



APPALACHIAN FOREST HERITAGE AREA

New Grant Funds Monongahela Volunteer Program

AFHA has been awarded a \$70,000 Mid-Capacity Assistance Program grant from the National Forest Foundation. With this grant, AFHA will focus over the next two years on the MVP: Monongahela Volunteer Program, while building collaborative partnerships and organizational growth. AFHA has pledged \$5000 cash plus \$5000 in-kind services for match the first year, and will need to raise \$10,000 in new cash match for the second year.

Aubrey Dickerson, AFHA AmeriCorps VISTA member, was the primary grant writer developing this proposal. The grant will move Aubrey from his VISTA position

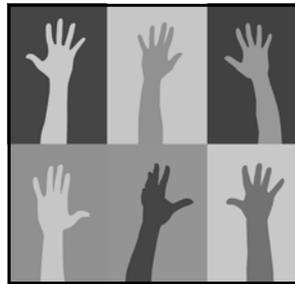
to a funded full-time staff position in the second year of the grant. Outcomes of the grant will be expansion of volunteerism with emphasis on conservation work on the Monongahela National Forest, expanded publications and outreach, building stronger collaborations, and economic development through conservation and tourism.

National Forest Foundation is the official non-profit partner of the USDA

Forest Service. With Ford Foundation support, the National Forest Foundation (NFF) has established the Mid-Capacity

Assistance Program for locally based collaborative efforts working on natural resource issues on National Forests and Grasslands. AFHA is currently working on a NFF Wilderness Stewardship Challenge grant, to help survey conditions in Wilderness Areas. (see story p3)

We have also previously completed two NFF Collaborative Assistance Program grants for organizational development.



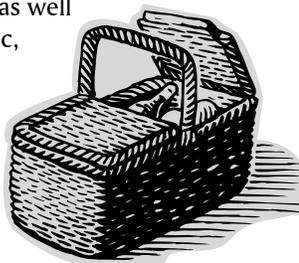
Celebrate! AFHA Volunteer and Stakeholder Picnic

AFHA invites you to attend our first annual volunteer picnic, August 21st, 2009 at Stuart Recreation Area outside of Elkins. The picnic will feature recognition for this year's volunteers, partners, and AmeriCorps members, as well as forest-themed games, picnic, music, and social time.

The event will be held from 4 pm until 8 pm, Friday August 21, in and around the large pavilion at Stuart Recreation Area (see directions at right) The picnic will be an optional potluck, with grilled meats and mushrooms provided by the AmeriCorps team. Bring a side dish if you want – or just bring yourself to join in! RSVP's are appreciated so we know how much food to plan for. Tell the park gatekeeper when you enter that you are part of the AFHA event.

Join us in celebrating the many accomplishments of our 2008-2009 AFHA AmeriCorps team and in recognizing this year's AFHA partners and volunteers. Please share this invitation with your friends and partner organization members. Feel free to come early to swim or enjoy the park. If you can't be there for

the whole time, join us for as much as you can. Whether you arrive early for games and recreation or stay late for music and campfires, there's sure to be something for everyone.



AFHA Volunteer & Stakeholder Celebration

Friday, August 21, 2009

Stuart Recreation Area
Monongahela National Forest

Approximate schedule:

- 4:00 pm forest-themed games
- 5:00 pm Recognition ceremony
- 6:00 pm Picnic dinner
- 7:00 pm Music and campfire

Directions: From Elkins take US Route 33 east for approximately 4 miles. Turn north on WV 33/8 (old US Route 33) and follow signs. Turn north on WV Route 6 and drive 1/2 mile to the entrance.

RSVP if you plan to attend: call 304-636-6182
or email: volunteerism@appalachianforest.us

AFHA AmeriCorps 2008-2009

The AFHA AmeriCorps program and its sub-sponsor partner organizations work collaboratively by placing AFHA AmeriCorps members in positions to “get things done”. As our second year nears completion, we take a look at the successes of our AmeriCorps team.

