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QC Trails.org Celebrates 2017 Opening Day for Trails

We can't wait for spring—and here's why! On **Saturday, April 8, 2017**, people across the country will celebrate the nation's fifth annual Opening Day for Trails.

Opening Day for Trails is a national event organized by the Rails to Trails Conservancy to encourage people across the country to officially kick off spring by hitting their favorite pathways.

Whether you've been out on the trail all year long, or have been waiting for warmer weather, **Opening Day** is a great way to officially kick off the season and explore trails!

In the Quad Cities Area, you can find opportunities for physical activity on over 75 trails using the free, user-friendly, interactive, and mobile-responsive website, QCTrails.org.

QCTrails.org was developed to encourage area residents to become more active by making information available about over 300 miles of land and water trails in the Quad Cities, Illinois-Iowa Region. The website provides tools to help users find trails that support a wide variety of activities – from walking paths and hiking and biking trails to paddling/water and equestrian trails.

The website was developed through a partnership between the Quad City Health Initiative and Bi-State Regional Commission as part of Be Healthy QC (BHQC). QCTrails.org was made possible with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Here are **seven** ways you can celebrate **Opening Day for Trails** on **April 8** (adapted from the [Rails-to-Trails Conservancy TrailBlog](#)):

1. Go for a nature walk, hike, or ride.

There's so much out there in the media and academia about how being in nature helps our mental and physical wellbeing. Trails are ideal public spaces for connecting or reconnecting us to nature – with routes that span for miles into some of the area's most beautiful wildlife areas (animal spotting and bird watching are good activities for many trails), preservation corridors, watersheds, and geographic wonders.

2. Spring that "New Year's resolution" forward!

Fitness and weight loss may top the list of New Year's resolutions made by Americans each year, but for many people, dark, cold winters can be super effective in knocking us off our game. What better way to get back on track than during the kick-off to the spring trail season – which means warmer weather and beautiful budding landscapes!

3. Transport yourself – literally – to your desired destination.

Trails are super fun, but that's only the beginning. In America, where traffic and pedestrian and bike safety are hot button topics, these safe, free routes get us where we need to go and keep us separated from vehicle traffic. Trails are critical resources for short trips, work commutes, and longer regional excursions.

If you're already a "trail transporter," keep up the great work! And if you've been thinking about trying out your heels or wheels to get places, Opening Day is a great time to start.

4. Hold your own gathering. (It doesn't have to be big!)

If you want the camaraderie of others on the most exciting trail day of the year, why not invite a few buddies to join you in your favorite activity? Take a stroll, roll, or ride (bike or horseback!) or even paddle. Find a new trail to explore on QCTrails.com. With maps and information for more than 300 miles of trails in the Quad Cities Area, QCTrails.org is a great tool to help plan your day. And share your experiences with us – tag photos with #QCTrails and #RTCOpeningDay on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram!

5. Volunteer your services to or on your local trail!

Giving back always feels good. Giving back to one's local community – while on your favorite trail – feels great. Contact your local trail manager to coordinate a trail cleanup or beautification project. QCTrails.org lists the trail manager for over 75 trails in the Quad Cities Area.

6. Start a family day tradition on Opening Day (that lasts throughout the year).

Opening Day for Trails is a great time to inspire a new trail tradition in your family – one that you can repeat throughout the year. Are you avid horseback riders, or are you looking to start? Have you been walking and running for years and want to try something new? What about a paddling excursion with your significant other? Is it time to take your daughter or son on their first long biking adventure? Regardless of what tradition you set, take someone you love, and take the trail!

7. Just get out and enjoy yourself!

The real beauty of trails is that they are for everyone, regardless of age or ability. This means to really celebrate Opening Day, all you need to do is get outside and get on the trail with a family member, a friend, your pet, or by yourself, and experience all the things that make trails great.

If you don't have a favorite trail already, check out QCTrails.org for ideas.

See you on the trails!

[Be Healthy QC](#) is a collaborative effort of Quad Cities organizations to increase access to environments with healthy food and beverage options and to increase access to physical activity opportunities. Be Healthy QC projects are funded in part by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) *Partnerships to Improve Community Health (PICH)* Initiative. PICH is a 3-year initiative that supports implementation of evidence based strategies to improve the health of communities and reduce the prevalence of chronic disease.

QCTrails is an initiative centered around community outreach and collaboration aimed at improving access to physical activity opportunities. The initiative is led by Bi-State Regional Commission in partnership with Quad City Health Initiative and with the support and collaboration of: the cities and counties in the Quad Cities Area who develop and maintain the trails, side-paths, parks, and greenways; bicycle and walking/hiking clubs/organizations; paddling clubs; environmental/recreation action groups; economic development and tourism organizations; and the website developer/consultant, Center for Community GIS.

The Quad City Health Initiative is a cross-sector community partnership working to create a healthy community. A 25-member community board oversees the organization, which was established in 1999. The Initiative seeks to be our community's recognized leader for creating collaborative action on health and abides by the core values of commitment, collaboration, and creativity. Major financial support of the Quad City Health Initiative is currently provided by the generous direct and in-kind investments of Genesis Health System and UnityPoint Health-Trinity. Additional financial support in calendar year 2016 was provided by: Cardiovascular Medicine, Davenport Eye Group, Deere & Company, Mississippi Valley Surgery Center, Modern Woodmen of America, Califf & Harper, P.C., Community Health Care, Inc., First Midwest Bank, Hy-Vee Inc., ILLOWA Construction & Labor Management Council, IMC Construction, LTD., Lee Enterprises, Inc., Molyneaux Insurance, Palmer College of Chiropractic, Quad Cities Chamber of Commerce, Rock Island County Health Department, Scott County Health Department, United Way of the Quad Cities Area, and WaterMark Corners.

The Bi-State Regional Commission is a local, voluntary organization established in 1966, serving local governments in five counties in eastern Iowa and western Illinois (Muscatine and Scott Counties, Iowa and Henry, Mercer, and Rock Island Counties, Illinois). The Commission serves as a forum for intergovernmental cooperation and delivery of regional programs and to assist member local governments in planning and project development.

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