



Fall 2023 · Cumberland County, TN

THE CUMBERLAND TRAILHEAD

The Voice of the Friends of the Trails

County Trails with a Past

BY MARY DEWOLF

As we hike the trails of Cumberland County, we are aware of the nature around us, the wildflowers, the trees, the scenery. We note the terrain and the quality of the construction. We find interesting bridges, benches, and other features. But do we know the history that surrounds us?

Black Mountain rises 2,900' from 270-million-year-old sandstone bluffs. In 1890 Dr. A.C. and Ella Eaton Gill purchased the 518-acre property as a place for a summer home at a time when it was only accessible by mule or on foot. Two chimneys and a spring house still stand on the property. After Dr. Gill—a professor at Cornell University—passed away, his wife, Ella, gave the property to the Cumberland Mountain School. The deed stated that this mountain was intended as a wildlife preserve and as a place of study, meditation, recreation, and worship. Eventually the property was purchased by the Tennessee Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church (TNUMC) who continued the promise for nearly 70 years, allowing the public to use the site for worship and play. In 2002, TennGreen purchased Black Mountain to preserve it for public use.

The trail is part The Cumberland Trail (CT), a rugged, north-south, foot traffic only trail along the eastern edge of the Cumberland Plateau. When completed, the CT will be 300-plus miles, running from the Cumberland Gap National Park on the northern border of TN/KY to the “Grand Canyon” of TN at Signal Mountain overlooking the TN River Gorge at Chattanooga. The CT was designated a State Scenic Trail in 1971, and a linear State Park in 1998. In September 2002 it was renamed the Justin P. Wilson Cumberland Trail State Park.

The CT is an integral part of the larger Great Eastern Trail.

Stay tuned for more installments of our local trail history.

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A View on Hiking

BY ERIN COFFEY

“Hiking is not escapism; it's realism. The people who choose to spend time outdoors are not running away from anything; we are returning to where we belong.” Quoted by Jennifer Davis. This quote couldn't be more true.

Did you know hiking has numerous health benefits besides physical exercise? Even for a brief half-mile, hiking can reduce stress, make one happier, improve sleep, improve your memory, reduce anxiety and depression, power your creative side of the brain, and just overall recharge yourself!

The overall feeling of calm that is transmitted from the smell of the crisp woods, the breeze rushing through the trees overhead, the earthly feel under your feet, and the mountain-top view is simply unparalleled, leaving you waiting for the next planned hike.



As a mother who hikes with four littles from ages 11 years to 6 months old, I hope to instill the same passion for hiking as I do. We've set out a goal of hiking all 26.2 miles of the Cumberland Co Hiking Marathon with only 2 more trails left and expected to finish by the end of the month. We each take away our own perspective from the hikes we've completed together. My oldest enjoys the grand views and my daughter loves the tallness of the trees and the rainbow of colors extending from the leaves, mushrooms, berries, herbs, flowers, and countless little creatures. My youngest walker loves jumping off giant rocks and taking risks--but learning balance, problem solving and motor skills. My infant front faces--taking in everything around her and usually falls asleep mid hike. Regardless of what we take away from each hike, whether it's with our Cumberland Forest Friends or with Daddy on a Saturday, we're raising another generation that loves nature and adventures.



Hit the Trails
Fall Festival

Saturday, October 7th
10am - 2pm
The Square
(At the corner of Peavine Rd. & Stonehenge Dr. in Fairfield Glade)

**Join us for the 12th Annual
“Hit the Trails” Fall Festival**

Live Music, Fresh Food,
Outdoor Activity Displays &
Marathon Awards

For more information check out the web-page at
<https://hikingmarathon.com/trails-festival/>



“Hiking is not escapism; it's realism. The people who choose to spend time outdoors are not running away from anything; we are returning to where we belong.”

JENNIFER DAVIS



St George trail bridge construction:

Foundation for South Bridge over Songbird Creek starts with a huge rock and a mounting structure.

