

# The Afterglow

The 103rd Issue

Spring 2024

## Follow the Gleam... Emily Sproul

- by Kaitlyn Keith

Growing up locally, in Staunton, Virginia, Emily Sproul loved her Nature Camp experience and became a Nature Camper for life. She has passed down that love of nature, curiosity, and tradition to not only her children, but the young students she works with every day.

Beginning her Nature Camp journey in the early 1990's, Emily attended two years as a camper. "Being at Nature Camp was beyond an amazing educational experience, it is also an amazing social experience. The bonds you make at Nature Camp really last a life time and are so strong. There are moments where you have not seen people in years, yet you pick back up as if there was no time gone. There is something about the Camp experience that gives us a commonality and it is a bond like no other."

One of Emily's favorite Nature Camp memories (along with many other fellow campers) was the counselor talent show. One memory in particular has stuck with her for all these years...the counselor talent show skit featuring Col. Jack Reeves. "My favorite memory has to be Uncle Ben's", a skit performed by Col. Reeves, John Diller, and Joe Garvin. "Colonel was asked to convert the rice! He asked the rice to change and preached to them to see the light and convert. It was such a funny skit and memory!"



Emily is now a single mother of four and has passed down her love of Camp to her children. She loves watching them go to Camp and form their own memories and traditions. "Watching them overlap with my own memories is the most strange, but incredible, experience. I like watching them get together and bond even though they were all in different sessions, but there was overlap in counselors, classes, even people. It just shows that something like Nature Camp can be so timeless, yet so unique."

Emily also works with children as a Montessori Assistant with preschoolers. When asked how she felt her time at Nature Camp "transferred" into the real world she stated that it "nurtured my curiosity, encouraged me to ask questions, and to always look at the world from different perspectives." She now passes that curiosity on to future generations.

Although she attended Nature Camp as a child for only two years, Emily has been an active Nature Camper for many years now. She has attended numerous Adult Sessions, Fall Hike Days, and Service Weekends. Not only does she encourage her children to attend Camp, she also participates in these activities with her father, George Sproul. Emily has been an active volunteer with Camp and is dedicated to seeing it have a long and successful life teaching and nurturing children. She has recently taken the position of Finance Committee Chair on the Nature Camp Foundation Board and looks forward to helping Nature Camp for many sessions (and years) to come.





# ***The Beginnings of Nature Camp***

- Nancy Lowry

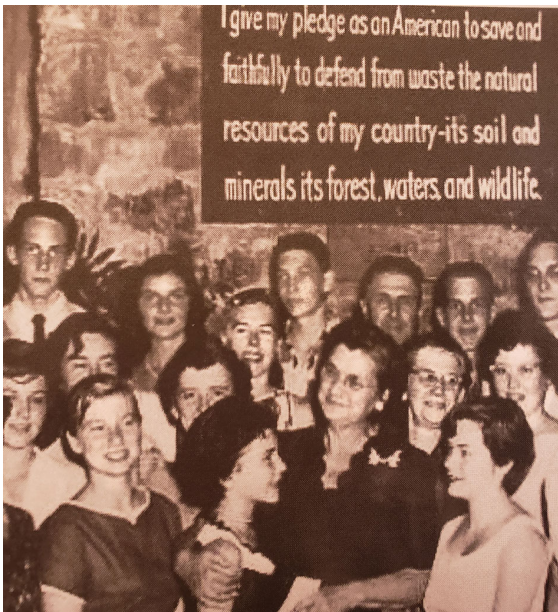
As a member of the Nature Camp History Committee, it is my pleasure to receive items of interest from Camp alums. I make a careful inventory of these personal memorabilia and deposit the original with the Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia. There, they will be digitized and stored, ready to provide information to the public when desired.

We have received most of the copies of Woodland Echoes, many camper notebooks, newspaper clippings about Camp and campers, oral histories from some campers, and many, many photographs. The photos are most valuable when dated and named.

One fascinating entry is a comprehensive history of the Nelson County Garden Club, titled *The Nelson County Garden Club: The First Fifty Years, 1935 – 1985*, written by Frederick Wilbur. Fred was a camper and staff member during the 1960s. His meticulous research for the book happens to chronicle the very beginning concepts of Nature Camp, and the slow process by which Camp became a reality.

