

PATH AGATE August 2014

PATH's All Girls Appalachian Trail Experience [AGATE] began as we came together in Base-camp Friday afternoon [8/15] on Brushy Mountain in Southwestern Virginia. For supper we shared a pot of Potato Soup, many tasty accompaniments to that, some great Breads, plus Watermelon and Brownies for dessert. This year's Campfire Discussion centered primarily around [1] the ideal timing for AGATE and [2] the best way to let others know of our Mission. When asked how we can accomplish the latter with her peers, thirteen-year-old Grace replied in one word, "Facebook"! Kelly worked [locally in Bland] until after 10PM and joined us quite late at the Campfire; she will be attending Wytheville Community College this fall and hopefully will be able to post Fliers there. Diana will post in Bland at ABB, the public Library and the US Post Office and Kathryn will design the poster which we hope to have ready for the up-coming event at Heartwood. We finished out the evening by drawing for a wide variety of door prizes.

Diana and Kathryn led our Saturday [8/16] Trail Assessment/Maintenance Hike on the Appalachian and Trail Boss Trails. The portion of the AT we were on was in excellent condition; the Trail Boss Trail was adequate for a Blue-blazed Trail although some side-hilling could be done about 2/3 of the way down to VA-615. We picked up trash as we hiked but could not do anything about the mattress at one of the camping areas on the Appalachian Trail; this is located just before beginning to ascend northbound into the Rhododendron Thicket.

The most memorable thing about this hike was "seeing" through the eyes of our youth. We stopped frequently and took numerous photos of the unusual and beautiful things they [and we] found in nature. Watch the PATH gallery for many of these including Kathryn's 'yellow bug'! Following the hike Diana and Kathryn helped Hope and Faith enjoy time at the creek-side. Later back at Base-camp Diana took Grace for a visit at her farm in Crandon while Kathryn played "A.T. -opoly" [created by Angie Sheldon & Barbara Walker] with Faith and Hope; I rested a bit then assisted Valerie and Zanna with meal preparation duties.

We were soon joined by Barry; a section-hiker, Flipper, we had met earlier and invited to join us; plus several volunteers from the Stony Fork Campground on the other side of Walker Mountain. Jim roasted Brats, Daniel made the most awesome Blackberry Cobbler, Betsy set out Chips and Dip, and 'Flipper' roasted a plate full of 'Crawdads' he found in the creek. PATH's traditional Fellowship Pot-luck also featured Valerie's Chicken 'n' Dumplings and Zanna's ever popular Mac 'n' Cheese and her Zucchini Casserole. These dishes plus others were immensely enjoyed as we continued to visit and share ideas around the Campfire where the circular seating and crackling fire seemed to put folks at ease and conversation flowed.

One main concern that was voiced to Jim earlier and he like-wise shared with those present appears to be the travel time/inconvenience it requires for some folks to come from Stony Fork Campground for the communal meal. We decided that next year an alternate meal should be planned for those not wanting to make the journey over Walker Mountain. I will coordinate the Fellowship Meal at the Pavilion in 2015 and will gladly do the same for the Stony Fork Meal if no-one else wants to do it.

With both Kathryn and Daniel available to lead "Leave No Trace" experiences we invited Kathryn to present "Leave No Trace" at next years AGATE event and Daniel agreed to lead "Leave No Trace" for Trail DAWG Days. The only other 'HOT' topic was the soon-to-be implemented PATH Facebook Page... of interest to many and especially to Grace!

We concluded the Volunteer Weekend with a French Toast Breakfast on Sunday AM [8/17] before we said our Good-byes. I hope I thanked everyone; if I missed you... or you... or you... please do know that your presence alone was meaningful to the shared experience as we came together to celebrate and preserve the Appalachian Trail.

Next years AGATE event will be August 14-16th, 2015; mark your calenders now so you don't miss it!!!

Respectfully submitted by Marcia Hudson Cope