

From Your Murrysville (a service of the Murrysville Star):

Conservationist Harrison honored for work to keep Murrysville acreage 'forever green'

by Tom McGee Staff Writer
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Don Harrison has played an integral part in the Westmoreland Conservancy's efforts to preserve parts of Murrysville as green space.

Now, the conservancy and municipal officials have ensured that his legacy will be preserved.

Murrysville Council voted 6-0 last week to name a trail in Murrysville after Harrison. Councilman Dennis Pavlik was absent from the meeting.

Harrison was told by conservancy President Shelley Tichy about the trail after the vote was held. He said he was surprised to learn of the honor.

"I had no inkling that was in the works," Harrison said in a phone interview Monday.

Tichy said Harrison has been a key part of the conservancy's efforts to buy land. Its first acquisition was the Kellman Nature Reserve in 1994, and its latest is the Caywood Nature Reserve, which was purchased last year.

Harrison has been part of the conservancy evolution--from searching for grants to buying land to preserve, Tichy said.

"When Don Harrison became president of the Westmoreland Conservancy, we also became landowners in our own right," Tichy said.

Harrison said the conservancy's efforts have helped ensure that parts of the municipal will remain open space.

"We've acquired about 264 acres that will be forever green," he said.

The trail honoring Harrison will be known as the Don Harrison Community Trail. It begins at the Walter Nature Reserve on Wiestertown Road and will end near Sloan Elementary School. It passes through Murrysville Community Park, Caywood Nature Reserve, King Nature Reserve and Potters Corner.

The trail is being built by volunteers. It is uncertain when the trail will be completed.

Once completed, the trail stretches about four miles, Tichy said.

"That corridor is an amazing feat. It bisects the community from east to west," Tichy said.

Mayor Robert Brooks lauded Harrison for his work.

Though the municipality does not often name trails after people, Brooks said, because the conservancy owns most of the land in the corridor, Harrison's name would be appropriate.

"It seems fitting that this should be that exception," Brooks said.