



IN THIS ISSUE

Investing in the future of *public lands*

*FIND Outdoors Team Members and
Volunteers launch new programs to
make the forest accessible for all.*

FIND
— OUTDOORS —
ANNUAL
JOURNAL
2024





AS CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF FIND OUTDOORS, IT IS MY HONOR TO REFLECT on the past year and share the extraordinary progress our organization has made. This year has been one of resilience, reinvention, and remarkable growth. Together, we have faced unprecedented challenges head-on while staying rooted in our mission: to provide transformative outdoor experiences for all.

First, this year marked an exciting new chapter for our organization with the arrival of Carolyn Ashworth as President & CEO. She is a local of Brevard, NC and brings a wealth of non-profit leadership and expertise to our organization. Under her leadership, and with the support of a revitalized leadership team, FIND is brimming with fresh energy and focus on our mission to connect all people to nature. Their collective dedication to environmental education, sustainable recreation, and community engagement is already transforming the way we serve our partners, visitors, and the public lands we steward.

This year also brought significant challenges, most notably the catastrophic damage caused by Hurricane Helene. The storm's impact was felt deeply across our sites and communities. But in the true spirit of FIND, our team mobilized quickly to restore access, repair infrastructure, and support impacted staff and communities. These recovery efforts were only possible through the generous contributions of time and effort of our volunteer staff, who banded together to promote conservation, recreation, and stewardship in their communities. Recovery efforts continue, but they are fueled by the same resilience and collaboration that define us.

We are proud of the capital improvements made at our sites across North Carolina, Georgia, and Kentucky, where facility upgrades and interpretive enhancements have improved visitor experiences and created more accessible, welcoming spaces. In the last year alone, FIND has reinvested almost \$4,000,000 into the public lands we steward, helping to preserve public outdoor spaces for generations to come. These investments are part of our long-term commitment to serving the communities FIND calls home, while protecting the natural and cultural heritage of our sites.

Collaboration has always been a key driver of our success. From new partnerships with local schools and nonprofits to regional conservation alliances, last year we expanded our reach and amplified our impact. This is why we are excited to be opening the new NEST at FIND Outdoors community space, where aligned organizations can interface with like-minded groups and individuals. These efforts will bring about greater community engagement and further engage FIND Outdoors into collaborative relationships that ensure our work reflects the needs and aspirations of the communities we serve.

Our education programming has also seen a major revitalization. From changes to our interpretive signage to a complete overhaul of our field trip programming, there are many things to highlight. We are really excited about the debut of our new Lecture Series that will bring together scientists, storytellers, and cultural leaders to share their knowledge and spark conversations on topics ranging from Appalachian ecology to inclusive outdoor access. These events not only educate but also inspire people to appreciate and conserve the ecosystems in our own backyards. Reach out to us if you have any ideas or suggestions for speakers!

Please join our mailing list, Facebook and Instagram groups, or just check our website (www.gofindoutdoors.org) to stay up to date with all that we have to offer and maintain your connection with us. We also appreciate your comments and suggestions to improve our programs.

As we look ahead, I am so thankful for our dedicated staff, passionate volunteers, generous supporters, and loyal visitors. It is truly inspiring to have our mission resonate with so many. Each of you plays a vital role in the success and sustainability of FIND Outdoors. Thank you for walking this path with us.

Let's Go!

Chad

Chad Leatherwood

FIND Outdoors Board Chair



Helene Resilience & Recovery

After Hurricane Helene caused severe damage across public lands in Western North Carolina, FIND Outdoors led a focused recovery effort in Pisgah National Forest. Community members came together through volunteer work, fundraising, and partnerships to help rebuild trails, support staff, and restore access to cherished outdoor spaces.

3



2 The NEST at FIND Outdoors

Learn about our latest adventure, The NEST! Our very own space that is rooted in nature, education, stewardship, and teaching.

5 Education at The Cradle

The Cradle of Forestry introduced four new grade-specific field trip programs that bring conservation to life through outdoor learning experiences.

7 Event Sponsors

Showcasing relationships that strengthen our impact and help us better serve the public lands and communities we work with.

8 Explorers Club Year in Review

Now in its third year, Explorers Club has engaged over 90 middle schoolers in free, bilingual outdoor adventures across Pisgah National Forest.

9 Employee Spotlight

Our Employee Spotlight series celebrates the dedicated individuals behind FIND Outdoors.

10 The Gladie Cabin

The Gladie Cabin, near the Cultural and Environmental Learning Center, reflects the early craftsmanship of settlers in Red River Gorge.

