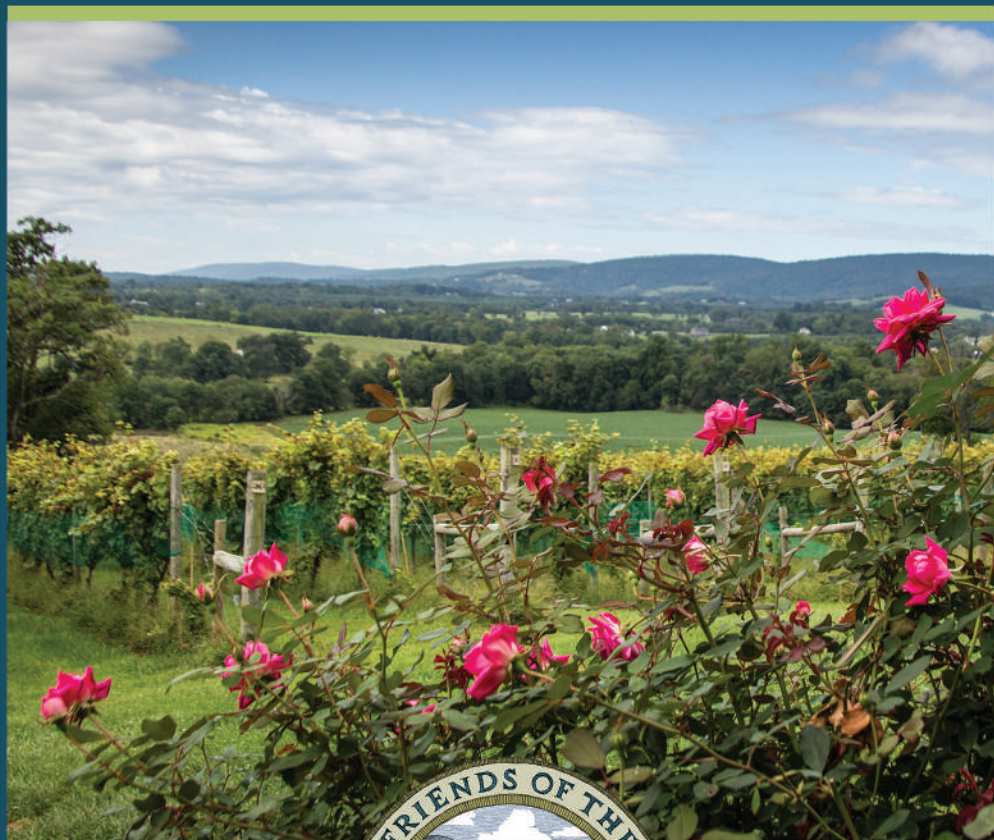


*Keep close to Nature's
heart... climb a mountain or
spend a week in the woods.
Wash your spirit clean.*

- JOHN MUIR



HILLSBORO WINERY PHOTO BY TOM EDMONDS



ANNUAL REPORT 2013-2014

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

The fact that I am sitting down to write this having just served my shift hosting the *Friends'* exhibit at the annual Bluemont Fair in the foothills of the Blue Ridge has me thinking. Thinking about the significance of a country fair that brings a community of people together to showcase the beauty of their village as well as the talents of diverse artisans. There is food, there is music, there are crafts and exhibits ... and there is the camaraderie of family, friends, and even strangers who gather to celebrate a season, preserve a tradition, and enhance the experience of a weekend afternoon. A country fair is an expression of old values that we see a reason to keep alive and well.

The work of *Friends* is a lot like that: our mission is to preserve, enhance, and celebrate the Blue Ridge – a piece of Americana that is a part of our history and that we want to ensure continues to be a part of our legacy to future generations. And how are we doing on that score? Events of the past year suggest that we are gaining momentum in some very exciting ways. I sometimes think of 2013-2014 as a year of “growing

up” for *Friends*. Not that we haven’t been growing all along or won’t continue to grow and mature; but building on the work of our founding leaders, especially Fred Hetzel and Al Van Huyck, former Presidents of the Board, and Jane Pratt, architect of the Conservation Corridor concept, we set in motion initiatives over the last year that have forced us to stretch into a more significant role in the conservation community and a more visible engagement with our members. Two examples are that we graduated from our original brochure-type website to an upgraded version with a new look and interactive capabilities and now publish a members’ newsletter. More important, *Friends* convened a ground-breaking summit last fall as a way to explore possibilities for leveraging the impact of conservation organizations in the region as a result of which a Steering Committee has been working in the intervening months to develop the framework for a Blue Ridge Coalition that is set to launch at a “mini-summit” in November.

