



Appalachian Trail **FAMILY PROGRAMS**

Engaging Families as Hikers and Volunteers on the A.T.



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Family Programs

Family Program Manual

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Introduction

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) as a volunteer-based organization has a long history of highly dedicated volunteers who give generously of their time and talents. Volunteers are the centerpiece of the Trail. Benton MacKaye called them the "soul" and their work is described in this way in the Appalachian National Scenic Trail Comprehensive Plan:

The "soul" of the Appalachian Trail is what has distinguished it over the years from all other trails. This soul results from the high level of participation by the people who...provide for its care and maintenance. It reflects the personalities of thousands of persons who have devoted their energies to the Trail because they love it.ⁱ

Volunteers are still essential to the survival of the Appalachian Trail, but volunteerism has changed since MacKaye's time. At the dawn of the 21st Century, ATC examined its need to stay current in an age of aging volunteers, technological advancement and decreased outdoor recreation by youth so that it can connect a new generation with opportunities to serve, protect and enjoy the Appalachian Trail. The ATC is committed more than ever to growing its corps of volunteers and Trail supporters for the long-term protection of the Trail. Engaging young people is vital to this effort.

Currently, most of the volunteers who manage and maintain the Appalachian Trail are over fifty. In 2007, a survey of A.T. volunteers found that:

- 10% are over 70
- 65% are between the ages of 51 and 70
- 23% are between 31 and 50.
- 2% of A.T. volunteers are under 30

This represents a missed opportunity both for the Trail and for young people eager for challenging and engaging service opportunities outdoors. Family-oriented programs offer a way to introduce younger people to the Trail and widen the range of volunteers and Trail supporters.

Engaging youth as visitors to the Trail will help young people cultivate new connections to the A.T. including a sense of place, a heightened appreciation of nature, and new and enhanced relationships with people who share their interests. And youth who have a positive experience outdoors are most likely to give back as volunteers (and become Trail supporters) since the number one reason cited by A.T. volunteers for their commitment to the Trail is "because I use the A.T. and want to give something back."

Furthermore, there is a pressing need to re-engage American children in outdoor activities . as hikers as well as trail stewards. American children are spending less time outdoors than ever before. According to the 2010 Report from **Children & Nature Network**, electronic media use by children and youth has increased in the past five years to more than 50 hours per week.ⁱⁱ As interaction with electronic media has increased, participation in outdoor recreation has declined among young people.

A study by the **Outdoor Foundation** finds that outdoor recreation participation among boys ages 6 to 12 dropped from 79% in 2006 to 69% in 2008. Among girls of the same age, participation dropped from 77% to 58% for the same period. These numbers also show a gap in participation rates for girls, falling behind boys more than 15%. Among all youth, ages 6-24, outdoor participation dropped from 39% in 2006 to 34% in 2008.ⁱⁱⁱ Trail clubs, whose members are already skilled hikers and trail builders/maintainers, can become part of a national effort to turn these trends around, and clubs can benefit by attracting new members and volunteers.

A.T. family programming is just one aspect of bringing young people to the Appalachian Trail. Working under a similar premise, ATC's Trail to Every Classroom (TTEC) program also aims to immerse students

in the interdisciplinary study of their own *place* as a means to cultivate stewardship of their communities and public lands.^{iv}

Both TTEC and family programs are efforts to build the next generation of A.T. volunteers. The 2002 Independent Sector report, *Engaging Youth in Lifelong Service*, states, “Adults who began volunteering as youth are twice as likely to give time as they grow older.” A recent report from the Corporation for National and Community Service, *Youth Helping America*, also suggests that volunteering is a learned social behavior.^v

Family programming will not replace or eliminate current trail club activities, but should augment them. A.T. clubs are expert at leading hikes and performing trail maintenance, and by offering these same types of activities to families, it will ensure the preservation of the Trail today, tomorrow and for decades to come.

Benefits to Clubs, Families and Kids

Inviting families to hike and volunteer has multiple benefits. Children 6-17 count parents, friends, and relatives as the primary motivation to participate in outdoor recreation.^{vi} Youth look first to their parents as role models. While modeling time spent outdoors exploring, or working on the Trail, kids see that grownups believe these activities can be fun and rewarding.^{vii} Children who grow up with these values adopt them and pass them along.

Working with families, clubs get the benefit of deep relationships that have already been established. Parents and children hiking together or working side-by-side as volunteers help the Trail because through a shared enjoyment of nature, they build fond memories and are invested in its long-term protection. For families, clubs and the Trail become important ways to connect to those family memories, traditional values, and cherished activities. Plus, parents can help supervise their children, and clubs benefit from reduced risk associated with operating youth-only activities. By engaging families, Trail clubs are investing in their future . . . attracting the next generation of club members, volunteers and leaders.

Working with clubs has multiple benefits for families. Families enjoy quality time together. “Unplugged” from distractions. Families who volunteer together report that the experience improves communication between family members. Volunteering together gives them a chance to know one another better, and helps them feel connected to their community and other volunteers. Volunteering for the A.T. can help families raise their awareness of environmental initiatives and issues.^{viii} When families volunteer together on the landscape it becomes *their* landscape, and the stewardship of *their place* becomes part of their job. The good feelings family members get through their volunteerism also makes the commitment worthwhile.

Youth benefit from family volunteering for the A.T. in important ways, too. They gain self-confidence by serving in useful ways and learning new skills. According to research, children who volunteer are known to have better self-concepts and attitude toward society, better academic and social skills, and increased leadership and problem-solving skills. Two-thirds of children who participate as volunteers as part of family volunteer opportunities report that it has helped them decide what they want to do with their life.^{ix} Trail work and other volunteer enterprises, for the good of nature and in nature, have physical and mental benefits for children and can help them establish life long habits that improve their quality of lives.

By expanding the engagement of youth and families in an appreciation for and stewardship of the A.T. in meaningful ways, we will build a corps of dedicated future volunteers, strengthen trailside communities and clubs, build a culture of conservation and strengthen family ties.

Address Lack of Time with Quality Time

The busy-ness of contemporary lives made up of tight schedules and a technology-focused populace often makes it seem difficult for parents and grandparents to participate in volunteerism. In a survey

performed by ATC in 2007 of club members who do not identify themselves as volunteers 44% said they do not volunteer because of a lack of time.

A.T. club members are parents, grandparents or caregivers for others in their family; they consider those roles as well as their responsibilities to other community commitments when assessing their available time. An Australian study of baby boomers recommends that organizations respond by eliminating the need to choose between family and volunteering.^x By addressing the lack of time by providing family volunteer opportunities (or family hikes), the obstacle becomes an opportunity that allows them to spend quality time with their family while giving back or spending time outdoors together.

Families: Defined

Families come in all shapes and sizes; be as inclusive as possible! For instance, ATC defines families for the purpose of this manual in one of these ways: as a nuclear family with two parents and their natural or adopted children; an adult guardian and child; a noncustodial parent and child; a single parent and child; or children and grandparents. Extended families that include parents, children, grandparents, aunts, and uncles, whether or not they live together, are considered family for the purpose of this program. A child is defined as any youth under the age of 18.

Family-friendly Opportunities

ATC and clubs aim to provide programs that involve parents and children of all ages in activities that target their skills, interest and availability. Family hikes, volunteer workdays, and trail crews are among the most likely programs since these are established core activities.

But, opportunities are not limited to hikes and trail maintenance; activities might also include nature slide shows, bird watching in a city park, or environmental monitoring.

For the purpose of this manual programs that provide day care for children in order for older youth and/or adults participate in other activities is *not* considered a family opportunity due to the additional challenges and risks involved with providing childcare.

Family-only opportunities may be family-friendly activities offered by your club, but family-friendly events do not necessarily need to be families only. As you plan the structure for your club's family program, keep in mind the capacity required to plan either of these options. As an example, the Continental Divide Trail Alliance began offering family-only crews in 2007. In 2008 due to limited staff resources and specific project requirements they began offering family-friendly crews that are open to both individual volunteers and family volunteers . thereby applying the %family-friendly+label to existing work projects, when suitable.^{xi}

The benefit to the family-friendly approach is that experienced hikers can be paired with inexperienced families, and experienced trail maintainers can be paired with new family volunteers. By clearly communicating the family nature of the event in event information materials, it should help experienced hikers and volunteers know what to expect if they elect to participate in the activity.

Using this Manual

Trail club members are already skilled trail maintainers and hike leaders. For this reason, this manual does not go into great detail about leading hikes or maintaining trails, but rather on the specific skills and resources needed to engage families in these activities.

Many A.T. clubs, A.T. partners and Trail organizations are already forging ahead with family programs. Gene Grayson, of the Appalachian Mountain Club's Connecticut Chapter (AMC-CT), for instance, started a family hiking program a few years ago because he %wanted to get kids outdoors.+ The experiences of Gene and others who work with families are included throughout this manual.

Family Program Goals

Engaging families as hikers and volunteers to meet these goals will strengthen the Appalachian Trail.

- Engender love of and support for the Appalachian Trail.
- Recruit of more than one volunteer at a time since family volunteering creates a natural multiplier effect.
- Develop life-long volunteers and supporters to benefit the A.T.
- Widen the circles of knowledge about opportunities to volunteer for the A.T. and clubs.
- Diversify volunteer population.
- Remain relevant to volunteers in an age of tight schedules and technology by offering one-time opportunities through its online clearinghouse.
- Create healthy living activities for families in our A.T. Communities
- Raise awareness of issues affecting the A.T., management structure, and policy decisions among more members of the surrounding community.^{xii}
- Garner interest from future philanthropists and donors to ATC and its affiliated clubs.

Your trail clubs may have identical goals or they may be modified based on the capacity and interest of the club and its leadership. **You can use the Family Programming – Goal Setting Worksheet** on the next page to define your club's goals for engaging families.

Family Programming - Goal Setting Worksheet

Select any goals below that your club hopes to achieve with family programming, then use the program development worksheet to refine your ideas.

- ☐ Engender love of and support for the Appalachian Trail.
- ☐ Recruit more than one volunteer at a time since family volunteering creates a natural multiplier effect.
- ☐ Develop life-long volunteers to benefit the A.T.
- ☐ Widen the circles of knowledge about opportunities to volunteer for the A.T. and clubs.
- ☐ Diversify our club volunteer population.
- ☐ Remain relevant to volunteers in age of tight schedules and technology by offering singular opportunities.
- ☐ Raise awareness of issues affecting the A.T., management structure, and policy decisions among more members of the surrounding community.
- ☐ Attract media attention.
- ☐ Attract funders interested in supporting our club programs.
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Other: _____

ATC: Family Program Development Worksheet

Proposed Program Name	
Brief Synopsis	
Goals: How will this program support your club's goals?	
Goals: How might this program support participant family's goals?	
Audience: for what ages is this program appropriate?	
What are the educational and/or engagement elements of this program?	
What are the service elements?	
What are the location/s of this program? Does it require a back-up location for inclement weather?	
Who, within your club, will work with you on this program? Who will take the lead?	
How will you promote and/or recruit for this program?	
Would this program benefit from a community steering	

committee and if so who might serve on it?	
What resources and/or supplies do you need to implement this project? Where can you get them?	
What is your timeline for implementing the project? Name several benchmarks.	
What will be your first step? Who will do it?	
How will you know if this program is a success? What indicators will you use for assessment?	
What do you anticipate as your principal obstacle/s in initiating and implementing this program? What solutions can you anticipate?	
How might you document and publicize the success of this program? How will you recognize the contributions of participants?	
Questions specific to your program:	

Club Considerations for Family Programming

With any new program the challenge is to anticipate additional time, resources and skills necessary to undertake the expanded services. In a 2009 survey of A.T. clubs their greatest concerns surrounding working with youth included capacity, concerns about liability, and a need for policies, procedures and training on the subject. We address those concerns in this manual; topics include capacity, policies, and procedures for family program planning, and the manual will serve as the basis for family training workshops.

Some clubs may already have members who attend hikes or work trips with family members. Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC), Tidewater Appalachian Trail Club (TATC), Susquehanna Appalachian Trail Club (SATC), and Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) report engaging families to some degree. An analysis of your club's membership participation may reveal that you are already hosting family-friendly events.

