



# Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy

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## Remembering Todd Chambers

By Charlie Brethauer

This past January Todd Chambers, president of the Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy, passed away unexpectedly at age 61. Todd was an athletic, active person and his death was a shock to those who knew him.

He was a graduate of Wittenberg University, Utah State University and University of Pittsburgh and worked as a landscape architect, most recently as owner of the Chambers Design Associates firm. His office was adorned with sketches of various projects he'd worked on. They were colorful works of art in themselves and displayed his artistic and creative talents.

Todd was a passionate advocate for community trails and guided the Conservancy for more than twenty years. Todd's love of hiking and the outdoors helped shape his support for community trails. His training as a landscape architect enabled him to imagine how trails could connect neighborhoods. He also spent many hours clearing brush and moving dirt to build trails.

In the 1980s and 1990s he was involved in the Harmony Trail project which envisioned a path following the route of the old Harmony Short Line inter-urban railway through the North Hills. A portion of this trail was realized and exists today as a surfaced trail from Route 910 in Pine Township, extending south to Richard Road. This trail follows Wexford Run through a quiet, beautiful valley just west of Route 19, not far from the hubbub of the North Hills. You're likely to see deer and hawks,

## Honoring Todd

By John Stephen

This year began with heavy hearts for the Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy with the way-too-sudden loss of our president, Todd Chambers. Todd's involvement with the organization stretched back to the origins of the Harmony Trail Council.

But his appreciation and love of the forests and pathways through the north woods extend even further back...to the days of his youth wandering and wondering through these stream valleys and forested hills. We were blessed that his love of the outdoors translated into hours of meetings, public presentations, trail building, and weed whacking; always with optimism and a smile.

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or perhaps a neighbor walking for exercise or taking a short cut. Todd enjoyed walking his dog there, as do many others.

The Vestal Trail in McCandless, connecting Vestal Community Park with the Oakridge Drive neighborhood, was another project Todd helped make a reality.

He believed in the better side of human nature. Those who didn't support trail projects, he was sure, could become supporters if only they knew more about the benefits of trails and had a chance to walk them. Todd enjoyed talking with not-yet supporters about trail possibilities.

We will miss Todd's leadership, his positive and friendly personality and his passion. His belief in the value of community trails, and his work to establish some of the earlier trails in our area, will be his enduring legacy.

It seemed that he knew everyone...and all who knew him were touched by his infectious goodwill. Trail building on a budget is rife with setbacks, but for Todd those setbacks were never a defeat, they were merely a delay.

To honor Todd's leadership and his tireless support for the Harmony Trail, the Conservancy will be installing a new bench on the Trail at a quiet spot near Wexford Run and below Wexford Station. We'll stop there on our 2016 Winter Hike.

In our hearts and in our work, Todd's energy and spirit will continue to inspire.

# Rachel Carson Trail Challenge 20th Anniversary Bash!

By Doug MacPhail

Attention past, current, and future Challengers and volunteers! Please join us one week prior to the 2016 Challenge on Saturday, June 11, 2016, 5 to 9 p.m. as we celebrate twenty years of memories of the Rachel Carson Trail Challenge. The event will be held at the spectacular White Oak Farm in Hampton Township which is located directly on the Rachel Carson Trail, just off of Wagner Road.

This is a family-friendly celebration that will feature delicious food from the renowned Casa Reyna restaurant, beer, soft drinks, live bluegrass music, and an awards/recognition ceremony.

Advance ticket prices will be an affordable \$20 and will be available soon online at the RCTC website.

Come and share your personal war stories from the past. We will have lots of fun facts and trivia. The event will also serve as the official t-shirt and tracking tag pick-up night. Yes, we are distributing the t-shirts prior to the Challenge next year!

We hope you'll wear your 2016 Challenge colors on hike day to celebrate the 20th anniversary of our wonderful event!

## 2015 Challenge by the Numbers

By Bob Mulshine

It was a deliberate choice to call the Rachel Carson Trail Challenge an endurance hike rather than a race. Everyone who makes a serious attempt to finish it should be admired, while all those that finish deserve to be celebrated. Reserving celebration just for the top finishers is out of character with the event.

