



# CHESSIE TRAIL TRACKS

Website: [www.friendsofthechessietrail.org](http://www.friendsofthechessietrail.org)

Email: [chessietrail@gmail.com](mailto:chessietrail@gmail.com)



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***IN THE NEWS: The “Year on the Trail” walks start; the Friends’ second Half-Marathon/5K draws a good crowd; the Trail bursts into bloom; and more, including Calendar listings ...***

## Stepping out with “A Year on the Trail”

Our “Year in the Trail” made its debut on March 25 with Vicki Sessions leading the walk along the popular Mill Creek section. Vicki used this first walk of the series to set the stage for the year-long monthly series of walks, reviewing not only the natural resources of the Trail but also its human use story. Future walks will feature specific topics including both natural forms and historical uses.



*Biking & wildflower walks are just two ways folks enjoy the Trail.*



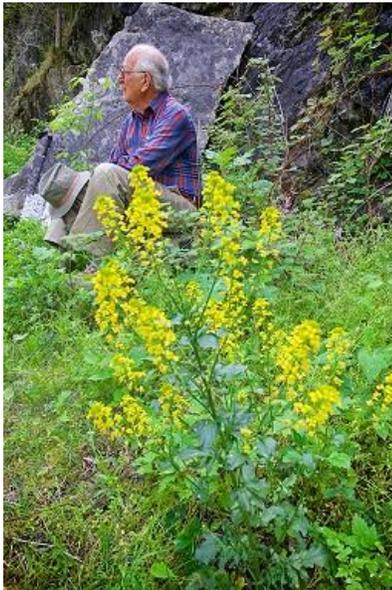
*A stone abutment of the old mill race reminds us of the river’s many economic uses.*



**Our April “Year” walk** was well attended, as geologist Ed Spencer helped us explore and understand the history of the cliffs above the Mill Creek stretch – puzzle over a possible sinkhole – note the marks of railroad blasting that helped create those cliffs out of the Edinburg limestone, laid down by an ancient ocean.

## *Dr. Ed Spencer Engages ...*

*Dr. Spencer engages an inquisitive crowd at the cliffs. At the prominent meander, the river continues to eat at the Trail (right).*



*Taking a break...*

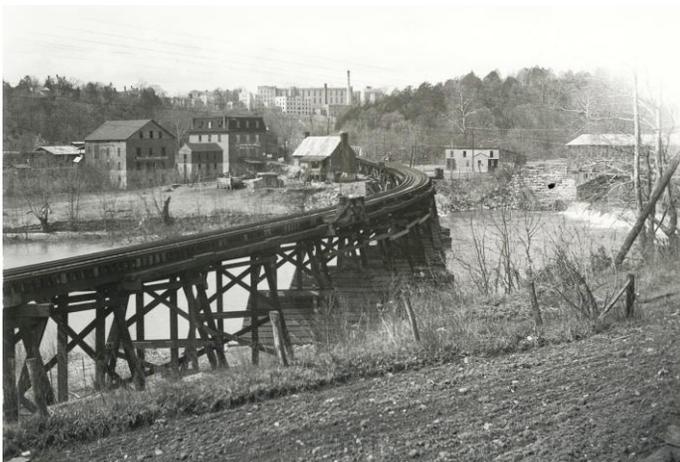


*Railroad blasting helped shape the cliffs, along with water and weather.*



*Dr. Spencer explains the Edinburg limestone - Did you know it was named for a town in Virginia?*

**Our third “Year” walk on May 20** will focus on a bit more human activity on the Trail, when we join the Preservation Month celebration at Jordan’s Point. We’ll walk across Veterans Bridge, turn onto Furrs Mill, and descend via the new Trail path our Maintenance Committee has blazed, to the “industrial” section of the Trail. We’ll learn more there about how the C&O Railroad helped create our Trail and enable industry to spring up there and at the Point.



On the run...

**Our second Half Marathon and 5K event** was a great success, with all thanks to our organizers – led by chair Eric Sheffield and recreation chair Laura Post – and our sponsors, and the Trail captains and our fabulous volunteer crew. Volunteers, you are the heart of this effort. You’ve been out on the Trail beforehand to clean it up – and on the day of the races to hand out water, help park cars, guide our runners and walkers, staff the food table, clean up afterward and so much more. You ... are ... awesome!!! Thanks and all props for all you do!



*The spring Half Marathon and 5K saw 171 runners and walkers complete the course and netted the Friends of the Chessie Trail over \$2,800, all of which goes for Trail improvements and educational activities on and about the Trail.*

*A heartfelt, stompin' thank you goes out to our major sponsors the SOUTHERN INN and WALKABOUT OUTFITTERS, and to our supporting sponsors CENTER OF GRAVITY YOGA & PILATES \* CORNERSTONE BANK \* GREAT VALLEY FARM BREWERY \* HEARTHSTONE LODGE & RETREAT CENTER \* OLD LEX MERCANTILE \* RAGGED MOUNTAIN RUNNING SHOP \* THE ROCKBRIDGE VINEYARD \* VIRGINIA SAFARI PARK \* and WELSH CONSTRUCTION ~ Thank you all, you are the best!!*

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

*Please note: The calendar can be subject to change because of weather and because we try to coordinate with other outdoor groups and events. Here's what we are looking at for the next few months:*

**SATURDAY, MAY 20:** History and Industry on the Trail: We join the Preservation Month celebration in Jordan's Point, where the Miller's House AND the newly renovated Beechenbrook Chapel will both be open to visitors, free of charge. The celebration runs from 1 to 4 p.m., and **FOCT will have an information table near the Pavilion. Stop by!**

**At 3 p.m., our FOCT "Year on the Trail" walk** will introduce our new and exciting connection from Jordan's Point across Veterans Bridge to Furrs Mill Road and down to the Trail – and on to the nearby industrial section for a talk about the railroad and industry.

