

## September Trail Town Ceremony – September 2013

This afternoon the Town of Marion, VA and all of Smyth County were officially declared to be an Appalachian Trail Community in a simple yet impressive ceremony!

John Shaffner and I arrived around 3 PM, secured a close-in parking space in case of rain, and enjoyed BBQ at Wolfe's prior to the Ribbon Cutting at 4PM. PATH was well represented when Greg Weaver, Steve Yonts, and Sam Mabe arrived and we had plenty of time to visit with the Mt. Rogers club folks: Anne Maio, Eleanor Grasselli, Bill Hurlebaus, and Beth Merz ...who also represented the USFS in the 'three-legged stool.'

Wendy Jansen from the NPS and Steve Paradis [ATC's newest CEO] were new faces for me and I had great visits with each of them as well as with Beth plus our own ATC VARO crew, Andy Downs, Kathryn Herndon and Josh [last name escapes me at the moment... sorry Josh] and also Julie Judkins from SORO! One of our TTEC teachers from Smyth County came and her school principal whom I had never met before; Ashley was amazed by how many folks knew about and appreciated her endeavours to take her students on the Appalachian Trail.

What was even more meaningful than the 'face-time' with Agency Partners and our sister club, was the pervading sense of camaraderie and good-will that was evident in the interactions between town and county leaders as well as our Agency Partners. Recognition was given to a pair of Trail Angels, Sherry and Jerry Thomas, who actually approached Mayor David Helms in a grocery store to inquire about the possibility of Marion becoming an Appalachian Trail Community; two local citizens whose voices were heard, action was taken, and much good has resulted from their speaking up.... I love that story!

The Marion Senior High School Band provided music; Boy Scout Troop 93, Colour Guard and Pledge of Allegiance; the speeches were short; and a beautiful cake was home-made delicious as was the iced tea.

I hope to use part of the ribbon [from the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony] plus my photos to create a bulletin board for our Volunteer Weekend Fellowship Pot-luck \_next weekend\_; will have that [and also my AGATE board from last year] for Festival of Leaves if PATH is doing that this year.

Hope to see many of you in Virginia next weekend!

Marcia

PS: Round-trip driving was 235 miles, no rain, and well worth it!