



GREATER HAZLETON

Rails-to-Trails to host g

By JIM DINO
Staff Writer

The Greater Hazleton Area Rails-to-Trails walking trail will be the site of a geocache event Saturday afternoon.

Bob Skulsky, executive director of the Greater Hazleton Area Civic Partnership — the organization that is developing the trail — said the sport of geocache uses global positioning satellite (GPS) devices.

"GPS devices used to be off limits to the public," he said. "They were like our secret weapon. But then, people all over the world had access to them, so President (Bill) Clinton signed an executive order and declassified them."

The whole idea behind geocache is to use GPS info to track down items that are buried, like a time capsule would be.

"It's like looking for buried treasure," Skulsky said. "There's a container buried that has things in it like a Matchbox toy. Whatever you find, you replace it with an item of equal value."

Once an item is removed, it can be placed in another storage container somewhere else. "One item made its way to Alaska," Skulsky said. "I think it is now in Oregon."

Skulsky said there are 1.1 million geocache units throughout the world, and that the sport has become very popular with young families.

Those participating in Saturday's event will be asked to find 10 geocache packages buried along the trail.

The event will begin in the trail's parking lot off East Broad Street at 1 p.m. Everything will be free. Participants are asked to bring their own water and can bring their own hand-held GPS units.

Participants will break off into groups, each with a

knowledgeable leader, to search for the cache. They can stay as long as they want, and look for more caches if desired.

The event is a Keystone Active Zone passport stop

Trail volunteers will provide a brief introduction about geocaching, including how to find coordinates, how to load coordinates in a GPS, and programming different GPS units

"We will have a couple of our volunteers who have become experts with geocache give a quick tutorial on hand-held GPS units on Saturday," Skulsky said. "You are given coordinates, and then asked to find the packages."

Skulsky said the geocache event has been held for the last few years along the trail, and keeps growing, as does the annual National Trails Day celebration that was held June 7.

The seventh annual event was the largest ever, Skulsky said. "We had about 1,000 people up there this year," Skulsky said. "The event went off very well. We gave away about 80 bike helmets."

"When we first started (with the event), it was held to thank the volunteers, and to get people on the trail. But we don't have to get people on the trail. We had 35,000 visitors last year and we anticipate more this year."

Sue Nasrani, chairman of the trail committee, said it used to hold regular walks on Sundays, but suspended

them because people now take to the trail on their own.

Nasrani, too, said the National Trails Day event was great. "God gave us great weather," she said. "We dedicated the environmental education area and the 27 memorial trees."

Skulsky said anyone who adopted a tree is asked to water it, because of the recent hot weather and lack of rain.

Nasrani said volunteers raised \$1,275 in donations. About \$500 bought food for National Trails Day, and \$700 was turned over to the civic partnership to help pay Skulsky's salary.

Donna Palermo, chairman of the partnership and president of the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce, said the chamber has had trouble raising money to pay Skulsky's part-time salary.

"He's only part-time, but he is always up on that trail. He puts in 60 hours a week. I hope we can get other donations for Bob's salary," Palermo said.

Skulsky and Nasrani offered their thanks to several individuals and local businesses that contributed to the trail.

jdino@standardspeaker.com

HAVE A GOOD DAY

Sherry Kacyon
Fern Glen

Our Subscriber of the Day

HAZLETON

geocache event Saturday



ERIC CONOVER/Staff Photographer

Sponsors of the Rails-to-Trails project and members of the Greater Hazleton Area Civic Partnership gathered Wednesday at the starting area. They are, front row, from left: Lillian Skulsky, Greater Hazleton Board of Realtors and sponsor; Melanie Kalinowski, Greater Hazleton Health Alliance and gold sponsor; Louie DeLorenzo, Fresh Start Bakery, silver sponsor; Terry Hartlage, Dial Corporation, silver sponsor; Bob Shafer, Humboldt Industrial Supply, bronze sponsor; Jason Bedio, Humboldt Industrial Supply, bronze sponsor; Robert Sagan, Hazleton City Water Department; and Emil Cann, Alfred Benesch and Company, bronze sponsor. Back row: Tom Hood, GHACP board member; Sue Nasrani, chairperson, Rails-to-Trails; Bob Skulsky, executive director, Rails-to-Trails; Joe Yannuzzi, vice president, GHACP; Paul Oswald, Boy Scouts of America District executive; and Donna Palermo, president, GHACP. The following silver sponsors were missing from the photo: Luzerne County Convention & Visitors Bureau, and Quaker Oats. Five bronze sponsors and nearly 20 other significant sponsors were not present for the photo.