“Preaching to the Choir” is the expression that came to mind when Backpacker Magazine first ran this promotion. I wondered why hikers and backpackers had to be encouraged to get out more, doesn’t that come naturally? For me getting into the natural world nearly qualifies as a personal need, like eating and sleeping. I nearly always finish a hike feeling restored and refreshed. What were the Backpacker editors pushing for?

As I read the articles on this topic it was easily seen that the editors were highlighting some of their favorite places, sharing them with their readers and encouraging those readers to enjoy these scenic or natural wonders or challenging terrain that they had enjoyed themselves. Doesn’t that come naturally?

In this issue of the newsletter I’d like to do something similar in encouraging our members to get out more. Of course, I want you to use and enjoy our own North Country Trail, but what about the situation where only a brief time, an hour or so, is available. No need to despair, recreation can still take place. There are numerous parks and natural areas close in to Traverse City where the City and neighboring townships have reserved public lands for your enjoyment.

I’m a map guy so I will start by encouraging hikers to stop at the Traverse City Visitors Center on Union Street at Grandview Parkway. The Center has a city/region map that is free for the asking and will help you find these nearby natural areas. For instance, there is a massive parkland at the Grand Traverse Commons with trails into the hills to challenge many a hiker. It’s not wilderness but it is refreshing.

Other convenient locations are in Garfield Township. Find the Kid’s Creek Natural Area between the Great Wolf
GTHC Loses Past Leader and Friend, John Briggs

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of John Briggs, past Vice President and Acting President of Grand Traverse Hiking Club. John died in his sleep Saturday, February 7.

John stepped up to the Vice Presidency to expand our Chapter’s boundaries in working with community recreation and getting our name known throughout the area. When our President moved away, he filled those shoes as well. John was a hardworking member of the Board, but incorporated humor in his presentations, hikes, and activities. He completed our 100 Mile Challenge in 2012. We were indeed fortunate to have had John and Nancy present their hike in the mountains of France and Switzerland to us in January.

Our condolences go to his wife of 30 years, Nancy, and to his family. We hold you close in our hearts.

We have asked Nancy to point out John’s favorite place on our 100 miles of the North Country Trail, and the Board has authorized a bench to be built with a memorial plaque for John. We hope it will provide us a place to pause and think of John and his love of the trail as we hike.

If you would like to contribute to this cause you may send a check to NCTA (note GTHC memorial in comment section), 229 E. Main Street, Lowell, MI 49331. Or on line: http://northcountrytrail.org, click on “donate”, click on “in memory of”, put in John’s name. In the comments section put “For Grand Traverse Hiking Club”.

Get Out More . . . continued from Page 1

Lodge and Kohl’s department store. The wetlands there will hold warblers during the spring migration and its loop trail is about 1 mile long. A little farther south, the Miller Creek Nature Reserve can be found behind the stores of Grand Traverse Crossing shopping center. A trailhead is located behind the Aldi store and another behind Home Depot. This trail system follows the stream and out into nearby meadows. Its three loops offer hikes from 3/4 mile to nearly 3 miles long.

Other sites include the Boardman River trails from the Natural Education Reserve to Boardman Lake, then along the east side of the lake on the Boardman Lake Trail. In East Bay Township look for the Refit Nature Preserve at Three Mile and Parsons Roads.

Hiking doesn’t require an expedition and, with a little effort, opportunities can be found close to home. The important thing is to take advantage of those opportunities and get out more!

Jerry Freels, President

Welcome
New Members

Amy Bembeneck Thompsonville
Jo & Donald Oostveen Manton
Tina Mickelson Interlochen
Baltimore Ortega Clarendon Hills, IL
Kevin Omilusik Traverse City
Margie & Jim Breit Williamsburg
Marcy Mailer & John Gerty Williamsburg
Robert Barnes Traverse City
Thomas Smith Cadillac
Nicholas Putala Traverse City
Heather Wilson Traverse City
Patricia Hoffman Petoskey

Thirty three members renewed in November, December and January. Thanks for your support of the NCTA and GTHC!

