

# RIDGELINE

A PUBLICATION OF THE SUPERIOR HIKING TRAIL ASSOCIATION

AUTUMN 2023



## LEGACY GIVING: LEAVING A TRAIL OF GOODWILL

**M**ichael Koppy believes we're all capable of great things. He would know; at age 69 in 2020, Koppy set the male supported Fastest-Known-Time record on the Superior Hiking Trail. He ran the entire 300-mile corridor in 5 days, 3 hours, and 44 minutes. Koppy also raised more than \$20,000 for the Superior Hiking Trail Association by turning his great accomplishment into a fundraiser. That's not his only legacy.

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## Legacy Giving ...CONTINUED FROM COVER

Koppy has been using the Trail for more than 30 years as both a hiker and an ultrarunner.

“I watched the Trail develop. I remember running sections when the Trail was only marked with flagging before it got grubbed out,” he said.

Koppy and his wife Carol Bonde are steadfast annual donors to the Trail, and he volunteers as a sawyer, helping clear downed trees and other debris from the Trail using a chainsaw.

Given their longtime commitment to the Trail, Koppy and Bonde wanted to do more and have included the Superior Hiking Trail in their will, setting up a legacy gift for the SHTA. “We all have certain values, right? And the things that we value, there is no reason they have to end once we are gone,” Koppy said. “I think that our values can live far beyond us.”

The couple consulted

with an attorney when it came time to do their estate planning, and set up a trust. Allocations,

including the legacy gift for the SHTA, are set by percentages.

“Our kids will get a portion, but

they also support the idea that we are using those funds to continue the things that we believe in,” Koppy said.

Koppy still holds the supported record today.

The Superior Hiking Trail Association would like to thank Michael Koppy and Carol Bonde for leaving a Legacy Gift to the Trail, and every legacy giver, past, present and future.

A planned gift to Superior Hiking Trail Association — through your will, retirement plan, or real estate and insurance policies — is a powerful and thoughtful way to share your dedication to the SHT in a way that helps preserve the Trail for future generations. A legacy gift to the SHTA may also provide welcome tax benefits to you and your estate.

**“I think it’s important to think about what your values are, and if one of them is valuing the SHT, then it should be in your will and become part of your legacy,” Koppy said.**



**Michael Koppy runs on the Superior Hiking Trail.** Photo courtesy of Michael Koppy.

## Legacy Giving: A Rundown of Your Options

### Make a bequest to SHTA in your estate plan

A charitable bequest is a common, simple way to include the SHTA in your estate plan to protect the future of the Trail.

A bequest to the SHTA is free from federal and state taxes and can be made either outright or contingent upon the death of the named beneficiary. The amount of the bequest, often indicated as a percentage of the estate, is deducted from your estate total,

offering substantial savings by decreasing the value of the estate subject to taxation.

### Qualified Retirement Plan or IRA Required Minimum Distributions

Approaching the age at which you’re required to take IRS-determined minimum annual distributions from your IRA or 401(k) can create a stressful situation: more taxable income than you plan to spend. Contri-

butions made directly to charities — Qualified Charitable Distributions — may provide tax savings. Naming a charity as one of your IRA or 401(k) beneficiaries can create tax efficiencies for your estate. Alternatively, you can name SHTA as contingent beneficiary upon the death of the named beneficiary.

### Name the SHTA in your Life Insurance Policy

Life insurance policies allow

several ways to give. You can donate a paid policy that you no longer need by naming the SHTA as the beneficiary and policy owner. In return, you will receive an immediate tax deduction based on your cost basis in the policy, and it will reduce the value of your estate by the full face value of the policy, potentially reducing estate taxes.

### **Begin your Legacy Giving during your lifetime with a Donor-Advised Fund**

A Donor-Advised Fund (DAF) is a charitable investment account

for the sole purpose of supporting the causes important to you. When you make a contribution to a DAF, you are usually able to take an immediate tax deduction. The funds are invested for tax-free growth, and can then be distributed to any IRS-qualified charity, like the Superior Hiking Trail Association. Many of our most dedicated donors are taking advantage of this style of giving.

## **2023 TRAIL PROJECTS— 135 DAYS OF RENEWAL**

**T**raditionally, trail project season runs between May 1st and October 31st—184 days to work. Once the spring thaw ended this year, we hit the ground running and didn't stop all summer and fall. To give you an idea of just how hard volunteers, contractors, and SHTA staff worked this year, we were out on Trail more than 135 days this season.



(Continued)

### **Making a Legacy Gift**

**A**nyone can make a bequest or legacy gift; there is no minimum amount. We recommend consulting with an estate planning attorney or tax accountant about how a planned gift to the SHTA will work for you. We know it will work for us!

If you have already named the Superior Hiking Trail Association in your will, please let us know so we can thank you during your lifetime.

We are available to communicate with finance or estate planning professionals to provide any support documentation needed to set up a bequest or planned gift. The following is the language we recommend to name the SHTA as a beneficiary in your will or codicil:

"I hereby give, devise and bequeath \$\_\_\_\_\_ (specific dollar amount), AND/OR \_\_\_\_\_ (specific percentage) percent of the residue of my estate AND/OR real estate located at \_\_\_\_\_ (specific location) to Superior Hiking Trail Association, a Minnesota nonprofit corporation exempt from federal taxation under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, currently located at:  
618 1st Ave, PO Box 315  
Two Harbors, MN 55616,  
Federal Tax Identification number 41-1560194."

