

# Local hiking club teaches use of trail as outdoor classroom

The Nantahala Hiking Club (NHC), the Franklin-based Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) trail maintaining club conducted a second workshop for local school teachers on Thursday, Oct. 11.

This workshop presented information on how to use the Appalachian Trail (AT) to teach North Carolina education standards.

The objective of the workshop is to inform teachers, students, and ultimately parents what a great educational resource the Appalachian Trail is and that hiking on the AT can be a foundation for healthful living, active learning, service learning, and place-based education.

Moreover, the proximity of the AT to the residents of Macon County makes it an exciting and easy way to experience nature and make education fun.

The NHC, in coordination with the ATC and the AT Park Office, developed the workshop primarily for classroom teachers in grades 4 to 8.

It explained how the AT is an excellent resource for interdisciplinary learning. Presentations covered teaching North Carolina educational standards in science, social studies, mathematics, and language arts in an outdoor classroom.

The design of the workshop integrated teaching reading as-



Photo provided

The “Appalachian Trail as a Classroom” workshop participants standing behind a table full of various learning resource materials with language arts instructor and presenter, Carol Fritz (far right).

sociated with the four academic subject areas and the use of technology to produce a nature journal. The concept of nature journaling is a way to connect children with nature.

Presenters included Carol Fritz, George Gover, Tom Rodgers and Bill Van Horn from the NHC; Janis Brannon and Ron Hensley from the Summit Charter School, Cashiers, N.C., and Julie Judkins from the ATC’s Southern Regional Office, Asheville. Jerry Span from Fontana Village Resort also made a presentation about his planned through-hike in 2008 and his availability to visit classrooms.

A teacher-led hike is scheduled for Jan. 23, 2008 to Siler

Bald on the Appalachian Trail.

This workshop, for classroom teachers, is a follow up to the “Hiking 101” P.E. teacher workshop the NHC presented last school year.

That workshop focused on the skills needed to accomplish a day hike and the physical and psychological benefits derived from nature.

Both of these workshops are the local hiking club’s initiatives to support two new ATC programs: “A Trail to Every Classroom” (a placed-based professional development workshop series connecting communities along the AT promoting resource stewardship, recreation and community engagement) and “The Appalachian Trail Mega-

Transect” (a bold new idea using the Appalachian National Scenic Trail as a mega-transect for monitoring the environmental health of the Appalachian Mountains).

Significant funding for the workshop came from the ATC’s North Carolina specialty license plate program.

Other supporters included the American Hiking Society, Leave on Trace- the center for outdoor ethics, Divine Foods, Inc, North Carolina Bartram Trail Society, Highlands Nature Center, Friends of the Greenway, and the U.S. Forest Service—Wayah Ranger District.

The NHC would like to thank Carol Waldroop, Nancy Cantrell, Tim Burrell and Diane Cotten from the Macon County Schools main office, Michelle Bell from East Franklin Elementary School, and Jan Gann, Shirley Parks, Sarah Lowell, Brian Crupi and Sue Ellen Chastain from the host school, Cartoogechaye Elementary School.

The NHC looks forward to helping the teachers as they use what they have learned in their classrooms and on an AT hike.

For more information on these workshops, the NHC, or the ATC, contact Bill Van Horn, 369-1983 or Julie Judkins of the ATC at [jjudkins@appalachiantrail.org](mailto:jjudkins@appalachiantrail.org).