



The Keystone Hiker - December 2020

Member's Corner

Hiking for the Holidays

This year is coming to a close and the holidays are just around the corner. Consider a gift from KTA for the hikers in your life. A [gift membership](#) with KTA makes a perfect present, unlocking store discounts, access to hiking events and information, and more. Or head to the [KTA store](#) for maps, guide books, or a [KTA Gift Certificate](#) for store orders, event registrations, or membership dues.

For your holiday needs not available in the KTA store, did you know you can raise money for KTA when you shop on amazon? Just use [this link for the amazon smile charity program](#) and a portion of your purchase is donated to KTA's mission.

Chapel Fork Shelter Dedication

At 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, November 7, 2020 Tina and Mike Toole organized the shelter dedication in memorial for Richard (Rick) Heimenz. Under a backdrop of fall leaves and warm temperatures, about thirty friends and colleagues gathered at a newly constructed trail shelter on the Chapel Fork in the Allegheny National Forest, to honor the memory of Rick Heimenz.



Five speakers honored Rick's energy and care for Pennsylvania's trails. The shelter was made possible through his generous contribution to the Keystone Trail Association (KTA) and the efforts of the Allegheny National Forest Chapter of the North Country Trail Association (NCTA). KTA was pleased to help fund the shelter using a portion of Rick's bequest in the amount of \$1,187.

It was noted that Rick had made the largest donation to KTA in the amount of almost \$400,000. This donation is allowing KTA to start a Grants-to-Clubs program supporting KTA members clubs as they fund trail related projects. His

donation also led to the Keystone Trails Endowment Fund. This is a critical step in securing KTA's future as a state wide voice for Pennsylvania's hikers and local trail clubs.



The shelter was mostly pre-constructed at an Amish Mill. It was then transported and finished at the site by volunteers. The site was then improved by the donation of a picnic table by the National Forest Service and provision of a fire ring.

The speakers remarked about Rick's intense concern for the forest and its trails. Over the years Rick worked around the

state with KTA caring for trails. He wanted to protect the environment and enhance hiker's experiences everywhere he went. As an engineer working for the ANF he spent his years building trail bridges, improving roads and trails. He even worked on relocating trails for a better hiking experience. As part of his official duties with the ANF he oversaw the removal of timber sale roads and put them back to a more stable natural setting by returning them to original slope and obliterating the treadway. It was apparent from the speakers that Rick strived for perfection in all of his endeavors.

One of Rick's colleagues mentioned his interest in collecting automobiles. Rick was a very diverse and complex person.

After the speakers were done, a memorial sign was fastened to the shelter in honor of Rick Heimenz. The group then proceeded to a reception that was held at the Kinzua ANF Information Center.

-Bob Merrill

A.T. Ed-Venture Series Stops in PA

Join the ATC on an [amazing virtual A.T. Ed-Venture Series](#), created for young people but engaging for all ages. Starting in Georgia and traveling all the way north to Maine, each session is led by environmental educators providing exciting content across diverse disciplines that connect curriculum and students to the Appalachian Trail. These interactive sessions will be hosted live via Zoom, and then published to YouTube for access at any time. They will take place on the first and third Wednesdays of every month August 2020 through March 2021 at 4:00 pm.

The entry in this series for Pennsylvania explores the question [What Makes a Place Unique?](#) and debuted earlier in November.

Giving Thanks to Trails

Dear fellow hikers and lovers of our footpaths,

Ever since the pandemic began, I've wondered how 2020 will be viewed as we look back years from now. Some of us will see it as just another year, while

others will remember it as a total s***show.

However we come to remember the year that just happened, I hope you noticed the incredible explosion of new hikers, outdoor enthusiasts and nature lovers sharing our trails and forests. While many of our brethren have taken to the streets protesting for what they believe in, many have taken to the woods and trails. It's as if a whole new generation suddenly discovered the joy of the outdoors that we've known for years.

For those of us who have spent lifetimes and professional careers trying to connect more people to nature and the environment, this has been quite a year. The outdoors simply has a power to make things seem better and reduce the tensions of the day. When we pass a fellow hiker on a trail, we do so without knowing or caring about their politics, biases or preferences. We only know that at that moment we each are enjoying a hike in the woods. We are finding our own moments of peace and serenity.

Out hiking, there are no D's or R's, red states or blue states. There is just all of us, out there, enjoying the outdoors, nature, and our hike.