To learn more, go to [superiorhiking.org/legacy-gifts](https://superiorhiking.org/legacy-gifts) or contact executive director Lisa Luukkala at: (218) 834-2700 x201, or [lluukkala@superiorhiking.org](mailto:lluukkala@superiorhiking.org).



The Superior Hiking Trail Association is dedicated to building, managing, renewing and promoting the Superior Hiking Trail.



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**VOLUME 38, ISSUE 2**

PEOPLE.  
NATURE.  
FOOTPATH.

## Trail Renewal Projects...CONTINUED

Volunteers completed six Trail Renewal Projects:

- Indian Camp Creek Stone Step Crossing,
- Wilson Creek Stone Step Crossing,
- Springdale Creek Bridge Removal and Stone Step Crossing,
- Britton Peak Stone Staircase,
- and the second year of work on the Mystery Mountain Rehabilitation.

Volunteers also built three different sections of puncheon and four reroutes on the Duluth section, cleared 100 miles of Trail, painted blazes, weed-whipped, dug latrines, maintained campsites, lopped brush, and much more.

Members, donors, and funders supported the work of seven different paid contractors to complete 200 miles of clearing, and three additional projects:

- Lismore Road Trailhead,
- Poplar River Reroute,
- and the White Sky Renewal and Stone Staircase.

Volunteers once again contributed more than 8,000 hours this season, and staff and contractors also put in thousands of hours. Thank you to everyone who put time, effort, sweat, and funding into these projects! Let's take a closer look at a couple of these projects that will be enjoyed for decades to come.

## \* Mystery Mountain Rehabilitation



Before



After

Photo by Tim Malzan

From a tread funneling water down the Trail to a 38' step and run puncheon.

This project rehabilitated half a mile of Trail from the Poplar River bridge at Lutsen Mountains to the Mystery Mountain Campsite. This popular section was very damaged — eroded, muddy, and continuing to degrade as inverted tread caught and funneled water down the Trail, creating additional erosion.

Contractor Tim Malzan of Trail Eyes, LLC led the project over the last two years. This year, with the help of 27 volunteers who contributed 576 hours to the project, we were able to complete: a 71-foot hybrid elevated structure that will now protect a sensitive wetland area, 15 5-foot wide timber steps, 290 cubic feet of rock armor, 94-foot and 38-foot step and run puncheons, 4 drains to keep water off the tread, and much more. The before and after photos of this project are awesome in the most literal sense of the word.



## \* White Sky Rock Renewal

This project tackled a problem area on the spur trail that runs from the Caribou Trail Trailhead to the main SHT near Lake Agnes. The “Lincoln Log Stairway”—an infamous, aged notched log”—was becoming unsafe and required a new solution. The spur also needed some tread rehab and erosion control.

Willie Bittner of Great Lakes Trailbuilders, LLC and a field crew from the Conservation Corps of Minnesota & Iowa built a very impressive stone staircase that seems to flow up the edge of a rock wall, seamlessly. The crew rebenched 300 feet of trail leading up to steps and made the stretch more walkable by renewing and smoothing the tread. They placed 20 additional stone steps in other locations along the spur and installed drainage to help with erosion control. The intersection with the main trail at Lake Agnes was also reinforced and stabilized with improved access to the lake.



On the left, the old notched log stairway rests next to a wonder of stonework by contractor Willie Bittner of Great Lakes Trailbuilders, LLC with a field crew from the Conservation Corps of Minnesota & Iowa.

## \* Encampment River Stepping Stone Crossing and Reroute

We had a great volunteer turnout on our Encampment River project where we installed 23 permanent stepping stones along with a short realignment of the trail to provide a shorter, more direct crossing.



Encampment River crossing.



(Continued)

## In-person shopping at Trail Store ends October 28th

Our online Trail Store stays open year-round, and new merchandise will be arriving during the next few weeks. We're always happy to ship you the latest SHT swag, and we offer curbside pick-up for online orders Monday-Friday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. by appointment.

**2023 Trail Store Hours**  
**May 18th-October 27th**  
Thursdays and Fridays  
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The SHTA Trail Store will re-open for in-person shopping in May 2024.



## Birchy the Beaver wants to celebrate you

Did you complete the entire Superior Hiking Trail this year? Or participate in our **Hike 50 Challenge**? Congratulations! If you would like to have your accomplishment recognized by SHTA mascot Birchy the Beaver, sign up to receive an official Certificate of Completion by Dec. 31st. **Hike 50 Challenge** and **End-2-Ender** recognitions will be mailed out in January 2024.





### \* Britton Peak Stone Staircase

Located on the spur trail up to Britton Peak, this project replaced a failing staircase and reinforced badly eroded tread. Led by Volunteer Crew Leads and SHTA staff, the group finished work started in 2020 by installing 24 additional stone steps.



