



Thread Trail gets key donation

By: Sherri Phengchard

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The Carolina Thread Trail has received a \$250,000 gift from Amy and Philip Blumenthal and the Blumenthal Foundation.

The donation will help the Carolina Thread Trail in its hopes to preserve, protect and connect open spaces through an over 500 mile "green ribbon" of parks, trails and conservation corridors, touching 2.3 million people in the Carolinas.

Dean Thompson, the development and communications director for Catawba Lands Conservancy, explained that the money the Blumenthals gave goes into the private capital campaign.

Since its launch in November of 2007, the Grants Committee and The Thread's Governing Board, of which David Blumenthal is a member, have awarded over \$820,000 in catalytic funding to communities from the organization's private capital campaign.

"The catalytic funding that goes to the community helps to leverage public funding to help the communities build their trail segments," Thompson said.

Katie Reeves, Indian Trail senior planner, said Union County has formed a steering committee comprised of municipality and citizen representatives, and they hope to apply for a planning grant from The Thread by mid or early April.

"Once the grant has been obtained, at that point, we will find a contract with a consultant, and then start to go through the planning process for looking at greenway options in Union County," Reeves said.

The preliminary brochures for the Union County threads show that a thread might go to Cane Creek Park. But Reeves said once they start the planning process, they would more specifically identify greenway trail locations.

"We do want trails to connect to parks and certain areas, so we will be looking at destinations and also areas for the trails to connect to adjacent counties thread trails," Reeves said.

Thompson said Union County residents have the opportunity to get involved and decide if they want equestrian trails, natural trails, paved trails or a combination.

One example of a thread in Gaston County is a blue way, which is a river trail. "People are paddling, kayaking and canoeing down that segment of the Carolina Thread Trail," Thompson said.

Sally Ormand, a governing board member, said in an email, "The Thread Trail should have a positive effect on the quality of life in our county by providing greenways for people to enjoy the out-doors, connect children to nature, provide a place for biking and hiking - and hopefully begin to make us a more physically fit community."

A recent press release from The Thread stated that Blumenthal, a dedicated environmentalist, is also motivated by the protection of natural lands and the health and wellness benefits associated with the trail system.

"The Thread is building community in our region in profound ways. It connects two states, towns, neighborhoods, people...it connects lives," states Blumenthal in a recent press release. "In these trying times, what our region – in fact, what our country – needs is to work together on meaningful projects that people really care about."

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