Of course, many of our trails are unknown to so many people or underutilized, while others are overused. This is why KTA works to show people new hiking opportunities, redirect them to lesser used trails and introduce newbies into an activity that is part of who we are. We are honored and grateful to all who support our mission and who have done so over these long and difficult months. Thank you.

Working together, we can continue to preserve the Commonwealths magnificent trail system, promote hiking to new segments of society, provide opportunities for both beginners and experienced hikers, and protect the natural environments we care so deeply about.

This year, on Giving Tuesday, please consider supporting KTA and our efforts on trails, hiking, conservation and the environment, and representing you, the Pennsylvania hiking community.

Donate

Favorite Hiking Trail Survey

KTA is conducting a member survey of our favorite PA hiking trails and we want to hear from you!

Visit kta-hike.org/trail-survey or email us listing a few of your favorite trails.

Please include location, brief description, approximate distance, and why you think it's special, and please include any rail trail or historic trails as well. We will compile a list of these trails for our membership and it will help KTA in promoting and protecting trails in the Keystone State. Thank you!

Volunteer's Corner

KTA A.T. Group Rebuilds Trail Near Lehigh Gap

A small group of trail volunteers completed some important restoration work on the Appalachian Trail on a Saturday in early November. The A.T. section just south of Lehigh Gap was washed out by a torrential tropical storm last storm. The storm cut huge ruts in the trail and washed out water bars. Hikers had started a bushwhack trail up the side of the hill to avoid the damage.

Five volunteers from the Keystone Trails Association Appalachian Trail group performed the restoration work on a beautiful fall day. Charlie, Janet, Kathy, Steve and Jim hauled rocks from nearby piles and placed them in the ruts. They rebuilt several water bars to divert water away from the trail. The bushwhack trail was blocked with trees and brush at both ends. The group plans to put up some wooden posts with painted blazes to direct hikers to the proper trail. The group stayed socially distant and followed the A.T.'s guidelines for trail work during the pandemic.

Thanks should also go to the Cumberland Valley Appalachian Trail Club and Appalachian Trail Conservancy for allowing the KTA's A.T. group to borrow tools for the work.



2021 Trail Care

Schedule to be announced

Visit <https://www.kta-hike.org/trail-care-and-trail-crew> for more info on volunteering with KTA

Hiker's Corner

Jeff's Jaunts - Hike to Panther Hill Vista and Panther Creek Falls - Pinchot State Forest

This hike is in the northern part of the Thornhurst Tract of the Pinchot State Forest. It leads to a scenic cascading waterfall and a beautiful view from Panther Hill. It's not often

when there is a great view and a falls along the same and relatively short hike. Once you leave the road, this hike is off trail. Hopefully someday the Pinchot Trail will be extended to include the view and falls.

High Bridge Road leads to the parking area. It is a dirt road and a little rugged, although a car can handle it. However, a vehicle with some clearance is a good idea. From the parking area, walk around the gate and follow the road. It descends to Panther Creek and crosses it. Continue on the road as it inclines and reaches a creek to the left, also Panther Creek. Here, leave the road and hike up along the creek. The forest is not brushy, but there are saplings and the protruding branches of beech trees. Reach Panther Creek Falls at, a 20 foot falls with several drops in a scenic rocky glen, located at approximately 41.279953, -75.627438. Continue up the creek a short distance; you will want to turn left and climb to work your way up to the vista on Panther Hill. You will pass old forest and logging roads, or ATV trails, but none go in the direction you need. Continue to climb. You will encounter steep rocky slopes with ledges. There are many ways to make the climb, simply choose the route that is best for you.



Reach the vista at 41.278351, -75.620993 and enjoy the stunning 180 degree views. You can see for over 40 miles with the vast plateaus of SGL 57 in the distance. The Nesbitt Reservoir can also be seen, as well as the point of Bald Mountain. The panorama is spectacular with many ridges and deep valleys. In October, the lowbush blueberry bushes at the vista turn a vibrant red, making the view that much more beautiful. South of the vista is an escarpment of cliffs with more views, although Panther Hill Vista is the most scenic. Views of this magnitude are rare in the Thornhurst Tract of the Pinchot State Forest.

[-Jeff Mitchell](#)

State Parks Require Negative Covid-19 Test

For the safety of visitors and staff, DCNR will be requiring guests to cancel and refunds will be issued if they are unable to honor mitigation efforts:

- Anyone who visits from another state must have a negative COVID-19 test within 72 prior to entering the commonwealth;
- If someone cannot get a test or chooses not to, they must quarantine for 14 days upon arrival in Pennsylvania before visiting a state park or forest; and
- Pennsylvanians visiting other states are required to have a negative COVID-19 test within 72 hours prior to their return to the commonwealth or to quarantine for 14 days upon return.
- Out-of-state visitors cannot use state park overnight facilities to meet the 14-day quarantine requirement. Out-of-state residents visiting for the day also must comply with the mitigation efforts.