From failing stairs and eroding tread to a beautiful new stone staircase that will stand the test of time and elements.

### \* Springdale Creek Bridge Removal and Stone Step Crossing

Volunteers removed an unsafe bridge and replaced it with a solid stone step crossing. The crew also repaired and reinforced the tread approaching the Springdale Creek crossing.



All photos by SHTA Intern Peyton Haug

### Thank You: **LCCMR/US Forest Service**

Along with contributions from SHTA donors and members, these projects were made possible by funding provided by the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources, and the U.S. Forest Service.



Thru-Hiker Business Member: **Whole Foods Co-op**  
Whole Foods Co-op inspired 300-miles of gratitude by renewing their "Thru-Hiker" Business Membership with the SHTA with a gift of \$6,023.21 from the Co-op's GIVE! program. Thank you, Whole Foods, for valuing and supporting the Trail!



# Superior Hero Tales: Josh Stangle

By SHTA Intern Peyton Haug

**J**osh Stangle is such a dedicated volunteer, when Larry Sampson, our Duluth-area contractor, needed three days off to spend time with family, he turned to Josh.

“He led volunteers for three days while my daughter and granddaughter were visiting,” Sampson said. “He’s so dependable, and a good leader.”

Originally from Ithaca in upstate New York, Stangle’s relationship with the Superior Hiking Trail started when he and his partner moved to Central Hillside, a neighborhood in Duluth where the Trail runs next to Chester Creek.

They began taking short walks on the SHT with their husky, which led to longer day hikes on the SHT up and down the North Shore, and then volunteering for the SHTA in 2018. When he’s not on trail, Josh is an associate professor of mathematics specializing in commutative algebra at the University of Wisconsin Superior.

This year, Josh has already volunteered more than 70 hours trail clearing, weed whipping, building boardwalks, and many other trail maintenance and renewal projects.

“I have volunteered for a lot of different organizations, and the SHT seems to really appre-

ciate their volunteers,” he said.

In the five years since his first project, Stangle has contributed hundreds of hours and adopted a section of the Trail near Spirit Mountain. Some of Stangle’s favorite SHT work sites include Ely’s Peak, Brewer Creek Park, Spirit Mountain and Mission Creek. “It can be fun from al-

most, like, a trail design perspective,” Stangle said. “Mission Creek was particularly hard, but it was my favorite because we had a lot of fun.”

Stangle now lives in the

Riverside neighborhood in west Duluth, a short walk away from the Superior Hiking Trail and close to the section he adopted.

“I grew up playing team sports and I don’t like competition. Trail work feels like a team sport but there is no competition. It’s all just super cooperative, not just being outside. I think it also opens your eyes up to trying to build spaces that feel natural but are also accessible,” he said.

Thank you, Josh, for all your hard work keeping the Superior Hiking Trail in great shape.

As Larry Sampson says, “(We) can’t say enough good things about Josh.”



Josh Stangle wears a big smile while weed whipping on the Duluth stretch of the SHT.

Photo by SHTA Intern Peyton Haug.

## Thank You, Volunteers

Volunteers supported the Trail in more ways than ever this summer. More than 8,000 hours were given to the Trail!

- Clearing weekends came back after several years on hiatus, taking a record number of trees off the Trail after last winter’s storms.
- A small but dedicated cadre helped bring back guided hikes.
- The new Corridor Clearing and Blazing Weekends targeted specific sections of the Trail that needed a little extra TLC.
- More than 150 folks joined us on one-day and multi-day trail maintenance projects.
- Volunteer cooks prepared meals at every multi-day project, keeping trail crews fed and happy.
- Asset inventories and intercept surveys were taken by a crew of folks eager to help with our master plan.
- And of course, our dedicated adopters lopped brush and cleaned fire rings, helping keep the Trail in great shape.

Volunteers spent time building skills, too, attending first aid training and chainsaw certification. On-the-project training included building rock stairs and water crossings, using rigging to move heavy loads, and building wooden structures.

Thank you to all our 2023 Volunteers! The Superior Hiking Trail Association is lucky, and very grateful, to have such a dedicated and talented group of people as stewards of the SHT.

*The SHTA Volunteer Program is funded, in part, by the Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation*





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Vibrant fall colors are beautiful to see, but also illustrate the variety of trees in the forest on the northern half of the SHT.

Front and back cover photos courtesy of John Steitz Photography

## Know Before You Go: Using the Trail During Hunting Season



SHTA staff wear various blaze orange items while heading out on Trail in November

With fall color change comes another fall tradition on the North Shore: hunting season. During the fall, please wear blaze orange or pink, educate yourself on the hunting seasons for various wild game, respect all Trail closure signs, and be prepared to encounter hunters on or near the Superior Hiking Trail.

In November, parts of the Trail are closed during firearms deer season. Plan ahead if you intend to use the SHT between

November 4-19. For the full list of SHT Trail closures, please visit our Trail Conditions page at our website, [superiorhiking.org](http://superiorhiking.org).

State parks also host various hunts and may restrict access to state park lands during this time. Check with any park you intend to visit. For more information about hunting seasons, go to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources website: <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/hunting/seasons.html>