



The Oak Leaf

Newsletter of TRISTATE RAMBLERS

Volume 47 Number 2

FALL 2024

Message from the President *by Gordon Thomas*



For me, the highlight of the past half year has been our board members' active and effective work to enhance

the many TSR events. Here's a sampling of these activities and some of the people involved:

The Oak Leaf (Lise Greene); themed hikes and paddles (Linda Lang); guidelines, leadership, and our web pages (Dianne Jones); cohesiveness of hikers and trail care (John Jurasek); finances (John Crump); new member welcoming ambassadors (Nancy Sierra); recording and organizing (Elise Morrison); holiday party and summer picnic (Jenny Monteleone and Carol Hodge); leader recognition, recruitment, and training (Linda Hetcher); those behind the scenes who give us ongoing crucial service, advice, and guidance (Kaat Higham and others). I am incredibly grateful to them, as we all are.

I'm particularly pleased with our work together to revise guidelines for participants and leaders in all our



events. Our goal is to make outings enjoyable and safe with whatever adjustments are necessary and beneficial. We want to preserve our best traditions and make improvements when they are helpful. I encourage all members to check out the revised guidelines (www.tristateramblers.org/aboutus) and use them with flexibility based on experience, as circumstances dictate.

Choosing an event that matches our speed is best even for a Monday

hike of 3 miles in 1.5 hours on fairly level paths. Many TSR events are already well run in keeping with the revised guidelines; here's an example of one such Tuesday hike.

In the leader's clear description, she included the facts that it would be "6 miles long, with 400 feet elevation in 2 hours and a fast pace of 3 miles/hour." Hikers who wanted the energetic speed signed up. Hikers who could deal with the length and elevation gain might have been tempted; but the description of the pace led some to look for an event where they could more comfortably keep up. The trip was easier to lead because no one was too slow, so she was able to guide them cohesively and happily. The energetic group was able to stay between the leader and the sweep, rest, snack, and find all the trail junctions together. According to subsequent reports, the leader and the hikers were all happy, safe, and healthy.

May it always be so.



The Oak Leaf is a publication of TriState Ramblers of New Jersey. Comments or questions may be addressed to the editor, Lise Greene, at lise.greene@montclair.edu. The newsletter is created electronically by the graphic editor, Jay Winslow, and emailed to all members. It is also posted on the TSR website. In order to ensure receipt of *The Oak Leaf*, please keep your email current with Jodi Ordovery, membership chair, at TriStateRamblersMembership@gmail.com.

SAVE THE DATE! SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2024

TSR Members Annual Meeting and Holiday Party

New Location: Verona Community Center, 880 Bloomfield Avenue, Verona, NJ 07044

Please join us for our club's annual meeting and holiday party indoors at noon on Saturday, December 7, at our new and larger venue: Verona Community Center. Everyone brings food to share for the potluck meal; beverages will be provided.

Annual Meeting/Party: The short annual meeting starts at noon, followed by the party.

Registration for the Party: Required through SignUpGenius.

Potluck Food: The new venue has a large kitchen and refrigerators to store food. There is plenty of room for the buffet tables, food, and beverages.

Hikes: Register through SignUpGenius for morning hikes with varying mileage before the meeting/party. Please drop off potluck food at the Community Center before hiking.

Sharpening Service: Once again, Phil Ross has generously offered to repair equipment and sharpen knives. Bring up to two items; drop them off at the Community Center by 10:30.

Swap Table: Bring hiking equipment, clothing, and related items in good condition to pass on to fellow club members. Note: If your items are still on the table when you leave, please take them back with you.

Help! Volunteers are needed at 9:30 for room, decoration, and food buffet setup, and afterward for cleanup. To volunteer, please contact Social Committee co-chairs Carol Hodge (chdrn@aol.com) and Jenny Monteleone (jennymonte82@gmail.com).

In the event of cancellation due to extreme weather, notification will be posted through a GoogleGroups email.

With Covid and other respiratory illnesses on the rise again, please follow recommended guidelines for your own health and that of all club members.

Contact Carol or Jenny with questions.

Election of Officers for 2025

The following slate will be presented by the Nominating Committee for election at the annual meeting on Saturday, December 7, at the Verona Community Center. (See details above.) For additional nominations, please contact Sheree Bennett at shereestarrett@yahoo.com.

- President Gordon Thomas
- Vice President..... John Jurasek
- Treasurer..... John Crump
- Recording Secretary .. Elise Morrison
- Schedule Coordinator..... Nancy Sierra
- Webmaster Dianne Jones
- Editor, *The Oak Leaf*..... Lise Greene
- Membership Chairs..... Jodi Ordover and Paul Augustyniak
- Nominating Chair Sheree Bennett
- Outing Chair Linda Hetcher
- Outreach Chair Kaat Higham
- Social Chair..... Jenny Monteleone

