



JIM DINO/Standard Speaker

Jeannette Levan, of Baltimore Life Insurance Co., second from right, presents a \$5,000 check to Bob Skulsky, executive director of the Greater Hazleton Area Civic Partnership. The money will be used toward a local match for a state grant to fund a feasibility and planning study for three-quarters of the 16-mile hiking and biking trail the Partnership, through its Rails-To-Trails Committee, is developing between east Hazleton and the Lehigh River near Weatherly. Also pictured, from left: Nancy Zolota, Bob Sagan, Karl Bergamo, Sue Nasrani and Jack Gouldstone, Rails-To-Trails Committee members.

Rails-To-Trails project attains \$5,000~~X~~
grant from Baltimore Life Insurance Co.

By JIM DINO

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The effort to build a 16-mile hiking and biking trail around the Hazleton area has received another financial boost.

Baltimore Life Insurance Co. has donated \$5,000 toward a \$70,000 feasibility study to develop the last three-quarters of the trail, from the Ashmore section of Hazle Township – near the former Beryllium plant – to the Lehigh River at Rockport.

Bob Skulsky, executive director of the Greater Hazleton Civic Partnership – the group spearheading the effort to build the trail through one of its subcommittees, the Rails-To-Trails Committee – said the money will be used toward the \$35,000 local match for a \$35,000 state grant made to the project.

“The thing that impresses me most is the wide diversification of community support this project is getting,” Skulsky said.

“We are getting help from all segments of the community. We have received donations from many companies, the Luzerne Foundation, the Luzerne County Commissioners and many fine individuals.”

Terry Bauder, chairperson of the Partnership, thanked the all-volunteer Rails-To-Trails Committee for their work on the project.

“This is a great day for the Civic Partnership,” Bauder said.

“I would like to acknowledge the hard work the Rails-To-Trails Committee

has undertaken, and all of the time they have put into this project. It is appreciated by the people on the board, and by the community at large, because this project will make the Hazleton area a better place.”

The \$70,000 will be used for a planning and feasibility study for most of the trail, and will include identifying landowners from whom rights-of-way will have to be obtained, and any physical challenges that exist on the proposed path of the trail.

Construction on the first four miles of the trail, from Route 93 to Ashmore, is scheduled to begin in the spring.

Rails-To-Trails committee member Sue Nasrani said the committee, and any member of the public interested, will be able to walk those first four miles of the trail Nov. 17.

Those interested in making the walk are asked to meet at the rear of Dubatto's Restaurant on East Broad Street at 1 p.m. that day.

“We are hoping a lot of new people will come out to see where the trail will be,” Nasrani said.

Nasrani said the committee is going to set up a subcommittee to coordinate the scheduling of future walks, meetings and fundraisers.

Bob Sagan, another committee member, said the committee is going to redesign its logo.