



GPTN

GREAT PLAINS TRAILS NETWORK

FALL 2023

ISSUE 152

Trailblazing into Tax Savings: Great Plains Trails Network becomes a Non-Profit

BY DENA NOE

Maybe you just read our headline and thought to yourself, isn't GPTN already a non-profit? For years we've been communicating with you, our donors and members, about our tax designation. We've written a lot of articles, sent emails and mailers asking you to donate to the Nebraska Trails Foundation so GPTN could continue to build trails in Lincoln and Lancaster County. Today that all changes as GPTN is now a 501c3 non-profit.

A look back might help explain this change. GPTN has been a champion for outdoor enthusiasts in Lancaster County since its inception in 1988. The organization's purpose has always been clear: to advocate and support a network of trails that can be used for biking, hiking, walking, and horseback riding. Elaine Hammer, fondly referred to as the mother of the trails, stated in the first newsletter printed in September of 1988, that GPTN would work with public and private officials to develop a master plan for trails that would have public support. Over the years, GPTN has been instrumental in creating a network of trails that have become a beloved part of Lancaster County's



Trail supporters and the general public come together on April 21, 1990 to celebrate the opening of the Rock Island Trail.

outdoor scene. This was due to the organization's focus on lobbying for change.

With the blessing of Elaine Hammer the GPTN Board has been working to change our designation from a 501c4 to a 501c3. Hammer believed, as did others on the board, it was time for GPTN to manage the funds it raised and offer our donors and members a tax-deductible option. We are excited to announce we have made this transition and are ready to begin accepting your tax-deductible donations.

The change to a 501c3 will not change the mission of GPTN. Instead it means that you, our members and donors, can now enjoy tax benefits

for your contributions, making it easier than ever to support our mission of creating and extending trails, building connections, and ensuring trail safety for everyone. With this new status, we can streamline our funding abilities and ensure that every penny received is allocated towards our projects. The GPTN Board will continue to work to grow the network of trails by working to bring private and public funding together. Join us in this exciting new chapter and help us create the best trail experience for all. Visit gptn.org to make a donation or become a member today.





President's Note

Hello Trail Advocates,

Fall is officially here and, as with every change of season, a good time to reflect on what we are currently grateful for. I know this can be controversial but the cooler fall weather often reminds me of what I call 'proper summer weather'. Given my up-bringing in Northern Minnesota, I can't help but be grateful for cooler weather during this season.

As I peruse this newsletter I find a lot to be grateful for, including the foresight of others to invest in a trails system in our city. Speaking of investing and foresight, I'm grateful for the many gracious donors that helped purchase the next piece of the puzzle to connect Spring Creek Prairie to Pioneers Parks and to Lincoln's trails system. You also cannot mention "legacy" and the Lincoln trails system in the same paragraph without thinking of Elaine Hammer. Her vision and tenacity will be needed to complete this legacy project.

I'm also grateful to the GPTN board for the work that has gone towards our designation as a 501c3. There has been a lot of good conversation and hours spent recognizing what has been done by others to create this gem of a trails system in our city. I believe this transition has positioned GPTN to be able to continue the legacy of building trails in and around Lancaster County.

Lastly, I am grateful for Lincoln Parks and Recreation. They are the masterminds behind the scenes, bringing these lifelines of trails to fruition while maintaining our current trails system. I would encourage you all to take the time to complete the survey mentioned in this newsletter on page 8. This survey will help the city be recognized for the work they have done to make Lincoln a Bicycle Friendly Community. Yes, we have more work to do to make Lincoln a safer place to ride, but as I worked through the survey, I'm reminded of all the work that has been done. I hope as you work through the survey you too will also recognize all the organizations and people that had a vision, planned, volunteered, donated and worked to create the trails system we have today. This makes me grateful.

See you on the trails,
Jordan Messerer



Great Plains Trails Network

Since 1988

*dedicated to the goal of developing
a network of commuter and
recreational trails within
Lincoln and Lancaster County*

2023

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www.GPTN.org

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GPTN and Elaine Hammer Memorials Played a Major Role in Recent Prairie Conservation

BY SUSAN LARSON RODENBURG



You might have heard the wonderful news that Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center, in partnership with Solidago Conservancy, recently announced the conservation of 310 acres of native prairie north of Spring Creek Audubon Center. Until

now, the acreage was believed to be one of Lancaster County's largest unprotected tracts of prairie.

