

Quad-City Labyrinth Project

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600 trail enthusiasts flock to national symposium in Davenport

By Christina McNamara | Friday, October 20, 2006 Quad City Times



John Schultz/QUAD-CITY TIMES, photographer. Lia Bellomy, 8, of Pleasant Valley, walks the labyrinth designed by the Quad-City Labyrinth Project and constructed by Aunt Rodie's Thursday at the RiverCenter, Davenport, during the 18th National Trails Symposium.

More than 600 recreational trail enthusiasts from across the country are making connections in the Quad-Cities for a four-day symposium where they'll swap ideas and problem-solve projects in their respective communities.

American Trails, an organization that promotes trails and provides trail information, chose to have its National Trails Symposium in the Quad-Cities this year, including a public expo Thursday night at Davenport's RiverCenter.

More than 30 conservation and recreation organizations as well as convention exhibits offered information about health, fitness in wellness in the Quad-Cities and far beyond.

The symposium has been held in Austin, Texas and Orlando, Fla. in the past, and conducting it here is a compliment to our local trail system, officials said.

"This means we're on the national radar screen in terms of trails. Residents here see our trails everyday and take them for granted," said Joe Taylor, president of the Quad-Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau. Throughout the next several days, land architects, community planners, and advocates for trails will attend seminars and learn how to better trails in their hometowns.

"The Quad-Cities is a leader with the Mississippi River Trail. I bicycled on it, and it was wonderful," said Robert Searns of Littleton, Colo., who serves as chairman of the board for American Trails. Searns said the Mississippi River Trail, which runs locally from Sunset Marina in Rock Island to Savanna, will eventually run from Minnesota to New Orleans. He said headway on plans for the trail will be made at the symposium.



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Quad-Cities Bicycle Club president Errol McCollum echoes Searns' compliments of local trails.

"We have a wonderful system and many communities are envious of it. Short of ours needing signage, it's one of the most extensive and well-developed systems that I've ridden on," he said.

However, McCollum said a monumental effort is underway to get bollards, or large, yellow poles, removed from the Great Mississippi River Trail for safety reasons.

A large labyrinth made of rock, dirt, and grass was set up for attendees to check out. There are currently five labyrinths in the Quad-Cities. Pat McLaughlin, executive director of the Quad-City Labyrinth Project, would like to see them added to health-care facilities and schools.

"They are a path of peace. They provide stress relief and become a sanctuary for people," she said.

Those who enjoy hiking and biking walked through the exhibit hall adding brochures and maps to their bags.

"I'm interested in trails. I bike, hike, and snowmobile. We got a map of Minnesota because we're going on a tour there. I also picked up trail maps to help me out around here," said Barb Mueller of Milan, Ill.

Activities for families also were showcased at the symposium.

"We got information on Niabi Zoo and the Family Museum. And, we got good info on trails, parks, and disc golf opportunities," said Jill Moore of Dixon, Iowa.

A presentation was made to John Turner of Sacramento, Calif., whose great-great grandfather, Iowa Congressman John Lacey, authored the Antiquities Act of 1906. The Act has protected millions of acres of natural resources and archaeological sites.

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