UPCOMING EVENTS

April 21
Rattlesnake Knob Trail Hike & Work Day with WCU

April 28
Greening Up The Mountains Festival, Sylva

April 29
Wilderness Falls Trail Hike & Work Day with Highland Hiker

May 5
Member Hike, RSVP
Wildflowers with Dan Pittillo

May 19
Hook, Line & Drinker Trout Festival, Sylva

May 26
Trail Hike & Work Day

June 2
National Trails Day Picnic in Panthertown 11am-1pm
Panthertown EXPO 2-4pm

June 15
Member Hike, RSVP to Tranquility Point

June 29
Greenland Creek Trail Hike & Trail Work Day

July 28
Member Hike, RSVP to Blackrock Overlook

August 4
Trail Hike & Work Day

August 11
Member Hike, RSVP
Geology with Bill Jacobs

August 18
Presentation: An Evening with Jennifer Pharr Davis

September 14
Member Hike, RSVP

September 29
National Public Lands Day

October 6
Member Hike, RSVP

Spring 2018
Friends of Panthertown News

Protecting and maintaining over 30 miles of public trails in Panthertown Valley since 2005

Volunteers from Shorecrest Preparatory School (March 2018). Photo contributed by Mike Steele. (left to right): Breck Tanner, Hannah Leary, Kimberly Baxas, Samantha Epstein, Emily Rutledge, Juliette Shelton, Clara Lawton, Allison Epstein, and Karli McDonough.

From the Shore to Panthertown Valley
Every March, for the past five years, students from Shorecrest Preparatory School in St. Petersburg, Florida, backpack and camp in Panthertown Valley. The four-night, five-day annual trek provides approximately 10 young women the opportunity to experience the splendor and rigors of authentic backcountry wilderness.

Mike Steele, who teaches math and science at Shorecrest, organizes the trip for senior girls. He spends months outlining the basics: how to set up tents, breaking in new hiking boots, perfecting the art of packing a backpack, and all that goes into a multi-day backpacking trip. Then it’s off to Panthertown for spring break (or at least it’s supposed to be spring). Often, temperatures dip and snow flies; sometimes, freshly awakened bears prevail over expertly hung food bags.  

"When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect." - Aldo Leopold

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In Recognition

Thanks to our volunteers from Shorecrest Preparatory School who once again spent their spring break week in service to Panthertown Valley. They even had a bear visit their campsite and steal their food!

To volunteer, or to Adopt-A-Trail in Panthertown, visit our website, call us at (828) 269-HIKE (4453), or send an e-mail to: friends@panthertown.org

Thanks to Nantahala Area SORBA volunteers for their work earlier this spring helping us build and maintaining a whopping 33 water diversions along Mac’s Gap Trail.

Special thanks to the kids and staff at Boys & Girls Club of The Plateau where 75 students from Blue Ridge and Summit Charter schools participated with us in our newly created Panthertown stewardship, education, and service learning program made possible by a generous 2017 grant funded by Wade Hampton Donor Advised Fund.

We would like to thank and congratulate our intern, Ben Davis, a Parks & Recreation Management undergraduate student from Western Carolina University, who worked with us on the trails in Panthertown this spring to complete his WCU PRM graduation internship requirements.

See the USFS Panthertown Bear Alert on our website at panthertown.org/bears

News & Happenings

With warmer weather here, and lots of work still to do as visitors continue to arrive in Panthertown, we hope you will enjoy our spring edition of The Panther’s Roar.

We would like to recognize our friend Dan Pittillo, Friends of Panthertown co-founder and board member who recently retired after 13 years as a Trustee. He will now serve on our Advisory Board. Thank you so much, Dan!

Thanks to Friends member and volunteer Katie Tims who contributed articles in this issue about Burt Kornegay’s recently revised Panthertown map, and interviewed our Shorecrest volunteers. We’d love to hear from you. Send us your Panthertown photos and stories to be considered for publication in a future issue. Everyone is welcome to contribute.

With the generous support of our dedicated members and hard working volunteers, we protect and maintain more than 30 miles of public trails in Panthertown Valley, and we work towards improving the recreational opportunities and experiences for all who visit and explore this special place. Thank you for being a supporting member!

