

MINE **AMD** ACID DRAINAGE **&ART** INC.

***"Artfully Transforming
Environmental Liabilities
into Community Assets"***

**Volume 2, Issue II
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Vintondale Construction Flowing Along



Residents and visitors gather to celebrate the historic groundbreaking for the Vintondale Acid Mine Drainage Treatment System and Community Park.

Late this summer, amongst blaring whistles and a cheering crowd, AMD&ART broke ground on the Acid Mine Drainage Treatment System and Community Park in Vintondale, Pa. As winter put a freeze on construction, the first snow fell on all six completed treatment ponds.

Planning for the park spanned five years, and over 150 people and various media representatives attended the groundbreaking event on August 14th.

Speakers included Pa. Rep. Sara Steelman, Brad Clemenson on behalf

of U.S. Rep. John Murtha, AMD&ART founder T Allan Comp, AMD&ART Board President Jeanne Gleason and Vintondale Mayor Diane Boring.

In her address to the crowd, Gleason said that she was excited to

begin work on a project that so many people have anticipated for so long.

"Vintondale excited many of us early on and got us into an action mode," stated Gleason.

"After many struggles and failures, we are here together to celebrate the start of this very important project."

To initiate the beginning of construction, each attendee was asked to participate in the ceremony and was given a whistle.

The participants blew their whistles three times, reminiscent of the company whistle that that once called Vintondale workers to the mines

The third whistle was the signal
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Founder Finds Inspiration with California Residency

With the first steps of renewal occurring in Vintondale through the construction of the AMD Treatment System and Community Park, AMD&ART itself is heading into a new chapter of recognition and redevelopment.

I was honored to be awarded a Bridge Residency by the Headlands Center for the Arts and the Institute for Noetic Sciences.

This opportunity, and the mini-residency awarded to Project Co-Co-

ordinators Jessica Johnson and Ellen Micoli, allowed the time necessary to develop new directions for AMD&ART.

The Vintondale and Dark Shade Creek sites serve as multi-disciplinary examples for projects throughout Appalachia. The Bridge Residency allowed national recognition of a project that, throughout the coming years, will continue to grow and embrace other sites socially and economically devastated by AMD.

AMD&ART appreciates the support of our old and new partners, for allowing this growth and change.

- T. Allan Comp, Ph.D.
Founder/Historian

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Park's Educational Opportunities to be Realized

From the beginning, AMD&ART has always focused on the lessons that could be learned from the Vintondale Treatment System and Community Park.

Teaching those lessons has just become easier.

AMD&ART and the Vintondale community recently received permission to use the Vintondale Reformed Hungarian Church for educational purposes.

The congregation uses the church, constructed in the 1920's, for monthly and special services. An agreement between AMD&ART and the Church was recently signed, opening the church for educational use.

As part of the agreement, the church will continue services, but will allow renovation of the basement to fit with educational plans.

Financial support for the renovation

and educational programming is bestowed by the Rockefeller foundation. The renovation has already begun, with AmeriCorps members, residents, and others providing volunteer service days to clean out and paint the downstairs.

Community members and the AMD&ART team believe that the church will provide a useful center due to its location on Main St., a few yards from the entrance to the Ghost Town Trail.

With the new Education Coordinator, Shannon Peterson, AMD&ART and Vintondale are exploring the possibilities provided by the Church.



The Vintondale Hungarian Reformed Church

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New Staff Starts at AMD&ART, Dark Shade Brownfields

Thanks to the success of three AmeriCorps volunteers working within AMD&ART, several more have been added to help move the project along.

Jessica Johnson and Ellen Micoli will continue as AMD&ART Project Co-Coordinator, and Damion Ciotti will continue as Outreach Coordinator for the Dark Shade Brownfields Project.

Joining them are Jill Byers, April Newell, Shannon Peterson, and Dana Serovy. In addition, Aaron George, a senior at University of Pittsburgh, Johnstown, signed up for a semester

internship with AMD&ART.

Changes were also made to the AMD&ART's Board of Directors, with Richard Burkert and Jane Marines both added as new members of the Board.

Richard Burkert is the Director of the Johnstown Area Heritage Association.

Jane Marines, Vintondale Municipal Authority President, has been involved throughout the planning and construction of the Vintondale Acid Mine Drainage Treatment System and Community Park.

New Artworks Funded by Rockefeller PACT Grant

The Rockefeller Foundation announced the Award of a \$140,000 grant in the Partnerships Affirming Community Transformation program, to be distributed over a three-year period to Vintondale, Pa., and AMD&ART.

According to the Rockefeller Foundation, the grant is awarded to "projects undertaken by artists and other cultural professional in collaboration with other community members to express identity, concerns, and aspirations through the arts and media, building cultural capacity and contributing to social change."

AMD&ART will assist Vintondale in using the Grant for artistic and interpretive projects on the Vintondale site where residents and AMD&ART are working toward completion of an acid mine drainage treatment system and community park.

