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Adirondack Trail Improvement Society

NEWSLETTER

FALL 2023

★ FROM THE PRESIDENT:

Greetings to this treasured ATIS community of current and former campers, trail crew, counselors, parents and family members, and countless friends and supporters! Despite lots of rain, wildfire smoke, and more rain, we're thrilled to report that this summer yet again exemplified the unique spirit that defines our ATIS community: passion for the High Peaks, enthusiasm for outdoor adventures, laughter, resilience, and lasting memories.

A huge thank you to our ATIS staff! Congratulations to Erik and the entire trail crew for their exceptional work to build a durable and sustainable new reroute on the Mossy Cascade Trail that leads to Hopkins, in addition to other critical trail maintenance projects. Their fine work on the Mossy Cascade Trail has received praise from many groups and individuals. If you haven't hiked the new trail, please go check it out! We also want to recognize and thank Sam and all of the counselors for their terrific leadership this summer, which included successfully implementing the new signup system, alongside an enhanced emphasis on training, safety, pacing, and inclusivity – while bringing infectious enthusiasm to all trips even in difficult weather. We are proud of their work with the Keene Youth Commission and Girls, Inc. Ben did a great job of upgrading and maintaining equipment for the Junior Program. He ensured that much needed work was completed on the war canoe, and purchased new canoes, tents, stoves, water purifiers and PFDs. These upgrades are important for morale and for safety, and Ben showed care in his approach.



We want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to you, our ATIS community, for your steadfast support during the introduction of the new Junior Program signup and payment system. We appreciated your patience and your feedback as we worked out the new process. Thank you for your collective understanding, which is instrumental to ensure the sustainability and future of ATIS. This summer, we were able to provide over \$5,000 in financial assistance, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to experience the magic of ATIS. We want to reassure families that financial assistance is available and is always an option. It helps us make certain that every camper can join in the fun, and we're here to support in any way we can.

The volunteer-led Adult Program offered trips almost every day throughout the summer with varied offerings ranging from hikes up 46rs, to canoe trips, to a fern walk, to a tour of John Brown farm, and so many more adventures. I led an Adult Program trip up Gothics on a spectacular day in July, and am already looking forward to connecting with old and new friends on Adult Program trips next summer. Thank you to all of our volunteer Adult Program trip leaders!

As with many organizations, ATIS's operating expenses continue to rise. Our expenses exceed our revenues, and ATIS needs your help to address this gap. We have included our current 2023 membership list in this newsletter, and it is not too late to (re)join ATIS as a member for 2023. You can become a member or renew your annual membership at <https://www.atistrail.org/membership>. As we approach the kick off of our annual fund campaign at the end of the year, we kindly ask you to consider our beloved non-profit in your holiday giving. Your continued support through annual fund donations plays an essential role to bridge the gap between revenues and expenses. We understand that each family's capacity to give varies, and we appreciate every contribution, no matter the size. Your generosity helps us continue to provide enriching experiences and ensures that the magic of ATIS endures for generations to come. Be on the lookout for our annual fund campaign which will kick off later this year.

In a time when so many people are seeking out the trails and the benefits of nature, it fills me with immense pride to support such an important organization. ATIS improves our trails and offers a sanctuary to connect with the outdoors, develop resilience, and forge lifelong friendships. Together, we're creating a future where preserving the High Peaks and enjoying the wonders of nature will inspire generations to come. Thank you for your ongoing support, and we look forward to making even more cherished memories next summer!

Lyla Kuriyan * President, Board of Directors * Email: lylakuriyan@gmail.com

★ TRAIL CREW:

The frequent and incessant rain this summer was less than ideal for the 2023 trail crew season. The wet conditions made trail work more challenging and dramatically increased the negative impact from hikers. Regardless, the crew soldiered on through the difficult working and living conditions and completed a



large volume of work throughout our trail system. A huge thank you to Dan Hausner (Crew Boss), Harris Billeci, Ed Donnelly, Lars Ellwanger, Asher Thomas, Max McClenithan, Michael Yaples, Richard Hayes Phillips, Pat Taylor and the volunteer crews for all of their efforts during a tough summer in the Eastern High Peaks.

The accomplishment of note this season was the completion and opening of a ½ mile reroute at the start of the Mossy Cascade Trail that leads to Hopkins. This work happened over the course of 2 seasons and represents one of the significant new sections of sustainably built trail in the High Peaks. Other important projects this season were replacing 3 aging high elevation ladders near the summits of Colvin, Gothics and Haystack, the complete rebuild of an exposed and failing bridge amongst the giant boulders on the Scenic Sawtooth Trail, and reworking and staging stone for a future work at the beginning of the Zander Scott or Ridge Trail that leads from Chapel Pond to the summit of Giant.

Erik Jacobson * Trails Director * Email: erikjacobson@atistrail.org

★ JUNIOR PROGRAM:

Even though the summer of 2023 was one of the rainiest on record, the weather did little to dampen the spirits of our intrepid camper and counselor crew throughout the months of June, July, or August. High Peaks Camp set the tone for the summer, with massive thunderstorms, wet socks nearly every day, and yet incredible energy and enthusiasm from the 18 campers and six counselors in attendance. Both that weather and that grit and determination carried on into the regular season, where campers even as young as four and five braved challenging rainy conditions, coming back with smiles on their faces and important lessons learned about how much fun it can be to be in the outdoors even when the weather isn't what you'd hope it to be. We also saw record participation on our weekly trips in partnership with the Keene Youth Commission. As a staff, we felt extremely lucky to be working with campers so willing to

make the best out of every situation and are grateful to all of the kids who showed up for hikes ready for adventures even in suboptimal conditions.

