone website: www.kaz-passport.org to register. Download your passport and get busy visiting the stops of your choice. Each stop has its own scavenger hunt question. Find the answers and log them on the website; the more stops visited and logged, the more awards you

earn and the greater your chance are to win prizes like an overnight at Split Rock Lodge, kayak excursions on the Susquehanna, whitewater rafting, bicycle gift certificates or more. Our own Wilkes-Barre Scranton Penguins are so inspired by the KAZ that they donated free passes to the brand new Ice Rink at Coal Street Park so anyone who visits and logs at least five stops can enjoy ice skating at the beautiful new rink.

The best prize however, is the great way that you will feel after time spent outdoors. Fresh air, sunshine, learning about your community and county, no-cost recreation and a chance to spend time with friends, family, even pets are all immediate benefits of the program. Local parks and trails are free and close to home and work.

Outdoor recreation is a fun and fit way to spend real quality time together as a family and is much healthier than time spent in front of the television. Most passport participants report that they continue to visit and explore favorite places they discovered thru the program.

The Wyoming Valley Wellness Trails Partnership, Hazleton Rails to Trails and Live Well Luzerne County at the Wilkes-Barre YMCA coordinate the program with the help of more than 70 other community partners, with great support from our local media and funded by grants from DCNR and Wilkes-Barre City. In addition to the passport, the program's website has a wealth of information about all our great close-to-home outdoor resources.

The program ends on Sept. 30, so don't delay. Add some free, close-to-home outdoor fun to your day with the Keystone Active Zone Passport.

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