What you might not know is that Great Plains Trails Network and Elaine Hammer memorial gifts contributed to this landmark accomplishment. GPTN pooled its collective funds, about \$90,000 in donations dedicated to the Prairie Corridor, to become one of the funding partners making it all possible.

The land will connect Spring Creek Audubon Center with the Prairie Corridor, a tallgrass prairie passage and trail which will extend from Pioneers Park to Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center. The Prairie Corridor project is a collaborative effort with many partners that include the City of Lincoln, Lincoln Parks Foundation and Lower Platte South Natural Resources District. With less than two percent of tallgrass prairie remaining in North America, this purchase will conserve and connect a larger habitat area to support the tallgrass prairie ecosystem for future generations.

"We are happy to have played a role in preserving this critical parcel of prairie, located north of Spring Creek Audubon Center. This allows for the extension of trail through the prairie, north of Spring Creek, getting us closer to Denton and our eventual goal, Pioneers Park, and the

rest of Lincoln's trails system," said Jordan Messerer, President of Great Plains Trails Network.

In recognition of GPTN and Elaine Hammer's contribution, Solidago and Lincoln Parks & Recreation will install a 7-foot by 1-foot custom-made marker and a tribute plaque on a boulder bench about Elaine and GPTN. This will be located along the first completed mile of trail within the Prairie Corridor, just west of Pioneers Park. The first mile will be named the "Elaine Hammer Mile."

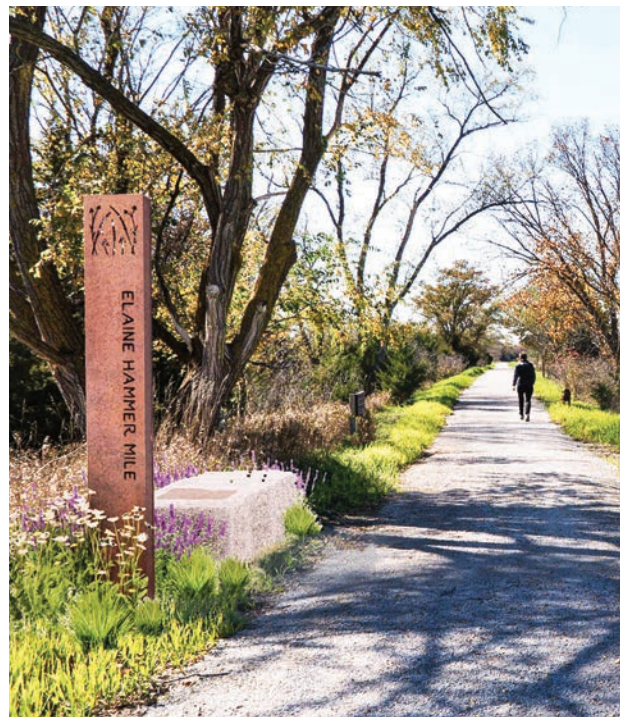
"GPTN has been a huge supporter of the Prairie Corridor since we actively started raising funds for this legacy project in 2017. We are extremely grateful for GPTN and its visionary leaders, and of course, its legendary leader and founder, the late Elaine Hammer," said Nicole Fleck-Tooze, Executive Director of Solidago Conservancy.

"We have more than two-thirds of the land needed for the Prairie Corridor, and this parcel is a big part of it, ultimately creating a mile and a half of connectivity on the southern portion of the trail between Spring Creek Audubon Center and Denton," said Fleck-Tooze.

Formed in 2020, Solidago Conservancy works with partners to conserve and expand greenways and natural areas toward the goal of a more connected and resilient landscape. Solidago is the Latin name for Goldenrod, Nebraska's state flower. The Conservancy is affiliated with Lincoln Parks Foundation and works collaboratively with the City of Lincoln, the Lower Platte South NRD, and many others to connect people with nature and open space.

Located south of Denton, Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center focuses on

conservation of the tallgrass prairie ecosystem and the birds that rely on it. This 850-acre tallgrass prairie sanctuary offers over three miles of walking trails, native prairie grasslands, wetlands and ponds, wildflowers and grasses, and beautiful scenic vistas. In its midst more than 235 species of birds, 370 species of plants, and other wildlife dwell side-by-side with historic 19th-century wagon ruts from a cut-off to the Oregon Trail.



