



CELEBRATING NATIONAL TRAILS DAY: EXPERIENCE YOUR OUTDOORS

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Contact

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On Saturday June 3, 2006, Valley Forge National Historical Park hosted a celebration as part of the 14th annual National Trails Day. With primary partners Eastern Mountain Sports and Unilever-Lipton® Tea, the park continued its tradition of recognizing this important annual nationwide event. The celebration took place at the park's Betzwood Picnic Area. Betzwood, located on the north side of the park, provides access to the Schuylkill River and to two multi-use trails. The River Trail—a designated National Recreation Trail—is a 3.5-mile hiking, biking, and equestrian path that provides views of the Schuylkill River. The paved Schuylkill River Trail, at 25 miles and growing, runs from Philadelphia through Valley Forge NHP to Oaks.

Though early morning and mid-afternoon showers occurred during the festivities, it did not dampen the spirits of the more than 1000 visitors who attended the event throughout the day. The celebration featured a Trails Fair complete with displays and exhibits from local and national organizations including the Montgomery County Department of Parks and Heritage Services, Delaware Valley Appalachian Mountain Club, Sierra Club, Horse-Shoe Trail Club, Leave No Trace, Schuylkill Heritage Area, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, US Department of Health-CDC, Friends of Valley Forge National Historical Park, Valley Forge Visitor and Convention Bureau, Starbucks, American Hiking Society, National Outdoor Leadership School, Encampment Store, National Park Conservation Association, Phoenixville Hospital, Upper Main Line Phoenixville YMCA, Gulph Mills Chiropractic Center, Goals Adventure Racing and Montgomery County Equine Council.

Eastern Mountain Sports, which has donated funds over the last two years to assist the park in trail preservation, was on hand to educate visitors about proper kayaking techniques, bike maintenance, hike basics, and packing for hikes. These educational programs featured opportunities for visitors to try out a variety of trails gear. Leave No Trace trainers were present to promote environmental awareness about trails and the ecosystems. The Delaware Valley Orienteering Association instructed visitors on the proper orienteering techniques.

Representative Sarah Pittman, of Unilever's Healthy Parks- Healthy Living program, presented the Lipton® Live Well Challenge. Unilever is the longest-standing corporate partner of the National Park Foundation and a Proud Partner of America's National Parks, a commitment manifest in its global commitment to sustainability and its vitality mission to help people look good, feel good and get more out of life while acting responsibly towards communities and environment. Visitors received information about daily physical fitness and the benefits of recreation along with free samples of Lipton® tea, step-pedometers, and National Trails Day t-shirts.

Over 100 volunteers donated their time to help to prepare and maintain a section of the park's trail system. Volunteers helped to correct poor drainage problems, picked up trash, and removed unwanted debris. Volunteers also helped with the behind-the-scenes work on the event such as preparation, traffic control, booth sets, and clean up.

National Trails Day is characterized by excellent collaborations with environmental, conservation, and health and fitness leaders to educate the community on the significance of trails in our communities. Valley Forge NHP would like to extend a warm "Thank You" to all the sponsors, volunteers, and visitors who made National Trails Day another big success. We hope that events like National Trails Day will continue to grow, so that more people can learn about the many benefits that trails have to offer, the value of trails preservation, and about the significance of their national parks.