

2009 Trail Towns Conference Speakers' Bios

March 19, 2009, MCCC West Campus

Ted Danforth **Hidden River Outfitters**

Ted Danforth worked for over 25 years managing his own environmental engineering business before his entrepreneurial spirit led him to launch Hidden River Outfitters. This new direction offered an opportunity to focus his long-held passion of working and playing in the outdoors and sharing his sense of place with others through sea kayaking.

In addition to sea kayaking, Danforth's interests include fly fishing, biking in charity rides, running, writing, inspirational reading, camp gourmet cooking, leave-no-trace camping. He also serves on the board of the Schuylkill River Greenway Association. Danforth holds an MBA from St. Joseph's University and Engineering degrees from Penn State University and Florida Institute of Technology.

Raymond Lopez, Manager **Borough of Pottstown, Bike Pottstown**

Raymond is the Borough Manager of Pottstown which is comprised of approximately five square miles of land with a population of 22,000 and is situated along the Schuylkill River and is in close proximity to two major highways – Route 422 and Route 100. The Borough owns 60 miles of streets and has 10 miles of state owned roadways and contains a portion of the Schuylkill River Trail which connects to West Pottsgrove Township and into Berks County. The Borough of Pottstown is unique as a municipality by having its own general aviation airport, bus transit system, water and sewer plants and community television station. The Borough of Pottstown has a compliment of about 180 employees.

Raymond started his career with the Borough in 1995 in the Inspections Department and accepted progressive promotions including Borough Manager in 2006. Raymond served on the steering committee assisting to develop and initiate Bike Pottstown.

Cathy McCollom, Regional Director for the Trail Town Program **The Progress Fund**

The Progress Fund is an economic development initiative to promote regional business development and cooperative marketing along the 150-mile Great Allegheny Passage.

Cathy, formerly chief programs officer for the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation, brings 25 years of experience in heritage tourism and economic development to this relatively new initiative. In her previous role as marketing director for Station Square, Cathy launched an international tourism program that helped make Station Square the number one tourist attraction in Southwestern PA. She has helped redevelop central business districts throughout Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, including Homestead, Wilkinsburg, East Liberty and South Side. She most recently served as program manager for the 2006 National Trust for Historic Preservation's annual conference held in Pittsburgh.

Cathy has served on the boards of a number of community and service organizations and was awarded a YWCA's Tribute to Women award in 2004 for her civic contributions.

Daniel R. Neducsin
Neducsin Properties, Manayunk

Mr. Neducsin is a Philadelphia native with strong family connections to the city. In 1977 he co-founded Mr. Goodbuys, a building materials chain with 18 stores. When he sold his share of the business in 1987, he started to commercially develop Manayunk's Main Street corridor, and moved his office to Manayunk.

In 1989 Mr. Neducsin initiated the Manayunk Arts Festival, which continues to be held the last week of June and has become a highly successful event with crowds estimated to be over 300,000.

In 1992 Mr. Neducsin ventured into developing and opening businesses in Manayunk. His first restaurant, Sonoma, started the restaurant renaissance in Manayunk. 1994 saw the purchase of an abandoned factory building complex that was converted into award-winning apartments (The Lofts at Chimney Hill). More restaurants followed with Kansas City Prime in 1995, Arroyo Grille-1996, River City Diner and Tootsies, a steak sandwich restaurant-1997. Mr. Neducsin continues to invest in Manayunk and his business' achievements include office building, condominiums, apartments and over 40 buildings that contain diverse retailers.

An annual Neducsin Scholarship was established in 1994. These scholarships are awarded to four, deserving high school graduates in Manayunk who are designated by a community selection committee.

From 2006-2007 Mr. Neducsin operated as Michael Nutter's co-finance chairmen. He helped raise \$8 million, and was involved in the transition team to develop a new city government to help Philadelphia become the next great city.

"My philosophy has been to solicit tenants who appeal to an older upscale, audience and to search for tenants who run destination type retail operations that are unique and not found in most shopping centers," Mr. Neducsin says. "I feel I have been successful and have also set a direction for the rest of Manayunk. Since I have come to Manayunk I feel I have been somewhat of a catalyst for other people to follow my direction in both philosophy and investment."

Neducsin Properties related businesses have employed over 600 employees while the associated properties are the residences for over 600 people. In the past 10 years there has been over 2,500 new jobs created and over 250 million dollars invested in real estate.

John Pearson
Fitzwater Station Restaurant

John Pearson has been a restaurateur for the past thirty years. His passion is to be an active member of his community. He is a past Chairman of the Board of Supervisors for Upper Providence Township, and spent the next five years on the Townships Parks and Recreations Board. He was also appointed to the townships County Open Space Task Force. During all of this time he has been an active member of the Board of Directors for the Schuylkill Canal Association.

For the last five years John has been operating a livery business called Port Providence Paddle, on the canal, behind his restaurant.