This custom-made marker will be located within the first mile of the Prairie Corridor Trail, west of Pioneers Park, along with the following tribute plaque, written by her three sons, Charles, Mark and Ken:

Elaine Hammer (1935-2022)

Elaine would be very happy to see you here today! She founded the Great Plains Trails Network in 1988 with the vision for all people to enjoy the trails and the natural beauty of Nebraska. Elaine helped develop the network of trails to connect cities, people, and families. Lincoln's trail system is recognized as one of the best in the country. Enjoy her legacy!

--Dedicated in 2023--

"Streets Alive" was Filled with Fun and Fitness!

BY GARY BENTRUP

Streets Alive is a unique annual, one day health and wellness festival that moves between neighborhoods every two years and centers around a local school. This year Streets Alive was held on September 24 in the University Place neighborhood and saw a huge number of attendees and exhibitors. For over 10 years, GPTN has been participating in Streets Alive, handing out trail maps and free smoothies made on a "human powered blender" bike. We were back out there again and served over 200 smoothies.

As part of Streets Alive, a community development project is chosen by the host neighborhood. The community development project aims to improve the health and fitness of the neighborhood. University Place Community Organization (UPCO) residents and Lincoln Parks & Recreation (LPR) chose to build a FitLot Outdoor Fitness Park (FitLot) in UPCO Park as the Streets Alive

Community Development Project for this neighborhood. A FitLot has several strength training stations using the person's body weight for resistance. It is wheelchair adaptable and accessible, and it allows people to easily bike, stroll, or roll from their home to the

FitLot and workout for free.

The first FitLot in Lincoln was built in Woods Park in 2020 by LPR with funding from AARP with the hope of building more in other areas of Lincoln. The FitLot in UPCO park should be completed in the near future.



GPTN volunteers enjoy this gorgeous afternoon while providing free smoothies made by their "human powered blender" bike to "Streets Alive" participants.

GPTN Benefits from the Open Harvest July's SEED Program



GPTN President, Jordan Messerer receives donation from Open Harvest's Ranya Aribi (Marketing Coordinator), Shelly Ollson (Wellness Coordinator) and Margot Conrad (Front end manager).

Photo courtesy of Open Harvest Marketing Team



We are so grateful to Open Harvest for making the Great Plains Trails Network their SEED Program recipient for the month of July. Through the community's generous contributions, Open Harvest's SEED Program was able to present GPTN with a donation of \$1,346.05. The SEED Program at Open Harvest Co-Op Grocery is a simple, yet powerful, giving opportunity that allows patrons to "round-up" their grocery bill for local organizations that share a commitment to a healthy community, sustainable food system and strong local economy. GPTN is so grateful to have community support like this that helps keep our trails system growing for everyone's enjoyment.

Thank you to Open Harvest for supporting GPTN in such a generous way.

HUB & SOUL

Music, Friends, and Fundraising



Jayne Snyder Trails Center's Hub & Soul venue.

BY KERRY EAGAN

For the Great Plains Trail Network, Hub & Soul is more than just another music festival in Lincoln, Nebraska. This event provides GPTN members with an opportunity to experience great music, great food, and camaraderie, all in the trail-friendly setting of the Jayne Snyder Trails Center and the Union Plaza Amphitheater. It has also served as an important fundraising event for GPTN.

Under the leadership of Doug Dittman, the Hub Café has sponsored and operated

Hub & Soul since its inception five years ago. Each year GPTN has been designated as the recipient of donations raised during the event, and approximately \$10,000 has been raised every year. Moreover, numerous GPTN members have provided volunteer services before, during and after the event. The Hub Café is now under new ownership, with Jake Thiessen and Crystal Bock Thiessen taking over in July of 2023. Jake and Crystal plan on carrying on the partnership with GPTN to keep Hub & Soul as the centerpiece social gathering for the Lincoln and Lancaster County trails community.

So far this year, audiences have been treated to entertaining shows by the Wondermonds and A Ferocious Jungle Cat in June, and by Emily Bass and the Kris Lager Band in August. Unfortunately, the July show was cancelled due to inclement weather. **The final two shows are scheduled for September 29th and October 27th. For more information visit the Hub & Soul website at: www.hubandsoul.com**



Hub & Soul at the Union Plaza Amphitheater.



Wondermonds kick off the Hub & Soul concerts.



Emily Bass entertains with a soulful energy.



Putting the sax in your soul!



A Ferocious Jungle Cat gets the crowd dancing !