Despite the weather, one of the highlights of the summer for us as a staff was our two-day trip with the Girls Inc. group out of Albany. The mission of Girls Inc. is to inspire and empower girls and young women to be strong, smart, and confident individuals through programs and advocacy that address their unique needs and challenges. Girls Inc. came up to join us on a rainy Thursday in late July, and while many of the girls on that first day almost immediately balked about going around a mud puddle just fifteen feet into the trail up to Giant's Washbowl, within the first half an hour, we were treated to squeals of "this is the most gorgeous thing ever!" as we crossed a swollen brook. (My response: "just wait till we get to the top!") After two years of holding trips with Girls Inc. in the southern part of the park, it was really special to get to show them some of our home turf, and to see the expressions on their faces when we got to share some of these magical places with them. The nine counselors who worked with the Girls Inc. group deserve special recognition—their ability to make connections with the campers over the course of those two days was inspiring to see and demonstrates the best of what this organization has to offer. For many of us, memories of those days will last a long time, and we are already looking forward to a repeat engagement next summer.

As noted above, the counselor staff deserves a lot of credit for setting the tone for such a fantastic summer. Their energy, care for their campers, and professionalism even in tough situations was exemplary this year. A huge thank you to Harvey Runyon, Aurelia Bolton, Josephine Crow, Teddy Gemmel-Hughes, Ilana Mirel, Sophie Nardelli, Riley Raker, Eleanor Winterer, Andrew Buchanan, Dixon McClintock, Finn Peartree, Oscar Anderson, Sayre Boutte, Julia Brown, Emily Caputo, Julia Cooper, Ari Ginsberg, Soren Jacobson, Cedar Larson, Olivia McCaffery, Thayer McClintock, and Audrey Schedler for all their hard work and dedication this summer.



We are also extremely grateful to the families who stuck with us through the transition to a new online-only signup system. While there were a few bumps and bruises along the way, we generally were pleased with how the signup system functioned and with our ability to navigate waiting lists, generate refunds for families, and ensure that everyone possible had a place on our trips. We appreciate all your feedback as we tried to smooth that process out this summer!

As I've returned to the flatlands of Massachusetts during the month of September, I cannot help but reflect on what a gift it is to work in an organization that gives kids the opportunity to unplug, connect with nature, push their physical limits, build lifelong friendships, develop their toughness and resilience, and just have fun. Like many of you, I'm sure, I miss the mountains during these fall months when I'm away from Keene Valley, but I also miss seeing the joy on the faces of both our youngest and oldest kids when they set off for a hike and the simultaneous fatigue and sense of accomplishment when they return. Next summer can't come soon enough!

Sam Hoar * Junior Program Director * Email: sam@atistrail.org

★ FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Thanks to all the staff, Junior Program participants, parents, and ATIS membership for a successful 2023 season. We endured wildfire smoke, unending rain, and an impressive hatching of blackflies yet we were

able complete a productive program. Both High Peaks camp and Leadership camp were fully enrolled this summer.

The change to our Junior Program signup and pay system went about as well as we could have hoped. I give great thanks to Sam and Lyla for handling the technical aspects of this changeover. We expect that next summer will be easier now that we are familiar with the system. ATIS was able to award more than \$5,000 in scholarships to camp and Junior Program participants this summer. Thanks as well to all who had a hand in our rejuvenated Adult Program!

This summer, new equipment and canoes were welcome additions to the program. We will endeavor to keep the equipment in good working order moving forward. The work on the war canoe is almost complete. We had been waiting for the new brass stem band. It should be in place next summer. Preparations are underway for next season. Best wishes for fall!

Ben Runyon * Executive Director * Email: atis@atistrail.org



★ ATIS BOARD OF DIRECTORS & ADVISORY COUNCIL

Thank you to John Hutchins, Bobbie Landers, Ed Hoffman, Eliza Harris and Ben Ticknor for their many years of service to the ATIS Board or Advisory Council. We are so grateful for your leadership to ATIS!

At the August 2023 Board meeting, the Nominating Committee offered the following slate of nominees for 2023-2024; the slate was approved by a unanimous vote of the Board:

- Board, Term Ending 2024: James Morley, Heather Raker (Vice President).
- Board, Term Ending 2025: Brendan Buschman, Mary Beth Kelly, Reid Jewett Smith, Heidi Kerko, Lyla Kuriyan (President), Cyr Ryan.
- Board, Term Ending 2026: Jessa Boutte (Treasurer), Suzanne Siner, Nia Spongberg (Secretary), David Landers, Sam Ticknor.

Advisory Council: Terry Buchanan, Laura Caputo, Sarah Carnevale, Karen Doman, Barbara Dwyer, Timo Fritzingler, Maya Judd, Joanna Smith, Lise Strickler, Doug Tansey, Margie Ticknor, Erick Vivas, Jeanne Warner, Tinny Weintraub, Tony Goodwin-Director Emeritus, Charles Garland III-Ex officio.

★ ATIS MISSION

The mission of ATIS is to inspire responsible stewardship and facilitate healthy enjoyment of wild lands and to support individuals in developing the skills and qualities necessary to thrive in the natural world and beyond. The mission is accomplished via educational and recreational programs for youth and adults from diverse communities and the maintenance and enhancement of public hiking trails in the vicinity of Keene Valley, New York. To learn more, visit www.atistrail.org

If you would like to donate to ATIS, please see www.atistrail.org/donate. You can also send a donation via Venmo (@ATIStrail).

The Adirondack Trail Improvement Society is a 501(c)(3) organization.
Our mailing address is:
Adirondack Trail Improvement Society
PO Box 565
Keene Valley, NY 12943

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