If asked what he would like to be doing right now his answer would be, kayaking down the Schuylkill.

Todd J. Poole - Managing Principal and President
4WARD PLANNING

Todd Poole is president and founder of 4WARD PLANNING LLC. 4ward Planning was established to assist local governments and developers achieve sustainable development outcomes through responsible, future based planning. Our approach, founded in socio-economic analysis, seeks the optimum development or redevelopment land-use program based on best case outcomes within a host community and region's **social, environmental, fiscal and economic** systems (the "4" in 4ward Planning).

Todd's land-use development and consulting experience spans more than 16-years, within the public and private sectors. Before establishing 4WARD PLANNING, Todd served as Director of Economic Planning for EDAW's U.S. operations – one of the largest land-use consulting firms in the world.

Todd has performed market and financial feasibility studies on behalf of the New York City Economic Development Corporation, Atlanta Development Authority, Fort Monmouth Economic and Redevelopment Planning Authority and the Fairmount Park Historic Preservation Trust.

As a public sector executive, Todd served as Deputy Executive Director/CFO for the Camden Redevelopment Agency, coordinating one of the largest redevelopment efforts in the country. His work in Camden included development of land assembly strategies, strategic planning, negotiating more than \$250 million of public/private partnership agreements, structuring public financing and incentive packages, and administering development projects for the Agency's portfolio.

Todd has examined revenue generation opportunities for the East River Waterfront Esplanade and High Line Park in New York City, Hinton Park in greater Nashville, Tennessee and the Thomas Livesy House in Fairmount Park, Philadelphia.

Currently, 4ward Planning is providing development advisory services to a private developer within the Pocono Mountain region and market analysis in support of a transit oriented development (TOD) project in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Todd earned a B.A. in Political Science and Economics from Rutgers University, and an M.P.A. with a focus in finance from Rutgers Graduate School, Newark. He is certified as an Economic Development Finance Professional (EDFP) by the National Development Council, and has presented on small businesses loan programs to the New Jersey Main Street organization. Todd is a member of City Parks Alliance, Urban Land Institute and Reconnecting America – Center for Transit Oriented Development.

Mike Rose
Manayunk Brewery and Restaurant

Mike Rose grew up in the Germantown area and has worked in the local restaurant industry for more than 35 years. Over the course of his career, Mike has gained valuable hands on management experience and he has continually educated himself on the changing trends of the restaurant industry.

Several of the establishments which Mike has had a hand in running were in close proximity to rivers, particularly the Schuylkill River. Mike worked for four years at the Catfish Café in East Falls, located approximately 20 yards off of the Schuylkill River. Mike then spent 10 years at Thomas' Bar and Restaurant in Manayunk, located approximately 100 feet from the Schuylkill before moving to Manayunk Brewery & Restaurant, located directly on the banks of the Schuylkill, where he has spent the last 12 years. Mike also spent the last 3 years operating Rock Lobster located on Delaware Avenue on the Delaware River.

When Manayunk began to flourish in the mid 1990s, Mike was approached by then owner Harry Renner to work as General Manager of the Manayunk Brewery & Restaurant. Under Mike's supervision, the restaurant went from a 150-seat restaurant to a 500-seat restaurant over the course of 6 years. Mike not only expanded the dining areas, he also expanded the layout of the restaurant over

the actual water with the construction of the large outside deck in the year 2000. In 2008 Mike was approached by Kay Sykora and asked if the restaurant could temporarily host a floating dock received through a grant from the William Penn Foundation. This dock has allowed for more usage of the river in the Manayunk area, allowing boaters and kayakers the opportunity to dock and embark on dining and shopping thus starting a trend of river activity that our area hopes to increase in the future.

Mike has enjoyed working over the years with various committees in the effort to help revitalize the Manayunk Canal and Schuylkill River. Mike has always had a passion for the water, being both an avid boater and fisherman.

**Crystal Seitz, President
Greater Reading Convention & Visitors Bureau**

Crystal Seitz is the President of the Greater Reading Convention & Visitors Bureau, an organization that serves more than 9.5 million visitors whose annual spending contributes approximately \$1.2 billion to the local economy. She has served in this capacity for the past five years. She is responsible for all marketing and promotional programs and initiatives designed to expand tourism and increase business and leisure travel throughout Greater Reading & Berks County.

Before joining the Visitors Bureau, Crystal was Executive Director for the Berks County Chapter of the American Red Cross where she was responsible for all operations, including human resources, finance, business opportunities, resale, marketing, fundraising, service delivery and building maintenance. Prior to that, she was employed by Met-Ed for more than 18 years. She was Manager–Culture, Diversity, Labor Relations and Training, and Manager – Community/Educational Initiatives at Met-Ed/GPU Energy. She also worked as a Performance Improvement Consultant and as an Advertising/Marketing Consultant for Met-Ed in her early tenure.