Hands up for the Kris Lager Band.



The hot music cooling fountain.



The Kris Lager Band keeps the crowd rocking into the evening!

Run 4 the Pines Helps Connect Murdock Trail to Prairie Pine



BY ANN RINGLEIN

If nature is medicine – about 200 folks – 100 of them runners – got a good dose of medicine at the 5th Annual Run 4 the Pines!

The beauty of this race is that all who attend get a good dose of nature at the truly amazing Prairie Pines Nature Center. The bonus is Prairie Pines gets some much due attention from runners and spectators and support for this great piece of land.

Winding through the Prairies Pines grounds, runners get a taste of tall grass prairie, of a Christmas tree farm from long ago, and a bit of a forest. The changing terrain and view make the 4 miles just fly by!

Whether you are an experienced runner, a beginning runner, a walker, or nature enthusiast – this run is for you and for the Pines. All the money raised goes towards the construction of a connector trail linking the Prairie Pines to the Murdoch Trail in NE Lincoln.

Just think how many more people will enjoy this prairie if they can get there via their 2 feet or 2 wheels of their bikes!

Sponsors for this event include – the Lincoln Track Club, Lincoln Running Co, Piedmontese/Mercado/Casa Boniva, Code Beer, Saro Cider, U Stop, Ink Alley, Harbor Coffee House, Waverly Rescue Squad. Thank you all for your support. Mark your calendars for August of next year to hit the trails of Prairie Pines and get a good dose of medicine in the process!



Photos by Brian Wandzilak and Ann Ringlein.

Lincoln Track Club Membership Application



Check the LTC Website for the 2023 Calendar and other information.
www.lincolnrun.org

The Lincoln Track Club was established in 1975 by an eager group of track enthusiasts. Although our title contains the reference to track, LTC has become a distance-oriented club that annually hosts seven races, with a range of distances, and also supports a number of other races in the community.

LTC is not just about hosting races. Our goal is to grow the sport of running for runners of all skill levels, as well as create opportunities for folks to get moving in a healthy, supportive environment. We annually give a portion of our race proceeds back to the community by financially supporting projects and proposals that foster fitness and physical activity.

In essence, we are a non-profit community service organization made up entirely of volunteers. Our membership includes runners of all skill levels, from some of the nation's finest road racers to new athletes who are just getting their start in the sport.

This is where you come in. We can always use more members to make our organization “run”! Please consider joining one of Nebraska's finest all-volunteer-run organizations. The cost to join is minimal, and by joining, you'll be helping grow the sport of running and creating positive opportunities for people in your community to be active and improve their health.

To join the Lincoln Track Club go to lincolnrun.org and click on the “Membership” button.

Winter is coming. Get ready to ride!

BY JESSICA CORMAN



The author, preparing for a winter commute in Lincoln on a colder day.

The phrase might evoke a sense of longing for snow covered fields, dread of shovelling and unintentional ice-skating, or simply a sense of annoyance about an ill-fated TV series. Wherever you fall (in the figurative, please not literal, sense), I hope you are planning to ride your bike this coming season. Oh,

you don't know what to wear? Well, here are my thoughts, from head to toe, from the balmy 50° to the chillier less than 20°. Note that these suggestions emphasize bike commuting, but are good for any type of casual riding (if you are thinking of more extensive riding - great! - and you likely already know that you need to layer to accommodate heat generation).

Head: As winter begins to envelop our city, I will first grab a buff to wrap around my otherwise chilled ears. When temperatures start to reach just under 40°, I add a beanie under my helmet. Wearing a beanie under a helmet is a lot like stuffing a sleeping bag back into a compression sack; I dread this stage of winter riding and long for the temperatures to fall under 32°. When temperatures fall this low (<32°), life gets easier. My head is no longer too hot to wear a ski helmet. Yes, a ski helmet: a cyclists' perfect combination of safety and warmth for a cold winter's commute. And, ski goggles are a great pairing. No more frozen tears!

Neck: Once temperatures descend below 40°, I put on another buff to cover my neck, and, if cold enough, also my mouth and nose. I use a cotton one if above freezing, a wool one if below. Wool is not cheap, but does a great job of keeping moisture from freezing on one's skin!

