



For Immediate Release



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Mary Black Foundation Rail Trail use skyrockets

Spartanburg, SC (November 12, 2013) – Partners for Active Living (PAL) commissioned a report of the use and community perceptions for the Mary Black Foundation Rail Trail and Wadsworth Trail. The study outlined the number and demographics of users, as well as perceptions of the facilities. Furman University's Julian Reed, Ph.D., conducted the evaluation, and the project was funded by Mary Black Foundation.

Results for MBF Rail Trail include:

- From 2006-2009, 24,820 users annually
- In 2012, 65,449 users annually, resulting in a 163% increase in trail users
 - Even split between male and female users
 - 11% children and teens, 75% adults, 14% seniors
 - 30% were non-white: approximately 20,000 users
 - Winter and spring are the most popular times of use
 - Maintenance and condition of the Rail Trail are considered good

Results for the Wadsworth Trail include:

- In 2010, approximately 6,615 users
- In 2012, approximately 7,665, resulting in a 16% increase in trail users
 - Even split between male and female users
 - 16% children and teens, 66% adults, 18% seniors
 - 11% were non-white: 843 users
 - Fall and spring are the most popular times of use

Over the last three years, PAL and many community partners planned events, created marketing campaigns, and advocated for infrastructure improvements along both trails, which aided in the increased use. A few of the efforts included:

- A dog park, water fountain, Bicycles, and wayfinding signs on the MBF Rail Trail
- Trains on Trail scavenger hunt presented by Women Giving of Spartanburg
- "I love the Wadsworth Trail" clean up events
- Creation of Friends of the MBF Rail Trail group and logo
- Mailing of a map of the Wadsworth Trail to 6,300 residents living close to the Trail

"The significant increase of use on the MBF Trail is unquestionably related to the strategic initiatives implemented by Partners for Active Living over the past three years. The MBF Trail in particular, is an



excellent example of how changes to the built environment can promote public health among the entire Spartanburg community. Partners for Active Living and the MB Foundation should be commended for their substantial collaborative efforts and investments to promote active living in the Upstate,” said Julian Reed, Health Sciences Professor from Furman University.

“The significant increase in the use of these two facilities shows the growing demand and interest for trails,” said Laura Ringo, executive director of Partners for Active Living. “As additional improvements and connections are put in place, we should see even more use, which is exciting for the health of our community.”

Trails are important to the health of Spartanburg. Page nine of the report states, “The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Task Force on Community Preventive Services recommended that efforts aimed at promoting walking and bicycling should include access to trails to encourage physical activity, and identified trails as integral infrastructure for physical activity. Community infrastructure is often considered a foundation for health and wellness and affects decisions related to health outcomes. Trails are examples of infrastructure associated with regular physical activity participation.”

For a copy of the full report, visit: <http://www.active-living.org>

Additional comments:

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The Mary Black Foundation Rail Trail is owned and maintained by the City of Spartanburg and is part of the Palmetto Trail.

The Wadsworth Trail is located along Willis Road and was built when the road was expanded thanks to the advocacy of the Westside Neighborhood Association.

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Partners for Active Living (PAL) transforms Spartanburg County into a vibrant, healthy, connected community where we live and grow. PAL employs four main strategies: places to walk and bike, programs to encourage activity, and policy changes and partnerships to sustain physical activity.