The grant will fund four initiatives, designed by the Vintondale community and the AMD&ART team, over the next three years.

The Vintondale Hungarian Reformed Church is to be developed as an education center adjacent to the

AMD&ART Vintondale Park. AMD&ART will work with the community to design educational programming and build community capacity to operate the center by 2003.

The other three projects will focus on the refuse pile, the mine #6 portal and the point where the water cleansed by the passive AMD treatment system and wetlands will return to the Blacklick Creek's South Branch.

AMD&ART and the Vintondale community are eager to begin these projects enhancing the 35-acre treatment system and community park, where ground was broken in mid-August.

AMD&ART founder and Histo-

rian T. Allan Comp, Ph.D., said the Rockefeller grant would open new doors for the organization and community.

"The Rockefeller Grant recognizes the environmental education opportunities we have built into the site, and provides a means to investigate application to real classrooms.

"Just as important, the Rockefeller funding will enable AMD&ART and the community to create meaningful and appropriate artworks.

"The three-year grant gives AMD&ART a stable platform to create long-term support with Vintondale and regional institutions."

We Want YOU in Vintondale

For the past few months volunteers have been buzzing around Vintondale cleaning, painting, and building to prepare for the coming of the new park and educational center. Now we are putting out our largest call for volunteers ever! Vintondale needs EVERYONE to come on out for a day this spring to plant the Litmus Garden that borders the treatment pond. We are planning on either the last week of April or the first week of May to settle 370 trees and 537 shrubs into their new homes. That's a lot of plants, so we need a lot of hands! Get together a group of good friends, or come on your own! Keep your eyes open for further information. Anyone interested should call the AMD&ART office at (814)539-5357.

Vintondale Construction

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to the payload operator who dug the first load of boney from the site.

The valley rang with the sound of whistles and the roar of the payload, the kind of collective action resulting in the real work that AMD&ART has always embodied.

The ceremony was followed by tours of the Vintondale site where the AMD&ART staff described the coming treatment ponds, recreation area, and renewed sense of place.

Since that summer day, L&M

Construction worked diligently to follow the plans, and successfully completed all six treatment ponds before winter arrived. All that is left to be done in the spring is the final pipework, which will carry the discharge into the ponds.

Construction on the rest of the site will continue in spring as well, with work beginning on the wetlands, the recreational area, and the planting of the litmus garden alongside the treatment ponds.



The six AMD treatment ponds

Visioning Meetings Devise Plan for Vintondale

Now that the Vintondale AMD Treatment System and Community Park Construction is well underway, Vintondale residents are again beginning to look towards the future.

Community members and the AMD&ART team have been considering the increased tourism, education, and other aspects that the Vintondale Park may bring. Visioning meetings were held throughout Vintondale, offering residents the opportunity to determine what those issues may mean to their town.

The visioning process helps residents to plan for the future and set goals to work towards their vision for their changing town.

The process has been organized by Sue Thering, who is working with AMD&ART and completing a Ph.D.

program at the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry.

Large group meetings were originally held to gather general ideas. From there, smaller interest groups were contacted, including various churches, the Borough Council, Municipal Authority, and other town organizations.

All of the ideas shared by residents were synthesized and presented at a town meeting on December 3rd in the Vintondale Hungarian Reformed Church. At that meeting, Thering said residents' ideas were used to express three divisions of Vintondale's vision for the future: preservation of the historic small town character, development of diverse housing and recreation opportunities, and coordination

of active citizen participation.

As a result of the meeting, residents formed cooperative project groups, focusing on Main Street Development and Preservation; Recreation, Education, Arts, and Culture; Housing Opportunities; and Citizen Participation.

These cooperative project groups will discuss possible projects, based on ideas presented by all residents at the visioning meetings, which may be realized in the town. The AMD&ART team will provide any assistance they can to the groups.

Anyone interested in joining a Cooperative Project Group should contact the AMD&ART office at (814) 539-5357.



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AMD&ART Founder Answers Community Questions

Progress on the Vintondale AMD Treatment System and Community Park is moving along quite rapidly now, and people are beginning to think seriously about the future reality. T. Allan Comp, the AMD&ART staff, and members of the Vintondale Municipal Authority and Borough Council recently met to discuss any questions that residents may have.

How did the AMD&ART project with Vintondale begin?

In 1994 Allan developed the idea of a community-driven, multi-disciplinary approach to the issue of Abandoned Mine Drainage in Appalachia. His approach recognized not only the environmental effects of AMD, but also the heavy social and economic tolls that AMD placed on nearby communities. So he formed a team of scientists, artists, and historians to try and see what they could do about the problem. After surveying a great number of communities impacted by AMD, Vintondale was one of the areas that AMD&ART wished to work in. The Vintondale community was eager to work with AMD&ART, and invited the non-profit group to start planning with them.

When will the project be done?

