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Progress Report - 2018

The Appalachian Trail Museum has completed its ninth season. Even those of us heavily involved in its operations have been surprised that the Museum is close to completing its first decade of operations. This year was bookended by two big projects. Because of the time, energy and expertise involved in those projects, as well as in our day to day operations, it's safe to say this was the **"Year of the Volunteer."**

The Museum is a volunteer operation. Only one member of our team draws any compensation; our manager is a part-time employee and always works more than he or she is compensated for. The rest of our team is strictly volunteers. This year many of our volunteers were truly exceptional and we will highlight their efforts in the letter.

This year, at our year-end Volunteer Dinner, Linda Patton, our founding librarian was named recipient of the **President's Award**. The library has been in the works for many years with much of the work taking place in Linda's home in Florida. This year that effort came to fruition with the establishment of our research library in the spring. Linda and David Crooks, who also contributed a big part of the collection, came to our spring board meeting in April and delivered their books. Linda then set to work, spending two months on site organizing our 1,600 - book collection as well as many other items. Roger Williamson, who had run the book department for Campmor, also contributed his large personal collection to the library and many others have contributed volumes.

Many of the books do not have a Library of Congress number. What that means is that the A.T. Museum library has **more A.T. books** than the Library of Congress or anybody else. The library is housed on the top floor of the Museum and special permission is required to use it. It is built to academic standards and it is our hope that professional historians will utilize the library as a research resource. Each year we are contacted by graduate students and professors and many have visited us. There have been many master's and doctoral theses on the A.T. and we hope that the Museum will be an increasingly valuable stop for historians. We also will open the library to others who are seriously pursuing research topics on the A.T.

Ron Bungay and his crew completed construction on the library including eight large handmade bookcases and a sliding barn door for security. Ron's crew spent much of the year preparing the second floor of the Old Mill for occupancy next year. This floor in the next few years will become the new main floor of the Museum and eventually we will relocate the greeter's desk and store there as well as use it to house many exhibits.

Another major project that will change the face of the Museum is a landscaping project inside our ramp to the second floor. Late in the summer, Lorrie Preston, one of the most active volunteers in the Pennsylvania hiking community, proposed a new garden to attract butterflies and featuring native plants found along the A.T. Not one to sit on an idea, Lorrie and her crew soon were spreading mulch, placing stones and otherwise pursuing the project. This project will also involve interpretative signs and materials and will evolve in future seasons.

In May we were back at Allenberry for our **8th Hall of Fame banquet**. This year's inductees were Bob Peoples, legendary operator of Kincora Hostel; Elizabeth Levers, who was responsible for relocation of much of the A.T. in New York; Photographer George Masa, who with his friend Horace Kephart, helped to establish Great Smoky Mountain National Park and the A.T. route through it; and Bill Kemsley, founder of Backpacker Magazine and the American Hiking Society, and a leading advocate for the A.T. in the 1970s. He was also behind Hikeanation, which will be described below. Also, present were Museum Volunteer Nan Dragon 'N Fly Reisinger, who at 74 became the oldest woman to thru-hike the A.T. and Dale "Graybeard" Saunders, who at 82 became the oldest man to thru-hike.

At the banquet, Bob Proudman, was honored with the **Lifetime Achievement Award**. Late in the summer, Bob developed cancer and passed away in October. He had begun doing trail work on the A.T. in 1965 and retired after more than 50 years of service to the A.T. He was the authority on trail design and maintenance and participated in many battles to complete and preserve the A.T. Perhaps no one left more of a mark on the ground of the A.T. than Bob.

In August, Dan and Kimberly Shaffer organized a program at the Museum marking the **70th anniversary of Earl Shaffer's pioneering thru-hike**. Dan is a nephew of Earl and his daughter, Kimberly, is a grand-niece. Both hiked large sections of the A.T. this year and Kimberly is hoping to complete the trail. The celebration included an appearance by Shaffer biographers Maurice Forrester Jr. and David Donaldson, authors of *A Grip on the Mane of Life*; former ATC executive director Ron Tipton; current chair, Sandi Marra; and Museum President Larry Luxenberg. The occasion also marked the 100th anniversary of Earl Shaffer's birth. His life and achievements are well documented in the Museum's exhibits.

