

## Trail Towns – a natural fit for SCORE



In our series of articles this year we've covered an overview of SCORE, the resources available from SCORE, and the organizations that interact with SCORE to help local businesses become successful. This month we will move into something that is beginning to develop right in our area – Trail Towns.

### What is a Trail Town ?

A trail town is a community that provides the goods and services to support the users of any trail system. When a trail user passes through a community, first, they need safe passage, then adequate signage to direct them down the trail, then some means of identifying goods and services relevant to a trail user and where they are located. A trail town is one which has taken this into account, and has maximized the positive experience for the user so that they will spend some time and money in the town, recommend it to their friends, and return to repeat the experience. In other words, a trail town can be an economic engine for a small community.

### How does SCORE fit into this concept ?

Generally, the types of businesses that are needed to support trail users are small businesses. Bicycle shops, outfitters, sporting goods stores, restaurants, coffee shops, bakeries, bed and breakfast lodging, recreational equipment rental companies, campgrounds, and taverns are typical in trail towns. These are the types of businesses that SCORE specializes in. When a new business in any of these categories develops plans to open, SCORE can be there to help them to have the best opportunity for success, from the development of the business plan, to marketing, to financial advice. Many of the people who start these types of businesses have a great idea and enthusiasm, but need a little assistance with the things that will assure that the business will sustain itself over time.

### Why are trail towns important in our area ?

Our area is unique in many ways. We have significant outdoor resources that most of us take for granted but are very desirable and hard to get in larger cities. We have fishing, hunting, hiking, biking, cross country skiing, boating, geocaching, beautiful scenery, two major river highways with the Allegheny and the Clarion, and what I like to call the "Recreational Interstate". A bike and hiking trail is well under way from Erie to Pittsburgh, and it links to trails that go all the way to Washington, DC. This trail intersects the North Country Trail, which is a hiking trail like the Appalachian Trail, and it runs from North Dakota to New York. These are becoming major recreational corridors, and they run right through our area. We can take advantage of this privileged location by having the businesses in our area to support the trail traffic.

### Is anything happening now in our area ?

The missing links of the trail through this area are being completed, with the McClintock Trail between Oil City and Rouseville currently under construction. In addition, the Oil Region Alliance is spearheading a Business Plan Contest to jump start the entrepreneurs to develop trail related businesses and that effort kicks off on May 15<sup>th</sup>.

### How do I find out more ?

Contact the Oil Region Alliance at 814-677-3152 for information on the trails and the Business Plan contest. To get a further overview of SCORE, and the services that it offers, go to the website [www.SCORE.org](http://www.SCORE.org). If you are interested in receiving counseling or becoming a SCORE counselor, go to [www.SCOREERIE.org](http://www.SCOREERIE.org) and "request a meeting" or contact Frank Hajduk or Mary Cochran at the SCORE office in Oil City at 814-677-3152.