NEWSLETTER

Friends *of the* Genesee Valley Greenway



Groundbreaking for the Bridges of Allegany

WELCOMING ALOT OF MOVEMENT ON THE GREENWAY!

This fall the Greenway is a work in progress in the best sense. In Allegany County, four new bridges are finally under construction, closing gaps left when the Pennsylvania Railroad pulled its tracks more than sixty years ago. Kristine Uribe has been on the Rossburg site over Wiscoy Creek with a camera. The completion of the project is tentatively set for July 2027. Until then, please stay off the work sites.

Farther north, the Whiskey Bridge trailhead south of Portageville is taking shape where the Greenway, the Finger Lakes Trail, and the Genesee River meet. Friends co-sponsored a Trail Town workshop in Genesee Falls in September, and members gathered on September 20 for the annual meeting, a history hike on the old Erie-Attica grade, and **celebrated a year that closed with more than 200 active members.**

Inside This Issue

- Tyler Heiman on the railroad under the Erie-Attica Trail
- Matthew Laun's flock of mergansers at Hinsdale
- A welcome to business member Jereko Gear at the LivCo Basecamp in Mount Morris
- Jules Hoepting's guided outings through December

BIG THANK YOU TO ALL WHO CAME OUT TO RIDE WITH US AT THE 3RD ANNUAL GREENWAY CYCLE CHALLENGE!

BRIDGES OF ALLEGANY

Submitted by Kristine Uribe

In June of ’22, the grant writing team I had been working with received “The Letter.” The vital document from DOT advising we are going to receive a $5 million grant to build four bridges. Already having the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation on board to cover the 20% match for the grant, I knew the project was in the bag. So when I got the news, you bet I skipped down the hallway yelling “We got it! We got it!”

For those unaware, there is a lot that must happen before a project this size can get off the ground. Design, discussion, permits, discussion, approvals, discussion, the bidding process… did I mention discussions? Even though it is all well-intended and needed, it’s enough to make you crazy! However, we have talented and knowledgeable individuals, and this is not our first rodeo, so the project began in June of this year.

As I attend the bi-weekly meetings and try to visit the sites at least once a week, I snap pictures and have discussions with those working on the project. Over the decade I have been blessed with this position, I have been very thankful to view photos taken by others since the 90’s (or late 1900’s, as I have recently heard it referred to) who saw the need to document the creation of such a unique park. (Thank you to those photographers!) Over the years, a number of those pictures came in handy as reference when trying to figure out a situation or comparing erosion then and now. Pictures can also be utilized in a presentation to highlight what can be accomplished with grant money, so I try not to miss any opportunities. (For reference, I have over 11k pictures on my work phone, and that is after permanently storing my first two years.)

As far as conversations go, for those doing the actual construction or monitoring the process, it is just another day on the job. In my eyes, however, it has been four long years waiting for these bridges to be built. Going deeper still, and most importantly, the surrounding communities have been waiting 60+ years for these gaps to close after the Pennsylvania Railroad removed their tracks and bridges. It is at this point in the conversation where I usually see “the look,” where folks start to understand just how important this project is. Sixty years is two generations, and certainly a long enough wait for connection.

That said, the pictures featured are from the Rossburg work site over Wiscoy Creek. Never witnessing a bridge being built before, I thought I would share pictures showing the process itself. Currently, different work sites are at different stages. I know this is exciting and we are all waiting for the day when we can cross, but until then (tentatively July ’27).

Enjoy the photos and Happy Trails!



As a courtesy to the workers & for your safety: Please do not enter any of the construction sites. We do not want anyone to get hurt or have this project delayed. We will keep you updated through this newsletter and via Facebook & Instagram.



BRIDGES OF ALLEGANY

Submitted by Kristine Uribe









Work underway at Wiscoy Creek in Rossburg town of Hune.

PRESERVING THE IRON RAILS: THE RICH RAILROAD HERITAGE OF THE ERIE-ATTICA TRAIL CORRIDOR

Tyler Heiman

This year's Friends Annual Meeting on September 20th brought a passionate focus to the incredible transportation history hidden right in our local landscape. Regional railroad historian Tyler Heiman led an engaging look into the specific regional railroad networks that laid the foundation for Western New York's industrial boom, focusing heavily on the historic corridor that today serves as the scenic Erie-Attica Trail. Attendees explored how this specific right-of-way once stood as a crucial economic lifeline, allowing local agricultural, dairy, and lumber products from the surrounding countryside to be shipped rapidly and competitively to major eastern markets. By tracing the evolution of these lines, the lecture successfully reconnected residents with the vital role early infrastructure played in building the prosperity of our towns.