In terms of activities, we have expanded both our reach and our

partnerships over the last year. Working with The Mountain Institute and Loudoun Valley High School, we inaugurated the *Jane Pratt Blue Ridge Education Award* – a step toward realizing our strategic intent of providing an educational component and outreach to youth. Our Land Use Committee is pursuing an assessment of mountain ordinances across the five counties of our program area. And James Remuzzi, one of several new Board members, has proposed the formation of a Stewardship Committee to support on-the-ground projects.

There’s much more to “show and tell,” so read on to get the full story



Photo by Sky Richardson.

with visuals. And stay tuned to our newsletter and website for more to come on upcoming events. You can join the fun – and the good work – by becoming an active part of our efforts.

Carole Napolitano
President

Friends of the Blue Ridge Mountains

MISSION

To preserve, enhance, and celebrate the Blue Ridge Mountains as a valuable resource and treasured space for present and future generations.

VISION

The Blue Ridge Mountains stand secure as a national treasure for all time ... ancient and sacred space that is maintained as a model of natural and cultural preservation – a free and accessible destination for recreation, discovery, and renewal that inspires others to join us and sustain our effort.

PROTECTING AND ENHANCING OUR MOUNTAINS THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

We are proud to report major accomplishments by *Friends of the Blue Ridge Mountains* over the last year.

Each year *Friends* awards a *Friend of the Mountain* plaque to an individual or group that has acted to preserve the Blue Ridge. The awardee for 2013 was the late Jane Pratt, a former Board member and the architect of the Blue Ridge Conservation Corridor project, upon which our Blue Ridge Coalition work is based.

In October of 2013, *Friends* and National Wildlife Federation co-hosted the Blue Ridge Summit at Bluemont Vineyard with over 60 participants representing conservation and historical groups, land trusts, county governments, and landowners from across the region. It was a high energy day with

spirited dialogue about protecting the natural, historical and cultural resources of our Blue Ridge. A high point of the event was the drafting of principles for a Declaration of Stewardship. Several featured presenters provided context re: the mountains as a resource as well as threats and opportunities. Keynote speaker, Dr. Andrew Taber, President of The Mountain Institute, discussed mountain conservation around the world. A very special moment, at the midway point in the event, was the presentation of the 2013 *Friend of the Mountain* award to the late Dr. Jane Pratt, architect of the Blue Ridge conservation corridor concept which served as a stimulus for the Summit.



BLUE RIDGE SUMMIT PAGE 2:
2013 Blue Ridge Summit photos
by Sky Richardson.

JANE PRATT BLUE RIDGE
MOUNTAINS EDUCATION AWARD
THIS PAGE: From left to right, Peter
Weeks, Liam McGranahan, Christina
Nelson, and Jed Shilling at Loudoun
Valley High School Evening of Honors.
Photo by Joyce Gates.



As a follow up to this event, *Friends* convened and continues to facilitate a Blue Ridge Coalition Steering Committee comprising core partner organizations represented at the Summit. At this point the *Declaration of Principles* has been finalized, a mission statement for the Coalition has been crafted, and a website is in process. The Steering Committee is now focused on a meeting in November at the Smithsonian Conservation and Biology Institute in Front Royal to launch the Blue Ridge Coalition.

The Coalition is designed to serve a variety of objectives including functioning as a clearing house for relevant information, events, and newsfeeds from member groups; advocating for issues of mutual interest to member organizations or subsets of member organizations; and combining resources to do "on the ground" projects that benefit the Blue Ridge and downstream communities.

Early in 2014 the Land Use Committee began a two-year program to research, evaluate and compare ordinances governing Blue Ridge Mountain land uses in each of the five counties in our program area. Working with county staff, landowners, and other stakeholders, we are developing an inventory of best practices as well as identifying gaps in Blue Ridge environmental regulations.

