

LOCAL

Out-of-town visitor inquires about rail-trail project

■ A woman from Nashville, Tenn. who formerly lived in the area learned about the trail while attending Patch Town Days at Eckley.

By **JIM DINO**

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The effort to build a hiking and biking trail along abandoned railroad beds between Hazleton and Weatherly is getting national notoriety.

Bob Skulsky, executive director of the Greater Hazleton Area Civic Partnership, said he recently received a telephone call from Tennessee regarding

the Rails-to-Trails project.

"I got a call from a woman from Nashville," he told the partnership board at its monthly meeting last week. "She wanted more information on Rails-to-Trails."

Skulsky said the woman was visiting another local tourist attraction, the Eckley Miners' Village, where she learned about the trail.

"She was formerly from this area, and was visiting," Skulsky said. "She learned about it at Patch Town Days at Eckley. She thought it was a wonderful idea, and asked if she could do it (in Tennessee). I told her it



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was a national effort."

Skulsky said he schooled the woman on the trail.

"I spent about an hour on the phone with her," he said. "I gave her a brief acquaintance of Rails-to-Trails. There

are seven field offices, and I gave her the location of the closest one."

The Rails-to-Trails committee had a stand at Patch Town Days, and Skulsky said several out-of-town visitors stopped

by and bought Funfest raffle tickets.

"They said they didn't know about the trail, but they thought it was a good idea," he said.

The committee also got about \$52 in donations.

Skulsky reported on a session with state officials held Monday at the trail. They walked the first quarter of the trail, which will be built this year, to discuss signs that will be erected along the trail to point out areas of interest.

The biggest problem with the signs, Skulsky said, will be including the logos of all the

organizations and agencies that have contributed to the effort. They are on the sign that was erected along Route 93, near where the trail will start.

The partnership board also discussed two other projects to make the area look better.

Skulsky said as part of the annual Red, White and Blue campaign, local communities got bows and flowers to plant.

"Ten to 12 communities took flats of flowers each, plus bows," he said. "There were also a few nonprofit groups, like United Way, and Bishop Hafey High School."

Elaine Judd, co-chairperson of the partnership's gateway beautification project, said some work has been done, but there is still some to complete on entrances along Route 924 up the road from the Humboldt Industrial Park, and along Route 424 near the intersection of Route 309.

Judd said she had help from volunteers to mulch flower beds at both locations. But she is wondering where state funds are that were promised to Hazleton to finish beautifying Route 924 all the way to Interstate 81.

Skulsky thanked Judd for her efforts.