The six treatment ponds were completed last fall, and only the final pipe work remains to be installed in the spring. The litmus garden bordering the pond will be planted come the springtime, and construction will begin on the wetlands as well. When the wetland base is ready next summer, water will be released to flow through the treatment ponds and wetlands, finally treating the discharge that has been polluting constantly for the past half-century. Once the wetlands have water in them, they will be planted with native flora. Habitat boxes, built by the Blacklick Valley High School, will be installed. Work on the recreation area will be ongoing. With support from the U.S. Forest Service and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Vintondale already has the funding to install a pavilion, planter boxes, trashcan receptacles, a volleyball court, and a walking trail. A grant has been submitted requesting funds for a soccer field, and there are plans to submit requests for support of a baseball field and bike park. So by next fall the treatment system and wetland should be completed and functioning, and the recreational area will be constantly growing. The site will continue to evolve as the community finds new ways to use it.

Why in Vintondale?

There are a number of reasons that explain why AMD&ART wanted to focus on Vintondale. The main one being that the Vintondale community showed interest, activism, and enthusiasm. In addition, the site is an almost perfect physical setting for the kind of project that AMD&ART had in mind. There is a discharge flowing right through the town; the discharge is relatively simple to treat; there is plenty of land space to both treat the discharge and create some other community asset on the site; the site borders the Ghost Town Rail Trail, where 75,000 people a year will be able to increase their understanding of AMD, and learn from this model of community development.

How will the recreational area be developed?

The physical layout of the recreational area is already planned by community members and the AMD&ART team. However, funding still needs to be obtained to support those plans. AMD&ART will work with the community of Vintondale to identify sources of financial support, so that the community can then apply for and receive the funds to build the recreational area.

How will the Vintondale Hungarian Reformed Church be used?

The Vintondale Hungarian Reformed Church recently offered to let AMD&ART and the Vintondale community use their building as an educational center. AMD&ART and Vintondale have always focused on the educational opportunities afforded by the site, and this agreement will allow those opportunities to be maximized. The Rockefeller Foundation also recently awarded AMD&ART a three-year grant that will fund various interpretive aspects on the site, as well as the transformation of the church into an educational center. The Rockefeller grant includes funding for three years of an AmeriCorps volunteer to run the center. This year, AMD&ART will investigate the possibilities for educational programming, which can be used in the community, with schools, and visitors next year. If the concept works, it is hoped that the third-year will be a cross-over year, with Vintondale taking on most of the responsibility for the center, so that in the years that follow the center can still be maintained without AMD&ART intervention.

How will the funds necessary to maintain the park be obtained?

AMD&ART will establish a trust fund in the name of the park with the Community Foundation. This fund will be able to supply some of the resources necessary to maintain the park. AMD&ART will contribute a base amount needed to open the trust fund, which will begin earning interest. Other donations can be deposited in the fund, increasing the interest earned. Another trust fund will be established to guarantee the maintenance of the treatment system for the next 50 years. AMD&ART has also been working with various community members to practice identifying, applying for, and managing grants. In the future, if the park has the expected impact of increasing property values and the general economy of Vintondale, the Borough may have enough income to help support the park as well.

How will the AMD treatment system affect Blacklick Creek and waters downstream?

The treatment system being built in Vintondale is part of a greater plan to clean up AMD in the Blacklick Creek watershed. There are many more and worse discharges on the Blacklick Creek, but the fact remains that the Vintondale discharge must be treated if the Blacklick Creek is ever to run clear again. There are treatment projects being implemented up-stream from Vintondale, and once those are completed efforts will focus on discharges down stream. More important, the Vintondale site will have a positive effect on the stream, and other AMD impacted streams, that goes way beyond the removal of a few metals. The high visibility of the Vintondale AMD Treatment System and Community Park, because of the educational aspects, the Ghost Town Trail, and the national attention that the site has already attracted, will greatly increase the public awareness about the plight of streams and communities impacted by AMD, and this increased awareness will be a strong push to further efforts to clean up AMD.

And The Garden Will Grow . . . The Vintondale park design includes a "Native Litmus Garden" that outlines the ponds. What is a Native Litmus Garden, you might ask?

It is a piece of interpretive, educational, landscape architecture.

The Litmus Garden is a collection of native trees and shrubs that will mirror the treatment ponds. As the AMD water passes through each pond, it will gradually change color, from a rusty orange to a clean blue-green. The fall colors of the plants alongside each pond will reflect the colors of the water, from trees with fiery red leaves, to trees with cool blue foliage. The garden plan includes 370 trees and 537 shrubs that need to be planted. When the snow melts, the land will be prepared for planting, and that is when YOUR HELP comes in. We have a lot of plants to plant, so we need a lot of volunteers to plant them. Right now we are aiming for the last week of April or first week of May to hold a planting weekend, in celebration of Earth Day and Arbor Day.

School groups, clubs, scouts, churches, families, any single person walking down the street . . . we need YOU! Anyone interested in helping out should call the AMD&ART office, (814) 539-5357, for more information. As the dates are finalized, they will be announced, so please keep your eyes and ears open.

... If You Come Help Plant It!