U.S. Forest Service: Bear Resistant Canisters Strongly Recommended in Panthertown Valley

Due to an increase in close and serious bear encounters in Panthertown, where campers have had to leave campsites and hikers have retreated from a local trail, the U.S. Forest Service is strongly recommending that backcountry campers use bear resistant containers for storing all food and scented items. Bear spray also highly recommended.

“We recommend no overnight camping without bear proof containers and some form of personal protection in the back country”, said Nantahala District Ranger Mike Wilkins.

Use bear resistant canisters for back country camping. Carry a readily available can of bear pepper spray (rated as bear spray by the U.S. EPA) and follow manufacturer recommendations.

See the USFS Panthertown Bear Alert on our website at panthertown.org/bears
From the Shore to Panthertown Valley

(Continued from Page 1)

“Many of the girls have never seen snow and a few have never seen a mountain,” Steele says. “I give them a very discouraging talk beforehand to explain that it will be cold, there will be times when they’ll be miserable and there’s a significant chance for bear interaction. I do my best to kind of scare them off. But every year, it seems the more I try to challenge them the more they take as a challenge.”

While adventure is certainly a major factor, service is actually the group’s No. 1 priority. Friends of Panthertown Board member and Trail Boss, Mike Purdy, organizes work projects, and for a few hours each day the girls and their two chaperones prune bushes and clean trails in Panthertown Valley.

“This is usually the first set of workdays we have every year, so it’s always a great kickoff for Panthertown’s new season,” Purdy says. “We’re very thankful to have the Shorecrest girls help out.” The adventure is grand. The service is rewarding. But it’s the discovery, Steele and Purdy insist, that is the best part of the Shorecrest trek.

“When the girls get to Panthertown they just have this wonderment in their eyes that those of us who grow up or live in the mountains just take for granted,” Steele said.

Purdy added, “It’s interesting to listen to them and watch them experience Panthertown for the first time. It’s a lot of fun.” 🐾🐾

Article contributed by Katie Tims.
Photos contributed by Mike Steele and Mike Purdy.
Visit panthertown.org/volunteer for volunteer info.
Burt Kornegay’s Guide to Panthertown
20th Anniversary Edition Now Available

Map now includes U.S. Forest Service trail numbers!

You’re ready to get out and hike Panthertown Valley – traverse the popular routes or perhaps head north to the trails less traveled. Either way, be sure to take your map!

Friends of Panthertown recommends the U.S. Forest Service’s official Panthertown Valley Trail System map or Burt Kornegay’s recently revised guide map, A Guide’s Guide to Panthertown, Bonas Defeat & Big Pisgah.

What’s the difference? The U.S. Forest Service map of Panthertown Valley shows the official numbered trails, while Burt Kornegay’s version lists those trails plus all of the unofficial footpaths. His guide also features color photos, history, and other useful information. Kornegay published his first map – a hand-drawn version – in 1998. Over the years, he added topographical information, updated trail routes, and provided more of the area’s history and facts.

To celebrate the 20th anniversary, Panthertown Map Association (PMA) published a brand new version – a collaborative effort of PMA President Tony Austin, Burt Kornegay, and PMA board members. This latest revision of Burt’s essential map now lists official trail numbers, making it easier for hikers and campers to cross reference locations and routes. The map is waterproof, tear-resistant, and a must-have for anyone planning to explore Panthertown.

“It’s is a true wilderness,” Austin said. “The trails are minimally marked, and that’s by intent – that’s the beauty of Panthertown. You need a map for safety-sake and for ‘staying found.’ ”

So, before heading out to Schoolhouse Falls, Salt Rock, Little Green, or Bonas Defeat, be sure to get your new map. Burt Kornegay’s guide is available locally at Highland Hiker stores in Cashiers and Highlands, and at many other fine stores in the area including City Lights Bookstore in Sylva, MadStone Cafe & Catching Light Books in Cullowhee, Outdoor 76 in Franklin, and REI in Asheville. Also, you can order the map online at www.panthertownmap.com. All proceeds from sales of Burt’s map benefit non-profit groups that protect and maintain Panthertown Valley.

(Article contributed by Katie Tims)
Friends of Panthertown to Host Presentation Featuring National Geographic Adventurer of the Year Jennifer Pharr Davis

On Saturday, August 18, Friends will host athlete, author, speaker, and National Geographic Adventurer of the Year Jennifer Pharr Davis. The program will be held at the County Club of Sapphire Valley from 5:30pm - 7:30pm. General admission tickets for the presentation are $10 per person, available at Cashiers Chamber of Commerce and panthertown.org beginning May 1.