Capacity

If you have come up with some goals for family programming (pages 7 - 9), your next step will be to assess current and additional capacity necessary based on the planning needs and considerations for family programming. This manual will help you with that process:

- **The important thing to remember is to start small and grow slowly.** Starting small will allow you to tweak your programming along the way to be as successful as possible. Your club may decide to host one seasonal activity to begin family programming, such as hike for A.T. Family Hike Day, or a trail work trip on Earth Day.
- **Hikes and trail maintenance trips are activities your club is already doing.** Your members are experts at leading these kinds of activities. Rather than being a new business, family programming is opportunity to grow your club's existing work with different participants.
- **There are special considerations for running family programming that will differ from traditional club activities geared to adults.** These considerations include event timing, supervision structure, and setting expectations. In other ways, the planning and preparation is quite similar since worksite safety, Leave No Trace principles, and details for running smooth hikes are foundational to clubs.
- **For any family program, pick the low-hanging fruit first.** These events will be the shortest hikes with the greatest features, basic maintenance of the closest section of the Trail to town, and easy terrain for either. Start with these introductory ideas; later your club can decide to continue with these simple approaches or develop other activities.

Partner to Build Capacity

If your club's capacity is limited to the extent that it can not perform all the functions of planning and executing a family event, perhaps the club will consider partnership with another organization. Take these as examples:

- ATC's southern office frequently partners with Western North Carolina Alliance for its work on exotic-invasive plant removal and restoration; this partnership distributes the roles and responsibilities related to recruitment, training, and event management.
- The Appalachian Mountain Club's Connecticut Chapter (AMC-CT) has partnered with the Connecticut Forest and Park Association to run events for families.
- Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) partners with the Audubon's Naturalist Society's GreenKids program.
- Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club (RATC) partnered with Kids in the Valley Adventuring, a family nature club, in February 2010 to present information and hike on the A.T.
- Many clubs partner with American Hiking Society (AHS) annually to promote National Trails Day events. In this way the responsibility for recruitment is distributed between the event organizer and AHS.
- Tidewater Appalachian Trail Club (TATC) is offering family programming as part of RiverFest organized by Elizabeth River Project.

As you consider developing family programs, look around for partners who might need your club's hiking and trail maintenance expertise.

Leadership of Family Programs

Identifying the right volunteer to lead family programs for your club will shape the degree of success of the programs. We'll cover recruitment volunteer leaders in more detail on pages 29 - 36. ATC recommends writing a clear position description for the volunteer who will lead the family program. The position description should include:

- What the club hopes to achieve through the program,
- Needs they hope the volunteer will fulfill,
- Training or supervision necessary,
- Support on which they can rely
- The time commitment required for this job which will depend on the frequency and complexity of the type of family programs scheduled. The worksheet **Planning Your Family Program (page 22)** will set the stage for the club's initial program offerings.

Depending on the club's structure, a volunteer leader for all family programs may lead hiking and work trips himself/herself. Alternatively, that leader may recruit volunteers to lead work trips or hiking trips for families. In either case, experienced hike leaders and trail maintainers may feel comfortable taking their existing knowledge and experience with those skills and apply it to the new audience of families.

Experience working with youth in schools, youth groups, scouting, or at camps is a benefit to this position but not necessarily a requirement. What may be most important is enthusiasm for the program and acknowledgement of the special circumstances each family faces, and the willingness to be flexible, accommodating and to make the experience fun.

Establishing Club Support: Communication as Your Foundation

The idea of establishing another program for a club can be daunting for some of the organization's leadership, membership and volunteers. The key to starting and running a successful program for families will include frequent and clear communication with members and the board of directors about the program's purpose, activities and outcomes.

From the outset publish information in your newsletter to let people know that your club is considering family programming. Share information with club members and involve them in the planning stages; this

can lead to new volunteers and the participation of your members' families. Being involved in the program planning may act as an incentive for members to invite their friends to the club's family events.

Club websites serve as a tool for communication within the club as well as with the community at large. Use this resource by creating a section of your site devoted to families and the activities your club offers for them. Almost 20% of all club membership begins with the initial visit to the website.

Once the family-program team is identified and the first program is being planned, the club should utilize other communication methods to recruit participants. These communication recommendations are found in the [Recruitment](#) section.

Leadership Examples from Clubs

Potomac Appalachian Trail Club: Beginning in 2001 Jennifer Chambers, a mother of two pre-schoolers, started leading family hikes for PATC. She and another mother who was also a hike leader alternated leading hikes each week. They focused on weekday morning hikes for parents of toddlers and pre-schoolers with distances between 2 and 3 miles. PATC continues to offer family hikes, family weekends at Bears Den Hostel, and a family picnic.

Appalachian Mountain Club-Connecticut: Family hikes have been offered since 2009 through AMC-CT. The club has a family coordinator and assistant coordinator who identify hike leaders willing to lead family hikes. As the hiking schedule is developed these volunteers are paired with family hikes.

Susquehanna Appalachian Trail Club: Family hikes are burgeoning in SATC. Current hike leaders for family outings are club members with families of their own.

Tidewater Appalachian Trail Club: A committee has been established as a working group of the Outreach Committee. The subcommittee meets quarterly and is made up of demographics representative of who they hope to reach, like families and adults 20-30 years old, and others with interest. In most cases they are offering the same club activities to these new audiences. In other cases they are offering beginning hiking and camping opportunities. Anyone in the club can lead family-friendly activities.

Planning a Family Event

Family activities don't need to be a departure from the type of things your club is already doing. Recreational hikes and trail maintenance are easily adaptable to families once family needs are considered. Special considerations for adapting your programming to this new kind of participant group are:

- Event timing
- Setting expectations
- Supervision structure
- Flexibility of organizer to adapt
- For volunteer opportunities as well as hikes, having varied activities for range of experience, talent, age and strength.

One inherent challenge of family-friendly programming is that it is intergenerational. Acknowledging this challenge will help organizers rise to meet it.

"I have monthly walks that are open to families. On the last walk we had a four-year old and an 80-year old." Pat McKinney, Schuylkill County Conservation District^{xiii}

As your club begins to develop its family program, start small. Begin family activities that are short . in time commitment and hiking distance.

"In the seven years [I led family hikes for PATC], half the parents had probably never hiked before. They wanted help and guidance." Jennifer Chambers, Potomac Appalachian Trail Club.^{xiv}

Start slowly, not just for your programming perspective, but also for the audience. Take families' comfort level into account when planning activities.

"What we're learning is that we have the hardcore members who hike and backpack; they are happy doing maintenance and being dirty. We have a group of new people who are very intimidated by it, and we have to do more things that are entry to allow them to grow. Get them involved in activities that don't require a lot of gear, like day hiking, or a lot of skill, like car camping." Nancy Rinkenberger, Tidewater Appalachian Trail Club^{xv}

Organize events that will be fun for families, fit their busy schedules, interest both parents and children, fit their skill levels, give them the chance to interact with other families, and spend time outside.

"Be open to what the group is interested in and meet them at their level. I know what I want to do when I go out, but I feel like it's more important to introduce people to this incredible resource that we have. If making that resource palatable means doing shorter hikes that are closer (to town) and at different times then that's alright." David Bice, Blue Skies Ministry, St. John's Episcopal Church and Natural Bridge Appalachian Trail Club^{xvi}

Event Timing

When you're scheduling an event for families, you'll have to consider their schedules (likely busy), the ages of the children who will be participating, and the experience (or lack of experience) of the participants. All of these factor into the length of the event. For family hikes and volunteer outings, keep in mind that the experience is more important than completing the scheduled hike or project, so plan carefully, but be prepared to be flexible.

Scheduling for families works best if it's a partial day (morning or afternoon), especially if young children (5 and under) are involved. Families with older children (six and older) may be able to participate in an event that is longer. Still, a full-day event should be reserved for families with children older than 10. Overall, it is best to plan shorter outings so that families aren't discouraged by unrealistically long time requirements.

"For a family a DAY is a lot. A weekend is almost more than they can handle." Teresa Martinez, Continental Divide Trail Alliance

Based on interviews with organizations experienced with organizing family programs, the optimal time to schedule family events are:

- Weekday mornings for parents with toddlers and pre-schoolers
- Saturday mornings
- Sunday afternoons
- During the summer, late afternoon and early evening

Be realistic about program timeframes. When estimating the length of the project, consider the driving time to the trailhead or worksite from town, the time it will take to complete your hike or volunteer project . including walking at a children's pace, stops to rest and refuel, and time to do any activities.

"I look for hikes that start within 25 minutes (drive) of town. The maximum time we hike is three hours. I know that's relatively short. We're leaving at noon on Sunday (from church) We're starting to walk around 12:45, and we end the hike in January or February at 4 p.m. when the sun is close to the horizon." David Bice, Family Hiking for St. John's Episcopal Church of Lynchburg, VA and Natural Bridge Appalachian Trail Club.

"Estimate how long you think the hike will take, and double it." Lauren Lang, Tips for Hiking with Kids^{xvii}

A few other tips to keep in mind:

- Consider hosting regularly scheduled events so that families know when to expect the outings.
- If you are planning events that require people to sign up in advance of their arrival, be sure to communicate the importance of notifying you if they cannot attend.
- Schedule your events as early as possible so that can be added to busy family calendars before they fill up with other commitments.

Remember, whether hiking or volunteering, it is important for family members to depart on a high-note, when they are feeling good. Feeling good about their level of fitness and experience in nature will lend them incentive to return.

Setting Expectations

A key element of a successful family event is setting and communicating clear expectations . to the organizers as well as families . about your club's family event. Whether your club is planning a hike or a volunteer project, as you work through the planning process you'll be able to provide guidance to both the club members leading the event and the families attending.about their role about your expectations for them.

Family Event Planning Worksheet (page 22) will help you create a clear description of the event for your outreach efforts. With these efforts, you'll begin setting expectations for families. Typical outreach and/or recruitment materials will include (at a minimum) logistical information . date, time, duration . a

description of the event, advice on what to bring and contact information. Even at this early stage, you want to begin giving families a sense of what to expect. This will help them determine if your event is right for them.

It is important to . . . succinctly and clearly communicate if you are encouraging families to be involved. You might end up with people who you don't want if you aren't very clear on your targeted audience. [Communicating clearly] will help create a better experience for you and your participants. +Sam Wilson, Volunteers Outdoor Colorado

If participants register in advance, leaders can facilitate parents' conversations with children about the importance of the opportunity by calling or sending an email in advance of the event. This contact serves as a gentle reminder about the commitment they have made to participate. It is also a good chance to update participants on weather forecasts, what to wear, things they need to bring with them, or updates to the schedule. This will probably prompt a bit more discussion at home before the event and will help solidify the motivation and interest of all the individual participants. Sam Wilson, of Volunteer Outdoors Colorado (VOC), prepares his volunteers before the project starts with basic information about the project: what to wear and bring, a schedule, description of the project and expectations for volunteers.

"I try to put as complete a hike description as possible. I put my email address and phone number. I make it sound welcoming so people will call if they have questions. If I have completely new hikers I pair them with someone with experience. They can talk together. We gear the pace to the slower, newer hikers. I usually lead from the front and stop often. I'll find something interesting to talk about, so I'll stop to introduce what I've found." Nancy Rinkenberger, Tidewater Appalachian Trail Club

Not all events require registration. Sometimes organizations don't know who will show up until the start of the event!

"We don't require people to call in advance (to join a hike). We don't know who will show up until we get there. We circle up at the trailhead, check liability agreements, and then we talk and set expectations. We count off, introduce everyone, and make sure everyone has water. For family hikes we (hike leaders) bring extra water bottles, just in case." Gene Grayson, AMC-CT^{xviii}

Especially in cases where participants don't register in advance, it is important to be clear about the day's activity, and provide a good orientation on the day of the event. Orientation is an important part of setting expectations; for families, keep the tone light, make sure they feel welcome, and be sure to stress the fun parts of the event. In general, touch upon these topics:

- Identify yourself and other leaders
- Welcome families as they arrive
- Give a brief introduction to your club and the A.T. . some families may not know that the Trail runs from Maine to Georgia or that it was built by volunteers. This is your chance to tell them about other opportunities
- Give an overview of that day's hike or volunteer activity - how long they will be gone, when they can expect to return, what they will see and do, the difficulty rating, and hazards they may encounter
- Leaders must clearly communicate expectations for the activity they are undertaking. Stated expectations should be the activity, terrain, distance, and difficulty, as well as any work to accomplish. During this time, leaders should also define their role and what can be expected of them. Also describe what you expect of parents and children
- Provide a safety briefing and discuss communication strategies
- Discuss Leave No Trace principles and provide training, if necessary
- Don't forget the fun!

