Gold Star Memorial Trail gains backing

Ed Zagorski Dodge County Pionier
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Recently, MEC donated $25,000 to the Gold Star Memorial Bike Trail. From left, are Dan Bell, GSMT Committee member; Andrew and Laura Johnson, Gold Star parents; Robert Kamphuis, MEC president; Cindy Steinbach, GSMT committee member and Andy Nelson, GSMT committee member gathered arch 23 to celebrate the donation to the trail. **ED ZAGORSKI, DODGE COUNTY PIONIER**

What began as a grass-roots initiative by a group of Mayville residents to create a safe connection between the cities of Mayville and Horicon is gaining steam and, more importantly, funding to become a reality. The connection is a Gold Star Memorial Trail.

Recently, Mayville Engineering Company donated $25,000 to the project.

“MEC wants to do our part to honor those who served and those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our way of life,” said MEC president Bob Kamphuis.

“MEC employs and has employed many veterans over the years and this is also our way of saying thank you, we appreciate what you’ve done for us.”

Kamphuis said when the committee first came to MEC and presented the early plan for the Gold Star Memorial Trail, he wanted to help.

He wants the funds to attract others to also donate or match pledges , which will result in a double impact.

“MEC hopes that this matching pledge encourages others to give, knowing that when they pledge, it will result in a double impact,” he said.

Kamphuis said the benefits for MEC and our shareholders isn’t monetary.

“It’s knowing and remembering that it takes great sacrifice to accomplish great and worthwhile goals and protect and preserve great ideals. We want to remember and honor the soldiers and their families, some of whom made the ultimate sacrifice,” he said. “As for me, I want to honor the memory of David Johnson and thank the Johnson family for their great sacrifice.”

Last year, the Beaver Dam Community Hospital Foundation pledged $10,000 to the project.

The 14.1-mile trail will stretch from Mayville to Beaver Dam and provide non-motorized recreational

opportunity while creating a link to the existing Wild Goose Trail. The trail will be completed in three phases.

The trail can be used for hiking, biking, cross-country skiing and showshoeing.

The trail is expected to be a catalyst and serve as a model for future initiatives that will provide safer biking access from the Horicon Marsh Education and Visitor Center to Horicon and on to the Wild Goose Trail, according to the Dodge County Park and Open Space Plan.

Dodge County Parks and Trails Manager Bill Ehlenbeck said that for the past two years he has heard from Mayville and Horicon residents who want to see a trail between their two communities.

"If 100 percent of the construction is coming from non-county funds we could support it," Ehlenbeck said.

In March 2014, Dodge County Board supervisors voted to support the Transportation Alternative application submitted to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation for the 2014-2018 award cycle.

The purpose of the TAP application is to secure funds to pay partially for the design and construction of proposed Gold Star Memorial Trail which will link the Horicon Marsh Education and Visitor Center with Mayville to be located within the right-of-way of State Highway 28.

The design and construction of phase one in Mayville's Theiler's Park to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Education Center is estimated at $640,000, which will be raised through grants and donations.

Dodge County Administrator Jim Mielke said if the TAP grant is received by the county it will cover 80 percent of this cost. Fundraising and other financial sources will be sought to cover the remaining 20 percent.

"This is a tremendous opportunity to connect two communities like Mayville and Horicon and possibly beyond to the Wild Goose Trail," Mielke said. "Especially it being a Gold Star Memorial Trail I don't think there is anything like this in the state."

Mielke said this also offers residents and visitors alike a chance to honor and remember the fallen soldiers who once resided in Dodge County.

All the funds raised for this project will go to Friends of Dodge County Parks a not-for-profit 501-3C organization (the same organization that built the Wild Goose Trail). For more information about giving to the project, contact fund raising chair Cindy Steinbach at 387-2140.

Gold Star Memorial Trail

WHAT: A 14.1-mile trail from Mayville to Beaver Dam.

WHY: To remember and honor the soldiers and their families

USES: Hiking, biking, cross-country skiing and showshoeing

DONATE: Contact, Cindy Steinbach at 387-2140.