

## Bill Krebs, Mayor of Springville, advocates for the ECRT Trail

The Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail (ECRT) has over 6,000 friends and supporters, but Springville Mayor Bill Krebs stands out from the rest! Bill first heard about the trail in 2008 when he read a news story that the Buffalo & Pittsburgh Railroad was considering railbanking its 27-mile inactive rail line that runs from Orchard Park to Ashford, crossing right through the middle of Springville, NY.

### Seeing potential

When Bill became the Mayor of Springville in 2006, the railroad had started to remove the ties and ballast on that line, but they never finished. **“What they left was an industrial parking lot—an eye sore right in the middle of town.”** Bill reported. **“When I learned there was potential to turn that mess into a multi-use trail, I was definitely interested.”**



### Advocating for the trail

A retired schoolteacher and former Boy Scout leader, Bill knew to do his research. First, he checked out trails in other communities to see how a ‘rails to trails’ could benefit Springville. Then he investigated railbanking, and learned it was a program Congress enacted to keep rail corridors ready for future rail use, allowing them to be opened for interim use as trails. That same year, Ann Bergantz approached Bill about joining a new non-profit she was forming called ECRT to bring all 27-miles of this local trail to life.

Bill became a huge advocate for trail development. He formed a committee of residents to explore the possibility of transforming the unused rail line into a multi-use trail. The Village Trustees participated in the trail design and its vision in their community. However, they became

frustrated at the length of time it was taking for New York State Parks to secure a contract from the railroad. Because NYS Parks was busy developing the Genesee Valley Greenway, they turned the project over to Ann and the ECRT Board of Directors, which was a real turning point.

**“While the 49-year lease for all 27-miles took a few more years, ECRT helped us secure a simple ‘Right of Entry’ agreement for our 1.8 mile section, which we named The Pop Warner Trail after a local football hero,” Bill stated. “That contract was signed in 2015, and then the real fun began.”**

### **Bringing the trail to life**

The Pop Warner Committee worked with ECRT to support the design of the trail. The Village Department of Public Works constructed the trail using millings as the surface. The project really took off when the committee secured a \$12,000 grant from the Springville Griffith Institute Community Foundation, which they used to buy benches, tables, and signs. To add more amenities, local residents donated a kiosk, a library and trees, and Erie County funded signage at the intersection of the WNY Scenic Byway.

At a Grand Opening Ceremony In 2016, Bill proudly cut the ribbon to the 1.8 mile Pop Warner section of the ECRT trail. In 2019, the open section was extended another three miles to Genesee Road. And while there is always more work to do improving the surface and signage, Bill could not be prouder.



**“I’m thrilled to see so many people on the trail hiking, dog-walking and biking year-round, with snowshoers, skiers and snowmobilers taking the trail into town in the winter,” Bill said. “It’s a legacy trail, with so much potential for the future, linking to the Senior Center, the high school, Springville Field and the Stream Trout Pond.”**

**Thanks, Bill for your vision and for being an advocate for Springville and for ECRT.**