The Catoctin Forest Alliance Bulletin

www.catoctinforestalliance.org

Newsletter of the CFA Vol. 16 No. 4 November 2026

Editor: Linda Sundergill

Our mission is to preserve and protect the Catoctin Mountain forest for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations

A Note from Our President

Our parks are among our greatest treasures. They offer breathtaking vistas, peaceful forests, and opportunities to connect with nature. They are places where families create memories, individuals find renewal, and communities come together. We enjoy these special places today because previous generations cared enough to protect them, and it is our responsibility to ensure they remain vibrant for future generations.

Today, our parks need our help more than ever. Budget reductions and ongoing staffing shortages have placed increasing pressure on park resources. Volunteers play a critical role in helping maintain the trails, historic sites, natural habitats, and facilities that make our parks so valuable. Whether you belong to a business, civic organization, youth group, church, school, or simply a group of friends, consider volunteering for a day or a weekend. Your efforts can make a meaningful difference. Trails need maintenance, bridges need repairs, invasive plants need removal, and historic structures often require care and attention. Park staff can identify projects that match your group's interests and abilities.

The legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) lives on throughout our state and national parks. The trails we walk, the structures we admire, and many of the resources we enjoy today were built by people committed to serving the public good. We have the opportunity to continue that legacy through volunteer service.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, people flocked to parks for recreation, reflection, healing, and a connection to the natural world. Visitors discovered the value of these outdoor spaces when they needed them most. Now, our parks need that same support in return.

Consider adopting a park, volunteering your time, or organizing a service project. Every hour contributed helps preserve these special places for future generations. If you are not sure where to begin, I would be happy to help connect you with volunteer opportunities and organizations that support our parks. Contact me at mailto:jimrobbins@comcast.net to learn more about how you or your organization can make a difference.

Happy Trails to You

Jim Robbins, President
Catoctin Forest Alliance

Artist in Residence (AIR)

Adrien Gehring

Adrien Gehring was the Artist in Residence at Cunningham Falls State Park September 14-28, 2026. Adrien is a 2-and-3-dimensional artist, a poet and writer. She lives in Frederick, MD.

OPEN TO NATURE: WE ARE WOVEN TOGETHER

For Adrien making art is an experience of removing barriers to openness and communion with the world. She practices embracing vulnerability, curiosity, and the connection to her senses to really experience the world around her. Then, the art she makes emerges from her open mind, heart, and energy. She lets go of pre-existing expectations or judgments.

During her residency, she observed a daily schedule of yoga, meditation and walks to support her creative practice. The public was invited to join her on two "Meditative Walks and Creative Reflection". She also did an "Eco-Printing Fiber Art Demonstration" at the Concessions Pavillion in the Park on September 19th. On Saturday, September 26th she did another free program for the public at Apples Church-- Eco-Printing "Make and Take".



Adrien creating fiber art for visitors at Cunningham State Park beach area 9-19, 2026.

Fresh leaves or flowers are placed directly on the cloth. Once arranged in the desired pattern, the cloth is rolled up with the leaves inside and tied tightly. The bundle is placed in a steamer for about 90 minutes and then left to soak for a few days. Once the cloth is unrolled and the leaves are removed, the imprint of the leaves and flowers and their color remain.



Left: Sun prints created using leaves found on a short hike at Apples Church 9-26-2026



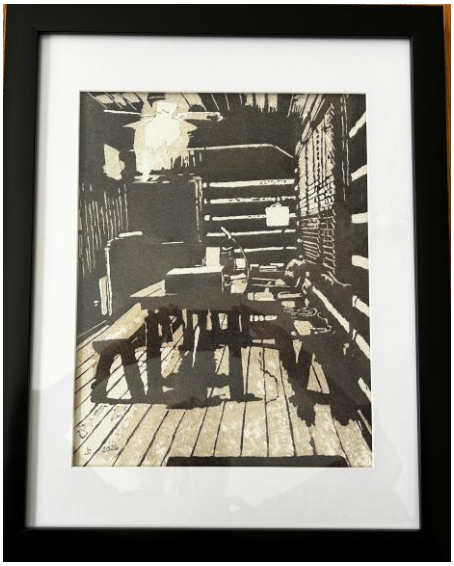
Right: Making Eco-prints using gouache watercolor paint and leaves. 9-26-2026

Jerry Brown

Jerry Brown was our Artist in Residence at Catoctin Mountain Park September 9-30, 2026. He is from Lancaster, PA and is a self-taught watercolorist. He first started painting at the age of 76, when his entertainment business was quashed by the COVID epidemic. Over the past 7 years, Mr. Brown has won numerous prizes and awards for excellence in watercolor at regional exhibitions and plein air painting competitions.

