



TRAIL TALK



NEWSLETTER OF THE OZARK TRAIL ASSOCIATION

James Murrell retires from USFS A great friend and partner to the OT

By Rick Henry

After 35 years of dedicated service, James Murrell retired from the U.S. Forest Service on December 31, 2011. All of his service was within the Mark Twain National Forest. He has been a willing partner and compatriot to all of us who are involved in trails and trails management. We will remember him for his involvement in Ozark Trail outings in the Winona and the North Fork areas. He has been a reliable partner, and always going about his duties in his characteristic humble and unassuming manner.

During his tenure, James performed in many capacities for the Forest Service, including in the areas of Youth Conservation Corps, range and wildlife control, timber and fire management and control, recreation, chainsaw and crosscut saw instruction, wilderness management, and working with volunteers. Most recently, James oversaw 216 miles of non-motorized trails including 74 miles in the wildernesses he manages - Piney Creek at Cassville, Hercules at Ava, Devil's Backbone at Willow Springs and Paddy Creek at Houston. It takes approximately 5 hours to cross James' zone. According to the Forest Service, James "history and knowledge of the Willow Springs area will be greatly missed. James' work ethic is superior and his ability to handle any situation in a calm, cool and collected manner is admirable."

Those of us who know James will heartily agree with that assessment including one who knows him best of all. According to his wife Jeanne, James "has always taken a keen interest in training others. On the wilderness trails, he's been very good at explaining to people how to use the equipment, axes, crosscut saws, etc., especially those who have had very little exposure to hard physical labor, such as AmeriCorp groups and Boy Scouts. He is a collector of coins and bones, and has many diverse hobbies including gardening, making his own jelly, hunting, trapping, and managing his farm for wildlife.

After retiring from the Forest Service, James intends to spend more time with his girls on the farm (his Angus herd and Jeanne). Minus the cattle, they plan to spend more time at their cabin, travel west a little more, do some volunteer work, and maybe take a hike or two. Well deserved, our friend. Enjoy your upcoming retirement, and from those of us at the Ozark Trail Association, thank you for your service and Godspeed! We hope to see you down the trail again.

Hike4Kids

By Michael McLaughlin

Greetings from the trail! As you read this I am beginning my Appalachian Trail thru-hike. After that, I'll come home and thru-hike the Ozark Trail.

My name is Michael McLaughlin, and I'm not your conventional thru-hiker. My longest hike is just 40 miles. So why am I attempting to thru-hike the AT and OT back-to-back? Because I'm trying to raise awareness and funds for underprivileged children, and I'll gladly hike 2,500 miles through the mountains if that's what it takes to get these kids some help!

I'm very passionate about helping children who have been abused, neglected, or mistreated because I used to be one of those children. I am a survivor of child abuse, and some have described my experience growing up as "horrifying." I won't go into details here (more information is available on the website www.hike4kids.com), but suffice it to say that my childhood left me both physically and emotionally scarred. But this isn't the end of the story. I made it through some difficult times, and now I need to draw on those experiences to help other kids. I came up with the idea for Hike4Kids after meeting a fellow MBA student who started a school for underprivileged blind children in Cameroon, Africa. I decided to hike

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NEWS & UPDATES

Ozark Trail named in President's America's Great Outdoors Initiative

This will provide support for extending the trail and fulfilling our mission!

February 4 Trivia Night nets over \$5000

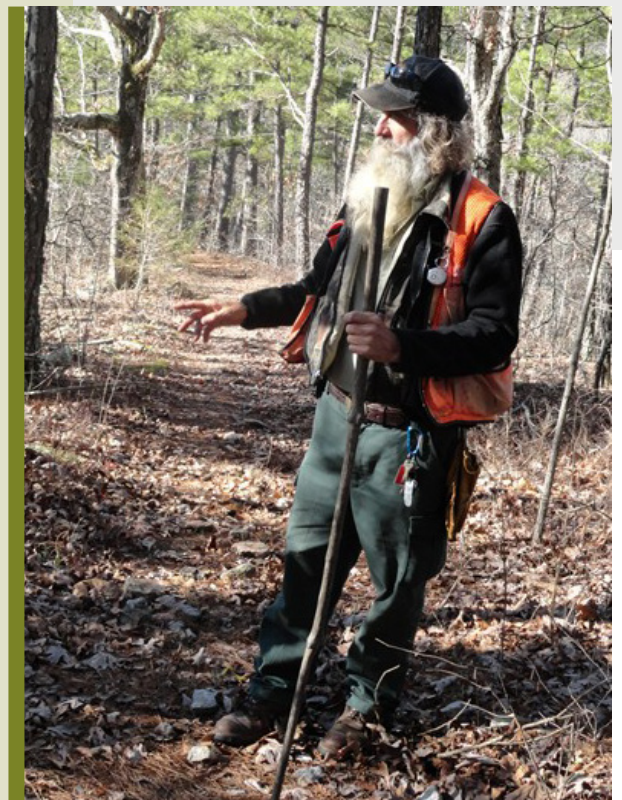
A big thank-you to April Scott and volunteers who made the night a great success. Thanks to everyone who attended.