TriState Ramblers Treasurer's Report for September 30, 2024

By John Crump, Treasurer

All figures in \$	Year End 9/30/23	Year End 9/30/24
Revenues		
Dues (renewals)	7,580	7,823
Dues (new members)	2,776	3,205
Total Dues	10,356	11,028
Interest Income (investment account)		185
Total Revenues	10,356	11,213
Expenses		
Printed Schedules	2,746	2,580
Events (picnic, holiday, other)	1,855	1,370
Gifts for Leaders	813	12
IT (web, Meetup, email, cloud, SignUpGenius)	948	2,047
Insurance	1,080	1,080
Other	564	845
Total Expenses	8,005	7,934
Change in Net Assets	2,352	3,279

Statement of Financial Position

Net Assets – Start of Period	14,772	17,123
Net Assets – End of Period	17,123	20,402

Membership and Events (all figures in numbers)

Number of Members (at 9/30)	693	701
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Leaders – Leading – Leadership: Spring 2024 Webinar

by Linda Hetcher, *Outing Chair*

Many thanks to those who were able to attend the TSR “Leaders-Leading-Leadership” webinar on April 17, 2024. We were very pleased with the number and engagement of current as well as aspiring leaders.

I would also like to thank the panelists who contributed to the success of the webinar. Sheree Bennett, Sue Bennett, John Crump, Gordon Thomas, and Lynn Tucholke unselfishly volunteered their time and willingly shared their expertise to ensure the session was of value for our members.

In addition, I would like to recognize the marketing efforts of Sue Bennett, Lise Greene, Kaat Higham, Dave Hill, Dianne Jones, and Gail Waimon. With their assistance, we were able to attract 47 participants.

The session included various topics that we thought would be of interest to both experienced leaders and those who were considering becoming a leader. Specifically, we covered what should be done before, during, and after a hike; provided a high-level overview of the popular [AllTrails](#) tool; reviewed TSR hikers’ resources; and

spotlighted several members’ views on how to successfully lead events.

Polling of attendees conducted during the session showed that 70% found the webinar to be very helpful. Among those who had not yet led an event and answered the question regarding how much they were influenced to lead, 22% said they intended to lead and 78% said they were now more likely to become a leader based on the session. It was great to see the positive results in real time.

If you were unable to join us, use [this link](#) (Info for Event Leaders) for access to our TSR cloud server where you can view the webinar slides, a video of the session, and a wealth of information for hike leaders and enthusiasts. We suggest you bookmark the link for easy access. (Contact John Crump at johnmcrump@yahoo.com or 973-534-6168 with any issues or questions about accessing these files or their contents.)

Please feel free to contact me at linda.hetcher@gmail.com with questions about leading events for TSR.

Cheesequake Raptors by Gordon Thomas

Lorrie Vece led a lovely hike on June 24 at Cheesequake State Park through marshlands, pine barrens, and deciduous forest areas. The route has more steep ups and downs than one would expect in the woods so near the water. Along the way, we encountered these raptors. No tired hikers were eaten.



*Cheesequake raptors
(Gordon Thomas)*

ECK by Gail Biggs



Eck Koon Goh (Gail Waimon)

This is the bittersweet story of our friend Eck Khoon Goh – bitter because Eck has moved thousands of miles away from us; sweet because she has been such a lovely friend to all of us. She has now realized a lifelong dream of returning to her family in Singapore.

Eck joined Union County Hiking Club (now TriState Ramblers) in June 2005. In addition to being an active hiker and leader, she served as the club’s Saturday hike coordinator, nominating chair, and treasurer.

For many years, club members organized fall trips to the White Mountains, and Eck took part in them. She also traveled extensively with many hiking friends. During her 50+ year stay in the United States, Eck managed to visit all 50 states! Now that she is back in Singapore, Eck is planning a trip to New Zealand.

“I will forever be grateful to the club, as it has changed my life in such positive ways,” said Eck. “Not the least of these are the many close and lifelong friends I’ve made through hiking and the trips to places I never dreamed I would see.”

We miss Eck’s friendly ways and wish her much love and luck in the future.

Hudson Farm Charity Hike *by Frank Angelastro*

On October 12, I had the pleasure of participating in the biannual Hudson Farm Charity Hike. Set on 4,200 idyllic acres in Andover, Hudson Farm is a member-sponsored “private year round outdoor experience,” according to its website. The property is opened to the public twice a year, usually May and October, for hikes that support local charities and civic organizations in a unique way.



This was my first experience with the charity hike, so I did not know what to expect. The information I obtained from the TSR Facebook page stated that you could start the hike any time from 7:30 to 11:30 AM. I arrived at 9:30 and the only available parking was on the street. So my hike started there, because it was at least a half mile from where I parked to the point of registration! There had to be at least a thousand participants.

A wristband with a number was given to each hiker and there were four checkpoints along the route. The course took us through beautiful wooded greens and past gorgeous Bear Pond, surrounded by the autumn leaves in all their glorious colors. It was spectacular! Since the Highlands Trail traverses the property, instead of sticking to the prescribed directions, I followed the HT signs for about a mile and then headed back. The terrain was hilly, serene, and beautiful.



Upon returning to the starting point, I received a carabiner clip, Hudson Farm bandana, and fake money equivalent to my age. I placed the money in containers representing the various charities and civic organizations I wanted to support; Hudson Farm donates the accumulated amounts to the corresponding club or organization. Before leaving, I enjoyed a barbecued hamburger. (Hotdogs were available, too.)

