

TRAIL BLAZER

NEWSLETTER OF THE ROANOKE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CLUB

Winter 2023

The Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club is a recreational hiking association of volunteers who preserve and improve the Appalachian Trail as the nation's premier, continuous, long-distance footpath.



Ridgerunner Salute

THANK YOU, SUZANNE !

by Pete Irvine

The Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club board and membership salutes and thanks Suzanne Neal as she completes her second season as The Catawba Ridgerunner.

Always positive, pleasant, persistent, pro-active, and persevering; Suzanne has been the face of the A.T. From April to November, she engaged thousands of hikers, backpackers, trail-runners, dog-walkers, boulderers, curiosity-seekers, and all other users of the popular stretch of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail be-

Ridgerunners fall into two categories, paid and volunteer. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy offers paid, seasonal positions along certain high-use sections of the AT, including Roanoke's "Triple Crown." Alternately, the RATC trains volunteers and assigns them similar duties which they execute as they are available. Ridgerunning originated as a response to heavy use and misuse of the trail along certain sections in particular.

tween Dragon's Tooth and Tinker Cliffs in western-central Virginia.

In addition to her sizable personal on-Trail efforts, Suzanne also supports RATC's McAfee Knob Task Force (MKTF, including compiling and sharing their reports) and engages with staff from the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (her employer), the National Park Service, Roanoke County Fire and Rescue, and the USDA Forest Service, from April through November. She has engaged, informed,

and educated thousands of visitors to this heavily-used, approximately 35-mile section of the A.T.; her engagement has resulted in increased visitor safety, improved visitor actions and behavior, fewer calls for emergency response, and much-reduced impacts to natural, cultural, and Trail resources.

RATC salutes Suzanne - we are grateful to benefit, along with many Trail users, from her and her efforts !

In Memoriam: John Miller

By Diana Christopulos and Jack Miller

RATC members were very sad to learn of the December 1, 2022 passing of long-time volunteer John Miller. He was a hike leader, maintainer, board member and a soul brave enough to lead the committee that revised our Bylaws in 2016. He was kind, wise and very thoughtful. His son Jack has provided a wonderful perspective on John's life.



This is: (l to r) back row Dad, his sister Deb, me, my wife Laura, bottom row my son Luke and my son Jacob

Dad was the middle child of a journeyman electrician, growing up in Virginia, Delaware and Pennsylvania. During a six-year stint in the Navy, he discovered he had a knack for computers. After his discharge, he got married, had his only child (me) and went to Christopher Newport College at night while working full time, then on to Old Dominion University for an MBA. In 1984, we moved from Hampton to Salem where he took a newly created position of IT

Manager at the Salem VA Medical Center. He worked at the VA for the next 27 years, all but the last couple of years as the head of the VA's constantly growing IT department.

The only vacations I remember taking as a kid were trips to the North Carolina mountains, which included long stretches of driving along the Blue Ridge Parkway. I LOVED these trips because Dad always wanted to stop at overlooks with hiking trails, and I got to go

with him down those trails. I lost interest in high school, but once I got a little older we started up again, hitting McAfee Knob, Dragon's Tooth, Tinker Cliffs, and lots of other spots. After I got married my wife Laura and I would meet him between where we lived in Mount Airy NC and Salem to hike, with Rock Castle Gorge a favorite destination.

One hike, in particular, that stands out was a long hike we did about

20 years ago somewhere in Botetourt County on the AT. We parked my car at the end of our hike and rode in Dad's truck back to the trailhead. Well, I left my keys in Dad's truck when we locked it up and headed out for our hike. About two miles from the end I realized what I'd done. I took Dad's keys and started running back to the trailhead (I was in much better shape back then). A couple of miles into my run back down the trail, I ran into another hiker. He asked if I needed anything, and I explained the situation. No problem, he said, I'm parked about a quarter mile up the trail. He GAVE me his truck keys and just said bring the truck back to the end of the trail, where he'd be waiting. That stands out to me as an example of the kindness, trust and respect folks have for each other in the AT community.

