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Looking for AmeriCorps Site Sponsors

Appalachian Forest Heritage Area AmeriCorps program is looking for sponsor sites! AFHA AmeriCorps members are stationed at sponsor sites to provide direct service toward project goals the sites identify. Sites are responsible for supervision and cash match to support the members. Our program includes a 16-county area in West Virginia along the backbone of the Appalachian Mountains. Site assignments focus on conservation, heritage tourism, and community development. In addition, our Hands On Team focuses on rehabilitation and restoration of historic community buildings, as well as selected conservation projects.

If you might be interested in sponsoring an AmeriCorps member as a direct service site for the Sept 2015 – Aug 2016 term, or for a Hands On Team project, contact us for more information and an application. Applications should be submitted by April 20.

For more information out the AFHA AmeriCorps program see

www.appalachianforest.us/ameri-corps.htm

or read stories from members in this and previous e-newsletters at www.appalachianforest.us/news.htm

If you are interested in information about applying as a site sponsor for our AmeriCorps program, please contact us at afha@appalachianforest.us.



Don't forget our next concert Wednesday March 18th at 7:30pm: Eric & Suzy Thompson at the Darden Mill. For more info: <http://tinyurl.com/pw2h5p>.

Save the Date: AFHA Stakeholders Meeting May 13th in Elkins.

SITES



~OF THE~ MONTH

Experience the heritage of your area! *Sites of the Month* spotlights events and locations within the region, based on AFHA's four themes: forestry,

the Railroad (Museum)

By Hallie Borstel

AFHA AmeriCorps Heritage Team Member

When I was little, like many children, I was sung to sleep each night by my parents. Their repertoire consisted largely of folk songs, including the classic "I've Been Working on the Railroad." Who knew that someday those words would be so close to the truth for me?

For the past six months, I've been serving as the AFHA AmeriCorps member at the fledgling West Virginia Railroad Museum. Located in the historic Darden Mill in Elkins, the museum's mission is to preserve and archive West Virginia's railroading history. The collection includes rolling stock (vehicles that move on a railway such as engines, passenger cars, and cabooses) as well as tools, photographs, books, and paper ephemera.



Artifacts on display include several company rule books, a track gauge, an apprentice's certificate, company paperwork and coal mining equipment. Photo by Hallie Borstel.

Before I began my AmeriCorps term, I only flirted



[Savage River State Forest](#) is located in in central and eastern Garrett County and at 54,594 acres, it is the largest state forest in Western Maryland. Pre-Contact forestry practices by Native Americans included slash and burn cropping clearing. After European settlement and the eventual development of transportation infrastructure, the county was completely clear cut by loggers during a 20 year period in the early 1900s. The present day Savage River State Forest began with the acquisitions of 9,352 acres of logged land from the N.U. Bond Company, the first of several acquisitions. Over 11,000 acres of the Forest is designated as wildlands and there are opportunities for hunting, camping, hiking and fishing.

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railroad for the advancements it brought. But I never delved into it in any formal capacity.

In doing my service, I wear many hats—though none of them is a conductor’s hat. I perform visitor services duties, update social media, catalog artifacts, and the odd administrative task. As this year marks the grand opening of the museum, I’ve spent a lot of time in exhibit research and design mode. I’ve been able to see complete transformation of the Darden Mill’s second floor, and am currently designing and installing this season’s exhibit, “The Virginian Railway: The Best Coal Railroad Money Could Buy.”



Installation of the Virginian exhibit in progress. Photo by Hallie Borstel.

The exhibit tells the story of the Virginian Railway through photos and artifacts, from its initial conception in the late nineteenth century to its demise in the 1950s. It will open on March 20th, when I will once again don my visitor services hat to greet the public.

Museum hours:

March 20-April 18, Fridays and Saturdays 9:30-5:30.

April 18-October 31, Thursdays through Sundays 9:30 to 5:30.



The [Durbin & Greenbrier Valley Railroad](#) is based in Elkins and operates refurbished historic excursion trains out of Elkins, Durbin, and most recently, Cass. The trains travel through mountain wilderness and include stopovers at destinations including the High Falls of the Cheat, one of the highest waterfalls in the state, and the abandoned logging town of Spruce, once the highest town East of the Mississippi and accessible only by rail. Starting in 2015, the company will begin operating Cass Scenic Railroad, which runs on historic Shay locomotives and includes a stop at Bald Knob overlook, the third highest point in West Virginia at 4,842 feet.



The [Pickens Maple Syrup Festival](#) takes place March 21st and

Hands-On in Photos

By Jenny Hart

AFHA AmeriCorps Hands-On Team Member

Since I became an AmeriCorps, I've been faced with the common questions, "What do you do?" I answer that I am an AmeriCorps member serving with AFHA on the Hands-On Team., but often I'm asked to elaborate. While I have a title and brief job description on paper, these don't entirely represent the restoration and preservation work our team does with historic properties. Therefore, I've spent some time debating how to efficiently answer the question.

We've been able to do some amazing work at the Delmonte in Elkins, Cottrill's Opera House in Thomas and the Forge in Arthurdale in addition to several other sites. Along with the restoration work we do, we frequently serve with other organizations in the area performing a variety of tasks through which I've been able to learn so much about the AFHA region. While I want to be able to promptly verbalize the scope of my service, I've also documented the work in the photographs below which illustrate some of the work of the hands-on team.

tradition of maple syrup making. There are several activities taking place over the two day period including a pancake feed, a craft show and demonstration, a woodchopping exhibition, book signings, and children's activities. There is also live music at the Pickens Opera House throughout the day and a square dance. You can view a [schedule](#) and listen to a [radio piece](#) about last year's festival. For more information about Pickens and its history, see the town [website](#).



[Lake Sherwood Recreation Area and Campground](#) in

Greembrier County is located on what was once the farmland of Richard and Jane Dixon Rider who settled there in 1790. Columbia Sulphur Springs, now defunct, was located nearby. The largest lake

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*Jenny Hart trimming in windows at the Delmonte. This image shows casing being put in around the windows so trim can be added to the outside.
Photo by Kara Baldwin.*



*At Cottrill's Opera House in Thomas, the hands-on team laid the floor and put in a wall.
Photo by Jenny Hart.*

Sherwood is a 165 acre reservoir located at an elevation of 2,700 feet. There is a campground and RV hook-ups are available as well. Three boat launches and a dock are available to the public with boats and canoes available for rent. Fishermen will be attracted to the large variety of fish in the lake, which is also one of loveliest swimming spots in West Virginia.

Do you have a suggestion for *Sites of the Month*?

Email us at:

info@appalachianforest.us

and let us know your favorite sites throughout AFHA!

Check us out on Facebook!



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The hands-on team built cat trees for their MLK service project at the Barbour County Friends of Animals shelter. Photo by Katie Booth.

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