Supervision Structure

With children as well as adults participating in your event, it is important to establish who is in charge, and who is responsible for keeping children in line. Parents bear the responsibility for their children's safety and behavior. Therefore, organizations must clearly communicate the parameters of the parents' responsibilities to oversee, support, train and manage the behavior of their children.^{xi} Families attending club activities also have the responsibility to follow the instruction of their leader, hike safely, monitor themselves, and look out for others in the group.

"A.T. hikers along the Appalachian Trail must be responsible for their own safety and comfort" A.T. Comprehensive Plan^{xx}

Though parents bear primary responsibility for managing their children's behavior, club members leading the family event have options when providing guidance and instruction to families. Parents, after all, will not necessarily be experienced hikers and trail maintainers! The leader of the hike or volunteer project may provide guidance to parents, who in turn supervise their children, or leaders may advise adults and children equally. In either case, the role of authority must be clearly established at the beginning of the project and understood by parents and youth participants. In our research, event leaders took different approaches for hikes and volunteer work trips.

For hikes, supervision often rests entirely with the parent. Leaders should define how parents are expected to monitor their children. Leaders may request that parents and children hike together, or leaders may feel comfortable with a looser structure that allows parents to observe their children without being in lockstep.

For work trips orientation and training may be provided by the trip leader who will supervise parents and children on the specific task while parents are responsible for their children's behavior. In either case, leaders must be responsible to step in to correct unsafe behavior of children or adults. Additional advice for work trip supervision is provided in that section of the manual.

What can you expect from children who participate in a family event? General guidelines on development and leadership qualities are reproduced below. Based on this information, clubs are most likely to have families with children younger than 12 on family hikes, since around that age they start seeking independence from parents. Work trips will be most successful if participants are 8 and older since youth that age begin to be able to work independently and demonstrate determination. They also are able to understand why they are doing the work, which will enhance their good feelings about their contributions.

The age of youth involved in the activity will set the tone for what can be accomplished and expected for that event. Here are some general characteristics and leadership qualities in human development for children between 5 and 17.^{xxi}

General Characteristics and Leadership Qualities in Youth aged 5 - 17	
Ages 5-7	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of energy balanced with need for rest • Enjoy running, hopping, chasing, catching and climbing • Can only focus on one thing at a time • Creativity and imagination are active • Sensitive to the comments of others • Can be easily frustrated 	
<p><u>Tips for working with children aged 5 - 7:</u> Teach through physical demonstration. Allow them to practice large motor skills. Build in rest opportunities. Lead simple activities with minimal and simple rules</p>	
Ages 8-11	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of energy balanced with a reduced need for rest • Can sit still for a variety of engaging activities • Logic and reasoning abilities are developing. Curiosity abounds, and so do why+ questions • Problem solving skills are improving • Children are beginning to work independently and show persistence 	
<p><u>Tips for working with children aged 8 - 11:</u> Explain the reason why we do this so they understand the process leaders go through in decision-making. Talk to youth like adults. Expect impulsive acting out that stems from frustration if things aren't going well. Provide lots of opportunities for exploration and learning new things. Encourage all youth to try new things and work toward their potential</p>	
Ages 12-14	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A more sustainable energy output • Coordination and fine motor skills are more developed • Developing sense of self • Can understand abstractions and various viewpoints. 	
<p><u>Tips for working with children aged 12 - 14:</u> Provide opportunities for leadership development. Include them in decision-making. Treat them with respect; talk to them like adults.</p>	
Ages 15-17	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important for them to acquire new skills • Developed logic and reason • Understand abstractions, problem solving and hypothesis testing • They challenge themselves with a wide variety of interest and look for ways to challenge themselves cognitively and physically • Be clear about why the leader recommends or needs something done a certain way 	
<p><u>Tips for working with children aged 15 - 17:</u> Allow time and space for youth to practice their own leadership skills. Model positive values and social skills. Provide skills instruction and activities for honing skills and cognitive development. Provide opportunities for success and allow for failure.</p>	

Youth that are involved as hikers and volunteers between the ages of 8 and 12 will be the most likely to continue as volunteers as they are teens since it offers the chance to be challenged physically and cognitively. Despite seeking independence from their parents, their commitment to the outdoors may be developed to the degree that they seek out volunteer work trips and hiking opportunities.

Flexibility of Organizers to Adapt

As organizers, particularly if you're used to leading adult-only hikes and volunteer projects, you may need to alter your impression of what success looks like when you're working with families. Rather than cleaning all the water bars, brushing spring growth, and sawing out blowdowns for a section, success may be cleaning several water bars and brushing within a certain distance. Hike leaders who can adapt their expectation of getting to the destination may experience the fulfillment of younger hikers' exploration and interest in rocks, sticks and creeks.

"A half-mile is good enough even though you planned for a mile and a half, and everyone feels good about what's been done, than that's okay." Teresa Martinez, Continental Divide Trail Alliance

Hikes that can be adapted for participants offer a way to enhance everyone's experience. David Bice, who leads family hikes for St. John's Episcopal Church in Lynchburg, Virginia says he has split hiking groups before, taking some hikers on an easier route while others take a more difficult route. (This is possible as long as at least two leaders are along . addressed in the planning section.).

Similarly, Gene Grayson and his wife lead a family hike to Soapstone Mountain in Connecticut. When the group reaches a certain junction, families can elect to take the more difficult trail route or the easier route to the summit fire tower. The adaptation to the hike helps people grasp the experience at a level that is right for them. Once at the summit, hikers can decide if they want to take the steep or gradual descent.

"A lot of times it has to be altered. If I have an idea we'll do a three-mile hike, sometimes it has to be altered if we have a lot of small ones. Just keeping in mind that people have taken time out of their day to come out and do it, so make them feel like they can do it." Chip and Ashley Donahue, Kids in the Valley, Adventuring^{xxii}

And remember, sometimes doing nothing is doing something.

"The kids get excited about the cool aspects of hiking like getting to carry your own pack with snacks, seeing bugs, climbing on fallen trees, throwing sticks and stones into creeks, finding the occasional geocache, etc." Katie Barker, SATC^{xxiii}

"People who go [with us] haven't been out that much. They're just fascinated by following blazes, looking at shelters, the off chance of climbing a rock or crossing a stream. Along the hike children become fascinated with what adults tend to think of as mundane – finding a stick or a really cool looking rock." David Bice, Blue Skies Ministry, St. John's Episcopal Church and Natural Bridge Appalachian Trail Club

"I'm a hike leader, so I just try to lead the hike. I try to show them things on the trail itself whether it is identifying certain types of trees, identifying water bars or some trail maintenance things as we go by. I show them blazes and talk to them about the standardization and why they are out there, that kind of stuff. People talk about what they know." Gene Grayson, AMC-CT

Range of Activities

When planning a family event, particularly those that may have a wide age range of participants, it's important to offer a range of activities. Review the general characteristics and leadership qualities of youth (page 17) for general guidelines, but remember there are no set rules.

For hikes that have very young hikers and older children, provide activities (pages 47 - 52) for the older to do while the younger children catch up at a pace that is comfortable for them.

For family work trips, site locations that offer a diversity of tasks will challenge both experienced volunteers and newcomers . or old and young. Offering something for different ages, talents, strength and ability will ensure everyone feels satisfied with a job well done.

Types of Events

Check the boxes beside types of family-friendly programs your club can organize.

Family-Friendly Events

- ☐ All-ages hikes
- ☐ Nature or trails slideshows
- ☐ Seasonal walks to observe fall foliage, winter views and animal tracks, spring wildflowers.
- ☐ Nature Club participation (see www.childrenandnature.org)
- ☐ Outdoor Activities

Family-Friendly Volunteer Opportunities

Trail-Maintenance

- ☐ Spring and fall section walk-through
- ☐ Litter clean-up
- ☐ General Maintenance: trimming, cleaning water bars, collect leaves and duff for mouldering privies
- ☐ One-day Worktrips: digging sidehill, building steps, shelter and privy maintenance, cleaning out water sources, paint blazes, assist in relocation, etc.
- ☐ Trailhead kiosk maintenance and/or beautification
- ☐ Shuttle a ridgerunner

Environmental Monitoring

- ☐ Exotic-invasive plant removal
- ☐ Restoration of areas recently cleared of exotic-invasive plants
- ☐ World Water Monitoring
- ☐ Phenology
- ☐ American Chestnut Monitoring

Advocacy

- ☐ Write legislators in support of Land Water Conservation Fund appropriations for A.T. protection
- ☐ Write local cities, counties to encourage them to include language to protect the A.T. in their land-use plans, ordinances and guidelines

Calendar of Events

There are a number of national days of service, holidays, or other days that lend themselves to coordinated family events. Here is a list of them in the months in which they generally occur.

Circle the days your club could host a family hike or outdoor activity. Place a star beside days your club could offer an opportunity for families to volunteer.

January

New Years Day
Martin Luther King Jr. Day

February

Hike the Hill
President's Day
National Invasive Species Awareness Week

April

Earth Day
National Volunteer Week
Global Youth Service Day

June

National Trails Day
Fathers Day

July

Independence Day

September

National Public Lands Day
A.T. Family Hiking Day
Take a Child Outside Week
Labor Day

October

Make a Difference Day
Columbus Day

November

National Family Volunteer Day

There are also annual events with a focus on celebrating the Trail in adjacent trailside communities. These events also offer the chance to engage families and include:

- Amicalola Falls A.T. Celebration & Backpacking Clinic
- Dahlenega Trail Festival
- Franklin N.C. April Fool Trail Days
- NOC's A.T. Founder's Bridge Festival
- Hot Springs Trailfest
- Damascus Trail Days,
- A.T. Museum Festival
- Long Trail Festival
- Millinockett Trails End Festival
- ALDHA Gathering.

Planning Your Family Program

Keep in mind the goals you already established your club's family program.

Compare monthly list of potential days with the club calendar and potential activities listed previously. To begin, identify at least two dates and two activities to begin your family-friendly program. Add others as you see fit.

Activity	Date of Activity and/or Day of Service
<i>e.g. exotic-invasive plant removal</i>	<i>Earth Day</i>

What frequency will your club host family activities? (use the space next to your selection(s) to further describe the timing of these activities)

- ☐ Weekly _____
- ☐ Monthly _____
- ☐ Seasonally _____
- ☐ Annually _____
- ☐ Other: _____

How will you categorize the activities you have planned? (select one)

- ☐ Family-Friendly ☐ Families-Only ☐ Both

Ideas for Introductory Activities

The easiest section of our Trail is _____.

The most rewarding hike shorter than four-miles is _____.

The closest section of our Trail is _____.

Easy trail maintenance tasks for the closest section are _____.

_____.

Planning a Safe Family Event

Health and Safety Considerations for the Appalachian Trail^{xxiv}

Involving families reduces a number of risks associated with youth-only programming. Parental participation closes the gap between numbers of children and the number of adults; the closer to equal ratio provides greater guidance for tasks and reduces the likelihood that a youth and adult volunteers or staff are alone. When you're planning a family event, whether a hike or a volunteer project, consider some of the risks you might face. Many known risks are described below, and you can find more information about these risks at ATC's website:

<http://www.appalachiantrail.org/hiking/hiking-basics/health-safety>

Weather-related dangers

Walking in the open means Trail users will be susceptible to sudden changes in the weather, and traveling on foot means that it may be hard to find shelter quickly. Pay attention to the changing skies. Sudden spells of "off-season" cold weather, hail, and even snow are common along many parts of the Trail. Winter-like weather often occurs in late spring or early fall in the southern Appalachians, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. In the northern Appalachians, it can snow during any month of the year. Hypothermia, lightning, and heat exhaustion are all legitimate concerns.