That being said, we do keep track of a lot of details about what goes on during the Challenge. The split times are published every year and kept on the website. Here are a few interesting facts about the Full Challenge in 2015:

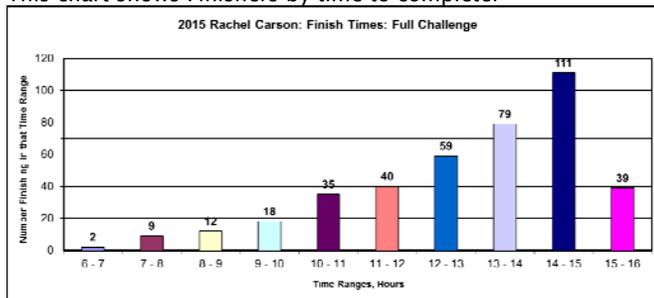
Registered .....	620
No-shows .....	37
Started .....	583
Dropped (175)/DQ'd (4) .....	179
Finishers .....	404
Official Finishers (<15:04) .....	375
Unofficial Finishers (>15:04) .....	29
Official Finish Rate .....	64%

half of the finishers reached Harrison Hills Park after that. The average finish time was 12:57:07.

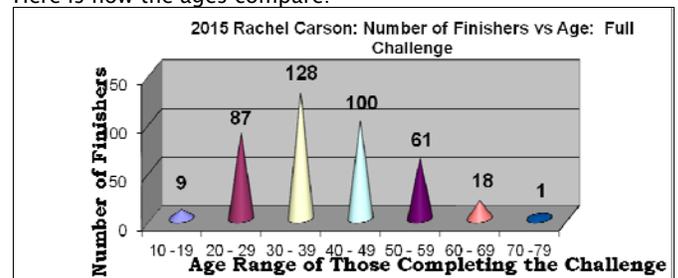
Here are some facts about the Challenge broken out by gender and age:

Female .....	216 (37%)
Male .....	367 (63%)
Average Age .....	39.3
Average Age Female .....	36.4
Average Age Male .....	40.7
Female Finishers .....	131 (61%)
Male Finishers .....	273 (74%)
Youngest Female Finisher .....	13
Youngest Male Finisher .....	14
Oldest Female Finisher .....	73
Oldest Male Finisher .....	68

This chart shows Finishers by time to complete:



Here is how the ages compare:



The median elapsed finishing time for all Full finishers was 13:22 and the median finish clock time was 7:11 PM. That is,

If you enjoyed these statistical views of the Challenge, you'll be able to find more at the 20th Anniversary Bash (see article above). We'll be presenting a full array of information about not only the most recent Challenge but all of the past Rachel Carson Trail Challenges as well!

## Trail Events Recap

By Steve Mentzer

In May, a bridge used by the Rachel Carson Trail to cross the Pennsylvania Turnpike was closed and removed as part of the turnpike widening project. The resulting trail reroute was finalized a few weeks later, just in time for the Challenge on June 20. It also added three quarters of a mile to the trail.

On Challenge Day, the trail was muddy and slick, with periodic showers in the afternoon. These conditions were the reason the completion rate fell to a ten-year low of 64%. Still, nearly 700 people made it to the finish in Harrison Hills Park and enjoyed a wonderful picnic.

Throughout the spring and summer, volunteers worked

feverishly to build trail above the Mahoning reservoir to move the Baker Trail off an open and dusty road and into the woods in time for the Baker Trail UltraChallenge on August 29.

They succeeded, and the eleventh UltraChallenge on the central section of the trail hosted 64 runners on a beautiful summer day.

These two events were the culmination of many volunteer hours spent planning, leading hikes, and exploring and building trails, not to mention staging them. We are grateful to every one of our volunteers!

## Expanding the Rachel Carson Trails Network

By John Stephen

After years of success stewarding the Rachel Carson and Baker Trails and welcoming a generation of hikers into Penn's Woods, the Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy is preparing to expand our work and grow Allegheny County's hiking trail network.

The Conservancy has a strong and knowledgeable corps of trail stewards that blaze, monitor, hike and enjoy the Rachel Carson Trail. Volunteer trail stewards adopt a section of the Rachel Carson Trail, maintain relations with property owners, communicate with municipal staff, and generally make sure the trail is a joy for users. With that, a trail is created for all to enjoy.

Now that the Rachel Carson Trail is strongly in place, the Conservancy Board is promoting the stewardship program to enable the network to reach new parks, new wooded hillsides,

and new stream valleys. Many municipalities have open space and recreation plans with identified hiking trails or greenways. The Conservancy's trail stewardship program can cost-effectively create those trails, and we need your help. We need a few good trail stewards willing to work with the Conservancy to blaze and monitor trails.

