

TENDING RESILIENT CONNECTIONS
2020 Annual Report

OUR MISSION

The Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor preserves, interprets and leverages the nationally significant history of the 165-mile transportation route between Wilkes-Barre and Bristol, Pennsylvania. By building and maintaining public and private partnerships, we create four vital connections.

1.

We connect people to the enduring **industrial heritage** of the Corridor through education and preservation of historic sites and cultural resources.

2.

We connect people to **health and wellness** through outdoor recreation by reclaiming the historic transportation route as the D&L Trail.

3.

We connect towns and cities to opportunities for **economic development** along the D&L Trail and Corridor.

4.

We connect people to **nature and the environment** through conservation and education.

OUR DEDICATION TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

In 2020, the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor adopted a formal Diversity, Equity and Inclusion statement.

The Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, Inc. is committed to advancing intentional strategies to promote diversity, equity and inclusion in all aspects of our organization. We are dedicated to eliminating historic barriers as a result of an individual's race, gender, age, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and level of physical ability.

That commitment has led us to analyze and improve our practices, these efforts took form in:



Providing bi-lingual print communications



Expanding hiring practices and guidelines to intentionally attract, hire and retain staff



Holding seven staff and board cultural competency, implicit bias, and justice, equity, diversity and inclusion discussions and trainings



A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



To Our D&L Community,

In a year marked by upheaval and uncertainty, the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor moved forward boldly and displayed extraordinary resourcefulness and resolve that affirmed our mission in ways that we could not have imagined.

The vital connections that we have touted for years – to our natural environment, industrial heritage, economic development, and health and wellness – became exponentially more evident as we navigated a world wrought by pandemic.



In 2020, more people used the D&L Trail than in any time in its history.

On some days, trail use more than doubled or tripled. Trail users reconnected with rivers, trees and landscapes that allowed them to recalibrate their internal clocks to the gentle pace of nature.

People across the Corridor revisited lessons of our industrial history and took comfort in the corridor's resilience dating back to the 1820s.

Bicycle stores, repair shops and outfitters in the Corridor saw strong business. With interstate travel limited, the D&L Trail became a destination for day trips that kept dollars circulating locally.

Finally, the record number of D&L Trail users found a safe, accessible, welcoming pathway that allowed them to move their bodies and exercise their lungs.

Our team of professionals, volunteers, donors and partners displayed remarkable resilience throughout 2020. Across our organization, plans and programs were halted, evaluated, changed, reimagined, adjusted, altered, improved and implemented.

Nothing was more symbolic of our collective grit than Hank and George returning to Hugh Moore Park to power the Josiah White II canal boat. In fact, perhaps Hank and George have had a message for us all along. By being strong, focused, patient, nimble and loyal, we could persevere the most harrowing of journeys.

In that enduring spirit, we wish to thank everyone who made 2020 a success in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges. We are stronger than we could have imagined. And we are ready to face 2021 with renewed energy and optimism.

See you along the corridor!

Michael Drabenstott, Chair



IN MEMORIAM

2020 marked the loss of two of our most loyal supporters, Lance Metz and Vance Packard.

*By Martha Capwell Fox
Historian & Archives Coordinator*



Lance Metz

Lance Metz was the historian for the National Canal Museum for 29 years. More than anyone, Lance led the museum to broaden its mission and collections from just the canals to encompass the history of how anthracite mining and the building of the canals and railroads that transported it transformed our region, and the nation, into an industrial and economic powerhouse.

History was Lance's passion as well as his profession. He found and collected documents, photographs, maps and artifacts from anthracite and canal companies, railroads, iron works and dozens of 19th and 20th century industries, as well as the stories of the people who built and worked in them. He led the Historic American Engineering Record survey which recorded many of the 19th-century buildings at the Bethlehem Steel plant, and the photo documentation of the plant and its workers.

Lance and the leadership of Hugh Moore Historical Park and Museums, then the governing organization of the Canal Museum, spearheaded the drive to create the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor in 1988.

