Q2 - June 2026 FOGVG.ORG

NEWSLETTER

Friends *of the* Genesee Valley Greenway



Welcome to Summer on the Greenway!

Happy summer, trail family! As we welcome the longer days and the warm, golden light filtering through the canopy, the Genesee Valley Greenway is looking better than ever. We know you're just as eager as we are to get out there and enjoy it, so we've gathered a collection of stories, projects, and milestones from our community to get your summer started right. From massive tree-planting successes in Wheatland to the historic preservation of "Little Italy" and the inspiring journeys of our newest members, this issue is a celebration of the miles we share. Pour yourself a cold drink, find a comfortable spot, and join us in celebrating everything that makes the Greenway the heart of Western New York.

Trail Tip of the Season: Experience the Golden Hour

The best way to enjoy the Greenway this summer is during the "Golden Hour"—just after sunrise or before sunset. Here is why you should plan your next outing around it:

- **Beat the Heat:** Avoid the midday sun for a much cooler, more comfortable hike or ride.
- **Wildlife & Serenity:** The trail is quietest now, making it the best time to spot wildlife and enjoy the peace of the woods.
- **Perfect Lighting:** Whether hiking or taking photos, the soft, warm light eliminates harsh shadows and makes the trail look magical.
- **Safety First:** If you stay out as the sun dips low, always bring a light or headlamp and wear bright clothing to ensure you stay visible.

Show Us Your Best Shot! We love seeing the trail through your eyes. Tag us on social media or email your best Golden Hour photos to be featured in our next newsletter!

FRIENDS OF GENESEE VALLEY GREENWAY



From Rails to Recreation

Our Story

When we formed the Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway in 1993, we looked at the silent, abandoned rail and canal corridors winding through our valley and saw more than just history—we saw potential. What was once the backbone of local industry has been transformed over the last three decades into the 90-mile, multi-use trail we cherish today.

Our mission has remained consistent since that first day: to develop, protect, promote, and maintain the Genesee Valley Greenway State Park in partnership with New York State Parks. Whether you are a casual stroller, a long-distance cyclist, or a history buff, you are part of a vision that stretches from Rochester to Cuba.

We are proud to have supported major improvements, from the 17-mile resurfacing between Rochester and Avon to the new benches and kiosks that make your day on the trail more comfortable. But our work is truly about the connections—connecting people to nature, to our region's rich canal-era history, and to one another.

As we look toward the future, we are focused on closing the remaining gaps in the trail and strengthening our regional network. We invite you to be a part of this ongoing journey—whether you're joining us for a hike, participating in our upcoming Cycle Challenge, or simply spreading the word. Thank you for helping us keep this corridor thriving for generations to come.

Click here to shop our new merch!



Stay informed with FOGVG:

- **Digital News:** Seasonal newsletters featuring park advocacy and trail town updates.
- **Web Presence:** Fresh updates to fogvg.org, Facebook.com/FOGVG, and Genesee Valley Greenway State Park Enthusiasts Group on Facebook
- **Regional Collaboration:** Active participation in the Genesee Valley Trail Town Program, working alongside local businesses and municipalities to boost regional tourism.

