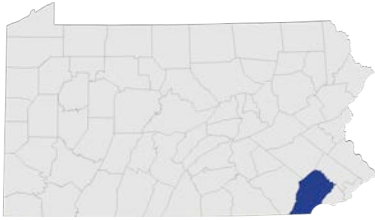


# My Story



## Attracting People from All Backgrounds Chester Valley Trail

By Tim Lander, Friends of the Chester Valley Trail

*“Electronic counters recorded over 350,000 users this past year, making the CVT the most heavily utilized part of the county park system.”*



The Chester Valley Trail (CVT) opened in 2010, converting a dormant Reading Railroad freight and passenger line into what is now a 13-mile rail-trail running through the heart of eastern Chester County, passing about a mile from my home. Like many



**Keystone Fund Investment:** \$500,000

**Total Public/Private Investment:** \$1.25

I would occasionally hike the old rail bed in the years before trail construction began, and I watched with interest as the transformation to a formal trail got underway. Several months before the opening date, the County Park Board formed a friends of the trail group, and I volunteered to join the inaugural board of directors. That means I not only benefit from using the trail myself, I frequently work with others who maintain the trail, including volunteers and county staff.

As a trail user, I enjoy walking and biking the trail, alone or with my wife. Much of the trail is shaded by large trees or passes by open meadows, providing a scenic backdrop for our outings. Bluebird boxes have been placed along the

trail, wildflowers attract a variety of native birds and bees, and deer and other wildlife can often be seen from the pathway. A local blogger recently posted a photo of a red fox happily trotting down the trail; apparently humans are not the only CVT enthusiasts! I find the trail to be an easy way to get an hour or two of exercise and fresh air, and I often come across friends and neighbors doing the same thing.

**Learn more at [KeystoneFund.org](http://KeystoneFund.org).**

The Friends of the Chester Valley Trail is invited to attend a variety of community events each year, where we meet trail users of all backgrounds: families with young children looking for a safe place to ride, bicycle commuters who are on the trail in the early hours of the morning and into the evening, avid runners who find the trail a great place to train, and retirees who regularly meet with friends for exercise and fellowship. Electronic trail counters recorded over 350,000 users this past year, making the CVT the most heavily utilized part of the county park system.

The Friends also collaborate with other organizations whose members volunteer their time on trail maintenance and related projects such as tree plantings. Several Boy Scout troops have worked with the Friends and County staff to erect trailhead kiosks, and one enterprising Scout installed a series of native tree identification signs for his Eagle Scout project. We participated with representatives of local historical societies and commissions to develop content for interpretative markers along the trail, covering topics from Revolutionary War days—both the British Army and the Continental Army camped nearby in the 1770s—to the many limestone quarries that were once active in the area, and which are still visible from the trail. I have also delivered presentations about the trail to a number of civic groups, and enjoy engaging members of the community who want to know more about the trail, its history, and plans for future expansion.

A common thread among many of the contacts I have made is how much the trail has become part of their weekly or even daily routine. People love the chance to be outdoors



getting some exercise, at whatever level of effort they find comfortable, in an environment that is safe, convenient, and free. As future expansion to the east and west is completed in coming years, the CVT will connect to the Schuylkill River Trail and other neighborhood trails, all part of the 750-mile Circuit Trail network in the Philadelphia area. Being part of this larger trail community is an added benefit of my association with the Friends of the CVT, as we collectively work to provide more opportunities for recreation and commuting.

With the CVT as the backbone of Chester County's trail network, additional spur trails are currently in the planning stages. I look forward to working with county staff, volunteers, and trail users for years to come, as well as enjoying time on the trail myself and with family and friends.

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