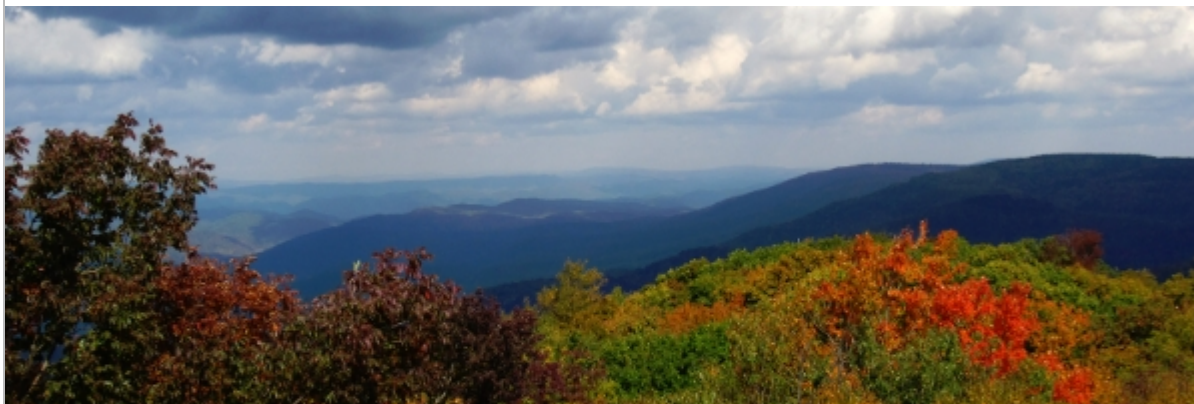


Covering ground with AFHA AmeriCorps members



## Appalachian Forest Heritage Area March 2014 E-Newsletter

### Greetings,

As we enter a new season we'd like to remind you of our senate [bill](#) for [National Heritage Area](#) designation. AFHA will need all the support it can get to become a National Heritage Area, so don't hesitate to write to or contact your senators. Or, consider reaching out to anyone on the [Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources](#), where our bill currently stands. We appreciate your support!

In the meantime, we continue to make strides in historic preservation, heritage development, and conservation through our AmeriCorps program. Already, our 2013/2014 AmeriCorps Team has reached the halfway mark in their year of service. Read about two members' experiences, below:

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### 17 Ways You Know You're an AFHA AmeriCorps Volunteer



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



*Sian Dowis is an AFHA AmeriCorps member serving with the West Virginia Railroad Museum and the Elkins Depot Welcome Center. She has been working on a new exhibit, "Innovation and Impact: Railroads in the Mountain State," which will be opening at the Darden Mill in Elkins on April 26, 2014. Mark your calendars!*

**1. You're in a committed relationship with pepperoni rolls.** Let's be honest. You totally drove over an hour just for fresh-baked pepperoni rolls at Tomaro's Bakery in Clarksburg. And they were worth it.

**2. Your inbox is flooded with invitations to local festivals.** From Artspring in Tucker County to Ramps and Rails in Elkins to the Autumn Harvest Festival and Roadkill Cook-Off in Marlinton, there are a ton of awesome festivals celebrating local heritage, art, music, and the glorious Appalachian forest.

**3. You attend old-time and bluegrass concerts on a regular basis.** If you weren't already an old-time/bluegrass fan before you came you, the absurdly talented musicians in West Virginia will convert you.



### [Holly River State Park](#)

Friday, April 4th marks the first day of the 2014 season for camping and/or cabin rental (the park features beautiful wood/stone New Deal era cabins) at Holly River State Park. The park protects more than 8,000 acres of forest in the northeast corner of Webster County. In 1935 the USDA relocated 13 families to the land that today makes up the park. Deforestation had led to extensive erosion and disappearance of wildlife in the area.



[The Darden Mill](#) was built in 1902, and today is one of only two original structures still standing on the Elkins rail yard. The building will be opening its doors to the public for a "Grand Opening" on

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Sabor in Elkins, you are bound to see some amazing performances. You are also bound to take up the banjo/fiddle/dulcimer/old-timey instrument of your choice.

**4. It takes you over an hour to drive twenty miles.**

Distance in West Virginia should seriously be measured in mountains, not miles. But with such beautiful scenery, whatâ€™s the rush? Listen to some good music, take the curves slow, and enjoy the view.

**5. There are certain views you never get sick of.**

Some places never grow old. For me, itâ€™s Lindy Point in Blackwater Falls State Park. Seneca Rocks and Bickleâ€™s Knob are close seconds.

**6. Youâ€™re a creative problem solver.** Being an AFHA Americorps is all about coming up with creative solutions to make the most of the resources at your disposal. \$25 budget for a museum exhibit? Not a problem!

**7. You spend a lot of time thinking about non-native invasive species.** Garlic mustard is your mortal enemy.

**8. You know multiple definitions for the word â€œramp.â€** Ramps are wild spring onions, and they are delicious in buffalo wing sauce.

**9. You have a genuine appreciation for hand-made crafts and goods.** From textile artists to potters to wood workers, many gifted and innovative artisans reside in West Virginia. Their work will tempt you. Their dedication to their craft will inspire you.