The Randolph County Community Arts center, located in downtown Elkins, continued its sponsorship of the AFHA AmeriCorps program this year. Under the direction of Beth King, executive director of RCCAC, AmeriCorps members assisted with exhibits and encouraged visitors. Iva Fabrikant, member at the Art Center, worked many days from open till close, ensuring that we could all have access to everything that the Art Center has to offer. Her projects included Sound Bites (a Saturday morning children’s activity) for the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibit Service (SITES) - New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music Exhibit, and collage panels painted by Elkins High School art students for display in the Elkins YMCA.

Stacy Lally also became a familiar face at the center by working the SITES exhibit, and collaborating with downtown merchants to create window displays that showcase American roots music. In addition to her service at the Art Center, Stacy completed several major projects for other sponsors. She began her year with a sewing project for Tucker County Connections, which helped educate fourth-graders about the flora and fauna of West Virginia by making a thematic quilt. Without missing a step, Stacy then transitioned to launching a tourism survey for West Virginia University Forestry and Extension Services. She was responsible for research and implementation for the survey mailing, as well as identifying and soliciting support from area businesses. And, as if this weren’t enough, Stacy worked with the Old Brick Playhouse to organize their library, assist cast members with hair and makeup, and even performed in their production of “The Little Match Girl”.

Chris Dudek, a recent WVU grad, helped to showcase West Virginia history by working with the Upshur County Historical Society. Utilizing his knowledge of



Chris Flags Trees at Rothkugel



Stacy and Chris help young volunteers with community Garden

computer-based library systems, Chris organized and inventoried decades of information for the Historical Society. He developed volunteer training to assist three different historical societies with improving their collections management. Chris also worked on conservation projects with the USDA Forest Service and the Monongahela National Forest, identifying NNIS

(Non-Native Invasive Species) and studying bats.

The USDA Forest Service and Monongahela National Forest have become important partners with AFHA. In addition to the NNIS work performed by Chris Dudek, Iva Fabrikant, and Erin Meade, they sponsored two full-time positions this year. Working in the supervisors’ office, Evan Burks became lovingly known as “Garlic Mustard Man” and “Weed Warrior”, for his extensive project to identify and remove the NNIS garlic mustard through implementing the “Garlic Mustard



Erin and Evan at History Day

Challenge”. Evan relished his position so much that he even bought a former Forest Service vehicle and now proudly sports around town in his “Forest Service green” Jeep.

In the Gauley District office of the USDA Forest Service Monongahela National Forest, Nathan Welch undertook the challenging role of implementing AFHA’s new Monongahela Volunteer Program. Making Nathan’s job even more difficult, he lived and worked away from the rest of the AmeriCorps team. Faced with the solitude usually experienced only by Buddhist monks, Nathan brought clarity and precision to the forefront in his projects. He worked on trail improvements and recreation sites, surveyed the newly adopted expansion to the Cranberry Wilderness Area, and recruited volunteers from near and far. These skills will serve Nathan well as AFHA is set to increase funding to the Monongahela Volunteer Program in the coming year.

There would be no forest if it weren’t for the trees. Making sure that the forest is never far from home, Erin Meade helped further the AFHA mission through the Friends of Trees sponsorship. Friends of Trees is a non-profit organization that builds community partnerships to plant, preserve, care for, and educate about urban

trees. Under the direction of Heather Biola, Erin helped to raise public awareness of the cause. Erin created a brochure and website for the Friends of Trees chapter and helped organize tree planting in downtown Elkins. Erin was also the lead AmeriCorps working on the Historic Rothkugel Plantation research project.



Darrell, Anna, and Russell re-do windows

In addition to forest conservation, AFHA works to conserve our heritage and built environment. Many of our area buildings were constructed long ago, before modern construction methods were employed, and represent the important stories of the community. The AFHA AmeriCorps historic preservation team, comprised of Joe Sabatino, Darrell Barlow, Anna Harrod, Russell Honderd, and Claudette Thorne, has worked tirelessly this year on a number of historic buildings, most notably the Darden Mill in Elkins, the Collett House in Beverly, and restoring the Whittaker Station interpretive site at Cass Scenic Railroad. Remnants of a former time and cornerstones of our forest heritage, these historically significant landmarks remind us of our past and inspire us to improve our future.



