Hey, Buddy, Take a Hike

By Rande Davis

Our headline for Pulse sounds quite rude, doesn’t it? Actually, our intent is just the opposite. Pulse is dedicated to volunteer organizations serving and representing the lifeblood of our community. Our report this issue is on just such a group: Sugarloaf Regional Trails (SRT). This is an organization whose mission is not only to help educate others about our local environment but also to foster enjoyment of historic Montgomery County and Sugarloaf Mountain.

Serving our area since 1974, it may be one of the better-kept secrets of any of the civic groups benefiting our community. A 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation that is financed entirely by grants and donations from individuals and businesses, the group has conducted cultural research and educational activities, published historic theme trail guides and books, and has held conferences on preservation and environmental issues. Sugarloaf Regional Trails has been a leader in the development of the county master plan for preservation.

Sugarloaf Regional Trails has researched and published fifteen elaborate trail guides, most meant for biking, others for walking or as an automobile tour, and even a couple of canoe tours. Each trail guide comes with complete directions and historical notes with pictures on various sites along the way.

The Poolesville Town Walking Trail is an absolute must for anyone living or interested in Poolesville and especially for visitors to the town. The five-page guide presents a condensed but very enlightening history of the town, offering eighteen historical sites of note.

For walking tour fans, there are two trail guides for Hyattstown and Potomac Bottomlands. They offer a hiker/driver tour of the Monocacy Battlefield and an auto tour of our rural churches. For canoeists, there are two canoe tours, one for the Potomac River and the other for the Monocacy River.

If you are in the mind for some fresh air, good exercise, and intriguing history, SRT has created bike trail guides for Boyds, Dickerson, Barnesville, Seneca, and the C&O Canal. If you prefer to sit back, relax, and take it easy, the rail tour puts you on the train from Rockville to Brunswick with explanations about various stops along the way.

Sugarloaf Regional Trails was founded by Frederick “Fritz” Gutheim, a gentleman whose background and resume make for a long trail of experience, from writer/historian to urban planning and environmentalist and includes our favorite, editor/newspaper reporter.

The leadership today consists of its Board of Directors: Peg Coleman (president), Chet Anderson (vice president), Carol Oberdorfer (secretary), Tom Proctor (treasurer), and members, Betsy Lyman, Boyce Miller, Bev Thomas, and Gary Valen.

All the trail guides are free of charge and available at www.sugarloaftrails.org. Take our advice, check them out, read about the organization, and then: Take a hike, will ya?