

# Trails Progress!

The missing link in the Path of the Flood Trail was opened in 2013, connecting the Franklin Ball Field to America's oldest railroad tunnel.

The Coy-McCombie Link was named for two volunteers whose time, coordination and equipment donations save \$100,000. Steve Coy, East Conemaugh Council President, had envisioned an easy way for people to visit the historic Staple Bend Tunnel since he was a kid. Rob McCombie is on the board of Cambria County Conservation & Recreation Authority, which managed the project, and Conemaugh Valley Conservancy, which provided support.



The Jim Mayer Riverswalk extension had been held up by a survey glitch that was resolved in late 2013, allowing Cambria County Transit Authority to remove the steel rails from the long-abandoned railroad and re-pave Central Avenue. CamTran was about to transfer the rail line to CCCRA as 2013 ended, with construction hopefully to take place in 2014. This 1.3-mile section will connect Sandyvale Memorial Gardens to the existing Jim Mayer Trail, creating a 3.5-mile trail.



From Sandyvale into Downtown Johnstown, the City installed bike route signage, and University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown students and others painted colorful share-the-road stencils on Somerset Street.

The Kiski-Conemaugh Water Trail was advanced as the City installed signs to open 3 river-wall maintenance ramps for boating access and CVC was obtaining land for a Seward take-out.



## Little Conemaugh Dramatically Improved

The Little Conemaugh River flowing into Johnstown had been arguably the most badly polluted river in Pennsylvania. But that changed dramatically in 2013, when Rosebud Mining Co., turned on the treatment plant for a re-mining project that eliminated the Topper Run abandoned-mine discharge, a huge, nasty discharge that by itself was 30% of the pollution load to the entire river. The most amazing facts about this project:

- It was done by private dollars (with lots of public support).
- It sustains and creates jobs as the coal mine can now expand.

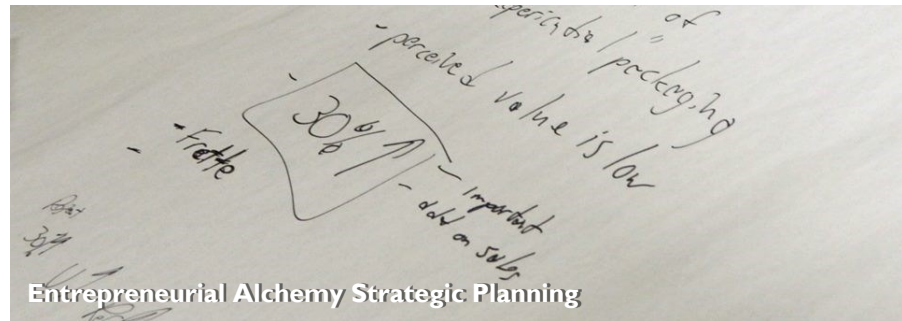
## Whitewater and Greenhouse Parks Work Funded

The state Department of Conservation & Natural Resources and the Richard King Mellon Foundation have each approved \$160,000 grants to improve the lower feature in Stonycreek Whitewater Park and build flush toilets in the adjacent Greenhouse Park. The grants were awarded to Conemaugh Township, Somerset County. The Community Foundation for the Alleghenies funded design.

Whitewater Park has been a major attraction for whitewater boaters, who play in the waves from two man-made drops, and for kids and others who tube and swim in the river.

Greenhouse Park hosts dozens of popular community events, as well as the Stonycreek Rendezvous, which attracts 1,200 people for one of the most acclaimed whitewater festivals in the East.

Classic Clowns attract attention from students at the Lift Johnstown Project Party



## 2013 Annual Report



## Let's Start Lifting, Keep Lifting: Volunteers Lift Johnstown!

Lift Johnstown's volunteer recruiting was a major highlight of our 2013 efforts as we advanced activity on three fronts.

We launched a much improved on-line volunteer registry in partnership with United Way of the Laurel Highlands covering Cambria, Somerset and Bedford counties. The link on Lift's web site often has over 40 volunteer opportunities posted.

