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New trail could honor biker's memory

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St. Joseph's dirt trails do little to change the perception of mountain bikers as daring, uber athletes.

For lesser riders, heart palpitations and wipeouts are common accompaniments of trail rides on the hilly terrain behind Krug Park.

"What we're trying to do is create something that people won't ride and automatically give up on mountain biking," said Shawn Force, owner of Forces of Nature outdoor sports shop.

Mr. Force and several mountain bikers are teaming with the city of St. Joseph to build a long trail section that can be easily tackled by novices.

The five-mile, gently sloped, winding trail is northeast of Corby Pond and east of Northeast Parkway. It will connect with an existing, more difficult five-mile trail southeast of the pond.

Mr. Force and City Engineer Roger Sparks marked the trail, and some mountain bikers have begun clearing vegetation. The city's Parks Department plans to send a prison labor crew to help next month.

"Everyone's getting pretty excited about doing this, so we should have it ready to ride next month," Mr. Force said.

The bikers have floated the idea of naming the trail after St. Joseph native Mark Reynolds, who in 2004 was attacked and killed by a mountain lion while biking on a California trail. Because the trail is on city Parkway land, the City Council would have to approve the naming, said Parks Director Bill McKinney.

"It would be an honor," said Dona Reynolds, Mark Reynolds' mother. "There was probably not a more avid biker than Mark."

Volunteers with chain saws, weed trimmers, leaf blowers and other tools can also help the bikers clear the trail. For more information, check stjmtb.blogspot.com for Internet posts on cleanup dates, or contact Mr. Force at 279-1500.

Dona and Gary Reynolds also established a charity in their son's honor to continue his tradition of giving needy children their first bicycle. The nonprofit Mark J. Reynolds Children's "First" Bicycle Fund hosts several annual events. Anyone wishing to donate or get more information can visit www.markreynoldsfund.org.

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