FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Date: March 5, 2015

Keywords: NGTC, north Georgia technical college, technical college, walking, walking trail, colonel ben purcell

NGTC’s Colonel Ben Purcell Trail is a great community resource

With spring in the air, thoughts naturally turn to enjoying outdoor activities, like walking and running. At North Georgia Technical College, travel on the Colonel Benjamin H. Purcell Trail is picking up again after the long winter months.

The winding trail that flows over rolling meadows and winds through the woods around a peaceful pond is a versatile loop that accommodates 3K, 5K, and 8K distances. The 10-foot wide track provides an easy walking surface with enough inclines to add variety to a walking workout. The all natural terrain is ideal for all levels of school cross country teams to use for both practice and competition during the season. It is also an excellent resource for community fund-raising 5K events and fun runs.

“We’ve seen a lot of use by the public,” noted NGTC Campus Life Director Sherry Seal. “We’ve had everything from middle schools in neighboring counties practicing here to a couple of people walking the trail for exercise to high school meets with over 20 schools attending.”

The trail was opened in July, 2011, with a special dedication ceremony. The trail was named in honor of the late Colonel Ben Purcell, long-time Habersham resident, decorated veteran, and faithful friend of North Georgia Technical College.

In 1968, Purcell was serving as Deputy Commander, DaNang Sub Area Command, and Executive Officer, 80th General Support Group, in Vietnam when the helicopter on which he was a passenger was shot down. He spent more than five years as a prisoner of war, 58 months of that time in solitary confinement. Purcell was the highest ranking U.S. Army officer held during the Vietnam Conflict. He was released at the end of the war on March 27, 1973. At home, Col. Purcell served his community in a variety of roles including State Representative of District #9 in the Georgia General Assembly. His associations with both the University of North Georgia and North Georgia Technical were a testament to his commitment to the pursuit of life-long learning.

“We maintain the trail all year long,” said Seal. “It is easy to get to, has great parking, and is a great resource for everyone in the community.” Though the college’s cross country program was recently closed, many of the college faculty, staff, and students are continuing to enjoy the meandering paths and fresh air. Community members are invited to come to the Clarkesville Campus Colonel Benjamin H. Purcell Trail and join in the fun!

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