



Sunflower Foundation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 22, 2022

MEDIA CONTACT

Brett Riggs

briggs@sunflowerfoundation.org

785.232.3000, Ext. 113

Sunflower Foundation hosting Powered by Trails event **Groups, state agencies with interest in trail projects to attend**



TOPEKA, Kan. – All trails lead to Topeka and the Sunflower Foundation Nonprofit Center, which next week is set to host a one-day learning opportunity for trail builders and enthusiasts, as well as groups, agencies and other stakeholders from around Kansas with an interest in the development and use of public trails.

Powered by Trails: Day of Learning @ the Powerhouse, will be 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 27, at the Powerhouse Education Center on the Sunflower campus, 5820 SW Sixth Ave., in Topeka. The Powerhouse, which specializes in holding events for nonprofit organizations, has been holding events since October 2021. This will be the first event hosted by Sunflower at the new center.

The event will include expert speakers, discussions, networking and the sharing of ideas related to trail projects and their benefits to the health, well-being and vitality of communities. It also serves as the culmination of a 14-week program in which trail-building groups from around the state learned advanced strategies for trail user assessment, economic impact analysis, and messaging and communications around the value of trails.

The Sunflower-led Trail Champion Cohort (TCC) program, which began in January and continued into the spring, provided participants with virtual and in-person learning opportunities, one-on-one coaching and networking with state agencies and nonprofit organizations. The TCC consisted of 16 groups from around the state representing such sectors as local government, business, health, community improvement, advocacy, and under-represented populations in their respective communities.

Since it began in 2005, the Sunflower Trails program has partnered with and invested in communities, nonprofits and schools to help build, expand, enhance or connect Kansas trails.

“Sunflower Trails has been a hallmark program for the past 17 years,” said Billie Hall, president and CEO of Sunflower Foundation. “Public trails can be a powerful strategy in providing safe, accessible venues for outdoor physical activity, as well as the ability to connect with nature and community – all elements that contribute to better health and well-being. It is very fitting that trail champions from across the state should join one of the first events at Powerhouse.”

The following groups participated in the TCC: Ad Astra Trail Collective, Independence; Columbus Trails Committee; Friends of Lawrence Area Trails; KCK Heritage Trail/Groundwork NRG, Kansas City, Kan.; Kansas

Alliance for Wetlands and Streams; Friends of the River/Friends of Land Institute, Salina; Liberal Area Coalition for Families; Lindsborg/Meadowlark Trail, McPherson County; Manhattan/Flint Hills Coalition; Osawatomie

Trails Task Force; RISE Cowley County; Topeka/Shawnee Co/Kanza Trails; Special Olympics Kansas; Thrive Allen County; Topside Trails, Goodland; and Wichita/Prairie Travelers.

The TCC, designed to expand participants' knowledge and connections so they can better champion trails in their communities, included opportunities for participants to engage with state agencies and nonprofits that have potential to partner with trail groups.



“The primary goal of the TCC is to provide high-level training and information to benefit and grow trail-oriented projects,” said Elizabeth Burger, Sunflower senior program officer. “While building the trail is clearly the first step, there are opportunities to advance this work through assessment, analysis and messaging. Trails can provide many economic and quality of life benefits, and we want to position communities to generate and provide that data in ways that are relevant to decision-makers and residents.”

Sunflower Foundation worked with Michele Archie and The Harbinger Consultancy, a group nationally known for its integrated approach to community and economic development, to develop the TCC curriculum. Topics included community benefits of trails and assessing their economic impact, how to survey trail users, telling your trail's story through social media and other messaging, communicating the value of trails to external stakeholders, and how to effectively recruit volunteers.

Archie, co-chair of the National Geotourism Council, will be speaking virtually at the Powered by Trails event. Her presentation is titled “Using Trail Data to Change Bodies, Hearts and Minds.”

Other speakers and sessions include:

- Amy Camp, founder of Cycle Forward, a consulting agency that supports trail communities across the United States and Canada, will virtually present “Cultivating a Trail Town State of Mind.”
- Mike Goodwin, of the Kansas Trails Council and Get Outdoors Kansas, will speak about the “Trail in a Box,” a mobile toolbox with everything a group needs to create a nature trail.
- Dustin Gale and Kayla Savage, of the Kansas Department of Commerce, will provide an overview of funding available to trail groups.
- A resource roundtable to connect participants with various state agencies and nonprofits.
- A session on increasing accessibility to trails to underserved populations.
- Each TCC group will highlight ongoing trail work in their respective community.

The event is free and open to all TCC team members. Other participants and trail champions who were not part of the TCC have been invited to participate or speak at the event. Registration for the event is closed.

To date, the Sunflower Trails Program has partnered on more than 210 trail projects in almost 80 counties.

“During COVID, we have learned just how important access to the outdoors and trails could be for not only physical but mental health,” Burger said. “To this end, we strive to create a culture of trails that supports their use by everyone, regardless of age, ability, income or background.”

For more information on the Sunflower Trails program and the Powered by Trails event, contact Burger at eburger@sunflowerfoundation.org or 785-232-3000, or visit www.sunflowerfoundation.org.

ABOUT SUNFLOWER FOUNDATION

Sunflower Foundation was established in 2000 as a statewide health philanthropy with a mission to serve as a catalyst for improving the health of all Kansans. The foundation believes that a thriving, sustainable nonprofit sector contributes to healthy communities, and we are committed to investing in mission-aligned nonprofits through grants, education, advocacy, collaborative learning and capacity building. To learn more, visit the [Sunflower Foundation website](http://www.sunflowerfoundation.org).