



What Public Health Problem Was Addressed?

According to the County Health Rankings, 26% of Kanawha County residents report no leisure-time physical activity and 28% of residents have inadequate access to locations for physical activity in their community. The City of Nitro, located within Kanawha and Putnam Counties, is a city with a population of about 7,100 residents and is dedicated to providing health and wellness resources to the entire community. They have recently made huge improvements to the lake area including recreational trails and a bike park. The Nitro Art and Nature Trail aimed to connect downtown Nitro and Nitro Elementary School to Ridenour Lake by installing four interactive areas along a fully ADA compliant trail. The trail will also be used by the school for outdoor learning opportunities.

What Approach Did They Take?

The City of Nitro and Nitro Development Authority worked to create the The Nitro Nature & Art Trail by installing four interactive areas along a fully ADA compliant trail linking Nitro Elementary to Ridenour Lake. The start of the trail includes several parking places and a trailhead sign with QR code for the Seek app. This app is used in conjunction with the trail for participants to learn and interact with the nature while they use the trail. Two of the interactive areas consist of rail fence with small interpretive signs with pictures and definitions of the plants, animals and insects that can be found along the length of the trail. The other two sections will contain mural art walls, which will display artwork by local artist as well as seasonal displays from both the Elementary and High School students.



What Were The Results?

In Phase 1 of the Nitro Nature and Art Trail, volunteers built 0.4 miles of packed gravel trail to connect 18th Street Hill to Ridenour Lake. Approximately 1,050 volunteer hours went into Phase 1 trail building and area clean-up. Phase 2 of the trail project included the installation of signs and mural art displays for participants to interact while using the trail. The trail provides the students at Nitro Elementary with a safe route to Ridenour Lake using the Nature & Art trail. Students will get to learn about the ecosystem while being physical activity.

A local non-profit, Rivers to Ridges, who facilitated Phase I with AmeriCorps volunteers, was able to step up and help finish the art panels. This was a great collaboration for both groups.

What's Next?

Phase 3 of the Nitro Nature & Art Trail is in the process of being completed. This final phase includes interchangeable art panels, a spider climber, a caterpillar roller, and a mural bench. Phase 3 is funded by a rural youth mini-grant and the city's match. Once completed, the trail will be fully open and functional for Nitro Elementary students to use during their schoolwork and will be able to become part of their curriculum.