Board of Directors

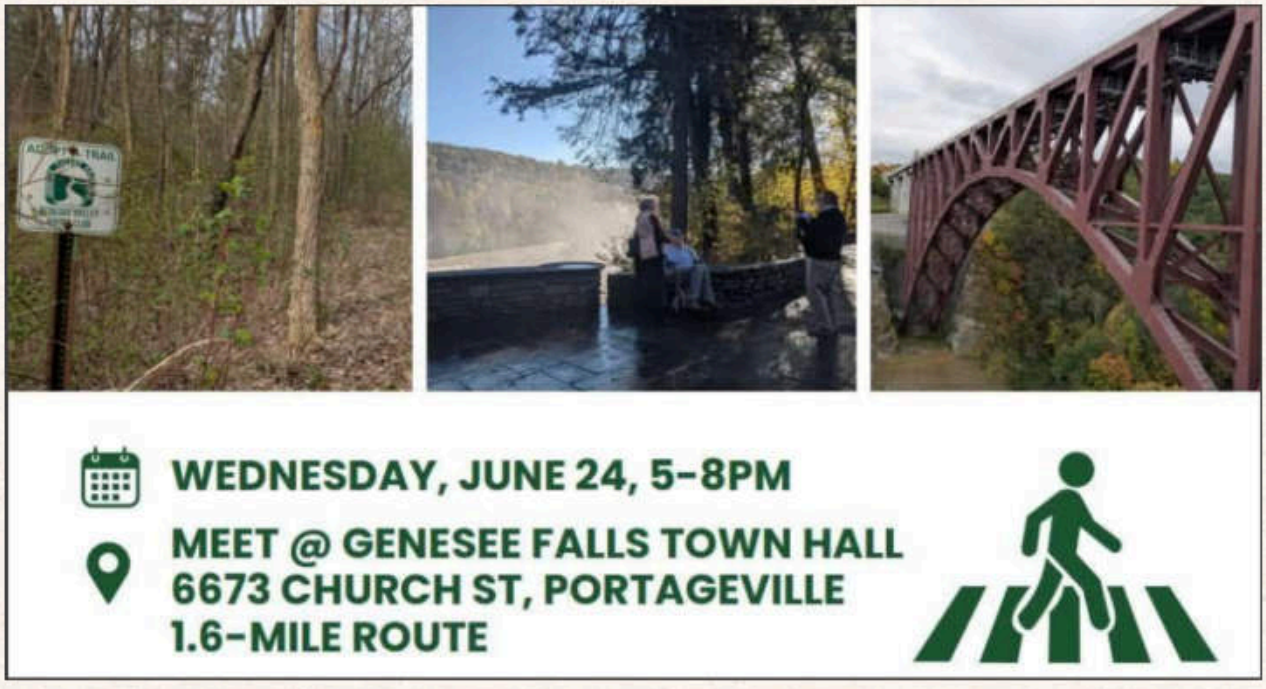
The Friends is governed by a 15-member Board of Directors composed of individuals who live within the Greenway region. Our Directors bring a wealth of practical knowledge and diverse perspectives, offering specialized expertise gained through their vocational, recreational, and intellectual pursuits.

We sincerely thank them for their time and dedication—without their hard work, we could not preserve the Greenway.

- Jonathan Enzinna – Cuba, Allegany
- Phyllis Gaerte - Caneadea, Allegany
- Coleridge Gill - Rochester, Monroe
- Frances Gotcsik – Lima, Livingston
- Beth Hazelton - Belfast, Allegany
- Pam Hill – Mt. Morris, Livingston
- Matthew Laun - Hinsdale, Cattaraugus
- Jason Morrison – Cuba, Allegany
- Davies Nagel – York, Livingston
- Marilee Patterer – Black Creek, Allegany
- Robert Reynolds – Caledonia, Livingston
- LuAnne Roberts - Genesee Falls, Wyoming
- Rebecca Rowley – Fillmore, Allegany
- Carl Schoenthal - Scottsville, Monroe
- Benjamin Woelk- Rochester, Monroe

Trail Town Walking Assessment

Town of Genesee Falls



Join Parks & Trails New York staff for a community walking assessment to evalute the hamlet of Portageville from the perspective of a visiting outdoor recreation user.

What to expect: This slow-paced walk will include frequent stops at trailheads and other key destinations. Ends with a group debrief over dinner at Letchworth Pines. Discussion topics include: How can Genesee Falls - Enhance access to Letchworth, the Greenway, and Genesee River? Drive more visitors to local businesses? Create a more walkable bikeable downtown?

Director Spotlight

Submitted by Matthew Laun, Director FoGVG

It is hard to believe that just a little more than a year ago, my wife Kris and I had never heard of the Genesee Valley Greenway Trail. What started as a search for some recreational property led to our introduction to the trail and an amazing group of people who voluntarily care for, promote, and grow this amazing WNY resource, the FOGVG!

