



By Noel Spring

Enthusiasm reverberated through the air outside of the Harris Township Library on August 26. A sign leading toward the commotion was titled "Granger Path Reasons." It was decorated with paint: smiley faces, a person biking on a path next to street, and handprints of the children who created it — Girl Scout Troop 198. It was a collage of reasons to create bike paths in Granger: "No pollution," "Get where you want faster," "It will help avoid car crashes." The sign pointed to children who were laughing and playing around a picnic table covered in snacks of all sorts. At this event, children far outnumbered adults, and for pertinent reasons. The group was gathered to kickoff of a campaign that has

been developed, to a large degree, for children ... and in some ways, by children too. This capital campaign kickoff also applauded contributions to the Granger Paths project, which will create multi-use paths throughout Granger. The current leg of the project is to begin building the beginning of what is called Phase 1: a 3.52 mile path that connects North Point and Mary Frank elementary schools; then goes west to Gumwood Road. In order to begin building the path, the Friends of Granger Paths have begun their Capital Campaign, "Get Up and Go," to raise

\$150,000. This amount covers 20 percent of the total cost required to build the Phase 1(a) path, which runs from Mary Frank School to Elm Road. The other 80 percent will be provided

by a Transportation Enhancement Grant from the Federal government.

The Harris Township Library event celebrated two hefty donations to the project. Matt Moore and his family donated

Granger Paths: By Kids, For Kids



Photo by Barbara Allison

\$2,500 to the paths initiative, while Lake City Bank presented an oversized \$4,500 check to smiling children. With these donations, the Granger Paths Initiative has a total of \$55,000 banked. Between more fundraisers, events and private donations, it is projected that this phase of the path could be completed by April 2012.

The children present at the event enjoyed sharing why they want the paths, and others explained how they have been involved in the campaign.

Shilpi Patel and her two daughters, Sophia, nine years old, and Sheila, seven years old, look forward to utilizing the paths as a family activity. Shilpi used to live in New York City, where biking and walking was the norm. "Since moving here, I don't get any exercise ... unless I go to the gym. My girls love to bike, but when we want to go, we have to go to St. Pat's Park." Saint Patrick's County Park is about a 25-minute drive from the Patel's home. They look forward to being able to bike anytime. Sophia looks forward to the independence that a bike path could bring. "I'm excited to bike by myself," she quickly averted her eyes to her mom, "If I'm allowed to!"

Another one of the many children passionate about the Granger Paths Initiative is Cole Clayton, ten years old. Cole is part of the First Lego League, which is a robotics and research program for 9-16 year old children. For a project about transportation, Cole found an interest in multi-use paths. "We could have picked buses, trucks, or something," he said. "But what it came down to is *what can they do right now*," said Cole's father, Wayne. Cole was one of the kids who helped collect 700 signatures from community members who support the paths, which they then took to the Michiana Area Council of Governments. "Frankly, it's so hard to say no to kids," said Wayne, "If we're going to encourage kids to walk and bike, we have to make a safe place for it."

With that safe place in the making, the children of Granger will soon have a new outlet for physical activity, an opportunity to choose an emission-free form of transportation, and a connection to surrounding trails in South Bend and Mishawaka.

To become a member of the Friends of Granger Paths organization, or to stay up to date on their accomplishments and fundraisers, visit www.grangerpaths.org. IG