



The Oak Leaf

The Newsletter of the TRISTATE RAMBLERS

Volume 44 Number 1

SPRING 2021

Message from the President *by Bill Reynolds*



This is my third letter to the membership through *The Oak Leaf* since taking office in December 2019. I have to say that this time has given me a renewed and significantly increased appreciation for all who have held this position before me — some for more than a decade!

Please remember: I want to begin by reiterating some points that tend to get lost in the pages that we all agree to when signing up for an event.

- ▶ Anyone who participated in a club event and later is diagnosed with Covid or tests positive must notify the club president so that others who were present can be informed of possible exposure.
- ▶ On the trail and during stops, breaks, and separations, members should stay at least 10 feet apart if not wearing a mask.
- ▶ A waitlist will be created when necessary. We urge members to sign up on the waitlist to demonstrate the level of interest for an event. (I will always try to identify a second leader when a waitlist for one of my hikes exceeds five people!)
- ▶ Members who are unable to participate in an event for which they signed up must change their status on SignUpGenius. If you

have to cancel at the last moment, contact the leader in addition to changing your status online.

- ▶ Leaders should notify the outreach chair of any no-shows following the event. No-shows who violate the obligation to change their status three times may no longer register for any events that require limits on participation.

These guidelines will be adjusted as state restrictions are changed. When we all adhere to them, we can get the maximum number of members on the trails safely.

Executive Board: I am so proud of and grateful for the efforts of my fellow board members. Thanks to each and every one of you for all you do to keep TriState Ramblers running smoothly and safely.

- ▶ Through the tireless work of outreach chair Debby Bronner and her cadre of volunteers, we have offered as many as 17 hikes in one week. More than 330 people (half of our membership) have hiked at least once over the nine months of June 2020 through February 2021. Debby, who has “retired” from this position, was showered with praise for her dedication to providing increased outing opportunities during the pandemic. At the virtual annual meeting in December, she was given the Dave Hogenauer Service Award in recognition of her extraordinary contributions.
- ▶ John Jurasek has embraced his duties as vice president, and you

can read more about him elsewhere in this issue.

- ▶ Karen Rychlicki has been a great asset as recording secretary in keeping a detailed record of our work, and we are very grateful for her efforts.
- ▶ Our webmaster, Dianne Jones, has continued to maintain and polish the website while also managing some important behind-the-curtain tweaks of the SignUpGenius system, allowing us greater flexibility.
- ▶ We owe a big thank you to Lise Greene not only for her editing of *The Oak Leaf* but her polishing of many of our contributions.
- ▶ John Crump has been a godsend in assuming the positions of treasurer AND membership chair. He has his finger on the pulse of all club activity and generates excellent, detailed reports on our membership, financial status (very good), events, and trends.
- ▶ Nancy Sierra, our schedule coordinator, is currently working on the July to December 2021 booklet. So get your offerings to the appropriate outing coordinator ASAP! We can look forward to all the schedule offers in hikes, paddles, and bike rides.
- ▶ As social chair, Terry Kulmane is planning the summer picnic. We continue to work on details for the holiday party and business meeting in December. Volunteers are always appreciated to assist with these events.

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Message from the President *continued*

- ▶ As I stated in the last issue, Linda Hetcher hit the ground running as outing chair at the beginning of this year and has increased her contributions since then. Through her networking with other members and based on some of their recommendations, we have added more than 15 new leaders over the past year.
- ▶ We also welcome to the board Kaat Higham, who has taken over the position of outreach chair from Debby Bronner, and Sheree Bennett, who has taken over the position of nominating chair from Gail Biggs. Both Kaat and Sheree can use additional help in their assigned tasks, so if you are interested, please reach out to them.

Board Meeting: On Friday, April 16, the executive board met to discuss several issues and make plans for the remainder of this year.

- ▶ In response to requests to increase the number of participants permitted on hikes, bike rides, and paddles, leaders now have the option to accept up to 15 members.
- ▶ In response to calls for increased outdoor opportunities, members

may now sign up for a third hike in any given week after 8 p.m. the day before, as long as no one is left on the waitlist.

- ▶ Elsewhere in this issue, others will detail some of their work and provide reports.
- ▶ In the past year, it was with a heavy heart that we canceled our summer picnic and holiday party. Now we are excited that both the picnic (July 10 at Lewis Morris Park) and holiday party (December 4 at Masker's Barn) are ON — in some form! Reservations will be required and details will be provided as the dates get closer. If Covid restrictions at the time of either event require us to make changes in location or in other ways, they will be communicated via email.

While it is easy to give a shoutout to the officers, outing coordinators, and special volunteers with whom we interact so often, it is YOU — the members of this club — who make it a lively, vibrant organization. The many event leaders and hundreds of participants in our activities make TriState Ramblers an exceptional club, for which I am very grateful.

Thank You, Jay Dibble! *by Dianne Jones*

If it seemed like the name Jay Dibble was listed for leading a lot of hikes last year, that wasn't your imagination! Jay led or co-led more than 40 hikes in 2020. What's more amazing (and appreciated) is that they were all in the second half of the year when we resumed activities during the pandemic.

With the number of participants per hike limited, Jay stepped up and added events to help get more members out of the house and onto the trails. Equally impressive is the variety of events. Jay led hikes on all days of the week except Monday and Thursday – from 25 different locations across 11 counties!

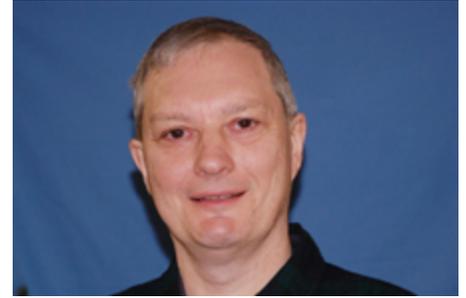
Jay may deflect and tell you he does it just because he likes to hike. But the fact that he is willing to help others get out as well is very generous and appreciated. When we see Jay on the trails, let's be sure to thank him for going above and beyond.



Photo by John Crump

Introducing Myself

by John Jurasek



If you feel like I do, you are so thankful that we seem to be approaching the end of the Covid-19 pandemic. Especially with the nice weather starting to come, some of us have been hiking on a regular basis; others are looking forward to getting back on the trails to visit their favorite places, find new places, and meet both old and new friends.

For those who don't yet know me, I would like to formally introduce myself as the new TriState Ramblers vice president. I have been a member of TSR since its inception and, before the name change, a member of Union County Hiking Club since the 1990s.

I have been active with the hiking community in various forms since that time, including serving on the executive committee of the Appalachian Mountain Club's New York-North Jersey Chapter and on the board of directors for the Adirondack Mountain Club. I am currently the hiking chair for the Sierra Club's Atlantic Chapter and publications chair for the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference.

It has been a privilege to lead hikes for all these clubs, many for more than 25 years. I really enjoy meeting friends old and new and sharing hiking experiences.

I look forward to helping lead TSR in the capacity of vice president as we ultimately reach some sense of normalcy after what has been a harrowing experience for all of us during the past year. I also can't wait to meet you out on the trails and at our regular events this coming year. Thanks to everyone for putting your trust in me for this position; please do not hesitate to reach out to me at any time for any reason.

TSR REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

HOLD THESE DATES!

Both events and locations are tentative at this time. Details will be provided as the dates draw closer; advance registration will be required.

- ▶ **Summer Picnic:** Saturday, July 10, at Lewis Morris Park
- ▶ **Holiday Party:** Saturday, December 4, at Masker's Barn

VOLUNTEER TO SERVE FOR ONE YEAR

All TSR members are invited to consider serving for one year (or more) as an officer, outing coordinator, or special volunteer. See page 4 of the current schedule booklet for a list of all opportunities. You are welcome to discuss your interest with [Sheree Bennett](#), Nominating Chair. Feel free also to contact someone presently in a position to review the requirements or to offer informal help.

TSR OFFICERS 2021

President	Bill Reynolds
Vice President	John Jurasek
Treasurer	John Crump
Recording Secretary	Karen Rychlicki
Schedule Coordinator	Nancy Sierra
Webmaster	Dianne Jones
Editor, <i>The Oak Leaf</i>	Lise Greene
Membership Chair	John Crump
Nominating Chair	Sheree Bennett
Outing Chair	Linda Hetcher
Outreach Chair	Kaat Higham
Social Chair	Terry Kulmane

CONNECT WITH US!

