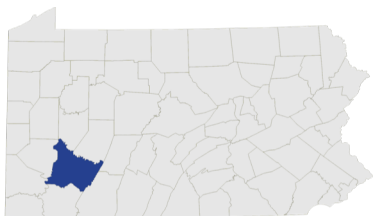


# My Story

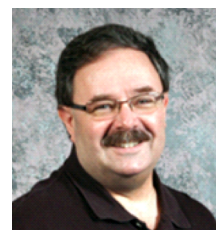


## A Part of Our Lives

### Five Star Trail

*By Mark Jackson, Westmoreland County Conservation*

***"The most rewarding thing is seeing your family, friends, neighbors, and visitors enjoying the trail."***



My association with the Five Star Trail began over twenty years ago when the idea of a recreational trail connecting five municipalities in central Westmoreland County was first conceived by a group of forward-thinking community leaders. I owned a small graphic design studio at the time and served several recreation and conservation-related clients. One of them approached me and asked if I would be interested in designing a logo for a rail trail, which was going to be built beside a live railroad spur running from Greensburg to Youngwood. There was limited, slow-moving activity on the spur at the time and the project was referred to as a "trail with rail."

The route would make its way through a mostly urban landscape: a combination of business, industrial, and residential areas



**Keystone Fund Investment:** \$95,000

**Total Public/Private Investment:** \$1 million

with large patches of open green space woven in between. It would provide an easily accessible source of recreation for thousands of people so they could enjoy walking, jogging, bicycling, and cross-country skiing.

When the trail was first built, an antique steam train was running a tourist excursion along sections of it. An illustration of this steam train appears in the logo I designed. Beside the steam train in the logo there is also a cyclist on the trail. He is waving to the engineer. Behind the cyclist, a young mother pushes a three-wheel jogging stroller. From the top of the steam engine's smoke stack five stars appear, representing the initial five connected municipalities of

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Greensburg, Southwest Greensburg, South Greensburg, Hempfield, and Youngwood.

When the trail was completed from Greensburg to Youngwood in the late 1990's, my wife Jill and I and our two daughters, Trudy and Mary, would occasionally take family bike rides on it. We even purchased a special "kiddie trailer" to tow along our two-year-old son Regis. Snuggled and strapped in the trailer, Regis enjoyed the scenery, his water bottle, and a box of crackers as we all rode along.

As our children grew, they participated in the Greensburg YMCA Summer Programs for many years. The Five Star Trail played an important connecting role in their YMCA activities. They often walked the trail in large groups guided by their counselors to get to Greensburg's Lynch Field where they could play games and swim.

A Five Star Trail highlight for our family occurred when our son Regis did his Eagle Scout Project as a service to the Trail. Working with Malcolm Sias from Westmoreland County Parks, Regis planned and coordinated the building of two mini-pavilions at two different locations along the Five Star Trail with Scout Troop 405 from

South Greensburg. The pavilions are large individual picnic tables protected by a shingled roof, and provide a place for trail users to rest beneath shelter from the sun or rain. Regis had to prepare the budget and do the fundraising for the project. He applied for and received grants from two local organizations. Regis's Eagle Project also included staining sections of wooden fence around trail access area parking lots. The support Regis received from Troop 405 was amazing. Scouts, parents, and adult leaders rolled up their sleeves on several organized work days and really dug into the tasks at hand. You could tell that they were proud to be a part of an effort to improve the trail. Over the years the Five Star Trail has benefited from many different Eagle Scout projects such as this one.

My relationship with the Five Star Trail continues today with my service on the Trail's Board of Directors as a representative of the Westmoreland Conservation District. Jill and I also volunteer in the summer to help with the Five Star Poker Run fundraiser. We manage a rest and water area along the trail where participants can draw cards to complete their Poker hand. We supply our own Easy-Up canopy and enjoy talking to the people.

Ultimately, the most rewarding thing about being associated with the Five Star Trail is seeing your family, friends, neighbors, and visitors enjoying it. You also gain a keen appreciation of what it takes to maintain and sustain the trail as a vital community resource.

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