Our heritage development members focused this year on interpretation, children's programming, and tourism. Joan Pitts developed a scavenger hunt and children's booklet for Historic Beverly, while also helping with the ON TRAC and gift shop development. Kent

MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

AFHA is working with the USDA Forest Service and the Monongahela National Forest to monitor wilderness areas and restore trails and campsites. Volunteers are needed to help walk wilderness trails, recording conditions and repairing damage from too much use. Both day trips and overnights are available. This project is supported by a Wilderness Stewardship Grant from the National Forest Foundation. Your time helping counts as match for the grant!

We are geared-up and ready to go, but... WE NEED YOUR HELP! If you're up for the challenge, contact us today to make a difference in YOUR national forest.

Phone: 304-636-6182

Email: volunteerism@appalachianforest.us

Website: www.appalachianforest.us/volunteerism

Walker worked in Webster Springs on museum development for the Webster County Historical Society, and research and interpretation for Camp Caesar. Linda McCauley developed a coupon book for Randolph County tourists, and helped expand the hours for the Randolph County CVB Visitor Center.

In addition to their primary assignments, the AmeriCorps members participated in Mountain State Leaders training which included carrying out a service project from planning to completion. Our team's projects included creation of a community garden, development of the AFHA Volunteer Booth, holding an educational bike ride, and organizing a tree planting volunteer weekend that reforested over eight acres of abandoned mine land with 5440 native trees.

AFHA AmeriCorps: Enhancing Assets to Benefit Communities, is made possible by a grant from Volunteer West Virginia and the Corporation for National and Community Service. Each project is supported by match and assistance from sub-sponsor partner organizations. We will begin our third year in September with an expanded team of 17 members.



BACK ROW (L TO R): Nathan Welch, Phyllis Baxter (program director), Evan Burks, Linda McCauley, Joe Sabatino, Joan Pitts, Chris Dudek FRONT ROW: Kent Walker, Darrell Barlow, Erin Meade, Stacy Lally, Russell Honderd, Anna Harrod, Claudette Thorne. NOT PICTURED: Iva Fabrikant, Amanda Hussion

Reaching You!

To reach more stakeholders, AFHA is moving towards more use of electronic media. If you are not on our email announcement list, please email us at: newsletter@appalachianforest.us or sign up on the web site: <http://www.appalachianforest.us/listform.htm>

We promise our announcements will be of interest to you as an AFHA stakeholder.

If you do not use email or prefer to continue to get mailed newsletters – please mail us a note or call to let us know your preference, and we will ensure that you don't get left out.



See AFHA on Facebook! 

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Coming Up....

- August 21 – AFHA Volunteer picnic at Stuart Recreation Area. See front page for info.
- August 26 – Integrating Wildlife Management Decisions into Forest Management Plans; Days Hotel, Flatwoods, WV; RSVP (free registration) with June Mandell, WV Division of Forestry, 304-558-2788.
- September 23 – October 4 – 73rd Annual Mountain State Forest Festival, Elkins. Visit the AFHA exhibit!

GROWTH RINGS is the periodic newsletter of the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area, Inc., in partnership with West Virginia University Division of Forestry and Extension Services. Our mission is to work locally to conserve, develop, interpret, and promote a regional network of forest-based resources and experiences in the highlands of West Virginia and Maryland for the enjoyment and appreciation of residents and visitors in order to enhance economic and community development.



Appalachian Forest Heritage Area

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AFHA Hosts International Forest Scientists at Rothkugel

In early June, VISTA Aubrey Dickerson and AFHA Council member Rob Whetsell met with and briefed a group of eighteen international forest scientists on the importance of the Rothkugel Plantation and the role that the AFHA plays in heritage tourism.

The visiting forest scientists were from seven different countries and three different US states. They were touring West Virginia as part of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) Small-Scale Forestry post symposium tour. The symposium in Morgantown was sponsored by WVU Extension Service and Division of Forestry and Natural Resources.

Rob detailed the history and significance of the plantation, while Aubrey described what AFHA is and how its purpose is to enlighten tourists on the complex story of the forest and how it has influenced society in our region.

Both visitors and lecturers benefited from the rendezvous. Rob commented, "I learned something! The Germans told me I was pronouncing Rothkugel the wrong way, it should be 'Rot-kugel'."



Aubrey Dickerson (AFHA) discusses the role of AFHA with international forest scientists at Rothkugel.