Google Group

The TriState Ramblers Google Group provides up-to-date information on added, canceled, and changed outings plus other information relevant to TSR's outdoor activities. Subscribe by sending an email to tsrhikers@gmail.com with a request to join the TSR Google Group. (A Gmail address is not required.) Emails will arrive with a subject line beginning: "TriState Ramblers Group Message."

Facebook

www.facebook.com/groups/243428139331669

The private TriState Ramblers Facebook page is a wonderful way for

members to post photos of club events, seek advice on hiking gear, arrange carpooling, and share useful information regarding hiking, biking, and paddling.

Website

www.tristateramblers.org

There is a lot of information for club members on the website, including a [link for directions](#) to the most-used outing destinations. When in doubt, check the directions and/or call the leader to confirm the exact meeting location.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL COMING SOON

Watch your email for a reminder from John Crump, membership chair, about dues for the new year that begins July 1. Please especially review the renewal notice to make sure your emergency contact information is correct. Consider all you receive for only \$15 annually! It is very easy to renew [online](#) or by check, if you prefer.

PARTICIPANTS AND LEADERS AT TSR EVENTS

In response to requests to increase the number of participants permitted on hikes, bike rides, and paddles, leaders now have the option to accept up to 15 members per event. To do so, leaders **must** contact tsrregistration@outlook.com by the **Wednesday before the week of their event** so the sign-up can be presented accordingly. (Leaders may not increase the number of participants without such week-prior disclosure.)

Note: If names are on the waitlist, leaders are encouraged to recruit a co-leader and split the group into two smaller ones, each up to the original maximum plus the leader. The second group should begin about 10 minutes after the first. Contact tsrregistration@outlook.com to adjust the sign-up page.

- ▶ No one may participate in a TSR event without prior sign-up.
- ▶ Members may register for up to two hikes per week (one main list and one waitlist) — plus unlimited biking and paddling trips.
- ▶ **Exception:** If there are open spots and no one on the waitlist as of 8 p.m. the day before, you may add yourself to a third main hiking list even if you are already registered for two hikes that week.
- ▶ Members who are unable to participate in an event for which they signed up must change their status on SignUpGenius. If you have to cancel at the last moment, contact the leader in addition to changing your status online.
- ▶ Leaders should notify the outreach chair of any no-shows following the event. No-shows who violate the obligation to change their status three times may no longer register for any events that require limits on participation.
- ▶ All members should continue to practice social distancing (10 feet apart on the trail) and wear a mask if that is not possible.
- ▶ Leaders are requested *not* to provide treats during lunch breaks.



TSR

The Oak Leaf is a publication of TriState Ramblers of New Jersey. Comments or questions may be addressed to the editor, Lise Greene, at lise.greene@montclair.edu. The newsletter is created electronically by the graphic editor, Jay Winslow, and emailed to all members. It is also posted on the TSR website. In order to ensure receipt of *The Oak Leaf*, please keep your email current with John Crump, membership chair, at johncrump@yahoo.com.

A Journey Through the National Park Service *by Ed Purcell*



Only known picture of Ed in a ranger uniform (at right) — 1985, explaining the terms of surrender to a group of U.S. Army officers at Moore House, Yorktown, VA.

One day during my junior year of college, I saw a flyer on a library bulletin board announcing an opportunity to spend the summer in a national park through the Student Conservation Association (SCA). I applied to be an SCA aide, volunteering alongside Park Service rangers with free housing and a modest food allowance.

Although I had visions of being assigned to one of the famous western parks, that was not to be. The SCA folks took one look at all the history and political science classes I had taken and assigned me to Colonial National Historical Park in Virginia. I spent the summer giving tours of the Yorktown Battlefield. Despite being assigned to a “cannonball park” and not a “real park” (like Grand Canyon), I enjoyed my experience so much that I wanted to do it again — hopefully in a paid seasonal ranger position.

After graduation, I discovered that the seasonal ranger job market was very competitive, and I didn’t get a position. Fortunately, I had also reapplied to the SCA for another volunteer slot and was assigned to a resource management position, which involves a vast array of activities that help to properly preserve a park. I worked at two small parks in South Central Pennsylvania: Allegheny

Portage Railroad National Historic Site and Johnstown Flood National Memorial. I spent the summer posting boundary signs for newly acquired parklands, doing wildlife counts, administering visitor surveys, maintaining firefighting equipment, and more.

This second SCA position beefed up my résumé and I accepted an eight-month position at Gettysburg National Military Park, primarily stationed at Eisenhower Farm. Finally, two years after seeing a bulletin board ad, I was an official park ranger with a Stetson hat. Working at Eisenhower Farm mostly involved giving tours of Ike and Mamie’s retirement home adjacent to the famous battlefield. Many days, more than 1,000 people would tour the house.

Because people generally ask similar questions, one of the required ranger attributes is the ability to answer the same question hundreds of times a day — with a smile. Typical questions: “What is that round sofa?” (A pouf.) “Is that a chair for little people?” (No, it’s a gout stool . . . which just leads to another visitor question.) There is a benefit to being asked similar questions. Most parks have binders for new rangers containing useful information and frequent visitor queries. With a quick

read of the binder, a ranger can probably field 90% of the questions.

Time at Eisenhower Farm flew by. I appreciated the opportunity to spend eight months getting to know the battlefield and the people who worked there. Gettysburg was a great town to live in, but I had to look for another seasonal position. After a couple of weeks of unemployment, I packed up all my worldly possessions in my Chevy Chevette and drove down the Pennsylvania Turnpike for my next seasonal job — at Valley Forge National Historical Park, another “cannonball park.” Although I was hired for eight months, I wound up staying for just a few. During my time at Eisenhower, I had applied for a position at Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and an offer came through. Valley Forge was full of fascinating history, but I could not resist the call of a “real park.” So I packed up the Chevette again and headed off to Tennessee.

I was assigned to the Elkmont Campground with the primary responsibility of registering campers (similar to a hotel front desk clerk). Elkmont had 220 sites and was full almost every night over the summer. Ticketron managed reservations, leading to long days in the office explaining to campers the complexity of the system. For example, if you were already staying in the campground, you might have to leave because others had made reservations through Ticketron. Or if you made a reservation through Ticketron and wanted to leave early, you could not get a refund from the park; you had to contact Ticketron.

Another source of contention was rules. People go camping to get away from things like rules and dislike those who enforce them (rangers). But with 220 campsites close together, rules are needed to prevent chaos. The flip side was that I was living in a beautiful park, got to do lots of hiking in my free time, and met many nice campers. All in all, I had a great job with lousy pay, but there is a saying in the Park Service: “You get paid in sunsets!”

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A Journey Through the National Park Service *continued*

An article about the Park Service would not be complete without a bear story. Early in my stay at Great Smoky Mountains, there was a knock on my door late one night. A frantic camper reported that a bear was destroying a pickup truck camper next to his site. I had never dealt with an aggressive bear and was not thrilled about encountering one that could destroy a truck. But there was no one else available, so I went to check it out. By the time I got to the site, the bear was gone. It had stood up and put its paws through the window of the pickup shell to get at the food that was in the truck. (Somebody should have paid attention to the food storage rules in bear country.) The animal made a mess, but the truck was not destroyed. However, the bear became a repeat offender and was eventually tranquilized and relocated to a remote section of the park.

Halfway through the summer, I got a call from Colonial National Historical Park, the first place I had volunteered. They were looking for a permanent fee collector at the Jamestown Entrance Station, which meant benefits and stability. Once more, I packed up the Chevette, and headed back to Virginia. It turns out that working at an entrance station is pretty tedious. I had two responsibilities: Collect \$2 from each car and



Ed's ranger hat on top of the bookcase in his den.

tell the occupants as much about the park as possible without creating a traffic backup.

After a couple of months of fee collecting, I started applying to jobs at other parks. As a newcomer to the permanent ranks, I was unsuccessful. Switching permanent jobs is even more difficult than getting that first seasonal job. One good thing about my work was that I lived in dirt-cheap park housing. So although it was tedious, I lived comfortably . . . that is, until the day I had to give up my park housing. Remember when I said we were paid in sunsets? Unfortunately, landlords do not accept sunsets for rent. After five years of volunteering and working in the parks, I resigned, with no plan for what to do next.

Fairly quickly, it all came together. I had accrued three years of federal service and, since I had taken several

accounting classes in college, needed only 15 accounting credits to be an auditor in the federal government. In less than a year, I was employed. One of the great things about auditing is that oftentimes you get to travel for work. Soon I was traveling all over the United States and around the world. During free weekends, I checked out nearby parks such as Everglades, Rocky Mountain, Mount Rainier, and North Cascades.