My name is Matthew Laun. I am a Disabled Army Veteran with a background in social work. Kris has a background in art history and is a blogger. We are both outdoor enthusiast who enjoy gardening, hiking, camping (having recently changed from tents to a camper), and kayaking. We've enjoyed learning the story of the GVGT and hiking the Cuba and Hinsdale sections over the last year.



We look forward to getting to experience more of the trail and meeting and getting to know more friends at the FOGVG.

Little Italy in York

Submitted by Davies Nagel, Director FoGVG

Last June, a forty year old idea finally came to fruition. Nearly 60 acres of forest and stream along with the remnants of an historic salt miner's settlement known as Little Italy, will be protected in perpetuity. The majority of the area was donated by Mark Occhioni, whose father actually lived in the small mining town whose 35 foundations can still be seen. The Genesee Valley Conservancy, through a generous gift from the Frank DiMino Foundation, was able to add the Preserve to it's protected spaces.

The two mile Little Italy Trail in the Preserve winds its way along Bidwell's Creek connecting the hamlets of Retsof and Greigsville and is the critical piece in the effort to connect the trails in the Town of York.

Two miles to the east (along an abandoned rail bed) is the Genesee Valley Greenway stretching 90 miles from Rochester to the Southern Tier. A mile to the west (along another abandoned rail bed) the Groveland Secondary (Phoebe Snow) Trail extends 22 miles to the Town of Alexander. Discussions are under way to extend trails from the Buffalo area to Alexander which would complete the circuit. Let's hope it takes less than another forty years to connect these three trails in in York and thereby enhance the trail experience in Western New York.



An Eastern White Pine, the Haudenosaunee Tree of Peace, being planted at the Western Door of the Little Italy Nature Preserve located in the Town of York, New York.

I Love My Park Day Update

Submitted by Maureen Leupold

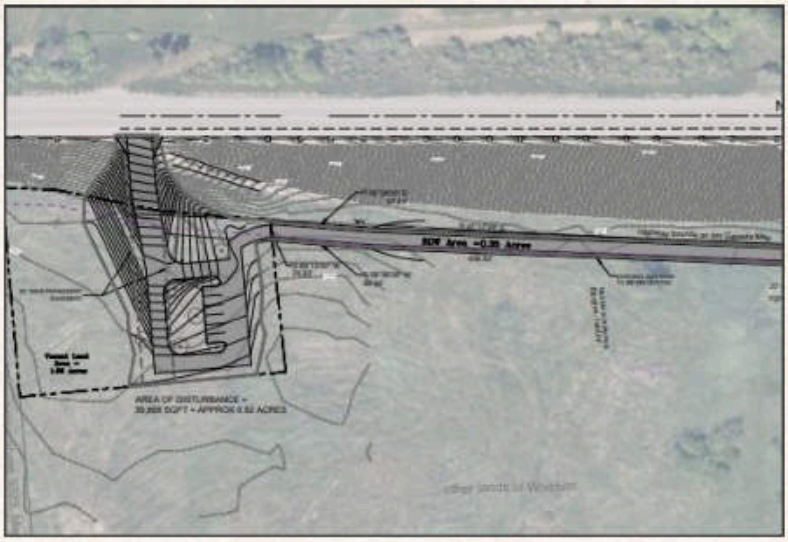
The community was called to help plant trees and was answered by over 20 folks! I Love My Park Day at Indian Allan Park was a great success! The effort put into planting approximately 200 trees along the trails was incredible! It helped that it was a beautiful Spring day along Oatka Creek. The trees came to our town from a US Forest Service grant secured by Monroe County Soil and Water Conservation District. Thank you to Oatka Creek Watershed Committee and the Town of Wheatland for bringing this 4th planting event to our beautiful new park. These trees, a nice mix of native hardwoods, will help shade Oatka Creek and replace the dead ash. Thanks to everyone who helped make this effort a great success!





