



New Kings Mountain trail brings a vision closer to reality Gateway to the Future

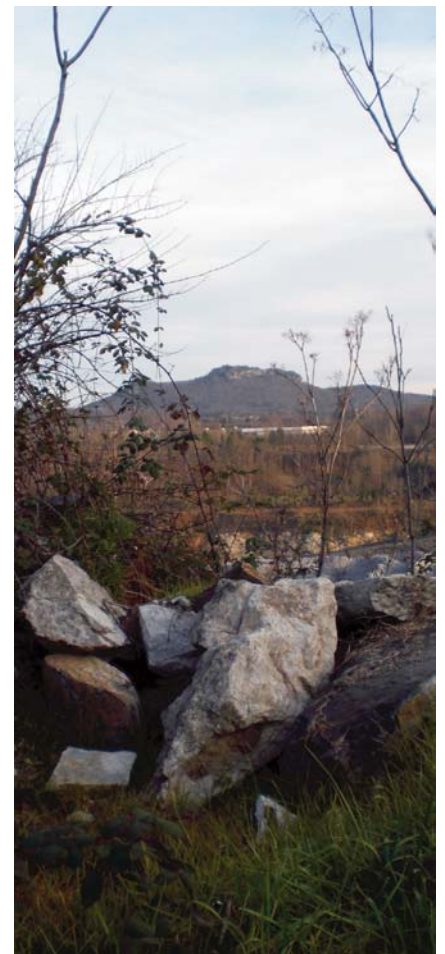
Words by Mark Alan Hudson
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As more than 400 people watched on a beautiful fall morning last November, a ribbon was cut. In some respects, it marked the culmination of almost ten years of work. In others, it signified work yet to be done.

Both represented reasons to celebrate.

Amid congratulatory messages from public officials and words of gratitude from those who shepherded the long process, Phase I of the Kings Mountain Gateway Trail was opened to an enthusiastic crowd ready to enjoy just over 2 ½ miles of trail meandering over more than 60 acres just one half mile south of Downtown Kings Mountain on Battlefield Avenue. The event also served as a dedication to the citizens of Cleveland County for their support of the project to date.

The smiles and joy evidenced were earned through a remarkable collaboration of volunteers, local businesses and governmental entities at the local, state and national levels that made the idea of not simply a trail, but a trail that would link two local state parks, one national park, as well as other trails, one step closer to reality.



According to Shirley Brutko, president of the Kings Mountain Gateway Trails, Inc., the idea for the trail came about through conversations with then recently arrived Erin Broadbent, superintendent of the Kings Mountain National Military Park. Broadbent liked the idea of joining the parks and their trail systems to a local city. She agreed to help locals pursue that vision, along with her fellow superintendents at the state parks and the Overmountain Victory Trail.



That support would be crucial to ultimate success. While the idea was sound, and the commitment was there to move forward, the project faced several hurdles. Funding was one of these but not necessarily the most difficult; the prime spot for the trail was right in the middle of properties owned by several businesses. It was hoped these businesses might be willing to sell the necessary parcels to begin work on the trail; in a best case scenario, it was hoped that some of the property might be deeded without cost as a conservation easement. Through quiet negotiations with these companies, support for the project grew and ultimately, they worked with the organization to grant easements and in some cases, in kind contributions. Brutko says these companies (Chemetall Foote, Martin Marietta, Consortium Group of Kings Mountain and Weir Properties), saved tens of thousands of dollars in costs and perhaps years in time required to move the project forward.

Also instrumental to the process were the three nearby parks—Crowders Mountain State Park in North Carolina and Kings Mountain State Park and Kings Mountain National Military Park in South Carolina. Each lent support and assisted in grant applications that thus far, has brought in more than a half million dollars. Other critical support for the project came from the City of Kings Mountain as well as Cleveland County.

One result of all this collaboration has been that the City of Kings Mountain was designated by the National Park Service as the “gateway community” for all three parks. The portion of the trail complete at this point is part of a larger trail system, some of which is also complete, that will actually join the three parks. When finished, the Gateway Trail will be part of almost 40 miles of trail system accessible from four different locations. It will also be part of the Overmountain Victory Trail and eventually, part of the Carolinas Thread Trail, which will link 15 counties in the Carolinas.

The trail opened with a parking area, restroom facilities as well as several picnic tables, a picnic shelter and grills. The trail itself, mostly with a paved surface making it highly accessible to all visitors, is open for walkers and cyclists.

Phase II of the trail, scheduled for completion in late 2010, will add four miles and bring the ultimate goal even closer to completion, expected to occur in 2015.