While the Park Service is justifiably known for its beautiful natural areas and fascinating historical locations, one of its best attributes is the employees. They are some of the most dedicated, smart, and talented individuals I have met. In my five years, I made several lifelong friends — and married a friend of a ranger from Colonial. We went hiking in Virgin Islands National Park on our honeymoon, and almost every vacation since then has involved a national park. My family's favorites: Dry Tortugas in Florida, Great Sand Dunes in Colorado, and Hawai'i Volcanoes.

It has been 35 years since I wore a ranger uniform and the iconic hat, yet the Park Service is still a very important part of my life. Now if only Covid would go away, we could start using our Golden Age Passport (free admission for those 62 and older) to visit even more parks.

MILES FOR CHARITY *by Susan Kleczynski*

Turn all the miles you walk, run, and bike into money for charity! The app for Charity Miles can be downloaded to any iPhone or Android device. You create a profile and select one of the more than 60 participating charities.

Your distance is recorded and sponsors donate to the selected charity, which you can change at any time. Sponsors donate up to 25 cents per mile for walking/running and up to 10 cents for biking. It's not a large sum, but now there is an extra purpose in each step I take. As the organization states, "you move for the causes and people you feel most passionate about." There is no cost to the user unless you want to make a personal charitable donation. For more information, visit the website at www.charitymiles.org.



EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING AT HEDDEN PARK

Your TriState Ramblers officers met outdoors on April 16 at the Hedden Park pavilion — a chilly day with warm camaraderie. President Bill Reynolds kept the

agenda moving briskly along, helped by hot coffee and a socially distanced picnic lunch. Decisions and plans emanating from the meeting are highlighted in the president's letter

and elsewhere in this issue of *The Oak Leaf*. They will be followed up by email as details continue to be developed.



Executive board takes a break.



Debby takes a selfie at her final board meeting.

Gratitude to Nature *by Julie Stanton*

The year 2020 was one that most of us were happy to leave behind as we welcomed in 2021. Loss of loved ones and our way of life blended with feelings of isolation, anxiety, and fear that often overshadowed any feelings of joy and hopefulness.

Every Thanksgiving, I journal about things for which I am grateful. Recently I picked up my journal in reflection and read the entry from Thanksgiving 2020. Of course, I expressed gratitude for the health and support of my family and loved ones, for the tireless compassion and strength of our healthcare workers, and for my steady flow of work during the pandemic. However, one of my entries jumped out: "I am grateful for nature and all it has given me: a steady ground beneath my feet, a sense of peace, a space for reflection, and opportunities to connect with others who share my love of the outdoors."

I had the privilege of participating in the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference's fundraising Trail-A-Thon for six weeks in the fall of 2020. TriState Ramblers is a member of the NYNJTC, which was celebrating 100 years of creating safe, enjoyable access to nature in the most densely populated area of the country — right here! The first-ever Trail-A-Thon

marked the organization's centennial through walking, hiking, running, or riding 100 miles. The event provided a way to support sustainable trails by exploring a favorite park, trying out a new trail, taking a lap around the neighborhood, or even hitting a treadmill. Every mile gave participants the opportunity to raise money for the Trail Conference and protect our land. I ended the fundraiser with 120.96 miles and an elevation gain of 15,456 feet.

Those six weeks were an oasis amidst a chaotic time. The more my feet connected to the trails, the more rocks I scrambled, and the more beautiful scenery I experienced, the more peaceful and happy I felt. As the pandemic continues and life remains challenging, my memories and pictures from those experiences are continual reminders of the constancy of nature as a source of hope, beauty, and strength.



Aphsawa Preserve selfie



Round Valley State Park

BEAR MOUNTAIN IN THE MIST

by Edward Leibowitz

On a Tuesday last fall (October 20, 2020), I led a group of TSR hikers up Bear Mountain via the Major Welch Trail. I had considered canceling the hike at 7:00 a.m. since it was drizzling, but the weather prediction for Bear Mountain was drizzle earlier in the morning and clearing by 9:00-10:00. Still, driving from my home in Union, I was concerned, as conditions did not seem to be improving.



When I arrived at the Bear Mountain Inn parking lot, there was a fine mist. (Laurie Larstanna was glad I decided not to cancel because she had started out very early and might have missed the announcement.) The Bear Mountain Inn allowed our small group to use the restrooms, even though a sign in the lobby indicated they were for inn guests only.

Due to the steepness of the Major Welch Trail and the misty weather, I discussed with Joyce Breach the possibility of going up and down the Appalachian Trail instead of going up the Major Welch and down the Appalachian. But this would have been rather boring, so we decided to attempt the originally planned route. Our group consisted of Laurie Larstanna, Susan Kleczynski, Lynn Tucholke, Cheryce Mallette, Avi Shkedi, Kam Minhas, Dianne Suozzo, Joyce Breach, and me.

Before starting the hike, I presented some background information on William A. Welch, most of which I obtained from *Harriman Trails* (a book authored by Bill Myles of the Union County Hiking Club) and *The New York Times*. Major Welch, a man of many accomplishments, was an engineer from Kentucky who

expanded Bear Mountain State Park from 10,000 to 43,000 acres. He built 32 lakes and 100 miles of road, including the Seven Lakes Highway. He also built the Storm King Highway from West Point to Cornwall. However, his greatest accomplishment was the 103 campsites he built in Bear Mountain State Park without destroying the lakefront. I suppose to properly honor Major Welch for all his accomplishments, the difficult trail named for him had to be in like proportion.

We began to walk around the west side of Hessian Lake to the start of the Major Welch Trail, marked by a red circle in a white square. Going up this trail normally offers some beautiful views of the Hudson River; unfortunately, due to the weather, we were soaked in by fog and could see nothing.

There were occasional problems with the markers, but we always managed to find our way. Nobody else was on the trail until we approached Perkins Drive, where we met one person descending. As we continued ascending, we reached a section where we had to climb steep, bare, slippery rock. Due to the misty weather, Joyce advised walking on the dirt alongside the rocks. I knew from previous climbs that a chain was built into one place in the rocks for hoisting oneself up, but we could not find it.

We finally reached Perkins Drive and climbed one steep hill before the trail leveled out near the tower —



which, unfortunately, was closed. It is a very interesting place to visit and provides an excellent history of Bear Mountain.

After lunch at the top of the mountain, Joyce helped me find the start of downward climb on the Appalachian Trail. We encountered many people ascending and descending, but don't try it unless you like a lot of steps! When we finally neared our parking lot by the inn, the sun came out. We could see the Bear Mountain Bridge and the Hudson River. Although the weather could have been better, we all enjoyed the hike.

I would like to thank Avi Shkedi for his pictures of our group ascending the Major Welch Trail.

Porcupine on the Appalachian Trail



Porcupine blends in with the scenery on an Appalachian Trail hike led by Joyce and Alan Breach on April 8, 2021 (Paul Sanderson)

HIKING OUR WAY THROUGH 2020 *by Gail Biggs*



Butch and Gail Biggs



Such a long year! What would we have done without hiking? As I review the past Covid year, I can honestly say that hiking was the hero. When New Jersey closed down in March 2020, my outlet was hiking. But soon the parks were closed, so we had to find other places to walk. Living near Morristown, I found the town a treasure trove of unexplored streets.

A couple of times we walked over to Evergreen Cemetery. I drive past it often, but had never thought about it or entered. Evergreen is a private cemetery that overlooks a large area (60 acres) of the town. Who knew? It was established in 1855 and many of its earliest “residents” were prominent New Jersey people — judges, governors, congressmen. Also interred are hundreds of long-forgotten Greystone Psychiatric Hospital patients. Strolling around the grounds, we kept discovering more Morristown history buried there.

A few times we walked over to Fort Nonsense, an actual part of the

Morristown National Historical Park. It sits on high ground overlooking the surrounding area, and once served as a location for George Washington’s soldiers. There are a number of explanations for its name, including one that says Washington had his men dig redoubts there in order to keep busy. Thus — nonsense.

Then we headed to many of Morris County’s many lovely parks as they reopened. Although Morristown National Historical Park remained closed for a long time, others offered wonderful, healthy mini-vacations. Lewis Morris County Park, Mahlon Dickerson Reservation, Tourne County Park, and Hacklebarney State Park were great places to take us out of our Covid funk.