Lance died on May 2, 2020, two days before the 50th anniversary of the museum he served so well.



Vance Packard

Long-time member of the boards of directors of the National Canal Museum and the D&L, Vance Packard died on October 27, 2020, at the age of 78. Vance was a prominent industrial historian and a passionate preservationist, who shared his expert historical knowledge and sharp practical wisdom with our organizations for many years.

During his 30-year career with the Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission, he worked in archaeology and preservation, and directed the Drake Well Museum as well as Eckley Miners Village and the Anthracite Heritage Museum. Vance was twice elected president of the Society for Industrial Archaeology and received its highest honor, the General Tools Award.

Conversations with Vance were always wide-ranging, informative and laced with humor. He and his wife, Barbara, travelled all over the world, and he was a fine photographer.

During our merger process, Vance gave the museum staff valuable advice for dispersing a warehouse full of large, never-accessioned industrial artifacts, and helped select which items should be held, stored, returned to their rightful owner or discarded. At the time of his passing, Vance had served on both boards since 2003 and was named the first D&L Board Member Emeritus.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Record trail use a bright spot for local communities in a tough year

*By Brian Greene
Director of Trails & Conservation*



2020 will have a large section in the annals of American history for many reasons. From the COVID-19 pandemic to racial justice struggles to a tumultuous election process, it felt like a stormy year for most people. One silver lining among the storm clouds was a renewed appreciation for the importance of outdoor spaces. The public demand for trails, parks and open space was at an all-time high. With many traditional indoor options closed and people looking to take a break from ubiquitous screen time, people flocked to local trails and regional parks in record numbers.



Overall, the number of cyclists on the trail increased 66% in 2020.

The D&L Trail saw record high monthly counts May through October. Some locations along the trail saw monthly increases in 2020 vs 2019 as high as 300%. Breathing the fresh outdoor air was not only a healthy and safe activity, but a soothing and calming way for people to deal with a stressful society. We know from numerous studies that time outdoors not only benefits your physical health, but also your mental health.

Another positive aspect of trail use is that it generates local economic impacts. From buying running shoes to bikes, sales of outdoor gear spiked in the late spring with some items like bikes being completely sold out across the country. But it wasn't only hard goods that people purchased. As people visited trails and parks, they bought gas, got take-out food and picked up a souvenir. These small, consistent investments helped many trail-friendly businesses get through a rough year. And while some sectors like lodging, had lower overall numbers, others like outfitters and bike stores saw some trail related increases.

“We’ve seen a significant increase in bike rentals and sales since we opened this spring” said Nikki Hurley of Pocono Biking. “Rail-Trail biking is a great way to stay active and have fun. Now more than ever, being outdoors is important for your physical and mental well-being.”

So in a difficult year, the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor was able to serve our community where they most wanted to be, out on the trail. This illustrates the importance of everyone in our community being able to access a trail easily from their home. Trails and parks are critical infrastructure for how the public responds to the health pandemic.

The D&L Trail was there for us in our time of need. As we move forward, it is important that the public supports the protection, promotion, and maintenance of this essential infrastructure. Many people told us they had never been on the D&L Trail before, but during 2020 it became a favorite location. We hope that joy and appreciation for trails stays present in the years ahead.





HEALTH & WELLNESS

All-time high participation among socially distanced wellness efforts

*By Imogen Wirth-Granlund
Program Coordinator*

710,458 *Get Your Tail on the Trail* Miles Logged in 2020

Retired history teacher and cancer survivor Stephanie Augello adopted her puppy Nellie to join her in walking for wellness along the D&L Trail. In 2020, she also volunteered as a moderator for the Walkers Facebook Group for the D&L Trail Challenge. She started each day walking Nellie by herself.

“Walking alone always gives me the chance to destress, clear my head and has helped me with my anxiety as well as having a positive effect on my mood,” said Stephanie Augello, D&L Trail Challenge participant.