Of course, Mrs. Fred Schilling (Lillian) was instrumental in this process. A member of the NCGC, under the auspices of the Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs, Mrs. Schilling worked tirelessly within her club and around the state to drum up interest, funds, and manpower to create “a nature studies camp for young people”, using the educational value of “a forest environment.” She was in a perfect position as chairman of the Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs’ Conservation Committee to accomplish this mission.

Mrs. Schilling stated that “in her considered opinion, the most effective way for the committee to attain any worthwhile and lasting results in their efforts to aid the conservation movement would be to teach conservation to the youth of the country.” [Coleman, History of Nature Camp] I think, as Nature Camp alumni, we would all wholeheartedly agree.



## ***Adult Session - June 6-10, 2024***

In November the Matts Creek fire burned more than 11,000 acres of rugged terrain, chiefly in the James River Face and Thunder Ridge Wilderness Areas on the George Washington National Forest in Bedford and Botetourt Counties. That event inspired the theme for this year’s Adult Session—“**Recycling and Renewal**”—and the burn area will be the site of a Sunday field trip during the 2024 session, which will run from Thursday, June 6, to Monday, June 10. Before that trip, participants will have the opportunity to learn about the recycling mechanism in the Milky Way, crayfish as great aquatic recyclers, examine trees up close on land, view fish in Big Mary’s Creek through a snorkel mask, discuss poems and essays on renewal and recycling in nature, make kites, create butterfly puddlers from junk-store plates, explore nature connectedness, paint and draw with natural inks, and pursue several other educational, recreational, and social offerings. And of course there will be the usual bird, plant, and insect walks; nocturnal stargazing; the ever popular Appalachian stringband workshop; and some excellent food. The cost is \$375, and registration is now open at <https://www.naturecamp.net/adult-session/>.

# News From Nature Camp

- Philip Coulling

Even in the absence of major renovation projects, it has been a busy off-season for Nature Camp, with several infrastructure improvements underway or already having been completed. The more than 20-year-old generator behind the canteen has been upgraded with a model capable of running not only the well pump in the event of a power outage, but also (thanks to new underground electrical lines) the effluent pump for the GTH septic system, the reach-in refrigerator and freezer in the kitchen, and some lights and appliances in the caretaker's residence (especially important during the winter!). The Champion warewashing machine, purchased in 2011, is scheduled to be replaced in time for the Spring Service Weekend, at which time a new basketball goal will also be installed. But perhaps of greatest interest to Service Weekend volunteers and Adult Session participants is the addition of a new coffee brewing station, which we hope will prove adequate in meeting the demands of caffeine-crazed crowds. These and other projects are all being funded by a generous grant from the Nature Camp Foundation, which continues to underwrite extra-budgetary capital improvements which, therefore, do not have to be funded through tuition increases.

While the camper experience remains free of digital screens, Nature Camp as a business needs to adapt to the requirements and expectations of a 21st century enterprise. This year we are adopting a system of electronic health records (the implementation cost of which NCF is also covering), which we hope will streamline the submission of critical camper information by parents and caregivers, expedite the check-in process on the first day of each session, and facilitate secure record keeping. No more paper forms to print, mail, and file!

The most exciting development so far in 2024 is one that came into place most recently: the creation of the new Tess Majors Endowed Naturalist position. Funded by a foundation newly established in memory of a long-time camper, passionate lover of nature, and exceptionally talented musician, this resident naturalist will enhance our educational program; assist the instructional staff in developing their classes and implementing engaging, hands-on class activities; and help lead nature walks during recreation periods. Several individuals have already expressed interest in this position, which I hope will be filled by the time this issue goes to press, and I firmly believe that it will transform the educational experience for campers and staff.

None of this would be possible, however, but for a new Special Use Permit, which the U.S. Forest Service issued earlier this year and which will extend Nature Camp's "lease" in the Big Mary's Creek valley for another 20 years (one year beyond our centennial!).

When registration opened in January, the parent of a new camper wrote on their child's application, and I quote, "We have heard this is the best camp around"; I'm admittedly biased, but I agree, and I would add that it's the best camp around because it has the best community of supporters. To all those reading this, thank you for all that you do to support and sustain Nature Camp.



