

# Joe K



Thoughtful. Quiet speaking. Number cruncher. Always ready to lend a hand. Boy Scouts. Greenways. RiverSweep. City Councilman. Avid cyclist. Energetic volunteer. Family man. Friend.

These are just a few of the descriptive phrases that might be used to characterize Joe Kochenderfer—or Joe K as most of us know him. Put it all together and he's one of our many unheralded civic-minded citizens.

To residents and tourists who love to walk a nature path, his persistent effort to complete the North Park Trail is his gift to us. This 1-1/2 mile trail with two loops that meander along the Susquehanna River and over an old railroad bed required many volunteers, creative thinking, and lots of plain old brawn to finish the project, with Joe K inching it along since 1997.



"The idea of a trail was proposed about 1994 by Anna Long, a City Councilperson, who thought the railroad bed in the North Park area might be a great way to begin the Greenway<sup>1</sup> trail concept in Havre de Grace. No trains had run on this track since the 50s. So in 1997 with the help of the Mason-Dixon Trail<sup>2</sup> members, Boy Scouts, APG service groups and other local organizations and individuals, we began to 'grub it out.' This was no small task since it was heavily overgrown. The goal was to create a trail that they hoped one day would connect trails down both sides of the Susquehanna River from Conowingo Dam to Havre de Grace," Joe explains.

Then there was a lull in the effort. Trying to figure out how to get the gravel fill along the old track bed was quite a challenge and it looked like the project might come to a standstill. Fortunately, an old, small, railroad car was discovered and sides built on it. Filled with gravel, it was now possible to complete their efforts. AmeriCorps<sup>3</sup> teams were key to this accomplishment. In 2001, in a 2-week period, half the track was covered with the gravel; while in 2003, the rest of the tracks were covered. Last year, after another two weeks of effort, AmeriCorps completed the task by filling any areas that may have settled.

"250-300 tons (TONS!) of gravel later, the North Park Trail sees approximately 10,000 visitors during the year. Some folks have used it once, while others may visit three times a day. It's a hiking and cycling trail with no motorized vehicles allowed. Folks in wheel chairs are able to use the leg of the trail built on the old railroad track bed," says Joe K. This section is actually a part of the Mason-Dixon Trail as well as the Greenway.

There's another leg that meanders along the shoreline paralleling the old towpath of the Susquehanna and Tidewater Canal. It's a great summer walk in an area that's perfect for picnicking. You can visit the Lock House Museum<sup>5</sup> or play at McLhinney playground (which will be improved in coming months). Or you can find a favorite spot to read a great book, or walk with a friend and share good times.

Joe K's perseverance and steadfastness has given us an opportunity to walk his dream. From the Joe K Trail in the North Park you can enjoy a unique setting, appreciate some great views of the river and the area bridges, commune with nature and reflect on history. With a brief walk from downtown, you can be enjoying the outdoors and some relaxation that's bound to make your stay just a bit more special. Joe also offers guided tours of the trail. Just check out our calendar of events. The Joe K Trail in the North Park is another great meeting place in Havre de Grace. *Photos courtesy of Becky Fitzgerald.*<sup>4</sup>



## GREAT SITES TO VISIT

- <sup>1</sup> Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenways, [www.HitOurTrails.com](http://www.HitOurTrails.com)
- <sup>2</sup> [www.MasonDixonTrail.org](http://www.MasonDixonTrail.org)
- <sup>3</sup> [www.AmeriCorps.org](http://www.AmeriCorps.org)
- <sup>4</sup> For more great photos by Becky Fitzgerald, visit: <http://public.fotki.com/BeckyFitz>
- <sup>5</sup> For more info on the North Park Trail and the Susquehanna Museum at the Lockhouse go to: [www.LockhouseMuseum.org](http://www.LockhouseMuseum.org) or [www.LockhouseMuseum.org/trail.htm](http://www.LockhouseMuseum.org/trail.htm)

Be sure to visit [www.havre-de-grace-md.com](http://www.havre-de-grace-md.com) for updates and other articles of interest.