Lift also started our Volunteer Spotlight Award. We presented the first award to Don Tedjeske for his hard work and dedication at Saint Vincent DePaul Society. We plan to make four such awards each year.

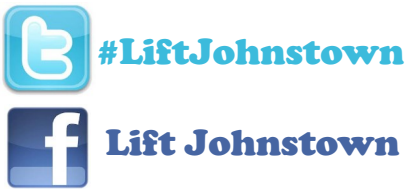
Our Project Party brought 873 sign-ups to volunteer at 70 non-profits. We hope to top that with our third Project Party from noon to 7 p.m. Jan. 23, 2014, at the Pasquerilla Conference Center in Downtown Johnstown.



Don Tedjeske

While Lift Johnstown is primarily focused on projects, we are perhaps most proud of the outreach that is touching many hundreds of people in our area – not just the people in need who receive support from these non-profits but also the people who discover the rewards that come from making a difference in the lives of other people.

## Lift Johnstown supported by...



www.liftjohnstown.org



## Highlights >>>

- Route 56-Downtown Gateway nearly done.
- New entrepreneurial initiative.
- Urban agriculture takes root.
- Cambria City Cultural District builds momentum.
- Progress on trails and parks.
- Little Conemaugh River vastly improved.

# Downtown Gateway Nearly Virtually Complete

The heavy construction is all done on the “Smart Transportation” project that creates an attractive gateway into Downtown Johnstown from the Route 56 Bypass.

The alignment of Johns Street by the Point Stadium was widened, with softer turning radii for trucks pulling in and out. A highly visible cross-walk was built to connect pedestrians to the Inclined Plane and to allow access to the “new” boat ramp. It not a new ramp, the Army Corps of Engineers is allowing use of the maintenance ramp for boat access and the project simply adds signage.

An island was built between east- and west-bound lanes, but shrubs and trees need to

be planted there and at other locations near Johns Street. A “welcome” sign also will be installed to complete the project.

These “smart transportation” features are designed to “calm” traffic and improve safety.

The City of Johnstown managed the project with the goal of welcoming and inviting people to explore the Downtown attractions, and to encourage more residences, loft apartments, restaurants, shopping and other commercial businesses.

The \$1.5 million project was funded by PennDOT with advocacy from Lift Johnstown and others.

# Calling All Entrepreneurs!

Have an idea for a new business to create jobs locally? Watch for coming announcements about Entrepreneurial Alchemy, an initiative to support budding business creators.

Funds are being raised for small grants for business plans or start-up capital.

Meet-up nights to exchange ideas and learn from others happen monthly at VOMA or UPJ. VOMA offers low-cost work space. College courses designed for would-be entrepreneurs may soon be offered.

Lift Johnstown has also actively promoted business development in the Downtown

and Cambria City, the area’s economic and cultural hubs. In 2013, new businesses include the Press Bistro, RJ’s Café & Lounge, the Spa, and Adorned Gift Shop, all in the Downtown.

## Economic Initiatives

No sustainable community initiative would be complete without an economic component. While Lift Johnstown leaves the direct business recruitment and expansion work in the capable hands of organizations such as Johnstown Area Regional Industries and local authorities, we do play a direct role in initiatives outlined here.

the Downtown: an education center with a restaurant on the first floor. The center would be developed by the Johnstown Business District Development Corp.

Appalachian Regional Commission has approved funding to build similar improvements at Washington Street and Route 56.



Photo by Kevin Stiffler

10,000 Maniacs doing up-lifting performance for Johnstown.

## Maniac Inspiration

An estimated 3,500 turned out for the 10,000 Maniacs concert sponsored by Lift Johnstown, the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies and Johnstown Area Heritage Association.

The event, held at Peoples Natural Gas Park, featured displays and information tables about improvements and initiatives taking place in the region. People were invited to post ideas for how to “lift” Johnstown.

