

PATH's All Girls Appalachian Trail Experience [AGATE] is a special time of sharing reserved for only women and girls that begins on Friday afternoon/evening and lasts through-out the weekend. This year's event began on Friday, August 16th as participants drifted into Base-camp... fewer than expected as the Girl Scout Leader had a family emergency, we had *more RAIN* in the forecast which affected others, and a few participants chose to camp at Stony Fork Camp-ground.

Friday Afternoon/evening: We gathered by supper time and enjoyed a Soup and Salad Meal followed by a great evening around the camp-fire. Having youngsters attending this year meant coming up with an AT Activity for them; this turned out to be tracing Virginia's AT miles on a map while we discussed how the Appalachian Trail winds through the woods, crosses open areas, goes over top of mountains, and even crosses rivers!

Our adult participants discussed AGATE's goals and agreed that they are best met away from public camping situations; ultimately we decided to continue Base-camping at the cabin [unanimously approved] and to continue attempting to interest more PATH women and local females for this event. Next we talked about our desire to actually be hiking/monitoring/lopping on the Appalachian Trail and the possibility of AGATE adopting a trail having at least *some* Appalachian Trail mileage; the Trail Boss Trail [one of the Laurel Creek Loop Trails] was chosen and this too was unanimously approved with Betsy and Marcia designated for follow-up to obtain approval from the Lead Maintainer and the Trail Management Committee. We ended our Friday Session with a drawing for Gift Cards to the Big Walker Mountain Lookout Country Store.

Saturday's Appalachian Trail Experience included even the youngest participants and was lead on the Appalachian Trail by Besty Truscott going south from Laurel Creek; Marcia Cope checked out the Appalachian Trail/Trail Boss Trail access from **Camp 282** where years ago PATH's first Trail DAWG Days Event was held [1998]; SuZanna Flinchum served as 'camp-sitter'. Meanwhile Sylvia Swain led a separate group of participants that camped at Stony Fork Camp-ground on the Seven Sister's Trail.

PATH's Saturday Night Fellowship Pot-luck was started years ago at Stony Fork Camp-ground when Doris Ford and a couple other women would stay in camp and cook for the men that were out on the Appalachian Trail; they would include the camp-ground hosts and occasionally some USFS personnel out of the Wytheville Ranger District [now divided between EDRD and MRNRA]. The tradition had been discontinued for several years before Paul Clayton and I started it up again in the mid-nineties as we cooked in camp for Marie Minor and Katie Floyd. Betsy Truscott and Worrell Campbell were quick to join us the next month and it quickly picked up momentum; soon the Fellowship tradition was revived and has since become an integral part of the fabric of PATH... one we didn't want to sacrifice *even to have an All Girls Event!* For this reason AGATE invited ALL of the weekend's volunteers [male and female] to come together on Saturday Night for Food, Fun, and Fellowship under the Pavilion and around the Camp-fire. Sylvia Swain and Kathryn Herndon joined us from Stony Fork Camp-ground and Jenny Williams from Chestnut Ridge plus several of the PATH guys... a good time was had by all *in spite* of the ever present rain that has dogged PATH events for most of this summer. Betsy and Marcia discussed with Lead Maintainer Barry Hester the possibility of AGATE adopting the Trail Boss Trail which Jim Houck agreed was a good idea; Barry gave us his consent and we feel certain that the North Area Overseer and the Trail Maintenance Committee will be OK with this arrangement. This decision and approval means that AGATE will now have two miles of the Appalachian Trail to maintain to ATC standards plus two miles with the less stringent standards for USFS trails.

AGATE also invited ALL weekend volunteers to a French Toast Breakfast on Sunday Morning; Jim and Barry were our only takers! We briefly reviewed the weekend's high-lights before Jim, Barry, and Grace Shuping were off for a task-oriented hike on the Laurel Creek Loop Trails. All too soon our group began drifting away... back to families, jobs, and lives in distant locales; and I began making notes and writing this report!

Next years AGATE event will be August 15-17, 2014 at my cabin on Brushy Mountain in Bland County Virginia. PATH women and girls are encouraged to attend and all Volunteer Weekend participants are invited to join us under the Pavilion on Saturday Night for our traditional Fellowship Pot-luck Meal. Come ye one and ALL!!!