



## Meet the Board of Directors

### **Jim Coplen**

*Business Manager, Southwest Allen County Schools*

**Passion for Trails:** Although I am a part of the Aboite New Trails Board through the Superintendent's appointment, I have been an avid cyclist for several years. In fact, one of my greatest life achievements was when my wife and I completed a one-day, 100-mile bike tour. We understand the importance of physical fitness and are interested in using the trails for walking, jogging and casual bicycling.

**Bio:** Jim Coplen was born and raised in nearby Warsaw, Indiana, earning a BS degree in Accounting from Manchester College in North Manchester, Indiana. Upon graduation he worked for nine years as an auditor of governmental agencies for the State of Indiana and has since worked in School Corporations managing business operations (3½ years at Peru Community Schools and nine years at Southwest Allen County). He is a member of the Indiana Association of School Business Officials and serves as Treasurer for both the Southwest Allen County Education Foundation and Aboite Baptist Church. He and his wife, Lesa, have two children.

### **Leslie Ferguson**

*Consultant, Leslie Ferguson Communications, Inc.*

*Public Relations Chairperson, Aboite New Trails*

**Passion for Trails:** Having lived in areas where the greater outdoors and fitness are a way of life for individuals of all ages, races, and walks of life, I see how a trail system can profoundly and positively impact a community – for safety, for the economy, for fitness, for a way of life. And I wish the same for Fort Wayne. Families in Fort Wayne (as with most Midwest cities) are confined to their cars, contributing to obesity, laziness, and pollution problems. If we can build a trail system that provides opportunities for alternative transportation to shopping, activities, and outdoor recreation, we could improve our community and our way of life.

**Bio:** Born in Fort Rucker, Alabama, Leslie Ferguson earned a BA in Advertising/Marketing from Indiana University and has over 11 years' marketing and public relations experience with companies in Denver, Minneapolis, and Fort Wayne. Prior to moving to Fort Wayne, Leslie served as a Marketing Associate for the Denver Broncos, as an Account Manager and Supervisor for two top 100 Public Relations firms, and spent eight years in the U.S. Army as a Public Affairs and Ammunitions Officer. Her military experience included stints in Korea, Bosnia, Croatia, Central Europe and Colorado, to name a few. Since living in Fort Wayne she has started Leslie Ferguson Communications, Inc., providing communications/public relations consultation for area businesses. She is active in the local community and supports area non-profits through volunteer efforts, including the YMCA, Arts United, the Museum of Art, and Aboite New Trails. She and her husband, John, have three children.

### **Michael R. Fitch, PE**

*Allen County Highway Director*

**Passion for Trails:** I got involved in [trails] in the early 1970's when I helped design the Fort Wayne Rivergreenway. In private practice, I planned and designed many trails all over Indiana. My wife and I like to walk, so my interest is also self serving.

**Bio:** Mike Fitch is a Hometown native and long-time Fort Wayne resident. Earning his BS in Civil Engineering from Indiana Institute of Technology, Mike began his career in private practice nearly 25 years ago as an engineer consultant, and has been in public service since 1990. Passionate about trails, Mike is an advocate for the trails movement in his current position as Allen County Highway Director and spends what little free time his job allows on community service. He and his wife, Cindy, have three children.

### **Gail Herendeen**

*Secretary of the Board, Aboite New Trails*

**Passion for Trails:** My husband Tom I had the pleasure of living in Indianapolis when the Monon trail was continued just a few blocks from our home. We were able to see the many benefits trails bring to surrounding families and businesses. We then lived in New Orleans for one year prior to moving to Fort Wayne and again enjoyed the ability to walk to parks, restaurants, shops, museums and even grocery stores. After being spoiled by the Monon in Indianapolis and then by the pedestrian-friendly city of New Orleans, I found it difficult and frustrating that sidewalks and trails are few in Southwest Allen County. After the playground (Three Rivers Junction) was constructed in 2001, it became apparent that Aboite has some great attractions with no pedestrian-friendly way to get to them. I want my family to have the option of riding bikes to the playground...walking to the grocery store... rollerblading to the swimming pool. I want my husband to have safer routes to get to where he can cycle. I want Fort Wayne to be an attractive and competitive city so my children may consider it when they are raising a family. I feel trails are an important part of that.

**Bio:** A native of West Lafayette, Indiana (where they recently built a great network of trails, by the way!), Gail Herendeen earned a BS in Occupational Therapy from Indiana University, attending both campuses in Bloomington and the IU School of Medicine in Indianapolis. Following graduation, Gail remained in Indianapolis and joined the Indiana Hand Center as both a Hand and Upper Extremity Therapist and as its Marketing Director. Gail is dedicated to the Fort Wayne community and dedicates her time and talent to numerous community organizations and projects. Namely, Gail was one of three general coordinators for the community-built Three Rivers Junction Playground located in Indian Trails Park off of Aboite Center Road. The project was funded by individual donations, corporate gifts, local grants and grass roots fundraisers and was constructed in just 6 days with the help of 2,000 volunteers. Gail and her husband, Tom, a former competitive cyclist and current recreational cyclist, have four children.

