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## American Trails honors Schnatters

### Anchorage trail was gift to neighbors

*By Chris Otts*

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John Schnatter has turned two of his favorite hobbies -- exploring nature and building things -- into a project that has earned national recognition.

American Trails, a Redding, Calif.-based nonprofit, has honored the Papa John's International founder and his wife, Annette, for a new trail in Anchorage. The group presented Schnatter's real estate company, Evergreen Real Estate LLC, with its corporate award at its biannual symposium in Little Rock, Ark., last week.

The award also recognizes the Schnatters' \$3 million contribution to the planned Louisville Loop trail.

"The work that he is supporting there and has done on his land is truly phenomenal," said American Trails director Pam Gluck.

The two-mile trail runs west from the center of Anchorage to Lakeland Road. It was completed in July, though Schnatter has been adding finishing touches, like a loop at the west end.

"It's been getting a lot of attention," said Ray DeMasters, who was walking the trail yesterday, as he does almost everyday on his break from the nearby Anchorage Post Office.

Schnatter built the trail, which runs through an undeveloped 100-acre farm he owns, as a gift to his Anchorage neighbors. It is open to the public.

"We always try to do things in a high-integrity manner, and when other people notice, it's very gratifying," Schnatter said in an interview yesterday.

Schnatter declined to say how much the trail cost, but no one thinks it was cheap.

In addition to the 10-foot-wide asphalt and brick path, the trail includes two concrete-and-steel foot bridges, an in-ground amphitheater, wooden decks overlooking wetlands and Willow Lake, a wildflower garden that has not yet sprouted, a half-mile fitness trail offshoot, benches, medallion compasses on the ground and about 100 new trees.

The trail is also meant to give students at the nearby Anchorage School, including the Schnatters' 10-year-old son Beau, a natural classroom. Schnatter said he could envision students harvesting pumpkins from a garden off the trail and selling them to raise money for the school.

This summer city planners said they wanted to make the Anchorage trail part of the 100-mile

Louisville Loop bike and pedestrian trail.

But Schnatter has not been receptive to the idea. It puts him "between a rock and a hard place" because Anchorage residents might not want the overall trail coming "right through the middle of Anchorage," but he wants to support the loop -- a project he has given \$3 million to.

He hopes Louisville officials instead pursue Anchorage's idea of routing the loop trail beside the La Grange Road railroad tracks, he said.

Schnatter has also backed off an original goal for his trail -- to connect to E.P. "Tom" Sawyer State Park via a tunnel under Lakeland Road. He said there is no reason to spend \$250,000 on the tunnel when the trail users "seem to be happy" without it.

"Sometimes, as Clint Eastwood said, a man's got to know his limitations," Schnatter said.

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