

COUNTY OF KANE

Corinne M. Pierog MA, MBA
Kane County Board Chairman



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cross Country Course Open to Public Is Kane County's Newest Gem

GENEVA, IL – As they say, slow and steady wins the race and the recent opening of Kane County's newest cross country course, which will attract the nation's finest collegiate athletes, is an example of why great things take time. The Northwestern Medicine Cross Country Course, located at the Settler's Hill site in Geneva, was more than a decade in the making and will bring numerous economic benefits to the County for years to come.

"The opening of the Northwestern Medicine Cross Country Course at Settler's Hill is the culmination of the leadership, commitment and hard work of many individuals within Kane County government," said Kane County Board Chair Madam Corinne Pierog. "It is truly a shining gem in the County that will bring countless economic and health benefits to our residents for years to come, and serve as a place where our nation's finest high school and collegiate runners will showcase their talents on the road to their dreams," said Pierog.

District 11 Kane County Board member John Martin was one of the earliest champions of the course, which he said is a testament to former Board member Mike Donahue, who served for six years in the district prior to Martin.

"Politically it became Mike's necessity to convince the Board to spend the money to do the project and that's when his term ended and he wasn't going to run again," Martin said. "I had known Mike for decades when I was a commercial real estate attorney and he was a developer, so Mike knew me and my background and convinced me to run for his position back in 2013."

After Martin was elected and began his term in 2014, the cross country course project became a labor of love.

"Mike began it, and then I followed the construction of it," Martin said. "We had all the typical problems with construction projects. We had the two rainiest springs in history and we couldn't get dirt. I would go out in the morning and sit at the golf course parking lot and count trucks coming in for 10 minutes and I could tell in 10 minutes whether we were going to have enough dirt to meet our daily quota," Martin said.



Pictured : Kane County Board Member John Martin, Dr. Brian Babka of Northwestern Medicine and Al Edgcombe, Chairman of the Chicago Area Track & Field Organizing Committee, officially kick off the inaugural meet at the Northwestern Medicine Cross Country Course. Photo by: Martin Pinnau.

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Kane County's Division of Environmental and Water Resources was responsible for the administration and completion of the construction contracts for the course during its development. "Our staff worked tirelessly to ensure the project was completed on time and under budget working through the challenge of record rainfall years," said Jodie Wollnik, Director of the Division of Environmental and Water Resources. Martin said the Division's leadership through many challenges was instrumental in the project's completion. "Jodie Wollnik is the reason the project was concluded in my opinion," Martin said.

The nearly \$4 million course, funded with tipping fees collected over the years from the landfill, is unique in the Midwest and provides spectators and runners alike with a panoramic view as far as the Chicago skyline. It is designed for high school and collegiate meets, but also can accommodate all ages and is open to the public as well.

Kaneland High School Boys Cross Country Head Coach Chad Clarey said he is grateful to all those who have made this course possible and that it will help fulfill a big need to have a championship facility close to home.

"The Illinois High School Association continues to struggle with finding schools, and more notably hosts, for State level competitions like Regionals and Sectionals," Clarey said. "The Northwestern Medicine Cross Country Course is going to be available each year to help our local runners and programs to fulfill that need for space to run competitive races at three miles," Clarey said. "Beyond high school, an intercollegiate meet is scheduled this fall. This event should gain more chances to help the NCAA in their efforts to have championship level competitions in the Midwest."

The Chicago Area Track & Field Organizing Committee oversees the administration of cross country meets, and has already scheduled several local and regional meets. In 2022, an NCAA Division 3 Regional will be held in November and a National Intercollegiate Running Club Association (NIRCA) Regional in October. Visit <https://www.chicagotrack.org/> for additional information on upcoming meets, course features and more.

An economic impact study in 2014 prepared by the Chicago Area Track & Field Organizing Committee showed that the Illinois High School Association (IHSA) State Cross Country Championships drew more than 30,000 spectators and 150 teams. The study also showed that high school meets in Kane County draw thousands, thereby contributing to the local economy when fans patronize restaurants, gas stations and other businesses. The study showed an even greater local economic impact when national, regional or conference collegiate championships are held, which according to 2010 figures can generate from \$632,000 to \$1.5 million per meet.

The Northwestern Medicine Cross Country Course also is available for the public to enjoy year-round.

"The Forest Preserve District of Kane County is happy to help offer a new walking/hiking/running amenity to the public at Settler's Hill, via the Northwestern Medicine Cross Country Course. The grounds are open to the public, sunrise to sunset, and provide hundreds of acres of open space for recreation," said Laurie Metanchuk Director of Community Affairs for the Forest Preserve District of Kane County.

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“We’ve frequently seen wildlife here, including various grassland birds and deer. Come winter, this will also be a great place to cross-country ski and snowshoe,” Metanchuk added. (Note: Sledding and downhill skiing will not be permitted.) “All Forest Preserve District rules and regulations apply. Dogs are welcome but must be kept on leash. We also ask that people pick up after their pets, and pack-out any trash.”

Parking for the cross-country course is just north of the Fox Valley Ice Arena. Upon driving into the entrance for the arena, residents will see a gravel trail that leads directly up the hill. The cross country parking lot is adjacent to that trail.

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