

Perseverance pays off in McKean County

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SMETHPORT – Ed Ponikvar, a McKean county native now living in Texas and chief education Officer of Knowledge Point Network, a 501©3 charity and Brenda Fitch, owner of Majestic Kamp and Lost Trails on Route 46, are finally able to realize their common vision after receiving a \$203,300 grant: to provide a



respite for active duty military and their families while camping and trail riding at Majestic Trails. Fitch has always hosted veterans and active-duty military. On Veteran’s Day weekend for the last two decades, it has been a free, four-day event for veteran and their immediate families. Now she plans on having Majestic Trails available to them 365 days a year. The request for grant money was declined for nearly three

years. Majestic Trails persevered, and with the assistance of Ponikvar, they celebrated the success with state and local officials, local veterans and Legion members on Sept. 23. Majestic Trails was established in 2001 and now has more than 40 miles of mountainous technical trails for all kinds of vehicles. Spanning in excess of 1,000 acres Majestic Trails is enjoyed by thousands of people each year. Employing six full-time and four full-time individuals during the summer months, Majestic Trails grounds, including 75 annual campsites and a log home to rent, are kept pristine and safe.



According to Ponikvar, the first order of business is to purchase a new bulldozer. Fitch was eager to show attendees how Majestic Trails will benefit from the grant, grinning widely as she spoke. “I can’t wait to get started,” she said. Her enthusiasm was infectious, as attendees were directed to several side-by-sides that would take them on trails through lush, mountainous



terrain. A few dirt bikes were there, including state Senator Cris Dush, R-Brookville, on an electric dirt bike. More from this section +24 Falling Leaves offers live music, kid's rides, vendors +11 Hundreds stop at fairgrounds for Fall Festival +3 Annual event in Sabinsville enjoyed by many Upon reaching the



overlook, many were heard commenting about the beauty of the ride and the vista that stretched for miles. Members from the Crosby American Legion #976, Smethport Legion #138 and various VFW posts presented the nation's colors. "I am glad to be here today to honor our veterans and troops," said state Rep. Martin Causer. "We are truly in God's country." Dush, a retired Air Force master sergeant, acknowledged all who are currently



serving in the military, including his son, and all those who have served. He then said, "This will be a place of rest and refuge for our veterans." McKean County Commissioner Carol Duffy agreed. "I can't say enough how much I appreciate those that have served, because without them we wouldn't have the life that we have here, the freedoms. This is our country, our county. Let's work together as a community. God bless America." Ponikvar said that motorized, hiking, fishing, camping, and hunting plus



retreat-themed events are proposed for expansion at Majestic Trails. He also plans to obtain a grant that will fund counseling services for veterans. Fitch and Ponikvar are optimistic about that task, realizing they have the backing from McKean county officials, state legislators and local support. "When we come together, we can be pretty efficient," said Ponikvar.