- **Hypothermia.** A cold rain can be the most dangerous weather of all, because it can cause hypothermia (or "exposure") even when conditions are well above freezing. Hypothermia occurs when wind and rain chill the body so that its core temperature drops; death occurs if the condition is not caught in time. Avoid hypothermia by dressing in layers of synthetic clothing, eating well, staying hydrated, and knowing when to hole up in a warm sleeping bag in a tent or shelter. Cotton clothing, such as blue jeans, tends to chill you when it gets wet from rain or sweat; if the weather turns bad, cotton clothes increase your risk of hypothermia. Natural wool and artificial fibers such as nylon, polyester, and polypropylene all do a much better job of insulation in cold, wet weather. Remember that, when the wind blows, its "chill" effect can make you much colder than the temperature would lead you to suspect, especially if you're sweaty or wet.
- **Lightning.** The odds of being struck by lightning are low, but an open ridge is no place to be during a thunderstorm. If a storm is coming, immediately leave exposed areas. Boulders, rocky overhangs, and shallow caves offer no protection from lightning, which may actually flow through them along the ground after a strike. Tents and convertible automobiles are no good, either. Sheltering in hard-roofed automobiles or large buildings is best, although they are rarely available to the hiker. Avoid tall structures, such as ski lifts, flagpoles, powerline towers, and the tallest trees, solitary rocks, or open hilltops. If you cannot enter a building or car, take shelter in a stand of smaller trees or in the forest. Avoid clearings. If caught in the open, crouch down on your pack or pad, or roll into a ball. If you are in water, get out. Disperse groups, so that not everyone is struck by a single bolt. Do not hold a potential lightning rod, such as a fishing pole or metal hiking pole.
- **Heat.** Dry hot summers are surprisingly common along the Trail, particularly in the Virginias and the mid-Atlantic. Water may be scarce on humid days, sweat does not evaporate well, and many hikers face the danger of heat stroke and heat exhaustion if they haven't taken proper precautions. The best measures against heat emergencies are wearing a hat and sunscreen, staying well hydrated as you walk, and drinking plenty of water in camp. The following are the most common types of heat problems:

- *Sunburn* occurs rapidly and can be quite severe at higher elevations; hikers in the Virginias and southern Appalachians are often surprised by bad sunburn in spring, when no leaves are on the trees.
- *Heat cramps* are usually caused by strenuous activity in high heat and humidity, when sweating depletes salt levels in blood and tissues.
- *Heat exhaustion* occurs when the body's heat-regulating system breaks down. A victim may have heat cramps, sweat heavily, have cold, moist skin, and a face that is flushed, then pale.
- *Heat stroke* is life-threatening and occurs when the body's system of sweating fails to cool a person adequately. Body temperature can rise to 106 degrees or higher.

Wildlife: Encounters and Diseases

Part of the experience found in nature is seeing wildlife or evidence of wildlife. Hikers are reminded to keep a safe distance from *all* wildlife found along the Trail. Be aware that illnesses like Lyme disease, rabies or hantavirus pose threats to hikers.

- **Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases.** Ticks, which carry Lyme disease, ehrlichiosis and other diseases, are a risk on any hike. The northeastern United States- from Massachusetts to Maryland- has the highest concentration of reported cases of Lyme disease. Always check yourself for ticks daily. When in tick habitat (grassy, brushy, or woodland areas) your chances of being bitten by a tick can be decreased with a few precautions:
 - Avoid tick-infested areas, especially in May, June, and July (many local health departments and park or extension services have information on the local distribution of ticks).
 - Wear light colored clothing. Dark ticks can most easily be spotted against a light background.
 - Tuck your pant legs into your socks. Tuck your shirt into your pants. Deer ticks grab onto feet and legs and then climb up. This precaution will keep them on the outside of your clothes, where they can be spotted and picked off.
 - Spray insect repellent containing DEET on clothes and on exposed skin other than the face, or treat clothes (especially pants, socks, and shoes) with permethrin, which kills ticks on contact.
 - Wear a hat and a long-sleeved shirt for added protection.
 - Walk in the center of trails to avoid overhanging grass and brush.

After being outdoors, remove clothing and wash and dry it at a high temperature. Inspect body carefully and remove attached ticks with tweezers, grasping the tick as close to the skin surface as possible and pulling straight back with a slow steady force; avoid crushing the tick's body. In some areas, ticks (saved in a sealed container) can be submitted to the local health department for identification.

- **Black bears** live along many parts of the Trail and are particularly common in Georgia, the Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains national parks, and parts of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. While attacks on humans are rare, a startled bear or a female with cubs may react aggressively. The best way to avoid an encounter while you are hiking is to make noise by whistling, talking, etc., to give the bear a chance to move away before you get close enough to make it feel threatened. If you encounter a bear and it does not move away, you should back off, speaking calmly and firmly, and avoid making eye contact. Do not run or "play dead" even if a bear makes a "bluff charge." If you are actually attacked by a bear, you should fight for all you are worth with anything at hand . rocks, sticks, fists.
- **Snake bites.** Poisonous and nonpoisonous snakes are widespread along the Trail in warm weather, but they are generally passive. Please don't kill them! Watch where you step and

where you put your hands. Snakes are active at night in hot weather, so use a flashlight and wear shoes.

Snake bites are rare, and bites from poisonous snakes do not always contain venom. Very few people die from snakebites in the U.S. If you are bitten by a snake you believe to be venomous, try to remain calm. Call 911 and seek medical treatment as quickly as possible. In the backcountry, this may mean walking out to a trailhead instead of waiting for emergency personnel to reach you. Wash the wound with soap and water. Do not apply ice. Do not apply a tourniquet; remove rings or other jewelry that could function as a tourniquet if swelling occurs. Do not use a cut and suck method to try and remove venom.

- **Rabies.** Cases of rabies have been reported in foxes, raccoons, and other small animals; a bite is a serious concern, although instances of hikers being bitten are rare. More information is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/>.
- **Hantavirus.** One case of the rare but dangerous rodent-borne disease hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS) has been reported on the A.T. In 1993, an A.T. thru-hiker contracted hantavirus as he hiked through Virginia. He became quite ill but did recover and completed his hike the next year; investigators were unable to pinpoint the exact location of infection. Precautionary measures for hikers: Air out a closed, mice-infested structure for an hour before occupying it. Avoid sleeping on mouse droppings (use a mat or tent) or handling mice. Treat your water, and wash hands.

Blisters

Blisters are one of the most common ailments suffered by hikers. Break in new boots before you begin your hike. Always keep your feet dry while hiking. When you stop for breaks, take your shoes and socks off to air out your feet. Change your socks fairly regularly. Don't wait for a blister to develop. As soon as you feel any discomfort, place adhesive tape, duct tape, moleskin, or a blister-care product over areas of developing soreness.

Poison Ivy

Poison ivy grows plentifully in the wild, particularly south of New England, and can be an annoyance during hiking season. Poison ivy is most often seen as a vine trailing near the ground or climbing on fences or trees. The leaves are in clusters of three, the end leaf with a longer stalk and pointed tip, light green in the spring but darkening as the weeks pass. The leaves often appear glossy in the sun. The inconspicuous flowers are greenish; the berries, white or cream. If you have touched poison ivy, wash immediately with strong soap (but not with one containing added oil). If a rash develops in the next day or so, treat it with calamine lotion or Solarcaine. Do not scratch. If blisters become serious or the rash spreads to the eyes, see a doctor.

Emergency Plan

As described above, time spent outdoors can pose a number of threats to health and safety. Familiarity with the range of risks and implementing strategies to reduce those risks will help you plan for a safe event. Still emergencies may occur and it is best to prepare for the worst even while you hope for the best.

Leaders of hikes and trail maintenance trips should be aware of the dangers described above. Leaders of work-trips should be aware of the additional hazards associated with trail maintenance tasks and the necessary safety gear and precautions necessary.

Here are some things to consider when putting together an emergency plan:

- An assessment of which locations, if any, offer cell phone reception
- A constant awareness of your location . forest and district, park, etc;

- Location of closest hospital;
- Collection of emergency contact information for all participants;
- First aid and CPR skills if required by your club for hike leadership or planned maintenance activity
- A second in command+in case something happens to the leader;
- A protocol for getting help if cell phone coverage is unavailable;
- Determination of who stays with injured person or party;

Use documents on the next pages to assess what could go wrong and what you will do about it.

Activity Safety and Precaution Assessment

Name of the Activity: _____

Use the health and safety considerations list as well as the trail maintenance tasks, hazards, and safety gear page to complete the grid below.

(This may include anything from weather dangers, like lightening, to poison ivy.)

Use the grid below to list the hazards and what can be done to prevent harm.

Potential Hazard	Prevention	Preparation
<i>e.g. Large boulders that kids may climb on. Might scrape knees on rocks.</i>	<i>Discuss safe climbing. Remind parents to take responsibility of safety for children.</i>	<i>First-aid kit stocked with rubber gloves, gauze, anti-biotic ointment and Band-Aids.</i>
<i>e.g. Poison Ivy</i>	<i>If it is highly likely they will encounter it, request long pants. Remind participants how to identify it. Encourage participants to stay on trail to avoid it.</i>	<i>Tech-nu or other poison-ivy cleansing soap.</i>

After thinking through these risks, you can make some decisions about what participants should bring with them. Next move to the **Emergency Planning Worksheet** below.

Emergency Planning Worksheet

Event Name:

Event Date:

Event Description:

Event Location *(be specific – agency jurisdiction, district, etc)*:

Itinerary:

Is cell phone reception available at event location? _____

Are there specific locations where cell phone coverage is available?

Closest hospital to event location:

Phone numbers for emergency service responders for event location:

Who is the “second in command” in the event that something happens to the leader?

What is the protocol for staying with an injured member of your party?

(Provide a copy of this planning sheet to a point-person who is not attending the event.)

Recruitment and Outreach

Much of the material in this section is relevant whether you're trying to recruit a volunteer or publicize a hike or other family activity. It is also useful if you're trying to recruit a leader from your club.

This information comes from www.appalachiantrail.org/volunteer_toolkit.

Before deciding on a recruitment strategy, it is important to know what you need from the volunteers you are trying to recruit. The practice of writing position descriptions helps you think through what you want from volunteers and how you need to prepare for them in terms of training, supervision and support. Clarifying this in advance will allow you and the volunteer to determine if the position is a good fit. It will serve to screen out volunteers who are not appropriate for the position . saving both you and the volunteer time.

When describing a volunteer position, be clear about what commitment you will be asking volunteers to make. If appropriate, define an opportunity as a short term project, with a clear deadline and end point, rather than a long term and/or open ended commitment. People who sign up for a short term volunteers often stay on if they find the work is rewarding . but they may never sign up if the initial commitment seems overwhelming or ill defined.

Position Description

For the volunteer manager, defining position descriptions can help you think through how you need to prepare in terms of supervision, training and support.

As a relationship develops between a volunteer and an organization . the position description is a reference both the volunteer and the manager can look back and refine as a volunteer's role at the organization changes. Though concise, a position description contains a wealth of information. Basic elements of a position description include:

- Title . The title should briefly describe the volunteer's role.
- Purpose/Desired Results . Defining a purpose lets volunteers know what they will accomplish. This is not trivial . it helps to motivate and give direction to volunteers.
- Contact Information/Logistics . The position description should list the contact person, information about timeframe (general and specific), location and any other logistical information.
- Responsibilities . Describe the general activities associated with the position.
- Qualifications . List the skills that are associated with this position. Make sure to note whether they are required skills, or merely desirable. If there are any requirements associated with the position (current sawyer certification, for example) make sure to list them.
- Participants . Here you can define who can participate in this particular activity. If there are age restrictions, for example, or if you are focusing on recruiting youth, you can include that here.
- Training . Describe any training provided . required and optional.
- Benefits . People volunteer for many reasons, and not all of their reasons are purely altruistic. Describe tangible and intangible benefits the volunteer may receive.

Sample: Position Description

Volunteer Position Title	Family Hike Day – Hike Leader
Purpose	Introduce families to the Appalachian Trail and out club
Responsibilities / Requirements	<p>The hike will need to identify and scout a route that is suitable for families, and respond to phone calls/email inquiries from potential family hikers. Hike leader will work with other members of the hiking committee to create an emergency plan and coordinate with others to plan the hike (gathering supplies, identifying family-friendly games and activities).</p> <p>The hike leader meets the participants at the hike departure point and assesses all hikers to make sure that they are properly equipped and physically able to participate in the hike. The hike leader organizes the carpool, leads the group to the trailhead, provides an orientation for the participants about the hike at the trailhead, and leads the hike. The hike leader must maintain control of the hiking group, make sure that all participants are accounted for at the end of the hike, and lead the carpool back to the starting point.</p>
Skills Required	The volunteer must be an experienced hiker with skill in leading and maintaining control of a group. The hike leader should be able to read and understand maps and guidebooks. Experience with youth is not required, but hike leader should be enthusiastic about working with families.
Who may participate	Experienced hike leaders
Location	Hiking route to be determined by hike leader.
Date / Time Commitment	5 . 10 hours preparation in the three months leading up to the hike and 4 . 6 hours on September 24, 2011.
Benefits	Chance to go hiking (!), introduce families to the Appalachian Trail, meet new people.
Training	Hike leader can participate in a Family Hike Day webinar, or refer to Family Program Manual for guidance and support.
Support	Hike leader will be part of a team planning and leading the hike.
Contact	<p>Jeanne Mahoney 304-535-2200 ext. 107 jmahoney@appalachiantrail.org</p>

Position Description Template

Build Your Position Description(s) for Volunteers to Organize or Lead Family Hikes or Work Trips using this template.