Cuba Access Project

With the recent acquisition by New York State of the abandoned Conrail corridor between Cuba and Belfast, plans are underway to create access and connectivity for vital sections of the Greenway in Allegany County. The new corridor serves as a parallel route to the much lower (and wetter) Genesee Valley Canal corridor which has proven to be a challenge to redevelop. Sections of the new alignment are very close to the former canal and will allow the creation of "loop" trails and improved access to birding areas and better infrastructure for trail development. Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway are directly involved in two initiatives to support this effort.



In cooperation with the Town of Cuba and anticipated donations of land and equipment from a local property owner, support from the Allegany Area Foundation has been secured to plan and develop a new trail access area for the east side of Rte 305 north of the I-86 interchange. This project will create parking spaces for trail users and create a direct connection to Cuba Rushford School by way of an improved trail corridor. For the first time, students will be able to access the school on their bicycles, avoiding a lengthy section of busy state highway!

Additionally, a sizable donation has been received to help push the development of resurfaced loop trails near Black Creek, a hamlet between Cuba and Belfast. This contribution along with future planning and funding will highlight an important area of the trail that will reopen some beautiful sections of trail.

A Journey Here

Submitted by By Maggie Ridge, former Village of Scottsville Mayor

The Greenway Connection: Our story begins with the Genesee Valley Greenway State Park. At the time, my husband, John, and I were living in a comfortable suburban home in Chili. John has always been an avid hiker and biker, and one of his favorite places to ride was "the Greenway" in Scottsville. He often told me about the trail—where it was and the wildlife he saw there, including snakes, snapping turtles, rabbits, and deer. I didn't know Scottsville well. I only vaguely remembered that it had a Wegmans and a McDonald's, and that my mother would get speeding tickets on North Road when she came over for dinner.

Finding Home in Scottsville: One day, while driving from our home in Chili to the trail, John noticed an open house on Rochester Street and said, "Just for grins, let's take a look." I was up for it. It was a beautiful late summer Sunday, and we immediately fell in love with the property. Nearly 18 years later, we are still enjoying our circa-1858 Victorian home. A lot can happen in 18 years. We came to love village life. John continued biking and hiking along the Greenway, and during COVID, I finally gave in and took a few walks there myself. He was right: it is a wonderful place to hike and bike.

Stepping Into Village Life: Several years after we moved, I found my way into village politics almost by accident. After hearing about a public hearing on updating the village code to allow backyard chickens—an issue that stirred strong opinions on both sides—I walked down to the Municipal Building out of curiosity. That evening became both my first public hearing and my first Village Board meeting. If you're keeping track, I was pro-chicken. It was inspiring to witness democracy at work, and I had no idea that about eight years later I would become mayor of this small, vibrant village. I had been thinking about retirement for some time. John had retired early and loved having more time for biking and hiking. I wasn't quite ready to stop working, but when I was approached about running for mayor, the case was compelling. I was interested enough to run, and I was sworn in on April 1, 2022.

Building the Northern Gateway

I was excited to work with the Wheatland Trail Town Committee on projects that would enhance the Greenway's visibility, use, and public awareness. I didn't know much about grants or grant writing at the time, but funding was available. In March 2022, the WTTC received the largest award among all the applications, totaling approximately $11,000. In March 2023, on behalf of the Village of Scottsville and with generous help from the committee, I submitted my first grant application. We were awarded approximately $5,000. The Village complemented the two grant awards with additional funding and in-kind labor as a match. The overarching vision was to identify Scottsville as the "Northern Gateway" to the Greenway. Together, these efforts—supported by committed volunteers, shared talents, the Village of Scottsville, and the Town of Wheatland—have made that vision a reality. I smile every time I drive by.

A Lasting Reminder

As Margaret Mead said:

"Never underestimate the power of a small group of committed people to change the world. In fact, it is the only thing that ever has."