A graduate of Kutztown State College, Crystal holds a bachelor’s degree in Communication Design. She also earned a Certificate in Corporate Community Relations from Boston College. She is active in many community organizations and committees including the GoggleWorks, Berks Conservancy, Berks Equine Council, Riverplace boards and the Initiative for a Competitive Greater Reading (IGCR). She also received the Berks County Chamber’s Athena Award in 2001 and Girl Scouts Woman of Distinction award in 2008.

Crystal resides in Berks County with her husband, Bob and her two children, Paige and Bobby.

**Shelley A. Speirs, Director of Outdoor Tourism & Sports Marketing
Pennsylvania State Tourism Office in the Department of Community and Economic Development**

Shelley A. Speirs is a graduate of East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania and holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Hotel, Restaurant, and Tourism Management. Her career has spanned from the metro areas of Washington DC and Philadelphia, to the mountainous regions of the Poconos. Her experience ranges from work in the hotel industry, sports camp industry, non-profit fundraising event planning and development, to her current role as Director of Outdoor Tourism and Sports Marketing for the Pennsylvania State Tourism Office in the Department of Community and Economic Development.

**Joseph R. Synchron, PE, PLS President & Chief Executive Officer
Schuylkill River Development Corporation (SRDC)**

The Schuylkill River Development Corporation (SRDC) is the lead agency for the redevelopment of the Tidal Schuylkill River. In partnership with public and private agencies, institutions and corporations, SRDC’s core mission is to revitalize and redevelop the lower Schuylkill River and reconnect it to the life and fabric of the city and region.

Mr. Syrnick came to SRDC in 2005 after a 34-year career with the City of Philadelphia, where he had been Chief Engineer & Surveyor since 1986. He served 18 years as a Commissioner of Fairmount Park.

As Chief Engineer and Surveyor, Syrnick was in charge of the Department of Streets Engineering Division which included highway and bridge design, bridge construction, traffic engineering, street lighting and the survey bureau.

Syrnick is a graduate of Drexel University (BSCE 1969; MSCE 1971) and is a registered professional engineer (PE) and professional land surveyor (PLS). Syrnick has completed various professional courses and has taught highway and transportation related courses at Drexel University and Philadelphia Community College. He is a member of several professional organizations including the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) and the American Planning Association (APA).

In early 2008, Mayor Nutter named Syrnick to Philadelphia's City Planning Commission.

Syrnick is a native Philadelphian and lives with his family in Roxborough.

**Elissa G. Thorne, Vice President of Heritage Programs
Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor**

Elissa G. Thorne joined the staff of Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor in January 2000. She serves as Vice President of Heritage Programs.

Her work with the D&L includes project management, marketing, byway planning and redevelopment projects that boost small town economies through public-private partnerships while preserving and enhancing heritage and cultural resources.

Elissa's heritage development experience began in 1981 as Jim Thorpe's Main Street Manager. She has served as a Resource Team Consultant for the National Main Street Center. She has worked in the private sector marketing a successful adventure sports company and was a co-owner of Blue Mountain Sports in Jim Thorpe until 2000. Economic surveys, integrated marketing and facilitation of innovated partnerships are among the highlights of her work.

While with the D&L, Thorne helped develop two regional revitalization programs, the Corridor Market Towns Initiative, as well as Landmark Towns of Bucks County, served as editor of "The Stone Coal Way", a heritage traveler's guide to the D&L Corridor and spearheaded the development of an integrated marketing program.

**Patricia Tomes, Program Coordinator Northeast Regional Office
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy**

Pat provides technical assistance to state and local governments and advocacy organizations on the planning, design, development and management of rail-trails and greenways. By developing collaborative and strategic relationships with other transportation, recreation, conservation and community based organizations, Pat works toward the mission of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, to create a nationwide network of trails from former rail lines and connecting corridors to build healthier places for healthier people.

Pat's work includes participation in trail user surveys, public workshops, feasibility studies, community planning and special events. Pat has managed six years of the Pennsylvania Greenway Sojourn, a multiple day, heritage bike tour involving three to five hundred people. She has also managed the production of the publication: Pennsylvania's Rail-Trails, a guidebook of open rail-trails in Pennsylvania.

Her current work involves developing a comparative report of economic impact surveys that have been done in Pennsylvania and adjacent states.

John Wood

John recently retired after 25 years with the Montgomery County Planning Commission in Pennsylvania. As the Chief of Open Space Planning, he coordinated the trail building effort for the County, which included the full construction of the Montgomery County segments of the Schuylkill River Trail. He was also responsible for the development of the County's Regional Trail Master Plan, a plan that anticipates the construction of over 180 miles of trails, as an interconnected network both within the County borders and to other regional trails in Berks, Bucks, Chester and Philadelphia Counties.

John will bring information he personally developed while in the County employ and information gathered from towns in his newly adopted home state of Maine.

John is now pursuing his interests as a watercolor artist and is living in the coastal town of Rockland, Maine.