In late May of this year the first annual *Jane Pratt Blue Ridge Mountains Education Award* was presented at Loudoun Valley High School's "Evening of Honors." Jane Pratt, former head of The Mountain Institute, and organization dedicated to protecting mountains and mountain people globally, helped found and grow *FBRM*. During her involvement with *Friends*, she had conceived of an education award to increase the involvement of young



VOLUNTEER DAY Brian Ferrell clears brush at the Blue Ridge Regional Park. Photo by Debbie Snyder.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

people in protecting the mountains and to build longer term commitment. This award has now been established in her honor and memory.

The honored recipient of the first award was LVHS senior Christina Nelson of Purcellville. Christina, an A+ student in environmental science, served as president of Loudoun Valley's Environmental Club and had helped coordinate activities such as trail maintenance, bluebird monitoring and box repair, and creating an environmental movie night.

On May 9th, *Friends* hosted the first of two annual Volunteer Days to continue the work of restoring the 168-acre Blue Ridge Regional Park off Mountain Road between

Bear's Den and Mt. Weather. The focus of the work was the removal of invasive vines and plants from a stone retaining wall which emerged as a beautiful architectural feature for the park.

Robin Williams of the Virginia Native Plant Society was on hand to assist volunteers in identifying and clearing away invasive non-native vegetation. She happily noted the reappearance of Lady Slipper and Violet, which she attributes to past Volunteer Work Day efforts to remove Mile-A-Minute, Oriental Bittersweet, and Honeysuckle vines.

CELEBRATING OUR MOUNTAINS

The Barns at Rose Hill in Berryville, Virginia, provided the venue for our 2013 Annual Meeting last November. Attendees were provided with an opportunity to visit the Clarke County Historical Museum and attend a presentation on the history of the county prior to relishing the traditional chili dinner prepared by Board members. An overview of *Friends* work over the past year was presented. New officers for the *Friends* Board of Directors were elected by acclamation including Carole Napolitano, President; Marie Uehling, Vice President; Debbie Snyder, Secretary; and Katie Conaway, re-elected as Treasurer. Retiring Board officers Al Van Huyck and Suellen Beverly were also honored.

Following the business meeting attendees enjoyed a rousing concert

of mountain music by the Short Hill Mountain Boys.

This year *Friends* participated in the annual Earth Day Loudoun celebration held on May 4, 2014 at Willowcreek in Broadlands. Our exhibit featured our regional display and offered a variety of Earth Day and mountain-themed activities for kids. The beautiful, breezy weather brought out hundreds of people many of whom visited our table and with whom we had the opportunity to speak about our work on behalf of the Blue Ridge. We had a wonderful time crafting with kids, adding to our contacts, recruiting new volunteers to our work days, and networking with other conservation organizations.

Friends hosted an exhibit at the 44th Annual Bluemont Fair, September 21 and 22, 2013. The village of Bluemont is situated in the midst of our project area in western Loudoun County. Our presence during the well-attended Fair enabled us to engage visitors in our work and gain additional support. Many visitors stopped by to view our display and hear about our efforts. We sold *Friends* caps and mugs and secured new memberships.



BLUEMONT FAIR Peter Weeks consults with a visitor. Photo by Carole Napolitano.

BUILDING OUR ORGANIZATION AND OUR PRESENCE

Membership remains steady at a little over 100 members in 2014. An outreach to landowners on the Blue Ridge is planned for late-October and November. The goal is to encourage membership in *FBRM* as well as conscious stewardship of residential mountain properties.

We are very pleased to have added three new members to our Board of Directors. John Maxey lives on the west slope of the Blue Ridge in Jefferson County, West Virginia. A native mountaineer, he chaired the County Planning Commission and serves on the Blue Ridge Watershed Coalition. Jed Shilling lives in western Loudoun County overlooking the Blue Ridge, and since retirement has served on a number of non-profits committed to promoting sustainable development and reducing poverty around the world, including the Millennium Institute and The Mountain Institute. James Remuzzi, President of Sustainable Solutions, LLC, lives near Shepherdstown, WVA. He is a practicing forester and has presented nationally on the tools and mechanisms required for effective ecosystems markets. More details on our Board members are available at www.friendsofblueridge.com

With great appreciation for their contributions we also bade farewell

(but not goodbye) to several retiring Board members including Al Van Huyck, Suellen Beverly, Mike Alter, Dana Rihani, and Austin Kane.



NEW E-NEWS! Our beautiful and informative e-newsletter.

