



By PHIL FEROLITO

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YAKIMA, Wash. -- More than 100 outdoor enthusiasts and supporters gathered Saturday at Davis High School for the long-awaited official opening of the William O. Douglas Heritage Trail.

A brisk breeze swept across the high school's courtyard as dignitaries from local governments and other agencies involved in the project hailed it as a community asset.

"We're glad to have this to give to people to say 'yeah, we have fun things to do in Yakima County,'" Mayor Micah Cawley said.

A high school choir performed and recent Davis High graduate Richard Castaneda briefly described the legacy the trail's namesake, William O. Douglas, a Davis graduate and former U.S. Supreme Court justice.

"I'm proud to be part of his alumni," he told the crowd.

A large map of the trail was sprawled out over the courtyard's concrete ground for people to look at.

Brochures of how to access the six sections of the trail from Davis High School were handed out. The trail covers about 80 miles and connects the Yakima Valley to Mount Rainier National Park.

Oregon filmmaker [John Concillo](#), who is working on a documentary of Douglas and his conservation achievements, filmed the event.

After the ceremony, Castaneda used a large pair of wooden scissors to cut a large red ribbon, officially opening the trail. The crowd quickly dissolved as people headed for trailheads. Volunteers were designated to lead hikes at each section of the trail.

Boy Scout member Ryan Sutton said his troop planned to hike two sections of the trail Saturday. "I think it's pretty cool — people can just come and do this from wherever," he said. "We're thinking about doing to whole thing, all the way to Rainier, sometime. So that's pretty cool."

Assistant Scout Master David Huycke brought nine scouts with him to try out sections four and five. "We like to hike," he said. "It's something I hope all Boy Scouts take advantage of once it's all in place."

And that may take a while as various agencies involved are working to connect the sections of the trail to Rainier National Park.

"I think it's a wonderful trail, but there is still a lot of work that needs to be done," said Gil Smith of Yakima. "Someday they will get it done." He's a member of the Cascadians, an outdoor group, and volunteered to lead one of the hikes Saturday. "There are a lot of members of the Cascadians here and they're excited about it," said Jean Chott, explaining that her group that formed in 1920 has roughly 300 members.

Ted Gamlem, who leads the trail task force for the Cowichee Canyon Conservancy, said the event was mainly to inform people how to access the six portions of the trail.

"This will be the first time you will be able to walk on the trail, and that's what we want people to do," he said.