Volunteer Position Title	
Purpose	
Responsibilities / Requirements	
Skills Required	
Who may participate	
Location	
Date / Time Commitment	
Benefits	
Training	
Support	
Contact	

Elements of a Recruitment Message

While the content of the message . format, style, tone . will vary depending on the audience and method of distributing your recruitment message, the basic [elements of a recruitment message](#), regardless of format or length, include:

- Need . What is the challenge or need?
- Solution . How will the volunteers' efforts address the need?
- Advantages . What do volunteers get from volunteering?
- Description/Contact . What will the volunteer be doing? Where, when and for how long?

Recruitment messages cover the who, what, where, when, how and why of a particular opportunity, but not all of these elements are equally important. In general, spend more time on the need, solution and advantages, and less time on logistics. Focus on the benefits of volunteering . and you can go beyond the satisfaction of giving back.+When you describe benefits to volunteers, you're really addressing their motivations, both altruistic and self-interested. People volunteer for many reasons . and often have more than one motivation. Some simply want to support the Appalachian Trail, while others want to gain a specific skill or meet new people. You can refer to the [experiences of your volunteers](#) when making an appeal . many people respond positively to the experiences of others.

For family programs the basic message should also focus on fun and communicate that it's a great way to spend quality time with family. For volunteer opportunities the message should also include sharing your values.+

Other important information to include in basic recruitment materials include:

- Event name with a catchy title.
- Date, time, duration of event
- How to get more information.
- Age range, if appropriate

Additional information may include:

- Event specific information, like points of interest, special features, or activities
- Purpose of volunteer activity
- Benefits of family volunteering, like improved family communication, making a difference, teaching civic responsibility
- Testimonials from other family participants

Recruitment Techniques

Consider these questions before you decide how to get your message out:

- What needs to be done, and who would want to do it?
- Where will you find them?
- What is the best way to communicate to find this type of volunteer?

ATC and clubs have a number of tools for their recruitment message. web sites and newsletters offer the opportunity to spread the word to members. Club web sites, other web sites, newspapers, community centers, radio stations and community events all offer the chance to spread the word about family-friendly opportunities.

Look Within. Some clubs may already have members who attend hikes or work trips with family members. An analysis of your club participation may reveal that you are already hosting

family-friendly events. Now, you can bring greater attention to it for all members of the club by hosting a special day for current members, volunteers and their families. If a new volunteer joins the club, ask if they have an interest in volunteering with their family.

Distributing fliers about upcoming family-friendly activities is a popular recruitment tool among groups reaching out to families. Flier should be designed with images of families. Fliers can be posted at outdoor outfitters, grocery stores, post offices, places of worship, daycare centers, schools, hands-on museums, movie theaters, libraries, hospital, business and corporations.

Web sites are the new bulletin board. They are places to share and disseminate information about communities. Plus, an online listing that links to an online registration form for the event makes it easier for families to register and receive reminders from you in the weeks leading up to the event. Once they register for one event in this way you have their email address so that you can invite them to future program activities.

“Use social media if you can. That’s been tremendously helpful for us in reaching a segment of population that we don’t normally reach. We’ve had really great success with Meetup.com Both families and 20-30s crowd have come to the club outings through Meetup.com. People who are looking for an outdoor activity can find us specifically. In the description of hike we include the parameters – kid-friendly, or if it’s intended for beginning campers we say that. We do this to make sure that the target we are looking for feels welcome and drawn into it.” Nancy Rinkenberger, Tidewater Appalachian Trail Club

“We advertised using PATC, a listserv, weekly reminders, and seasonal calendars. We started connecting up with moms through other listservs that targeted preschoolers, babies, and people who were blogging about that age set.” Jennifer Chambers, on her experience leading family hikes for PATC

Websites where you may post your event information include:

- Your club’s site
- ATC’s web site
- Facebook
- Meet-up
- Local or regional outdoor-focused websites of clubs, organizations, or activity groups with similar interests
- VolunteerMatch.org
- Idealist.org
- www.1-800-volunteer.org
- A.T. Volunteer Database (see below), Activities listed in the A.T. Volunteer Database should be denoted as family-friendly so that visitors can search by that parameter.

The A.T. Volunteer Database

The ATC volunteer clearinghouse database is an online searchable database of volunteer opportunities related to the Appalachian Trail. The database has two primary purposes: recruitment and volunteer program management. The database’s public interface allows potential volunteers to search for volunteer opportunities, contact program managers and register for volunteer opportunities. The administrative side of the database, which is secure and password protected, provides A.T. program managers (ATC staff and club managers) with web-based tools that will allow them to post volunteer opportunities and scheduling/recordkeeping features that will help manage their volunteers.

The database was designed to be adaptable; the more complex recordkeeping and management needs of larger clubs will be supported, and smaller clubs can choose which of the features they would like to use. Using the database is optional, Trail club program managers can decide how they want to use the system; they can simply focus on recruiting volunteers, use the database to manage their volunteer programs, or both!

Accessing the database is a simple process. Each volunteer program manager will be provided with a password protected administrative account which will allow them to login to the database through any computer with internet access. With administrative access to the database, can post volunteer opportunities and manage the volunteers affiliated with their programs. Clubs can create additional administrative accounts so that other club leaders can access the database as needed.

Though accessing the database is fairly simple, straightforward process, using the database efficiently, particularly for clubs who will be using administrative features, will require training. ATC, provides training in various formats . web-based tutorials, user manuals, online demonstrations and live/in-person classes/workshops when possible. The goal is to provide training in many formats that will reach our geographically diverse audience. See the basics at www.appalachiantrail.org/database.training.

Look to schools. Spread the word about your event through schools. Participation may be greatest in schools that are already involved with the Trail through a Trail to Every Classroom. Youth may encourage their parents to participate. Also consider contacting homeschooling networks.

Word of mouth is the most powerful marketing tool. Attend community events, talk to people in parking lots, or make a presentation to scouts.

According to a study of environmental stewardship organizations, family volunteer participants got involved because they heard about it from someone or because they were asked directly.^{xxv}

“Word of mouth is the most popular [way people hear about it] since it offers the chance to dispel misinformation about what hiking is, how it works, what kinds of equipment you need, and what to expect. [I can say] ‘you just need a children’s book bag or fanny pack. I’m sure you can do the hike. Last time it was two and half miles. Kids did it, and they had a blast.’” David Bice, Blue Skies Ministry, St. John’s Episcopal Church

“It grew; word of mouth has been fantastic. Families who come out and have a good time and spread the word. We have 600 families who get our newsletter three to four times a month. It includes our events and other events that are happening in the community.” Chip and Ashley Donahue, Kids in the Valley Adventuring

Recruitment Strategy Checklist

Check the boxes of recruitment techniques you will use for this activity:

- ☐ Ask existing members or volunteers to bring their family members.
- ☐ Publicize on club Web site and in newsletter.
- ☐ Post program event to A.T. Volunteer Database
- ☐ Ask members to invite friends with families to participate.
- ☐ Distribute fliers in the community
- ☐ Promote through the websites and newsletters of regional clubs and groups with similar interests.
- ☐ Send invitations to teachers and school student who have participated in Trail to Every Classroom.
- ☐ Send invitations to homeschooling networks
- ☐ Talk to people in the community about the event and ask them to attend.
- ☐ Publicize through community calendars
- ☐ Publicize through Public Service Announcements (PSAs)
- ☐ Promote through media alerts and press releases distributed local parenting magazines, city magazines and newspapers, radio and television stations.
- ☐ Recruit in partnership with another group (corporations, partner organizations, sponsor) (see section on club capacity for examples on recruitment partnerships)

Look at the job descriptions you have drawn up for this activity. Use the checklist to ensure that you included all the relevant information for the opportunity.

- ☐ Overview of activity
- ☐ Tasks
- ☐ Special skills needed to perform tasks
- ☐ Minimum age, if any for participating in this role or certain tasks
- ☐ Benefits to family volunteers
- ☐ Denote if family members can share the job.
- ☐ Required time commitment

Sample Family Hike and Activity Information

We are glad you are joining us for **Spring into Hot Springs!** This has all the information you need. If you have any questions at all, please call or email me.

Spring into Hot Springs

All hikers 5 and older are welcome to join us to hike a 1.6-mile loop on the Appalachian Trail and the Silvermine Trail. The hike will take us along the French Broad River where we will see spring wildflowers and we may see white water rafters. The trail ascends to Lover's Leap and offers views of the whole town of Hot Springs. The hike concludes through a rhododendron forest. The hike is easy to moderate in difficulty. We will follow up on the hike with a picnic lunch in town and ice cream from Two Scoops. Free time for kids to play in the creek will also follow the hike.

Saturday, April 21, 2011

9:30-11:30 for the hike

or 1:30 p.m. if you plan to stay for a picnic, ice cream and free time.

Location: Meet at the Silvermine Trailhead at 9:30.

Directions: Arrive in Hot Springs on 25/70. Turn right on River Rd. before you cross the bridge. Turn Left on Silvermine Road; it's not signed but turn left at the yellow house to put the river on your right. Travel under the 25/70 bridge and follow the road as it curves to the left at a well-signed junction for the Appalachian Trail. The trailhead is just ahead.

Approximate Drive Time: It will take about 45 minutes from Asheville and 20 minutes from Marshall.

Special Instructions

Please wear sturdy close-toed shoes or boots, layered clothes appropriate for the weather. It's not too early for ticks this year, so you may want to wear long pants.

Please Bring: sunscreen, bug spray, water in water bottles, snacks, a picnic lunch (if you plan to stay), and a good attitude . or one subject to change.

Other: If you're joining us for a picnic lunch in town and free time in the creek, please bring your lunch, money for ice cream from Two Scoops, and a change of clothes for your children after they've explored the creek.

The forecast is unseasonably warm for this time of year so we should have a really nice hike. Temperatures will likely start in the low 60s and will rise to the mid-70s by mid-day. In the event that there is a sudden change in weather (after all, we are in Western North Carolina), please know this is a rain or shine event . bring your rain jacket and come anyway!

Call or e-mail with questions: Leanna Joyner (828) 555-1212, leanna@leannajoyner.com

Template: Family Hike and Activity Information Sheet

We are glad you are joining us for *(name of the event)*! This has all the information you need. If you have any questions at all, please call or email me.

Please use the information provided here to plan for your participation. If you have questions, please contact us at the phone number or e-mail address below.

Even before the day of the event, organizers have the opportunity to facilitate participant preparation by sending a reminder e-mail or making a quick outreach phone call. It's a good chance to update participants on weather forecasts, what to wear, things they need to bring with them, or updates to the schedule. This will probably prompt a bit more discussion at home before the event and will help solidify the motivation and interest of all the individual participants. Let them know to contact the organizer if they have any questions or need to cancel their participation

Program Name: _____

(Insert Description and special features, points of interest, activities)

Program Description _____

(Date) (Start and end times) _____

Location: _____

Directions: _____

Approximate Drive Time: _____

Special Instructions _____

Please Wear: _____

Please Bring: _____

Other: (optional items) _____

Weather Forecast: _____

(Insert alternate plans in the event of rain, if needed, and let them know when they will receive notification)

Contact Name: _____

Contact Number: _____

Contact E-mail: _____

Family Volunteer Project Information Sheet

We are glad you are joining us for this event! Please use the information provided here to plan for your participation. If you have questions, please contact us at the phone number or e-mail address below.

Program Name: _____

Program Activities: _____

Program Date(s): _____

Program Time: _____

Location: _____

Directions: _____

Special Instructions: _____

Please Wear: _____

Please Bring: _____

Other: _____

Rain Plans: _____

Contact Name: _____

Contact Number: _____

Contact E-mail: _____

Afterwards – Reflection and Evaluation

Reflection is among one of the most important elements of the event because it allows participants to process the experience. They may reveal challenges they faced or general suggestions that will help organizers coordinate better events in the future. See

Feedback provided through the evaluations should be reviewed and taken into consideration when planning future programs.

Suggestions for Reflection

What did you learn about the Trail and its protection?

What did you see and hear?

How did you feel?

Did you learn something new about another family member?

What parts of the experience were the most challenging?

What did this experience mean to you?

What was the best part of today?

What will you remember about the work you did?

What made you proud about this experience?

