Working with KIVA allows me to...
Play, Learn, Volunteer
Two young parents, who rediscovered the natural world through their children’s eyes, now guide other families in finding time for a “green hour.”

Give Me Shelter
Consider for a moment how today’s Smoky Mountain shelters came to be.

Preserving Tradition on Big Yellow Mountain
Grazing animals in the grassy balds of the southern Appalachians may be continuing a practice created by Mother Nature thousands of years ago.

Northern Color
John Slonina hopes his photography will inspire others to enjoy and protect nature.
“FROM TRAIL TO TABLE” (A.T. Journeys, July/August) answered some questions for us. We crossed the Cumberland Valley on our latest section hike and I joked about it and called it the “crop walk,” but I loved every mile. I wondered how all that Trail access had been acquired. I’m pleased to learn that Trail access was done in a way that supports local agriculture. Sometimes it’s hard to wrap our hiker minds around all that the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and National Park Service do to make our hikes possible. Thanks!

Mark and Betty Gatewood
Mount Sidney, Virginia

I AM A MEMBER OF THE Appalachian Trail Conservancy and have been for a long time. I look forward to receiving your magazine and read it cover-to-cover. Great stories. Magnificent photography. You do wonderful work and I’m pleased to support your efforts with some of my limited resources. I shall look up your Facebook page and follow you there.

William Walls
Willow Springs, North Carolina

WE ARE SO PROUD TO BE AN officially designated A.T. Community, so we were a bit taken aback by the picture and description on page 8 of the July/August 2011 issue. We are located in Union County, not Unicoi County. Not a big deal as most [may] never know it, but just to set the record straight. Thanks for a great magazine. I read it from cover to cover when it arrives.

Bill Honaker
Blacksville, Georgia

FACEBOOK COMMENTS
JUST FINISHED READING MY July/August copy of A.T. Journeys. To say it was awesome would be an understatement. You folks impress me every time.
Mike Youths

CORRECTIONS
The caption for the photo in the July/August Overlook column incorrectly noted that Lake Nottely is located in Unicoi County, when the lake is, in fact, located in Union County, Georgia which, along with Unicoi County, is also an official designated A.T. Community.

In the July/August article: “A Stewardship Story,” the name of the company Echo, Inc. was misspelled. The corrected sentence should have read: “Four years of funding totaling $90,000 from the NRCS was secured through the Farm Bill and helped cover timber harvest costs and pay for subsequent invasive plant control in the stand — funded by Echo, Inc. — as well as the other agricultural efforts under the EQIP grant.”

A.T. Journeys welcomes your comments. The editors are committed to providing balanced and objective perspectives. Not all letters received may be published. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.

Please send them to:
E-mail: editor@appalachiantrail.org

Letters to the Editor
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
P.O. Box 807, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425-0807

Share your love for the A.T. with a gift membership
appalachiantrail.org/giftmembership

MOONPIE” ON GOOSE EYE MOUNTAIN, MAINE / BY JOHN CAMMERTA

Get closer to the ground with minimal cushioning and total support. Designed to let your feet run true to nature intended, wherever they take you.

The Merrell Barefoot collection. Let Your Feet Lead You.
Find out how and download our free app at merrell.com/barefoot

MEN’S BAREFOOT SONIC GLOVE
LET’S GET OUTSIDE®

Available on the App Store
IN 2010 THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY (ATC) CELEBRATED significant additions to the Appalachian Trail “greenway” in New Hampshire and in Tennessee through land acquisitions by the National Park Service (NPS) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). Funding for these projects came in part through ATC’s successful efforts in 2009 to help secure nearly 10 million dollars in congressionally appropriated Land and Water Conservation Fund money.

In New Hampshire, the NPS acquired 4,777 acres in Success Township in the town of Berlin — gateway to the rugged Mahoosuc section of the A.T. as it passes from New Hampshire into Maine. The acquisition included the peaks of Bald Cap and North Bald Cap, a prominent vista known as the Overlook, and several side trails. In Tennessee, the USFS acquired another 1,428 acres from the Conservation Fund, in the third phase of this project, affecting the 10,000-acre Rocky Fork tract in east Tennessee, which includes 16 miles of “blue ribbon” trout streams, and habitat for a variety of rare, threatened, or endangered species. It will also serve as home to a new, improved route for about three miles of the A.T. ATC was also successful in securing additional appropriations in 2010 for acquisition of the White Rocks property in Pennsylvania and another land-acquisition phase at Rocky Fork in Tennessee.

As important as land acquisition continues to be to the A.T. experience, the stewardship responsibilities for these lands continues in perpetuity. ATC and its club affiliates, as well as our agency partners, are responsible for the on-going monitoring and care of those lands and the natural and cultural resources they encompass. In 2010, significant new investments were made in our boundary maintenance and — monitoring program with the addition of several full- and part-time staff and interns.

ATC continued to support a number of on-going natural resource monitoring programs related to water and air quality, natural heritage sites, alpine birds, and other wildlife. Special emphasis was also directed toward exotic and invasive species, which pose a significant threat to a number of rare, threatened, and endangered plant species along the A.T. Working with the Southern Appalachian Cooperative Weed Management Partnership, 12 inventory and control workshops were hosted during the year, where more than 180 volunteers received training.

ATC also continued its open-areas maintenance program, in which mowing, grazing, and controlled burn strategies are employed to manage diverse ecological habitats along the A.T.

ATC also continued to make long-term investments in cultivating the next generation of A.T. volunteers through the Trail to Every Classroom (TTEC) program, jointly sponsored with the National Park Service Appalachian Trail Park Office. To date, this professional development program aimed at elementary, middle, and high-school teachers has provided training in place-based education more than 220 teachers who in turn have engaged more than 15,000 students from all 14 Trail states. Additionally, in early 2010, ATC officially launched its Appalachian Trail Community designation program — celebrating the designations of Franklin, North Carolina; Hot Springs, North Carolina; Unicoi County, Tennessee; and Great Barrington, Massachusetts — which is an important step in developing awareness, appreciation, and concrete support for the A.T. and its surrounding lands to Trailside communities for the future.

During 2010, ATC continued its recovery from the recession of 2008 and 2009, ending the year with a modest operating fund surplus. In addition to rigorous financial oversight, our success for the year was due in no small part to our first-ever “gala” awards event, staged in the Great Hall of the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., with essential support provided by UPS. The gala saluted our partners in the TTEC program and introduced ATC to a larger group of corporate partners. Throughout the year, as in the past, we also benefitted from the generous support of our members as well as our corporate and foundation partners. To all of them, and to all of the thousands of volunteers who support the Trail project, we express our deepest thanks.

J. Robert Almand | Chair
David N. Stantz | Executive Director

The Appalachian Trail Community designation program is an important step in developing awareness, appreciation, and concrete support for the A.T. and its surrounding lands to Trailside communities for the future.