Covid-19 immediately impacted TriState Ramblers, and we had to curtail our club hiking program. But with ingenuity, resourcefulness, and SignUpGenius, a new, adaptive club program was born. Online registration eliminated the physical sign-up sheets and restricted hiking groups to

a manageable ten per leader. Following recommended distancing on the trail, the club could safely hike throughout the pandemic. Events capping at 10 (and, later, at 15) quickly filled up, so new leaders came forward to add more hikes. Some days featured numerous choices.

Club leaders Bill Reynolds, Dianne Jones, and Debby Bronner along with others kept the ball rolling. We could never have done it without them. Special kudos to Debby for tirelessly managing SignUpGenius with her 24-7 coverage, ensuring that we all can hike.

When the pandemic is finally behind us, TriState Ramblers can incorporate some of our new procedures into our regular protocol. Others, such as a limit on the number of hikers, can easily be put behind us. Many new members seeking pandemic relief joined the club and have acquired a love of hiking. Any way we look at it, hiking gave us a lifesaving lift in our darkest days. It is truly the Hero of 2020!

Farewell to Our Friends RON KUHNS • 3/25/21

Remembering Ron Kuhns by Margo Moss

Ron Kuhns, a member of TriState Ramblers since 2004, passed away on March 25, 2021. He was a quiet, unassuming guy who had a love for the out-of-doors. Ron led some club hikes, and we were hiking companions for about the past six years. He enjoyed exploring new territories. He unselfishly gave his time to help clean up the trails with informal groups as well as on his own when he saw something that could be improved. Ron also loved music, and I believe he had a collection of literally hundreds of (would you believe) cassettes and records as well as CDs. I will miss his company. My prayers go with his family, and may he rest in peace.

Comedy of Confusion (or Tale of Two Toilets) by Lise Greene

It was a beautiful morning to lead a hike, and the parking lot was filling with eager TSR members who had signed up online — so many that one hiker, Paul Sanderson, had agreed to be a co-leader in order to accommodate more participants. In addition, the meeting location had been moved to a bigger lot that fits more cars and, unlike the original lot, has a porta-potty. The day before the hike, everyone was emailed a notice of these changes as well as the leaders' day-of-hike phone numbers.

On hike day, I kept checking arrivals against a list I'd printed from SignUpGenius, but near departure time, four people were absent. Neither Paul nor I had heard from any of the four missing members. Then, just before heading into the woods, two of them (A and B) arrived. We took off without knowing the whereabouts of the other two.

It turned out that the third person (C) had merely been delayed. Upon reaching the deserted meeting place after 10:00, she decided to make the best of the situation by following a short loop trail on her own. Happily, she encountered the group as our paths intersected and then continued on with us.

Back home that afternoon, the message light on the kitchen phone was blinking from 9:30 that morning. I pressed the button and heard A, one of the hikers who had ultimately shown up just in time, describing the (wrong) parking lot where she and B were waiting — but her message was cut off. Though wondering why my home phone had been used rather than Paul's or my cell, I was glad they had somehow gotten to the

correct meeting place in time to join us.

Later, my husband told me that he had been in another room when A was leaving her message on our home phone. Entering the kitchen, he had intercepted the call without hearing the part already recorded in which A explained where she and B were. So my husband assumed they had gone to the first planned meeting location and gave directions from there to the second lot, mentioning the porta-potty as a landmark. However, there are three lots for that park along the same road — and the third one also has a porta-potty (uh-oh).

When checking my email a while later, I saw a note from B, the other "lost" hiker, that had been sent about 9:45 that morning. A and B were still alone in the third lot, which was clearly not the correct meeting location despite the presence of a porta-potty. She used her cell to Reply All to my email sent the day before to all participants, asking for help and providing her number. But without email access on my (not-smart) phone, I did not see her request until getting back home. I wrote to explain my lack of a timely response; she wrote back that, fortunately, another hiker in our group had seen the email and called her immediately with directions. That's how A and B arrived in the nick of time — one mystery solved.

Another layer of the mystery was uncovered when I suggested to B that in the future, calling the cell number provided for day-of-hike would be a better option than email. She replied that A had, in fact, called Paul's cell

and left a message, but he did not answer or call her back. Hmmm! I followed up and learned that his phone had indeed rung, but he mistakenly hung up before hearing who it was. Not recognizing the number, he nevertheless checked to see if a message had been left — nope. So he thought nothing more of it until we compared all of these notes hours later, and then checked his phone again . . . discovering A's voicemail. ("I still have a lot to learn about using my iPhone," he acknowledged.)

But why didn't anyone call *my* cell phone, which was turned on the whole time? Sad to say, I realized afterward that I had mistyped one digit when entering my number in the email. I wonder if someone else kept getting strange messages. Gee whiz!

This was a mystery that took the better part of a day to figure out. By evening, I couldn't stop smiling at the amazing combination of missteps. (I'm still smiling now!) Luckily we all ended up with a perfectly lovely shared experience on a sunshiny day and a rainbow of trails . . . except for D, the fourth missing person. As it turned out, D had apparently canceled her registration after my last review of the SignUpGenius list, which was just before leaving the house that morning.

Moral of the story (from someone notorious for getting lost): If you are in doubt about how to reach a meeting location, check the TSR website for a [link with specific directions](#) (to the most-used destinations) or ask the leader for detailed directions prior to the date of the event. All's well that ends well!

*Stream crossing
(Warren Page)*



*Lunch spot
at the pond
(Debby Bronner)*

Lessons from the Catskills *by Carolyn Smaka*



Ace



Comeau Property

My husband and I were itching to go hiking in the Catskills last fall. But our 13-year-old Shih Tzu, Ace, was having some health issues. On a good day, a challenging walk for him was the 1.5-mile Nomahegan loop in our hometown of Cranford. Leaving our dog alone in a rental house for hours while we hiked didn't seem right. So we decided instead to visit Woodstock, New York, and do some exploring where we could take Ace along. I admit I was disappointed that we wouldn't be doing any "real" hiking.

On our first day, Ace and I discovered the **Comeau Property** that includes a 1-mile trail where leashed dogs are welcome. A few steps from the parking lot, we came upon a beautiful open field with giant clouds throwing shadows over distant mountains. I had never noticed before how the Catskills have rolling, rounded shapes instead of sharp, pointy peaks. I later learned it's because they are not "mountains" in the traditional sense; they were formed by erosion of a raised ocean floor plateau and further sculpted by glaciers. Ace bounded along the

well-marked trail that wound in and out of tall musky pines, alongside a river, and over wooden walkways. This peaceful ramble became a regular outing during our time in Woodstock.

Our next adventure was along the **Ashokan Rail Trail**, one of many being developed in upstate New York. I thought it sounded a bit boring, as I pictured walking along abandoned railroad tracks, but at least Ace could handle it. We parked at the Woodstock Dike trailhead and walked on a flat, tree-covered gravel trail for about 10 minutes. Then a break in the trees opened to a sunny view of the



Ashokan Rail Trail

glistening Ashokan Reservoir flanked by Ashokan High Point. Ashokan is Iroquois for "where waters converge," which is fitting given the history of the reservoir and its connections to Esopus Creek and other nearby reservoirs. Interesting placards along the trail tell tales of the immigrants who helped to build the reservoir, and warn people not to feed the goats that are brought in to help manage vegetation in summer months.

We also took in some of the quaint towns in the area, including our favorites, **Woodstock** and **Saugerties**.

We enjoyed walking along the **Kingston** waterfront, where we had a lovely outdoor meal. After browsing the shops, we took home books and homemade chocolates.

My yearning for challenging hikes with payoff views subsided as I felt myself softening to the beauty of the Catskills.

Two other places worth mentioning are **Onteora Lake** and **Poet's Walk**. These are easy, dog-friendly walks that offer awesome views. The colorful fall foliage was almost at peak while we were there. Some of the vistas on Poet's Walk offer those wow moments you get on difficult hikes after tough climbs — we almost felt that we didn't earn them on this leisurely stroll through a beautiful park.

Although I did not do any "real" hiking, I loved our time in Woodstock. It seemed the Catskills were trying to teach me the same lessons as the pandemic:

Find joy in what I can do, instead of regretting what I can't.

Slowing down doesn't have to mean missing out.

Be grateful. Always.

Happy trails, fellow Ramblers.



Onteora Lake Trail



Poet's Walk

Once-in-a-Lifetime Event? TriState Ramblers Virtual Annual Business Meeting 2020 by John Crump

In years prior to the pandemic, TSR's annual business meeting took place at the holiday party in December. This option was not available in 2020 due to pandemic restrictions. However, the executive board wanted to report about the club; the club is required by its bylaws to have an annual meeting; and we needed to elect officers for 2021. What to do?