Participants pay nothing and are not asked for anything. This was certainly a worthwhile event on a perfect autumn day in a beautiful setting that supported many great organizations. I encourage TSR members to consider taking part next spring or fall – or both!



Hiking Among the Laurels

by Thea Landesberg

A question for my fellow TSR members: Why do you hike? Exercise?

Relish the change of seasons? Enjoy quiet time alone? Spend time with friends?

Discover a trail you’ve never hiked before?

Delight in forests and other natural sights: waterfall, magnificent vista from the top of a mountain, sounds of spring peepers, sight of orange newts the morning after a rainfall?

I’d guess that you have checked off many, if not all, of these experiences. I’d like to share with you one special time I was lucky enough to come across an unexpected majesty of nature.

In early June, my friend Angela and I set out early for Harriman State Park, starting our hike from Lake Skannatati. We parked, crossed Seven Lakes Drive, and followed the Long Path Trail southwest. Once we passed under the power line and crossed over Route 106, all was natural and quiet. Streams were flowing and spring leaves were sprouting on the trees.

When we turned left onto Beech Trail, my heart started beating fast – not from the climb, but from being stunned by the vast number of blossoming mountain laurel bushes everywhere. Pink and white blooms created a glowing arbor of color as far as I could see. A few minutes along the trail, I stopped to look around, take in the natural beauty, and say thank you to Mother Nature (I really did). I felt so lucky to have chosen this time of year to hike in this park on this trail. I almost started to cry.

Angela and I took our customary coffee break in a clearing alongside the trail. Sitting among the pink and white flowers, we sipped our coffee. I kept smiling, feeling so happy to be there with my good friend in the midst of this beauty and solitude – and made a mental note to return next year for another dose of nature’s brilliance.

Exciting Eighties-Plus! Keep On Doing Everything Possible

by Jean Fletcher



Jean Fletcher (left) leading Governor's Island bike ride

I was raised in Rochester, New York; went to college in Ohio; moved to Pittsburgh; and got married. We lived on Long Island and then moved to New Jersey: first Sussex County, then Morristown, and now Morris Plains. I have two sons, five grandchildren, and one great-grandchild; some live close by, others do not.

When I was working as an administrative assistant, several colleagues were members of Harriman Hikers, a popular weekend group out of Ramapo College in Mahwah. At about age 63, I began hiking with them and continued once a week until I retired at 73.

Through that group, I heard about others. Learning that TriState Ramblers offered weekday events, including biking and paddling, I joined in 2006. When there was a need for more leaders and I was asked to become one, I accepted the invitation.

At some point, I also agreed to be the biking coordinator. The

Governors Island rides were probably the best trips I led (see photo – I'm on the left). Approximately a year after taking a rest from that position, I became the paddling coordinator, a position I held until this past summer. During that time, I coordinated about 16 events annually and led about four myself, totaling around 28 events over the years.

I also served as the editor of this newsletter. When it became clear that online and publishing skills would be helpful, I passed the job on to others.

The way to get the most enjoyment from a favorite activity is to participate in the planning and execution of events. I like the challenges of organizational stuff! I like being involved and meeting other participants! I like to go out and play!

My advice from the vantage point of having lived 84 years: Keep on doing everything possible, especially the things you enjoy.

Trail Maintenance by John Jurasek, Vice President

Our club is a maintaining member group of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference. This means we have the responsibility to maintain a section of trail in the North Jersey area. In recent years, we have not been able to accept this responsibility due to a number of factors – including lack of interest.

We are now looking for volunteers willing to donate some of their time to help maintain a small stretch of trail. This usually involves clipping overgrowth, refreshing blazes, and other general upkeep. All tools and training will be provided. Currently there are no specific time or location requirements.

If you are interested in this opportunity to benefit not only our club but also the trails we often use, please contact me at Jurasek@optonline.net for more information. Thank you in advance for supporting the TriState Ramblers.

Book Nook

We can't all hike throughout the world, but we can join the journey vicariously through those who have been there – if they've written about it. This new column is for TSR members to share recommendations on books with trail and nature themes. Please send submissions for future newsletters to the editor (lise.greene@montclair.edu). I'll begin with a book I didn't want to end:

Leave Only Footprints: My Acadia-to-Zion Journey Through Every National Park (Conor Knighton)



Faced with an unexpected loss – his fiancée's abrupt breaking of their engagement mere months before the wedding – Knighton took refuge in nature. Serendipitously,

2016 was the centennial of the establishment of the National Park Service. As a CBS correspondent, he asked the television station to sponsor his yearlong exploration of every national park in the United States – all 59 of them, from Acadia to Zion. Although his fiancée had said “no,” his employers said “yes.”

The resulting book provides a beautiful description of the parks themselves, including their history and geography, along with striking insights on many levels. Knighton experienced the first sunrise and the last sunset in the USA, encountered pioneering people, conquered the exhausting challenges of travel from coast to coast and to islands way off-coast, explored past and present cultures of the land's inhabitants over the centuries, and ultimately cultivated personal peace through our national treasures.

Readers are treated to fascinating facts and photos along with the author's internal progress in overcoming his pain. I laughed, cried, learned, and deepened my own appreciation for our priceless parks.