Notes from the Trail: Belfast Trail Town

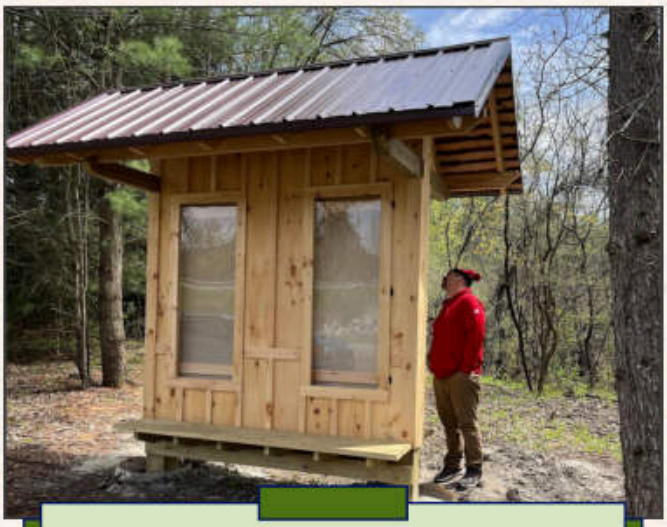
Submitted by Beth Hazelton, Director FoGVG

There's a lot happening along the GV in Belfast NY. This past winter, the Town of Belfast voted to become a Trail Town after a year of working closely with PTNY. This spring, PTNY granted Belfast a WNY Trail Town grant for $15,000! The grant will add much needed infrastructure to both the Greenway and Downtown Belfast including trail and road signage, kiosks and bike racks- in town and at the trail- benefiting both trail users and Main Street. The grant will also create an interactive rubbing project along a mile of the trail in connection with the Belfast Public Library.

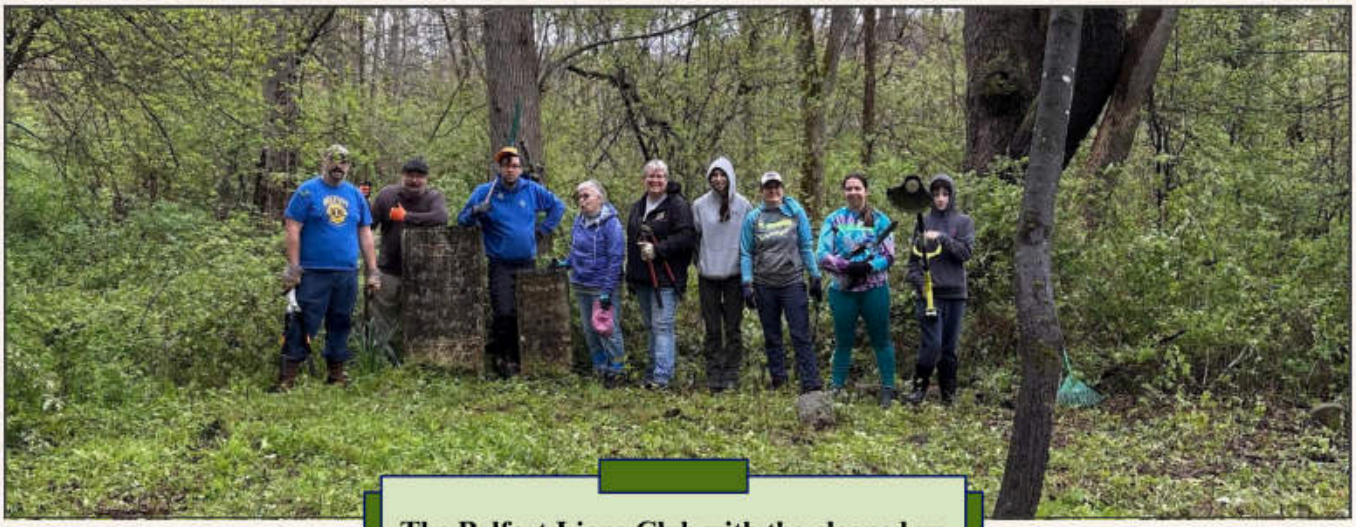
This summer, the town highway department will be replacing a culvert from the old GV canal and helping the GVSP to build a much needed parking area next to the trail.
In May the Belfast Lions Club worked to clean up the Old Irish Cemetery along the Greenway in Belfast (off North Lake Road). Several Lions members came out to lend a hand and hack back at the Multifloral rose bushes that took over the area.