During his Residency, Jerry did three free programs for the public. He did an open studio painting session at Visitor's Center in Catoctin Mountain Park on September 12th, a Notan workshop at Apples Church on September 19th and an artist's talk and showcase at the Thurmont Library on September 26th.

Visit Jerry's website, www.3BWatercolorStudio.com, to lean more and see his gallery of paintings.



Artist's Cabin at Misty Mount
Notan watercolor by Jerry Brown
16' X 20" framed

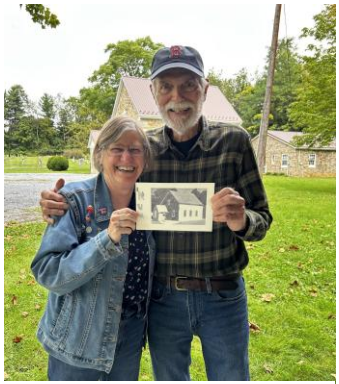
Notan is a watercolor technique that uses the white of the watercolor paper and two other shades of color. First. any areas of the white watercolor paper that the artist wants to preserve, are painted with gum mastic. Then the light hue is poured onto the whole paper. Once the paper is dry, gum mastic is painted onto the newly dried area, preserving that color from being painted over. The process is repeated with the darkest color. Then the mastic is peeled off to reveal the finished art work.



Jerry's Artist Talk and Showcase of the art he created during his residency September 26, 2026 at the Thurmont Regional Library.



Group with their notan watercolor paintings of Apples Church



Artist, Jerry Brown, presented Paula Mathis (representative of the church) with his original notan painting of Apples Church.

National Park Service News Release

2,000 Maryland Fourth Graders Trade Classrooms for Forest Trails at Catoctin Mountain Park

National Park Foundation funding covers buses, interpreters and nature journals for Frederick County and Maryland School for the Deaf students

For Immediate Release: November 9, 2026
Contact: ncr_communications@nps.gov



A student sketches observations of a tree during an outdoor education activity at Catoctin Mountain Park. NPS photo.

THURMONT, Md. — About 2,000 Maryland students will study how plants and animals survive in the wild at Catoctin Mountain Park this school year, supported by an $18,500 National Park Foundation Open OutDoors for Kids grant. For many, the trip may be their first visit to the national park near their homes.

Fourth graders from Frederick County Public Schools and the Maryland School for the Deaf will visit the park during the 2026-27 school year. Because transportation costs can prevent schools from making these trips, the grant will pay for buses. It will also fund nature journals, American Sign Language interpreters for students from the Maryland School for the Deaf, an intern stipend and part of the cost of seasonal staff. The program begins in the classroom, where park rangers

lead interactive lessons on plant and animal adaptations. Students then visit the park to look for wildlife signs, examine how plants survive and record their observations in nature journals.



A student writes her observations during an outdoor education activity at Catoctin Mountain Park. NPS photo.

Fourth graders also receive a free national park pass so they can return with their families. The pass is for the 2026-27 school year. It expires August 31, 2027.

“A child’s first visit to Catoctin can be the beginning of a lifelong connection with the outdoors,” said **Rick Slade, superintendent of Catoctin Mountain Park.** “When we remove barriers and give students the chance to explore, ask questions and discover this park for themselves, we open the door to experiences that can stay with them for years.”

NPS

About the National Park Service. Since 1916, the National Park Service has been entrusted with the care of America's national parks. With the help of volunteers and partners, we safeguard these special places and share their stories with millions of people every year. Learn more at nps.gov.