### **Sharon Repka Jellison**

*President, Ronald G. Repka Foundation*

**Passion for Trails:** Having been a cyclist and rollerblader for the past 15 years, I have longed for a safe place for myself and two boys to enjoy these, as well as other outdoor activities. The addition of trails for our community will impact our quality of

life in so many ways. I look forward to this dream becoming a reality for Southwest Allen County.

**Bio:** Sharon Jellison is a Chicago native and earned her BA in Psychology from Indiana University. Upon graduation she worked for the Bank of New England in Boston for three years, leaving to join Indiana Records Managers in Fort Wayne where she served as a sales representative. Her community activism has included volunteer efforts with the Fort Wayne Jewish Federation and Erin's House. Sharon founded the Ronald G. Repka Foundation and was instrumental in the Share the Road Campaign implemented in Fort Wayne in 2002 following the death of her first husband, the late Ron Repka. She has two teenage sons and lives in Indianapolis with her husband, Jeff.

### **Bob Kennedy**

*Deputy Director of Public Works and City Utilities*

**Passion for Trails:** My passion for trails began last year when working closely with Jack Stark, previous greenway coordinator (volunteer). Jack did an excellent job evaluating the current river greenway system in Ft. Wayne and developing a comprehensive study of needed improvements. Public Works will play a major role in making the needed improvements to the existing system and helping build & connect the river greenway to the outlying trail systems that will ultimately connect over 80 miles of trails. Mayor Graham Richard has committed \$2 million dollars over the next 4 years to help transform our city into a city of trails and connectivity. Public Works will partner with the Park Department in this venture.

**Bio:**

Bob Kennedy is a lifelong resident of Fort Wayne and a longtime dedicated employee of the City of Fort Wayne, having served in various positions within the City for more than 20 years. Past positions include Street Commissioner, Chairman of the Board of Public Works, and his current position of Deputy Director of Public Works and Utilities, a position he has held since August, 2004. Bob is also a certified Black Belt in Six Sigma, which is a management tool that started with Jack Welch at General Electric. Six Sigma is being used all over the world using statistical data for quality improvements in work processes. His current position with Public Works and City Utilities provides him an annual budget of nearly \$100 million, which along with the 500 employees that report to him, he manages and controls Street Dept., Water Dept., Water Pollution Control Maintenance and Water Pollution Control Plant, Water Filtration Plant, Right of Way, General Accounting, Planning & Design Services, Graphic Information Systems, Board of Works, City Engineering, Fleet Management, Flood Control, and Traffic & Transportation Engineering. Bob lives in Aboite with his wife and daughter.

### **Barbara J. Krisher**

*Aboite Township Trustee*

**Passion for Trails:** Trails will offer everyone in Aboite Township the opportunity for exercise and independence. Our sense of community will grow with each completed portion, as we all work together to make our trails a reality.

**Bio:** Originally from Cincinnati, Ohio, Barbara Krisher has been a Fort Wayne resident for many years. She earned a BS in education from the University of Cincinnati and an MS in Education from Indiana University, and spent nine years teaching before entering

the public service sector. Barbara's public service career spans two decades. She has served as the Aboite Township trustee since 1991, and in various other political leadership roles with a variety of organizations in Allen County and Aboite Township, including the Aboite Township Park District Advisory Board, AAUW, League of Women Voters, and the Allen County Republican Women's Club. In addition, Barbara has served as the Republican Precinct Committeeman; as the Vice-Chairman, Third District, Member, Republican State Committee; on the Allen County Republican Executive Committee; on the Allen County Sewer Board; and is currently a member of the Allen County Planning Commission. She has a passion for the local arts scene and has been a volunteer usher for the Embassy Theatre since 1985. She has two adult sons.

### **Arthur E. ("Art") Mandelbaum**

*Attorney, Carson Boxberger LLP*

**Passion for Trails:** After cycling competitively in college and taking up running in recent years, I understand the safety concerns of non-motorized users of our thoroughfares. My understanding of the danger of using roads for running and cycling became more acute when I lost a friend who was tragically struck and killed while cycling on roads in Allen County. By adding trails, I hope and expect that injuries and deaths from accidents between cars and runner or cyclists can be avoided.

