

Grant Awarded to ICSD for Trail Project

July 12, 2013 (*Independence, IA*) – Community members will soon be able to enjoy a beautiful new trail within the Independence Community School District's (ICSD) campus. The District was recently awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Buchanan County Community Foundation. These funds help reduce the cost to pave the trail and make it even more assessable to all campus visitors and community members. The project came in \$76,400 under budget.

The paved trail will provide a safe, direct connection between the District's East / West Elementary campus and the new JR / SR High School. Over time, the trail will feature benches, trees, historical points of interest, and outdoor education features, primarily funded by donations.

The District received very competitive bids for the project and selected Custom Concrete, LLC, an Independence-based company, for the job. "We are excited to see the trail now under construction, and look forward to the trail being available to our students, staff and visitors when school starts this fall," added Superintendent, Jean Peterson. "The trail is just one more piece in our goal to make ICSD a first-class learning institution and we appreciate the support of local organizations helping to make that a reality. The project will help with our wellness initiative and allow students to access the buildings without having to travel on 20th Ave."



The tentative name for the trail is the "American Trotter Trail".

For a few years in the late 1880s and early 1890s, Independence was a nationally-known horse-racing center, and was sometimes referred to as the "Lexington of the North". This came about as a result of the meteoric financial success of Charles W. Williams. A telegraph operator and creamery owner from nearby Jesup, Iowa, Williams (with no experience in breeding horses) purchased in 1885 two mares, each of which within a year gave birth to a stallion. These two stallions, which Williams named Axtell and Allerton, went on the set world trotting records, with the result that Williams' earnings enabled him to publish a racing newspaper titled *The American Trotter*, to build a large three-story hotel and opera house called The Gedney, and to construct a figure-eight shaped race track on the west edge of town, on a large section of land called Rush Park, where he also built a magnificent horse barn, his family mansion, and peripheral structures.

Today, the primary location of Williams' race track (which was the original site of the Buchanan County Fairgrounds) is owned by the school district. The new trail will intersect the original site of the Williams' race track. The Buchanan County Community Foundation officially awarded the grant to ICSD on July 10th at their award ceremony. For more information about the Foundation, visit www.cfneia.org/affiliates/BuchananCounty.

If you have questions regarding the new trail, please contact Superintendent Jean Peterson at jpeterson@independence.k12.ia.us or (319) 334-7400.

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