



NEWS

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Montco Launches 2nd Annual Trail Challenge

Norristown, PA (May 4, 2017) – The Montgomery County Health Department (MCHD), with assistance from the Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC), and the Parks, Trails, and Historic Sites Division (PTHS) of the Department of Assets and Infrastructure, launched the second annual Montgomery County Trail Challenge at today’s Board of Commissioners Meeting. The Trail Challenge will run May 6 through December 3, 2017.

The Montco Trail Challenge began last year as a family-friendly way to encourage physical activity and decrease the risk of heart disease and related health issues, such as Type 2 Diabetes and obesity, while at the same time connecting residents with the county’s parks, trails, and historic sites. In 2016, more than 1,500 participants ranging in age from 6 months to 73 years old walked or biked the Montgomery County trails.

[Thirteen Montgomery County trails](#) are part of the 2017 challenge, up from 10 in 2016. The trails connect greenways, waterways, and heritage corridors throughout Montgomery County. In addition to the 13 trails, participants can visit an additional two trails, parks, or county historic sites to receive credit towards an achievement level (Explorer, Adventurer, or Trailblazer) in the challenge. It is not required to walk or bike the entire trail to get credit for the challenge. Montgomery County has partnered with Zagster to [offer bikes](#) for rent throughout the trail system for those who want to bike the trails.

“Last year’s Trail Challenge was a great success, and we’re expecting even more participation this year. And let me be the first commissioner to say: challenge accepted,” said Val Arkoosh, chair, Montgomery County Commissioners. “Look for me out on our many beautiful trails over the next few months, because I plan to be the first commissioner to achieve the Trailblazer level.”

Funded through a Pennsylvania Department of Health grant in partnership with the Health Department, Planning Commission and Parks, Trails, and Historic Sites, the trails throughout the County are identified and assigned their own unique shape which is mounted at trail heads or parking lots. Upon visiting the listed parks and trails, participants need to correctly identify the designated shape.

Trail Challenge cards can be printed from the [website](#) and can also be found at Montgomery County libraries, designated parks and trails, select YMCAs recreation centers, and other [locations](#) throughout the county. There are three levels of achievement in this year's challenge –

- 5 Trails: Explorer (recognized with a patch)
- 10 Trails: Adventurer (recognized with a medal)
- 15 Trails: Trailblazer (recognized with a cooler backpack)

Participants can submit their cards online or drop them off at Green Lane Park, Lorimer Park, Norristown Farm Park, Central Perkiomen, or Lower Perkiomen Valley Park.

According to survey results from last year, 2016 participants included individuals, families, as well as youth groups from all parts of the county (Rockledge, Pottstown, Collegeville, Lansdale, East Greenville, and King of Prussia) as well as neighboring counties (Philadelphia, Chester, Berks, and Bucks).

At the end of the Challenge, a survey was conducted and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Of those surveyed:

- 94% visited a new park or trail
- 76% learned something new about their community
- 72% exercised more
- 98% had or would re-visit a park or trail from the challenge

The county will be tracking progress of the challenge through December on social media and asks participants to use social media to post pictures and recognitions, and encourage friends to participate. Use the hashtag #MontcoTrailChallenge.

To learn more about the Challenge or to register, visit www.montcopa.org/trailchallenge.