Comparison of General Fund Revenue and Expense for 2010 and 2009 ended December 31 of each year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2009</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revenues</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Public Support</td>
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<td></td>
<td>In-Kind Contributions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>532,873</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Expenses</td>
<td>5,834,414</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2009</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expenses</td>
<td>5,834,414</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Education and Outreach</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Publications and Marketing</td>
<td>1,282,279</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Expenses</td>
<td>5,344,414</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase in Net Assets</td>
<td>264,537</td>
<td>267,403</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Trail maintenance — as well as facility construction and maintenance — has always been central to the work of ATC and its 31 affiliated Trail-maintaining clubs; and 2010 was no exception. More than 6,120 volunteers reported contributions of nearly 214,000 hours during the year. Their remarkable efforts included contributions from both club-affiliated and independent volunteers who populated one or more of ATC’s seasonal Trail Crew programs.
A note, written in our then seven-year-old daughter’s handwriting, sits on our desk at home: “When can we go outside?” The note, scribbled on an old envelope, was sneaked into our home office and placed on the desk while I was busily working on a paper for my master’s degree. Now, nearly four years later, it still sits there as a reminder of why we needed to make some changes around the Donahue house. The kids had noticed that their usually playful and energetic dad was sitting at the computer a lot more and spending a lot less time playing with them. Shortly after this note appeared, a family meeting was called where we discussed setting aside some time each week to get the family out to the local parks. My wife, Ashley, started coming home earlier from work to gather stuff for picnics and I started keeping “business hours” instead of working on my classes every night.

We live in the Roanoke Valley, an amazing place, filled with natural wonder. Unfortunately, I had explored very little of it as a kid; though I didn’t tell Ashley this when we first started dating. I found out she was a more of a “free-range child” growing up. I really enjoyed spending time with her, so I faked being an outdoor person as well. Our first hike together, walking to a waterfall in the Jefferson National Forest, ended up calling my bluff. We were walking along, hand in hand, enjoying the view. I was amazed by the beauty of the trees and the ground cover. I found myself captivated by my partner and continuing to fall in love. However, “Nature Man” was quickly revealed to be a complete wuss, when all of the sudden a small green snake popped out from under a rock and “attacked” me. When Ashley tells the story, she always makes sure to point out that suddenly her brave new boyfriend was crying and screaming while climbing up onto her back.

Fast forward a few years and there we were with kids, and I wasn’t quite sure where to start. I knew I wanted to share with them the same wonder that I had felt on those
first hikes with Ashley, but I wanted to keep them from the fear that I had experienced. I learned lessons while I walked with them, and stood amazed with them, watching the wonder of the world through their eyes. We live five minutes from the Appalachian Trail, but I had never stepped on it before we started our club. While shopping at our local bookstore with hopes of finding maps and field guides, a friend who worked there mentioned that she had just read Richard Louv’s Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder. Ashley and I decided to take it home to get some ideas for how we could include more family time in the great outdoors. Around the same time, we had started inviting family and friends along on our hikes. The same kids were talking about the animals they saw, the flowers they picked, and the leaves they collected. It dawned on me that Richard Louv points to as reasons why families are getting out together less and less. These reasons seemed to be exactly what had been keeping us inside; our busy family schedule, the fear of the unknown, and a loss of natural stewards. The life of parents so easily becomes: wake up, get ready, school, work, pick-up, homework, housework, a story, and then to bed. Where does one find the time for a “green hour”? Last Child in the Woods mentions that our fears keep us from getting outside together — for me, a fear of snakes and other things jumping out at me. Lastly, Louv writes about a loss of “natural stewards,” those who guide us to actually see and learn from the natural world once we finally get outside. Every parent or grandparent can take on the task of being a natural steward, even with basic knowledge of the natural world. A child’s first discovery of an ant or grasshopper can spark their lifelong love of nature. As Rachel Carson wrote, “If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder without any such gift from the fairies, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, who is, or can pretend to be, a child again.”

Ashley and I decided early on to keep KIVA events simple; our theme: play, learn, explore. The KIVA adventure can grow from a simple family outing to a more involved adventure. It’s all about family volunteering, while still encouraging families to enjoy the natural world around us. As an added bonus, the children begin to see themselves as protectors of those particular parks that they have been exploring all year long.

A personal benefit in hosting a nature club has been the opportunity for our family to work as a team outside of the home.

For KIVA events, we brainstorm together, we work around each other’s schedules, and we use each other as sounding boards. Every December, the five Donahues take a hike to remember that it is our family’s enjoyment of the world around us that gave us the idea to start our nature club. During this “annual board meeting,” we all vote whether to continue hosting KIVA for another year or not. Every vote counts and everyone knows their voice is heard.

Ashley and I are so thankful for our experiences these last few years. We have seen our family grow from a couple of novice explorers into five nature ambassadors. Each of our children has found a special talent that they bring to our meetings, which gives Ashley and myself more time to interact with local folks interested in the outdoors. Our eldest is a natural hostess, our middle is the trailblazer, and our youngest spots everything interesting on the trail. We always have a trial run of an upcoming event on our own before we invite others along. This helps us to prepare the parents before our events through KIVA e-mails. We rate the hikes and provide a checklist for families to help them get ready for hiking with us, or if they decide to try it on their own. Hearing from families that they enjoyed one of our local parks because we recommended it really makes all the planning time well spent.

Nearly four years into hosting KIVA, Ashley and I have learned so much about the natural world. We have gathered nearly every nature guide we can find and constantly look forward to discovering new things along with our kids.

I no longer jump at snakes and somehow we find ourselves becoming natural leaders. However, I am still finding that I have so much more to learn. I was honored to be asked to participate in the Appalachian Trails Conservancy’s (ATC) exceptional “Trail to Every Classroom” program last year. During the year-long program, I was introduced to Leave No Trace ethics and the importance of the local Appalachian Trail club in a day of hikes for families. We look forward to connecting with the ATC maintainers who work constantly to keep our local section of the Trail looking wonderful.

We must allow children to experience and love the earth, before we start talking to them about how the earth needs to be saved.

Beyond Ecophobia, by David Sobel

Clip and Ashley Donahue are the co-founders of KIVA. For more information visit www.kidsadventuring.org and appalachiantrail.org/familyhike

Below: The Brady family joins KIVA on the A.T. for No-Hoo-Hoo Day — the day to scare away winter by putting your best silly face forward. Left: The Donahue’s youngest son, Finnan (left) with fellow nature observer Carson during the trip near Hog Camp Gap.
This past July, at the Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s (ATC) Biennial Conference, ATC announced its new Board of Directors. New to the board are Lenny Bernstein, Richard Dail, Arthur Foley, Mary Higley, Terry Lieberman, and Mike Marzia. Re-elected members include Robert Almand, Kara Ball, Marcia Fairweather, Brian Fitzgerald, Sandi Marra, Charles Maynard, William Plouffe, Betsy Thompson, and Clark Wright Jr. The Board of Directors is made up of 15 elected volunteers who are elected to serve two-year terms. Each of the 15 Board Members brings their own unique set of skills and life experiences to the ATC. Working as a unit, they are key to the success of the ATC.