**MONDAY, JUNE 12:** Our annual potluck picnic at the Pavilion in Jordan's Point will start at 5:30 p.m. with walks around Jordan's Point and across the bridge to the new Furrs Mill entrance, for those who haven't seen it yet. At 6 p.m. guest speaker Col. Jay Williams will talk about what's ahead for VMI's plans for the Trail. Dinner at 6:30 p.m. and a chance to socialize with fellow Friends and talk about what the "Year on the Trail" is showing us and our plans for the year ahead.

**SATURDAY, JUNE 17:** We'll be at the rescheduled Earth Day on Hopkins Green, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., with a movie for the kids scheduled that evening. Look for our table there, but also bring the kids for fun craft activities and refreshments sponsored by 50 Ways Rockbridge.

**SATURDAY, JUNE 24:** Our second annual night walk will start at 8 p.m., leaving from an entrance near the Pure Oil sign (look for FOCT signage – and there is parking behind the “Trail Shack”). We'll look for birds homing at twilight, listen for night sounds, and do a little star-gazing.

**SATURDAY, JULY 22:** We'll seek to beat the summer heat with an early morning “invasives” walk on the Trail. We'll meet at the Mill Creek gate at 8 a.m. and spend an hour or two identifying, pulling and cutting invasives, including privet, multiflora rose, stilt grass and garlic mustard. (Honeysuckle and crown vetch too!)

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 26:** Another early morning “Year on the Trail” walk. We'll, listen for bird sounds, check out insect and amphibian life, and take the temperature of a summer day. Meet at the Mill Creek gate at 8 a.m.

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 23:** We'll celebrate the fall equinox, with “Year on the Trail” plans TBA.

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28:** Our fall Half Marathon and 5K events will step off at 8 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. Stay tuned for plans for the day and also for the evening before.

### *Private property ...*

Recent events on the industrial stretch of the Trail remind us that several parcels in that East Lexington section of the Trail are privately owned. These parcels were sold before the rest of the Trail was transferred to The Nature Conservancy, and they cross the Trail. They are not owned by VMI, the owner of the rest of the Trail, and apparently there is no deeded easement for use of the Trail through these properties.

We seek to keep members informed about all Trail news. Please contact us at [chessietrail@gmail.com](mailto:chessietrail@gmail.com) if you have any questions or want to share news or see other Trail news covered.

### **LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION:**

While work continues to connect the original Trail head in Jordan's Point with the rest of the Trail, the area around Mill Creek, below Old BV Road, continues to be a popular starting point.

When we start at the Mill Creek area or Mill Creek gate, we're gathering in the small meadow near the large Chessie Trail “Welcome” sign – where two sections of wooden fence mark the spot where a gate formerly stood. This is a common point of departure for many walkers and runners, and is about exactly a half mile east of the stoplight on Veterans Bridge. It is a few hundred yards past the large boulders across from the water treatment plant.

There's no official parking lot for the Trail at this point. We'll keep you posted as that develops.

### **2017 MEMBERSHIP**

We are now accepting Friends of the Chessie Trail memberships for 2017! Our dues remain the same: \$10 for individuals and \$25 for families; \$5 for full-time students. We also have our Lock Keeper, Batteau Captain, and Locomotive membership levels for those who would like to contribute more. If you haven't rejoined us, please take a moment to do that now – see below! As always, any level of donation is greatly appreciated.

The 2017 membership form is available at our website, [www.friendsofthechessietrail.org](http://www.friendsofthechessietrail.org). You may print it out and mail it to us at FOCT, P.O. Box 1261, Lexington VA 24450. Or, if you prefer, renew your membership online using PayPal. Please share as well – we welcome friends and family. And please let us know if you have questions or ideas about the Chessie! Membership Chair Becky McKenzie can be reached at [chessietrail@gmail.com](mailto:chessietrail@gmail.com).

#### WHAT MEMBERS CAN DO:

- **Check us out on Facebook:** Post your comments, add photos, share with friends or send them an email to check it out! Let friends know about our website, [www.friendsofthechessietrail.org](http://www.friendsofthechessietrail.org), and invite them to try out one of our activities.
- **Help maintain and improve the Trail:** The Maintenance Committee has regularly scheduled workdays, usually on Mondays. For info, or just to drop in for a day, email [lad.sessions@gmail.com](mailto:lad.sessions@gmail.com)
- **Help educate the public and plan programs:** Drop in for a Communications Committee meeting – help with events, the newsletter, or just bring your feedback! Email [chessietrail@gmail.com](mailto:chessietrail@gmail.com).
- **Work on ideas for more recreation on the Trail:** Contact the Recreation Committee at [runthechessie@gmail.com](mailto:runthechessie@gmail.com)
- **Be in touch with your Board:** Visitors are welcome – first Monday of the month – email [chessietrail@gmail.com](mailto:chessietrail@gmail.com) for info.
- **Just show up and enjoy!** Hike the Trail, join us for programs, bring friends – and send feedback to [chessietrail@gmail.com](mailto:chessietrail@gmail.com)

Dues from 2016 helped us greatly with a number of projects: Most of the old farm gates are now bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly; many portions of the Trail have been upgraded; and we went to a second printing of our FOCT brochure. You'll now find brochure holders at seven locations along the Trail. (Please let us know if you find a holder empty so we can restock.) We're excited about several new maintenance and educational projects in 2017, and we invite you to join us in working on them.