Trail Crew bring over 250 ft of lumber to a road near St George Trail. From here it must be moved over 600 feet through the woods to the bridge site. South Bridge takes shape. Stringers in place, bridge designer Jerry Brown explains next steps to long-time trail volunteer, Gary VanDeCarr.

After the stringers are leveled, VanDeCarr and Mike Durwald clamp the base in place for the hand rail before the treads can be screwed down. North bridge allows St. George Trail to cross Songbird Creek twice, making an easy one-mile trail near Snead Drive and St. George Place. The trail has been under construction since February 2023 and is all hand built. As of September, just over 1,400 feet is complete.

Fairfield Glade Trail Crew Updates

BY MARK ROBINSON, PHOTOS BY MARK RICHIE

If you've been hiking the Seven Bridges Trail on a Saturday morning, you may have noticed the Fairfield Glade Trail Crew busy building one of our latest trails. Named the St. George Trail, the main loop will be a half mile in length and cross Songbird Creek twice with bridges. There will also be three connectors: one to a future parking lot at the St. George Drive stop sign at St. George Place, another to a pedestrian entrance at Snead Drive, and the third connector to the Seven Bridges Trail.

What the trail lacks in distance it makes up for in scenery. Sections of the trail are along the creek, pass through moss-covered rock formations, and go along a large rock bluff. We expect this trail to be opened to hikers sometime next year.

The Trail Crew has also been doing preparatory work on a trail in North Fairfield we've named Moss Creek. Plus, root and other trip hazard clearing on the Hiking Marathon Trails.



Sometimes the Trail Crew is asked, "How do you move all those rocks?" Here five volunteers use a cargo net to move a rock estimated at over 300 pounds. It becomes an anchor rock for one of the bridges across Songbird Creek on the St. George Trail.



Rare photo of the elusive bridge painter and trail adopter, Ron Karnes. Ron uses a back pack blower to clear leaves in the fall and a gas string trimmer to keep down the grass on several Glade Trails. Although we rarely see Ron, his work is noticed and appreciated.

Save the Date

The Friends of the Trails Annual Meeting will be held on Wed, December 13th at 5:00pm at the TCAT College. Come and hear the latest news on local trails, which ones have opened recently and which ones we expect to open in the next few months. We have two Board Members whose term expires at the end of the year, Ethan Hadley and Mark Houston, hopefully both of them will be prepared to serve another three-year term.



A showing of Harry and the Hendersons at the Palace Theatre in downtown Crossville will benefit the Friends of the Trails. Tickets are only \$5, and all proceeds will go to FOTT. Let's pack the house for a great cause!

Bigfoot Festival

BY MARK BALDWIN

The Upper Cumberland Bigfoot Festival returns for its third year on October 21, 2023! This year's festival will go toward helping local veterans with housing needs. This festival has something for everyone! Come see more than 100 unique vendors, many of which will be decked out in red, white, and blue! Enjoy some great food from a variety of food trucks or simply come to see if you can find Bigfoot!

Come get the autographs of the cast of Mountain Monsters! Huckleberry, Buck, and Wild Bill will join us, as well as Bigfoot expert Cliff Barackman from the show Finding Bigfoot. Come chat with these folks and get those Bigfoot questions answered. Come to be entertained by watching the various contests! Once again, the crowd is sure to be entertained by the mullet and Bigfoot calling contests. New to this year's festival is the costume and tree knocking contests! All are sure to be crowd pleasers!

Be sure and bring the kids to the Kids on the Rise kids' zone! That zone is always a blast and we're bringing even more to it this year!

The National Guard will have military equipment for folks to see and they'll be on hand, along with various other military operations, to answer any questions you might have. You might also thank them for their service.

There's also a Bigfoot 4-H 4K on the evening of October 13th to benefit Cumberland County 4-H! Tickets are only \$30. See uchigfoot.com for more info!

