



A History

The concept for a network of multi-use trails throughout Aboite Township was created in 2001 after two incidents highlighted a significant need in the Township. The first event was the completion of a community-built playground that unfortunately had few trails surrounding it or leading to it. The second incident was a tragic bicycle accident that killed Aboite Township cyclist, Ron Repka. Both events marked the need for change for area residents and trails advocates, Lynn Reecer and Stephanie Schultz. Armed with a vision for a network of safe, multi-use paths in Aboite and a passion to make it happen, the two brainstormed ideas for a non-profit organization dedicated to that vision. They agreed that the safety, economics, quality of life, and fitness benefits would be enough to gain the right interest to build such a trail system. In December 2001, a successful public meeting supported that notion. And thus **Aboite New Trails, Inc.** was born.

In 2002, Ron Repka's widow, Sharon Repka, joined Reecer and Schultz in the quest to build a trail system. Repka recently had started her own non-profit organization, the *Ronald G. Repka Foundation* and had launched a *Share the Road* sign campaign in honor of her late husband. A significant donation from that Foundation, combined with another large contribution from the *Times Corners Lions Club* allowed Aboite New Trails to commission a feasibility study. What ensued was a nearly 50-mile plan promising safe pedestrian and bicycle travel by weaving natural corridors to community assets like parks, schools, churches and businesses. The network of trails extends across the Southwest area to Fox Island County Park and links to central Fort Wayne's Rivergreenway trail system.

In 2003, Reecer, now President of the Board, and Schultz, now Vice President of the Board, (Repka has since moved to Indianapolis but is still involved) formed a dynamic 16-member Board of Directors. In May 2004, the Board hosted a public meeting to garner more support and reveal the Plan. A well-attended meeting prompted residents, trails advocates, and area politicians to get involved. With its formal fundraising campaign scheduled to begin in late Fall 2004, Aboite New Trails and its advocates see this trail system as a mandatory amenity if Fort Wayne is to make itself more appealing to new businesses. The nation's most livable places share a common thread of multi-use trails, which connect people with places and with each other. Aboite New Trails believes it is possible to use trail mileage as a measure of an area's quality-of-life, strength of community, and local economic vitality. With the help of concerned citizens, all of these things are possible for Aboite and its residents.

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