The presentation dove deep into the complex rivalries and corporate shifts that defined local rail operations, specifically highlighting the history of the Erie Railroad. Long before it became a peaceful multi-use public path, this corridor saw intense competition as major companies like the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad, the Dansville & Mount Morris, and the Shawmut lines all vied for regional dominance. The discussion walked through key moments in local rail history, including the intense corporate resistance to connections at Groveland Station, the eventual merger into the Erie Lackawanna Railroad in 1960, and the final abandonment of the tracks. Highlighting these dramatic shifts showed how a simple line through the woods was once a heavily contested battleground for the iron rivals of transportation history.

Today, walking the Erie-Attica Trail offers an active connection to that very history, moving west from Avon toward its crucial intersection with the Genesee Valley Greenway State Park. The recent historical hike underscored how visitors can still spot the engineered grades, old culverts, and the magnificent 220-foot historic truss bridge spanning the Genesee River. Observing these physical infrastructure remnants forces a deeper appreciation for the preservation efforts that keep this public space open and safe for the community. By understanding the deep history beneath our feet, every hiker, cyclist, and casual walker who visits the corridor becomes a part of keeping Western New York's incredible railroad legacy alive.

SAVE THE DATE

- Talk and book signing with William D. Burt
- Sunday, December 6, 2:30 p.m.
- Nunda Historical Society
- The Last Days of the Rochester Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad
- Book signing follows. Museum and Rose Shave Gallery open 2:00–4:00 p.m.



New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Guided Outings on Genesee Valley Greenway



- General nature walks, social strolls, history-based stories, birding, group bike rides, night walks, & more!
- Led by NYS Parks educators
- Over 50 programs a year, held rain or shine.







Want to receive information on Greenway guided hikes?
Email **Genesee.Education@parks.ny.gov**
and ask to sign up for *The Genesee Naturalist* newsletter.

GENESEE FALLS HOSTS TRAIL TOWN PLACEMAKING WORKSHOP & PROGRESS CONTINUES AT THE WHISKEY BRIDGE TRAILHEAD

On September 8, Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway joined community members, local leaders, and trail advocates for a productive placemaking workshop led by Parks & Trails New York. The meeting focused on defining new opportunities to strengthen the community's connection to the Genesee Valley Greenway and identify ways to enhance the visitor experience for residents and trail users alike.

Participants discussed strategies for promoting local attractions, improving trail access, and supporting outdoor recreation as an economic and community development asset. The session also provided an opportunity to share updates on several ongoing projects that will help make Portageville and the Town of Genesee Falls an even more welcoming destination along the Greenway and attract visitors from Letchworth State Park.

We are pleased with the progress we sponsored this year at Whiskey Bridge (located at the Genesee River on Rte. 19A just south of Portageville). We previously received a Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Legacy Grant from the Community Foundation of Greater Buffalo, which allowed us to plan and implement improvements where the Greenway, Finger Lakes Trail, and the Genesee River connect. Current and upcoming improvements include enhanced parking, visitor amenities, interpretive features, and other infrastructure designed to create a safer and more enjoyable experience for trail users as well as paddlers along the Genesee River. These investments will strengthen this location's role as a gateway to the Greenway and Genesee Falls, while helping showcase the area's natural beauty and outdoor recreation opportunities.

Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway appreciates the Town of Genesee Falls' ongoing partnership and commitment to the Trail Town initiative. We look forward to continuing our work together as these exciting projects advance and new opportunities emerge to connect people with the Greenway and the communities that make it special. This project would not be possible without the assistance of the Wyoming County Highway Department.



New path to the river under Whiskey Bridge east of Rte. 19A, south of Portageville — where the Greenway, Finger Lakes Trail, and Genesee River meet.

WHISKEY BRIDGE TRAILHEAD CONT.



Improved landing and parking area along the Genesee River at the Whiskey Bridge trailhead.



Stone-edged path to the river and erosion protection at the trailhead.



Work continues under Whiskey Bridge.

FOGVG CONNECTS WITH TRAIL AND PARK LEADERS AT THE STATEWIDE FRIENDS CONFERENCE

Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway (FoGVG) joined organizations from across New York State at the Statewide Friends Conference in Lake George, hosted by Parks & Trails New York in partnership with the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. The biennial conference brought together Friends groups, nonprofit leaders, volunteers, and public lands advocates to share ideas, strengthen partnerships, and explore new ways to support parks, trails, historic sites, and public lands throughout New York.

The 2026 conference theme, "The Power of Partnerships," focused on how effective collaboration can expand access, strengthen stewardship, and create welcoming outdoor spaces for all New Yorkers. Attendees participated in workshops, networking sessions, and field experiences designed to showcase successful programs and innovative approaches to public land management and community engagement.

