



Trail Markings

GVTA newsletter

Summer 2020

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[Update from the Board](#)

by Annie Côté-Kennedy
President, GVTA

We hope everyone is keeping healthy and able to enjoy some hikes albeit in a very different environment, given the necessary public health restrictions. As Covid-19 has

caused havoc across the world, the pandemic has taken its toll on our hiking club as well.

How COVID-19 has affected plans

Several of our plans had to be cancelled or deferred:

The Hike Leader Training originally scheduled for March had to be cancelled. Our goal remains to increase the number of hike leaders so we look forward to having Hike Ontario resume this important program. As soon as we know more, we will advise those who had registered for the March class. In the interim, we have reviewed and updated our standing orders relating to our hiking program and updated our hike leader forms – so we'll be ready to go!

Our Annual General Meeting which was originally scheduled for May has been deferred to September 15. Our AGM may be held virtually depending on group size restrictions in effect at that time and the general environmental conditions. The government of Ontario announced on March 31 an Emergency Order that permits nonprofits to hold annual general meetings electronically or over the phone even if legislation or our bylaws say we can't. We will advise you in advance of the format and details for participation.

A trail audit was planned for this summer and has been deferred to later in the fall. The audit was to identify any problem area on the trail and develop a plan to fix short term issues and issues requiring more in-depth work and work teams.

All our organized hikes have been cancelled and will not resume until the pandemic is well under control. Our trails do remain open with the exception of segments of the trail that are on Grand River Conservation Authority lands and Six Nations of the Grand River between Brant County Road 22 and Painter Road. We ask that people using the trail to please follow public health guidelines:

- Hike locally.
- Limit your group to members of your immediate household or to the acceptable group size at the time of your hike.
- Maintain the recommended physical distancing.
- Don't go if you are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 or have been in contact with someone diagnosed with COVID19.

What does a hiking club do when it can't offer organized hikes?

That was the question some of the board members and hike leaders were pondering at a recent Zoom meeting. At our upcoming board meeting, we will be looking at different options including posting hikes that people can do on their own. As well, we are looking at ways to promote trail maintenance, including encouraging trail users to report issues with the trail and establishing a program to coordinate trail maintenance in small sections of the trail that require attention. The details of any initiative will be published on gvta.on.ca.

We do look forward to resuming normal activities but in the interim, we want to promote healthy hiking in this strange new world and we want to do our best to maintain viable and safe trails. Enjoy your summer and stay safe!

[Walk Yourself Happy](#)

by Anita Smith

It was the summer of 2010 and I had a problem to solve. My young JK student, let's call him Cade, had been a little ripper during his first year at school. He would be returning in September as an SK student and I needed to find a way to help this "wild child" find more success. Cade seldom had any conflicts with peers during outdoor play but when in the classroom, he routinely knocked kids down, stepped on fingers and was simply overly rambunctious.

As our school backed onto a 100-acre greenspace I considered adding more nature time into my Kindergarten program. With my administrator's blessing "forest school" was born! Every week my Kindergarten students spent 2 hours hiking to and exploring in the local forest. Along with the seasons Cade simply blossomed. He became a leader among his peers. I also noticed a more personal change. My own mood was improved as I looked forward to forest school days myself!

Could a healthier state of mind be attributed to a simple "walk in the park"? As it turns out, research responds with a resounding "yes!" While most of us know we feel better after an invigorating hike in the great outdoors, there is now the science to explain the benefits and how they occur.

The quality of exercise improves when in nature. Research demonstrates there are physical, and brain benefits of exercising on uneven surfaces which activates many underutilized muscles. Forest exercise elevates mood, and lowers fatigue, tension, and anger. A forest hike increases benefits of lowered blood pressure and cortisol levels compared to those from walking on a treadmill. That forest hike can even reduce bodily chemicals linked to depression, cardiovascular disease, and inflammation.

Trees release aerosols including phytoncides. Along with lower production of stress hormones, reducing anxiety and increasing pain thresholds, by inhaling these aromatic plant chemicals you are also increasing your body's antioxidant defense system! We also inhale negative ions in the air, which are highest after a rainfall and in early morning or dusk. These help our bodies reduce stress, depression and anxiety as well as helping to improve our cognitive performance.