Finally, a Bigfoot Festival VIP event will take place the evening before the festival at the Community Complex. That event benefits the Cumberland County Rescue Squad. Festival parking is free and admission for all ages is only \$5! Again, festival proceeds will benefit our local veterans.

We'll see you on October 21st at the Cumberland County Fairgrounds! Gates open at 9:00 a.m. and the festival ends at 5:00 p.m.

For even more information, visit uchigfoot.com



New Trails and Additions

BY BRENDA GIBBON

Airport North Trail

Despite the storms moving through our area, the new Airport North Loop trail was ready in time to be included in the 2023 Cumberland County Hiking Marathon! Our team of volunteer trail builders put in extra time to ensure hikers could experience this scenic trek through the woods and “desert” areas. One storm fell several large trees blocking the trail. Several volunteers, led by John Conrad, were able to get the trail cleared in one day. The proximity of this trail to the Airport also adds another element of variety the other trails don’t have, and hikers Steve and I met talked about how much they like it. This trail still needs some touch up in a few areas. Watch for notifications about upcoming work sessions. Join us and help make this trail even better.



Gary VanDeCarr, Tom Buckley, Ken Smith, Bob Obohoski, Michael Durnwald, Jerry Brown, Dan Coats and Pat Brewer. (Unknown order)

Meadow Park

We are welcoming a new trail at Meadow Lake Park! This project is in the design phase and construction will begin in the Fall. Watch for notifications about upcoming work sessions and, if you have a chance, join us in building another great Crossville trail!

L-R Joe Lucas, John Conrad, Tim Case, Brenda Gibbon, Steve Gibbon after scouting the proposed Meadow Lake Park trail.



Frey Branch -Uplands at Pleasant Hill

Work on a Frey Branch reroute began in June. The work was completed in time to have this trail included in the Marathon. Adding this reroute allowed Uplands to make this pretty and peaceful hike available to the public. Hikers we met during the Marathon talked about how the trail is peaceful and very pretty. The trail showcases waterside and mossy woodland environments.

Find a problem on a trail?

When you find a problem on a trail, please let us know at the Maintenance Reports section of the Friends of the Trails website. Visit our website at <https://crossvilletrails.com>, select Trails & Hiking, and choose Maintenance Reports at the drop-down menu. Find the trail name, click the “REPORT ISSUES” button, complete the form, and click “Submit Form” to send your notification.

Rock Crew repairing damaged trail
Danny Terry, Joe Lucas, Dan Coats (L-R)



Support for Tennessee Trails Association's Fund-Raising Efforts Continues

BY NORM BRINSLEY

Fairfield Glade Resort and Zurich Homes continued their commitment to enhance Tennessee's state-wide network of hiking trails by supporting the Tennessee Trails Association's Annual Meeting's fund-raising efforts for their Evan Means Grant Program. Both organizations have generously donated cash and services each year since 2019, except for 2020 when the TTA did not convene its' annual meeting. As in prior years, Zurich Homes responded to the request with a check for \$500.00 and Fairfield Glade Resort once again, donated a golf and condominium package valued at over \$600.00. Cash donations are credited directly to the program while donations of goods and services will be offered in a silent auction during the TTA's meeting on 20 – 22 October at Natchez State Park. At last year's event, Zurich's generous contribution exceeded other cash donations while bidding for Fairfield Glade Resort's package went for more than its' estimated value.

As background on this event, the origin of this grant program comes from the TTA's efforts to honor Evan Means, a co-founder of the Tennessee Trails Association, in 1968. It was established in 1999 to help fund volunteer-based nonprofit organizations with valid requirements that meet the program's established criteria for consideration. Grant requests are expected to be less than \$1,000 and therefore may be too small for consideration by more established grant-awarding organizations.