FoGVG was proud to participate as both attendees and conference presenter. We shared the story of the Genesee Valley Greenway's continued growth and impact, highlighting the importance of partnerships among local communities, Trail Towns, and volunteers. We also shared how our organization has evolved over the past 30+ years, and that we have a renewed vision and strategic plan for the future. With so much to share, we celebrated all the hard work that has gone into the many projects completed by State Parks and Genesee Valley Trail Towns along the Greenway.

The conference also provided an opportunity to learn from organizations across the state that are facing similar challenges and opportunities. Sessions focused on strengthening nonprofit organizations, enhancing stewardship efforts, developing community partnerships, and improving accessibility and inclusion in outdoor recreation. These conversations offered valuable insights that FoGVG can apply to future programs and initiatives along the Greenway.

FoGVG extends its appreciation to Parks & Trails New York and the conference partners for organizing this exceptional gathering. Events such as the Statewide Friends Conference remind us that the success of New York's trails and public lands depends on strong partnerships, engaged communities, and dedicated volunteers.

As we continue our work to preserve, promote, and enhance the Genesee Valley Greenway, we look forward to putting the lessons and connections gained at the conference into action, ensuring that the Greenway remains a treasured resource for recreation, conservation, and community development for years to come.

Learn More Online:
ptny.org/events/friends-conference/

PARKS & TRAILS NEW YORK

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING CELEBRATES ANOTHER YEAR OF GROWTH AND IMPACT



Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway welcomed members, supporters, history buffs, and partners to our 2026 Annual Membership Meeting on September 20, 2026, for an afternoon of reflection, history, celebration, and ideas for the future. The meeting highlighted the organization's accomplishments over the past year, recognized the dedication of our volunteers and partners, and provided an opportunity to make new friends.

President Carl Schoenthal reported on another productive year for FoGVG, including the successful award and completion of projects supported through the Western New York Trail Town Program, ongoing improvements in communities such as Belfast and Genesee Falls, progress toward the Whiskey Bridge Trailhead project in Portageville, educational outreach initiatives, and the continued success of the Greenway Cycle Challenge. The organization also shared news of its expanding regional leadership through participation in the Western New York Greenways Planning Summit, the 2026 Statewide Friends Conference, and advocacy for direct funding to improve and build greenways across the region.

Members heard encouraging financial and membership updates from Treasurer Ben Woelk. FoGVG's membership increased to over 200 members during the past year, while the organization's financial position remained strong, ending the year in a positive financial condition to support additional trail improvement projects.

The membership also conducted important organizational business, including amendments to the bylaws and updates to the organization's Five-Year Plan, which will help guide future growth and enhance representation from communities throughout the Greenway corridor. Elections were held for the Class of 2029 Board of Directors, continuing FoGVG's commitment to strong volunteer leadership.

Before the formal meeting began, attendees enjoyed a special guided hike that added a memorable historical dimension to the day. FoGVG extends its sincere appreciation to Tyler Heiman for sharing the rich history of the Erie/Attica Railroad corridor and its connection to the modern Greenway. Tyler's knowledge and enthusiasm brought the landscape to life, helping participants better understand how the region's railroad heritage shaped the communities and transportation network we enjoy today. The hike was a wonderful reminder that the Genesee Valley Greenway is not only a recreational asset, but also a living link to Western New York's transportation history.

The afternoon concluded with a presentation by guest speaker Michael Cocquyt of LaBella Associates, who shared insights on current trail and greenway initiatives and opportunities for future collaboration.

As FoGVG looks ahead to 2027, we thank our members, volunteers, donors, community partners, and advocates whose support continues to advance the mission of preserving, promoting, and enhancing the Genesee Valley Greenway for all. Together, we are building on the Greenway's past while creating an even stronger future for the communities it connects.

SAVE THE DATE

Coming up — Erie Canal Museum Sloan Lecture

Short Stories Along the Genesee Valley Canal
Jules Hoepting, Environmental Educator, New York State Parks
Wednesday, November 12, 2026 • 12:00 p.m.

In **person at the Erie Canal Museum,** 318 Erie Boulevard East, Syracuse, and **on Zoom**. Everyone who registers also receives a recording.

To sum up the Genesee Valley Canal in a word? Dramatic. The timing was terrible. The route was ambitious: one of the highest canals in the world, pinned to the side of a canyon, along one of New York State's most visited waterfalls. Then there were the people and their shovel-swinging, whiskey-drinking, religion-bringing, gun-spinning stories. Join Jules Hoepting for this talk on one of New York's most enigmatic lateral canals.

