

# Proposed Trail Includes Plaq.

When she's not taking care of her three children, four horses, four dogs and her own career administering psychological tests, Katie Brasted is usually working on her dream—a nineteen-mile multi-use paved pathway with a parallel equestrian trail as well as a 176-acre park between the Metropolitan Development Center and Belle Chasse Primary School to be located in the English Turn and northern Plaquemines Parish areas.

"This is something that I've been working on for at least the past year-and-a-half," said Brasted, and apparently she's made a lot of headway.

Over the last year she's contacted several public officials in trying to see her dream come true, and she's gotten positive responses from all of them.

Louisiana State Representative Ernest Wooton, wrote a reply to Brasted stating he endorsed the project because "it seems to be a worthwhile project and one that I am sure will enhance our Parish."

U.S. Senator Mary Landrieu also sent a letter of support stating, "It is my understanding that the development of trails can improve the quality of life in the community," she said.

Several others including members of the house of representatives, state senators and local officials from Plaquemines Parish have also shown their support.

Plaquemines Parish President Benny Rousselle also lends his support. "Anything we can do to promote more recreation is a good idea to me. If this gets built, it could also mean a boost in tourism for Plaquemines," he said. "I think it would be great to have some recreation along the river."

Brasted's next plan is to go to the Plaquemines Parish Council. "I just want to explain my vision and hope they think it's a good idea too," Brasted said. That vision came to her while horseback riding along the Mississippi River near her English Turn Home. Ever since she and her husband Bill moved to the area a few years ago the couple horseback ride to visit their friends in Jesuit Bend frequently.

"We usually take the highway from English Turn into Belle Chasse and we always see someone cycling, roller blading or running along the road," said Brasted. "I thought it would be nice to create a trail that would be safer and more scenic for those who are always exercising along that busy highway."

"We have so much here.

We have historical sites, wildlife that you can't see in many places, and we have bottom land hardwoods," she said. According to Brasted, on frequent horseback rides along the levee, "I've come across Ft. St. Leon ruins, the old sugar mill, the Algiers Locks, World War II bunkers, and various plant and animal life that would be perfect for tourists to visit and learn about."

Brasted also believes a walking trail and park would be a way to preserve the dwindling green space that is unique to the West Bank. "The Belle Chasse and English Turn areas are growing, and I think we need to set these places aside for our children to enjoy," she commented.

In addition a park would offer parking for hikers, bikers, rollerbladers and horseback riders; a covered equestrian center; camping areas for scouts and 4-H members; horse stalls; and a multi-use building, she says.

"It would impact our community in numerous ways including preservation of historical points, education by increasing their access to the

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river, habitat and historical activities which have occurred along the river and integration of individuals with disabilities with non-handicapped peers," Brasted said.

The idea has gotten around to several groups in the Plaquemines and New Orleans areas, "Now, it's just a matter of money and planning," said Rousselle, which means there's still several hurdles to cross before Brasted's project comes to fruition.

Brasted said the pathway is estimated to cost roughly \$180,000 per mile (or \$4 million total). Brasted said she doesn't have an estimate for the park.

So far, the Regional Planning Commission has agreed to put up \$35,000 for a feasibility study of the park and trail. She also expects other funding sources to come from State Capitol Outlay, Congressional Appropriation, Land and Water Conservation Funds, and several other organizations. But another hurdle is a \$25,000 master plan—a blue print from the Corps of Engineers.

Janice Acosta, Council Chairwoman, and others on the council said they need to know more about the plans and how much the park will cost before she can support Brasted, "but it sounds like a great idea," Acosta said.

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