REMINDERS

Getting There

Have you ever gotten lost or been late getting to a hike/bike/paddle because you were not sure of the meeting location? TSR has a [Directions document](#) (also available at the top of the [Directions](#) page on our website) with directions to most meeting places. If the meeting location is not in this document, specific directions are provided in the event description itself.

For those who rely on GPS, there is also a handy feature in the TSR calendar. The calendar entry includes the meeting location. Just click on the location to easily map out the directions (the default map app is Google Maps). You can access the link to the TSR calendar or find instructions to link the TSR calendar to your own calendar on the [Member Info](#) page of our website (member log-in required).

Remember, a park can have multiple meeting locations. Make sure you know the correct destination by fully reading the event description and referring to the TSR Directions document.

Also remember that the listed time is the start time of the event, which means the ready-to-move time. Give yourself enough time to find the hike start point, get situated, gather your gear, use the facilities (formal, portable, or natural), hear any leader comments, etc. so you are ready to set off at the scheduled time. Out of courtesy to others, the leader is not obligated to wait for any latecomers.

Not Getting The Weekly TSR Emails?

As you probably know, an email goes out every Thursday evening to members who have subscribed to the TSR Google Group. The email serves as a reminder that registration is open for the next week's events. If you believe you are subscribed, but are not receiving the weekly email, it is likely an issue with your email provider's spam filters (especially if you are not using a Gmail address).

It's possible you are receiving other emails from TSR but not the weekly reminder. That, again, is an issue

with your email provider's spam filters. In both cases, check your spam/junk folder and add tristateramblers@googlegroups.com to your contact list.

The good news is that you don't need the weekly email! All the information contained therein (schedule, process, rules, registration link) can be found on the [Members only](#) page of our website (log-in required).

Signup Etiquette

Just a reminder about a few things:

- Whenever you sign up on the Waitlist, put in the comment area "1st hike" or "2nd hike." It helps our hardworking volunteers to more easily monitor the signups.
- Do not jump the queue. Before adding your name to the hiker list, review the Waitlist to see if anyone else is a "1st hiker." If so, add your name to the Waitlist with "1st hike" in the comment area. Our hardworking volunteers will move you to the hiker list if there is availability. Signups are time stamped so it can be verified if the queue is jumped.
- Similarly, do not "move" yourself from the waitlist to the hiker list. Our hardworking volunteers will move you when they have the opportunity to do so.
- If you need to cancel, please remove your name before 8 pm the day before the hike. Otherwise there may be people on the waitlist who do not get to hike.

Thanks for your cooperation.

Who Ya Gonna Call/Email?

Not sure who to contact when you need help? Note: A list of TSR club officers can be found on our website (www.tristateramblers.org/officerspublic). If you:

- Have questions about a specific hike/bike/paddle (meeting location, difficulty level, etc.) – ask the event leader using contact information in the TSR schedule event description. Do not text if the leader has specified no texts; your message will not be received.
- Must cancel late or last-minute – contact the event leader as a courtesy.

- Are a leader and need to communicate about an event (for example cancellation, update, Add-On, Show and Go) – see the TSR Leader FAQs on the [For Leaders – Members Only](#) page of our website (log-in required).
- Still need help with SignUpGenius after reviewing the [rules](#), instructions for [signing up](#), or instructions for [deleting](#) your sign-up – email the outreach chair (tsrregistration@outlook.com).
- Have questions about your dues payment, current membership status, updates to contact information, etc. – email the membership chair (tristateramblersmembership@gmail.com). Contact information updates can also be made online (www.tristateramblers.org/update).
- Are interested in becoming a new leader – email the outing chair (linda.hetcher@gmail.com).
- Would like to subscribe to, have questions about, or have problems with the TSR Google Group email list – email the TSR webmaster (tsrhikers@gmail.com).
- Believe you are subscribed to the TSR Google Group email list but are not receiving messages – it is likely an issue with your email provider. Check your spam/junk folder and add tristateramblers@googlegroups.com to your contact list.
- Would like to submit an article for our newsletter – email *The Oak Leaf* editor (lise.greene@montclair.edu).
- Would like to volunteer to help with our social events (summer picnic and holiday party) – email the TSR social committee (tsrsocialcommittee@gmail.com).
- Have suggestions for improvements – contact any TSR club officer.

WILL YOU BE THE NEXT BIKING COORDINATOR?

If you are interested in volunteering for the position of biking coordinator for our TSR schedule, please reach out to either Sheree Bennett (shereestarrett@yahoo.com) or Linda Hetcher (linda.hetcher@gmail.com).

HIKING THE HIGHLANDS TRAIL by Paul Sanderson

The wonderful Highlands Trail is under-utilized and unappreciated! A decade ago, after regular TSR hikes on numerous portions of the trail in northern New Jersey, I decided to attempt the entire HT. It was day hiking only, since no camping is allowed anywhere along the trail, which runs approximately 150 miles from the Delaware River in Riegelsville, New Jersey, to the Hudson River in Cornwall-on-the-Hudson, New York. During the years I hiked it, the trail was constantly rerouted, primarily to eliminate road-walking.