We began exploring how to conduct a virtual meeting that would accommodate more than 100 members with presentations by board members and voting. Not everyone is familiar with Zoom meetings and the typical Zoom format would not fill all our requirements. However, a Zoom webinar meeting is designed for many people to watch and listen with only a few presenters. It also has a live polling feature that can be used for voting. Here is how Zoom explains the differences between meetings and webinars:

Meetings are designed to be a collaborative event with all participants being able to screen share, turn on their video and audio, and see who else is in attendance.

Webinars are designed so that the host and any designated panelists can share their video, audio, and screen. Webinars allow view-only attendees. They have the ability to interact via Q&A, chat, and answering polling questions.

After deciding to use the webinar, the next challenge was how to hand off among multiple presenters who would not be in the same room, each with different visuals. We determined that one board member should control the visuals through PowerPoint and hand off the audio to each presenter in turn. Our webmaster, Dianne Jones, would take over the visuals for part of the meeting to demonstrate how members can use the website.

Then we had to design and implement the PowerPoint presentation. We first made a master template with a background photo from one of our



Proposed Executive Board 2020-2021

Gail Biggs

• President	Bill Reynolds
• Vice President	John Jurasek
• Treasurer	John Crump
• Recording Secretary	Karen Rychlicki
• Schedule Coordinator	Nancy Sierra
• Webmaster	Dianne Jones
• Oak Leaf Editor	Lise Greene
• Membership Chair	John Crump
• Outreach Chair	Debby Bronner
• Social Chair	Terry Kulmane
• Outing Chair	Linda Hetcher
• Nominating Chair	Open

Use the Poll feature on Zoom pull down menu to approve these nominations.

Hogenauer Service Award Winner

Debby Bronner

- Debby Bronner graciously and patiently helped members navigate the club's SignUpGenius procedures required in 2020 in order to participate in outings during the coronavirus pandemic.
- Debby is given this award in special appreciation for her tireless efforts that have enabled club members to continue hiking, biking, and paddling safely during the pandemic.

hikes. Most of TSR's event, membership, and financial data are stored in Excel workbooks. The workbooks generate analyses in charts, tables, and other formats, from which we selectively copied and pasted into the PowerPoint electronic slides.

Finally, we had three practice sessions to become familiar with using these tools while fine-tuning the content. Our goal was to present

the information quickly and without a hitch.

One final challenge remained. Our outreach chair, Debby Bronner, was involved in all the planning and practice sessions, but we did not want her to know she would win the Hogenauer Service Award during the meeting. To keep the secret, we changed those slides only a few

(continued on next page)

Virtual Business Meeting *continued*

minutes before the presentation to surprise Debby — and it worked! Debby was recognized for her extraordinary work in managing the new online sign-up system for TSR events during the pandemic, which required constant monitoring and updating. We are deeply grateful for her commitment and flexibility, which enabled hundreds of members to enjoy the outdoors safely.

The executive board was very pleased with the participation of so many members. Frankly, we did not know what to expect, because the virtual annual meeting of another much larger outdoor organization had fewer than 40 participants. But TSR's meeting drew more than twice as many, most via computer and a few by phone. The polling/voting feature resulted in approval of the minutes

from the 2019 annual meeting and election of all board members presented for 2021. Members also used the chat and Q&A features to comment or ask questions.

A fun feature to close out the meeting was a special drawing. Instead of pulling tickets from a hat, the names of all attendees were listed in an Excel workbook, and then a random number generator formula was used to assign a number to each person. The two members assigned the lowest numbers each received a gift card. Congratulations to Ed Leibowitz and Gail Waimon!

While we were happy with the results of our first virtual gathering, we hope very much to be together in person next December for a shared meal and camaraderie in conjunction with the annual meeting.

Meeting Date:
12/5/2020

TriState Ramblers Business Meeting
Zoom Data Analysis

Print Date:
12/6/2020

Attendance Analysis		
Type	Count	Comment
Host(s)	1	
Panelists	7	
Computer Attendees	73	Note that some couples may be in one sign-in
Phone Attendees	5	
Total:	86	

Voting Analysis		
	Yes	No
Accepting Minutes	55	0
For or Against Officers	62	0

Q&A Data	
	Count
Number of Questions	5
Answered by Text	1
Answered in video	4

Drawing Winner:

Edward	Leibowitz	eleibow@verizon.net
Gail	Waimon	gswaimon@comcast.net

HELP STOP THE SPOTTED LANTERNFLY

Hikers can help to eliminate egg masses of the invasive spotted lanternfly at the end of April and early May before they hatch. Each mass holds 30-50 eggs and can be found where there is sooty mold on a tree — often the invasive tree of heaven.



The spotted lanternfly is not a threat to humans or animals, but has the potential to greatly impact agricultural crops and hardwood trees. The insect is known to feed on numerous types of vegetation and the sap of many important plants in New Jersey including grapevines, maples, and black walnuts.



The New Jersey Department of Agriculture recommends using a rock and/or credit card to crush the egg mass and scrape it off the tree into a bag to prevent the sac from hatching. For additional NJDA information:

[Spotted Lanternfly](#)

[Spotted Lanternfly Egg Mass](#)

[Scraping Instructions](#)

[General Information](#)

Trail Improvements and Reblazing: Pyramid Mountain Natural Historic Area and Lewis Morris County Park

Trails have been reblazed throughout two popular areas used by our club. In both locations, colors have been changed to be more user-friendly and simpler for hikers and bikers to navigate. Visitors can check maps in park kiosks. For easy reference during an outing, users are strongly encouraged to download or photograph both old and new maps before heading out on the trails by clicking on the links below:

[Pyramid Mountain OLD map](#)
[Pyramid Mountain New Map](#)

[Lewis Morris OLD map](#)
[Lewis Morris NEW map](#)

NATIONAL PARK SURVEY RESULTS by Dianne Jones

Our national parks are a national treasure, with more than 300 million visits in each of the last five years. The Great American Outdoors Act was signed into law in 2020, permanently funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund to restore our national parks.

More than 50 members responded to the National Parks Survey in the fall 2020 issue of *The Oak Leaf*. Results are presented here:

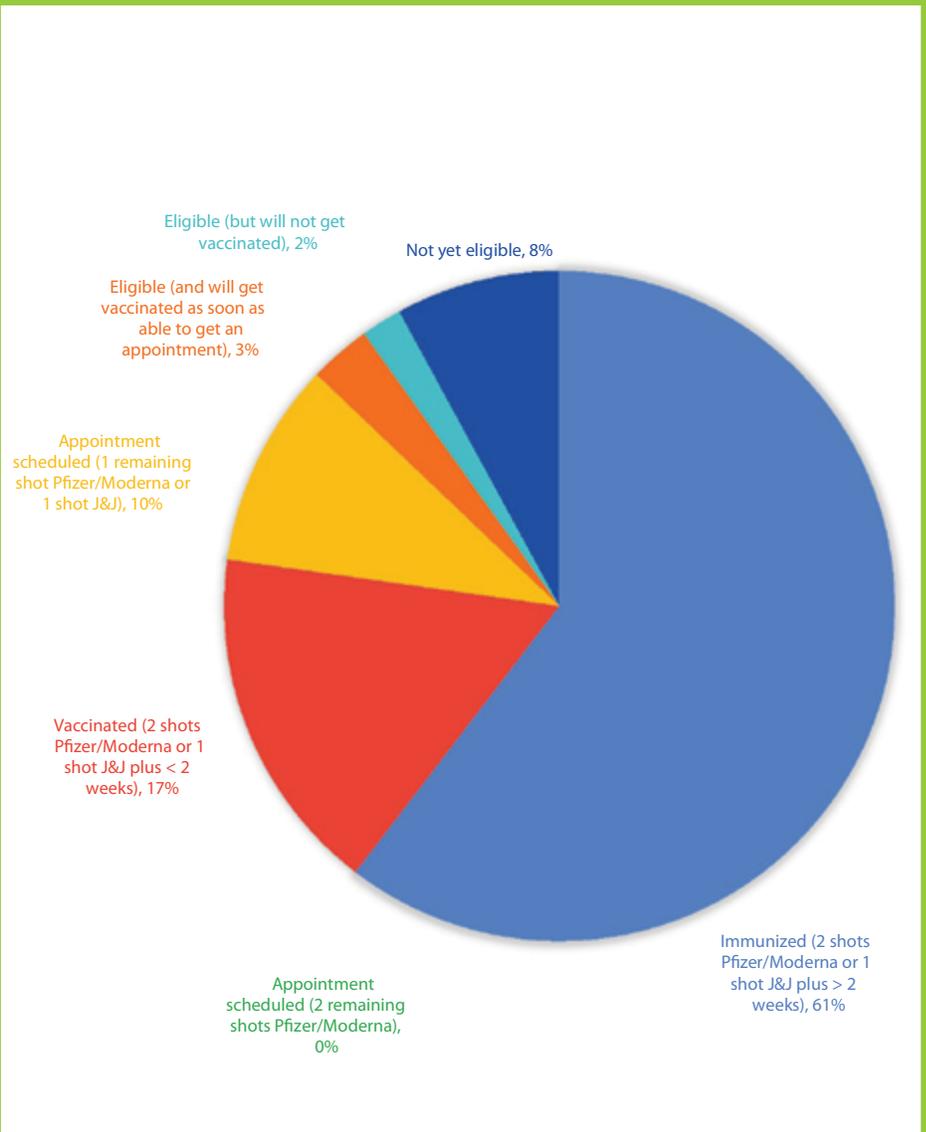
- ▶ There are 59 national parks spread over 28 states and territories.
- ▶ Our responding members have made 1,014 visits among them.
- ▶ Members have visited an average of 19 national parks.
- ▶ Only two national parks have NOT been visited:
 - Alaska – Kobuk Valley
 - American Samoa – National Park of American Samoa
- ▶ The three most popular parks (more than 40 members have visited each):
 - Arizona – Grand Canyon
 - California – Yosemite
 - Maine – Acadia
- ▶ According to the National Park Service, in 2019 the most visited national parks were (in order):
 - North Carolina/Tennessee – Great Smoky Mountains
 - Arizona – Grand Canyon
 - Colorado – Rocky Mountain
- ▶ More than 30 members have visited these six parks:
 - Florida – Everglades
 - Utah – Bryce Canyon
 - Utah – Zion
 - Virginia – Shenandoah
 - Wyoming – Grand Teton
 - Wyoming – Yellowstone
- ▶ 19 different parks got at least one vote as a member’s favorite. The three most favorite parks are (in order):
 - California – Yosemite
 - Maine – Acadia
 - Utah – Bryce Canyon