After he retired from the VA, he got very active with the RATC, learning proper backcountry trail maintenance techniques, learning how to use the quiet equipment required for wilderness areas, and educating my two boys on proper hiking etiquette and care for trails (no shortcuts on switchbacks!!). I think he so appreciated the work others had done before him to make all these beautiful trails in all these beautiful places, he wanted to do his part

Probably my favorite memories about Dad hiking, though, are from COVID. My mom passed away in mid-March of 2020, and we couldn't get together in the usual way to grieve or support each other. My family has a small cabin off the Parkway near Sparta, NC, and we were spending a good bit of time there during the lock down. So my wife, kids and I would meet Dad at least monthly in spots along the Parkway between our place and Salem, give



This is at Stone Mountain State Park in NC. Dad is in red, then there's my oldest son Luke, my wife Laura and my youngest son Jacob. You can see how we were social-distancing.

each other big "air hugs" and go hike a trail and chat. Even if we only got to see each other for a couple of hours, it was way better than Zoom, and we all got to get out and do something we enjoyed.

Those hikes were a lifeline for me during a really hard time.

John asked that people make donations to RATC in lieu of sending flowers. Donations [can be made online](#) or via a check mailed to the club treasurer:

Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club
PO Box 12282
Roanoke, VA 24024-2282

Please note that gifts should be designated as memorial donations in honor of John Miller.

Board Members and Officers		
President	Bill Neilan	president@ratc.org
Vice President	Josh Wolsey	vicepresident@ratc.org
Secretary	Susan Terwilliger	secretary@ratc.org
Treasurer	Janice Metzger	treasurer@ratc.org
Membership Coordinator	Cathy Butler	membership@ratc.org
Shelter Supervisor	Homer Witcher	sheltersupervisor@ratc.org
Shelter Supervisor	Therese Witcher	sheltersupervisor@ratc.org
Trail Maintenance *	Mike Vaughn	trailsupervisor@ratc.org
Hikemaster	Jennifer Frye	hikemaster@ratc.org
Newsletter Editor	Ron Bradbury	blazer@ratc.org
Conservation Supervisor	Tom McAvo	conservationsupervisor@ratc.org
Land Management Supervisor	-vacant-	landmanagement@ratc.org
Counselor	Jason Thompson	counselor1@ratc.org
Counselor	Brian Boggs	counselor2@ratc.org
Counselor	Brendle Wolfe	counselor3@ratc.org
Counselor	Julio Stephens	counselor3@ratc.org
McAfee Knob Task Force Liaison	Dee Case	casedee@sbcglobal.net
Webmaster	Jill Pennington	webmaster@ratc.org
Roanoke College Liaison	Conner McBane	cmcbane@appalachiantrail.org
RATC Archivist	Diana Christopulos	
ATC President's Leadership Circle	Diana Christopulos	

The Rest of the Story:
A.T. Hall-of-Famers with
strong RATC ties

By Diana Christopulos

When the Appalachian Trail Hall of Fame inducted three people with strong ties to our club on October 1, 2022, the Roanoke Times ran a nice [formal commentary](#) about the event. But there is more to the story, and I thought our members would like to hear it. Tom Speaks and Jim and Molly Denton joined Charles Parry (RATC Trail Supervisor, 1976-2010) and Grandma Gatewood (RATC member and guest speaker) as Hall-of-Fame (HoF) members. ~~~



Photo courtesy of USFS

Tom Speaks, who served as Supervisor of the George Washington & Jefferson National Forest, became the first U.S. Forest Service staff member ever inducted into the HoF. That’s a bit surprising, since 47 percent of the entire A.T. is on national forest lands, and the staff have been great partners to clubs like the RATC since at least 1940. I was looking forward to seeing Tom at the event, but Covid prevented him and his wife from attending. Instead, former Appalachian Trail Conservancy president Ron Tipton told some great stories about how Tom was able to convince an extremely reluctant landowner to turn over a large acreage to the Cherokee National Forest in North Carolina. Tom’s winning strategy: going out and baling hay with him!