The NY-NJ Trail Conference has a “Guide to the HT” that provides an overall general description (<https://staging.nynjtc.org/region/highlands-trail-region>) and excellent detailed notes (<https://highlands-trail.org/book/highlands-trail-guide>). The instructions provide mileage for the various segments. While I read the information for each segment, I did not rely entirely on it. The trail is very well marked and I rarely had any difficulties staying on it.

Each of my hikes began where the previous one ended, which occasionally resulted in issues I would have preferred avoiding. Road walking produced the most problems, because sometimes I walked past the point where the trail went off the road again and needed to retrace some steps.

My first hikes were toward the southern end of the trail in Riegelsville, near where Route 78 crosses the Delaware River. Since I mostly walked solo, my hikes were in-and-out and took quite a few to complete. I began each one at a place where I could easily park my car, then hiked for 3-6 miles until I found another good parking place. Then I retraced my steps back to my car. I often took photos of street signs to make sure I remembered where my next starting point would be.

One of the most non-strenuous yet challenging sections was from Route

31 through Spruce Run Recreation Area to the end at Route 635. Much of the HT parallels Van Syckles Road, where I encountered above-the-knee high grass. I had difficulty locating



Cairn on the HT

the HT markers because they were on stakes within the large grass fields.

Later I read the instructions: “The paths along the fields in Clinton Wildlife Management Area are cut in late summer/early fall. We are not permitted to do any cutting between May 15 and July 15 [and] these paths become quite overgrown. Weed growth may be chest-high and stickers may be mixed in. It may be prudent to either skip the CWMA section during the summer, or to simply walk Van Syckles Road.” On the way back to my car, I did walk the road – and can attest that reading the instructions more carefully in advance is sometimes very useful!

Going north, the HT enters the Pequannock Watershed (which requires hikers to purchase an annual permit). It then progresses through Norvin Green State Forest, Long Pond Ironworks State Park, and Sterling Forest State Park before entering New York. Crossing the state line, I hiked through

Goosepond Mountain State Park and Gonzaga Park and – on my last, most strenuous segment – hiked into Schunemunk Mountain State Park before returning to my car parked in Gonzaga.

I was only about halfway to the next parking area when I turned around. But due to the lack of parking and other issues, this is where my HT hiking ended. Although I had earlier hiked from the New York end at Cornwall-on-the-Hudson, I left a large stretch of forest between those points regrettably undone. Still, I was able to complete the New Jersey portion and some of the New York sections.

I found that the Highlands Trail was not heavily used, since I rarely met anyone along the way. Hikers must be adventurous and willing to go farther afield to see something different! I encountered a family of wild turkeys, a pot-bellied pig, and numerous historical and interesting signs and buildings, all while passing through rural areas and forests.

My overall sentiment is that more folks should explore the New Jersey HT. There is much more of our state to see than just the heavily hiked north Jersey forests!

The NY-NJ Trail Conference has a series of maps for the NJ portions of the HT at <https://highlands-trail.org/content/highlands-trail-guide>. As the site notes, a very good digital Avenza map app is also available.



Little cabin in the woods

Welcome, New TSR Members from 4/1/24 to 9/30/24!

Yohko Ballan, Cranford
Lyle Beck, Denville
Shari Beckford, West Orange
Sangeeta Benbow, New Providence
Michael Bieber, Westfield
Ellen Blumenkrantz, Closter
Diane Boyle, Linden
Kathy Brawley, Warwick
Kelly Briggs, Ringwood
Sasha Briggs, Ringwood
Densley Butcher, Morristown
Jimmy Butler, Berkeley Heights
Fiona Byrne, Westfield
George Carfagno, Palm Coast
Butch Ceccacci, Verona
Diane Ceccacci, Verona
Sharlene Chin, Suffern
Sharon Clemons, Morristown
Hayley Cohen, Hewitt
Lori Cohen, Edgewater
Peggy Cohen, Westfield
Robert Cohen, Hewitt
Pierre Combs, Rockaway
Gerald Connolly, Lake Hopatcong
Mariel Consagra, Stony Point
Caroline Cullen, Somerville
Charles Curcio, Wayne
Vincent DellaPietra, Smithtown
Tim Demkin, Warren
Gene Demsey, Springfield Township
Thao DeNunzio, West Orange
James DeProspero, River Vale
Will DeRoberts, Boonton
Deborah Druce, West Orange
Howard Druce, West Orange
Noreen Drucker, Morris Plains
Beth Duvall, Scotch Plains
Amy Elfman, Teaneck
Jack Elias, Lansdale
Roy Fischman, Staten Island
Julia Gaffney, Newfoundland
Syarifa Galeb, Franklin Park

