

# Pocono Forest & Waters Conservation Landscape SUCCESS STORY

By: Live Well Luzerne &  
Wilkes-Barre Family YMCA

## Luzerne County Keystone Active Zone Passport

### SUMMARY

The Luzerne County Keystone Active Zone Passport aims to encourage people of all ages and abilities to get outside and active using their close-to-home parks, trails, and outdoor events. The passport consists of 30 “stops” offering more than 50 opportunities to be active outdoors. Passport program participants answer scavenger hunt questions at the KAZ website, [www.kazpassport.org](http://www.kazpassport.org), and receive small awards for every 5 questions answered. 30,000 passports are printed and distributed to every elementary school in the county, providing contact information and directions to our great local places to county families whether or not they participate in the scavenger hunt.



### CHALLENGE

Luzerne County is consistently in the bottom quartile of the County Health Rankings for Pennsylvania, with adult obesity and physical inactivity among a host of behaviors that contribute to the county’s poor health status. Children are equally likely to have poor health status; with 2008 BMI data indicating over 50% of children from the Wilkes-Barre Area School District were overweight or obese. For some children, these problems can intensify in the summer, when they stay at home with nothing to do, because parents are at work and anxious to keep kids safe and close to home.

Another challenge in the county is the lack of centralized information targeted to residents about the great local places people can go to be active. Municipal and volunteer park and trail and outdoor organizations don’t have time or expertise to promote their locations or events throughout the county. Great places end up being well-kept local secrets. The KAZ Passport program aims to change this.

### PARTNERSHIP IS KEY:

#### Program Partners:

Live Well Luzerne  
Greater Hazleton Rails to Trails  
Wilkes-Barre Family YMCA

#### Media Partners:

WYLN  
WBRE & WYOU  
Entercom Communications  
All 11 county school districts and all partners as well as a multitude of local organizations helped promote the KAZ to their constituents.

#### Funding Partners:

DCNR CLI grant  
D&L Trail Alliance  
Wilkes-Barre Health Department  
PPL  
Proctor & Gamble  
Luzerne County Convention & Visitor’s Bureau  
Wilkes-Barre Family YMCA

#### Passport Stop Partners:

**State Parks:** Nescopeck, Frances Slocum, Ricketts Glen, Lehigh Gorge  
**Local Parks:** suburban, urban and rural  
**Trails:** Black Diamond Trail, Greater Hazleton Rail Trail, Back Mountain Trail, Susquehanna Warrior Trail, Levee Trail, Mocanaqua Loop, Historic WB Walking Tour, Picton Preserve, Eckley Miner’s Village  
**Events:** Community events like Pittston & Wyoming Valley Riverfests, Y Walk Wednesdays, National Get Outdoors Day

#### Prize partners:

14 organizations & businesses donated prizes.



## SOLUTION

The Keystone Active Zone provides information and incentives for families to visit great, free local places through a summer-wide on-line scavenger hunt, getting their physical activity through “stealth health.” The printed questions also include website, address and phone information of 30 different outdoor parks, trails and events/programs in the county. These passports are distributed to all elementary school students in the county and the program and benefits of getting outside is promoted on television, on radio and in print media. We also undertook additional activities in 2012 to increase access to the outdoors, which were promoted in the Passport and in media, working with LCTA to create a new bus service to Frances Slocum State Park from the City of Wilkes-Barre Intermodal Center. We also started “Y Cycle Sundays” which provided bicycle safety courses at local Y’s and family-friendly group bicycle rides on local trails, and continued Y Walk Wednesdays.

## RESULTS

30,000 Passports were distributed to county elementary schools and, at local Ys, businesses and at local events. Frequently, when we went to events, attendees mentioned receiving the passports at schools. In 2012, the seventh year of the program, almost 150 people logged one or more stops, and over 400 downloaded passports on-line. A number of avid KAZ families, many of whom do the program year after year, logged over 15 stops, with 34 people logging over 25 stops. These people visited well over 850 local places over the course of the summer. We sent out 10 email blasts advertizing local events and explaining the KAZ to approximately 1000 people. In the second year of using Facebook to communicate, we almost doubled the number of people using Facebook for the KAZ. Facebook also became a very useful way to record photographs of KAZ stops and events. People consistently say the Keystone Active Zone Passport program introduced to places that they did not know existed in the County. Our Lehigh Gorge Y Cycle Sunday was the subject of a front page feature article in the local Times-Leader newspaper, and two of the bicyclists- mothers who had grown up in North East Pennsylvania- were riding the Gorge for the first time. The LCTA Bus may be continued in a van, with the number of riders low, but consistent.

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