

Contact: Kelly McCandless
Billings Chamber/CVB
Phone: (406) 869-3732
(406) 861-2981
kelly@BillingsChamber.com
www.BillingsChamber.com

P.O. Box 31177
815 S. 27th St.
Billings, MT 59107
Fax: (406) 245-7333
www.VisitBillings.com
www.BrandBillings.com



Media Release

Billings Chamber/CVB Awarded Montana Trail Advocacy Award from the International Trail Symposium

For Immediate Release

Billings, MT, April 17, 2013: The Billings Chamber of Commerce/Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) accepted the Montana Trail Advocacy Award during the International Trail Symposium Awards Banquet in Phoenix, AZ on April 16th. John Brewer accepted the award on the Chamber/CVB's behalf. This prestigious award honors the work the Chamber/CVB does to bring together multiple community organizations focused on trail enhancement and development in order to achieve common goals.

The Chamber/CVB Board of Directors established trails as a long-term priority issue five years ago when they identified the impact trails have on a community: increased property values, enhanced quality of life, better tourism amenities, etc. John Brewer, Chamber/CVB President and CEO explains, "A healthy trail system promotes the Chamber/CVB mission to develop a strong business climate and vibrant economy by serving the community in a leadership role thereby enhancing the quality of life. What's more, trails are no longer a luxury amenity, trails and non-motorized transportation options are now appreciated as essential infrastructure that aids business recruitment and retention, in addition to quality of life. "

With goals to connect a 26 mile trail loop (the Marathon Loop) around the city of Billings, to maintain and enhance trail amenities, and to establish bicycle friendly access throughout the community, the Chamber/CVB developed a Trails Committee with over 100 enthusiasts interested in working together on these initiatives. Chamber/CVB Board Chair Greg Kohn, says, "The Chamber/CVB conveys the ideas of people. Our community's trail success through the Chamber/CVB is due to the hard work of the 100+ people who are active on our trails committee and work tirelessly for the trail system."

The Chamber/CVB was nominated by these vital community partners who, along with other trail supporters, deserve equal credit for the award: BikeNet, the Yellowstone River Parks Association, RiverStone Health, and the City of Billings Alternative Modes of Transportation office, Director of Parks and Recreation, and the Director of City Planning.

Billings' growing reputation as a "trail-friendly" city is the result of over 36 miles of trails developed in less than 20 years, with usage increasing 10% annually. The League of American Bicyclists recently designated Billings as a bronze-level "Bicycle Friendly Community." This transformation is the product of the unique partnership described above.

In explaining why the Chamber/CVB should receive the award, the nominators indicated the following, "The Billings Chamber/CVB is the oil that makes this partnership hum. A respected voice for businesses in our region, the Chamber/CVB is a uniquely-effective, and somewhat unexpected, advocate for trails in our community. The Chamber is a clearinghouse for more than a dozen trail-friendly organizations and leads a "Trails Committee" whose members -- aided by the Chamber's resources, staff, and prestige -- locate, build, maintain, and support local trails. By leveraging individual strengths for common goals this community-wide consortium of businesses, trails groups, city and county officials, healthcare organizations, and many others -- has achieved goals that could not have been achieved separately without the Chamber's leadership."

Bill Cole, Chair of the Chamber/CVB Trails Committee, reflects on the future of trails for Billings, "This award is excellent fuel as this group continues to forge ahead. As enhancements to Swords Rimrock Park and Yellowstone Kelly's Gravesite all gain momentum, the committee is more energized than ever as we encourage people to use the trail system, create a sense of arrival through a Swords Rimrock Park gateway, and continue with the work we're all so passionate about."

In addition to other trail fundraising efforts, the Chamber/CVB and Big Sky Economic Development market the "Billings, Montana's Trailhead" license plate, which advertises the trail system and generates proceeds from sales to fund trail development.

###

Advocate. Connect. Grow.

The Billings Chamber/CVB represents you, our 1,200 members who employ more than 44,000 people. We help you grow your bottom line by connecting you to opportunities and advocating for your business and our community.

Thank you to our nominating partners:

