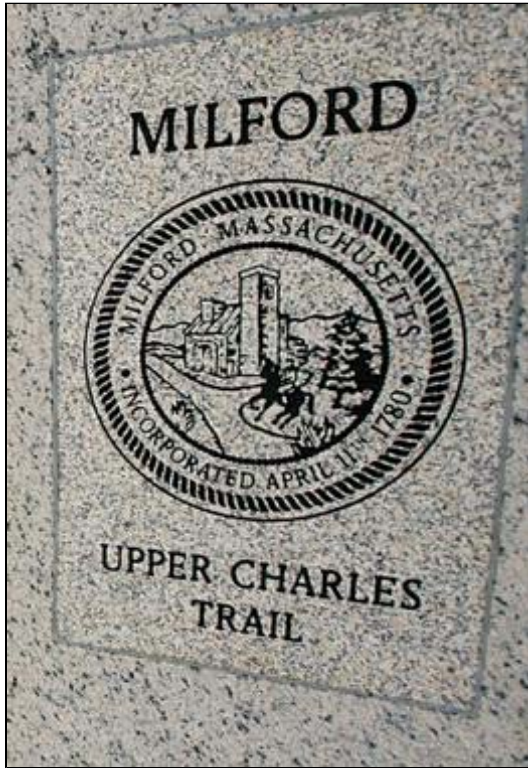


Hail, hail the open trail



By Danielle Ameden/Daily News correspondent
GHS
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Milford, MA -

Saturday is looking like a day for sneakers.

After years of planning and miles of construction, the Upper Charles Rail Trail has had the finishing touches put on it, the granite pillars are in place and an invitation has been sent to the community.

Officials are finally ready to celebrate the ribbon-cutting for the 3 1/2 miles of Milford's meandering trail.

"It really is a major milestone," said Reno DeLuzio, chairman of the rail trail committee. "We've been at this for over nine years and we've finally arrived."

Saturday's rain-or-shine celebration will kick off with a 10 a.m. ceremony at the Rte. 16 trail head across from Sacred Heart Church.

DeLuzio will serve as master of ceremonies and local and state dignitaries, including state Rep. John Fernandes, D-Milford, state Sen. Richard Moore, D-Uxbridge, Board of Selectmen Chairman William Buckley and Parks Commissioner Reno Baci, are slated to speak.

Family-friendly festivities at Fino Field will follow, featuring 50 vendors including Whole Foods Market, the Boy Scouts and the Visiting Nurses Association of Greater Milford, who will conduct blood pressure checks.

The celebration marks the official opening of the recreational trail, which has been used for about a year by people enjoying biking, walking, jogging and rollerblading.

The 12-foot-wide, handicapped-accessible trail has branching entrances on Main Street from Sacred Heart Church and Dunkin' Donuts that meet at Fino Field and lead to the Rte. 85/Interstate 495 overpass.

Though still in the planning stages, Milford's 3-mile-long second stretch of the trail will lead from the Sacred Heart entrance to Holliston and from Deer Street to the Hopkinton town line.

Built on old railroad beds, the multipurpose loop trail will eventually connect Milford with similar stretches planned in Holliston, Sherborn, Ashland and Hopkinton for 20 miles of trail in total.

Following Saturday's ribbon-cutting ceremony, the celebration will continue along the trail and at Fino Field.

The Milford Explorers Post Honor Guard and Senior Center's Silver Sneakers walking group will lead a procession from Sacred Heart, officially starting to break in the paved trail.

At the field, kids will be able to play on a Ninja Turtle moonwalk and take kiddie train rides from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.. There will be bicycle decorating from 9:30 to 11 a.m., with the chance to win a bike during a raffle. A bike helmet giveaway and bike parade sponsored by the Milford Police will start at 11:30, followed by karate and dance demonstrations, women's self-defense and bike workshops.

A fun run led by the Tri-Valley Front Runners will begin at 1:30 p.m. A new mountain bike donated by Benjamin Moore and Milford Bike will be raffled off on Fino Field at 3 p.m., with proceeds benefiting the new Dana-Farber

Cancer Center at Milford Regional Medical Center. Balloons, coffee, ice cream, kettle corn and other treats will be available.

"Dusty not rusty" used bicycles will be collected with \$5 donations by "Bikes Not Bombs," a nonprofit peace organization that ships bikes to economic development projects in South Africa, Ghana and Guatemala.

Friends of the Upper Charles Rail Trail Committee Chairman Pat Rosenthal hopes Saturday's celebration not only brings people together but also inspires the community to come back and explore the trail again and again.

"It's an opportunity for folks to stop and smell the flowers ... to take a step back and slow down. Everybody's always running here and there and everywhere," Rosenthal said. "It's an opportunity for people to get healthy doing a variety of different things."

"It's a place to de-stress, unwind, just relax and meet other people from your neighborhood," she said.

Buckley said he has been impressed by the hard work and initiative Milford leaders and volunteers have taken to turn the town's abandoned rail corridor into an open place capitalizing on the beauty of nature.

"The commitment the community makes to open space, to a healthy way of life, and just in general outdoor activities ... If we don't make these types of commitments as a community ... there'll be none of this left for our grandkids," Buckley said.

"Some of it, for me, is the view," he said. "There are times when you're on it when you could just as easily think you were in state parks in Vermont or Maine or New Hampshire. It doesn't feel at times that you're in the center of Milford."

For more information on the trail or the grand opening celebration, visit www.milfordtrail.org.

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