



## Riverwalk just the beginning

*LHVA brims with programs that improve region*

**By Natalie Gelb Solfanelli**

In mid-July, LHVA officially cut the ribbon at the downtown Scranton Riverwalk. Since the Riverwalk's opening, the positive feedback from the public has been overwhelming.

Scranton now joins the list of "livable cities," including Wilkes Barre, that enhance the quality of life for their residents and visitors with trails that highlight natural resources within their urban environment and allow for recreational, wellness and social opportunities.

This newest section of the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail (LRHT) begins at Olive Street in Scranton, across the street from the Ice Box Sports Complex. It continues for almost a mile to the LRHT trailhead of the CNJ section. From there it connects with the one mile long CNJ section to Elm Street. These combined sections of the LRHT offer a round trip walk or run of approximately four miles just a stone's throw from downtown Scranton.

Although obscured by a concrete barrier, there is an existing sidewalk on the side of the Mulberry Street Bridge that provides access by foot or bicycle to the spur trail that connects with the main Riverwalk. The spur was constructed with funding from PennDOT's "Safe Route for School" program to allow students of Scranton High to avoid the dangerous traffic situation that occurs at the end of the school day. The Riverwalk is accessible from every Scranton neighborhood.

The trail is LHVA's signature project. But there are many other programs and activities that merit mention. LHVA works in positive and creative ways to sustain and enhance the quality of life and economic development of the Lackawanna Heritage Valley, a National and State Heritage Area in Northeastern Pennsylvania. A diverse array of partners, local communities, nonprofit organizations, cultural and historic attractions, public officials, business and civic leaders, planners, educators, preservationists, conservationists and private citizens relies on the heritage area to provide the energy to create collaborative, innovative and essential community projects. Funds from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and the National Park Service (NPS) allow the organization to support important initiatives such as the educational mini-grants program, the Heritage Valley Roundtable, the Northeastern Pennsylvania Conservation Alliance, as well as the development of the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail along 40 miles of the Lackawanna River.

The Authority's investments in the community have resulted in improvements to historic sites and museums, training for educators, new and expanded cultural events, and important environmental programs. Most importantly, the programs have engaged community officials and residents, and they have created a sense of place and a heightened appreciation and awareness of the region's heritage. These accomplishments are vital to the future of the community and economic development in the region. In addition, every dollar that the Authority has invested in the community has been matched by more than \$5 of private and other public funding.

A unique partnership has also been developed with WVIA Public Television in the production of a series of documentaries called "The Extraordinary Journey," about the immigrant experience in Northeastern Pennsylvania. The first two widely viewed and highly popular episodes told the stories of Eastern European and Irish immigrants who settled in the region. Both films have been adapted for national distribution. The LHVA's own program, "Views from the Lackawanna Heritage Valley," airs regularly on Channel 19, a local public access television channel.

"Views" features interviews with legislators and public officials, current events and projects, as well as stories and facts about local history.

The Authority's volunteer corps, Ambassadors in Action, is a rapidly expanding group of citizens who are committed to helping LHVA tell the region's story, facilitate partnerships, enhance the physical character and economic vitality of Lackawanna Valley communities, improve the visitor experience, and reconnect people and the communities to the Lackawanna River. Visit [www.LHVA.org](http://www.LHVA.org).

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