In the interest of adding capability and visibility to our electronic communications, we developed two new vehicles. With the help of our partner, the Downstream Project, we have created a more sophisticated website with interactive capabilities that allow people to both join our organization and donate on-line. By way of enhancing our communication to our growing subscription list, we now publish a newsletter that keeps our followers aware of our activities and upcoming events and that is designed to drive traffic to our website.

PLANS FOR 2015

As part of our environmental education initiative and in collaboration with the Head of Environmental Studies at Loudoun Valley High School in Purcellville, Virginia, presenters from *FBRM* and a partner organization, The Mountain Institute, will offer students an educational curriculum focused on the mountain habitat and the Blue Ridge in particular. Meeting with students both in the classroom and in the field, mentors will provide students with the opportunity to view, firsthand, stewardship issues on local properties during the 2014-2015 school year.

The Development Committee will undertake a membership campaign targeted to mountain landowners.

The Land Use Committee will proceed with its work in each jurisdiction within our program area to develop strategies of approach for improving regulations to protect the Mountains as a valued resource while respecting the rights of property owners.

The newly-formed Stewardship Committee will focus on highlighting the role of land stewardship through education, outreach, and action. We will work with the *Friends* Development committee to raise funds to help implement a variety of

stewardship demonstration projects in the range. Our long-term goals include offering workshops for mountain landowners to learn more about stewarding their property; providing students with hands-on experience in conservation practices, and taking the lead in coordinating ongoing volunteer work sessions in regional parks.

We will continue to host annual events such as Volunteer Days and the Annual Meeting and will participate in community festivals such as Earth Day and the Bluemont Fair.

We will strengthen our existing partnerships and seek opportunities to build new ones that serve our mission and vision. As part of that effort we will look to be conveners for new initiatives and will play a key role in launching the Blue Ridge Coalition.



EARTH DAY Rebekka Prinz offers kids a coloring project at Earth Day Loudoun. Photo by Carole Napolitano.

DONOR RECOGNITION

Friends of the Blue Ridge Mountains is grateful for the financial contributions of all members. We wish to offer special recognition to the following individuals, businesses, and organizations for their generous support between September 1, 2013 and August 31, 2014:

Goose Creek Friends Meeting
Carole & Stephen Napolitano
Maria Nicklin
Polly Porter
Schuyler Richardson

John D Shilling
Bruce & Edith Smart
The Downstream Project
Marie Uehling & Will Hetzel
Alfred & Betty Van Huyck

A very special thank you to **Bluemont Vineyard** and **Savoir Fare Limited** for their significant pro bono contributions to our 2013 Blue Ridge Summit.

Board of Directors Members as of August 31, 2013

Carole Napolitano
President

Marie Uehling
Vice President

Deborah Snyder
Secretary

Katie Conaway
Treasurer

John Maxey
Chair of the Land Use Committee

Peter Weeks
Chair of the Membership and
Development Committee

Rebekka Skinner-Prinz
Chair of the Celebrations
Committee

John "Jed" Schilling
James Remuzzi



STANDING, LEFT TO RIGHT: Peter Weeks, Rebekka Prinz, Deborah Snyder, Carole Napolitano, James Remuzzi **KNEELING:** John Maxey, Marie Uehling **ABSENT:** Katie Conaway, Jed Shilling. Photo by Sky Richardson.

FINANCIALS

	12 MONTHS ENDING 8/31/2013	12 MONTHS ENDING 8/31/2014
INCOME		
Charitable Contributions	5,917	6,714
In Kind Donations	3,600	-
Membership Fees	2,250	2,005
Rental Income	3,840	760
TOTAL INCOME	15,607	9,479
EXPENSES		
Charitable Donations	-	50
Fundraising Expenses	485	2,369
In Kind Donation Expense	3,600	-
Administration	1,842	1,869
Program Services	2,704	3,390
Intern Expenses	518	622
TOTAL EXPENSES	9,149	8,301
INCOME LESS EXPENSES	6,458	1,178

To learn more about *Friends* and join or donate, visit
www.friendsofblueridge.org

Friends of the Blue Ridge Mountains is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.
 Taxpayer ID Number: 22-3970963 | P.O. Box 1002, Purcellville, VA 20134
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Photo by Tom Edmonds.



Committed to preserving, enhancing and celebrating the Blue Ridge Mountains

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