

The Quality-of-Life Connection: Trails, Community and Family

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.



At their most basic, trails encourage personal interaction in a way entirely unavailable to automobile users. Were these individuals passing one another in cars, their interaction would be limited to, at most, a honk and a wave. Wilderness Trail, Va. © LORILI TOTH / RAILS-TO-TRAILS CONSERVANCY



A solitary winter evening on the George S. Mickelson Trail in the Black Hills of South Dakota demonstrates the beauty available on secluded trails. © ALEEN GOLIS / RAILS-TO-TRAILS CONSERVANCY



The Caboose Covered Bridge preserves the history and beauty of Wisconsin farmland. Glacier River Trail, Wis. © BRUCE KINATEDER / RAILS-TO-TRAILS CONSERVANCY

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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



"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



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



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