Stephanie Augello

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, our community recognized the importance of health and wellness, particularly outdoor recreation. Dramatic changes in our work, home and social lives prompted us to seek the restorative power of nature to heal and strengthen our bodies, minds and souls. Thus, we saw record trail use along the D&L Trail, featuring new signage promoting compliance with state and federal guidance regarding masking and social distancing. Despite statewide restrictions to slow the spread of COVID-19 resulting in the cancellation of nearly all our public events for the year, our staff adapted to enhance virtual engagement and to encourage physical activity on the trail.

Get Your Tail on the Trail, our innovative public health partnership with St. Luke's University Health Network, recorded the highest participation rate in its seven-year history. We transitioned to online programming, from virtual bike rides led by D&L staff to St. Luke's Walk with a Doc videos. For our Winter Mini-Challenge in March, 967 participants completed 30 miles in 30 days.

From May to November, 1,160 participants completed our 165 Mile Challenge. Participation increased by ~12.9% from 2019 with 2,586 participants logging exercise on tailonthetail.org. Remarkably, these participants logged 710,458 miles, ~29.2% more miles than the previous year—demonstrating a significant improvement in overall physical activity.

The D&L Half Marathon, our signature fundraiser, reincarnated as the D&L Trail Challenge—a month-long online competition that fostered camaraderie and motivation among the walkers, runners and cyclists. In October, 561 registrants recorded 34,741.36 miles. Participants enjoyed the social networking feature and flexible schedule of the virtual event, indicating interest in keeping the Trail Challenge option alongside our traditional half marathon in the future.

Throughout the D&L's storied past, our community has adapted with resilience during natural disasters like floods and technological innovations like railroads. When COVID-19 threatened to derail our planned calendar of events, we designed new ways to reach our community across the social distance and connect them with the health and wellness benefits of the D&L Trail.

NATURE & ENVIRONMENT

The power of partnerships



By Kathleen Ward
Conservation Coordinator

Lehigh Valley Greenways Conservation Landscape launched 2020 by gathering 40 of our partners at Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living to celebrate accomplishments and plan for how we would work cooperatively in 2020 to achieve mutual and individual goals in the Conservation Landscape.

COVID, of course, changed things. It shifted our short-term priorities, methods of communication and simple day to day tasks. However, despite the pandemic, Lehigh Valley citizens still desired to enrich their quality of lives by exploring local parks and the hundreds of miles of trails and greenway corridors within the partnership's boundaries.

To help respond to the demand and associated impacts, Lehigh Valley Greenways and its partners launched a campaign educating the public on the need to social distance while on THE LINK Trails Network by:

- distributing bicycle bells to encourage good trail etiquette
- supporting partners with mini-grant funds for trail counters and bike safety checks
- using social media to promote trail-related businesses
- providing public updates on local businesses available to service equipment like bicycles
- promoting THE LINK to the public via billboards and social media
- increasing public relations coverage across newspaper, blogs, and recorded interviews

11 Mini-Grants Awarded through Lehigh Valley Greenways



But not all business was derailed. Things started to settle down to a new normal. Lower Mount Bethel Township held its ribbon cutting ceremony in late October for its years-long project: The Meadow at Martin's Creek. The Meadow is a 74-acre park with critical watershed, wildlife habitat and natural resources. An example of partnerships, LVG provided mini-grant funding for parking and streambank stabilization on land purchased with the support of the County of Northampton and the Commonwealth.

"Partnerships such as this are crucial for communities like Lower Mount Bethel Township to continue to preserve open space," said John Mauser, Lower Mount Bethel Township Supervisor and steward of The Meadow at Martin's Creek project.

The power of Lehigh Valley Greenways is convening partners so that groups can collaborate and communicate to bring a large project to fruition over time. Whether it is supporting a new park or cooperating during a crisis, partnerships allow people to get outdoors, enjoy them and advocate for new projects in the future.



2020 D&L TIMELINE



January:

We gathered 40 Lehigh Valley Greenways partners at the Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living to celebrate 2019 accomplishments and plan for 2020 actions.