A November Note from Shelley



Submitted by Shelley Miller, Membership and Fundraising Chairman

Hello CFA Family and Happy November! If you have already renewed your membership with CFA, thank you **sincerely**! If you have not, please do so. Membership sustainability is critical on many levels to the programs of CFA. Joining or renewing your membership is super easy on the NEW CFA WEBSITE, *catoctinforestalliance.org*. You may also send the filled–out newsletter page to the CFA PO Box 411, Thurmont, MD 21788 with a check made out to CFA. Please share CFA membership information with anyone you know who may be interested in joining, to help us preserve the Catoctin Mountain forest for present and future generations. Many exciting things continue to happen in CFA and we want you to be a part of them!

In retrospect:

I had the honor and pleasure of attending the Cunningham Falls and Gambrill State Park (CFGSP) volunteer luncheon a few weeks ago. Ranger Claudia Padilla did an awesome job making volunteers know they are greatly appreciated and how they serve to provide a vital part of sustaining our community's natural resources/parks. I recognized many faces and some were associated with CFA also. Thank you, Claudia, and thank you to CFA folks who also volunteer at the parks.

Upcoming Opportunities:



CFA Holiday Gathering

As many of you know, ThorpeWood has undergone some changes in recent months. ThorpeWood's Holiday Open House remains one of their many incredibly wonderful community offerings. Please join CFA members as we plan to meet there on **Sunday Dec. 13, 2 pm -7 pm**. The building is located at **13002 Mink Farm Rd., Thurmont**. The event is free but it is requested that each guest bring **one-two dozen cookies to share on the cookie buffet table!** It is such fun! If you have never been to ThorpeWood this is a beautiful time to see it in its glory as it is decorated for the Holidays. Hope to see you there! We will try to get a table but there are always plenty of places to sit and enjoy or socially mingle.

For those of you who want to know more about ThorpeWood and the changes of the recent months, you can check out their Facebook page. I have included the following excerpt here from their Facebook page online.

> *"A Note from the Merle Thorpe Jr. Charitable Trust. ThorpeWood Is Here to Stay. Sixty-six years ago, Merle Thorpe Jr. purchased 23 acres in the Catoctin Mountains. In 1993, before his passing, Merle established The Merle Thorpe Jr. Charitable Trust (MTCT), a 501(c)(3) private foundation, and endowed it with 30 acres of this special place and the responsibility to carefully steward it for the future.*
> *Merle loved his mountain acreage. It was his refuge from city life and the demands of practicing corporate law. Nearly every weekend, he retreated to*

this place along Bussard Branch to reset and restore himself by immersing himself in the outdoors.

Merle's vision extended well beyond his own enjoyment of the property. He believed that others—particularly people from underserved communities—should have the opportunity to come to ThorpeWood and be moved, each in their own way, by the mountain's abundant offerings, just as he had been. For more than two and a half decades, those hopes have been made real at ThorpeWood—a place where people have gathered, explored, learned, and experienced the simple joy of being outside. The 30 acres originally entrusted to MTCT have grown to 156 acres of forests, fields, streams, and trails. Together with ThorpeWood barns, animals, and gathering spaces, this remarkable property has welcomed thousands of people.

Over the years, ThorpeWood identity has largely been shaped by three important community activities: Programs supporting underserved members of our community; Interactive experiences with our farm animals and opportunities to explore our trails, brook trout stream, pond, arboretum, and natural world; and Events and gatherings at the Lodge. These three pillars remain central to

ThorpeWood future. We understand that the recent announcement by the nonprofit, ThorpeWood, Inc., about the relocation of its programs understandably created some confusion. We would like to clarify what that announcement means for the ThorpeWood property and animals.
ThorpeWood is not moving. Merle's ThorpeWood lives on Catoctin Mountain. This is its home. ThorpeWood is inseparable from the forests, fields, streams, trails, animals, and gathering places that surround it. It remains here, and it will continue here. We are deeply grateful to the employees and volunteers who have cared for ThorpeWood over the years, who have tended its gardens and trails, cared for its animals, maintained its facilities, welcomed visitors, and brought its programs to life. They have given an extraordinary amount of themselves to this place, and they have our deepest gratitude. We look forward to opportunities for their continued employment and volunteer involvement at ThorpeWood.