Register:
https://www.simpletix.com/e/2026-sloan-lecture-series-tickets-243113

Questions: educator@eriecanalmuseum.org or 315-471-0593.
Series supported by the Winifred & DeVillo Sloan, Jr. Family Fund.

SOMETHING FOWL IN HINSDALE

Photo and text by Matthew Laun

Street bridge. The bridge sits at the southernmost entrance of the current trail. It was a sunny day, so I thought I might catch a glimpse of the softshell turtles that enjoy soaking up the sun on the bank of Oil Creek there. I gently made my approach. Looked over the side of the bridge. No turtles. Yet something else was there. One Common Merganser duck that was heading under the bridge. It suddenly changed course and headed downstream. It was not alone. One by one, duck after duck followed. I counted 27. It was a wonderful sight! As they swam off I turned around only to find a second group, just as large, heading upstream. What was going on? An early migration. In total, the flock that stopped to rest numbered over 65. Along the GVGT you can find many sections that sit right next to local waterways like Oil Creek. These waterways provide perfect landing and takeoff zones for a wide range of waterfowl. From now through November a number of species will be traveling through. So keep a keen eye, and don't forget to share your GVGT experiences with us!



Common Mergansers on Oil Creek at the Old Main Street bridge, Hinsdale. Photo: Matthew Laun.

COMING SOON!

Little Italy Nature Preserve Official Opening and Ribbon Cutting

The Genesee Valley Conservancy and the Town of York Historical Society
Monday, October 12, 2026 • 11:00 a.m.

Schedule

10:00 a.m. — Gather at the Retsof Trailhead, 2670 Spring Street, for coffee and doughnuts. Park at the end of the street or along the road. ADA parking in front of the LINP signs.

11:00 a.m. — Dignitary comments, dedication, and ribbon cutting (bring your scissors). Official photograph.

11:45 a.m. — Hike Through History along the historic Little Italy Trail to the Longhouse at the Western Door and Rose's Bar and Grill in Greigsville (1 mile, mostly flat/moderate; option to return to Spring Street before the creek crossing).

12:30 p.m. — Snacks and celebration at Rose's Grill. Parking/shuttle available.

Info: GVC 585-243-2190 • YHS 585-519-3017

WNY TRAIL TOWN GRANT ON OCT 13TH.

Big ideas start with great conversations. As an eligible Western New York Trail Town Grant (WNYTTG) applicant, you're invited to join us on Tuesday, October 13 at 3pm via Zoom to connect with local leaders and representatives from communities in and around your region to share past WNYTTG project successes, brainstorm new possibilities, and build regional momentum. This will be an open discussion for you (ahead of our next grant round opening in January 2027) to get inspired by projects in your area that were funded in the past and to float ideas by residents of other Trail Towns and staff of Parks & Trails New York.

We'll quickly touch on key objectives and the 2027 grant round timeline for newcomers, but the bulk of the hour is yours—dedicated entirely to dynamic networking and interactive ideation!

Register in advance: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/nJko4HBJRU6zRIjwxYbbrw

If your schedule is full, please extend this invitation to a colleague or community partner ready to talk about future projects.

Learn more about Western New York Trail Town Grants

We hope to see you on the 13th!

THE TRAIL TOWN EXCHANGE ON OCT 16TH.



Trail towns, gateway communities, agencies, and partners will trade case studies, practical resources, and ideas on community development, stewardship, and placemaking. The day opens with "What Does It Mean to Be a Trail Town?" and includes a session on building a sustainable Trail Town program.

Register: www.eventbrite.com/e/trail-town-exchange-registration-1997854502598

Program and speakers: just-trails.my.canva.site/2026-trail-town-summit

Note: This is a national Community of Practice event, separate from the Oct. 13 Parks & Trails New York Trail Town Grant Zoom. Both can sit on an events page.

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT: JEREKO GEAR



Photo courtesy of Jereko Gear, jerekogear.com.

Jereko Gear, FoGVG's business member, operates out of the LivCo Basecamp in Mount Morris — a short step from the Genesee Valley Greenway. The shop's line is simple: getting you out there.

Owner Jeremy Kocsis stocks new and used outdoor gear, runs a consignment program, and repairs worn equipment so it stays on the trail instead of in the landfill. The bike shop handles tune-ups, rentals, and e-bikes for rides on the Greenway and at Letchworth. Snowshoes rent for $15 a day.

Stop in at the Basecamp before your next outing, or look ahead at jerekogear.com. Share a trail photo with #jerekogear.