March:

Staff members began working remotely.



May:

The 2020 165-mile *Get Your Tail on the Trail* Challenge got off to a strong start as more people than ever started flocking to the trail.

February:

We hosted a winter walk for our 2020 *Get Your Tail on the Trail* Winter Challenge Kick-Off at Jacobsburg State Park.



April:

Our Walking Coach, Michele Stanten, led us all to Walk for Wellness with a virtual walking plan.



June:

Our beloved National Canal Museum turned 50 years old - with no one there to celebrate!





July:

The museum safely reopened with new safety and cleaning protocols.



September:

Together with the Carbon County Chamber of Commerce, we celebrate the first anniversary of the opening of the Mansion House Bridge.



November:

The first ever D&L Trail Challenge drew to a close, taking the place of our cancelled D&L Heritage Half Marathon.

August:

Hank & George returned to Hugh Moore Park after their extended vacation.



October:

We hit the trail for a socially distanced ride with the Coalition for Appropriate Transportation and Afros in Nature.



December:

Our supporters gave us the best end of year gift, their generosity—helping us raise more than \$31k in the last month of the year.





INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE

Moving the National Canal Museum online

*By Daphne Mayer
Director of Museum & Education*

2020 was a challenging year for the National Canal Museum and the D&L's efforts to share the region's industrial heritage with the public, but it also offered new opportunities. The year marked the 50th anniversary of the founding of the National Canal Museum in 1970. Rather than a celebratory year filled with events and activities, it instead became a time to reflect upon the museum's history. We took the time to interview past museum staff and volunteers and comb through old newsletters and documents. Understanding where we have been informs the next 50 years of the museum's future. It also allows us to indulge in some nostalgia through a series of blog posts on topics such as the Canal Days Festivals. These blogs will continue through early 2021, thanks to the positive reception from our supporters.

Another part of our 50th anniversary celebrations was the debut in July of the museum's special exhibition "Where Creativity Flows: Two Centuries of Art Inspired by Our Canals." Incorporating artwork loaned from other institutions and private collectors, this exhibition is the museum's most ambitious to date. To enable more people the opportunity to see this beautiful collection, we are delighted to be able to keep it open through 2021.

While 2020 was marred by closures of the museum and cancellation of events and educational programs, we were able to successfully pivot towards virtual ways of sharing the Corridor's history with the public. The D&L was fortunate to be awarded a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to digitize parts of the museum's collections and increase access in innovative ways. We hope that you have enjoyed the regular blog and social media posts that highlight some of the amazing objects that the museum cares for. We also created an interactive Museum at Home webpage featuring virtual exhibitions, activities, and videos that we developed throughout the year (canals.org/national-canal-museum-at-home).

Though we were sadly unable to host schoolchildren at in-person field trips, the D&L worked closely with the Bethlehem Area School District to ensure that all of their 4th grade students were able to take part in virtual field trips to the Freemansburg Canal Education Center this past Fall.

We look forward to welcoming museum visitors and event participants back in 2021. The D&L continues to push ahead with digital projects to connect with audiences wherever they are. In the coming months, we look forward to sharing with you the new D&L Discoverer app, a renewed Tales of the Towpath website, an immersive virtual reality experience co-developed with Lehigh University, and a Cultural Ecology of Eastern Pennsylvania curriculum for high school students. Stay tuned!



**18 Virtual Field Trips
with 973 Students**

**100 Kids Participated in
Kids On The Canal Events**

**5 Educational Virtual
Programs Created**



SUSTAINING

Timeless generosity

By Kelly Federico

Manager of Gifts & Development

At the beginning of 2020, the D&L had plans to engage our community with in-person regional events, member gatherings at the National Canal Museum, and our biggest fundraiser, the D&L Heritage Half Marathon. The pandemic shifted interactions. Connections were instead made over Zoom, social media, text, email, and handwritten notes.