**Bio:** Born in Indianapolis, Indiana, Art Mandelbaum graduated from Indiana University with a BA and a JD. He moved to Fort Wayne upon graduation and joined Carson Boxberger LLP Attorneys at Law, where he has remained since. In 1996, he earned Partner and focuses in the corporate, business and real estate section of the firm. In addition, Art is President and Co-owner, with Barbara Baekgaard, of Baekgaard Ltd., a men's gift importer/manufacturer and distributor. Art is active in the Fort Wayne community and has served in leadership positions with several area non-profit organizations, including the Fort Wayne Sports Corporation, the Fort Wayne-Allen County Convention and Visitors Bureau, Leadership Prayer Breakfast, the Woodson/Fabini Foundation, Junior Achievement, the Vera Bradley Foundation, and Aboite New Trails. He and his wife Jennifer have three children.

### **Dr. Scott Miller**

*President, Ophthalmology Consultants*

**Passion for Trails:** I enjoy endless outdoor activities and feel that the proposed trail system will go a long way toward enhancing the quality of life in the Fort Wayne area. It will provide a way for the young and young at heart to travel safely to various destinations in the area despite increasing auto traffic. It will encourage physical activity, and in turn help counteract the obesity epidemic that threatens to overtake our healthcare system.

**Bio:** A Fort Wayne native and South Side High School graduate, Scott Miller earned both his Bachelor's and Medical degrees from Indiana University. Upon completing his residency with IU, he founded Ophthalmology Consultants in Fort Wayne, where he has remained President since 1983. He is a former President of the Fort Wayne Medical Society, former President of the Indiana Academy of Ophthalmology, and has served on numerous medical and community-related Boards, including the Fort Wayne Philharmonic and Lutheran Homes. He is currently a Board Member with Medpartners, the Fort Wayne Chamber of Commerce, and is the Co-founder of the Matt 25 Diabetic Eye clinic. He and his wife, Susan, have three sons.

### **Dr. Mark O'Shaughnessy**

*Cardiologist, Fort Wayne Cardiology*

**Passion for Trails:** A majority of the Heart Disease I see daily is preventable with healthy lifestyle choices. Fort Wayne needs safe, convenient places to encourage activity/exercise. I finish each of my lectures with the statement that ultimately, I hope to put myself out of a job, but I need everyone's help to make Fort Wayne a healthier place to live.

**Bio:** A Fort Wayne native and graduate of South Side High School, Mark O'Shaughnessy attended Indiana University Medical School where he specialized in Cardiology and Internal Medicine. Upon completing his residency, he joined Fort Wayne Cardiology (FWC) where he has remained for 11 years. At FWC, Mark is the Director of the Cardiac Catheterization Lab, and serves as the Medical Director of both Wellness and Education. In 2004, he received the Senator Richard Lugar Community Fitness Award for work promoting Community Wellness. He is a member of the American Medical Association, the Indiana State Medical Association, the Fort Wayne Medical Society, and is a Fellow of the American College of Cardiology. Mark is dedicated to the Fort Wayne community and has served on numerous Boards, including the Fort Wayne Medical Society Board of Trustees, Matthew 25 Health and Dental Clinic, and the St. Joseph Foundation. He lectures regularly on community and wellness programs and is an avid marathon runner, having completed 25 to date. His lifelong goal is to finish a marathon in each State. He and his wife, Laura, have three teenage children.

### **Debbie Probst**

**Passion for Trails:** I'm a big proponent of exercise. I race sailboats competitively (more physically demanding than you'd think!), run, walk, ski, lift weights, rollerblade, bike, hike, and love to be outside. I think the trails will bring a social and physical impact on our community to both individuals and families. I am worried that children are getting less and less active and hope these trails will not only get them away from the TV and video games, but also provide an easy way for them to participate in healthy activities as a family.

**Bio:** Born in Centerville, Ohio, Debbie Probst earned a BA in Economics from the University of Michigan. She began her professional career as a Systems Analyst for Systematics, Inc., specializing in banking software, in Pittsburgh, PA, New Britain, CT, and Burlington, VT. Other professional experience includes brief stints with Essex Wire and Fort Wayne National Bank, both in Fort Wayne. Debbie is committed to the Fort Wayne community and dedicates her time to area non-profits, including Youth for Christ, the Vera Bradley Classic and the Fort Wayne Sports Corporation. She and her husband, Adam, have three children.

### **Lynn Reecer**

*President of the Board, Aboite New Trails*

**Passion for Trails:** After researching pedestrian trail systems in cities across the US for three years now, I am thoroughly convinced that there is no other single improvement that the city of Ft. Wayne and Allen County could make that would resolve or remedy so many of our community's problems. Investing in multi-use trails along all of our main roads and linking residents of all ages to most destinations by foot, bike, etc., would transform our community from a hard-sell to outsiders, to one that's greatly

desirable and attractive. At the same time, these trails would drastically improve the quality of life for those of us who already call Fort Wayne our home.