June Thaden
Upcoming Programs . . June Thaden, Program Chair

**All programs are held at the Nature Center on Cass Road at 7:00 p.m.**

**Tuesday, March 17, Patty and Dave Warner**

**Quetico Falls Chain**
The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in Minnesota and adjoining Quetico Provincial Park in Ontario are over two million acres and 1600 lakes of what many consider the premier canoeing area in the world. After many years of going to the BWCAW (Dave started in 1970, Patty in 2004) this was our second trip to Quetico. Starting from the southeast corner at Cache Bay we headed northwest down the Falls Chain to the center of the park then turned south back to the border then northeast returning to our starting point. We traveled 108 miles by canoe through 30 lakes and across 40 portages in 14 days. But we’re not in it for the miles, we travel at our own pace and like our creature comforts. We’ll describe what we take, what we eat and share some of the things we’ve learned over the years.

**Tuesday, April 17, The GTHC Players present**

**A Trail Runs Through It (Building a Trail in Untrod Places)**

There is a lot that must happen before the beautiful new trail is winding its way through the woods, with its viewpoints and a bench or two, and blazes and signs to point the way. Nearly all the GTHC volunteers are involved in some way. Before becoming involved on the Board and the Trail Crew I had no idea of all the things happening in the background, and I find it fascinating, fun and exciting. There is a reason that several of our members are top NCTA volunteers! The GTHC Players will present a fun retelling of typical experiences of rerouting a trail, rebuilding a short section of trail, or “maintaining” a trail by Adopters of a section of our 100 miles — within a probably hilarious 45 minutes. Come share our joy in creating a pleasant way through our region.

**Tuesday, May 19**, 

**Heather Peyton and Marilyn Hoogstraten**

**Hiking the NCT in North Dakota**

There were birds, bulls, strange gates, and sunshine. We hiked through grasslands, and wood copses, beside lakes, and along country roads. We followed well marked trails, yet sometimes bushwhacked. We lunched with pelicans and cows, scrambled over stiles, and had a great time hiking part of the North Country Trail in North Dakota. There’s more to be done. You might want to join us.

---

Grand Traverse Hiking Club - A Chapter of the North Country National Scenic Trail
James Thomas and his friend Seth will be starting their journey at Lake Sakakawea State Park on March 20. Planning on an average 21 mile days they hope to be in Minnesota about April 10, Wisconsin May 20, entering Michigan’s Upper Peninsula May 30, and reaching the lower peninsula June 25. Adjustments for severe weather, rest days, or other unforeseen inconveniences will likely change this schedule. They will be updating their schedule on social media. I asked James what led to this undertaking:

The initial idea to thru-hike the North Country Trail formed a few years after we began hiking local spots such as Sand Lakes Quiet Area and the Manistee River Trail. Something was compelling us toward a ‘true’ challenge, one that would test our mental and physical endurance as well as our abilities to plan, research, and carry out an adventure. We read about the success of hikers attempting the fabled Appalachian Trail, growing more inspired at the proposition of a long distance/thru-hike. Seth and I entertained this idea to hike the AT in 2013, but little did we realize Luke “Strider” Jordan had already began his own thru-hike of the NCT - the same trail where all of our inspiration began! It wouldn’t be until Luke quietly passed by our hometown of Traverse City during the blazing hot summer before we came across his journey on Facebook, eventually leading us to his journal entries and the story of how he came to his adventure. This served to bolster our already growing interest in the world of thru and long distance hiking, and made us more seriously consider the NCT in lieu of the AT.

Later in the year, the paths of Cyndi & Terry Dickey crossed my own during an overnight hike along the NCT in Sand Lakes. We discussed the trail as well as Luke’s current thru-hike, then we spoke about their progress with the ‘100 mile challenge’ - the Grand Traverse Hiking Club’s challenge to hikers involving all 100 miles of the chapter’s section, usually completed over multiple day hikes throughout the year. Once we had parted ways, I had already made the decision to join the club and take on that challenge. I ended up joining the trail crew, assisted with construction of a puncheon bridge, leading hikes, and joined hikes led by others whenever possible. Through Cyndi, Terry, and many other club member’s encouragement and assistance, I completed a ‘mini-thru’ of the hiking club’s 100 mile section shortly before winter of 2013. Over the course of five days I covered all 100 miles, earning myself a patch, sticker, and name on a plaque proudly claiming my feat along with many others who had done the same.