Upper body: I mostly assume that I am going to change my clothes at work. So, I tend to follow a simple recipe for what to wear, swapping out layer strength based on the temperature. The recipe is simple: a base layer, a mid layer, and a rain jacket. Above freezing, the base layer and mid layer are most likely a light wool long-sleeved shirt and a fleece vest. Below freezing, but above 20° or so, I might swap in a down vest or a heavier wool, long-sleeved shirt. When temperatures hit below 20°, I'll swap the vest for a lightweight down jacket. In the single digits, I will change the rain jacket for a hardshell jacket. Note that the change of clothes at work has a dual purpose: 1) it gives my commuter clothes a chance to air out before I put them back on to bike home (sweaty clothes mean a very cold ride!) and 2) I might meet whatever professional clothing etiquette is prudent for an academic. I also keep a heavy winter jacket in my office. Unlike the rain jacket, this insulated jacket keeps me warm if I need to go outside during the workday.

Hands: Keeping my hands warm can be tough. I have found that even at temperatures of 50°, I appreciate a light pair of gloves. If it is under 40°, I am wearing mittens. I have a thinner pair of mittens for temperatures above freezing and a double layered pair for temperatures below. If it is 20° or less, I will use a gifted pair of battery powered mittens to keep me warm. These mittens are ridiculously warm (and luxurious), though I do not know if I could afford them if I had to actually buy them! So, I will let you all in on what I did prior to the marvel of battery warming: I used a disposable hand warmer in each mitten.

Lower body: Leggings are made for cycling and winter is no exception. A pair of unlined leggings paired with an insulated skirt is perfect for a cooler

winter day. If the temperatures are below 32°, I will swap in my fleece-lined leggings. When the temperatures are in the teens, I will add unlined leggings under my fleece-lined leggings. And, if it is actually snowing (what a treat!) or freezing rain (ugh!), I may use rain pants over the leggings to help keep my legs dry. Rain pants can add extra warmth, so this may mean swapping out the fleece-lined apparel.

Feet: Like hands, it can be tricky to keep one's feet warm. For me, I find wool socks paired with boots are the trick. The other trick is to slip on a different pair of socks during the day, so the warm wool socks you wear on the commute home are nice and dry. If your boots have a sole thicker than your average shoe (as many do), you may need to adjust your seat height to be comfortable.



Commuting in December in Alaska means traversing a winter wonderland.

Winter is coming, but maybe you are a bit more ready for it now. The more you ride in the winter, the better you will learn what you need for warmth and comfort. Enjoy the ride and enjoy the cold!

Event CALENDAR

OCTOBER

- 7 Market-to-Market
- 27 Hub & Soul

BICYCLING LINCOLN™

BicycLincoln is a community group that supports and promotes bicycling in the city of Lincoln. Our mission is to provide information and a unified voice for bicycle advocacy in an effort to make cycling in Lincoln more friendly, safe, easy, accepted, and “so that more people bike and bike more often.

Check them out at bicyclincoln.org/



FRIDAY
OCT 27

JOSH HOYER
THE SOUL REVIEW

*Hub
& Soul*

Let's Make Lincoln Gold

In 2019, the City of Lincoln was awarded the Silver level in the Bicycle Friendly Community (BFC) national program administered by the League of American Bicyclists. The five levels of the BFC award - diamond, platinum, gold, silver and bronze, and honorable mention category - are designed to provide incentive for communities to continuously improve. Awarded communities must renew their status every four years. Judges use the 5 Es to evaluate each application: Equity &

Accessibility, Engineering, Education, Encouragement, and Evaluation and Planning. This year, Lincoln is going for **Gold!**

As part of the application process, the League of American Bicyclists conducts a survey to hear from Lincoln bicyclists. The survey is meant to provide context for their review team's decision-making process, as well as provide valuable feedback for the City of Lincoln from bicyclists in the community. Anonymous

aggregate survey results will be provided back to the City of Lincoln later this year. More information about the public survey can be found here. <https://bikeleague.org/bfc-program-public-input-survey-goes-even-more-public/> Results from the BFC will be announced in December.

In the meantime, please take the survey below and share widely with your network to help support Lincoln's BFC status. #goforGOLD

Public Survey Link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BFC_Fall23

The survey will remain open through **Friday, October 20th.**




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Take the Trail-A-Thon Challenge



It's not too late to join the fun of the Lincoln Trail-A-Thon challenge.


The Trail-A-Thon is a self-directed, family friendly event, that challenges you to complete 92 miles of Lincoln Trails! Explore new trails, enjoy familiar trails - all while helping support Lincoln's great trails network. All proceeds go to building trails in Lincoln. Visit gptn.org/lincolntrailathon to learn more.