Fun Facts:

- ▶ In 1982 there were only 48 national parks and the most popular were Great Smoky Mountains and Acadia.
- ▶ A study by the US Department of Agriculture in the 1980s found that on average, Americans had visited 2.7 national parks.

2020 undoubtedly put a crimp in many travel plans. When widespread travel resumes, perhaps a trip to our beautiful national parks will be in your plans.

TSR VACCINATION SURVEY



About 45% of those surveyed (i.e. the Google Group mail list) responded.

Margo Moss: National Park “Champion” *by Dianne Jones*

Margo Moss, a longtime TriState Ramblers member and hike leader, is also the national park survey respondent who has visited the most locations — 50. In addition to the two parks where no responding members have been (Kobuk Valley in Alaska and National Park of American Samoa), the only ones she has not visited are:

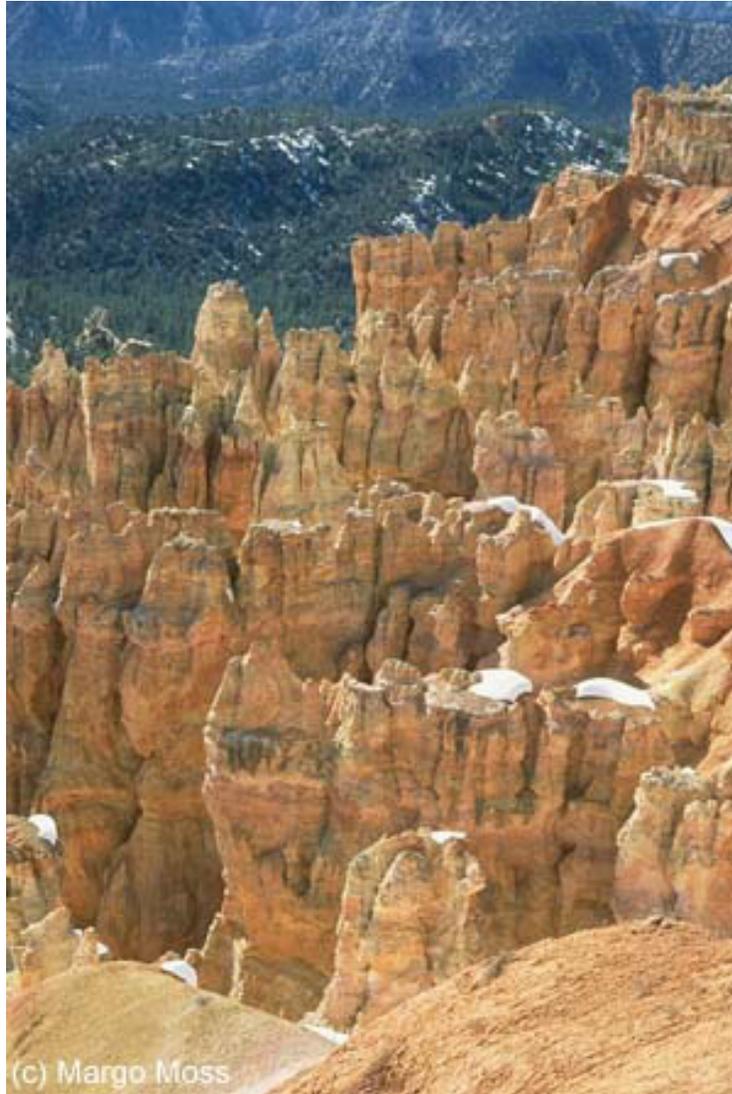
- Alaska — Lake Clark
- Alaska — Wrangell-St. Elias
- Kentucky — Mammoth Cave
- Michigan — Isle Royale
- Minnesota — Voyageurs
- Ohio — Cuyahoga Valley
- South Carolina — Congaree

Margo’s extensive travels to national parks were not planned to set a record. They resulted from opportunities to travel and make memories with friends and family while enjoying the great outdoors. Her trips have been inspired by beautiful photographs that compelled her to take in and photograph the views in person.

Her favorite was a seven-week tour with her son after his high school graduation. They visited many national parks in Alaska, most memorably Denali and Katmai. She traveled to the Great Smoky Mountains with TriState Ramblers friends (before they were the Ramblers). On the recommendation of David and Naomi Sutter, she visited Lassen Volcanic in California (which she had never heard of) and Canyonlands in Utah. Margo experienced the purple mountain majesties of Glacier National Park with her sister and mother on a cross-country drive. She was lucky enough to visit Death Valley during a once-in-100-years bloom of wildflowers.

Margo is a “silver” member of the Travelers’ Century Club, a special recognition for those who have visited at least 150 countries. She is scheduled to give a virtual presentation to the club on her 2018 trip to Greenland (see some of her photos at www.acephoto.com).

For TriState Ramblers, Margo is leading a series of hikes in Palisades Interstate Park, where she has been walking for many years.



*Bryce Canyon
(Margo Moss)*



*Portage Glacier
(Margo Moss)*

HIKE PREPARATION by Thea Landesberg

Saturday 9:00 a.m. any season

Me: Angela, want to go hiking tomorrow?

Angela: Yes!

Me: Great. I'll email you later with details.

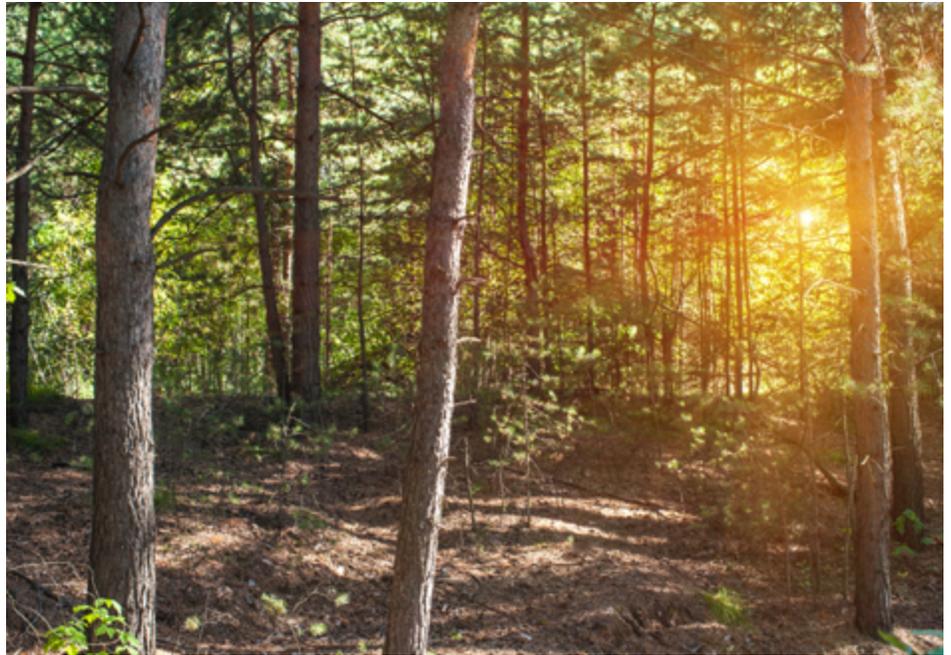
Angela: 👍

Saturday 9:10 a.m. — Think: Where to go? Do we have time for a long drive, maybe head north to Shawangunk, west to Allamuchy? No, maybe closer to home, Harriman. Harriman it is!