Since then, Seth and I firmly decided on our plans for the NCT. Hiking regularly, choosing gear, purchasing maps, and working relentlessly to save up money for our thru-hike to begin the first of spring, 2015. We’ve put extensive research into a guide that will help us remain on-trail when used with maps, not to mention keep us aware of grocery stores, camping, permits, lodging, post offices, chapters, phone numbers, and distance covered along the way. Pace was determined and itineraries were created to give ourselves a rough schedule to strive for, helping reassure ourselves of timeliness along the way. Resupply was decided to consist of both pre-made meals before the hike and ‘buy as you go’ shopping as we pass through towns, keeping cost, ease, and variation in mind.

Years have passed since we first came up with the dream to hike over 4,600 miles in one year, and now a single month remains. From the learning and encouragement at home, to the patience and endurance we’ll subject ourselves to from our first steps in North Dakota. We have so much to be thankful for as we approach our date of departure: our preparedness and perseverance bring peace of mind, but friends, family, acquaintances, and fellow hikers will ultimately serve as inspiration for every step of the way.

Thank you!

Lets give James and Seth some Trail Magic while they are out there!
We welcome Pat Brumbaugh who will be replacing Arlen as the Administrative Trails Coordinator. Her husband, Chuck, will assist her. Pat writes: Chuck and I have always enjoyed being outdoors- camping, hiking, skiing and snowshoeing. Mike Schaefer mentioned the club to Chuck and we began attending GTHC meetings after our kids went to college. Our son, Andy, took a backpacking class in college which led to a number of backpacking adventures, mostly in the UP. Although we consider ourselves more like walkers than hikers, we have taken a number of hiking trips on both the east and west coasts. Our favorite was our family trip to Ireland. We look forward to becoming more involved with GTHC.

When you are working on the trail, it is always satisfying to have hikers pass by and know our hard work is being used. We received a note from one of our 100 Mile Challengers, Glen VanAntwerp, who said when he and Steve neared the US131 bridge, they came across a couple guys “wrestling a small wooden bridge into place with cables and such. We stopped and visited for a few minutes, talked about trail distances and the variance between distances on the NCT trial maps and the distances between GTHC signs. They proudly showed us their iPhones with the trail apps and assured us that the signs were much more correct than the maps. We were greatly reassured as we wanted to believe that we were actually walking farther than the map said. It sure felt like farther. We didn't want to imagine that we were just old and slow.” These two guys, whom Glen described as “fit and trim, white haired and white bearded,” were Ed Morse and Karl Pearson. They were cabling down a bridge, which had moved in the spring high water, to three trees.

NOTES FROM ARLEN

TRAIL CREW 2015 is made up from the 2014 listing after contact by email; however there are opportunities still open for others. Contact Jerry Marek if you choose to be included.

CR 612 REROUTE is in the early stages of scouting and contacting land owners. The hope is to move the NCT off from this 7 miles of road walking to somewhere on the south side. We have been in contact with the Boy Scout camp south and west of Sunset Trail where the current NCT terminates at the highway. Dick Naperala, Ed Morse and Jay Warren have done some preliminary scouting. Wetlands are one of the problems in this area along with many landowners which will require easements. Some of you may wish to team up with these fellows in their search for a route. Personally, one of the great adventures of trail building is this phase where you seek to find and are often pleasantly surprised with the discoveries. You might also call it bushwacking.

THE ANNUAL REPORT for 2014 is available at our monthly meetings, or on our web page. It's a good read highlighting the accomplishments of last year, and includes the goals for 2015.