See how far you can go!!

When you register you'll receive a Lincoln Trail-A-Thon pair of socks. After you complete half the routes, you'll receive a second pair of socks. *Note: kids will receive a bike bell and bike reflector when they register.*



Congratulations! We had five people complete the Lincoln Trail-A-Thon challenge in August: Doug Fen, Bruce Hammond, Pat Hammond, Maxine Moul, and Ted Taege. **Way to go!**



Bike Walk Nebraska cultivates and supports safe and accessible active transportation across our state by leading sound policy and advocating for best practices. We work across sectors in partnership with elected officials, municipalities, and organizations to ensure that biking and walking - whether for transportation or recreation - works for all Nebraskans.

Become a member at:
www.bikewalknebraska.org



LOWER PLATTE SOUTH NRD



Keep adventuring on the LPSNRD trails!

**MOPAC EAST
OAK CREEK
HOMESTEAD**

lpsnrd.org/trails

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www.givenebraska.org/



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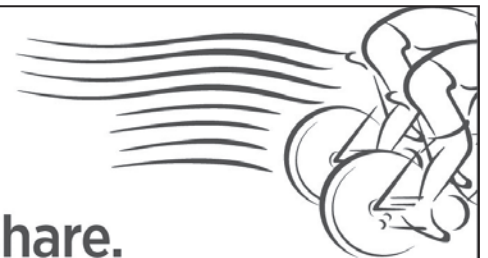
Monday - Friday 10 AM - 6 PM

Saturday: 10 AM - 5 PM

Sunday: 12 PM - 5 PM



Ride. Share.



That's what the Great Plains Bike Club is all about. We actively promote bicycling with rides for all levels of riders in and around Southeastern Nebraska.

Weekly rides with a leader | Show 'n go rides
Ice cream & coffee shop rides | Moon-lit rides
Hammering training rides | Trail rides

We sponsor the Spring Fling ride in April and Heatstroke 100 in August. We also promote bicycling safety through community-sponsored events. For more information and an on-line application to join the club, go to greatplainsbikeclub.org.



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Bicycling Club**

GPTN NEW & RENEWING MEMBERS June 1, 2023 - August 31, 2023

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Daniel Brown
Paul Breitreutz
Dan & Becky Caldwell
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Rick Earnest
Mark Felker
Dale Gebhard
Raymond M. Grauf
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Grant Hoover
Jared Jobes
David Kohrell
Barb Kortum
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Mark Melichar
John Munson
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Sue Stehly
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Phil & Mary Wolfe
Douglas Zink

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Great Plains Trails Network

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For more information:
www.gptn.org

Help Lincoln Go **Gold**

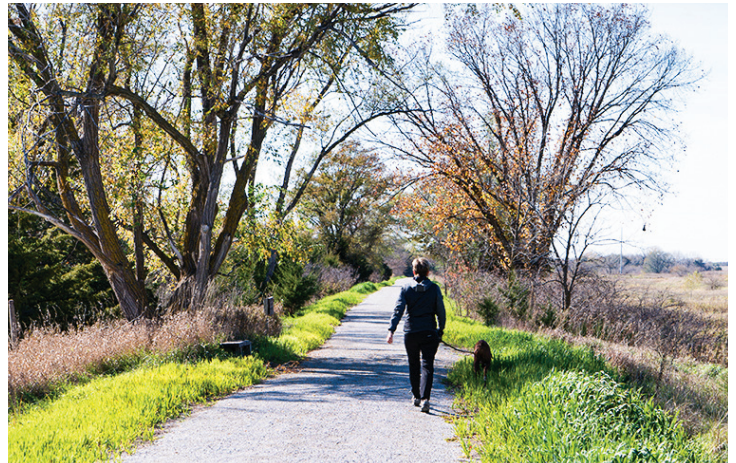
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We Need Your Support!

Prairie Corridor Trail

The Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch is a tallgrass prairie passage and trail that will build on our nationally recognized trail system, linking Pioneers Park Nature Center and Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center. Please consider donating to this exciting project. The approximately 10-mile greenway is a once in a lifetime project. Please consider donating. *Thanks!*



Make contributions payable to:

Great Plains Trails Network

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Designated Project: _____

Mail to:

GPTN

P.O. 82902

Lincoln, NE 68501-2902