

# HAPPY TRAILS

## FAR NORTH DALLAS KNOWS HOW TO USE USELESS GREEN SPACE

One of the jewels in Far North Dallas is the Preston Ridge Hike and Bike Trail. The trail begins just north of Coit and Spring Valley and runs along Belt Line and Meandering Way to McCallum Boulevard. A spur runs from Meandering Way and Brentfield west to Brentfield School.

When Far North Dallas was being developed with homes and stores in the 1960s, '70s, and '80s, there wasn't much land set aside for public green space; the thinking was that the land was too valuable to leave it undeveloped. So Far North Dallas has less park acreage than any other part of the city.

What we did have was miles of TXU easements. Those easements had electrical towers on them, but they also had grass. So we did have some "green space", just not very useful green space.

When I moved into my house close to Meandering Way 30 years ago, I remember thinking it was a shame that nothing was being done with all that grassy area. Then, about 15 years ago, TXU planted wildflowers in the Meandering Way easement for a few blocks north of Belt Line.

The flowers looked wonderful for a month or two but not so wonderful for the month or so it took them to go to seed for the next year. Everyone



was asking TXU to come and mow the easement, so TXU gave up that experiment. It was a shame to lose the wildflowers, but then something even better came along.

**We will have a hike and bike trail that reaches all the way from the very northern edge of our city and connects with other trails all the way down to White Rock Lake.**

In 2001, Dallas County put in a hard surface trail on the easement. People in the neighborhoods along the trail were so excited that they began walking and jogging and riding their bikes on the trail before it was even finished. Then the City of Dallas put money into its 2003 bond program for a trail master plan and amenities. The City suggested that the area start an advocacy group, and the Friends of the Preston Ridge Trail was born.

This dedicated group has since planned and planted and nurtured the trail into what it is today — a beautiful linear park with hundreds of trees and bushes, benches, doggie stations, stone-columned entries, a bulletin board, drinking fountains, bike racks, and more. Kudos to Friends president Cori Pratt and board members Rod Scales [volunteer extraordinaire], Rodney Schlosser, Matt Bach, Shelia

Farmer, Cathy Qualls, Theron Russell, Sonia Brown, Stan and Pat Altschuler, and North Dallas Neighborhood Alliance liaison members Lucie Bellew and Rose Harder. Thanks also to Mike Donahue, Becky Elam, Rich Morgan, and Michael Voit who helped with design work, and last, but certainly not least, outstanding Dallas Park Department trail coordinator Michael Hellmann.

This wonderful group of people would be the first to tell you they couldn't have done it without all the terrific volunteers from the homeowners associations along the trail and from the Latter Day Saints Church at Meandering Way and Belt Line. These volunteers helped plant the hundreds of trees and bushes and will keep them watered for the first two years. The next planting, from Arapaho to Belt Line, will be in a few weeks.

Meanwhile, Phase II is underway from McCallum to the Bush Turnpike at Hillcrest. This stretch of trail is in Collin County and was partially funded by Collin County's Open Space Program. It should be completed within the next two months. Then we will have a hike and bike trail that reaches all the way from the very northern edge of our city and connects with other trails all the way down to White Rock Lake!

November brings the gratitude of Thanksgiving and December the joy of the holiday season. I, and so many others, am very grateful to Dallas County, the City of Dallas, the Friends of the Preston Ridge Trail, and the many residents who have given Far North Dallas the wonderful gift of this trail. It is a jewel that shines brighter with each year that passes.

**Sandy Greyson**, a neighborhood resident and former city councilwoman, writes a monthly opinion column about neighborhood issues. Her opinions are not necessarily those of the Advocate or its management. Send comments and ideas to her at 6301 Gaston, Suite 820, Dallas 75214; FAX to 214.823.8866; or e-mail [editor@advocatemag.com](mailto:editor@advocatemag.com).