Erika Gamel, Forest Hills
Maureen Gardner, Madison
Eneide Geiyer, Bayside
Luba Globerman, Randolph
Carol Grant, Chatham
Roxane Halter, Springfield
Valerie Harrington, Bernardsville
Ronald Harrison, Allentown
John Infosino, Lebanon
Halina Karachuk, New York City
Cushla Kelly, Upper Saddle River
Joan Kelly, Cedar Grove
Melissa Kelly, Cedar Grove
Sheree Kelly, Ocean Grove
Gerry Kesselman, West Orange
Karen Koppa, Skillman
Michael Kozaczek, Millington
Adrienne Krinsky, Verona
Matthew Landale, Mountainside
Christopher Lawrence, Verona
Michael Lawton, Highland Park
Jane Liu, Cranbury
Petra Lukoschek, New York City
Jean Lyons, Montclair
Elizabeth Marks, Wharton
Jay Mathews, Millburn
Katherine McMaster, Piscataway
Barbara Melli, Florida
Anne Mernin, South Orange
Lori Messina, West Milford
Anne Mickens, Butler
Veronica Mistretta, Bloomingdale
Joel Mizrahi, Highland Park
Terri Mott, Warren
Pat Muessen, Bridgewater
Jonathan Mysko, Belvidere
Usha Natarajan, Basking Ridge
Alia Naz, Carlstadt
Luise Neilson, Maplewood
Linda O'Connell, Hamburg
Mary O'Malley, Chatham
Barbara Onello, Montville

Sunghee Park, Clifton
Sanjay Patel, New Providence
Joe Paullus, Monroe Township
Jomol Peter, New City
Chris Peterson, East Hanover
Marianne Pita, Bronx
Olena Polakoff, Warwick
Betty Presser, Westfield
Silvio Proano, West Caldwell
Heidi Remak, Westfield
Elizabeth Rose, Bernardsville
Shelley Rothenberg, Westfield
Lisa Rowe, Branchville
Marianne Rubino, Maplewood
Dave Russell, Long Valley
Mark Saunders, Wayne
Jerry Scanlan, Andover
Randi Schey, New Windsor
Rina Schijanovich, Mahwah
Gary Schuch, South Plainfield
Joshua Seery, Bordentown
Cathleen Shamieh, Whippany
Judith Sheft, Westfield
Sigrid Sindel, Warren
Faye Slep, Short Hills
Ed Smoot, Somerset
Meredith Speizer, Spotswood
John Staunton, Summit
Mark Stein, Morristown
Naomi Stein, Morristown
Robin Stevens, East Setauket
Petra Strickland, Morris Plains
Neil Sullivan, Chatham
Patrick Sullivan, Cranford
Linda Tong, Bergenfield
Maira Urena, Maywood
Venkat Vajipey, Jersey City
Peter Wright, Bernardsville
Sharon Yedwab, West Orange
Sally (Sarah) Yingling, Westfield

Shoutouts for TSR Members 2023-24

John Crump: He has spent countless hours contributing his expertise to provide numerous analyses of the club from every which way; the data have helped the board to make decisions based on facts.

Dianne Jones: Her keen analytical mind and untold hours of work have resulted in many informative documents on our website (which she maintains) and in our newsletter. / I appreciate her tremendous efforts as webmaster, leader, and advisor. / I enjoy working with Dianne, who helps me when posting, writing, and revising hikes. I can go to her with any questions and concerns I may have. Her responses to my inquiries are always fast. In summary, I appreciate Dianne's help. / She is a fabulous webmaster and always responds to inquiries, whether within her domain or not. / She is an excellent leader; her hikes are challenging and fun. She takes care of everyone to make sure we are safe and enjoying the hike. / Not only is she our webmistress, but she also leads a substantial number of hikes.

Still Hiking in Our Nineties *by Dave Sutter*

I led a New Year's Day hike at Dater Mountain in Harriman State Park from Kelly Slide up to the old Blue Disc Trail route from the 1930s. This hike is so steep that, at age 96, I will not repeat it . . . maybe! My wife, Naomi, is in the middle of the picture on her hands and knees, and I am behind her, watching in terror. No one got hurt, but the parameter of any hike is "safety first." The second photo is going up the original 1924 Appalachian Trail route over Anthony's Nose; I am in the front.



Dave Sutter leading hike up Dater Mountain



Going up original 1924 AT route over Anthony's Nose

ANSWERING THE CALL *by Nancy Sierra, Schedule Coordinator*

SignUpGenius is a handy tool that allows leaders to cap the number of participants on their outings and lets them know how many hikers, bikers, or paddlers will attend. But the sign-up process and understanding the rules of participation can be confusing to some new members.

With this in mind, a welcoming "ambassador" committee was created roughly two years ago. Since then, a few volunteers have been calling all new members shortly after they join the club. The phone call not only

provides a personal welcome, but assures that new members are able to navigate the system so they can participate in their activities of choice in a manner consistent with the rules of the club.

The process has been rewarding to new members and callers alike. Recipients of the call routinely express surprised gratitude that we go out of our way to do this, while callers get a sense of satisfaction from the grateful response. Most importantly, however, the program is successful in its goal to un-muddy the

waters and help get people "out there" in the activities for which they joined the club.

At this time, we have five ambassadors who generally make three or four calls a month at their leisure. Having "extra" volunteers will reduce the number of calls each one makes and allow for coverage when someone is away or otherwise unavailable.

Are you interested in becoming an ambassador? Please contact Nancy Sierra at nsmd_solo@yahoo.com. Thank you.