OUR FIRST SPRING PROJECT will involve the reroute of the NCT to the north side of Twenty-two Creek. Spring is an ideal time for trail building. There are no leaves on trees blocking the flagged route, no mosquitoes yet, cooler temperatures for working, and no ferns to trip over and wet the legs. We are of course curious about the extent of the beaver dam in that area that was steadily encroaching the area. Virgin pine trees and beavers working should cast quite a spell on this project. And of course, there are 2 puncheon type bridges to build.

TRAILS DAY

Save the Date! Trails Day this year will be held on Saturday, June 6.
January is the GTHC Chapter’s annual meeting. A presentation was also made to Arlen Matson for his 21 years as Administrative Trails Coordinator. Arlen was presented with a framed photo of the recent Fife Lake Reroute Ribbon Cutting, at the meeting. Arlen Matson, outgoing Administrative Trails Coordinator, summed up our progress on the past year’s goals and laid out our trail goals for 2015 with his normal humor. It is also the month with that chapter awards are presented.

At right: Chapter President Jerry Freels presented Marilyn Hoogstraten with the NCTA Annual Chapter award for taking initiative when we were without a president to get a board meeting and agenda prepared, as well as serving as our meeting photographer.

(photos by Heather Peyton)

Far left: Arlen also announced the presentation of the 2015 Silver Saw Award (picture above) to Steve Rouse, a member of the trail crew and a Sector Coordinator, who wasn’t able to attend the meeting.

Near left: Arlen Matson then presented this year’s NCT bandana to everyone who had volunteered during 2015 in any capacity. There were a lot of hands up in the audience, indicating just how important volunteers are to our chapter.
A presentation was also made to Arlen Matson for his 21 years as Administrative Trails Coordinator. Arlen was presented with a framed photo of the recent Fife Lake Reroute Ribbon Cutting, a project that has taken much of Arlen’s time in the past couple of years. Arlen recognized his wife Arlene for being supportive of his trail tasks, keeping him on track and taking care of some of the administrative duties. Arlen will continue serving on the Board in a trail advisory and historian role.

Amid much laughter Dick Naperalala also presented him with a miniature pulaski, a reminder of the hard work he has put into trail building.

REPORT YOUR HOURS

Unless you are part of a trail workbee, or other group activity, be sure to report your volunteer hours to the NCTA. It is important to do this because the NCTA shows the volunteer hours when they are requesting support from the federal government or other funding organizations. GTHC recently bought a mower with these funds. Reporting should be done quarterly, but you can go back a couple of years to report. If you didn’t keep track, think back, check your calendar, estimate what time you might have spent.

It’s easy. Go to http://northcountrytrail.org, in the Members drop down menu, click on “Report Volunteer Hours”, fill in your identification information, then enter hours by type of work. Be sure to click on “Submit”.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

GTHC will again be manning the parking lots at the College for the Bayshore Marathon on Saturday, May 23. This is an important role, keeping cars from leaving parking lots when runners are leaving the race start and when they are returning to the finish. The Traverse City Track Club is very generous to the non-profits who volunteer, and this is one of our biggest fund raisers (and we don’t have to sell anything)! Contact Treasurer Darlene Warren if you can help that day: 223-9818 or jdarwarren@aol.com.

The GTHC chapter is not just about building trail, but also about introducing the trail to others. And about getting out and hiking it! At right hikers enjoy a pause while hiking Muncie Lakes during the annual holiday outing this past December.

Photo by Sara Cockrell
When you join the North Country Trail Association (NCTA), the organization that supports the many clubs that do the work of building and maintaining the trail, you also become affiliated with the Grand Traverse Hiking Club. Our Introductory Membership Program allows current members to sign up new members at an introductory rate of just $23.00. To qualify, Introductory Members must be new to NCTA, or not have been members for at least two years. The rate for continuing members is $46.00.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name (please print)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daytime Phone (area code first)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills to volunteer:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mail with check to: North Country Trail Assoc., 229 E. Main Street, Lowell, MI 49331
Sponsored by Jerry Freels, President Grand Traverse Hiking Club

Grand Traverse Hiking Club
520 Highland Park Drive
Traverse City, MI 49686

Stamp