As Pete Irvine, another former USFS employee and current RATC volunteer, has noted, “Tom was a champion of and warrior for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. It is very fitting that Tom is the first career USDA Forest Service employee selected for the A.T. Hall of Fame. He cut his teeth on the Trail in his first USFS job as a seasonal A.T. Ridgerunner in south-west Virginia. He re-energized the stalled USFS land acquisition program for the Trail in the 1990s, then served as Forest Supervisor on two A.T. national forests: the Cherokee in Tennessee (150 A.T. miles), and the George Washington & Jefferson National Forests in Virginia (335 A.T. miles).”

Tom’s leadership during the early days of the Atlantic Coast and Mountain Valley pipelines - questioning their impacts on water quality, plant and animal life and other aspects of the forests - [drew the wrath](#) of the over-the-top industry blog, Marcellus Drilling News, which has also characterized landowners and others opposed to MVP as [“leftist radicals.”](#)

I caught up with Tom after the induction. Gracious as always, he said, “I was surprised and humbled when Ron [Tipton] called me with the news, especially when he listed many of the names of past inductees. Many of those individuals I personally know, have worked with and respect greatly for their tireless dedication to the AT experience. How fortunate I was to be surrounded with a small but highly effective team of individuals that were the best the agency had to complete the difficult land protection task we were given, and they were all dedicated to doing so.”

We are forever grateful for his service and the outstanding staff he attracted.



Molly Denton with Jimmy, Shirley, and Michael on the rocks at King’s Ravine c. 1961. Photo courtesy of Shirley Denton

What’s it like to be the children of Appalachian Trail legends? That’s what I asked Shirley and Mike Denton, whose parents Jim and Molly Denton were also inducted into the HoF.

In the early 1950s, along with Tom and Charlene Campbell, the Dentons were leaders in moving the A.T. 170 miles to the west, away from the Blue Ridge Parkway and other roads and onto better-protected U.S. Forest Service lands. A World War II veteran who became a chemist at the American Viscose rayon plant in Roanoke, Jim soon became an RATC leader. The A.T. had fallen into disrepair during the war and in a 1949 speech at the RATC annual meeting he declared that “it is safe to say that the section [of the A.T.] southwest from Roanoke to Iron Mountain near Damascus is the worst to be found in the whole length of the trail.” He

vowed to lead the change effort, convincing an ailing Myron Avery that RATC volunteers could do the job. By 1955 the relocation was declared complete. Jim served as RATC president four times and filled many other roles in the club.

Molly was the first woman elected as RATC’s president (1952). She also helped organize a series of public square dances to fund the trail relocation and took leadership roles

in editing the newsletter, judging photography contests, and organizing club entertainment. Oh, and she had three children between 1949 and 1954.

(It should be noted that Tom and Charlene Campbell were central to all of these changes as well, and that the Campbells and Dentons were close friends for the rest of their lives.)

Jim accepted a transfer to the Viscose plant in Front Royal in 1958, and the Dentons became perpetual leaders in the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club. The Jim and Molly Denton Shelter in Northern Virginia is named in their honor.

Two of the Denton children - Shirley and Mike (with his wife, Courtney) - were able to attend the HoF induction on a dark, wet, cold day.

We sat at the halfway point of the A.T. and, instead of downing half a gallon of ice cream, drank a lot of hot coffee while they told their tales. Here are some of the highlights:

Dad’s name was more prominent, but Mom deserves credit for raising 3 children! We were “dragged on the Trail” even into our teenage years. Dad was analytical and precise - a chemist. He authored two hiking guidebooks for the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club - [Current Hikes in Shenandoah National Park](#) and a guide to hikes in the Massanutten area.

Mom was very loving and also wrote two books - a [Guide to Wildflowers of the Potomac Appalachians](#) and [Guide #7 - AT in Northern Shenandoah Mountains](#). She was also a swimming instructor and donated money to help build a pool in Front Royal, where the bathhouse was named after her. Molly received a master’s degree in chemistry from Cornell University, and her older sister received a doctorate from Stanford in one of the sciences. She was outgoing and made friends easily. Dad was devoted to his family. He quit smoking when they had kids.

Shirley recalled an “extremely ill-advised” winter hike with the Campbells when Mike was very little and Shirley was perhaps 10 years old. She was wearing rubber boots, and the snow was so deep it came over the top. Jim protected Mike, carrying him back to the car and dropping out of the hike. No such luck for Shirley, who was not offered that option. She believes she got frost bite, but none of the adults seemed worried about her - and she still remembers it!