Shoutouts for TSR Members 2023-24

Sheree Bennett: Besides being so active in the club and leading so many versatile hikes, she often steps up to take on other people's hikes when they can no longer lead. She has an infectious love of hiking, doesn't give up due to health problems but deals with them patiently until she is able to hike again, and organizes (unofficial) trips. I find her to be an inspiration.

Linda Hetcher: In addition to her very helpful ongoing work as outing chair with about a dozen outing coordinators, she organized an excellent webinar for event leaders and prospective new leaders.

Julie Stanton: She took the initiative to add Fridays to our schedule so we can now say our club hikes seven days a week. She got a special assist from Kaat Higham, who took on the additional job of Wednesday coordinator.

ALASKA: THE SEARCH by Bill Correa

Last July I was in Alaska and went on a hike with three friends. After making a wrong turn on a dirt road in the middle of nowhere (but everything there is in the middle of nowhere), we came upon a woman who seemed to be in distress. Stopping to see if there was a problem, she told us a two-year-old boy had been missing in the woods for 45 minutes. She was waiting for the police, who were coming from Fairbanks 60 miles away.

The first police car arrived a few minutes later. Wanting to help, we went to the house where the child's mother was crying. Somehow little Leon had gotten away with the family dog; the dog had come back, but no kid. The four of us immediately went into the woods to look for the boy while neighbors and police converged on the area.

Things were disorganized at first until state troopers took command and organized us into teams. We were told that Leon might be hiding and that we should start looking into every nook and cranny within a quarter-mile radius. The response grew: helicopters, drones, K-9 units. The woods were very dense and the search was very intense. I had tears in my eyes thinking about this little kid. The radius was expanded. After more than two hours, we finally turned around, thinking he could never have made it that far.

Meanwhile, a cop had noticed a security camera on a vacation house near the child's home. It was owned by a man who did not live in Alaska; another neighbor knew his number and the police called. The owner checked his phone and saw that Leon had walked past the house with his dog three hours earlier. Then the dog walked back without the boy.

Everyone was instructed to go downhill in that direction. A police team found Leon three quarters of a mile from his house in the area we had approached two hours earlier before turning around in the rough terrain. He was wearing only a shirt – no shoes – and he was okay. Thank goodness for a happy ending! The



Area where Leon was found



Some of the 20+ state troopers who responded

police and people from the community were one big happy group.

We finally continued on our hike, followed by a very welcome dip in a

hot spring. I will never forget that day.

PS: The dog was definitely not Lassie. He slept on the porch during the entire search.

Amonini! (Sicilian for Let's Go!) *by Philip Ross*



Mount Etna emitting smoke in the distance, with miles of cooled lava and volcanic cinders between it and us



Our group at dinner in Catania

Seven TSR members (Ursula Anders, Yanling Cheng, Cheryce Mallette, Lori Mayer, Petra Weller, Wei Zhao, and myself) spent two weeks hiking and sightseeing on the island of Sicily from October 13-28. We contracted with Marta and Giuseppe of Passamontagna Viaggi, the wonderful Italian guides who had shown us the Amalfi coast in March. They filled every day and evening with terrific hiking plus cultural and gastronomic delights.

I love a good challenge, and some of our hikes had long, steep, difficult terrains and scary rock scrambles. Many of the hikes offered expansive views of beautiful scenery – sea-coasts, volcanic craters, gorges, and mountains. One unique and thrilling experience included a jarring vehicle

ride on rutted tracks up a volcanic mountain, then hiking on hardened lava flows and dunes of black volcanic cinders. We also saw and visited many beautifully preserved medieval towns perched high on hilltops.

Cuisine is a major factor that draws me back to Italy as often as possible. On hiking days, our guides provided picnic lunches consisting of bread, cheese, cold cuts, tomatoes, cucumbers, fruit, and various condiments. Outstanding dinners ranged from traditional Italian and Sicilian dishes such as seafood and pasta to innovative vegetarian food.

Other guides with local expertise taught us the history and provided interesting insights in the cities of Palermo and Catania, some towns, archeological sites, and monasteries.

Given its strategic location, Sicily has been occupied by the Greeks, Romans, Normans, and Arabs. Most old buildings are made of pale limestone, but Catania has a lot of black volcanic stone construction. The city was devastated by an earthquake in 1693; only a sturdy 13th-century Norman fortress remains from before that time. Later, lava flowed around the fortress, extending the coastline by a kilometer.

Our final restaurant dinner was below ground in a charming vaulted-ceiling stone chamber. From there, steps led farther down to a lava cave containing an underground river – a surprise that enchanted us all! Click [here](#) for pictures and video summaries (each about 2½ minutes) of our hikes and other experiences.



Petra relaxing in front of a medieval hill town after a day of hiking



Spectacular view from a hill town

Shoutouts for TSR Members 2023-24

Linda Lang: She creatively generated interest among potential paddle leaders and filled dates readily. Also, her idea to arrange a training for those new to the event could eventually add more leaders. / For all her work to offer paddling opportunities to those who don't (yet?) own kayaks.

Stan and Bev Kaltnecker: They are very personable and friendly every time I see them – an adorable couple to hike with whether they are leading or not. / Consistent leadership of weekly hikes, and adherence to the rules of good leadership (like waiting occasionally for those falling behind).

Anastasia Tavarez: She started leading hikes last year and has done a great job leading many more.