What can be done to further the work that you did?

What did you learn that you didn't know before?

Family Event Evaluation Form

Name of the activity:

Name of Volunteer(s):

Date of volunteer activity:

Project Leader:

Briefly describe what your family did in their volunteer assignment:

How did you find out about this activity?

What interested you in this activity?

What benefits have you received from volunteering with family?

Overall, was it worth your time spent as a volunteer?

Would you and your family volunteer for us again?

Would you recommend this volunteer opportunity to a friend?

Use the rating scale below to indicate your level of satisfaction with these event criteria.

Criteria	4 Very Satisfied	3 Satisfied	2 Not Satisfied	1 Disappointed	N/A
Welcome and Orientation					
Training					
Understanding of why you were doing the tasks you were doing					
Work Site					
Bathrooms, Outhouse					
Opportunity to meet other volunteers					
Use of your time					
Leadership techniques					

Are there any things you'll do better next time you volunteer?

What can we do to improve this type of volunteer activity?

Family Hiking and Outdoor Activity Programs

Busy parents appreciate being able to just show up at an event when someone else has done all the planning. Appalachian Trail clubs, already experienced at leading hikes and knowledgeable about the A.T. and other local trails, are in a great position to engage families as hikers. Hikes and activities need to be tailored to suit their needs. Families seek opportunities that are:

- Fun and active
- Fit their busy schedules
- Capture the interest of both parents and children
- Meet their current abilities
- Help them develop new skills
- Give them the opportunity to interact with other families in a setting where kids can be kids.

"My favorite experience is just taking something you would normally do inside and do it outside. On a recent hike on the A.T. we had a spring tea party. We hiked in water, brought tea bags, (everyone brought their own insulated mug), and scones." Chip and Ashley Donahue, Kids in the Valley Adventuring

"We [offer hikes] in October and go through April. There's a lower risk for poison ivy in the winter. There tend to be fewer [other] people on the trail. The leaves have fallen. There's less humidity, and it's clearer so there's a farther sight distance. Starting [any] earlier (in the year) you run into ticks and overgrowth of poison ivy." David Bice, Blue Skies Ministry, St. John's Episcopal Church and Natural Bridge Appalachian Trail Club

Planning Guidelines for Family Hikes and Activities

Hiking or spending time outdoors with families requires a different approach. Club leaders need to plan a hike or project that is safe but also fun. Leaders need to keep an eye on participants to make sure that they are having a positive experience and be willing to adapt as needed. Many ideas and suggestions from hike leaders and family hike resources.^{xxvi}

"In our research, the most repeated theme was to be prepared for the worst and hope for the best. Have plenty of water and snacks when hiking with youth of all ages, and be prepared to slow your average pace and shorten your average distance. Be open to a change of plans and opportunities to play more where you are. Bring a smile and a sense of wonder." Jan Onan and Kate Fisher^{xxvii}

Choosing a route or a site for an activity

When you are planning a hike for families, you need to factor in the age and experience of your hikers, as well as the different goals and expectations of family hikers.

- Consider a maximum of 3 or 4 miles for an all-ages hike
- Be realistic about the time it will take you to hike so that you can communicate a time commitment to participants before the hike.
- Get as far from civilization as possible without being too remote.

- Choose a hike with special features or points of interest might appeal to families. Favorites among youth are rocks to scramble, water to play in, great picnic spots, hollow trees to stand in, caves, great views, and places to fly kites.
- Hikes tend to be successful when they are close to home and families don't have to drive more than 45 minutes to reach the trailhead.
- Consider having two leaders on hand. This may offer the option to modify the hike (easy version, harder version) along the way.
- Acknowledge the intergenerational aspect of family hikes and be prepared to handle participants ranging in age from 5 to 85.

Guidance for families before the hike

Novice hikers won't know what to expect on their first hike, or how to prepare for themselves and their children. You can help them prepare by screening them before the hike . asking them about their experience, skills and history . or by encouraging them to contact you and other hike leaders with questions.

FOOD & WATER

Encourage families to bring water and snacks, particularly things they can stow in their pockets and nibble while walking. Snacking will provide more energy than a few big meals. Energy bars or a mix of dried fruit, nuts, and chocolate bits work well. Crackers and cheese, tuna and chicken in foil packets, pita bread or bagels, and peanut butter are popular lunch options. Presuming that the family hikes will be short one day hikes, however, let families know that they can pack whatever foods they like best, even fruits and vegetables.

For short hikes, families should expect to bring a supply of water from home or from other treated domestic sources. The amount of water needed depends upon length and difficulty of the hike, and the temperature. ATC recommends that adults bring at least one quart of water in cool weather and two to three quarts in hot weather. Remind families, particularly parents of small children, that even water sources may look, smell, and taste good it can still be contaminated by microorganisms, and they shouldn't drink untreated water.

- Consider bringing along extra water and snacks, particularly if the families attending are novice hikers or you're not sure who will show up.
- Children are especially susceptible to sun exposure and exhaustion; make frequent stops to rest and refuel.
- As people gather up at the trailhead, let them know it's okay to snack before setting off. Starting out fueled will help them hit the trail strong.

For more information on food and water visit:

<http://www.appalachiantrail.org/hiking/hiking-basics/food-water>

CLOTHING AND GEAR

What you need to carry depends on how far you're going, where, and when. Novice hikers do not need to make a huge investment in gear before going on their first hike. Recommendations from ATC for hikers:

Footwear

Hiking boots are optional for day-hikes, particularly when the terrain is not that rough. Many hikers wear trail runners or lightweight boots. The *most important thing is that shoes or boots fit*

well and are well broken-in before you hit the Trail—nothing ends a hike quicker than blistered feet!

Clothing

- Ask families to bring clothing to protect themselves from cold and rain, even for hikes scheduled in midsummer and especially at higher elevations.
- Avoid cotton clothes, particularly in chilly, rainy weather, -wet cotton can be worse than nothing and can contribute to hypothermia. Instead, choose synthetic fabrics such as polypropylene and various acrylic blends as well as wool or silk which will help protect you against the dangers of hypothermia.
- Layer your clothes- a polypro+shirt, synthetic fleece, and a coated nylon or breathable+ waterproof outer shell will keep you both warmer and drier than a single heavy overcoat in cold, damp weather.
- Encourage children to wear bright colors . as it will be easier to keep track of them
Bring a hat to protect you from the sun and rain

If families are not sure what to bring with them. Reassure them that packing for a day-hike is relatively simple.

- A map and compass (learn to use them first!)
- Water (at least 1 quart, and 2. 3 on longer hikes in hot weather)
- Warm clothing, rain gear, and a hat
- Food (including extra high-energy snacks)
- A trowel for burying human waste and toilet paper
- A first-aid kit with blister treatments
- A whistle (three blasts is the international signal for help) . teach children that whistles are not toys.
- A Garbage bag to carry out trash
- Sunglasses and sunscreen- especially when leaf cover is gone
- A first-aid kit . parents must be responsible for
- A Blaze-orange vest or hat during hunting season

Hike leaders should also bring a first aid kit adapted for youth and first-time hikers. Add children's sunscreen, children's Tylenol, Band-Aids, tweezers, hand sanitizer, blister treatment.

SANITATION

Don't expect flush toilets on the A.T.! Most A.T. shelters have privies, but often you will need to "go in the woods." Proper disposal of human (and pet) waste is not only a courtesy to other hikers, but is a vital Leave No Trace practice for maintaining healthy water supplies in the backcountry and an enjoyable hiking experience for others. No one should venture onto the A.T. without a trowel or wide tent stake, used for digging a 6"-8" deep "cathole" to bury waste. Bury feces at least two hundred feet or eighty paces away from water, trails, or shelters. Use a stick to mix dirt with your waste, which hastens decomposition and discourages animals from digging it up. Used toilet paper should either be buried in your cathole or carried out in a sealed plastic bag. Hygiene products such as sanitary napkins should always be carried out.

Orientation before the Hike

Before the hike, provide an orientation (pps) that covers roles and responsibilities of leaders and hikers, talk about safety and describe the route . and, don't forget the fun!.

- Set ground rules that includes who is the leader and who is the sweep.
- Rotate which youth leads+with the leader

- Discuss what will happen in case of an emergency
- Teach kids not to use their whistle as toys, but how they should use them in the event that they are lost.
- Cover Leave No Trace principles with hikers. More information is here:
<http://www.appalachiantrail.org/hiking/hiking-basics/leave-no-trace-practices>

Remember to stay flexible . it is more important that families have a good experience than that they complete the planned route. For novice hikers, don't wear them out on their first time. Make them feel like they can do it.

- It's the journey, not the destination. Be willing to modify the hike. If you planned a 4 mile hike that was an out-and-back and the pace of toddlers means you are only going to walk half the distance, do so without making it feel like a concession. Adjust the hike to the comfort and enjoyment of all participants.
- Stop and explore the natural world along the way . animal tracks, frogs, turtles, mushrooms, ants, flowers, wild raspberries, or evidence of beavers. Compare different ecosystems you pass through . a meadow, deciduous forest, or a pond.
- Other teachable moments can be talking about trail construction, blazes, and reading the map. Tell them about your club and the work that you do.
- Don't forget to take pictures. If you e-mail them back to participants at the end of the hike, they can have a record/memory of the hike to keep track of where they've been.
- Bring nature guides to use along the way.
- Just because it's raining or snowing doesn't mean it won't be fun for families.

"Since January 2008 we've met just about every month. Our first event had four inches of snow on the ground. We thought we would stay in and read a story at the local nature center. A little girl came up to me and said, 'Excuse me mister, when are we going to go outside?' After that we decided whatever the weather we'll go outside – rain, shine, or snow. I have seen so many wonderful things through families when it's all rainy, and parents are grumpy. We might be grumpy, but the world transforms and kids can really enjoy that. Remember that it's a family thing." Chip and Ashley Donahue, Kids in the Valley Adventuring

Tips for Hiking with Toddlers

- The pace may really slow significantly as they explore everything; go at a speed that is comfortable to everybody.
- Aim for loop hikes or out-and-back hikes rather than shuttles that are difficult, or impossible, for juggling car seats
- Allow a balance of time in the stroller or baby-backpack and time spent walking/exploring.
- Designate whether hikes for toddlers are jogging stroller friendly, jogging stroller passable (with some obstacles), or not jogging-stroller passable (that will require kid-carrying backpacks or for children to walk).
- If you have a mix of young children and older children, set the pace for the group for the slowest hikers by stopping older children frequently for activities and free time.
- Take two or three steps and interpret. Two or three steps, then interpret. It's about using all the senses.+Pat McKinney

Hip-Pocket Activities for Connecting People with the Natural World

These activities were gathered and refined by Pat Straughan and Delia Clark for Shelburne Farms. They reflect the work of many of our colleagues over the years.

Whether your trail leads to a stream, wetland, field, or forest, or even to a local garden or park, you will find a whole new world to explore with your senses, even if you think you already know the place well! Slow down, open your eyes and ears, and discover some new ways to know a place near you.

The following activities can be done any time, any place, and in any order. Choose a few favorites and keep the simple low-cost supplies ready in your pack for an opportune moment. Most of the activities will take about five to ten minutes, but a few require extra time, as noted. They are a wonderful way to begin a hike, to keep a group together, to spice up a destination, or to occupy part of the group while the other part catches up or engages in a different activity. Adults will enjoy them as much as children.

Sharp Eyes:

Materials: none.

Stand opposite your partner. Take a really close look at what each of you is wearing. Be sure not to miss any details. Look so closely that if anything were to change you would notice it! Then, turn away from each other and each change ONE thing about your dress (roll up a cuff, move a ring, undo a shoelace, etc). Now, turn back, and your partner has to find out what has changed. If they can't - give them a clue (It's above the waist, etc). When you feel your detective skills are honed, set off to explore the natural world.

A Fistful of Sounds:

Materials: none

Gather the group in a circle. Explain that you will all be silent for a minute and you will each be keeping track of all the different sounds you hear on your fingers. Have everyone hold up both hands and close their eyes. Announce when a minute starts and ends. Have everyone open their eyes with their hands still in the air and look around at everyone else's fingers. Ask people to name some of the different sounds they heard.

Color Search:

Materials: small color paint chips from hardware store, either a great variety of colors OR many different shades of green or brown. OR small cards colored with crayons.