2020 will be remembered for many things, including the generosity of the D&L community during this difficult year.

In October, with the Half Marathon on hold, the D&L Trail Challenge brought D&L supporters together to log miles and support the D&L's mission. Thanks to our supporters the challenge raised more than \$36,000. We look forward to celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Half Marathon and the second year of the Trail Challenge in 2021.

In a year marked by economic downturn, our supporters still invested in our mission. We often saw individuals increasing their support from 2019, specifically to priority projects like trail gaps in Luzerne County and Lehigh Valley. Compared to 2019, total giving from individuals and businesses was up 31%.

"I want to thank you for the work that you and your associates do concerning the trail. I am using the trail more this year than I have ever in the past. In using the trail so often, I see the improvements and the maintenance that is being done. It is awesome. Thank you! Please keep up the good work!"

– Chuck McKinney, Allentown

We are an organization that is successful because of strong partnerships. Thank you for supporting the D&L and partnering with us to connect people to nature and the environment, health and wellness, industrial heritage, and economic development. We could not do the work we do without generous people like you.



730

**Donors &
Members**

**\$190k Gifted
by Individuals
& Businesses**

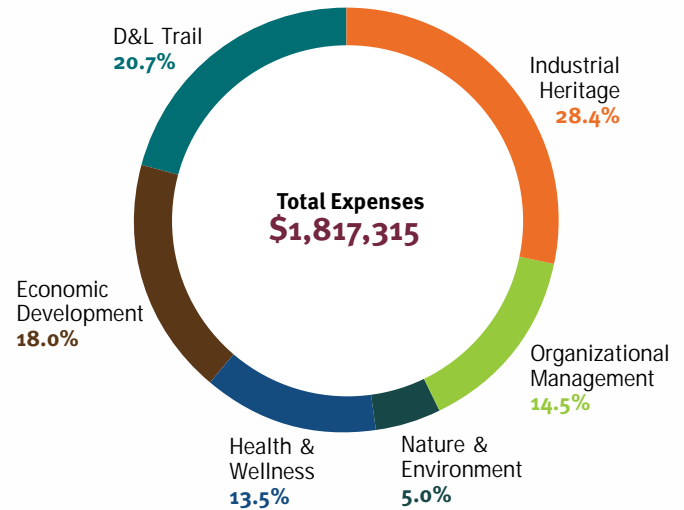
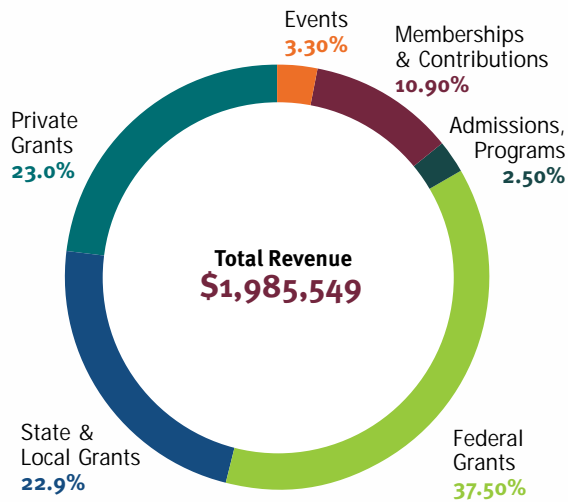




D&L FINANCIALS

Statement of Financial Position (For year ended December 31, 2020)

A Summary of 2020 Financial Activity



**Expenses above do not include depreciation of fixed assets.*

DONORS & MEMBERS



This list of donors and members celebrates those who made gifts, pledges, and pledge payments from Jan. 1, 2020 to Dec. 31, 2020.

\$20,000 or More

Buehler Memorial Trust
Elaine Emrick
National Park Service
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St. Luke's University Health
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\$19,999 to \$5,000

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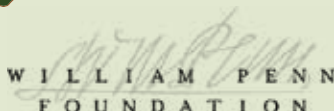
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