Member survey coming soon

Watch the e-bulletin, website and Facebook page for an online survey on volunteer incentives and recognition. We need your help to expand and improve this program.

Please renew your OTA membership!

Look for a postcard in your mailbox with details.



James Murrell, doing what he does best: sharing his knowledge with others in the woods

OUR MISSION

The Ozark Trail Association is a non-profit group with the mission to develop, maintain, preserve, promote and protect the rugged natural beauty of the Ozark Trail.



Ozark Trail Association
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POWERED BY VOLUNTEERS.

JOIN US: Learn about volunteer opportunities and become an OTA member at ozarktrail.com or email volunteer@ozarktrail.com.

MEMBER MEETINGS: 7:00 - 9:00 p.m., second Tuesday of each month. All are welcome!

Trail Talk is published four times each year for OTA members. If you would prefer to receive your copy electronically, please contact Kathy Atnip, editor, at kathy.atnip@ozarktrail.com.

Photos: Adam and Rebecca Rothermich, Darla Rein



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Hike4Kids

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in support of her school as well as a second charity, the Family Resource Center. The FRC helps ensure that kids here in St. Louis don't have to experience what I went through.

I had the passion and determination to help these kids, but I needed a way to direct peoples' attention to this important cause. I first considered bicycling across the U.S., but people seemed intrigued by the possibility of a double thru-hike. They were impressed by the sheer commitment of time and dedication it takes to complete a 2,500-mile hike. Thus, Hike4Kids was born to raise funds for the Cameroon school and for the Family Resource Center in St. Louis; 100% of the money raised will go to them and you can donate through the website.

Please support both Hike4Kids and the Ozark Trail Association, as both groups are making tremendous strides toward making this world a better place to live.



Adam, Becca and Cody Rothermich

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Winter into spring on the trail

By Steve Coates

Spring is almost here. Frankly, winter wasn't all that bad. A crisp walk in the woods on a sunny winter afternoon is one of my favorite moments. Last weekend I saw crocuses in full bloom and daffodils are popping up all over St. Louis; I am always in awe of what nature is able to endure only to bloom to life each spring in full splendor. You might say nature inspires me. What inspires you?

Inspirational sources come in many forms. Recently, I was fortunate to be able to attend the send-off reception for Michael McLaughlin, a man setting out to thru-hike the Appalachian Trail and the Ozark Trail in the same year to raise awareness and funding for victims of child abuse. If you're not aware, Michael's story of overcoming child abuse is inspiring but I'll let you read his own account elsewhere in this newsletter. I enjoyed listening to other people describe how Michael has affected their lives. He has touched a lot of people and I feel fortunate to have met him. I'm looking forward to following his journey. When he returns to Missouri later this year to thru-hike the Ozark Trail, I hope to be able to get out and hike a part of it with him. His website is hike4kids.org and you can also follow him on Facebook and Twitter. Hope to see you on the trail soon.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Unexpected things can happen when you're trying to avoid studying. In 2007, Adam Rothermich was a student at the Missouri University of Science and Technology. While searching the internet for a hiking trip, he learned about volunteering for the OTA. As for Rebecca (Becca) Rothermich: after hearing Adam's trail stories non-stop for two years, she volunteered in order to meet those crazy trail people for herself. In between, they got married and made two job-related moves, but they keep coming to events and we're glad they do.

Between them, Adam and Becca have racked up nearly 450 volunteer hours and 5000 miles commuting to OTA events. The jobs they do include trail building, leading crews, and taking great photos at every event. In addition, they've recently taken on managing membership records and are converting the records to a database format to make them easier to manage. Becca is also working on new recognition and incentive programs for volunteers.

Adam says that some of his best trail stories start with the line "Adam, you're coming with me..." And he adds, "it's the people I've met that make the Ozark Trail so important to me." Becca agrees the best part of being a volunteer is "hands-down, the people. I've met so many amazing people and they inspired me to get more involved from their passion for the OTA." The sense of accomplishment after building six feet of trail and the good night's sleep after an event are bonuses.

Their advice for other OTA volunteers? "Don't be shy if you see either of us taking your picture!" and "keep working and don't pose!"