

Morgantown wins honors for rail-trial

Delegate Fleischauer also recognized

BY JANET L. METZNER

The Dominion Post

CHARLESTON — Morgantown was a big winner Monday during a Trails to Wellness Conference at the Capitol Complex. Morgantown was among 11 West Virginia cities honored for creating walking and bicycling trails.

Councilman Jim Manilla accepted an award honoring Morgantown's eight-mile Caperton Trail.

"Morgantown is definitely a city involved in the trails," Manilla said as he accepted the award co-sponsored by The West Virginia Trails Coalition and West Virginia Walkable Communities.

Bill Reger, Morgantown resident and director of Mon Moves — a campaign designed to get residents out and walking — said, "Trails attract positive health and lifestyle changes in communities and can spur economic development."

The Mon Moves media campaign begins in the spring, Reger said.

Alan Ducatman, of West Virginia Walkable Communities and a Morgantown resident, presented the awards, including those to Beckley, Cairo, Charleston, Fayetteville, Roncverte, Shepherdstown, Thomas, Welch, Wellsburg and Wheeling.

Delegate Barbara Evans-Fleischauer, D-Monongalia, was recognized for promoting trail development and trail use in Morgantown.

Scott Rotruck, president of the Morgantown Chamber of Commerce, pointed out that the Caperton Trail — named after former Gov. Gaston Caperton, who served from 1988 to 1996 — was developed with public and private money.

For example, along South University Avenue, public money paid for street repairs, a new parking garage, and the WVU Foundation building, which houses the general administration services at WVU.

Private developments include Oliverio's Restaurant on Clay Street near the trail, the Radisson Hotel and the new Jackson & Kelly building, all along University Avenue.

Manilla, a lifelong Morgantown resident, recalled years ago when he walked along the railroad tracks near the river. Those tracks have been replaced by paved walking trails.

"It is amazing what the trails have done for our community," he said. He rides his bicycle more often now. A few years ago he only occasionally rode to Mount Morris, Pa. "The trails are definitely safer," he said.

He even takes his 18-month-old son along for rides in a carrier made for bikes.

Mark Wise, director of Morgantown Board of Park & Recreation Commissioners, said the trails are responsible for "a transformation of the Wharf District and awareness of the river."

Wise did not attend the conference, but said Monday the development of the Hazel Ruby McQuain Park, an amphitheater which seats 1,500, has brought in concerts and other events to the riverfront area. An ice festival is scheduled for February.

Wise recalled the Fourth of July celebration last year. "There was so much activity along the trail, it was hard to believe we were in Morgantown."

An afternoon forum included discussion of legislation to create a state trail authority with the positions of statewide trail coordinator and district trail coordinators.

Delegate Cindy Frich, R-Monon-

TRAILS

FROM PAGE 6-A

galia, who attended the forum, said, "The small-town appeal of West Virginia cities tends to give West Virginia a competitive edge in the tourism market" at a time when some people

still aren't comfortable with traveling far from home. Frich is a co-sponsor of the legislation with 13 others from both the House and Senate.

The trail coordinator would promote economic development and tourism near the trails, Frich said. The project would be funded through grants.