

## ***Welcome to Luray's "New Front Porch" The Luray Hawksbill Greenway***

*"A greenway is a linear open space established along either a natural corridor, such as a riverfront, stream, or ridgeline, or overland along a railroad right-of-way converted to recreational use. It is any natural or landscaped course for pedestrian or bicycle passage. An open space connector linking parks, nature reserves, cultural features, or historic sites with each other and with populated areas."*

*C. Little*

The Town of Luray is bisected by Hawksbill Creek. This creek lies within a floodplain in which no buildings can be erected. This several mile long area has long been an overgrown weed infested area and an eyesore for many years.

The town's Director of Parks and Recreation and one, non-staff, volunteer developed an outline in 1999 for the development of a walking trail along this creek called The Luray-Hawksbill Greenway. The Luray Town Council supported this activity but essentially left the architectural planning, grant application process, and development to these two individuals. The Director of Parks and Recreation supervised the project communicating progress and/or problems to the Town Council as the project developed. Working with the Virginia Department of Forestry, Chesapeake Bay Restoration Foundation, Department of Conservation and Recreation, and local groups such as Page Valley Master Gardeners, Scout Troops, GardenClubs, and Page County Tree Board the committee of two acted as the catalyst for the over-all greenway project. The greenway is being developed in phases with the first one-half mile trail being completed in year 2001, the second phase was completed in 2004, and the third phase was completed in the fall of 2005.

The town was awarded another grant for Phase 4 of the greenway in the amount of \$100,000 and grant applications have been submitted by the committee for funding of the 4th phase. Thus far this committee has raised over \$ 400,000 in grants for construction. The greenway has proven to be so popular that all trail amenities such as benches, trash receptacles, picnic tables and drinking fountains have been funded by residents and local organizations. The ten-foot wide paved pathway is ADA-compliant throughout its length. The Luray-Hawksbill Greenway has received several awards for innovation and several planning groups from other communities have observed the success and have made site visits to see how a small town could have achieved this remarkable accomplishment in such a short period of time. Examples of awards received are:

- **Valley Conservation Council, Better Models, Outstanding Public Amenity**
- **Scenic Virginia, Best Preservation of a Scenic Water Corridor, October 2004**
- **Champions of the Environment, Merck Inc.**
- **Virginia Municipal League's 2005 Achievement Awards competition:**

The town's entry describing the Luray Hawksbill Greenway project was chosen as the winner in the category for localities with populations of fewer than 5,000.

A local artist painted a mural on a building along the first phase of the trail. The building was plain and uninteresting. Wrangler Jeans and The Luray Garden Club provided funds to have this building power washed, tuck pointed, and base coat painted. The artist then painted the inspiring "Nature's Tribute Nine Eleven" which transformed the uninspiring building to become an attractive source of interest.

The painting of this mural sparked interest within the local Art Guild and nine other murals have since been painted on buildings and structures throughout town. Additional murals will be added each year.