GUIDED OUTINGS: GENESEE VALLEY GREENWAY STATE PARK

Led by NYS Parks educator Jules Hoepting. Pet friendly.

Thursday, October 8, 4:00–6:00 p.m. — FALL FOLIAGE WALKS: Cuba. Meet at the Bull St. parking area by the gazebo (GPS 42.217149, -78.282242). 3 miles.

Thursday, October 15, 4:00–6:00 p.m. — FALL FOLIAGE WALKS: Nunda Valley Loop. Meet at the Town of Nunda Highway Department (GPS 42.592305, -77.941446). 3 miles.

Tuesday, October 27, 4:00–6:00 p.m. — FALL FOLIAGE WALKS: Scottsville. Meet at Canawaugus Park (GPS 43.018206, -77.747897). 2–3 miles.

Thursday, October 29, 3:00–5:00 p.m. — HIDDEN HISTORIES: Belfast: Murder Warehouse. Meet at Belfast Warehouse along Murray Hill Rd. (GPS 42.342937, -78.125365). 2 miles.

Tuesday, November 3, 2:00–4:30 p.m. — GOOD DAM VIEWS: Beaver Engineering in Black Creek. Will carpool. Meet at the parking area along Route 305 (GPS 42.302858, -78.163122). 3.5 miles.

Saturday, November 14, 1:00–3:00 p.m. — Oakland Locks: Where Water Went Upstairs. Meet at 9280 Oakland Rd., Nunda, 14517. 2 miles.

Saturday, November 21, 2:00–4:00 p.m. — GOOD DAM VIEWS: Mount Morris's Man-Made Waterfall. Meet at the RG&E parking area along Route 36 (GPS 42.739438, -77.882138). 2–4 miles.

Saturday, November 28, 2:30–4:30 p.m. — GET OUTDOORS SOCIAL STROLL: Cuylerville to Chandler Road. Will carpool. Meet at 2958 Cuylerville Rd., Leicester, 14481. 3 miles.

Tuesday, December 1, 2:30–4:30 p.m. — GET OUTDOORS SOCIAL STROLL: York Landing to Fowlerville. Will carpool. Meet at 3249 York Landing Rd., Piffard, 14533. 2.5 miles.

Friday, December 11, 2:30–4:30 p.m. — GET OUTDOORS SOCIAL STROLL: Wadsworth Junction to Canawaugus. Will carpool. Meet at Canawaugus Park (GPS 43.018206, -77.747897). 3 miles.

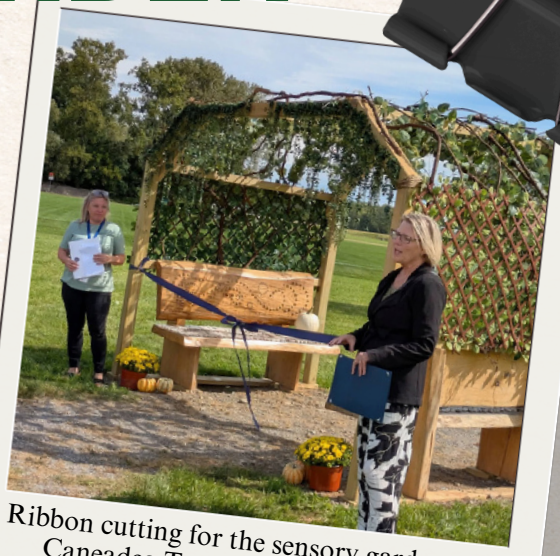
Thursday, December 17, 2:30–4:30 p.m. — GET OUTDOORS SOCIAL STROLL: Piffard to York Landing. Will carpool. Meet at 3238 Genesee St., Piffard, 14533. 3 miles.

For more information:
Visit Jules's full-page ad and The Genesee Naturalist
Genesee.Education@parks.ny.gov
or call 585-493-3680

SENSORY GARDEN

SENSORY TRAIL RIBBON CUTTING





Ribbon cutting for the sensory garden at Caneadea Town Park, Houghton, September 15. The space was created by local artist Eric Jones.

Julie Schmidt, from Senator George Borrello's office, and Lee James, from Assemblyman Joe Sempolinski's office, presented a certificate of recognition. Students from Belfast and Fillmore schools came to try the garden. Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway was among the partners thanked, along with the Town of Caneadea, RVER Group, and New York State Parks.

Allegany County Department of Health cut the ribbon on September 15, 2026, for a sensory garden at Caneadea Park in Houghton. The Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs program built the first phase with a state grant, and organizers are already seeking funds to expand it.

Local artist Eric Jones designed the space. The goal is simple: a peaceful place where children can explore nature through touch, sight, and movement, and where children of all abilities can play side by side.