For more information about ATC’s board members visit: appalachiantrail.org/leadership

**New “NATIONAL PARTNER” Awards**

**AT THE RECENT 38TH BIENNIAL MEMBERSHIP CONFERENCE AT EMMORY & HENRY COLLEGE IN SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA, THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY’S (ATC) Board of Managers honored two long-time agency partners with a new category of award: the National Partner award. For many years, ATC has recognized outstanding volunteers and even a number of public-agency partners by conferring honorary memberships — ATC’s highest honor — at its biennial meetings. However, due to a change in the ATC by-laws in the 1990s, that honor is now limited to individuals who have performed significant service “independent of paid duties.” Nonetheless, the 2011 Honorary Membership Committee — an ad hoc committee appointed by Bob Almand, chair of the ATC Board of Directors — sought to recognize two agency partners for their extraordinary contributions to the Appalachian Trail project spanning more than three decades and thus chose to create a new category of award.

In most other respects, the National Partner award is similar to the Honorary Member award. It is intended to recognize service “of considerable duration, demonstrating a long-term commitment to the Trail and Conservancy” that has had an “inspirational or exemplary effect” on the Trail project or Trail-wide significance.

This year’s recipients of the first National Partner award were Donald T. King, chief real-estate officer for the National Park Service (NPS) National Trail Land Resources Program Center in Martinsburg, West Virginia, and Pamela Underhill, manager of the NPS Appalachian Trail Park Office in Harpers Ferry.

**Don King** has spent more than 40 years with the National Park Service including the past 32 years supporting and then managing the NPS land acquisition program for the A.T. During that time, King has been involved, directly or indirectly, in the acquisition of lands and interests in lands bordering the Trail in 11 states. Those acquisitions have affected more than 2,500 parcels of land, more than 137,000 acres, and have extended federal ownership along 620 miles of the Trail.

**Pam Underhill** has devoted the past 32 years to the defense of the A.T., the care of its associated natural and cultural resources, and the principles of cooperative management and volunteer-based stewardship. Her duties have included stints as an administrative assistant, a project coordinator, and an environmental-protection specialist. In 1999, she was selected to serve as the park manager (superintendent) for the Appalachian Trail Park Office — a position she has held ever since. She also has been a strong advocate for a number of newer outreach programs, including the Trail to Every Classroom program and the Appalachian Trail Community designation program.

**Ronald S. Rosen,** who currently serves as chair of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference (NY-NJTC) A.T. Coordinating Committee and as the NY-NJTC delegate to the Mid-Atlantic A.T. Regional Partnership Committee, has been active in Trail-management issues since the mid-1970s. In 1981, he helped form, and then chaired, the Dutchess County (New York) Appalachian Trail Management Committee — a position that he would hold for the next 23 years — during a challenging period in which the A.T. land-acquisition program in New York was in full swing and both ATC and local maintaining clubs were developing land-management programs and policies. In 1990, the committee was expanded to include the Putnam as well as Dutchess County portions of the A.T. in New York and Rosen also played a key role in developing one of the first A.T. local management plans. He also has been involved in helping to resolve some controversial issues related to alleged nuclear contamination at Nuclear Lake following the purchase of that property by the National Park Service. Nuclear Lake now is one of the scenic and recreational highlights along the Trail in New York.

**Arthur Foley** also has been involved in A.T. and ATC affairs since the mid-1970s. As a member of the Kanawha Trail Club in the 70s, he helped flag and then relocate a section of the A.T. to the north end of Peters Mountain, away for a cluster of power line towers, and later assisted with a relocation of the A.T. on the Celenean property near Pearisburg, Virginia. He then became a Trail overseer with the Potomac A.T. Club and was involved in reblazing a section of the A.T. from Loudoun Heights in northern Virginia to Harpers Ferry, home of ATC headquarters and visitor center. Foley later served a total of six terms on the ATC Board of Managers as ATC treasurer, between 1981 and 1987 and again between 1993 and 1999. For the past several years, he has chaired the ATC Audit Committee and, at the biennial meeting in Emory, he was re-elected to serve, again as treasurer, for the 2011 to 2013 term on the ATC Board of Directors. Both Foley and Rosen received framed Honorary Member certificates and an engraved Jefferson cup.

**Ronald S. Rosen** and Arthur P. Foley joined the ranks of 52 other individuals to receive Honorary Member distinction during the 86-year history of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.

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**ATC and Agency Partners Honor OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEERS**

**During the recent Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) Biennial Conference in Emory, Virginia, (ATC) bestowed its highest honor — Honorary Membership — upon two outstanding volunteers, while the National Park Service and USDA Forest Service recognized individuals who have volunteered along the Appalachian Trail for 25 and 50 years.**

Ronald S. Rosen and Arthur P. Foley joined the ranks of 52 other individuals to receive Honorary Member distinction during the 86-year history of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.

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Eight volunteers received Gold Service Awards from those agencies recognizing 50 years of active volunteer service to the A.T. Those honorees included Bruce Cunningham, Margaret Drummond, Mary Edson, June Engle, Thurston Griggs, Blair Keller, Gilda Keller, and David Thomas. Another 58 volunteers received Silver Service Awards recognizing 25 years of service to the Appalachian Trail. Both 50- and 25-year volunteers received special plaques and 50-year volunteers also received recognition letters signed by the director of the National Park Service and the chief of the USDA Forest Service.
Hunting regulations vary widely along the Appalachian Trail. Although the A.T. is a unit of the National Park system, it traverses many different types of public lands. Hunting is permitted along approximately 1,250 miles of the A.T. Both hikers and hunters are advised to “know before you go.”

- Know local hunting seasons
- Wear blaze-orange
- Use extra caution near roads and in valleys.
- Avoid deer firearm season from October through January by hiking in one of these national parks: 
  - C & O Canal National Historical Park, Maryland
  - Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, West Virginia
  - Shenandoah National Park, Virginia
  - Blue Ridge Parkway, Virginia
  - Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Tennessee and North Carolina

For more information and to see ATC’s 2011-2012 Hunting Season Guide visit: appalachiantrail.org/hunting

Bear Mountain Now Accessible

TWO-HUNDRED PEOPLE GATHERED ON THE SUMMIT OF BEAR Mountain June 4, National Trails Day, to celebrate the opening of a new 1.3-mile Appalachian Trail loop that includes a 0.4-mile section of accessible trail. The new ADA trail section extends from the parking area near Perkins Tower to a viewpoint over the Hudson Valley that, on a clear day, takes in the Catskill Mountains. It is the first such viewpoint from the A.T. on Bear Mountain. The trail was built by the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference (NY-NJTC) in accordance with the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The trail is part of a multi-year project to improve and rehabilitate the trail network at Bear Mountain. Project partners include the NY-NJTC, the Palisades Parks Conservancy, the Palisades Interstate Park Commission, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, and the National Park Service.