Many thanks to all the NCF members whose support allows us to continue to enrich, inspire, and transform lives.



## ***Fall Service Weekend - Snoopin for the Scoop***

- Pamela Tetro (and Theta Miller)

An amazing amount of effort was on display for my first Service Weekend. It was 70 degrees in the shade as I started off my “snoopin’ for the scoop” for this Afterglow article. After a fabulous lunch - thanks to the amazing kitchen crew - I started my search at the infirmary where Katherine H, Emma, Maggie, Kim, furry friend Hadley, and Kat B (who “loves to play in the dirt”) were laying down primer for the new light gray paint later in the day. Of note, crafty Kim was happy to volunteer so she could “shirk her real work.”

I then heard Theta Miller, Service Weekend Coordinator, directing Bev and Lee to move rocks with this advice: “just don’t move the rocks along the border” - easier said than done...but they did it. Over the weekend an ever-smiling Theta was directing and appreciating volunteers in equal amounts. So important! Later, along the main road, Bev, Lee, and some boys were loading piles of brush and branches into Ventry’s truck to pile somewhere else out of the way to the delight of our area snakes and varmints.

Ann H (appropriately occupying a director’s chair) greeted, braceleted, and name tagged volunteers along with taking photos of people and tasks accomplished. While there I met Ellen, her hubby, Tim, and their 7 month old Aussiedoodle on the main road as they head to town to purchase wire to repair the Bird Boxes in the museum. Tim gave up a day of thrifting and Ellen the season’s end of “Foundation” (Netflix sci-fi program) to volunteer. Major sacrifices!

Sneaking into the empty OFFICE building (rather dark and musty – maybe a good cleaning is due at the next Service Weekend), I found a curious, but apparently precious, slice of tree with these words “Grandma stop eating all the Wineberries.” Makes one wonder.....

The next volunteer I spotted was Paul using a rather “tiny” socket wrench to put the finishing touches to the hose holder on a new post. I tested his work (snoopervising moment) and all was solidly in place. With safety glasses and his own tools, Keith was found putting in “sweat equity”, happily hammering away on the LS building replacing rotting siding. No termites were found. His wife, Penny, was supposed to be in the kitchen where one could find spices galore and a humongous beautiful bowl of watermelon, tomato, cuke, and red onion salad. Alas, Penny was AWOL - maybe taking care of their sweet dogs? This couple now lives in Florida and may be our volunteers who came the furthest to help out!

Mike T was ubiquitously found, “whacking Autumn Olive” most of the morning. Then he started in on the Japanese Stilt Grass behind the bunk and T-houses. Kat B and Jackie were raking and weeding. Free exercise - a benefit of volunteering. Kate later walked with me up Nature Trail Road (on her way to flag a trail to Lookout Rock) and could not spot any Autumn olive trees – evidence of good work over the years. Mike T smiled broadly when hearing this.

The flagpole area was cleared by Lyt using a hand pruning saw, ladder, and throw line (still climbing trees after all these years) and a vigilant crew to warn passersby of falling branches. A couple of the beech tree limbs were covered with Beech Blight Aphids – very white and feathery (looking like snowflakes) and if you shake the branches the aphids start dancing. Two of our young folks, Ryan and Kyle, teamed up to tote logs by wheelbarrow to the shed area to be piled for firewood. They continued this activity for the “cross fit crew” that I snoopervized at the end of the day.





My head and bottom enjoyed a short quiet rest on a new bench at the back side of LS. Is it possible I heard crickets at 3:45 pm? Also, I heard bird song, Keith hammering, murmurs of LS conversation, and footsteps along the path with human hoots and exclamations. The hoots and exclamations were from 6 kids playing in the pool area. Precious sounds. Pebbles and Jareth picked up all the trash along the Camp trail to the main road. Words of wisdom from Pebbles t-shirt: "Dill with it" over a pickle picture.

Luke, who was quite tired from sweeping off all roofs, supervised teams staining the porches with carbolineum. These volunteers included Margaret, a previous camper when Luke was a counselor.