Ask your group to look around: what colors do they see most of around them? Expect brown and green to predominate. Challenge them to look more closely for other colors by handing out color chips. Use a variety of unusual colors and challenge them to find the closest match they can by looking under things, up, down, up close. They should not pick living things, but rather just share it with another person. You should circulate to inspect everyone's discoveries. Some will pick up bits of bark etc, so you might gather everyone in a circle to see these. Using a variety of bright colors will bring surprising finds in the habitat, but using many shades of green, for example, will highlight small differences between grasses, leaves and mosses. After the activity, discuss their findings. Were they surprised by the colors they found or the number of variations of a single color?

Shape search:

Materials: small pieces of card cut into squares, circles, oblongs and "squiggles" etc.

Take a new look at this place by trying to see it as a collection of shapes. Take one card at a time and try to find the shape in the plants, buildings, water or animal tracks in your place.

Texture Match or Wake up Fingers!:

Materials: brown bags, each containing a household object with a distinctive texture – sandpaper, crumpled aluminum foil, plastic bags, packing bubbles, etc.

To get a feel for your place, lay the bags along a trail or in a circle and challenge folks to use their fingers ONLY to investigate the texture in the bag WITHOUT LOOKING at the contents. Ask them to give a good word to describe the feel of the object. They can then take their fingers and touch things in the habitat until they find the best match. Share. Compare several textures.

Nice-Smell Social or The Whiffing Party:

Materials: tiny tasting cup or other “sundae” container for each person.

Take a deep breath in your habitat. Can you detect any special aroma in this place?

What if you were to take a closer smell around you. Challenge each member of the group to think of this as an ice cream social, but instead of composing a sundae out of their favorite ice cream and toppings, they will create a sundae of the best smells they can find in the place. When sundaes are complete, have a social!! Take a relaxing tour around all the members of the groups and find out what their aromatic ingredients are.

Mirror magic:

Materials: a hand mirror for each participant.

Take a mirror out to your special place. Sit down and look at your surroundings reflected in your mirror. They will be upside down! Talk about a fresh look! Can you see anything about the trees, for example, that you had not noticed before? Pick an object of interest, such as a branch on a tree, and try to describe where it is to a friend looking through their own mirror. See if you can give good enough spatial directions so that they can find it.

Mystery Collection:

Materials: Egg cartons with two words written on bottom (one word on left, one on right). One carton per pair or small group.

Ask the pair or group to look at their words written on the bottom of the egg carton. Keep the words secret from other groups!! The challenge is to fill 6 spaces in the carton with items that fit one descriptive word, and fill the other half of the carton with items fitting the other word. When the collection is as good as it can be, take it to another group and challenge them to figure out what the hidden words might be! Or you can gather all the groups in a circle and the group can work together to guess the words on one carton after another. Sample words: round, square, curly, straight, prickly, tickly, white, black, green, brown, soft, hard, whole, holey, smooth, rough. (About 20 minutes, depending on group size)

Poesy poetry:

Materials: three trees/flowers/pigs/ecosystems...whatever you are studying; three envelopes each containing: several small pieces of paper and one big one, and several pencils.

Let's just take trees as the example. Here's a wonderful way to take a closer look at the differences between, and essential characteristics of, three trees. Select the trees you will use by laying an envelope next to each one. (To make the challenge easier, choose three very different trees, such as a sapling, a mature tree, and a rotting stump!). Pile the pencils and small papers outside the envelope.

Each person in the group should visit each of the three trees, wandering around in any order, taking as long as they need. They should spend a little time contemplating the tree, choose a word or short phrase that they feel captures the spirit or feel of the tree, write it on a small paper and put it in the envelope. Their word or phrase should not say the name of the tree, such as White Pine, but rather capture its essence, such as King of the forest! Each person does this for each tree. When all are finished describing, gather the envelopes and bring the group together. Divide them into three groups and give each group an envelope. Challenge them to create a poem from the words inside the envelope.

Rules: They may NOT omit any words (if there are four words, they must include them all. They CAN add extra words if they wish, but just simple connecting words.

When the group has compiled their poem, they should copy it onto the larger piece of paper and figure out a way to do a dramatic theatrical reading of their poem for the other two groups. Which

poem described which tree? Congratulate the group on their marvelous descriptions and productive team work. (About 30-45 minutes)

Place poem:

Materials: one piece of paper and pencil.

With younger children, one can use a similar technique to capture the essence of a place . useful when we can't take this place back to the classroom with us to share!! Gather the group in a circle or on a log. Ask them to look around this place and think of one word that describes it for them. Silently! Walk down the line and have each person WHISPER their word to you as you record them on a paper. Simply read back the list with a %poetic+voice, and you have all created a wonderful poem that can transport any reader to this place.

Focus Rings

Materials: toilet paper tubes or tube shapes rolled from playing cards or squares of cardboard, one per person

Distribute the focus rings. Challenge each person to find something in the forest, meadow (or wherever you are) that they have never noticed before. Demonstrate walking right up to within an inch of a tree trunk, lying on the ground face down, looking straight up, etc to give them the idea of varying their perspective. Wander among the group, asking them to show you what they noticed. You can also pair them up at the start and have them show their partner what they found.

Silent Activity:

Materials: None, or a journal, or a piece of paper clipped to cardboard and pencil

Have each person find a quiet place to sit alone. Depending on the age, you might want to say that they need to be able to see you, or shouldn't go past that big tree, or whatever. Different ways you can have them use this time include:

- Simply sitting alone and quiet - a rare event for many - keep it fairly short.
- Have them create a sound map - try to develop a visual representation or key for different kinds of sounds and record their hearings on a paper, with themselves marked in the center as an X
- If age-appropriate, have them journal about a particular question, such as %What is one thing you can see here that fascinates you. What does it make you think of in your own life?+or %What would it be like if you were sitting here in the middle of winter (or summer if it is winter!)?

Make sure to share and debrief what they heard.

Jenny's Game:

Materials: one leaf/ pine cone/ acorn for each person – choose an appropriate item, but make them all similar – i.e. all maple leaves.

Gather in a circle. Give a leaf to each person. Ask them to take a couple minutes to get to know this leaf SO well that if they were to lose it they could recognize it again. Gather all leaves. Begin to pass the leaves, one at a time, to your right. Give the following instructions:

%It's YOUR leaf, hold onto it. If it's not, pass it on+. When all have been reunited, share some of the characteristics they used for identification. How did they feel when they found their friend again??!!

Andy Goldsworthy Sculptures:

Materials: If possible – a book of Andy Goldsworthy photographs to show the possibilities.

Divide into small groups and ask each group to create a sculpture from natural materials within the habitat, IN the habitat. They can be of any size, shape or complexity, but should not destroy living things. Share the sculptures with a gallery walk, allowing each group to describe and name their piece. Leave for others to enjoy if appropriate. As an added twist, say that each person should have one secret addition to the sculpture that none of their other group members know about.

Drawing Swap:

Materials: small clipboards and paper and pencils. Best done in forest or other natural area.

Have the group line up along a stretch of trail, or in a circle, facing out, and sit down. Ask each person to pick ONE detail of a tree, plant, geologic formation, etc that they find particularly interesting. They then draw that detail, not the whole scene. When they are satisfied that they have captured the distinctive quality, have them switch drawings with a friend, or collect them all and distribute them. The task is to try to find the detail that was drawn by the other person.

Belly Botany or Lie Down and Look:

Materials: hula hoop or circle of string; paper and pencil.

Lay down the hoop, or use a string to make a circle on the ground. Lie down and look. Draw a circle on your paper. Map everything you can find within the circle. Share. What did you find that surprised you? Take an ants-eye view of life in this small plot.

Animal Camouflage:

Materials: none. Best done in forest or shrubby area.

Find out what its like to be an animal in this place! You can start by being "it" in the middle. Close your eyes and count to "15" or "20". While your eyes are closed, the children should hide themselves. Open your eyes and call out the names of anyone that you can see without moving from your spot. The ones you can see are out and should come to the middle with you. Close your eyes and count again. The children should move in and camouflage themselves again. Repeat a couple of times. Whoever is the closest person to the "it" at the end of the last round and is still camouflaged is the winner! If you do not feel comfortable enough with your group to be "it" with your eyes closed, have one of the children be "it" and help them. Don't forget to tie this in with animals need to escape their predators, and to discuss which camouflage strategies work best.

Art Gallery:

Materials: cardboard frames, one for each pair.

Gather the group in your place. Have the participants take a partner. Give a cardboard frame to each pair. One person is the artist, the other will hold the frame for them. The artist can choose their favorite view within the place and position the frame exactly to capture that view. The frame holder must keep the work of art as it is, while other artists view the gallery and visit all the chosen works of art. Then switch roles within the partners. Discuss the natural elements which captured the notice of the artists.

Becoming One with This Place:

Materials: none. Works best in forest.

As you move through the place, leave one person at a time to be placed in the habitat. Lying down and being covered slightly with sticks, ferns, leaves etc from the ground. Having the weight of forest floor debris over your body helps to ground you in this place. All lie still and silent until everyone is in position. Allow the group an appropriate time to spend simply being part of this place. Use a gentle symbol to end the activity. Gather and silently leave the place. Share thoughts a little ways off.

Last picture:

Materials: none.

This activity is similar to Art Gallery, but simpler. Before you leave a place, have the group imagine that they have one picture left in their camera. The camera is made by framing pointer fingers and thumbs into a square and looking through it. Which shot would each person choose for their last picture. Share. Remember this place.

Other Activities

These other activities were researched and collected by Kate Fisher and Jan Onan. They reflect ideas found on websites devoted to hiking with children, including REI, Washington Trails Association, Hiking Along, among others.

Themed Hike Ideas

Backpacking: Each family brings a food item to share (specified by the leader). Hike into a campsite or A.T. shelter and share a meal either on an open flame or on camp stove. Treats like S'mores are a hit.

Wild Flower: Identify flowers along the way. Participants can draw pictures in a nature journal, photograph them, or use a guide to find out the flower names. Make a list of all the flowers you seen on the hike and review at the end. Tell stories of how plants got their names, or make up stories about the plants.

Photography: Each child brings a camera (or supply camera and send photos via email or disc). Photos can be shared on a website or emailed to each participant. Guide participants to discover what makes an interesting photograph. Consider perspective, light, color, or shapes.

Book Time! Read a children's book before a hike or during a hike. The book can be divided up and read at the beginning of the hike, during a break, and at the end. A list of books to consider reading on a hike are listed below.

Autumn Hikes: Leaf rubbing, tracing, stenciling and identification are possible ways to appreciate the fall scenery.

Winter Hikes: Look for animal tracks and guess what kind of animal left them. Walk through an evergreen forest, and bring a tarp to sit on, hot chocolate to drink, and voices to sing.

Summer Hikes: Playing in the water in creeks and streams, or swimming offer a fun hiking activity for young hikers. Picnics at waterfalls, identifying river critters, or rock flipping to discover who's living where it's cool are all summer hike activities. Blueberry or raspberry tasting can sweeten summer hikes for all ages. Summer also offers a good chance to learn about native and non-native, invasive plants.

Maps Hike: Have kids follow along on a map to see if they can tell where to go.

Go on a short hike and after see if kids can draw a map of what they walked including features they have seen; then compare to a real map. Learn about trail markers and cairns and other ways to identify sense of place. Introduce compass skills.

Rocking Out: Hikes that have an opportunity for kids to play on and climb boulders are a big hit. Identify rocks or learn about the creation of rocks along the way. Children may be challenged to see how many different kinds of rocks they can collect in a given period of time. Use the opportunity to play Jeopardy with a small rock.

Ideas to Distract and Entertain

ABCs: start at the beginning of the alphabet and identify something on trail that begins with A and work your way through the alphabet. An alternative way to play this game is to name a letter and then identify all the things you see that start with that letter.

The Never-Ending Story: One person begins to tell a story then passes it along to another person to continue the plot.

Twenty Questions: Think of a noun (person, place, or thing). Then other hikers ask yes or no questions to figure out what the noun is. The hiker who guesses correctly gets to pick the next noun.

Animals: First person names an animal, and the last letter of that animal's name must be used by the next person as the first letter of another kind of animal. Animals can not be duplicated. This rotates through the group until a hiker cannot think of something or they repeat something that has already been said, then that person is out. (e.g. turtle+elephant+tiger+rabbit) This game can also be played with other categories or topics.

Sing: Singing songs that everyone knows can be a great way to pass time. Make it creative by seeing how quietly, or loudly, they can sing different parts of songs.

Play Telephone: When the leader hears a critter or sees something, say to the next person %
hear a whippoorwill to our right+Each person passes it along. Later, the leader stops and asks
the last person what they heard.