The trail was enthusiastically welcomed by trail lovers of all levels of ability. Matthew Castelluccio, Adaptive Sports Coordinator and Patient Mentor at Helen Hayes Rehabilitation Hospital in Rockland County, commented: “I was very impressed with the design and layout of the trail. It provided a challenge that was not too difficult to be discouraging. For the first time in eight years since my motorcycle accident, I was able to enjoy hiking with my friends.”

Johen and Paul Dolan wrote after the opening: “In our over 30 years of involvement in the Trail Conference and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, we have never been more proud to be associated with these two fine groups. We both also have a deep appreciation for landscape and trail design, and as parents of a child with a disability we have a particular interest in seeing more accessible trails.”

Praising Peter Jensen’s trail design and Eddie Walsh’s execution, they continued: “Your work has extraordinary design elements, a Japanese garden like balance and artistry, spectacular use of rock and wild landscape, and a great sensitivity to the user. The trail is a wonderful experience for all — a quiet, healing place that will become one of the A.T.’s great treasures.”

See the upcoming November/December issue of A.T. Journeys for a full feature about accessible sections of the A.T.
give me

By PHILIP ROYER

SHELTER
WHEN A BACKPACKER WHO IS TRAVERSING THE 70 MILES OF APPALACHIAN TRAIL IN THE GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK APPROACHES A TRAIL SHELTER AT THE END OF THE DAY’S HIKE, HE OR SHE IS FAR LESS INTERESTED IN THE HISTORY OF THAT STRUCTURE THAN IN THE NUMBER OF EMPTY BUNKS OR WHERE TO GET WATER AND COOK DINNER. THE STONE WALLS, METAL ROOF, AND WOODEN BUNKS ARE ONLY A BRIEF INTERRUPTION OF THE HIGH COUNTRY LANDSCAPE, PROVIDING REFUGE AND, IN SOME CASES, SURVIVAL FOR BACKCOUNTRY USERS. THAT IS AS IT SHOULD BE. BUT CONSIDER FOR A MOMENT HOW TODAY’S SHELTERS CAME TO BE.

In the southwest portion of the future park, hunters and herders had established camps at the balds along the Tennessee state line. Archaeologists have confirmed that several of those sites had been used since prehistoric times due to dependable water and a bit of flat ground. The Spence Cabin and the Hall Cabin once stood near the present Spence Field and Derrick Knob A.T. shelter sites and served hikers when herders no longer grazed livestock there. Atep Mount LeConte on lumber company property, Paul Adams built a crude hiker shelter in 1925 for the Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association. This was the start of LeConte Lodge, which still serves overnight guests five miles from the Trail. These scattered shelters were inconsistent in construction, but they served for a time.

National Park Service Master Plans that emerged after park establishment in 1934 provided a systematic approach to the construction of all types of improvements, including trails and backcountry shelters. In accordance with those plans, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) built many miles of trail, including portions of the A.T. The park and hiking clubs recognized the necessity of shelters on the A.T. Curiously, the 1940 Master Plan anticipated building shelters along other trails not for overnight camping, but as refuge from rain for unprepared hikers. Between 1938 and 1940 the CCC constructed eight Adirondack-style shelters along the A.T. These wooden shelters served hikers until the 1970s, but as backcountry use levels increased, the park planned a major expansion of its shelters.

The 1940 Master Plan anticipated building shelters, not for overnight camping, but as refuge from rain for unprepared hikers. Between 1939 and 1964, the Accelerated Public Works (APW) program funded construction of 17 new, stone shelters in the park; 14 of those were on the A.T. In some cases, the new shelter co-existed with its neighboring CCC shelter for years. Teams of park employees adopted a prototypical park design with three stone walls, integral fireplace and chimney, and an open front. A 22-foot by 18-foot roofed area accommodated 12 people, in two levels of wood-framed bunks with hardware cloth supports for each berth. Log beams, cut on site, spanned the width of the shelter. Aluminum siding was specified for the roof. The stone walls and metal roofing were deviations from the mostly wooden CCC shelter designs, likely from experience with destruction of CCC shelters by fire. For a brief time, there were 18 A.T. shelters in the park, but all of the CCC shelters either burned or were demolished by the mid-1970s. When the stone shelter at False Gap was destroyed, it was not replaced, leaving 13 shelters along the A.T.

Besides re-roofing, only a couple of major changes were made to the stone shelters. To guard against bears, at least one of the CCC-era shelters sites had been surrounded by barbed wire fencing with a stile for hikers to climb over. In similar fashion, the open side of the shelter was enclosed with gated chain link fencing beginning in 1968.

Previous pages: Indian Gap CCC Shelter, 1955. Photo courtesy Thompson Brothers Digital Photograph Collection, University of Tennessee Libraries, Knoxville; SMHC crew lift a new beam into place at Derrick Knob in 2007.

Photo by Terry Elmore
When the 1974 "Wilderness Recommendation for the Smokies" was sent to Congress, it contained a proposal to eliminate shelters. The Wilderness recommendation ultimately failed, and the resulting General Management Plan (GMP) of 1982 contained a decision to retain some shelters, mainly along the A.T. where horse use is permitted. Removal of the chain link fencing on the front of this shelter was considered but was not approved because of the lack of a cable hoist system, a feature being added at many park shelters and campsites at that time. Funding for the project was scarce, so donors were sought. A metal roofing company donated metal shakes and installation labor. Materials were hauled one mile to the shelter by horses, and hiker firewood plus roof beams were cut on site. The work progressed, weekend after weekend throughout the spring. Upon completion, hiker feedback was positive for the "Smokies Sheraton," a favorable comparison to the "Fontana Hilton," its counterpart on the south end of the park.

Successful completion of the Davenport Gap project encouraged all parties to tackle the heavily used Icetower Spring Shelter in 1999, with financial support from the Friends of the Smokies and Richard Haiman National Parks Foundation. Severe erosion in front of the shelter had lowered the grade more than a foot below the floor level. Instead of working during the spring thru-hiker season, construction started on National Trails Day in June. A helicopter airlift was required to move materials to the site three miles north of Newfound Gap. In one long weekend, 20 plus volunteers managed to move an enormous amount of fill dirt, demolish the chain link fence and old roof, complete the new roof framing, and install the majority of the new, corrugated metal roofing. Volunteers then spent several more weekends finishing the project. An expanded porch area provided much needed room for covered benches and shelves. It is noteworthy that Icetower Spring was the first shelter where the bear fence would not be replaced, a result of extensive park research into bear behavior and shelter user patterns.