11 Georgia + Kentucky Project Updates

From water systems to facility upgrades, efforts throughout our sites in GA & KY help ensure safe and welcoming experiences for all visitors.

13 2024 Year in Review

FIND Outdoors advanced its mission through annual giving, major capital projects, and commemorative programs across more than 10 sites in three states.

14 Giving Back + Celebrating Our Donors

We celebrate the generosity of our donors who make our work possible. FIND Outdoors prioritizes using funds efficiently to enhance the natural places we all cherish.



The NEST at FIND Outdoors

At FIND Outdoors, we believe meaningful change begins when people come together around shared values. That belief led to the creation of The NEST, a new shared space designed to support local organizations and community efforts. It's a quiet, adaptable place where ideas can take shape, partnerships can strengthen, and mission-driven work can thrive. The NEST was built to serve those working to make a difference, and we're proud to offer this space as a resource for our community.

THE NEST STANDS FOR NATURE, EDUCATION, STEWARDSHIP, AND TEACHING. THESE FOUR PILLARS REFLECT THE VALUES AT THE HEART OF FIND OUTDOORS AND MANY OF OUR NONPROFIT PARTNERS.



The NEST is available in multiple configurations.

The NEST is available at little to no cost to nonprofit organizations with current 501(c)(3) status & businesses whose work aligns with our mission and values.

- Environmental education and conservation
- Outdoor access and learning
- Community development and outreach
- Youth programs and nature-based initiatives

If your mission connects with any of these areas, you're welcome here! FIND Outdoors reserves the right to evaluate alignment and partnership on a case-by-case basis.



*SCAN TO
LEARN MORE
ABOUT THE
NEST!*



HELENE RESILIENCE & RECOVERY

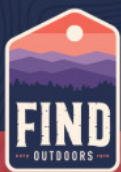
THOUSANDS OF VOLUNTEER HOURS POWER THE RECOVERY OF WESTERN NC'S PUBLIC LANDS.

Hurricane Helene brought widespread destruction to the southeastern U.S., with particularly severe impacts in Western North Carolina. Public lands, including national forests and recreation sites, were hit hard - trails were damaged, facilities were flooded and access to popular outdoor destinations was cut off. This disruption not only affected these fragile ecosystems but also the communities and economies that rely on these spaces for tourism, recreation and employment.

In the aftermath of the storm, FIND Outdoors launched a Hurricane Helene Relief Fund to provide necessary resources, specifically for the restoration of public lands throughout Pisgah National Forest. With community support and generous donations, FIND coordinated over 3,700 volunteer hours, valued at over \$124,000, for clean up and trail infrastructure repairs and held events like Pickin' for Pisgah, raising nearly \$10,000 for damaged recreation sites.

Additionally, FIND Outdoors organized a volunteer fair to connect community members with a variety of non-profit organizations that work with our public lands, supported displaced staff through an assistance fund and partnered with STIHL to offer chainsaw training.





Stewardship in Action

Hurricane Helene Recovery by the Numbers

FIND is an outdoor recreation nonprofit that centers forest education and stewardship. As part of fulfilling that mission, in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, FIND raised funds in order to help repair and restore public lands, educate on emergency preparedness and support displaced employees.

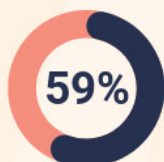


Milestones

- 100% of donations supported Helene Relief
- 71% of donations came in from 85 generous donors
- Over 3,780 volunteer hours donated = \$124K+ in service value!
- \$1,855 round up donations from FIND Sites

\$24,299

Employee Assistance



Employee Assistance:

100% of employee aid applications were approved. Support was provided to employees who had to evacuate and lost their jobs.

\$14,900

Community-led Volunteerism

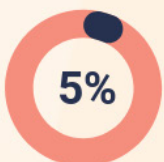


Community-led Volunteerism:

Volunteers rebuilt boardwalks and bridges at Carolina Hemlocks, Coon Tree, Pink Beds, and the Cradle of Forestry. Cleanup also began at Black Mountain Campground.

\$1,859

Volunteer Fair



Volunteer Fair:

FIND Outdoors hosted a multi-group volunteer fair featuring 9 local organizations that work on public lands in WNC. Our goal was to inspire new volunteers and strengthen collaboration after Hurricane Helene.



EXPANDING EDUCATIONAL IMPACT AT THE CRADLE OF FORESTRY

The Cradle of Forestry has launched four new field trip programs, expanding our educational reach and deepening our commitment to outdoor learning.