Come and learn more about our program, hear about the best opportunities for new trails, and meet some of the trail stewardship leaders at a public presentation and meet & greet:

Rachel Carson Trails Network  
Hikers Helping Hikers Create More Miles of Trail  
Indiana Township Municipal Building  
3710 Saxonburg Blvd., Pittsburgh, PA 15238  
Wednesday, November 18, 7 PM

## Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy Membership Application/Renewal

Join RCTC leaders by volunteering for a role that suits your time and inclinations. Make check payable to the Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy, P.O. Box 472, Wexford, PA 15090-0472, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

I Am A	<input type="checkbox"/> New Member	<input type="checkbox"/> Renewing Member	Date	Renew online at <a href="http://store.rachelcarsontrails.org">store.rachelcarsontrails.org</a>	
Annual Dues	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$15	<input type="checkbox"/> Family \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting \$50	<input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining \$100	<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate \$250
Name			Age		
Street Address					
City, State, Zip					
Telephone		Email Address		Municipality	
Contact Me For					
<input type="checkbox"/> Rachel Carson Trail maintenance		<input type="checkbox"/> Harmony Trail maintenance		<input type="checkbox"/> Membership development	
<input type="checkbox"/> Baker Trail maintenance		<input type="checkbox"/> Vestal Trail maintenance		<input type="checkbox"/> PR/Publicity	

# Event Calendar

Details and more events on [www.rachelcarsontrails.org/events](http://www.rachelcarsontrails.org/events)

## Sunday, October 18: Fall Season Hike 9:30AM–2PM

Join us for a 7-mile hike on the Rachel Carson Trail, from Hartwood Acres Park to North Park. Beverages and treats afterwards. **FREE and open to all!**

## Wednesday, November 18: Trail Network Presentation 7PM

Come and learn about plans for expanding the Rachel Carson Trails network. See article on page 3. **FREE and open to all!**

## Sunday, February 7: Winter Season Hike 10AM–2PM

Join us for a 6-mile hike from the Harmony Trail to the Beaver Shelter, the western terminus of the Rachel Carson Trail. Beverages and treats afterwards. **FREE and open to all!**

## Every Sunday, April 17–June 5: Rachel Carson Trail Training Hikes 8AM–

Eight hikes on the Rachel Carson Trail to help prepare for the Challenge, 8–21 miles each. **Volunteer hike leaders needed!**

## Wednesday, May 4: Volunteer Appreciation Picnic 6PM–7PM

**Calling all volunteers!** If you participated in a trail work crew, or helped out on the Challenge or UltraChallenge, or any other activity related to our trails or would like to, then please attend our Volunteer Appreciation Picnic! There'll be food and drink and lots of discussion about trail related topics. Takes place at the Cabin on Ingomar Road in North Park prior to our Annual Public Meeting. **FREE and open to all!**

## Wednesday, May 4: Annual Public Meeting 7PM–8PM

Come hear us discuss a year of progress and teamwork on the

Baker, Harmony and Rachel Carson Trails in addition to information on the upcoming Rachel Carson Trail Challenge and the Baker Trail UltraChallenge. **FREE and open to all!**

## Saturday/Sunday, May 28/29, June 4/5: Barb Peterson Memorial Trail Orientation Hikes 8AM–Noon

Four hikes on the Rachel Carson Trail to help prepare for the Challenge, 6–8 miles each. **Volunteer hike leaders needed!**

## Saturday, June 11: Challenge 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Bash 5PM–9PM

A celebration of twenty years of Rachel Carson Trail Challenges! Plenty of food, drink, and music, along with presentations on the Challenge over the years. Tickets \$20 in advance, available on the website in 2016.

## Saturday, June 18: Rachel Carson Trail Challenge

The twentieth annual grueling 34-mile endurance hike on the Rachel Carson Trail, plus the 18-mile Rachel Carson Trail Homestead Challenge and the 8-mile Rachel Carson Trail Friends & Family Challenge.

## Friday, July 22: Summer Season Hike 9PM–11:30PM

Join us for a 5–6 mile summer **night** hike in North Park on various trails in the light of the moon. Check the website for location. Bring a headlamp or flashlight. Moderate difficulty (some hills). Beverages and treats afterwards. **FREE and open to all!**

## Saturday, August 27: Baker Trail UltraChallenge

The twelfth running of the 50-mile Baker Trail ultramarathon & relay from the southern terminus to Smicksburg.

*Please plan your annual renewal now.*