Saturday 9:15 a.m. — Take out Harriman State Park maps, north and south, and review parking issues. Forget Reeves. Unless we get there by 8 a.m., the parking situation is aggravating. I haven't been to the Ramapo Equestrian Center for a while, but — is it still closed? Johnstown Circle? Could be crowded, too. Hmmm. Maybe the hikers' lot near St. John's in the Wilderness Church? Tiorati always offers good parking unless there's some event going on.

Saturday 9:30 a.m. — More scouring of the maps for just the right trail. Feeling energetic, I consider trails with aerobic-positive uphill, maybe trek up Black Mountain from Lake Silvermine or up to the Timp from Route 9W. How about a little walk down history lane via Baileytown Road to the cemetery? Green Pond is perfect for summer views, Breakneck Pond makes my heart smile any time of the year. Up to Hogencamp Mountain for some gorgeous views? Agony Grind? No, forget that one. Really tough hiking and not much in the way of vistas.

Saturday 9:45 a.m. — Check the weather channel. Snow? No. Rain? No. Temperature? Not too cold, not too hot. Perfect.



Saturday 10:00 a.m.

Me: Meet at Sloatsburg DD. 8:30 a.m.? (As teachers we're used to getting up and out early)

Angela: 👍

Saturday 7:00 p.m. — Take out backpack and hiking paraphernalia bag. First aid kit? Check. Tick spray, extra socks? Check. Locate my extra pair of glasses, just in case I fall and break the ones I'm wearing. This has never happened, but you never know. Bear whistle, large plastic bag to collect trash left on the trails. Driver's license, health insurance cards, money, all in a small plastic case. Fill water bottle and place in the backpack along with my snack pack: two apples and a Nature's Bakery Fig Bar. Walk outside to the car to check for gas; half-tank will do.

Saturday 10:00 p.m. — Check the weather channel again. Still good, no rain or snow in the forecast. I get distracted by interesting video of a deer rescued from the ice. And several more unrelated, trivial, yet captivating videos that do not help the going-to-sleep process.

Sunday 6:30 a.m. — Wake up, excited, look out the window to see a clear sky! Have coffee, do some stretching exercises while watching

my favorite reruns of George Lopez. Eat a healthy bowl of oatmeal and blueberries, check the weather channel one more time.

Sunday 7:30 a.m. — Fill thermos with coffee. Angela and I love to have coffee breaks mid-hike, preferably on top of a mountain, smiling at Mother Nature and so happy to hang out together. Check www.511.nj/ny for road accidents or delays.

About to head out — Harriman map? Cell phone? Note left for my husband so he knows where I'm going? Yes, yes, yes. Thermos in my backpack? Extra shoes, Stabilicers in the trunk? (Again, you never know.)

Sunday 7:45 a.m. — Spend 10 minutes putting on my boots. Make sure the laces are tight, but not too tight. Undo and lace again. Load backpack in the car.

Sunday 8:00 a.m. — Okay, in the car. Check www.511.nj/ny (yes, again) for a traffic update. Tune in to WCBS for yet another traffic check and weather forecast. Good — no rain. Check backseat to make sure I took the right Harriman map.

Down the driveway. Smile. On my way to a great day on the trail with my hiking buddy.

Paddling on the Musconetcong River *by Bev and Stan Kaltnecker*

On a beautiful autumn day last October, TSR members enjoyed a lazy paddle on the Musconetcong River — two miles up and two miles back. Then we had lunch on land before a few of us returned to our kayaks and paddled around Saxon Lake.



Two Eskimos sitting in a kayak were chilly, so they lit a fire in the craft. Unsurprisingly it sank, proving once again that you can't have your kayak and heat it too.



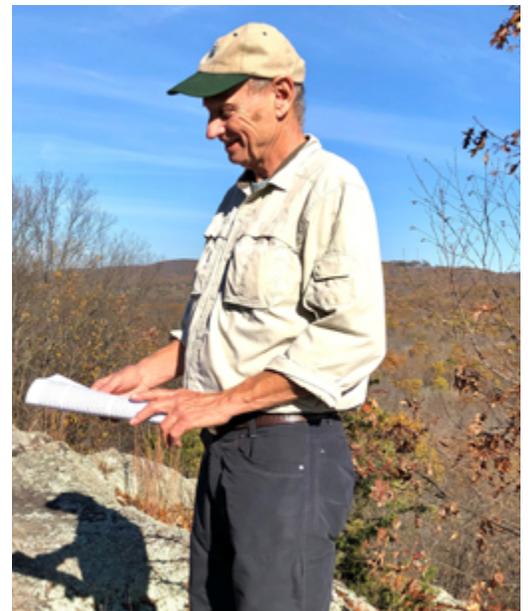
*Steve Koehler at Lewis Morris Park
(Paul Sanderson)*



Steve's friends sharing memories



*Tonya Biondi, Lise Greene, Louis Thompson, Paul Sanderson, Alan Breach,
Kathe Serbin, Rich Baumeister, Carolyn Canfield, Eck Khoon Goh, Joyce Breach*



Paul Sanderson reading eulogy

STEVE KOEHLER MEMORIAL HIKE

by Tonya Biondi • photos by Tonya Biondi except as noted

Many of you remember Steve Koehler, a 29-year member of Union County Hiking Club/TriState Ramblers who served as treasurer and membership chair. John Crump, who currently holds those positions, noted that Steve was generous with his time, answered all his questions during the transition, and kept excellent membership and financial data records.

Steve participated in and led numerous club hikes. In addition, some of you spent time with him on many annual hiking trips to the White Mountains. He was also an avid

square dancer and shared this activity with some TSR members as well.

On February 25, 2020, Steve passed away. His wife, Peggy, asked Paul Sanderson to gather Steve's hiking friends and spread a portion of his ashes at a special place. The decision of "where" was easy: Ramapo State Park. The gorgeous seven-mile route was one of Steve's favorites, which he had hiked countless times.

So Steve's last hike with TSR friends was on November 5, 2020. It was an absolutely spectacular day with mild weather and sunny blue

skies. Ten of us began at the Back Beach parking lot and hiked up the Indian trail. We arrived at a beautiful lookout on the ridge to enjoy lunch, and each of us shared our special memories of Steve. Some had not heard Paul give Steve's eulogy, so he kindly shared it again before quietly spreading the ashes on the beautiful mountainside.

Our friend Steve had a wry sense of humor and will be greatly missed. If any of you are hiking on the ridge overlook at Wanaque Reservoir, think of Steve as you pass through. A part of him will be there forever.

ROCKtober 2020 Hikes

Bill Correa led five fabulous “ROCKtober” hikes in 2020 for our adventurous members (photos by Dianne Jones except as noted).



October 1 – Breakneck Ridge, Cold Spring, NY (Storm King Mountain in the background)



October 8 – Stonetown Circular, Ringwood, NJ



October 15 – Seven Hills, Harriman State Park, NY (Louis Thompson)



October 22 – Dunderberg Spiral Railway, Harriman State Park, NY



October 31 – Storm King Mountain, Cornwall on the Hudson, NY (Jason Briggs)

PHOTO COLLAGE OF CLUB LEADERS *by Gail Waimon*

I am so thankful for ALL our leaders, old and new.