Developed in alignment with national and North Carolina state education standards, these programs are tailored by grade-level and designed to bring environmental concepts to life through engaging, hands-on experiences.

Each offering focuses on key themes of conservation, stewardship and sustainability, providing students with meaningful opportunities to connect with nature and better understand their role in protecting it.

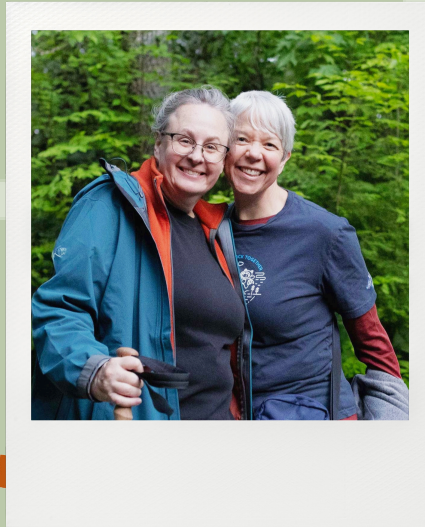


Students from Rosman Elementary School visited the Cradle of Forestry for their first field trip of the year. For many, it was their first time experiencing this historic site, where they learned about the roots of forest conservation and connected with the outdoors through hands-on exploration.

**SCAN TO
LEARN MORE
ABOUT BOOKING
CRADLE OF FORESTRY
FIELD TRIPS!**



Let's Go *MAKE MEMORIES*



THANK YOU TO OUR 2025 EVENT PARTNERS

Our community sponsors play a vital role in helping FIND Outdoors bring people together. Through their generous support of events, these partners help us create meaningful outdoor experiences, foster environmental stewardship, and strengthen connections across the region.

We're grateful for their continued investment in our mission!

BLUE GHOST FIREFLY TOURS



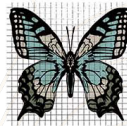
First
Citizens
Bank
forever first®



AMERICAN
BACKCOUNTRY

METAMORPHOSIS
DESIGNS

Transform Your Space
because...



Change is Beautiful!



FOXFIRE NIGHT HIKES



STEWARDS & STORYTELLERS LECTURE SERIES



Interested in being an event or program sponsor?

For additional information on how you or your organization can be a sponsor, please email us directly at: info@gofindoutdoors.org. Thank you!



CLUB DE EXPLORADORES

Year 3 in review:

Now in our third year, the Explorers Club has brought over 90 young adventurers on a dozen excursions in Pisgah National Forest. They hiked, climbed and swam - all the while learning about Leave No Trace principals and the beauty of the world right outside their back door. Club members along with their families hunted for the mysterious Blue Ghost Fireflies on a unique night hike. And, in partnership with Mountain True, they paddled the French Broad River. These opportunities for adventure club members see first-hand that "these forests belong to you too!"

Explorers Club is a free, bilingual outreach program for middle school aged students in Transylvania County and surrounding areas, providing opportunities to go on adventures in Pisgah National Forest.

YOUR ENTHUSIASTIC AND DEDICATED WORK IS INVALUABLE, BOTH FOR PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL CARE AND FOR THE PRACTICAL BENEFITS OF CONTACT WITH NATURE.

- LOURDES CAROLINA INOA
EXPLORERS CLUB PARENT



DRU COSNER

GEORGIA VISITOR CENTER MANAGER

Originally from Blairsville, GA, Dru comes from a family with deep roots in the area, dating back to the Georgia land lottery. He developed a strong connection to the outdoors early in life through hiking, camping, and canoeing across the Southeast. After his studies at Young Harris College & the University of Georgia, Dru worked at Vogel State Park and Yellowstone National Park. He went on to spend over 15 years in law enforcement but his path eventually led him back to the mountains.



Starting with FIND as a part-time water system operator at Brasstown Bald & Lake Winfield Scott, Dru has grown with our team and now manages Brasstown Bald and Anna Ruby Falls.

Dru values and exemplifies our shared passion for protecting public lands. Each day brings a new adventure whether it is beautiful mountain top views, or a cool breeze beside a waterfall. Sharing and watching visitors discover the natural beauty of the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest is his favorite part of the job. We extend our thanks to Dru for his ongoing commitment to helping others FIND outdoors.



THE GLADIE CABIN



WHILE THE GIRLS NEVER LIVED IN THE GLADIE CABIN, THEY WERE KNOWN TO OFTEN PLAY ON ITS PORCH.