The Dentons loved hiking above all else. Dad’s passion was the AT, Mom’s was the outdoors. Their

whole life was AT-centric. That is why they accepted the transfer from Roanoke to Front Royal. Dad also helped build the “Big Blue Trail,” which is now the [Tuscarora Trail](#).

At the ceremony itself, Mike noted that the Denton legacy was that stewardship is a value shared by their three children and five grandchildren in Florida, New Mexico and Oregon. They are all advocates for the natural world.

Shirley added that, despite his love of hiking, “My dad could not conceive that anyone would thru hike the AT. They took us to all of the interesting parts.”



Photo: Diana Christopulos

The A.T. Hall of Fame is a program of the Appalachian Trail Museum in Pine Grove Furnace State Park. Details about the museum and the Hall of Fame, including a video of the induction ceremony are available on the museum’s website, <https://www.atmuseum.org/>. The Denton children begin speaking [here](#).

Trail Supervisor’s Report

By Mike Vaughn

This will be my final report as Trail Supervisor for the club. After four years in the position, I am stepping down to spend more time hiking and traveling. I will greatly miss working on a regular basis with all of the dedicated trail maintainers on the trail. I will continue to serve as a maintainer on a section of the AT. I am pleased to report that the number of maintainers has grown over the past four years from 45 to 120. I am very grateful to all of the new club members that have stepped up to help maintain our section of the AT and its side trails. I think the addition of all of these maintainers has made a significant impact on the condition of the trail. I can tell from my hikes out there that we as a club are doing a great job on keeping up with clipping and blowdown removal along the trail.

Probably the thing I will miss the most is the camaraderie of the workers on the Monday work hikes. When I took over four years ago we increased our work hikes to once per week. We were able to accomplish a great deal in a relatively short period of time while also having a lot

of fun. Over the past four years we had over 140 work hikes. Among other accomplishments, we rehabbed seven bridges and installed over 1,100 steps. It was usually very hard work each day we were out there but I think we all found the work very rewarding. It is a very good feeling to see a nice, sturdy set of steps where there was a rock jumble at the beginning of the day. I want to thank all who participated in these work hikes, whether in the heat or cold the volunteers always stepped up.

As many of you will recall, the club coordinated a major rehab project on the McAfee fire road last February. The 2.5 miles from route 311 to the AT crossing were worked on. The project entailed regrading the fire road and putting in over 30 drainage ditches. Pending National Park Service approval, we are hoping to work on the remaining 1.5 mile portion of the fire road from the AT crossing to near Campbell Shelter. Club member Pete Irvine will again lead the project. The project will take about two weeks and should be completed this spring.



Top: Mike Vaughn and Ray Gaut took a plunge to upgrade bridge railings on a trail bridge near Troutville, while (bottom) Jim Webb and Mark Farrell stayed dry working on the same bridge.

Over 20 club members helped on this project last year. We will be proving ad-

ditional information about volunteering for the new road work at a later date.

In November the club received a \$9,200 grant from the Virginia license plate program. These funds are being used to purchase tools, several picnic tables, a shelter roof, and plexi-glass for kiosks. In addition, it funded crosscut training classes for our maintainers. We will also be renting a storage unit for tools and equipment with these funds.

Also in November one of the footbridges north of Craig Creek sustained major damage. It had to be removed. Because the footbridge was in the Brushy Mountain Wilderness Area, it is uncertain if the USFS will allow it to be replaced. Generally, structures such as bridges are not permitted in federal wilderness areas. Hikers should be cautious in this area following heavy rains. This area is subject to flooding.

Finally, I’d like to welcome the following new maintainers that have started since October 1. Here is a list of them and the sections they are working on:

- Brad Shearer
- Dragon’s Tooth Trail
- Ray Gaut
- South of Rte. 42 to Rte 630
- Jonathan McGlumphy
- North Mountain Trail, Route 311 to Grouse Trail



From L to R: Pete Irvine, SAWS Wilderness Specialist Lauren King, Ray Gaut, Dave Grimm, Gary “Goose” Moore. **Behind the camera:** Eric Giebelstein

See, Saws!

