

LOCAL

Inmates make way for the Gateway Trails

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The Gateway Trails, one of Kings Mountain's biggest future tourist attractions, are being cleared by a most unlikely workforce – inmates of the Cleveland County Detention Center.

And why not? The labor is cheap and the rewards are boundless as the dream of the Gateway Trails is becoming a reality.

"They're loving what they are doing," said Vice President of the trails Shirley Brutko. "There are nine of them that have been coming on a regular basis. They're clearing out the dense forestation so that we can see where the trail needs to be."

Brutko said that before the inmates started clearing, they had already flagged a couple of miles of the trail with the help of a global positioning satellite and equipment. The inmates, she added, are clearing out some of the underbrush to make it easier for the equipment to get in and push the trail through. This will be their third week on the job.

"We are talking to some asphalt companies. We should start actual construction within the next couple of months," Brutko said. "We're going to work on the trailhead as soon as possible so that people can actually see that we're moving forward and making progress. We want to start in that area and hopefully get the restrooms and picnic shelters started by the fall. Designs are being prepared for those right now."

Once the designs are completed and the underbrush cleared, construction can begin. Brutko

said that they will be doing the trailhead construction, along with its possible four different trails, first. The project will be completed in phases. "And then we're going to start on the longer trail immediately after those are pushed through," she said.

"The trailhead area will probably be opened up next year," Brutko added. She said that they plan to have the entire trailhead and first four paths open to the public for use "probably before the trail is even opened up down to I-85."

Most of the trails will be bike accessible, but plans also account for a few foot paths for leisurely strolls. The trailhead, itself, includes about 44 parking spaces, restrooms with office space, a map kiosk, a bike rack, a covered shelter with picnic tables, a drop-off loop, and tree-canopied picnic tables. Unofficial plans also allow for about 50 overflow spaces for parking, if needed in the future.

"Over the next three years, it looks like we've got over \$900,000 to start spending (on the trails)," Brutko said.

Gateway Trails, Inc. rehired Haden-Stanziale, out of Charlotte, to design the trails. The group hired them before to construct the master plan for the project. Brutko said that in addition to the design work, Haden-Stanziale will also oversee the construction of the trails. "They will help us get the bids out for construction companies in the area that will actually push the trail through and put the gravel and asphalt down," she added. "Martin-Marietta has been absolutely wonderful to work with and they're furnishing us with some of the gravel for the



DESIGN OF TRAILHEAD PROVIDED BY HADEN-STANZIALE

surface."

Martin-Marietta has also donated boulders, which Brutko has said will be used as "boulder art" at the trailhead. Chemetall Foote Corp. has also been essential in donating acres of land to the project.

As for the hard workers currently toiling away, "the Trails group has been feeding the inmates lunch one day a week and the (Central United) Methodist Church has been feeding them one day a week through its community kitchen," Brutko said. "That's been really special. They appreciate it so much."

The trails, planned to be a gateway to local parks, tourism, health and happiness, has also turned out to be a gateway for second chances as the inmates

clear the land that will be enjoyed for decades to come.

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National Night Out Tuesday at Patriot's Park

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The City of Kings Mountain will host its annual "National Night Out Against Crime" on August 5 from 6-10:00 pm at the Gazebo at Patriot's Park.

The event is an effort to unite the community with police departments, fire and rescue workers against injustice. Hot dogs and soft drinks will be given away for free.

"It's almost like a neighborhood block party," said KM Special Events Director Ellis Noel.

For kids, especially those drawn to cars, there will be new police Dodge Chargers on display from the KMPD and the Highway Patrol.

"We (KMPD) have two new chargers. I just love their body style. They're a little more aerodynamic than the Crown Victorias," said KM Police Capt. Jerry Tessneer.

The KM Fire Department will give kids a ride on one of their 1936 restored trucks. The Cleveland County Sheriff's Department, according to Tessneer, will be exhibiting their rapid response van. Also, school resource officers, EMS, and the traffic enforcement division will "have something out there," Tessneer stated, in addition to K-9 units, the Gaston County Rural Police and others.

The Calvin Edwards Trio, led by the band's famous "International Jazz Musician" and namesake of

the group, will be performing. Edwards, the son of a Kings Mountain pastor, had started playing and singing in a Gospel group called "Five Blind Boys of Alabama" when he was 17. He is now a Japanese Jazz powerhouse with albums "So What we Forget" and "Just Swing."

As Noel, Tessneer, and Murphrey see it, the whole purpose for National Night Out is the opportunity for families to have a get-to-know-you evening with law enforcement.

"We're asking our residences to lock their doors, turn-off their lights, and spend time with their neighbors and the police department," Murphrey said.