Visitors who don't comply may be fined between \$25 and \$300.

Visitor center exhibit halls and interpretive areas will be closed, and all indoor programs will be canceled. Restrooms will continue to be available.

Masks are required to be worn:

- In park and forest offices;
- In any other indoor public space including restrooms;
- During both indoor and outdoor special events and gatherings; and
- Outdoors when visitors are unable to adequately social distance.
- All outdoor environmental education and recreation programs will be limited to 20 people, to include staff and volunteer leaders. Masks must be worn by all participants, and services will be denied if visitors cannot comply.

These changes are effective today, and will remain in effect until at least January 15, 2021.

Visit [DCNR](#) for more information.

Legislative Update

HB 2934 - Rep. Jennifer O'Mara (Delaware Co.)

Note: This legislation will not be considered this session but should be supported if reintroduced in a future legislative session.

Article 1, Section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution requires the Commonwealth to conserve and maintain the environment for all of its citizens. It is our duty to uphold that directive to the best of our abilities not only because it is constitutionally required, but because we owe it to future generations of Pennsylvania citizens.

In order to better care for our environment, this legislation will create a Public Natural Resources Trust Fund, which would receive money from oil and gas developed on the over 385,000 acres of Pennsylvania land leased for such development. The money would be put into a trust fund and used for various conservation projects carried out by the Pennsylvania Departments of Conservation and Natural Resources, Environmental Protection, and Agriculture. These investments would benefit state parks and forests, county and municipal land, organizations that hold land for public benefit, and nonprofit organizations that work on environmental conservation, restoration, protection, and recreation.

Pennsylvania is a beautiful place to live, work, and raise a family. We have a constitutional responsibility to keep it that way through conservation and environmental protection efforts.

Planned Relocations on

KTA's Section of The Appalachian Trail



A group of volunteers from KTA has been maintaining a section of America's most popular long-distance trail, the Appalachian Trail, since 2016. The section is in eastern Pennsylvania north of Allentown, from Lehigh Furnace Gap to Little Gap. The midpoint of the section is at the Lehigh River. Just east of the Lehigh crossing is the famous Lehigh Gap rock scramble, one of the highlights of the entire 2,190 mile A.T. KTA's Lehigh Gap crew also maintains two side trails, the North Trail on the west side of the Lehigh and the Winter Trail on the east side. Altogether, the KTA group maintains 16 miles of trail.

Some improvements and relocations of the A.T. have been in the works even before KTA took over the section. Hikers on the A.T. and adjoining trails may see marker flags along the footpath. These are NOT to be followed by hikers at present. They simply mark the planned route of the trail. Continue to follow the white blazes for the A.T. and blue blazes for the side trails.

Here is a brief description of the planned relocation and improvements. A more detailed description, including maps, can be found on the KTA Lehigh Gap A.T. website.

West of the Lehigh River the A.T. will be rerouted and will be connected to the present North Trail. This trail has several spectacular views of the Lehigh Gorge and in general is a much better trail than the present A.T. The new A.T. will be rerouted on a different path down the ridge, with a new side trail to the Outerbridge A.T. shelter. It will continue on a mostly rerouted path down to Lehigh Gap.



Speaking of relocations, PennDOT is planning to either replace or make substantial improvements to the bridge that carries PA Route 873 and the A.T. over the Lehigh River. We've participated in meetings including PennDOT, Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and other interested parties. Although we don't have complete details of the new bridge yet, we do know that it is extremely likely that the A.T. will follow a new sidewalk on the north side of the bridge, rather than the current path on the southern side. We'll provide more details to the hiking community as we receive them.

Going over to the east side of the Lehigh River, the trail will begin the ascent up the mountain closer to the parking lot, via a series of switchbacks. The famous rock scramble will remain almost unchanged. After the rocks, the A.T. will be rerouted back onto the former A.T. corridor. The trail was temporarily rerouted off the corridor to allow for a remediation project. That section was severely damaged by fumes coming from a now defunct zinc processing plant down the mountain in Palmerton. Over the past several years contractors have

removed the tainted soil and planted trees and grasses. Over the next few years, the trail will be moved back to the top of the mountain.