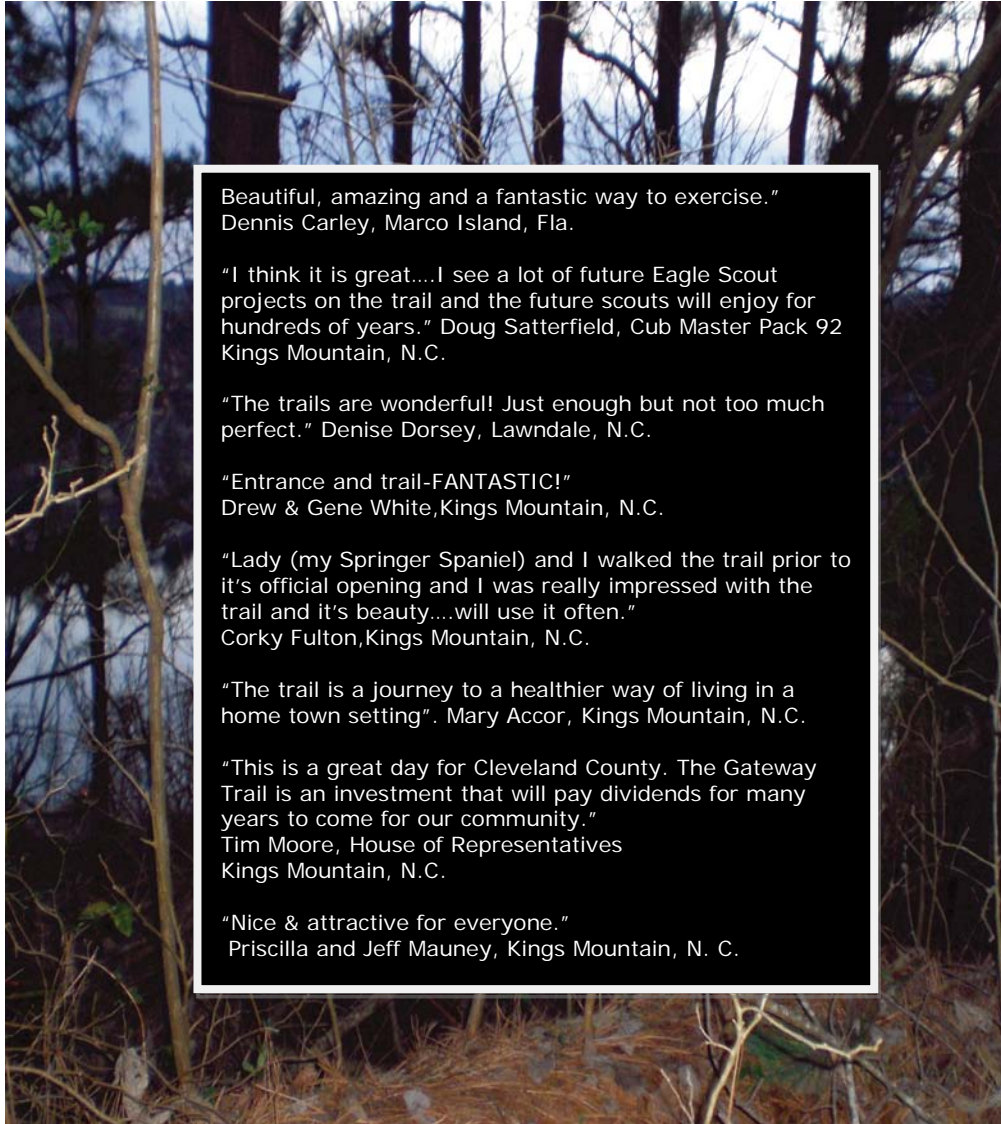
But for now, Brutko is savoring the obvious success of the first phase, noting that on its first official day of being open; more than 1200 people enjoyed the trail and its views.

With a gleam in her eyes, Brutko says the best is yet to come.

Based on what has happened so far, it's easy to believe her.

Details: The web address for the trail is www.kmgatewaytrails.org.

To reach the trail, take the Rt. 216 exit off of Rt. 74 bypass east at Kings Mountain. Turn right off the ramp onto Piedmont Avenue which changes to Battlefield Avenue once you cross Rt. 74 Business. Travel ½ mile to 807 S. Battleground Avenue at the corner of Quarry Road (GPS Coordinates *N35° 13.802' W081°21.030'*).



"Beautiful, amazing and a fantastic way to exercise."
Dennis Carley, Marco Island, Fla.

"I think it is great....I see a lot of future Eagle Scout projects on the trail and the future scouts will enjoy for hundreds of years." Doug Satterfield, Cub Master Pack 92 Kings Mountain, N.C.

"The trails are wonderful! Just enough but not too much perfect." Denise Dorsey, Lawndale, N.C.

"Entrance and trail-FANTASTIC!"
Drew & Gene White, Kings Mountain, N.C.

"Lady (my Springer Spaniel) and I walked the trail prior to it's official opening and I was really impressed with the trail and it's beauty....will use it often."
Corky Fulton, Kings Mountain, N.C.

"The trail is a journey to a healthier way of living in a home town setting". Mary Accor, Kings Mountain, N.C.

"This is a great day for Cleveland County. The Gateway Trail is an investment that will pay dividends for many years to come for our community."
Tim Moore, House of Representatives
Kings Mountain, N.C.

"Nice & attractive for everyone."
Priscilla and Jeff Mauney, Kings Mountain, N. C.

<http://www.foothillspotlight.com/index.php>