The location of Pecks Corner Shelter, far from any trailhead, dictated a volunteer crew that would remain on site until completion. In 2000 the shelter's rotten roof beams made it the highest priority. This was the first project to utilize treated utility poles for the new roof beams. The complete renovation, including a large amount of earth fill in front of the shelter, was completed in one week, a strategy favored on all future projects.

Drainage problems plagued Birch Spring Gap Shelter, and the 2001 renovation elected to keep it as a campsite using hillside formations as Cosby Knob, Derrick Knob, Double Springs Gap, Mount Collins, and Russell Field shelters rolled by each year. This addition initially pleased shelter users, but negative comments about the fence's "zoo" effect produced humorous signs such as "Don't Feed Humans."

In 1973, the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club (SMHC) stated that it favored retaining the shelters. When the 1974 "Wilderness Recommendation for the Smokies" was sent to Congress, it contained a proposal to eliminate all shelters. Public comment was solicited; the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club (SMHC) stated that it favored retaining the shelters. The Wilderness Recommendation ultimately failed, and the resulting General Management Plan (GMP) of 1982 contained a decision to retain some shelters, mainly along the A.T., and remove several shelters elsewhere in the park. This decision was based on supporting material in the Environmental Impact Statement. In short, research demonstrated that a shelter was good at confining user impact to a small area, especially in fragile high elevation zones. Implementation of the 1982 GMP eventually reduced the total number of park shelters from 15 to 16, including the 13 A.T. shelters.

In 1998, with encouragement from the park, SMHC undertook a project that began as replacement of the leaky roof on Davenport Gap Shelter. Previously, club volunteers had maintained the A.T. in the park, but the majority of maintenance on the 13 shelters had been by the National Park Service. I was not a club member at that time, but a friend in the club who was familiar with my love of hiking and backpacking asked me to apply my architectural skills to the project. Since my first hikes in the Smokies, I had used the shelters, and sometimes I grimaced about the dark, cramped space within the bear fence and the lack of benches, but I assumed that the shelters would never change. During our trip to Davenport Gap to measure for the new roof, we discovered that the roof support beams were rotten, a characteristic of all the APW era shelters due to the constant presence of moisture in the wall below the stone chimney. Some users consider the integral shelter fireplace to be an asset, but anyone attempting to keep the structure dry considers the chimney to be a curse.

Roof replacement became an opportunity to address some of the other problems. Several proposals were submitted to the park for approval, and the eventual design included a clerestory window, new benches along the edge of the bunk, and a covered front porch and tack storage area (a portion of the A.T. where horse use is permitted). Removal of the chain link fencing on the front of this shelter was considered but was not approved because of the lack of a cable hoist system, a feature being added at many park shelters and campsites at that time. Funding for the project was scarce, so donors were sought. A metal roofing company donated metal shakes and installation labor. Materials were hauled one mile to the shelter by horses, and hiker firewood plus roof beams were cut on site. The roof work progressed, weekend after weekend throughout the spring. Upon completion, hiker feedback was positive for the "Smokies Sheraton," a favorable comparison to the "Fontana Hilton," its counterpart on the south end of the park.

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Twenty years ago a student handed Peter Weigl, a biology faculty member at Wake Forest University, a peculiar tooth he dug from a wetlands in western North Carolina. It was black, an inch long, and looked as if it had been buried for ages. Although Weigl’s interests generally include things living, he wasn’t unfamiliar with paleontology, having spent time on digs in Africa. So after some detective work, he identified the specimen as a back tooth of a tapir — an herbivore that once roamed North America until its extinction more than 10,000 years ago. While the discovery wasn’t ground breaking — other past mega herbivore remains have been unearthed in the region — the fossilized tooth has helped unravel a fundamental mystery of the origin of some of the most precious places in the southern Appalachians.

One of those places is the grassy dome that spans the top of Big Yellow Mountain in the Roan Highlands — its apex, just a mile from the Appalachian Trail in the heart of one of the footpath’s most adored sections. On a recent visit, I shared the top of the mountain’s broad ridge with a few dozen head of cattle who were, naturally, more captivated with blades of grass than they were the view. For a lover of solitude and stunning places in their natural state, it may be a liability that the ravenous herd of bovine are here. Yet what may surprise those who view the cows with suspicion is that they may be continuing a practice unleashed by Mother Nature thousands of years ago.

Big Yellow is among dozens of grassy balds — treeless mountain tops — that adorn the high ridges of the southern Appalachians. Many are within the A.T. corridor and, because of their high elevations, are a major feature of the landscape. Yet the precise beginnings of Big Yellow’s 5,440 foot grassy dome and other balds are as uncertain as the inventor of the internet. Were the treeless domes created by the hands of man, or an ecological anomaly; natural islands of grass among lush forest?
Land managers have reintroduced animals to maintain grasslands, such as grasshoppers in the highlands of Virginia, and goats on Roan Mountain.

When I was a kid, I was very aware that I could walk to Maine from the cabin in the Roan Highlands. I was five years old, the roan highlands. I suspect that some who prefer big Yellow’s ridge often say, “It’s the most beautiful place I’ve ever been,” says Holman, whose knowledge of the landscape has helped shape how it’s managed and has been instrumental in helping conserve other key tracts of land. Recently, for example, he contacted conservationists for decades. It’s easy to see why. From the mountain’s famous mountain tops. That coincided with an explosion of interest in the cultural and economic landscape too. The arrangement on big Yellow mountain and in the roan highlands. They learned that rare animal and plant species, assumed to be unique to big Yellow land, says Leutze. There’s a history of taking advantage of people in Appalachia. We’ve become better at the human element of what to do with land means in the world. Weigl’s 10,000-year-old tapir chopper may have helped to manage the importance of using the landscape right. The stakes are enormous high.