By Pete Irvine

It wasn’t officially an RATC event, but 5 RATC members made up most of the work crew on War Spur Loop Trail (USFS Trail #68) in Mountain Lake Wilderness in Giles County on Saturday, December 12. This work hike was hosted

by our friends at SAWS: Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards. The workers split into two 3-person crews, each equipped with a vintage crosscut saw (either “Chopstick” or “Maleficent”), axes, loppers, McLeods, fire rakes, and folding saws. They cleared 12 blowdowns (mostly oaks killed years ago by gypsy moths), and

cleaned 20 drainage dips to continue to move water off the trail. It was a “day in the clouds” with zero visibility, mist, steady drizzle, and chilly temperatures at 3800’ elevation. This work hike was organized and led by Eric Giebelstein, SAWS Deputy Director and RATC maintainer and section crosscut sawyer.

Continued>>



In areas of national forests (and also national parks) that are designated as federal Wilderness (or Wilderness Areas), the use of motorized equipment or mechanical transport is prohibited. In these areas, traditional tools including crosscut saws, axes, and swing blades (weed whips) are used for trail maintenance instead of chainsaws and weed eaters. In all other areas on the national forests, motorized and mechanized equipment is allowed for trailwork.

The RATC section of the A.T. Includes portions of three (3) Wildernesses. From south to north, these are Peters Mountain Wilderness, Mountain Lake Wilderness, and Brush Mountain East Wilderness. Of the ~120 total A.T. miles that make up RATC's section, about 13 miles is within Wilderness.

For folks interested in learning more about official Wilderness, the best source is the Wilderness Connect website at www.wilderness.net



President's Report: Happy Trails!

by Bill Neilan

Let me begin by wishing everyone a Happy New Year!

We have much to look forward to this year:

- Some new board members
- First full year of the McAfee Knob Trailhead Shuttle
- Some exciting changes around the Catawba Shelter area
- More improvements to the Catawba Mountain fire road
- Our annual Corn Boil
- More recreational hikes
- GoFest
- The ever-necessary maintenance hikes
- Things we don't even know about yet, that challenge us and grow us and bring us together

This will be my final entry to the Blazer as my term as president of the RATC ends this March. Naturally I started writing with the notion that I would say THANK YOU to each person who helped me along during my time on the board. However, I quickly realized that if I named each and every volunteer individually, we would need to have

a separate edition of the Blazer. A very long list of dedicated volunteers do their part to keep the RATC as one of the best AT clubs on the trail, and you have offered your support and encouragement to me as president. Instead, let me say "thank you" to people by their roles instead:

"Thank you" to the RATC Board members, counselors and ex-officio members that worked with me.

"Thank you" to the trail maintainers that keep our 120 miles of AT safe and wild.

"Thank you" to each and every Volunteer Ridge Runner that took the time to monitor our Triple Crown so that hikers were safe and ready for the hike.

"Thank you" to the Hike Leaders that attended Hike Leader training and then lead so many recreational hikes.

"Thank you" to all the members that are unable to participate in activities but still maintain their membership and financial support for the club; without your

help we could never afford to buy tools and materials.

Finally, "thank you" to the rest of our readers and club members; you are the people who make the RATC what it is that it would be impossible for me to name you all even in groups.

I am honored to have had a chance to serve as club President.

I cannot wait to see you all on the trail or at a club activity!



In Memoriam: Joe Kelley



It is with great sadness we note the death of longtime club member and trail maintainer, Joe Kelley. Joe was just 55 when he died in October.

Along with his brother Brian, Joe maintained a six-mile section of the AT near Kelly Knob for over 20 years. Joe and Brian got involved volunteering with RATC in 1994 under then-trail supervisor Charles Parry. They co-maintained a section of trail from near Wapiti Shelter to just past Doc's Knob Shelter from 1995-99, then took over maintaining the Kelly Knob section in 1999 when the previous maintainer, Gary Close, passed away.

