

Goodbye and thank you to this year's AmeriCorps volunteers!



Appalachian Forest Heritage Area

August 2013 E-Newsletter

Greetings,

As August comes to a close, we take a look back on the past year and feel grateful for the many volunteers who have helped out with everything from tree plantings and historic reenactments to running our local farmer's market and restoring historic windows. We are especially thankful to have spent the year working with 27 AmeriCorps volunteers, who have helped to make a difference in the AFHA region in more ways than we can count! Thank you for your service!



AFHA AmeriCorps members gathered at Scott Hill in Elkins



SITES



~OF THE~ MONTH

Experience the heritage of your area! *Sites of the Month* spotlights events and locations within the region, based on AFHA's four themes: forestry, history, culture, and nature.

September 9th.

In Exhibits, Planning Makes Perfect

By Alison Thornton
AFHA AmeriCorps Heritage Volunteer



Thornton has put together an exhibit on chairs, covering the history of many styles and manufacturers. The exhibit, which includes this red painted children's rocking chair, is currently on display at the [Beverly Heritage Center](#).

As a full time Americorps volunteer at the Beverly Heritage Center, one of my projects was to plan and execute small rotating exhibits. While this may seem like picking out pictures and sticking them on the wall, it turns out exhibits take an amazing amount of planning! From inception of the ideas and themes portrayed, to mapping out each item, to choosing what kind of glue-like substance to use on different materials, exhibits are more work than I had realized.

First step is to flesh out what the exhibit will portray, and what themes come to the forefront from researching the items in the exhibit. At first, I envisioned an exhibit featuring different types of chairs throughout history. While researching the different styles, manufacture, and time frames, I



[Fernow Experimental Forest](#)

holds local, state, and national significance as a Historic Landscape and as a national field laboratory for the USDA Forest Service. Fernow is on the leading edge for the study of hydrology, erosion, regeneration, and harvesting. Northern red oak being the most common species found in the forest, and the site features hiking trails and interpretive signage. Both guided and unguided tours are available. Fernow sits just south of Parsons, the seat of Tucker County. The town itself has a long history in the wood working industries and is home to a large Kingsford's owned charcoal manufacturing plant.



[Fairfax Stone State Park](#) is

a West Virginia state park that commemorates the Fairfax Stone, a surveyor's marker and boundary stone at the source of the North Branch of the Potomac River in West Virginia. The original stone

arrange them into some sort of order, defined by themes that arose from my research. I decided to arrange the chairs by timeframe, then style and manufacture.

The second step in putting up an exhibit is to map the exhibit space (multiple times until you get it right), and visualize how the exhibit will flow for the visitors viewing it. This is easier on graphing paper! Museum artifacts shouldn't be handled more than necessary, so mapping the space is really important in exhibits. This also includes the walls, and even the ceiling if necessary. One must think about how to give both the text and the artifacts depth within the exhibit. Will multiple thicknesses of foamcore give enough depth to the text? Will you need to use and construct boxes to give the exhibit more vertical space? Do some artifacts need to be covered, and does this require you to put other items into your budget? Planning, planning, planning!



Guided by her background in archaeology, Thornton's know-how in caring for different types of artifacts has been a tremendous asset to the Beverly Heritage Center.

Once these decisions have been achieved (whew), your research will come into play in the form of the text and

boundary dispute between Thomas Fairfax and the English Privy Council concerning the Northern Neck of Virginia. The placement of the stone determined the boundaries of a large tract of mostly unsurveyed land in the English colonies of Maryland and Virginia.



[The Pocahontas County Opera House](#) was built in 1910 during the height of the lumber boom, but was sold shortly after in 1914 due to the owner's financial troubles. For many years it was used for car sales and lumber storage. In 1991, Pocahontas County's Historic Landmarks Commission purchased the Opera House and worked to transform it into a performance space. Today it is an intimate venue with seating for 250 people. The annual performance series brings more than a dozen performances on its stage each year, including bluegrass, jazz, folk, musical theatre, and much more.

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Unfortunately, this is just too much information for an exhibit. For each chair I used four components: the chair itself, a bullet point description, a simple picture of the parts, and a photographs showing one like it in use in another setting.

It is easiest to think about and map the text on graph paper, so when you install your exhibit you don't find that a fire alarm is in your way. (Yes, this happened.) This step also requires answering other questions regarding your exhibit: What is the best thickness of foamcore or vinyl to use? What kind of glue or epoxy is correct to use? Is cold or hot press more appropriate for mounting exhibit text and photos? Where will printing be done? What kind of stick-um is correct for the walls in the exhibit? Being able to do these sorts of things in-house keeps the cost down. In total, my exhibit on chairs will cost (not including my time) less than \$25!

There will be bumps in the road with exhibits and their planning. Do not get discouraged if you find that the canned lighting casts strange shadows on the artifacts, or that someone used the last Exacto blade (that someone being you), and you have to run out for more. Go back to your map and switch things up a bit, then take your list, because there will be more than one thing you need at the store. In the end, it is extremely satisfying to go into an exhibit that you have produced and have visitors, board members, the community, and yourself be happy with the way the exhibit turned out. The catch is, it requires planning, planning, planning!

[Beartown State Park](#) is perched on Droop Mountain, southwest of Hillsboro, West Virginia. The name for the 107 acre natural area comes from its many rock caves which serve as black bear dens during the winter; these unusual Pottsville sandstone formations continue to intrigue visitors. Purchased in 1970 through the generosity of the Nature Conservancy and Mrs. Edwin G. Polan, development within the area has been minimal. A boardwalk traverses the park, guided by interpretive signs discussing the local ecology.

Do you have a suggestion for *Sites of the Month*?

Email us at:

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and let us know your favorite sites throughout AFHA!

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