John Holman, a retired North Carolina forest manager, says Leutze was a key to the Roan Mountains, who is now an expert on high elevation conservation projects. In the mid 1970s he recalls his parents hosting trail gatherings in the cabin’s rustic living room. Leutze got to know the valley floor is a common feature of the highlands. Conservationists now refer to it as the greater roan highlands. The arrangement on big Yellow mountain and in the roan highlands. They learned that rare animal and plant species, assumed to be unique to big Yellow land, says Leutze. There’s a history of taking advantage of people in Appalachia. We’ve become better at the human element of what to do with land means in the world. Weigl’s 10,000-year-old tapir chopper may have helped to manage the importance of using the landscape right. The stakes are enormous high.

famous peaks are in view: the profile of grandfather mountain; grassy ridge of big Yellow, an all-star line up of North Carolina’s mountain ranges with similar climate and vegetation characteristics — in oregon and washington — have treeless mountain tops in the 1960s while a student at Duke. “i was concerned as the balds grew over,” says Weigl, who has observed a steady backslide in the southern Appalachians — of which there are roughly so — are artifacts: created by the hands of man. Many who hold that view contend the balds don’t aren’t and are therefore worthy of only limited efforts to conserve. Weigl’s not so sure. “there is an indication that many of the peaks lost their forest in the cultural landscape. As a specialist of the history of vegetation and its link to climate, Weigl says Leutze was a key to the Roan Mountains, who is now an expert on high elevation conservation projects. In the mid 1970s he recalls his parents hosting trail gatherings in the cabin’s rustic living room. Leutze got to know the valley floor is a common feature of the highlands. Conservationists now refer to it as the greater roan highlands. The arrangement on big Yellow mountain and in the roan highlands. They learned that rare animal and plant species, assumed to be unique to big Yellow land, says Leutze. There’s a history of taking advantage of people in Appalachia. We’ve become better at the human element of what to do with land means in the world. Weigl’s 10,000-year-old tapir chopper may have helped to manage the importance of using the landscape right. The stakes are enormous high.

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Jack Igelman lives in Asheville, North Carolina. He is a member of the American Museum of Natural History. He is a member of the American Museum of Natural History. He is a member of the American Museum of Natural History. He is a member of the American Museum of Natural History.
Northern Color

John Slonina is a professional, full-time nature photographer and photo tour leader who has been photographing nature for more than 25 years. He uses photography as a way to teach people about natural history — his mission is to promote knowledge of North America and its ecosystems. "Understanding the natural world not only increases your appreciation of nature but also helps you become a better nature photographer," says John. He hopes his photography will inspire others to enjoy and protect nature. John lives in Grafton, Massachusetts with his wife, Vicki, and two children, George and Henry. He loves photographing, kayaking and, most of all, exploring wild areas with his two sons.

Katahdin Sunrise; Sandy Stream Pond, Baxter State Park, Maine
www.sphotography.com
View of Mount Lafayette from Sugar Hill, White Mountains, New Hampshire
The town of Delaware Water Gap has a long, rich history as a resort destination. In the late 1800s and early parts of last century, there were enough hotel rooms for the little burg along the Delaware River to grow to six times its off-season population of about 400 residents. Its popularity stemmed, in large part, from its proximity to the railroad, which made it a convenient six-hour trip from New York City to the Pocono woodlands of Pennsylvania’s Delaware Water Gap.

There were a handful of grand hotels in Delaware Water Gap’s heyday. One even advertised “running mountain spring water in rooms.” Resorts boasted “commanding views for 30 miles in every direction of the grandest scenery east of the Rockies.” One hotel had its own dairy herd to provide milk.

The hotels, for the most part, are gone. Interstate highways and automobiles freed travelers from the limitations of the rails. But the natural splendor remains, thanks to the unique geographical formation for which the town is named. Delaware Water Gap’s tradition of hospitality also continues — both to the cars and buses that bring more than five million tourists to the area each year, and to the few thousand foot-borne trekkers who walk into town on the Appalachian Trail.

It’s still a small village — 700 residents, give or take. It’s a town so small there is not even a laundromat. “The town sewer system couldn’t handle a laundry,” says Reverend Karen Nickels, who until this past April when she retired was pastor at the Church of the Mountain, a Presbyterian congregation that plays a large role in the town’s well-deserved reputation as an Appalachian Trail town. There is no supermarket, either; hikers who have serious resupply needs, or an urge for clean clothes, can get a shuttle into nearby Stroudsburg for that stuff. That hardly matters to the hikers who inundate the town each summer. They revel in what the town does offer, rather than complain about the few services it might lack. “I love this town,” says Jackie “Goldie” Hurd, a thru-hiker from Akron, Ohio, as he heads down Delaware Water Gap’s Main Street while enjoying a “zero day” in late June. “It’s very soothing.”

It’s that R&R that is the town’s biggest attraction to hikers. In the old days, that meant soaking feet battered by Pennsylvania’s infamous rocks in a bucket of Epsom salts at the Church of the Mountain’s hiker hostel before moving on to New Jersey. Modern hiking shoes are easier on the feet. The hostel no longer keeps those buckets on hand. But it still is a popular place to spend a day tending to mail drops and bounce boxes, replacing worn out gear at the only on-the-trail outfitters between Harpers Ferry and Kent, Connecticut, and eating apple pie. “It’s a good little Trail town,” says Rachele Cooper, who, along with her husband, Chuck, runs Edge of the Woods Outfitters in Delaware Water Gap. “We have the hostel, the bakery. We’re here. There’s the post office. And there are a couple of places to grab a beer if you are so inclined. There is stuff to do if you take a zero day, like tubing in the river. We’re a pretty hiker-friendly town.” Cooper’s shop does not rely just on foot traffic. From top: Geological pressure, millions of years ago, forced quartzite rock, seen here on Mount Tammany on the New Jersey side, to bend upwards, creating the distinctive rock patterns that allowed the Delaware River to slowly cut the path that resulted in the Delaware Water Gap; The Village Farmer has long been a popular “refueling” stop for A.T. hikers.
on Appalachian Trail hikers. The town is in the middle of the 67,000-acre Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. Bicycle rentals are a big part of Edge of the Woods’ business. Cooper also offers guided day hikes on local trails. A lot of hikers, though, do rely on the shop — especially to replace shoes and socks destroyed by 150 miles of boot-eating rocks. A second outfitter, the Pack Shack, located a few blocks further north on Broad Street, has shifted its emphasis from walking to paddling, specializing in canoe trips. But the shop still repairs Leki poles and offers hiker shuttles.

Of course, not all hikers need the services of an outfitter. All hikers do, however, like to eat. And good food is something Delaware Water Gap is known for along the trail — especially the apple pies. Village Farmer, a bakery-cafe-farmers market located on Broad Street, just around the corner from Edge of the Woods. On a typical, late June day, you will find Ginger Turriello there, up to her elbows in apples and cinnamon. Turriello, who bakes the signature pies served at the Village Farmer, turns out almost 100 regular size pies on a day like this, when the tourists are starting to arrive for long Fourth of July stays and the thru-hiker wave is near its crest on the A.T.