Closer to Little Gap you'll find a section of trail that has already been rerouted by ATC's Mid-Atlantic trail crew. Lastly, the most recent relocation that you can walk on now was done on the Winter Trail. The crew did a great job of rock work there, including creating a couple of new views of the Lehigh Gorge.

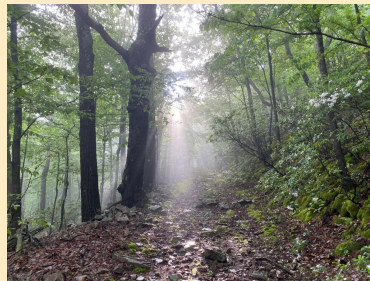
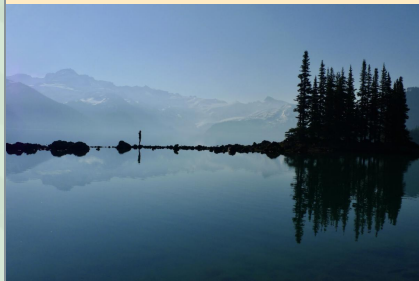
If you are interested in more information about KTA's A.T. section, including updates on the relocation projects, visit the website dedicated to the Lehigh Gap A.T. section, found at <https://ktalehighgapat.weebly.com/> To contact the folks who manage the KTA A.T. section, use this email: ktalehighgapat@gmail.com

-Jim Foster

2020 Summer/Fall Photo Contest

Submit your photos at <https://www.kta-hike.org/photo-contest.html>

The winner will be announced in January and will receive a free 1 year membership and KTA hat.



Community Calendar

KTA Events

Spring Hiking Weekend - April 9-11 Wellsboro

Stay at the historic Penn Wells Hotel and enjoy a weekend of fantastic hikes in and around the Pine Creek Gorge.

Allegheny Front Trail Slackpack - May 14-17

Hike the AFT with a daypack. 4 days of hiking, 41.75 miles, carpool each day between the trail and accommodations at Black Moshannon Lodge.

Old Loggers Path Slackpack - June 11-13

In 3 days of hiking, you'll have checked the OLP off your list, made friends, and maybe even shaved off some waistline.

Black Forest Trail Slackpack July 9-12 or August 20-23 or September 24-27

Take advantage of this incredible opportunity, to complete in ONE WEEKEND the trail that everyone talks about: The Black Forest Trail.

Allegheny National Forest Weekend - August 20-22

It's time to leave the city behind and get back to nature. During our weekend hiking adventure we'll be staying at Groves Lodge in the heart of the National Forest.

KTA Board Zoom Meeting

Dec 10 from noon to 1pm

Contact the KTA office for call in information

Quarterly Meeting

Jan 9 - time and location TBD

We will be back with Hiking Weekends, Slackpacks, and more in 2021!

Community Events

WANT YOUR EVENT FEATURED ON THE COMMUNITY CALENDAR?

KTA will promote your club/organization's major events through The Keystone Hiker, Facebook, and our website. It's a perk of membership! Just submit a list with date, time, location, and link to web page for only those events that the public should see, to ktaadmin@kta-hike.org.

Club Spotlight

Duncannon Appalachian Trail Community



The Duncannon Appalachian Trail Community Advisory Committee hopes that our mission statement "Promoting, Protecting and Preserving Our Outdoor Recreational Resources for Future Generations" will carry over into all changes being considered for the Duncannon Borough, including improved river access and beautification of the town. The Committee plans to support and implement projects and programming that

enhance tourism opportunities for Duncannon as an outdoor recreation destination and encourage everyone to get outside, enjoy nature and recognize the connection between the health and abundance of the region's natural assets and the vitality of its communities. Our volunteer committee meets monthly. We support the efforts of the Trail Clubs maintaining the A.T. in the Greater Duncannon Area including MCM (Mountain Club of Maryland), SATC (Susquehanna Appalachian Trail Club), CVATC (Cumberland Valley Appalachian Trail Club), and YHC (York Hiking Club).

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS

This newsletter is published monthly by Keystone Trails Association. Submissions are accepted on a rolling basis. Opinions expressed are those of the listed authors. The Editor encourages submissions reflecting all viewpoints, but reserves the right to edit material. You are encouraged to submit material (even just a trail closing or care alert!) to the Program Administrator, Casey Schneck, at ktaadmin@kta-hike.org. The deadline for newsletter submissions is the 15th of the prior month. Submissions received after that time will be considered for the next month.

Please reference our **[Editorial-Style Guide](#)** while you compose your piece.