Ambassador Program Volunteers: Lynn Tucholke (it was her idea), Nancy Sierra (coordinator), Linda Hetcher, Kaat Higham, Elise Morrison, Kathe Serbin

Carol Hodge: For stepping in as event coordinator and hike co-leader when she's not traveling. She's always ready to help.

All behind-the-scenes volunteers: Kaat Higham (Facebook and SignUpGenius); Debby Bronner, Sue Griffin, Linda Laidlaw (SuG); Linda Laidlaw, Gordon Thomas (biking revival); Linda Lang (paddling resurgence)

Ken Donhauser: He volunteers to lead very long sign-up groups to assist the main leader.

Sheree Bennett and Dianne Jones: For their leadership and expertise.

Debbie Stuart and Dianne Jones: Avid hike leaders.

Kaat Higham: For all her help in putting new paddle trips on SuG; she's been great. / For her tireless work with the often challenging registration process.

Diane Willer, Helen Lippman, and Jean Fletcher: For all their support and readiness to jump in whenever anyone needs help leading trips.

Al MacLennan and Ken Donhauser: They are extremely helpful to the slower hikers, providing great, safe Monday hikes.

Linda Laidlaw: She deserves a gold star for her work supporting the sign-ups.



Hiking the Highlands Trail: Tangle Wood Trail in Voorhees State Park - Paul Sanderson

Burls and Twisted Branches/Roots

Enjoy these amazing natural works of art photographed by our members. The spring 2025 issue will feature animals and insects observed along the trails. Photos can be emailed (as JPG attachments) to the [editor](#) at any time.



Metrosideros Robusta New Zealand, Sao Miguel, Azores - Elise Morrison



James River Park, Virginia - Jodi Ordovery



Elk Pen Circular, Harriman State Park - Sue Bennett



Face in the tree, Parvin State Park - Lise Greene



Base of large tree, Honolulu - Philip Ross



Berkshire Valley Wildlife Management Area - Martha Brown



Deep Cut Gardens - Kathe Serbin



Ghost Lake, Jenny Jump State Forest - Debby Bronner



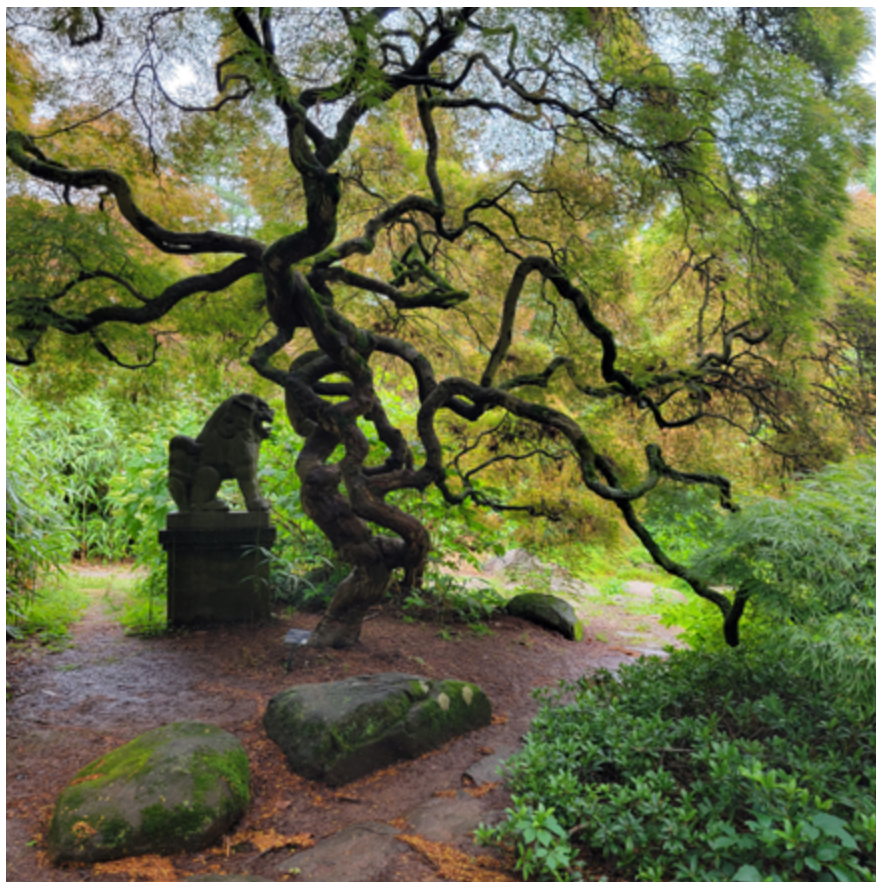
Big Burl, Stephens State Park - Carl Wilder



Janus Burls, Highlands Trail - Paul Sanderson



Jockey Hollow - Lynn Orlovitz



Meditation Garden, Duke Farms - Sigrid Sindel



Terra Nostra, Sao Miguel, Azores - Elise Morrison



Tulip Springs, South Mountain Conservancy - Anthony Caruso



Rhino burl tamed by Sheree Bennett, Turtle Back Rock, South Mountain Reservation - Laurie Larstanna