Located about a half mile northwest from where the A.T. crosses town, the Village Farmer sees a steady stream of hikers at the height of the season. Many drop more than once while they are in town, filling up on the house hot dog and apple pie special (most add a second hot dog and a scoop of ice cream on their pie, owner Susan Cooper — Rachele’s mother-in-law — says), then they do the same before heading out of town in the morning. “My son came up with a special breakfast sandwich. It’s raisin bread French toast with two jumbo eggs, sausage, and a drizzle of honey,” Cooper says. “The hikers have adopted it as their own.” The folks at Village Farmer have been known to open early if they see a hiker standing outside who looks to be in a hurry. “We get quite a few hikers. We love them,” says Cooper. “It’s fun to see how far they have come. They come from around the world and end up here.”

The Village Farmer is not the only popular eatery with A.T. hikers. The Water Gap Diner next door, with a full menu and hiker-friendly hours (they open at 5 a.m. for breakfast), serves good food, and lots of it. Dough Boy’s Pizza, on the same block as Village Farmer and the diner, is also popular with the hiker crowd. So is Zoe’s Ice Cream Emporium, an old-fashioned ice cream parlor in the historic Castle Inn, which sits right beside the Trail at the other end of town. Finer dining establishments such as Antelao, the Sycamore Inn or the legendary Deer Head Inn, which claims the honor of being the nation’s oldest continuously running jazz club, also are hospitable to hikers.

“All the restaurants in town welcome hikers, though most would prefer they shower first. The diner’s not as picky. It does not mind if hikers come in straight off the Trail,” Reverend Nickels says. Hot, free showers are available at the Church of the Mountain’s Hikers Center, the oldest, continuously running hostel on the Trail. Church members even supply towels and toiletries. Matt’s Place, a three-sided log shelter in back of the church handles overflow when the hostel is full. Some hikers are also lucky enough to come through town on the other end of town. Fine dining establishments such as Antelao, the Sycamore Inn or the legendary Deer Head Inn, which claims the honor of being the nation’s oldest continuously running jazz club, also are hospitable to hikers.

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a woman
WITH A MISSION

In September 2010, the Appalachian Trail’s oldest hostel, Shaffer Hostel, turned 50. Nickels recounts the outfitting of the church’s hiker center, which opened in 1976 and was Nickels’ idea. It was built specifically to accommodate the church’s hiker feeds. For years they were held in the driveway next to the church, near the entrance to the basement hiker hostel.

On this night, in the peak of the thru-hiker wave, 27 hikers from at least seven states gather to feast, 27 hikers from at least seven states gather to feast, along with almost that many of the church’s members, who bring covered dishes and home-baked desserts. “We’re in a transition period,” says church member Larry Beck, checking the progress of his homemade strawberry ice cream. “To not have [Nickels] present is a big void,” says Jim Dellaria, who came back to the church when he moved his event promotion business home from California. A.T. mythology says that Nickels founded the hostel, but the truth is, the church’s outreach to hikers was well established when she arrived. “Part of the job description was working with hikers. That was in the mix from the beginning,” Nickels says.

The church’s Hiker Center opened in 1976. Back then it shared space in the town library. “It started under Reverend Bill Coha,” says Beck. “But then it really took off under Reverend Nickels.” The hostel soon took over the whole basement, and a bunk room was added. When that proved not big enough, a three-sided log shelter was erected to handle overflow. If that is full, like it is this night, hikers are welcome to pitch tents in the grass out back. Hot showers, with fresh, clean, towels — church members launder them by the basket — are a big attraction. The place is cleaned every day. Stay is free. To not have [Nickels] present is a big void,” says Jim Dellaria, who came to the church to open the hostel’s doors, then hung out for an hour talking with Karst about the challenges of being a woman on the Trail. “She was very warm, and she connected with hikers very well. She just connected well with people,” Karst recalls. “She is one of those folks that everyone on the Trail has nice things to say about.”

She is one of those folks that everyone on the Trail has nice things to say about.

For more than 20 years, the recently retired Reverend Nickels (above) assisted A.T. hikers as part of her job description: “... a mission to foot-weary hikers; to people who put on a pack and walk 2,000 miles.” As she puts it, “There’s not there on the porch of the church’s fellowship hall. The large, covered porch was Nickels’ idea. It was built specifically to accommodate the church’s hiker feeds. For years they were held in the driveway next to the church, near the entrance to the basement hiker hostel.

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“Could you look in her eyes and see she had real compassion for hikers. She really cared,” says Nichols. “We had to have lots of buckets with Epsom salts for them to soak their feet in.”

An interim minister is holding down the fort while the congregation searches for Nickels’ successor. That successor will have big hiking boots to fill. “Reverend Nickels was a big part of everything to do with this church community,” says Dellaria. “She was a strong force.” Nickels didn’t just use the hiker mission to help those walking from Georgia to Maine. She also used it to give her congregation, something to rally around. The hiker mission instilled a sense of purpose in the church. “It’s what we are called to do,” Beck says. “We’re called to service. It’s natural since we are right on the Trail.”

say. Perhaps her favorite is the one about the time Earl Shaffer came to town. Shaffer was 79 in 1988, when he decided to take a 2,000-plus-mile walk in honor of the 50th anniversary of his first thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail. The hoopla around Shaffer’s effort was overwhelming, especially for a guy like Shaffer, the Trail’s legendary first thru-hiker, who thrived on the solitude of the woods. “Reporters were driving him crazy,” says Nickels. “So his brother called to ask about having a press conference at the church. They were hoping if he accommodated the press, they would leave him alone.” It didn’t work.

Shaffer left after the press conference and was hardly across the Delaware River when the reporters caught up with him again. Shaffer’s problem was that he was too kind, Nickels says. “He was basically a shy man. He couldn’t tell reporters, much less fellow hikers, ‘I’m going to do it’.” Shaffer walked into the church. “I have a zillion stories,” Nickels likes to
I have never believed in a realistic utopian society, but if one were ever to exist it would do so on Max Patch.
IT WAS GREAT TO MEET SO MANY OF OUR MEMBERS IN EMORY, Virginia at our biennial meeting. I hope you had a spectacular time. Thanks again to all the hard working volunteers who made Virginia Journeys 2011 an awesome success.

Congratulations to our newest Honorary Life Members — Arthur Foley and Ronald S. Rosen, and to the many men and women who were honored for their volunteer service of 50 and 55 years. Bob Almand and Dave Starzell gave an overview of our 2010 Annual Report in the beginning of this issue. Please take a few minutes to look over the entire report at appalachiantrail.org/annualreport. In every issue of this magazine we highlight the members and partners who contribute to the overall success of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC). In the annual report we salute everyone again. Thank you!

