



Carolina Gateway: Kings Mountain trail draws a crowd before Saturday grand opening

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Cassie Tarpley

KINGS MOUNTAIN — Avid hikers, Dr. Paul Hendricks, a Kings Mountain dentist, and his wife, Mary Ann, didn't wait for a formal invitation to start enjoying the new Gateway Trails portion ready for a grand opening Saturday.

"We've already walked it and it's really neat," Hendricks told The Star Wednesday. "They've done a wonderful job on it!"

Kings Mountain Gateway Trails Phase I, a wooded park with two looping trails, picnic tables and other amenities, constitutes just the western "tip of an iceberg." Eventually this trail site will link the city, as the National Park Service's official Gateway to the Parks, to the vast historic and recreational tourism magnets of Crowder's Mountain and Kings Mountain state parks and Kings Mountain National Military Park and The Overmountain Victory Trail.

Beyond that, it will become part of the 15-county Carolinas Thread Trail.

"It's very easily accessible and it's really pretty too ... got a nice view when you get to the top of the trail," Hendricks said.

"I really can't wait 'til the next phase is complete, when it joins in the trail at the South Carolina park all the way to Crowders Mountain. I have walked that trail — from the edge of the Battleground all the way to the Linwood Avenue exit."

Hendricks' family is "really impressed," he said, with this addition.

"They've done a first class job. The greenway concept is something we're excited about ... we love to hike and that fits right into our cup of tea."

"We've had a lot of people out here walking it already," said a bubblier-than-usual Shirley Brutko, president of Kings Mountain Gateway Trails Inc., showing off the amenities Monday. "The parking lot has already been full and we're not even open!"

Getting to this point after more than a decade of dreams, Brutko is understandably excited to have overcome early resistance and to have celebrated shining moments, as well.

"Several grants, public and private donations and land easements have all made this awesome project possible. Mining companies Martin Marietta and Chemetall Foote have taken the lead in donating land," she said.

Phase I is about one-third of the project and probably the most expensive, about \$400,000, Brutko said.

"It really looks good and it was built with a lot of grant money, didn't cost the taxpayers anything," said Rick Moore, a Kings Mountain council member and owner of Timm's Furniture, which borders the property.

Half a million dollars came from the N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund — PARTF, Brutko said, with smaller grants from Adopt A Trail and the Recreation Trail Program.

“This is the first project in 20 years to get all three state grants at one time.”

KINGS MOUNTAIN GATEWAY TRAILS, INC.

GRAND OPENING

NOVEMBER 7, 2009

KINGS MOUNTAIN, NORTH CAROLINA

DEDICATION AND HISTORY

Shirley Brutko
President, Kings Mountain Gateway Trails, Inc.

Welcome and thank you for being here on this day of “History in the Making.”

This park and these trails are dedicated to you and the many champions that made it all possible! A scenic and wonderful place to experience nature at its best!

A brief history: Approximately 10 years ago after having started work for the Cleveland County Chamber, I decided to help Kings Mountain connect with its' very rich Revolutionary History. I heard that Erin Broadbent would be coming to the Kings Mountain National Military Park from Washington, D. C. to be the new Superintendent and I was excited about the possibilities. After Erin's arrival, we met to take a tour of the area. Soon after, I invited the three area park superintendents to a City Council meeting to talk about ways of making a connection with Kings Mountain. Erin applied for a grant from the National Park Service and Kings Mountain was officially designated the Gateway to the Three Area Parks. In 2001, a group formed from the local government, businesses, the Chamber of Commerce, and four park superintendents. Bill Lane from the National Park Service, Rivers, Trails, and Conservation division led the group for 4 years.

2005: The Kings Mountain Gateway Trails, Inc. began with a slate of Officers, a Board of Directors, was incorporated, and received a 501c (3) non-profit designation.

2006: The group raised \$25,000 to pay for a Feasibility Study to find a way to connect a trail from the City to the area parks.

2007: Conservation easement documents were signed by two area mining companies; Chemetall Foote and Martin Marietta, and by The Weir and Consortium Properties. Martin Marietta provided the trail head property and Chemetall Foote gave the majority of property for Phase I and 4 more miles of trail and a bridge crossing I-85 for Phase II to be constructed over the next two years. The Kings Mountain Gateway Trails group, Cleveland County and the City of Kings Mountain all signed agreements to be partners for the project with Cleveland County obtaining the ownership. A percent of the easements will eventually be deeded back to the City of Kings Mountain after completion.

2007: Mountain Mama Beauty Pageant and talent show kicked off the fundraising and made more than \$7,500.

2008: A presentation, book signing and dinner hosted by the Kings Mountain Gateway Trails group and World famous writer Robert Morgan led the 2nd fundraiser making over \$3,000. Haden Stanziale was awarded the contract to do a Master Plan and apply for a PARTF grant.

2008: Three grants were received, PARTF for \$500,000, AAT for \$5,000, and an RTP grant for \$75,000. Other gifts received consisted of materials, labor, foundations and individual donations. A groundbreaking was held and clearing began. Haden Stanziale was hired to oversee the project. Eagle Wood, Inc. was awarded the construction contract. Inmates began clearing the trail.

2009: Construction began with the help of inmates and much time, energy and hard work and decision making by the Kings Mountain Gateway Trails group. The City of Kings Mountain constructed the restroom/office facility and volunteers constructed the picnic shelter, the kiosk, assembled the picnic tables and cleared the picnic area. The County installed a septic system. Stonework was done by Broad River Construction.

November 7, 2009: Grand Opening and Dedication of Phase I with a \$400,000 investment.

<http://www.shelbystar.com/news/kings-42880-mountain-carolina.html>