

Interurban Trail Gets Unexpected \$2,500 Award

Three-month Facebook campaign ends in extra rewards for runners-up, and the Ozaukee Interurban Trail is among them.

By [Sarah McCraw](#) | Aug 7, 2011 4:28 am ET | Updated Aug 9, 2011 9:07 pm ET
This post was contributed by a community member.



The Ozaukee Interurban Trail is now up an unexpected \$2,500 after involving six other Milwaukee-area nonprofit causes.

Liberty Mutual Insurance announced last week the winners of their Facebook-based "Like My Community" campaign. [Children's Hospital of Wisconsin](#), [Milwaukee Rescue Mission](#) and the [Washington County Humane Society](#) all won the top prize of \$30,000 each.

The remaining causes, including [Ozaukee Interurban Trail Advisory Council](#), [Albrecht Free Clinic](#), [Prevention & Protection of Abused Children, Inc.](#) and [The West Bend Baseball Association](#), all received a surprise award of \$2,500 each.

Husband and wife John and Helen Ward, who sit on the Advisory Council, hope the Facebook campaign helped area residents learn something about the trail they didn't know before.

"It's a wonderful facility not just for recreation; people use it for commuting also," Helen said. "We see so many people out on the trail that wouldn't be biking or walking otherwise because it's a safe place to be off of the streets."

Helen said a lot of people told her that they got on Facebook so they could vote for the Ozaukee Interurban Trail Advisory Council in the contest, and she is amazed at the support it received.

From May 9 through August 1, more than 33,000 votes were cast on Facebook between the seven different nonprofits. More than 1,800 votes went towards the Ozaukee Interurban Trail Advisory Council.

Liberty Mutual kicked off the campaign in spring by asking their employees to nominate causes that benefit the communities where they work and live.

"It was something that was not only important to me, but I felt would touch others around the community," said Robert Gudates, a sales representative for [Liberty Mutual Insurance](#) who nominated the Ozaukee Interurban Trail for the [social media contest](#).

During the campaign, large "Like" buttons were placed along the Interurban Trail in Port Washington and a video was posted on Facebook to tell voters more about the trail. Although it didn't win the grand prize, Gudates said he believes the contest did something important for the historic trail.

"There's a bigger picture to the dollar amount or monetary amount," he said. "There's a bigger, a larger message to be told."

Gudates and his wife live in Mequon and use the Interurban Trail throughout the year for a variety of activities including biking in summer and snowshoeing in winter.

"It's more than just pavement that runs 30 miles," Gudates said. "There are train stations that used to be on the trail. There are signs (giving details) about the trains."

In the early 1900s, the trail was actually a railroad line that spanned between Milwaukee and Sheboygan. The Railroad operation shut down in the 1950s and sat unused for many years. That is, until Helen Ward wrote a letter to Wisconsin Electric in 1974 asking for permission to use the property for a trail.

"It's just very gratifying to see how many people are enjoying it," Ward said.

Today, she and her husband, John, remain involved with the Ozaukee Interurban Trail as part of the Advisory Council and say they are excited to hear about the \$2,500 award from Liberty Mutual.

The Wards are not exactly sure what the council will do with the award money, but one idea includes improving a portion of the trail that runs behind the train depot in Cedarburg. Other ideas involve placing a monument or sign at the bridge that crosses I-43 which was built in 2009, to recognize those who brought the project to life.

Gudates hopes more people will take advantage of the Interurban Trail after hearing about it in the Liberty Mutual Contest.

"They have something that's right at home," he said. "Obviously they have the beautiful lake that's just out to the east, but there's something there that's possibly a few blocks from their house they might have not known about four months ago."