Located near the Gladie Cultural and Environmental Learning Center, the Historic Gladie cabin is a reconstruction of a cabin that was built and lived by the Ledford family, one of the first to settle in the Red River Gorge. Cabins built at this time were built by hand utilizing chestnut, hewn by hand with a broad axe. Spaces between the logs would be chinked together using a mixture of mud and grass. Finally, white oak would be split into shingles for the roof.

Some of the most notable folks coming out of the Red River Gorge are The Coon Creek Girls, one of the first all-female string bands. Formed in the mid-1930s, the band featured renowned banjo and fiddle player Lily May Ledford, her sister Rosie, Esther Koehler, Evelyn Lange, and later Minnie Ledford.

The group made regular appearances on the radio program Renfro Valley Barn Dance, and even played for President Franklin D. Roosevelt and George IV and Queen Elizabeth of England before they disbanded in 1957.

Lily May Ledford would go on to play folk festivals throughout the U.S. and Canada in the 1960's & 1970's. She was awarded the National Heritage Fellowship, the U.S. government's highest honor in folk and traditional arts.

The Coon Creek Girls were inducted into the Kentucky Music Hall of Fame in 2004. Their intense, foot-stomping approach to traditional Kentucky Mountain Music continues to inspire and entertain.



Investing in Georgia

Unlike traditional concessionaires, FIND Outdoors is a nonprofit organization. We reinvest 100% of profits from campsite reservation fees, day use fees, ticketed events and retail sales back into the sites we manage. These funds support essential site maintenance, improvements and educational programming. In Georgia, FIND Outdoors invested over \$800,000 in 2024.

\$356,034	Morganton Point Site: Improvements to sites #31-37 Water Systems
\$318,154	Lake Rabun Beach: New Pit Toilet, New Boat Ramp, Water Systems
\$58,845	Anna Ruby Falls: Water & Septic Systems
\$44,571	Brasstown Bald: Repaired elevator to viewing deck
\$28,673	Lake Winfield Scott: Water Systems



Fall Gladie Reopening

Water system investment: \$153,467

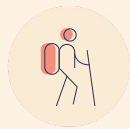
The Gladie Cultural and Environmental Center is the hub for information in the Red River Gorge. When water systems went down in the Fall of 2023, the indoor facility operations ceased. With the support of the Cumberland Ranger District of the Daniel Boone National Forest, the Center was able to continue to provide information on trails and the history of the area to guests during the peak summer season despite the facility's closure.

FIND Outdoors, in partnership with the US Forest Service, invested in water system repairs that would allow the center to reopen in November 2024.



2024 in Review

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW



381k

ANNUAL VISITORS
TO FIND SITES

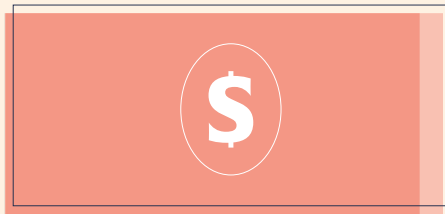


153

FIND OUTDOORS
TEAM MEMBERS

3

STATES MADE UP THE
FOOTPRINT OF FIND
OUTDOORS SITES



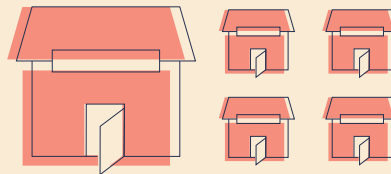
90.5%

-NEARLY 4 MILLION DOLLARS-
WAS INVESTED BACK INTO FIND
SITES & EDUCATION PROGRAMS

VISITOR CENTERS & GIFT SHOPS

5

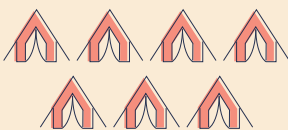
FIND MANAGED
VISITOR CENTERS



CAMPING & RECREATION AREAS

7

CAMPGROUNDS &
RECREATION AREAS



236

CAMPSITES
OPERATED

21k+

DAY USE
VISITORS

37k+

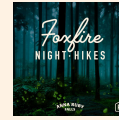
NIGHTS OF
CAMPING ENJOYED

3 in 5

CAMPERS
USED TENTS

Our Mission: FIND Outdoors mission is to provide all people with educational, recreational and interpretive opportunities about natural resources and cultural history.