Belfast Central School 2nd Graders on a scavenger hunt on the Greenway Trail in Belfast.



GVSP installed a new kiosk at the Route 305 Trail parking lot in Belfast. Posters/information to come soon.



The Belfast Lions Club with the cleaned up Old Irish Cemetery.

Mindful Moments on the Greenway

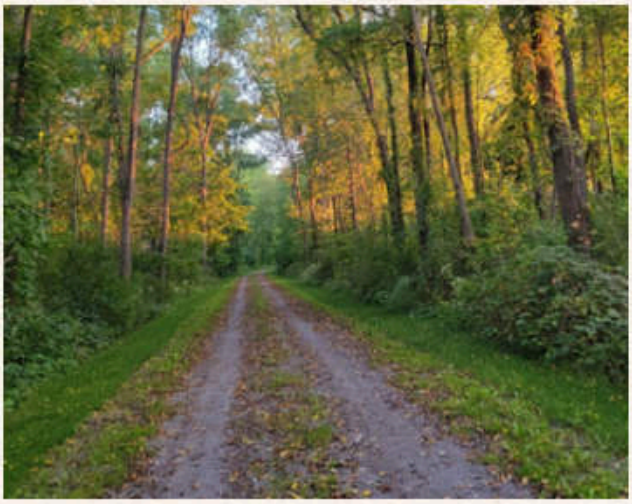
Summer Trail Tips: How to Savor the Season

As the temperatures rise, our Greenway transforms into a lush, vibrant corridor of life. It's easy to focus on "hitting our mileage" or moving quickly, but summer is the perfect time to slow down and practice a little mindfulness while you enjoy the trail. Here are three simple ways to turn your next walk or ride into a restorative experience:

- The 5-4-3-2-1 Sensory Walk: When you reach a shady stretch of the trail, stop for a moment. Acknowledge 5 things you see (the patterns of light on the leaves, a wildflower, a butterfly), 4 things you can hear (the rustle of wind, birdsong, the crunch of gravel), 3 things you can feel (the breeze on your face, the texture of your bike grips or hiking poles), 2 things you can smell (damp earth, pine, fresh grass), and 1 thing you can taste (keep a water bottle handy and notice the cool sensation of a refreshing sip).

- Seek Out the "Green Cooling": Summer heat can be intense, but the Greenway's canopy offers a natural, air-conditioned sanctuary. Plan your outings during the early morning "golden hour" or the late evening, when the trail is quietest and the wildlife is most active. You'll find the temperature drops significantly under the shade of the native hardwoods—many of which were just planted by our incredible volunteers!

- Leave No Trace, Take Only Peace: Practice "mindful stewardship." As you enjoy the trail, consider carrying a small bag to pick up any litter you see. Knowing that you've left the trail better than you found it is one of the most rewarding ways to feel connected to the land.



Whether you are exploring the new sections in Cuba or relaxing near Oatka Creek, we hope you take a moment this summer to truly be on the Greenway.

Happy trails!

The Big Event!

September 12th 2026 marks the third edition of the Greenway Cycle Challenge. The ride runs from Scottsville to Avon and is a leisurely 10-mile direct link between these two communities. In the past, we have hosted over 250 riders, many of whom have brought back their friends and families and are "teamed" up again for this year's ride. Friends of GVG are happy to plan and sponsor this event each year, with title sponsorship from CooperVision in Scottsville. We are planning some new elements this year, so keep your eyes out for additional information in the weeks ahead.