Jennifer Pharr Davis has logged over 14,000 miles on six different continents, including thru-hikes of the Pacific Crest Trail, the Colorado Trail, Vermont’s Long Trail, numerous trails in Europe, and the Appalachian Trail three times. In 2011, Jennifer wanted to test her physical limits. With the help of her husband Brew and a dedicated group of friends, she set the fastest known time (male or female) on the “A.T.” by hiking 47 miles a day for 46 days straight.

Jennifer will be sharing slides and stories, answering questions, and reading excerpts from her new book The Pursuit of Endurance (Viking). Publisher’s Weekly says, “this inspiring work (is) at times reminiscent of the writings of such travel memoirists as Cheryl Strayed and Bill Bryson (and) could become a regular companion for distance hikers or, indeed, for anyone embarking on a personal challenge.”

Jennifer will also be selling and signing books after the program. For her adventures, she has been featured in the New York Times, the Washington Post, NPR's Talk of the Nation, ESPN, and the CBS Early Show. She is founder and owner of Blue Ridge Hiking Company, an Asheville, North Carolina-based guiding service whose mission is “to make the wilderness accessible and enjoyable through the written and spoken word, instruction and guiding.”

Limited Tickets Available $10 General Admission at panthertown.org/tickets Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce beginning May 1.

For more information, please visit our website or send e-mail to: friends@panthertown.org
**Friends of Panthertown to Celebrate National Trails Day with Picnic in Panthertown and a Panthertown EXPO at Sapphire Community Center**

On National Trails Day, Saturday, June 2, **Friends of Panthertown** will host an informative **Panthertown Valley EXPO** at Sapphire Valley Community Center from 2pm to 4pm and an informal **Picnic in Panthertown** kick-off gathering at the Salt Rock Gap overlook in Panthertown Valley from 11am to 1pm. Both events are free and open to the public. Everyone is welcome.

For the **Picnic in Panthertown**, bring your own chairs or a blanket, gather your friends, and pack a picnic lunch to enjoy at the Salt Rock Gap overlook. There will be an opportunity to go hiking and explore Panthertown both before and after the picnic. Maps will be available at the trailhead and at the EXPO.

After the picnic, head over to the Sapphire Valley Community Center anytime between 2pm and 4pm for a **Panthertown Valley EXPO**. Experts will be on hand to provide information and answer your questions about exploring Panthertown, including hiking, mountain biking, riding horses, fishing, birding, and rock climbing. There will be door prizes and giveaways, including maps and t-shirts, live music by **Geoff McBride**, plus an opportunity to sign up for summertime guided hikes into Panthertown.

**Friends of Panthertown** is the 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that protects and maintains more than 30 miles of public trails in Panthertown Valley, a 6,300 acre backcountry recreational area in the Nantahala National Forest. Panthertown offers some of the most scenic public trails in the area.

Sapphire Valley Community Center is located at 100 Cherokee Trail in Sapphire, NC. Salt Rock Gap is located in Panthertown at the end of Breedlove Road in Cashiers. Parking is limited along the bumpy 1/4 mile USFS gravel road leading to the trailhead. Signs will be posted at the trailhead directing hikers to the nearby picnic site located about a 5-10 minute walk from the parking area. In case of rain, the picnic will instead be located at Sapphire Valley Community Center where the EXPO will also be held. 🐾🐾
Boys & Girls Club of The Plateau Youth Participate in Panthertown Stewardship and Education Program

Special thanks to the kids and staff of Boys & Girls Club of The Plateau (BGCP) with their 75 outstanding after-school students from Blue Ridge and Summit Charter schools who participated in our newly created Panthertown stewardship, education, and service learning program. The new program is aimed at Cashiers area youth and teaches about Panthertown Valley with a focus on forest conservation and stewardship, backcountry safety, volunteerism, and Leave No Trace principles. The program is funded by a generous grant from Wade Hampton Donor Advised Fund. Friends of Panthertown is proud to partner with BGCP and support their mission as they serve our community "to enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens."
Mike Purdy, Friends of Panthertown Trail Boss, with Mike English, carefully cutting out a large tree that had fallen and blocked a trail in Panthertown.