EDUCATION



2k+



ATTENDEES TO TICKETED
NOCTURNAL EVENTS

NATURAL INQUIRER

226k+

MATERIALS DISTRIBUTED
IN 2024 FISCAL YEAR



COLLABORATIONS



The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Brevard-Davidson River Presbyterian Church, Columbia, Davidson River Outfitters, Dogwood Health Trust, El Centro Comunitario, Headwaters Outfitters, Hola Carolina, Latinos Aventureros, Packout Pisgah, Pisgah Area Sorba, Pisgah Map Co, The Hub, and Transylvania County Rescue Squad



GIVE BACK!

ANNUAL GIVING

Support the work and mission of FIND Outdoors and the more than 10 managed sites in three states.

MAJOR GIFTS & SITE ENHANCEMENTS

Champion a specific capital project by directing your gift to a project that matters to you. Contact the Grants & Sponsorships Coordinator to discuss the possibilities.

TRIBUTE GIFTS

The impact of our beautiful outdoors can resonate throughout a lifetime. It is also a great way to recognize a birthday, anniversary or special occasion. Highlight the legacy of a loved one or commemorate a special occasion with a tribute gift to FIND Outdoors.

EDUCATION AND SPECIAL PROGRAMMING SPONSORSHIPS

Provide financial support for events, programming and specific initiatives. Your sponsorship makes it possible for us to continue providing programs, tours, exhibits and outdoor experiences that can help shape and cultivate the next generation of forest stewards.

COMMEMORATIVE BENCH/PLAQUE PROGRAM

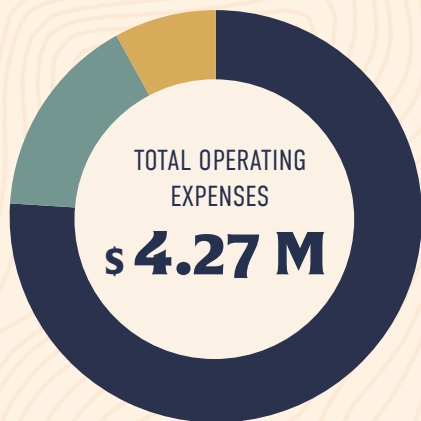
Donations are accepted for the purchase and placement of Commemorative Benches and Plaques at a location approved by FIND Outdoors along a trail or in an identified space on the grounds of the property of the Cradle of Forestry located in Pisgah Forest, NC.

CELEBRATING OUR DONORS

Donors are at the heart of everything we do. We're deeply grateful for your generous support throughout the year and wish to express our gratitude.

At FIND Outdoors, we work diligently to keep administrative costs low so that the maximum amount of your contribution goes directly toward our mission: making Forest-Inspired Nature Discovery available to all.

Every gift makes a lasting impact. At a time when protecting our public lands is more important than ever, your support helps safeguard these spaces to ensure they remain open and thriving for generations to come.



● Maintaining Facilities <i>Including capital improvements</i>	75.95%
● Education and Programming	15.95%
● Administrative	8.10%



CFAIA d/b/a FIND Outdoors is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that has adopted nine critical guiding principles and best practices to operate at the highest level of non-profit ethics and transparency. TIN: 56-1302500

\$60,000 - \$100,000

NC Museum of Natural Sciences
Simon Family Foundation
State of North Carolina, Dept of
NCR and Cultural Resources

\$10,000 - \$20,000

Justice Outside
The Landmark Project
REI Cooperative Action Fund

\$1,000 - \$9,999

Creative +
High Range Designs
Robert Kellner
Helen Knouf
Chad & Kari Leatherwood
Mid-Atlantic Stihl - Keith Bender
Morrow Insurance Agency
Woody Platt
Amber Share
Weyerhaeuser

\$250 - \$999

Allison Alston
American Online Giving Foundation,
Inc./Benevity Giving Platform
Averys Tree & Lawn Services, LLC
Steven Beck
Catheys Creek Electric, LLC
Ross Dowswell
Matthew Gately
Heidi Philyaw
Reese Landscaping Services, LLC
Lane Schroeder
Jocelyn & Clay Wilson

\$1 - \$249

Jay Alost
Hope Ascher
Travis Baird
Katie Baldwin
Ernest Ball
Reggie Banks
Bonnie Banner
Susan Banta
Steve Barnash
Chris Barrett
Bear Country 5K & 10K Race 2024
Melisa Beauchamp
Rick Beley
Suzanne Berube
Kylie Blanchard
Judith Blue
Jennifer Boston
William Bowers
Billy Bryson
Deborah Bundy
Heather Busher
Eric Caldwell
Dennis Carter