Bill Reynolds, our fearless leader and president



Debby Bronner eats a healthy snack



Gail Waimon's knee-deep freshies



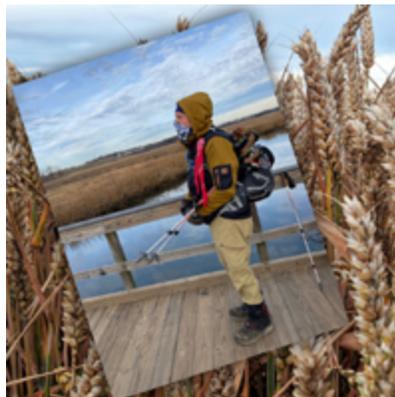
Gordon Thomas shoots



Hike leader Dave Sutter



John Jurasek at Pyramid Mountain



Lenny Friedman at Cheesequake



Louis Thompson the man behind the mask



Lenny Friedman and Gail Waimon lead their first snowshoe hike



Yellow becomes Lise Greene



Spring is coming — Ed Leibowitz and Ken Donhauser

Take Me to Your Leader: Insights from Newly Minted Hike Leaders *by Linda Hetcher*

Have you been thinking of becoming a hike leader? Are you curious as to what it entails? Might you be a bit apprehensive about taking on the responsibility?

I asked a number of our newest leaders to answer those questions and share their experiences. Some have led independently, while others have led with a partner over the last several months. Although backgrounds vary among the leaders, there are some interesting common perspectives across the group.



Sharon Lehman

Sharon Lehman (SL) has a passion for hiking that started from playing all day in the woods in her backyard. She joined TSR while still working, and

since retiring has become much more active in the club. She enjoys meeting great people and discovering new places to hike.

Gordon Thomas (GT) shared that hiking was a family thing. He joined his father and grandfather on his first hike to Zealand Falls in New Hampshire almost 70 years ago.



Gordon Thomas

Len Friedman (LF) has hiked extensively both here and abroad for about 30 years. He is among a number of our members who first joined the Frost Valley/Union County Hiking Club, which is now TSR.

Anna Merritt (AM), though new to TSR last fall, has hiked since she was five. Her parents introduced her to hiking on vacations in the Tatra Mountains in Poland.

Kaat Higham (KH) is relatively new to hiking and has been a TSR

member for about one and a half years. She has co-led at Governor Mountain with Dianne Jones.

Russ Bangs (RB) hiked as a kid, left it for

Len Friedman



a while, and became very active again over the past decade. He joined TSR about a year ago.

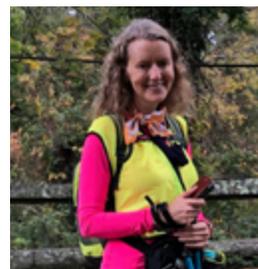
Sue Bernstein (SB) and **Nick Gaura (NG)** have partnered to lead hikes. Together they have almost 15 years of experience in the club.

Maya Ruvinshteyn (MR) and **Yuriy Rakhlin (YR)** met in a hiking club in Uzbekistan, where they enjoyed the beautiful Tian Shan Mountains (Mountains of Heaven). They passed their love of hiking on to their daughter, who started when she was four years old. Hiking continues to be part of their outdoor activities here in the United States.

Kathi Caccavale (KC) has been hiking since 1989 and found TSR through Meetup. She has increased her hiking activity with the club during the pandemic.

What influenced you to become a hike leader? What do you like about leading?

SL: I always enjoyed hiking with Bev and Stan Kaltnecker. They asked me to consider leading a hike, and though I was reluctant at first, I am so glad that I said yes. I volunteered to lead some Monday hikes where I felt comfortable, and got a tremendous amount of support from friends and other leaders. Additionally, it gave me



Anna Merritt

the chance to get outdoors more to enjoy the trails. Leading lets me explore new areas and allows me to get to know my fellow hikers.

Their gratitude is especially rewarding and gives me a personal sense of satisfaction. I can share my love of nature and the outdoors with them.

GT: Bill Reynolds asked for an additional leader on a hike in January. I agreed because I figured I'd get coaching before the hike and understanding during the hike. I was right on both counts. The help from the group is comforting. As a new member and an even newer leader, I can say that I like the support and suggestions of the other members very much. This fruitful interaction made my introduction to TSR membership and transition to being a leader very smooth and eased my concerns.



Kaat Higham

LF: When hiking capacity restrictions were imposed due to the pandemic, I knew leading hikes would enable me to get out more frequently with

like-minded people. The transition was not difficult because I have been leading bike rides and ski groups for many years. Leading hikes enables me to select the location, terrain, distance, and pace I most enjoy. I also get to meet more TSR members.

AM: When I lead, I can share the beauty of some of my favorite spots with others, and that gives me a sense of accomplishment. I also like the opportunity to learn about the various places, including seasonal trail conditions and existing fauna and flora.

KH: Leading simply provides more opportunity to hike. With the pandemic, I am enjoying small group hiking. Being recently retired, TSR gives me opportunity to both attend and lead. With seasoned hikers on a trek, you gain confidence as the leader.

(continued on next page)

Newly Minted Hike Leaders *continued*



Russ Bangs

RB: I was interested in becoming a leader since I'm passionate about hiking, and I would like to help others feel the same spirit of the woods that I do. Also,

several hiking friends encouraged me to lead hikes and that was a big driver. When leading, I enjoy the feeling of accomplishment and knowing that others have confidence in me. The fringe benefits are getting to choose where and when I go on a group hike. I don't have to worry about a waitlist.

SB: I wanted to hike closer to home, and leading was one surefire way to do that. Those attending the hikes are all very good company.

NG: Sue asked if I would assist her, and I felt it would open up different parts of the state to other members. It was also fun sharing some unique facts about the area we hiked.



Nick Gaura and Sue Bernstein

MR: Yuriy and I wanted to help TSR invite more people outdoors, especially during these times.

KC: My friends and some TSR members encouraged me to lead this winter. I actually trained as an Appalachian Mountain Club hike leader a few years ago, but then broke my ankle before I had a chance to co-lead with that group. Leading affords me the chance to share with people places that they might not already know as well as information about those places. I enjoy the companionship of fellow hikers. It's fun to plan a route and receive feedback that others enjoyed it, too.

As a new leader, what advice do you have to share with anyone considering leading a hike?

SL: Pick a hike that you know and love and start with that one! Don't be afraid, as you will have other leaders to support you. If you don't know which hike to choose, there are so many leaders who are experts on those trails that you can tap for navigation and scouting assistance.

LF: I would advise someone considering leading a hike to scout the route within a few days of the start date. I also try to get a handle on the weather forecast before proposing a hike. It's not always predictable, but can help avoid unpleasant surprises.

AM: Have an up-to-date map or something like the AllTrails app. Don't be afraid of experiencing new trails. It's always nice to know and share some history about a given park and/or historic buildings along the way to make the day a bit more interesting.



Maya Ruwinshteyn and Yuriy Rakhlina

KH: Scouting hikes ahead of time with an experienced TSR member is invaluable. Also, periodically check the tempo of the trek with attendees to ensure it is the correct pace for the group.

RB: Don't feel shy or intimidated about leading. Just go ahead. The hikers who participate want you and the hike to be successful. In all the hikes I've led so far, I've felt complete support from those who joined me.

SB: There is plenty of advice and guidance available, making it easier than you might think.

NG: I had some concerns, but it worked out fine.

MR: Lead a hike. It will give you a new experience. You will learn more about the area around you, and about yourself.

Do you have any parting comments?

SL: I was so happy to volunteer with an organization like TSR. If you are thinking about leading a hike, *Kathi Caccavale* do it!

LF: I like to learn new hikes in previously unfamiliar places. If you do, too, I recommend relying on maps, experienced leaders, and apps. Practice the hike on your own and become knowledgeable about some history or trivia connected with a trail.

KC: I look forward to leading future hikes that I have not seen listed on the schedule so far or perhaps in a while. Stay tuned!

As hiking enthusiasts, TSR members know that a walk through the woods does wonders for the mind, body and spirit. Why not take the benefits received by hiking to the next level by transitioning from an attendee to a leader? As you heard from our new leaders, it's not that daunting a task and the return from your efforts is very valuable.

Sure, you have to do some pre-work and planning, but if you want to increase opportunities to experience more of the tri-state trail system, volunteering to lead is the answer. Our new leaders have explained that when they were willing to share their passion for hiking with others, they found the assistance and encouragement needed to be successful. Who knows? You may be able to tap one of the interviewees in this article to scout or co-lead your first leadership event.

In addition, an online informational meeting will be held soon for prospective new leaders. Notification will be sent via the TSR Google Groups email list. If you are not subscribed to the list, feel free to contact me directly at linda.hetcher@gmail.com.