**10. Tucker the turtle is your spirit animal.** You are united by a fiery hatred of garlic mustard and other

completion and installation of a new exhibit by the West Virginia Railroad Museum: *Innovation and Impact: Railroads in the Mountain State*. And don't forget to stop and see AFHA's exhibit too, during the building's new weekly operating hours, TBA.



[Spring Music Week](#) is April 6 through April 11 at the Augusta Heritage Center. Anyone can enroll in classes with some of the region's most talented musicians. Students can choose from classes on old-time fiddle, guitar, hammered dulcimer, and more. Class sizes are limited to encourage one-on-one time. There are regular evening jam sessions, slow jam sessions, song swaps, dances, a public concert, as well as end-of-the-week skits and performances by the student classes.

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**11. You have incredible weekend adventures that don't break the bank.** With numerous opportunities for hiking, biking, camping, climbing, and caving, it doesn't take a lot of money to experience the wonderful wilds of West Virginia.

**12. You wear jeans and hiking boots to fit in.** The daily dress code here is casual. And during hunting season, orange truly is the new black.

**13. You take leaf peeping very seriously.** Fall in West Virginia is a many-splendored thing.

**14. Three words: Augusta Heritage Center.** It brings people from all over the world to Elkins to promote, encourage, and celebrate West Virginian folklife. Pretty awesome, huh?

**15. You geek historic preservation.** When you visit a historic building, you understand the painstaking work it took to preserve it for future generations, and you appreciate it.

**16. You are surrounded by natural beauty, history, and cultural heritage.** Like all places, the Mountain State has its problems, but it also has so much to offer those who are resourceful and adventurous. If you keep your sense of wonder, you will experience the sublime.

**17. You get things done!** You preserve historic buildings and build sustainable hiking trails. You promote local economic development. You help museums and historic sites bring more tourists into the area while celebrating your community's unique history and heritage. You maintain and rebuild forests and wetlands. You help keep mountain traditions alive. You manage wildlife to promote biodiversity



[The Cheat River](#) is known as a haven for whitewater enthusiasts. The Canyon section of the Cheat River is a destination for thousands of rafters each year, and the Blackwater River, Otter Creek, Big Sandy Creek, and a number of other tributaries attract expert whitewater kayakers. Calmer sections of the offer scenic flat water float trips. Rafting season officially begins in April, and don't forget about the [Cheat Festival](#) during the first weekend in May!

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Do you have a suggestion for *Sites of the Month*? Email us at: [info@appalachianforest.us](mailto:info@appalachianforest.us) and let us know your favorite sites throughout AFHA!

are part of a movement that is rebuilding rural Appalachian communities and economies through sustainable assets while preserving and sharing local traditions. You are an AFHA Americorps member. Your work is not for the faint of heart, but it is rewarding. You work to change your community, and one day you discover that your community has also changed you.

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## Changing Directions

By Anthony Ghezzi

AFHA Hands-On AmeriCorps Member



*Through his AmeriCorps service in West Virginia, Ghezzi has assisted in many hands-on projects, including historic window sash repair/preservation, trail building, tree plantings, and much more.*

**We all have those years, those jobs, those experiences, and those moments that forever change our lives.** They may be small things, they may be large, but we often define them as transformational. As if this thing has transformed us from one state of being to another. I can say that is true of West Virginia, of AFHA, and the AmeriCorps program itself. In the

quite different, and I am quite different for it.

I won't bore the reader with my career path prior to becoming an AmeriCorps member, I'll only say that in my mid 30s I am not in the traditional age range for the programs I chose to serve with. I wanted a restart, a do-over to use the language of kids playing in the street. I wanted to take my life in a whole new and grand direction, issue was I didn't have the foggiest clue what that direction was.

I applied to the AmeriCorps program on a friend's recommendation. She described her year of service with AmeriCorps as the best year of her life. I was fortunate enough to be selected to serve with a Habitat for Humanity affiliate in Delaware, along with an amazing bunch of people. It was my first real experience with a non-profit, in the realm of serving and volunteering. I was given the opportunity to serve needy families and make a difference in their lives, improving their living situation for years to come.



*Ghezzi, serving in Delaware as an AmeriCorps member with Habitat for Humanity.*

I chose to do a second year in the AmeriCorps program, this time with AFHA. I wanted to be in a more rural and rugged environment and serve with a

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of the historic preservation trade, nor just to see the inner workings of another non-profit, it gave me the chance to move to the great state of West Virginia. The natural beauty of this state not only exceeded all expectations but also helped clarify my competing objectives for my post AmeriCorps life.

AmeriCorps offers different things for different people. Depending on your age and goals it could be: a chance to reevaluate your path and chart a new course, the first foray in to the "œreal world" , a chance to understand what non-profits bring to our national landscape, or a place to gain on-the-job skills right out of college. A couple things AmeriCorps is certain to be: a time to form life long friendships, the opportunity to learn that there is a leader inside you, and that there is one is all of us.

I can't say that I have, or will ever have all the answers. One conclusion I have come to though is that the AmeriCorps program can provide an individual with stable platform to build the rest of their lives upon. It can transport and transform you. It can and will take the leadership potential in you and bring it forth. If you or someone you know is considering the AmeriCorps program I have two words for you: do it.

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