Hiking in the outdoors also stimulates mindfulness, slowing the pace and stress of daily life by creating bite-sized spans of noticing the here and now. Hikers get outside their internally focused thoughts and direct attention to the sights and sounds in the natural environment. The wondrous views we take in during a nature hike fires up a portion of the brain which is rich in opioid receptors. These have the potential to trigger feelings of wellness and increase personal motivation.

These past few months have been a challenge for everyone, and I expect that challenge to be with us for a while yet. Perhaps not a cure but maybe we all need to get the following prescription filled:

DIRECTIONS: Go for a daily hike outside in nature.

REFILLS: Unlimited

EXPIRES: Never

I am thankful to Cade for opening my eyes up to the possibilities literally in our own backyard. In closing I'd like to wish you well and suggest that you go "take a hike!"



Member Profile

by Emily Bennett

In this issue, let's meet two of our newest GVTA members



Cynthia Coulis beside her favourite bridge on the GV trail.

Cynthia is an avid hiker and runner. She discovered the GVTA trail while on a run and was amazed by the nature so close to her home. She loves the trees, waterway and the bridges along the trail between Bridge Street and Ebycrest. She was sharing her discovery with a friend who happened to be a GVTA member and learned about the GVTA. She was encouraged to download the Ondago APP and hasn't looked back! She uses the APP to plan her hikes and running routes. She is currently navigating the West Montrose area trails every weekend. Cynthia hikes or runs with friends and two grown sons every week. She can't wait to show her daughter who lives in Calgary her favourite trail when times permit.

The trails are not only a great place to hike, but a perfect way to enjoy the natural beauty of the area. She is grateful to Brian Vink who gifted the membership!



David Marcus & Family

Building memories while hiking with his father started David on a path to enjoy the outdoors. His family hiked the Bruce Trail regularly and sparked his interest in end-to-end trails. Hiking provides an inexpensive way to enjoy the outdoors and along with their four boys (Andrew, Joshua, Nathaniel and Samuel), he and his wife Connie enjoyed local trails while the boys were growing up. Fast forward a few years, their eldest son now regularly hikes over 20km on the Bruce and GVTA trails.

Family hikes are informal outings, in fact, they found out about their favourite GVTA trail section by accident. In an attempt to hike in the Elora Gorge Conservation Area, they found the parking lot full. They explored the area and found the GVTA trails in the Elora area (Map 13) and spent an enjoyable day on the trail.

Now that the boys are older, David is focused on logging his hikes and completing end-

to-end trails sometimes accompanied by his son(s). He successfully completed the Steeltown Stomp, a hike/run/climb (with over 2000 stairs) along the Hamilton Escarpment, on his first attempt last fall. He recently completed Iroquoia section end-to-end in January and earned his Iroquoia Winter end-to-end badge. David's goal is to complete our trail end-to-end.

David would like to encourage all families, especially those with young children to get out and hike locally. Children can learn about birds, reptiles, plants and more. You might get lucky and encounter a patch of wild black raspberries!

Hiking Notes

by Greg and Jeanette Vincent

Greg and Jeanette are regular hike leaders for GVTA. Here are some photos and a short article about a trail beyond the Grand Valley Trail which they do each year as an organized hike.

Lynn Valley Trail

Lake Huron and Port Dover rail line was established in 1873 and the CNR ran it until 1988. What a classy way to get to Port Dover for a holiday excursion! You would arrive at a working port with a variety of boats to take you on excursions and a terrific beach to swim from. Jeanette and I usually park at Simcoe and walk or ride bikes the eleven kilometers to Port Dover. Absolutely everything is interesting; the river, the flowers, and trees such as the Osage Orange are Carolinian. Don't miss the excellent small museum in Port Dover and you must have a Perch lunch/dinner there overlooking Lake Erie. Search out the "Alligator" in Simcoe. The LVT is good for cycling as well.
<https://www.lynnvalleytrail.com>



The GVTA achieves its mandate thanks to its membership and donations from organizations, businesses and individual community supporters. Revenues from your membership fees and donations are used to:

- maintain more than 250 km of trails in the Grand Valley
- offer hiking and outdoor activities
- promote hiking in the Grand River watershed
- support Hike Ontario, the provincial association for hiking and trail clubs
- purchase liability insurance for our club and our trail

To support the club, you can volunteer with us, encourage friends to join or make a donation to the club. Visit gvta.on.ca for volunteer applications, membership forms and to make a donation online.



*Of all the paths you take in life,
make sure a few of them are dirt.*

-John Muir