Isaac Zuercher, an avid hiker and highly skilled mountaineer, directs Zurich Homes' building operations in Fairfield Glade. He believes that managed development and maintenance of hiking trails is an important part of environmental protection. With that in mind, his organization coordinates directly with Fairfield Glade's Architectural Review Committee to make certain that homesites are built on and landscaped to maintain as much of the natural setting as possible. Mary Jo Paige, Director of Marketing and Events for Fairfield Glade Resort, is a strong promoter of the numerous trails that are established throughout Fairfield Glade's thousands of acres.

Hiking is a favorite activity for full time residents as well as the hundreds of people visiting the Crossville area. This year, the 2023 Cumberland County Hiking Marathon will offer hikes on five of Fairfield Glade's twelve natural surface or grassy trails. It goes without saying that many of these hiking enthusiasts may become residents of Fairfield Glade and clients of Zurich Homes. Isaac and Mary Jo are quick to recognize the value of the area's hiking trails to the community and hope that their contributions will help to keep existing trails in good repair as well as support new ones. Both individuals are committed to their broader goals of helping to build a community where households and nature can thrive.

Forest Friends

BY ANNA GROOM

Cumberland Forest Friends made the best of a muddy situation while hiking the Habitat Trail in August. The crossing was flooded, so we took the spur trail and had an amazing afternoon creek stomping and crawdad catching. We carried out multiple bags of garbage and trimmed a few overgrown briars along the way.

The group has had a record number of hikers for the Sept marathon and have stretched the limits for the short-legged and baby-wearing mamas.

We love to get the kids outside exploring and learning about the world around us every week. See you on the trails!





Above: Laurel Falls

The CTC partnered with Monkey Town Brewing Company to sell custom collector edition pint glasses. The new glass features Laurel Falls from Laurel Snow Natural Area on the pint glass.



We want to hear from you!

If you have something to share with FOTT members in a future issue of

THE CUMBERLAND TRAILHEAD, please email your submission to Anna Groom, editor, at annamargaret.tn@gmail.com



BY SAVANA KEETON

The Cumberland Trails Conference (CTC) has grown its thriving community and hopes to continue growing. The monthly volunteer events have started to flourish with the weather cooling off a bit. The trail crew always loves to see new faces at our volunteer events and connect with the community. With over 2,000 volunteer hours as of this point in the year, there are almost 6,000 feet of new trail built in the Upper Piney Area, a mile of finished trail off Hwy 30, and a mile of finished trail leading up to Morgan Creek in Laurel Snow State Natural Area. Although these portions are not yet open to the public, the three miles of finished trail is an exciting accomplishment for the Cumberland Trail Project.

The CTC has several exciting events coming up! The Cumberland Trail Summit was designed to get people outside and on the trails. It is a retreat-style event taking place in October 19-21 2023. There are native plant hikes, guided rock-climbing excursions, pontoon boat rides, morning yoga excursions, and many educational workshops and guided hikes. Tickets can be purchased on our website: cumberlandtrail.org. Weekend pass holders will get a custom CTC Nalgene water bottle and be entered to win a \$100 Rock/Creek gift card!

The W&W Art Auction will be held April 13, 2024. This event will be hosted at Trinity Chapel in Dayton, TN. Join us each spring for a night of art, local beers, wine, and hors d'oeuvres.

Fall is upon us! We are delighted to see the leaves change to warm autumn colors and feel cooler weather approaching. There are some beautiful segments along the Cumberland Trail to enjoy the fall colors. The Brady Mountain Overlook is a perfect trail to highlight some of the natural beauty of Tennessee. This four-mile out-and-back hike leads up Brady Mountain to overlook Grassy Cove, the largest sinkhole in North America. If uphill isn't your style, the Black Mountain Overlook is only a half-mile from the parking lot off Bat Town Rd in Crab Orchard. Lastly, the trail from Laurel Snow Natural Area to Bryan's Overlook is absolutely breathtaking. It follows Richland Creek past an old coal mine, meanders towards Laurel Creek, where you eventually find the bottom of Laurel Falls (featured on our new pint glass series), until you climb up the bluff line to the top of the waterfall and have a perfect sunset view of the gorge.