When Lift Johnstown held a stakeholders update at the Press Bistro, co-owner Jeremy Shearer said all of the energy at the show helped to convince him that there was enough going on in town to take the risk of opening in the Downtown.

# Urban Agriculture Hits Home in Johnstown

The Greater Prospect Store, Inc., or GSP, was poised to open in January 2014 after nearly a full year of construction.

Dozens of volunteers helped to build the store, which will operate as a non-profit co-op and will feature produce grown in many of the community gardens that are being created throughout the area.

While developed to help people in the urban center of Johnstown, GPS needs broad community support. Please consider becoming a member, which provides for a discount on purchases. Membership information will be linked on Lift’s web site.

GPS development, like many Lift Johnstown projects, was funded by the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies.



Wine festival mascot

Over the course of 2013, several new community gardens were developed, and with three more planned for 2014, the community will have 11 of these neighborhood assets. People who



Greater Johnstown CTC students helped the Greater Prospect Store.

help with the gardens can enjoy much of the produce.

Sandyvale Memorial Gardens is a centerpiece of the urban agriculture initiative. Sandyvale has 15 garden beds, making it by far the largest of the community gardens.

Sandyvale also has a greenhouse, which has installed three hydroponic systems that grow produce throughout the year.

Other parts of the greenhouse will grow “startings” that will be transplanted to schoolyard gardens and other community gardens in the spring.

The inaugural Sandyvale Wine Festival held in 2013 was a huge success. Event coordi-

## Big Events in 2014

Lift Johnstown is helping to plan two big events for 2014.

Johnstown Area Heritage Association is working with over a dozen community groups to plan commemorative and other events honoring the 125th anniversary of the great 1889 Johnstown Flood.

Laurel Highlands On- and Off-Road Bicycle Association, Benscreek Canoe Club, the Johnstown YMCA and other partners are planning Allegheny Adventure Expo Oct. 3-5. The event will feature various vigorous and some tamer outdoor activities, plus a big concert at Peoples Natural Gas Park.

We’ll also have the big regular events, including the AmeriServ Flood City Music Festival and Thunder in the Valley.

nators are confident they will have more wineries and will have more tents and other facilities to spread out the event and make it easier for festival goers to get around — and get wine..

The wine festival promises to become a signature event for the region.

# Arts and Cultural Efforts Grow

Cambria City continued to evolve as the region’s Cultural District, home to several arts and cultural organizations locating in one of the area’s most historic neighborhoods.

The Grand Halle on Broad Street in the former Immaculate Conception Church began formal programming with a musical series featuring its historic Stein Organ, and a series of performances headlined by Song Works, an informal group of people who write and perform their own original music. The Halle also hosted about 15 weddings and other special events.

Bottle Works Ethnic Arts Center completed work on its outdoor garden space to beautify the neighborhood.

Bottle Works merged with its neighbor, ART WORKS in Johnstown, in a move that both organizations said would make them stronger. Both have had a part-time executive director and were concerned about competing for limited resources. Now they will hire a full-time executive to man-

age and lead both.

AW Gallery Shoppe had a great year within ART WORKS with the consignment shop with quality art for sale.

Johnstown Concert Ballet purchased the former Hornick’s Sporting Goods store on Broad Street and began renovations for performing space.

VOMA (Venue of Merging Arts), Johnstown Area Heritage Association, Alternative Community Resource Program also call Cambria City home.

Meanwhile, the Arts Coalition of the Alleghenies continued to promote arts events across the three-county area.



St. Nicholas Feast at Grand Halle.

## Robotics Competition Inspires Young People

The FIRST LEGO League Tournament for Southwest/Central PA attracted 99 students from 12 school teams at St. Francis University’s Science Outreach Center. Volunteers are needed as judges, referees and general support for the 2nd contest, which is slated for Feb. 22 at Greater Johnstown Career and Technology Center.

Lift Johnstown supports the event as part of our focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education. At right, students demonstrate their work at a Lift Johnstown community update, which was held with a Green Drinks social event.