As part of this transition, the nonprofit formerly known as ThorpeWood, Inc. will relocate its programs and operations to elsewhere in Frederick County, where the organization will continue its work in mental health, wellness, grief support, outdoor education, and other nature-based programming under the name One Wild.
The MTCT Trustees wish One Wild every success in this next chapter. We are grateful for the programs and experiences created at ThorpeWood and for the many people whose lives have been touched by that work.

And we want to be very clear about what this transition does—and does not—mean: ThorpeWood is not going away. The Merle Thorpe Jr. Charitable Trust is actively working to forge a new partnership that will ensure uninterrupted care for our animals, create opportunities for current employees to continue their work on the property, and open the door to new

ways for the community to experience and enjoy ThorpeWood. There is much more to come. ThorpeWood will continue to be a place to wander a trail, meet an animal, learn something new, gather with others, breathe fresh mountain air, and discover just how much adventure, wonder, and joy can be found outside. We are proud of ThorpeWood history. We are deeply grateful to the people who have helped build, care for, and sustain this special place. And we are excited about what comes next.

The Trustees
The Merle Thorpe Jr. Charitable Trust" (from https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61594848227850)

Want to volunteer for the EKO fourth grade field trips?

You hear me say this quite often and I will continue to say it! CFA's support of the Every Kid Outdoors (EKO) program at Catoctin Mountain Park has been a long standing one. Anyone interested in volunteering with the EKO fourth grade fieldtrips please contact Carrie Andresen-Strawn (Carrie_Andresen@nps.gov). It is an incredible educational program that positively influences many. As a seasonal employee at CFGSP this past year my heart was warmed by the many fourth grade passes I saw being used to access the state park as well! This is a great program!

The Cunningham Fall State Park First Day Hike (January 1 2027 South Beach Concessions Building of William Houck Area 14274 William Houck Drive, Thurmont MD 21788 1pm-3pm) and the **Maple Syrup Festival (March 6 2027)** are just around the corner. Save the dates if you would like to join in the fun!

CFA remains a vital group of caring individuals who are making a positive impact in our community. Please consider being an active part of this cherished service-oriented organization. Please share information with others who may consider joining as well! Please join or renew your membership today by going to catoctinforestalliance.org.

Visit www.catoctinforestalliance.com

Consider Donation to CFA

To help CFA continue its programs to preserve and protect the Catoctin Mountain forest, please consider, making a donation. CFA is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, so your donations will be tax deductible. Any donation over $20 will include a one-year CFA membership. Here is what your donation could do.

- $50 will buy notebooks or clipboards for 40 children at the week-long day camp.
- $120 will cover the cost for one child to attend the week-long day camp
- $125 will provide food for 40 children for one day of day camp.
- $200 helps sponsor the Artist in Residence program
- $364 will buy protective equipment for a SUCCESS program youth.
- $400 will buy bus transportation for 40 children to day camp for one day.
- $1300 will fund the SUCCESS program for one year.

Giving Levels

- **Acorn** up to $99
- **Seedling** $100- 499.99
- **Sapling** $500-999.99
- **Mighty Oak** $1000 and over

Donation checks can be made out to CFA and sent to Catoctin Forest Alliance, PO Box 411, Thurmont, MD 21788

Join or Renew your Membership to CFA

We'd love to have you join us in our mission to protect the Catoctin Mountain forest. Your support would be a great benefit to us and the forest. To join CFA or renew your membership, please send the membership application form and a check made out to **Catoctin Forest Alliance** with notation **"Membership"** to the address below. The yearly membership dues are $20 per person or $30 per couple.

You can also join online at http://www.catoctinforestalliance.org/index.php/join.

Kathy Byrne
CFA Treasurer
123 Ironmaster Dr.
Thurmont, MD 21788

New members will receive a CFA patch

Name(s): _____

Mailing Address: _____

Email address: _____

Committee Interest

Strategic Planning ___	Membership ___	Conservation/Education ___
Fundraising ___	Artist in Residence ___	Marketing/Publicity ___
Information Technology ___	Finance ___	

Visit our website at www.catoctinforestalliance.org