In October, members of ATC’s Board of Directors and ATC staff will celebrate the 90th anniversary of the publication of Benton MacKaye’s article proposing an Appalachian Trail at Hudson Farm, where he wrote it in 1921. In the opening paragraphs of MacKaye’s treatise, he states: “The problem of living is at bottom an economic one. And this alone is bad enough, even in a period of so-called ‘normalcy.’ But living has been considerably complicated of late in various ways — by war, by questions of personal liberty, and by ‘menaces’ of one kind or another. There have been created bitter antagonisms. We are undergoing also the bad combination of high prices and unemployment. This situation is worldwide…”

His words could just as easily have been written yesterday. He goes on to propose, not only the Appalachian Trail, but a series of communities along the Trail that would support those who sought the rest, restoration, and health the mountains provided to visitors.

With your help, ATC continues to build on MacKaye’s vision through our Appalachian Trail Community designation program. More and more communities, large and small, are seeking to embrace the Appalachian Trail as a vital part of their future for tourism and economic development. These same communities will, in the years to come, return to the Trail as volunteers and members to sustain it.

Thank you for your support,
Royce W. Gibson Director of Membership & Development

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MAY — JUNE 2011

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To make a contribution or renew your membership, call (304) 535-6331 ext 119, or visit: appalachiantrail.org/donate

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Hike Strong Drive Proud
Show your appreciation and support for the Trail each and every day with an Appalachian Trail (A.T.) license plate. A portion of all proceeds will help manage and protect the A.T.

Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Join the Journey

Appalachian Trail Guardians are members who make a monthly pledge via their credit card or through an automatic deduction from their checking account.

Sign up to become a monthly donor with a gift of $15 or more a month and we’ll send you an autographed copy of Leonard Atkins’ book: Wildflowers of the Appalachian Trail while supplies last.

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A new food co-op has fantastic tasting foods. Great long-term storage containers, and individual packaging, perfect for camping. Just add water; heat, and enjoy! Visit: 5792 freefood.bgo.com or contact: Richland and Kimberly Sanders richard@kemflylme.com or (800) 970-2890.

Lost and Found
Lost on July 7: woman's silver bracelet on the A.T. in New York; likely near the beginning of New York A.T. Section 10 going south to north 6/32, from Traylor Creek on the Smokies Valley Road. The bracelet is a simple cuff-type, with engraved edges on both sides. Inside the bracelet is my name (Cynthia) and my husband's name (Carl), but there could be very bad faded. Very strong sentimental value. If found, please contact: Cynthia at cynopderbeck@hotmail.com.

For Your Information
Trails End Festival. All trails will again lead to Millinocket, Maine and the 2011 Trails End Festival held on September 16, 17, and 18. People in the Katahdin Region and from all over will celebrate with food, activities and fun for the whole family. Join us for three days of free music in downtown Millinocket. For more information contact: www.trailsandfestival.org.

Hosted by the Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association, the 30th anniversary Gathering will be Columbus Day weekend, Oct. 7-9, 2011, at the College of Liberal Arts, North Adams, Massachusetts. Members get together each fall for the Gathering, where folks share their experiences through workshops and slides. For more information and details visit: www.alda.org.

Public Notices may be edited for clarity and length. Please send them to: editor@appalachiantrail.org

Public Notices
P.O. Box 807
Harpers Ferry, WV 25425-0807

ON THE APRIL MORNING IN 2010, WHEN MY 10-YEAR-OLD SON SCOOTER AND I SET OUT to hike the entire Appalachian Trail, we were convinced it was all about the numbers. On day one, it was 31 degrees; we hiked 9.5 miles, taking breaks at miles 2, 4.5, and 7. In fact, we believed that counting was the obsession of everyone attempting a thru-hike. How many miles did you hike today? How many pounds are you carrying? Liters of water? One day I even counted the number of times I stubbed my toe (it was 43). The list of potential numerical items of interest was infinite. Scooter and I developed a routine to celebrate and record our progress along the Trail. Every 100 miles, we would track down the nearest writing surface — a piece of cardboard ripped from one of our resupply boxes, the lid to a Poptart container, the palm of my hand — and on it write our latest 100-mile milestone. Engaging the nearest willing person into service, we would pose for a picture, then post it on Facebook for our family and friends back home.

Yet as I recently glanced through an old November-December 2010 edition of A.T. Journeys, I was surprised and delighted that what jumped out to me from the pages was not numerals, but familiar faces. There was a picture of “trinket,” whose scooter and I shared hot dogs and homeschooling over a joint journey from Shenandoah National Park. Then there was “Buck” (U.S. Army Officer Steve Owens) and his two charming children, whom we met after a violent thunderstorm in the Smokies. We chatted for over an hour, comparing quirky hiking-with-kids accounts and listening with fascination to Buck’s description of the mountains in Afghanistan. It was with much reluctance that Scooter and I pulled ourselves away to continue on to Fontana Dam. We had found kindred spirits.

The obsession had had with numbers during our hike faded as I recalled other faces, other people we had encountered on the Trail. After a nasty tumble down a slick section of rocks just north of Garfield Ridge Shelter, I was attended to by “Eureka,” a sweet, gutsy gentleman thru-hiker whom we had not seen since Virginia. Although I declined his kind offer to carry my pack back to the shelter, I realized it was his compassion and willingness to assist a fellow hiker in need that truly reflects what makes the Trail unique.

To me, the Trail is a giant, but cozy, neighborhood stretching the length of the Eastern Seaboard complete with characters similar to those found in any community back home — like the section-hiking family from North Carolina who, instead of lending us a cup of sugar, allowed us to borrow their brand new Lexus for an early morning resupply. “Just leave the keys under the seat and lock it up when you're done — we have another set,” they cheerfully called as they hiked on up the Trail and we headed into town. And while this was an extraordinary case of A.T.-neighborly-ness, it was no exception. I could easily catalogue daily, smaller kindnesses that Scooter and I received from the many people we met along the way: “Captain Slick,” who appointed Scooter his personal consigliere (from Godfather), consulting him on matters of weather, gear, and foodstuffs; “Pastor Dave,” who set up a table with donuts and other snacks on a 100-Mile Wilderness Trail crossing; and “Uncas,” who brewed me a hot cup of coffee on a particularly bone-chilling lunch break. And we could never forget “Etchasketch”, who hiked together off and on from Pennsylvania to Georgia, until it seemed as if I had acquired another son and Scooter a brother. We will probably never again see many of these Trail neighbors with whom we shared our epic journey. But while the memory of the weight of our packs or the number of miles we counted to Katahdin will fade, we will never forget the relationships we discovered on the A.T. For this reason, I would happily return to that neighborhood should future time and circumstance ever allow it.

To me, the Trail is a giant, but cozy, neighborhood stretching the length of the Eastern Seaboard.

Cheryl “4:13” Borek and her son Scooter, live in Durham, North Carolina.
Help to preserve and protect the A.T. for the next generation of dreamers and doers. Become a part of the A.T. community. Volunteer with a Trail Club or Trail Crew. Encourage your family and friends to get involved by giving them a gift membership.