Spencer Carter
Laura Champion
Emily Chapplear
Laura Cheatham
Darlena Cochran
Wayne & Betty Coleman
Francisca Comar
Ed Cousineau
Kathryn Craig
Bruce Crews
Cassidy Diamond
Sue Donato
Annie Drennan
Jeb Durden
Barry Dutton
Brenda Eav
Diane Ebbitt
Lisa Eischen
Habiba Farag
Shawn Farrell
Amanda Flowers
Tad Fogel
Bridget Fox
Jessica Frady
Reginald Funderburk
Catherine & Scott Gain
Lee Galloway
Russell Garrison
Ed Gash
Rose George
Greg Getzinger
Grey Gowder
Bill Gozansky
Brenda Greene
Jonathan Griffin
Shannon Groelle
Jan Grossman
Cindy Hallman
Mandy Harmon
Dawn Harpur
Matthew Hasbrouck
Karen Hayes
Sterling Hearth
Eva Hedgecock
Lon Hetrick
Jasmine Hodgson
Ashley Hoffman
Monique Holloman
Cody Howard
Dan Howes
Randy Ittner
Nikola Jankovic
Victoria Jarred
Karen Kaczman
C Kane
Jennifer Keeney
James Kelley
Stephanie Klempner
Melanie Kolifraith
Jennifer Kravassi
John Kreeger

Brian Landis
Lena Lane
Cindy Lee-Baker
Sherry Litzenger
Pamela Loetscher
Crystal Lucinian
Reid Lynch
Kelly McBride
Nina McCaslin-Horn
JR McCay
Babs McDonald
Kimberly McGlothlin
Robin McLachlan
Linzey McMahan
Gabriel Mejia
Elizabeth Miller
Alexander Motten
Jessica Nickelsen
Silvia Novelli
Allison O'Neill
Maureen Oprisko
Jessica Orth
Brian Owens
Susan P
Joseph Pallot
Ed Paradis
Holly Parker
Teri Pate
Karen Pearce
James Ragsdale
Crystal Reese
Samantha Robbins
Hannah Roof
Kenneth Rowland
Srishti Sathir
Elizabeth Samuelson
Patricia Sanders
Derek Schaper
Carol & Russell Scott

Robin Scrivner
Amanda Searcy
Dawn Skerrett
Susan Smart
Kimberly Smith
Aaron Smith
Mafus Smith
Connie Stephens
Ryan Stepler
John Stewart
Margo & Jim Stringfield
Joseph & Pamela Suskay
The Hub & Pisgah Tavern
The NC Arboretum Society
Jennifer Tran
William Trotter
Tracie Turner
Skye Tyler
Linda Weber
Linda Weber
Anne Westlake
Tamra Whitaker
Megan Wichelhaus
Shannon Wiebe
Karl Wiedemann
Jacques Wiener
Elizabeth Wierszalowski
Philip Wilhite
Amelia Williams
Clarissa Williams
Cheryl Williams
Abigail Williams
Audrey Wood
Scott Wright

In Honor of

Eric & Jennifer Blue
by Judith Blue
Ken Cordell
by Babs McDonald
LS Gash
by Ed Gash
The O Boys
by Maureen Oprisko
Pickin' for Pisgah Musicians
by Margo and Jim Stringfield
Kirby & Matt Wilson
by Monique Holloman

In Memory of

Fred Hutchinson
by Cheryl Williams
Stu Ryman
by Chad & Kari Leatherwood

In Recognition of

All Hosts and Volunteers
CASP Service Volunteers
FIND Outdoors Board of Directors
FIND Outdoors Team Members
National Forests of North Carolina:
Supervisors Office
Natural Inquirer
US Forest Service Ranger Districts in Georgia:
Blue Ridge & Chattooga
US Forest Service Ranger Districts in Kentucky:
Cumberland
US Forest Service Ranger Districts in NC:
Pisgah, Appalachian, Nantahala, Grandfather,
Cheoah, Tusquitee
Supporters of donation boxes and round ups
at all of our sites
The Team at Marketing Outpost
Trevett's: Print + Mail

MAKE A DONATION TODAY!

SCAN TO
DONATE
TODAY!



Gifts of any size and any amount provide needed resources to make recreation equitable and available for all. Become a supporter of FIND Outdoors by scanning the QR code and making your donation today!

LET'S GO
FINDTM
ESTD OUTDOORS 1972

PHOTO BY DIOGO DEASSIS

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