



THE EXTRA

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Trail tales: Marchant vision includes Swamp Rabbit expansion in county

By John Clayton

Editor

T. Eston "Bud" Marchant has seen firsthand what the Swamp Rabbit Trail has meant to a bustling Travelers Rest and believes trail expansion into and through Laurens County could offer a similar boon here.

"We're in for a lot of exciting activity and, hopefully, over the years we'll be able to do this," said Marchant of bringing the Swamp Rabbit Trail into Laurens County from its southern-most point in the Fountain Inn area.

Marchant was named executive director of the Laurens County Trails Association on April 1. He replaced outgoing executive director Don Walker, who is relocating to North Carolina.

Walker and Marchant said they have been working together during a transition period as the association continues to focus on developing more trail activity in the county.

"The Swamp Rabbit Trail is very close to the Laurens County border, so it would be very nice to bring that linkage to Laurens County, through Laurens and through Clinton and eventually be able to hit the Palmetto Trail over in the Sumter National Forest," Marchant said. "That would make a great trail for people to hike on and see nature, but also it would be a huge economic development tool."

Marchant pointed to places such as Tumbling Shoals and Boyds Mill, which offer boat landings for kayakers and fishermen and other outdoor recreation options in Laurens County.

"We were at Boyds Mill on Saturday and there were kayakers out, and people were fishing," he said. "It was just beautiful."

Marchant recently returned to Laurens County as a full-time resident for the second time after his retirement from Central Carolina Community College in Sanford, N.C., but knew little about places such as Tumbling Shoals and Boyds Mill.

"Laurens County is really blessed with a lot of trails and a lot of resources," he said. "I think we need to do a better job of marketing so people know what we have, but we have a lot to offer."

In addition to a larger, connected trail system the local trails association is attempting to bring to the county by acquiring property easements, the Laurens County Park off of Airport Road also offers trail loops that are used by runners, hikers



Photo by John Clayton

ON THE TRAIL — From left, Laurens County Trails Association Executive Director T. Eston "Bud" Marchant, former executive director Don Walker and Laurens County Parks and Recreation Director Andy Howard on the trails at Laurens County Park.

and cyclists.

County Parks and Recreation Director Andy Howard said the trails at the county park are widely used by local residents and cross-county teams.

"People are out here all the time, so there are a lot of people who like to get outside," Howard said.

Prisma Health is the title sponsor of the Swamp Rabbit Trail in Greenville County, and Laurens Memorial Hospital, which is part of the Prisma Health system, is a supporter of the trail expansion in Laurens County.

"It's for health reasons," Marchant said of getting local residents out and moving on trails here. "But it's also will be a great economic development tool."

In addition to Travelers Rest, Marchant pointed to the Town of Port Royal, which sits between

Beaufort and Parris Island and is getting a new boutique hotel. One reason behind the venture is the property's adjacency to a trail spur that will connect to the area's Spanish Moss Trail.

"I've been pushing trails forever," Howard said. "Now, county council is behind it, and we're getting support from individuals who have pledged money. It's been fabulous to see the work that's done We've got something that Greenville doesn't have, and that's the natural space. That's what people are looking for."

Marchant agreed.

"We need to make sure that continues to be the case," said Marchant, who would like to see trails link Clinton and Laurens. "We have those natural resources that attract people. Second to workforce development in economic development is parks, recreation and trails. That's just the way it goes."

Miles of yard sales and miles of fun

By Judith Brown

Staff Writer

There are folks who might stop at a yard sale once or twice a year if they happen to drive by one. And then there are yard sale aficionados, folks like Rhonda Wingerter who has helped put Greenpond Community on the map with its expansive, annual community-wide yard sales.

Next Saturday, May 25, is the Fifth Annual Four-Mile Yard Sale, and it really is literally along a 4-mile stretch of Greenpond Road in the northern part of Laurens County. It extends from the intersection of Greenpond Road at Beulah Baptist Church up to just beyond the intersection with S.C. Highway 101 at Crossroads Express Store. The Greenpond Fire Department is about in the middle, with a couple of miles of booths scattered along either side.

Wingerter is definitely a yard sale aficionado, and she has always known that she's not alone.

"I love yard sales, and there are a lot of people who will travel to go to yard sales every week," Wingerter said. "I had heard that Calhoun Falls had a big one, so I started asking around, 'What if we do one? It would be fun!' And that's how it started."

About two-thirds of the community participates, she said, and sometimes they've put their efforts toward raising funds for certain needs, such as when the grandson of a neighbor needed funds for a kidney transplant.

"We're a close-knit community so, of course, everybody wanted to participate and help," Wingerter said. "They were going to have a bake sale, so everybody contributed baked goods and helped raise money for him."

It's become a great fundraising tool for area non-profits as well, Wingerter said. Greenpond Volunteer Fire Department sells biscuits for breakfast and barbecue at lunch, and last year made about \$3,000 for the volunteer fire department.

Last year, volunteers and staff from the Laurens County Cancer Association set up a

(Continued on page 2)

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