Joe led the Student Conservation Association Crew that built John's Spring Shelter in 2004 and finished the work with Frank Haranzo

when the SCA crew's term was over. Frank donated the money for the shelter construction and he maintains that Joe's position as a licensed contractor was instrumental in that shelter being finished. Joe will be sorely missed by his family and all of his many friends.

In the months since his passing, the RATC has received a number of anonymous donations in the name of Joe Kelley. Unable to thank anonymous donors directly, club President Bill Neilan would like to publicly express his heartfelt gratitude for your generosity via this newsletter.

Hike Reports

By Ron Bradbury

AT over Brush Mountain, Rte 620 to Rte 621
December 30, 2022
7.9 miles
Hikers: Ron and Keli Bradbury

A few days after some brutally cold weather, a forecast for sunny skies and temperatures approaching 60 degrees compelled us to sneak in one last hike for 2022.

We dropped a vehicle at the small trailhead along route 621 and then started our northbound hike from Route 620 at 10AM. We left the trailhead just behind Ranger and his human, who were headed up to the Audie Murphy memorial and back. Along the way, we met two other groups heading to the monument, but otherwise the trail was quite empty. We did see some hunters along the sides of the roads and were aware through out the day of random gun shots in the distance.

As noted in the Trail Master report, a bridge over a small creek was removed after sustaining damage last fall; we followed some temporary orange plastic ribbons to a set of stepping stones, but the creek was dry a few feet up from the former bridge anyway.



The remnants of a bridge over a small stream north of Craig Creek are a few feet from an easy crossing.

National Forest Service policies restrict new construction in Wilderness Areas and thus the trail here may be permanently rerouted a few yards to the stepping-stones.

About two miles into the ascent up Brush Mountain, we were warm enough to remove a few layers. This 7.9 mile hike basically ascends for a little over 3 miles, and then descends gradually until a steeper descent over the last half mile. While the initial ascent is steady, the grade is not oppressive; with the bulk of the ascent behind us, we sat on a bench to enjoy our lunch.

The Audie Murphy memorial was a necessary stop, and we paused to honor his memory and service.



We wrapped up our hike about 3:00. On the drive to our start, picked a hitchhiking hiker who needed a ride to his car; he and a friend were up from NC to log some local AT miles.



AT “Sawtooth Ridge”, Rte 311 to Rte 624
January 2, 2023
5.9 miles

Hikers: Ron and Keli Bradbury

After seeing lots of bear hunters during a hike a few days earlier, it occurred to us that perhaps our understanding of bear habits was somewhat uninformed. Why would bear hunters be hunting bears if bears were hibernating now, as we believed?

Our naiveté was confirmed when just before we started hiking we saw a large black bear amble along and head up into nearby woods. Clearly this bear was not hiber-



nating. According to the [Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources](#), “Depending on weather and food conditions, black bears enter their winter dens between October and January...” Further, bear hunting season is open in much of this area until January 7 and so both bear and hunters were just doing what they do.

Although the weather on this hike was again quite warm for January, the alternating presence and absence of direct sunshine and wind drove us to switch several times between winter attire (complete multiple layers, hats and gloves) and summer attire, e.g. short-

sleeved t-shirts. The east side of ridges was warm in the sun while the west side was shaded and chilly; when clouds rolled in and the wind picked up, winter again felt like winter.

After the ups and downs of the ridge, the trail opens into several cow pastures. Curious cows eyed us and announced their presence, but seemed otherwise disinterested as we passed by. A final ascent and descent through some woods took us back to our car in ample time to head into Roanoke for lunch.





Shelter Supervisor's Report

By Homer and Therese Witcher
Jenny Knob shelter - Install new picnic table
October 8, 1022
Attending: Therese Witcher (leader), Adam Day, Kathryn Plunkett, Jim Webb, David Grimm, Ray Gaut, Jason Thompson, Walter Shroyer

Last spring, a tree broke off next to the shelter and landed on the picnic table and fire grate. The damage to the picnic table included one leg broken off and the 6x6 frame on the other side cracked halfway through.

We had hoped to have 10 people to carry in all of the lumber for the new picnic table, but these 8 man-



aged to carry in everything in one trip. Jason did come back twice to help the two ladies further down the trail with their heavy load and it was much appreciated.