**Bio:** Lynn Reecer is a Dayton, Ohio native and a graduate of Indiana University's School of Business, earning a BS in Marketing. She served as a Xerox Sales Account Manager for seven years in four different States, achieving President's Club (top 10%) for most of those years. Her dedication to the Fort Wayne community is evident in her volunteer efforts in the education arena, having spearheaded the \$80,000 fundraising drive for Fairfield Elementary School and its new playground, as well as volunteering countless hours to Southwest Allen County Schools for 10 years. Lynn's passion for trails and improving the lives of Fort Wayne residents led her to co-found Aboite New Trails in 2001. She and her husband Mark have three children.

### **Jane Schmitt**

*Treasurer of the Board, Aboite New Trails*

**Passion for Trails:** I see the development of trails in and around Ft. Wayne an essential part of the needs of our community. It will enhance the quality of life and provide all an opportunity to explore different areas of Ft. Wayne.

**Bio:** Jane Schmitt is a Belleville, Illinois native and a graduate of Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois, where she earned a BS degree in Education. Her professional experience includes Trust Officer for Aurora National Bank in Aurora, Illinois, and a Probate and Tax Paralegal for Hopkins & Sutter law firm in Chicago. Jane's commitment to her community is apparent in her volunteer efforts, which have focused primarily on education and youth organizations, including serving as President of Deer Ridge Parent Teacher Club, Treasurer of Woodside Parent Teacher Club, Treasurer of Boy Scout Troop 333, as well as having worked on fundraising auctions for Concordia Lutheran High School and the Anthony Wayne Area Council for Boy Scouts. She and her husband, Greg, have twin boys in college.

### **Stephanie Schultz**

*Vice President of the Board, Aboite New Trails*

**Passion for Trails:** I want residents of our area to have options to walk or bike somewhere besides in their cul-de-sacs. I hope to see families out walking & biking together on these trails, experiencing the community in a way other than in our cars. Eventually people will think of destinations a short distance away as somewhere we routinely walk or bike rather than depending on the car to get there. It will change our community.

**Bio:** Originally from Knoxville, Tennessee, Stephanie Schultz has been a Fort Wayne resident and local trails advocate since 1997. She earned her BA from University of Tennessee and her MBA from Central Michigan University, and her professional experience includes tenures as a Business Manager for a radiology practice in Wyoming and for an environmental services lab in Michigan, as well as serving as a pharmaceutical sales representative in Fort Wayne. A published author, Stephanie has written a children's book for Mike's Carwash, which was used for promotional purposes. She is actively involved in the community, having served as a Girl Scout Leader for five years, on the Steering Committee for the Three Rivers Junction Playground project, and as President of the Greenway Consortium, advocating for greenways and trails throughout the city. She and her husband, Grant, have two daughters.

### **Gregg Walbridge**

*President, Southwest Development Group*

**Passion for Trails:** My passion for trails comes from developing neighborhoods that enhance the quality of life. As part of this goal we began developing trails in a number of our communities and continue to do so.

**Bio:** Gregg Walbridge is a Fort Wayne native and a graduate of Purdue University with a degree in Construction Engineering. Upon graduation, Gregg spent 15 years in project management and development of residential housing projects, and commercial and industrial construction. He then served for ten years as President of National Serv-all, a solid waste management company, before founding Southwest Development Group. Committed to the community where he lives, works and owns a business, Gregg is active in area non-profits, including holding leadership positions with Canterbury School, the Masonic Learning Center, 431 Foundation, the Scottish Rite, and now Aboite New Trails. He and his wife, Susan, have four children.

### **William A. Zielke**

*VP, Marketing & International Development, Do It Best Corporation  
Fundraising Chairperson, Aboite New Trails*

**Passion for Trails:** I'm excited about and committed to the trails project for so many reasons - I can think of no other SINGLE initiative that can, at one time, have such a positive impact on health and fitness, property values, pedestrian and cyclist safety, energy conservation, community connectivity and general overall quality of life for a community. A robust system of multi-use trails is a common element in nearly every community that has been listed as "one of the best places to live". I want this for Fort Wayne.

**Bio:** A Chicago native, Bill Zielke earned his BA from Northern Illinois University and subsequently spent 30 years in the Telecommunications industry, primarily in leadership positions with Contel of Indiana, Contel of Illinois, and GTE North. He has been in his current position as Vice President of Marketing & International Development with Do It Best for seven years. Dedicated to the communities in which he lives and works, Bill has volunteered for many area non-profit organizations and projects, including having served as the Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Greater Fort Wayne Chamber Of Commerce; the Chairman of the annual fundraising campaign and Chairman of the Board of the United Way; Chairman of the Indiana Telephone Association; Board member of Junior Achievement, Co-chair (with wife, Pam) of the Capital Campaign for the YWCA; and is currently a Board Member of Lutheran Hospital. Bill is an active outdoor enthusiast, as is his wife, Pam, and their two adult children. His son, John, recently completed a cross-country bike trek from Seattle, Washington to Washington, D.C.