Steve F helped to organize the library w/ Ann H, Katherine H, and Emily S. I snooped in the library and found it impressively neat and organized. Thank you!

I discovered the "Cross Fit Crew" toward the back of Camp - June, Leda, Jake, Justin, Simon, and Maddie. Here were the happy chainsaw operators (notably Eleanor) and manual log splitters (Justin) risking life, limb, and hemorrhoids while causing a bit of a racket to make benches. Tossing the new benches (go June and Justin) end over end about 50 feet to create a new circular sitting area reminded me of tractor tire flipping Cross Fitters.

Last but not least our bedtime story reading Mack. He was in his element at the shed, organizing and doing random "fix it" stuff that folks brought to him. One of his completed tasks was putting casters on file cabinets for the nurse's area.

Thus ended my first quite enjoyable Service Weekend!

Kudos to all that came to volunteer:

Thank you Adam, Ally M., Ally R., Amy G., Ann, Argo, Art, Beverly, Callie, Carolyn, Claire, Corey, Eleanor C., Eleanor T., Ellen, Emily, Emma, Eric, Flip, Han, Hunter, Jackie, Jake, Jareth, Jerry, June, Justin, Karen, Kat B., Kat S., Kate, Katherine, Keith, Kim, Kyle, Leda, Lee, Luke, Lyt, Mack, Maddy, Maggie C., Maggie J., Margaret, Marianne, Mike, Naomi, Neil, Nell, Nick, Pamela, Paul C., Paul G., Pebbles, Peggy, Penny, Peter, Rachel, Ryan, Sandra, Sarah C., Sarah K., Sarah O., Sarah W., Sharon, Sheryl, Simon, Steve, Theta, Tim, Tyler, and Ventry.

Come join us next time! Remember to register online from the Nature Camp Foundation webpage and look there for updated procedures and anticipated projects. Everyone is welcome at Service Weekends regardless of prior experience or status as a camper, staffer, families and friends. All skill levels can be put to use. The recreation field and surrounding National Forest provide an excellent opportunity for those who wish to camp. Single sex bunk houses are available for those wishing the ease of just throwing a sleeping bag on a bunk. Spring Service Weekends are always the third full weekend in May and Fall Service Weekends are the third full weekend in September. Mark your calendars and join the fun!!





## ***News from the Development Committee***

- Amy Gonzalez

### **Help Wanted – New Development Committee Chair Needed by January 2025!!**

Hi friends, I am soliciting your help in finding my replacement as the Chair of the Development Committee for NCF. After serving one partial term and two full 3-year terms, it's time to relinquish my scepter.

Basically, this job is to plan, organize, and direct all the NCF's fundraising efforts. This includes the annual fund giving campaign, and, on occasion, working with individual donors on planned giving, major gifts, and to head up any capital campaigns that may be necessary. Annual work is focused on two solicitation letters/emails that go out shortly after each Afterglow is published. Gifts received must be acknowledged for tax purposes and because it's good manners to say thank you when a gift is given. Our database administrator handles the bulk of the work to carry out this acknowledgement process: recording gifts in eTapestry and preparing and mailing the thank you letters as well as recording and notifying when tribute gifts are made. The Development Chair supervises the work of our database administrator, reviewing gift records and acknowledgement or notification letters before they are sent. To keep this work on track we touch base via Zoom with the Development Chair, Database manager, and NCF president about every other week. During my tenure, the duties of this position have evolved to include hands on work with our constituent management platform: eTapestry (a Blackbaud product) and training will be provided to my replacement!

So – I am asking for your help and consideration in finding someone who is willing to take on this position. It does carry a time commitment and some responsibility, but the rewards are great. Please contact the NCF Vice President, Jason Farr ([vicepresident@naturecampfoundation.org](mailto:vicepresident@naturecampfoundation.org)) if you are interested or if you have someone in mind. If you have questions, please contact me, Amy Gonzalez ([development@naturecampfoundation.org](mailto:development@naturecampfoundation.org)).