Once we had everything at the site, we split into two groups with one group dismantling the old table and the other group constructing the new picnic table.

Work was rapidly completed and everyone was off the mountain by 1 PM. Another project was successfully completed due to having an outstanding crew.



Catawba Shelter - add a step
December 3, 2022
Homer, Therese and Bennett Witcher, Adam Day

Suzanne Neal reported in her last weekly Ridge Runner report that Catawba Shelter needed an addi-

tional step. We hiked in a few days later to evaluate the situation. We discovered that the risers under the bottom step were rotting and that due to soil erosion it was over 15 inches from that step to the ground.



We recruited our son, Bennett and our neighbor, Adam and on December 3rd, we carried in three 3-step risers and two 10-foot 2x6 boards. In 2.5 hours, we had attached the new risers and steps and removed some roots and rocks that were in front of the steps. We also repaired the picnic table, but this is only temporary. The plan is to build a new picnic table before spring.

Membership Coordinator Report

By Cathy Butler

The Go Outside Festival (GoFest) is an annual three-day celebration of everything outdoors in Virginia's Blue Ridge. Historically held at River's Edge Park, this year's festival was moved to downtown Roanoke on October 14-16, 2022. The event had 32, 000 attendees and although there was no cost to attend, it generated over \$2 million in total spending.

RATC members were present and we shared much information about our club with festival attendees. At our booth we had handouts on the club, the Triple Crown hikes, AT maps, etc. We also promoted the new McAfee shuttle. We had RATC hats and t-shirts for sale. Several club members were available throughout the festival to answer questions about our recreational hikes, work hikes and even our monthly happy hour.

Our assigned spot was in upper Elmwood Park on the sidewalk in closest to Elm Avenue. At first we thought there would not be much foot traffic because this was the far edge of the festival layout which spanned most of downtown. We quickly found out that we were incorrect - there was a steady flow of people by the booth the entire weekend. Our candy bowl drew kids to our booth and subsequently gave us a chance to chat with their parents about the club. In full disclosure, the candy bowl drew in adults of all ages as well. The most exciting GoFest news is that we signed up 37 new/renewing members to our club!

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) donated three Hydro Flask packs to us to use as prize giveaways. We gave one away each day by drawing a name from the new/renewing members from the day.



Friday and Saturday's winners were so excited that they came back to the booth to pick up their prize.

Thanks to the ATC for their wonderful partnership. And congratulations to Adam, Jim and Beth for winning one of these cool packs.

A big thank you to the many volunteers - Bill, Suzanne, Josh, Pam, Joy, Bruce, Jeffery, Susan, Brian, Bryon, Sue, Moussa, Jess, Mirna, John, Kathy, Greg, Katrina and Chuck.

We're already looking forward to the GoFest 2023 scheduled for October 13-15, 2023.

I hope to see you there!

TRAIL BLAZER
Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club
PO Box 12282
ROANOKE VA 24024-2282

CHANGE SERVICE
REQUESTED

Roanoke Appalachian
Trail Club Application
New and Renewal

- IF ACCEPTED FOR MEMBERSHIP, I AGREE TO:*
- 1. Support the objectives of the RATC
 - 2. Abide by the rules of the national and state parks and forests
 - 3. Respect the interests of the owner when on private property
 - 4.Keep trails and woodlands free of litter, and
 - 5. Abide by the instructions of the leader on group hikes and trips

Name(s)	New Member Packet Fee:	\$5	
Address	Individual # of years	x \$15	
	Family # of years	x \$20	
City	State	Zip	Individual life membership x \$250
			Family life membership x \$300
Phone		Donation	\$
Email		Total Amount Enclosed	\$

Dues are payable in January of each year. Make checks to “RATC” or use PayPal at ratc.org

Please send dues and any questions about money or membership to:
Treasurer, PO Box 12282, Roanoke, VA 24024
RATC is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization. Membership dues are tax-deductible.

Please Note: To save costs, the Trail Blazer is provided electronically via email/link. Paper copies may be obtained via mail. Request a paper copy via treasurer@ratc.org or by calling 540-521-5435