In June we celebrated the 25th anniversary of National Trails Day with a **Children's Festival** organized by Barry Flicker. Barry is a legendary volunteer, traveling hours to the Museum to cut the grass on our large grounds. At the Children's Festival there were games and crafts. We also inaugurated the **"Half Pint Challenge,"** for children to eat a half pint of ice cream. This is a tribute to the nearby Half Gallon Challenge for thru-hikers and the inspiration of Margy Schmidt. Children who completed the Challenge were awarded an inscribed small wooden spoon. Museum Manager Nate Shank had acquired a Good Humor Freezer and Barry and Museum Treasurer Jay Sexton did the scooping. Nate is an experienced children's nature educator and led the children through a series of games and activities.

Less glamorous but quite important for the Museum's future, Margy Schmidt led a year-long strategic planning effort culminating in a thorough and beautifully documented **strategic plan**. Margy served as the Museum's first manager and put in place many of our procedures and is responsible for much of the Museum's graphics excellence. The ambitious strategic plan calls for making the Museum a world class institution and focuses on the collection, physical infrastructure, financial sustainability, operational excellence and visitor services and education. The planning process was an opportunity to appreciate our past successes as well as focus on addressing deficiencies in our current operations and opportunities for future growth.

Museum Vice President Gwen Loose at year-end had **five new exhibits** underway. These exhibits will be unveiled in a **Grand Opening on Sunday May 5**, the day after the 2019 Hall of Fame Banquet. In 2019 the banquet will be at the Army Heritage Center in Carlisle. Gwen has been responsible for all of the Museum's exhibits, including the first one, which opened at ATC headquarters in Harpers Ferry in June 2007. Gwen also gave a talk, part of the South Mountain lecture series, on her book on women A.T. pioneers. The book is being published by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.

The upcoming exhibits include a children's exhibit on a **Night on the A.T.** complete with night sounds; one on **building the Trail in Maine**; a tribute to **Walkin Jim Stoltz**, an early Museum backer: one on the 50th anniversary of the National Trail System; and one on **Hikeanation**, the coast to coast walk inspired by new Hall of Famer Bill Kemsley. That walk, which began in San Francisco and ended more than a year later at the Atlantic Ocean, included more than 500 miles on the A.T. The trip increased awareness of long-distance backpacking and led to the establishment of the American Discovery Trail.

The exhibit on Blazing the Trail in Maine is on the wall on the top floor, adjacent to the library. But much of the flooring will be removed and the exhibit will be visible from the floor below. The principal artifact in that exhibit is a folding kayak (Folboat), belonging to trail founder Myron Avery, who used the boat to scout the trail in Maine. The boat was donated by Myron's son Hal Avery.

Walkin Jim Stoltz hiked the A.T. in Maine in 1974 and never stopped backpacking and composing music about the wilderness and hiking and crusading to promote and preserve that wilderness. Jim held a fundraising concert for the Museum in Carlisle that helped to launch the Museum. He was a revered figure in hiking circles and one of the most experienced hikers of his era.

Another new item in the Museum is a bust of trail pioneer **Ed Garvey**. Sculptor Tom Logsdon so far has done seven busts for the Museum. We are also working to establish a photography archive and an oral history project through the collaboration of Dan Innamorato and Joe Harold. For the book nook in the Children's Museum, we received a quilt for the wall from Carol Podlaski featuring birds and prominent features of each state.

This year we refashioned our donation jar. It is now a wooden bear with a sign that says Please Feed Me. While the bear is always hungry for cash donations --- as are most Museums --- we want visitors to keep in mind that they shouldn't feed real bears or attempt to get close to them.

Whether it was the bear or our hardworking membership secretary, Robert "Red Wolf of da Smokeys" Croyle, this has been a **record year for donations**. Late in the season we received two large donations totaling \$40,000. We also received many smaller donations for the library including donations for the eight bookcases and for a highly specialized vacuum cleaner.

We are in the midst of a multi-year fundraising campaign and we thank our supporters for their generosity. The campaign, which runs through 2021, has a goal of raising \$350,000 and will ensure that we can complete all the exhibits for the Old Mill and fund our ongoing operations.

Red Wolf keeps our members up to date with a weekly email report with news of the Museum, the A.T. and many beautiful trail photographs. If you have items of interest, please send them to him at the email below. There have also been more than 300,000 views of his thread on whiteblaze.net.

Besides donations of money and artifacts, the Museum especially treasures individual volunteers whose efforts on exhibits, construction, greeting visitors and so much else keep the Museum open. Individuals from far away are welcome to spend a few days, a week or longer as a volunteer at the Museum and getting to know our special part of Pennsylvania.

As always, thank you for your support.

Larry Luxenberg

President

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