Community and family are at the heart of the American trail experience. One of the most significant benefits of trails is the sense of community and the connections they build. Well-designed trails transform “community” from an abstraction into a real place. While it is difficult to quantify the ties of community and family that trails help to build, the positive experiences of trail users can be captured in the stories embedded in the following pictures.

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Two children learn and grow through the delight of skating in a safe and special place. Capital Crescent Trail, Washington, D.C., and Md. © FREDERICK STORK / RAILS-TO-TRAILS CONSERVANCY

“Some trails are happy ones. Others are blue. It’s the way you ride the trail that counts. Here’s a happy one for you.” — Dale Evans-Rogers, “Happy Trails.” Paulinskill Valley Trail © SUSAN DATA-SAMTAC / RAILS-TO-TRAILS CONSERVANCY

Beneath the wind mills of Garret Wind Farm a family cycles while energy is silently produced. Great Allegheny Passage, Pa. © ZACH HENDERSON / RAILS-TO-TRAILS CONSERVANCY

The Lachine Canal Trail in Montreal, Canada creates a vital connection between the Atwater Market and community trail users © BILLY FIELDS / RAILS-TO-TRAILS CONSERVANCY