## ***Elections***

- Jason Farr

Everyone loves an election year! This year's Nature Camp Foundation election includes just one open board position - we are in need of a Development Committee Chair. Amy Gonzalez has given her all for more than 2 full terms and has been a driving force in getting us all in really good shape with eTapestry and encouraging continued support of the Foundation and our work. If you would be interested in learning from Amy and taking on this meaningful task - please see her Development article above!!!

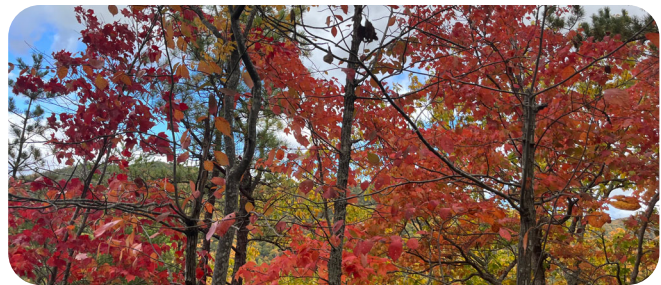
Our election results last year saw some shifting of jobs as well as some new faces on the NCF board. Jason Farr finished his term as an At-large board member and was elected to the position of Vice President. We welcomed newly elected Simon McKay to his first term as our 2nd At-large member and Emily Sproul was appointed to the board as our Finance Committee Chair. If you have an interest in service on the NCF board or getting more involved in another capacity, please be sure to update your profile on the NCF website (<https://www.naturecampfoundation.org/update-your-profile/>). You can also further explore ways to get involved here: <https://www.naturecampfoundation.org/participate/>. If you have any questions regarding potential service on the NCF board or in another capacity, please do not hesitate to reach out to Jason Farr ([vicepresident@naturecampfoundation.org](mailto:vicepresident@naturecampfoundation.org)) or our NCF president, Nell Fredericksen ([president@naturecampfoundation.org](mailto:president@naturecampfoundation.org)).



## ***Almost Fall Hike Day 2023***

- Barak Brashear

During this year's Fall Hike Day participants gathered at Camp in the morning for another successful and fun day. About a hundred participants took part this year (not including cooks, hike leaders, and a handful of other volunteers). Fall Hike Day has become one of the most popular Nature Camp Foundation events and the NCF would like to thank everyone who participated. Special thanks to Paul Cabe and Leigh Ann Beavers who again not only led a small group of cooks in cooking a delicious dinner, but also donated all the food for the event - such an amazing donation of talent, time, and food!! Thanks to our fearless hike leaders: Philip Coulling, Simon McKay, Neil Fredericksen, Luke Wilson, Ryan Garvin, Lock Cabe, Corey Basham, and Ann Henry.



## ***Spring Art Day - 2024***

- Barak Brashear

The first annual Nature Camp Spring Art Day was a great success! Participants were able to spend the day at Nature Camp and participate in two art classes, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. This year had a great variety of classes with some fantastic instructors, and a fun and artsy time was had by all!

Special thanks to the generous and talented instructors for teaching some amazing classes:

Leigh Ann Beavers - Observation Drawing From Biological Form

Walter Mehring - Art on the Fly (aka kite making)

Nell Fredericksen - Solar Printing

Jason Betzner - Nature Photography

Alden Roberts - Knitting Basics and Knitting Beyond the Basics

Ali Wieboldt - Journal Making

Stay tuned for information on our next Spring Art Day!!!



## Find Us on Facebook!!

*You can connect with the Nature Camp Foundation at:*

*<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Nature-Camp-Foundations/107552817467>*

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## Visit the Nature Camp Virtual Canteen Today!

You can now order T-shirts, sweatshirts, onesies, kids wear, mugs etc from our online "canteen" We have 20 of the most requested designs available in our shop or you can purchase the designs for use on a huge variety of items.

Please visit our SpreadShirt shop at <https://www.spreadshirt.com/shop/clothing/t-shirts/nature+camp/>

The \$2.50 we earn from each sale goes to support our scholarship fund!!!





# Calendar of Events

Spring Service Weekend	May 17-19, 2024
Adult Session	June 6-10, 2024
Prospective Camper Day	July 20, 2024
Fall Service Weekend	September 20-22, 2024
NCF Open Membership Meeting	September 21 , 2024
Fall Hike Day	October TBD, 2024



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