Riddles, Word Games, and Minute Mysteries: Search the internet before you leave on your hike
and bring a few with you on each hike.

On Trail Games

Try to see how many animals you can find on the hike.

Try to find a twig in the shape of a certain letter.

Find a leaf with (what qualitiesō) . not three leaves

Books to enjoy on a trail

Depending on the age range of participants, reading a book outside may be a suitable activity.

Scoot! Cathryn Falwell

The Very Hungry Caterpillar, Eric Carle

The Very Quiet Cricket, Eric Carle

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do You See, Eric Carle

Owl Moon, Jane Yolen

The Night Tree, Eve Bunting

The Lorax by Dr. Seuss

Structured Activities and Unstructured Play Time

Chip and Ashley Donahue who have a large Family Nature Club in Roanoke Valley say one of
the biggest things they have learned in the process of leading trips is that its important to have
unstructured time, too.

*“For families who are so stretched out it’s a good model not having activities – just
spending time with family. We remind families ‘this is your time. I got you hear now
interact with your child. We’re expecting you to stay and make a memory with your kid.’
There’s something magical that happens when families are stuck in that situation
together. It’s not another sports activity; it’s a chance to talk together, or turn over rocks
together.”* Chip and Ashley Donahue, KIVA

Kyrina Johnston with 4-H Club family programs takes a different approach, and in some cases
asks parents to interact less with their kids and to simply observe so that kids can explore the
natural world with their peers. She says that by parents just being there it gives kids the
confidence to explore within the boundaries drawn by the leader.

*“I do think having structure and having rules is very important when you start. We start
structured then go unstructured from there.”* Kyrina Johnston, 4-H Club, Campbell
County, Virginia.^{xxviii}

Program Name: _____

Location: _____

Assistant Leader(s) (optional): _____

- ☐ Estimated travel time to destination: _____
- ☐ Convenient meeting location
- ☐ Adequate parking for group
- ☐ Family-friendly hike (<4 miles) (loop or out/back)
- ☐ Need for permission assessed due to group size.
- ☐ Are there bathrooms or outhouse?
- ☐ Kids can run, play, explore and be loud

Technical (lots of rocks and roots) Paved

Steep Rolling Flat

5 4 3 2 1

☐ Jogging stroller friendly ☐ jogging stroller passable ☐ not-passable

Will participants be required to register beforehand? _____

If yes, deadline for registration: _____

If this is event that requires registration, will there be a way to incorporate families who show up unannounced? _____

What type of supervision will you provide for this event? (select one)

- ☐ Parents supervise children
- ☐ Family Event Leader supervise parents who supervise children
- ☐ Family Event Leader supervises both parents and children
- ☐ Other:

Will families be allowed to “turn back” early?

Is this an all-weather activity?

In the event of inclement weather the program is: (select one):

- ☐ postponed ☐ cancelled ☐ taken indoors
-

How and when will participants be notified in the event of a change of plans?

Complete the **Activity and Precaution Assessment** and the **Emergency Planning Worksheet** for this event and include as part of this event's material.

Consider the season and the average temperatures, and **use the list provided to select the items participants need to wear, bring or may want.**

Must Wear	Must bring	Might want	Item
			Sturdy, close-toed shoes or boots
			Layered clothes, appropriate for weather
			Daypack (children's school backpack is fine)
			Long pants
			Rain jacket
			Snacks, picnic lunch
			Water in water bottles
			Sunscreen
			Hat
			Bug Repellent
			Sun glasses
			Change of clothes (to leave in the car)
			Pad and pencil
			Binoculars
			Field Guide
			Whistle
			First-aid kit, with band aids
			Kite
			Magnifying glass
			Flash light
			Hand sanitizer
			Gloves
			Warm Hat
			Gaiters (for snow)
			Other:
			Other:

Day of the Event Checklist for Leaders

Event Organizer's Day-of Checklist

- ☐ Personal hiking equipment (pack, water, snacks, hiking stick, jacket)
- ☐ Extra water
- ☐ Extra snacks (optional)
- ☐ Leader's First-aid kit
- ☐ Pens and pencils for any last minute paperwork
- ☐ Forms, if needed
- ☐ Any equipment for the day's activity
- ☐ Attendee list, if needed

Orientation & Welcome Checklist

Orientation may include any or all of these items. Given the specific hike and activity you have planned, *select the appropriate items* to include in your orientation:

- ☐ Identify yourself as the hike leader
- ☐ Welcome families . . adults and children as they arrive
- ☐ Provide an introduction of the club,
- ☐ An introduction to the Appalachian Trail and its history,
- ☐ What to expect from the hike or activity.
- ☐ Parents responsibility to supervise their children, if required
- ☐ How the leader plans to keep the group together
- ☐ Communication strategies to use when outside
- ☐ Specific safety instructions, related to the safety and precaution assessment
- ☐ When they will finish the hike (return)
- ☐ Where to find the outhouse or restroom, if one is available
- ☐ Relevant Leave No Trace information for this hike

Event Planning Timeline and Task List For Hikes and Outdoor Activities

At Outset

To Do	Person/Team Responsible	Action Needed/ Resources Needed	Due Date	Done
Establish planning committee				<input type="checkbox"/>
Reserve venue, if needed				<input type="checkbox"/>
Recruit partners, if desired				<input type="checkbox"/>
Complete Hiking & Activity Planning Checklist and worksheet.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Complete Activity Safety & Precaution Assessment and Emergency Planning Worksheet				<input type="checkbox"/>

6-8 weeks before event

To Do	Person/Team Responsible	Action Needed/ Resources Needed	Due Date	Done
Acquire permission if needed for group of 10 or more.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Update or develop media list of reporters likely to cover the event. Be sure to have correct contact information.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Begin to promote Event with fliers				<input type="checkbox"/>
Announce event through club newsletter and partnersqnews and websites				<input type="checkbox"/>
Use the Hike & Activity Info Sheet as a guide to post event details to community calendars				<input type="checkbox"/>
Write and send out PSAs				<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify and source needed tools, materials, supplies, snacks				<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify an alternative activity or protocol for establishing a rain date in the event of rain.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify and secure any required technical expertise.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify qualified volunteer supervisors				<input type="checkbox"/>

4-6 weeks before event

To Do	Person/Team Responsible	Action Needed/ Resources Needed	Due Date	Done
Plan and practice leading activities				<input type="checkbox"/>
Recruit or confirm volunteers to help manage the event, sweep, photographer, audiovisual techs, etc.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Refresh promotion with fliers				<input type="checkbox"/>

2 weeks before event

To Do	Person/Team Responsible	Action Needed/ Resources Needed	Due Date	Done
Hike walk through or site visit				<input type="checkbox"/>
Call or email families to ensure participation, answer questions, promote discussion about the activity at home, and to remind them of what to bring.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Final push for recruitment				<input type="checkbox"/>
Prepare news release				<input type="checkbox"/>
Prepare the orientation, training speech, and demonstrations in advance of the event.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Confirm venue, if necessary				<input type="checkbox"/>

1 week before event

To Do	Person/Team Responsible	Action Needed/ Resources Needed	Due Date	Done
Call or e-mail families to ensure participation, answer questions, promote discussion about the activity at home, and to remind them of what to bring and where to meet.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure club volunteers assisting with event clearly understand their roles. Circulate list of responsibilities.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Follow up with reporters.				<input type="checkbox"/>

Collect release forms				<input type="checkbox"/>
Replenish First-Aid kit				<input type="checkbox"/>

1-2 days before event

To Do	Person/Team Responsible	Action Needed/ Resources Needed	Due Date	Done
Make nametags, if needed.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Respond to final inquiries.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Pack pens, pencils , evaluation forms, membership applications, water, first-aid kit.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Pack any necessary items for activities or exercises will do with kids.				<input type="checkbox"/>

After the event

To Do	Person/Team Responsible	Action Needed/ Resources Needed	Due Date	Done
Write an article about the event for your organization's newsletter/web site, and encourage any partners to do the same.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Follow up with members of the media by sending a press release that provides an overview of the outcomes of the event.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Review notes from period of reflection and the evaluation forms as a resource for planning future activities.				<input type="checkbox"/>

Case Studies of A.T. Clubs with Family Programs

AMC-CT

Appalachian Mountain Club . Connecticut Chapter has been running family hikes for a couple of years. These hikes are organized by a coordinator and assistant coordinator and are led by existing chapter hike leaders. Family hikes are generally fewer than four miles. The club has had some success in partnering with the Connecticut Forest and Park Association and American Hiking Society's National Trails Day. Gene Grayson with the club recommends having two hike leaders and a hike that lends itself to be modified as easier and harder so that participants can select their difficulty level when the opportunity presents itself. Gene says he talks about what he knows . trail maintenance, water bars, blazes, and trees, but finds that people are just happy to be out there.

PATC/Jennifer Chambers, Hiking Along, LLC

About 10 years ago Jennifer Chambers along with another friend from PATC started leading hikes with their children who were in preschool. These weekly hikes were on weekday mornings, two to three miles in length, and classified by their suitability for jogging strollers. Registration was not required by families joining the hikes, and about half the parents who came out to hike in a seven-year stretch had never hiked before. In addition to weekday morning hikes for families with preschoolers, Sunday afternoon hikes between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. have had good participation, especially for families with older youth.

Through her experience leading family hikes for PATC as well as through her business Hiking Along, LLC, Jennifer recommends these tips for success:

- Provide clear expectations . hike description, terrain information, activities on the hike, instructions for paperwork, information on weather, and cell phone numbers for emergencies.
- Set clear ground rules along with the introduction. She defines herself as the leader and that no one may walk ahead. She designates a sweep and communicates to the kids that no one can fall behind the ~~%aboose.~~+Ground rules also include safety rule of ~~%only do~~ what is comfortable for you without the help of a parent.+
- Manage different age groups on a hike by stopping the older youth frequently for activities and free time so that the younger kids can catch up.

Susquehanna Appalachian Trail Club

Susquehanna A.T. Club offers a few family hikes every quarter. These hikes can be led by anyone in the club but only two families have led family hikes to date. Organizers seek out-and-back or loop hikes with interesting features like water and large rocks; hikes have not been longer than three miles. Hikes offer the flexibility for families with younger kids so that they may turn back before the planned distance was reached. The turnout for these events have been mixed. There is no age requirement for participation but SATC requests a responsible adult for each child. Hikers meet at the trailhead since car seats make carpooling difficult.

Tidewater Appalachian Trail Club

Tidewater Appalachian Trail Club formed a Youth Working Group under its Outreach Committee in an effort to get more young people involved in the club. Their goal was to attract more families with children, and young adults in their 20s and 30s. The club has successfully recruited new participants for its programming through Meetup.com and Facebook.com. The committee's focus is to encourage present members to plan family activities. Especially helpful are introductory opportunities for inexperienced hikers and campers, allowing them gain knowledge and confidence through these activities. TATC places an emphasis on being welcoming. They provide complete hike descriptions, highlight whether kids are welcome and include personal contact information for the event coordinator in case there are questions.

A.T. Family Volunteer Program Work Trips & Maintenance Projects

Families as Volunteers

Families seek opportunities that:

- fit their busy schedules
- interest both parents and children
- apply their current talents and ability
- help them develop new skills
- work with fun and inviting organizations

When families decide to volunteer to help the Appalachian Trail it is because they have evaluated the kinds of family volunteer opportunities available and have selected the A.T. because it is something they believe in. Families often begin by committing to a one-time volunteer activity. This gives participants a chance to test the waters.^{xxxix} If they have a good experience, they do come back for more.

By agreeing to just one opportunity at a time family volunteers may commit at a frequency that is right for them, and thereby avoid setting unrealistic expectations for themselves or the organization. First-time volunteer opportunities also give clubs the chance to evaluate the participating family.

Agencies who use family volunteers regularly report that long-term commitments come from positive first impressions. A successful engagement works for the club and for the family.

"I know anecdotally that [families] are some of our best returners. Families have a really good time; it becomes a really good event for them. I've seen a lot of those families come back on different projects. The reason is that it can be a family trip (especially if it's an over night trip). On almost all of our trips we provide food and some entertainment. We try to create an environment where it can serve as a good way to bring that family together, give back, and take a trip to another part of Colorado." Sam Wilson, Volunteers Outdoor Colorado^{xxx}

When deciding to volunteer as a family, families evaluate the child's interests and ability, the parent's interest and ability, the location, frequency, duration of the activity, and the attitude of the organizing club.^{xxxi} They also determine if it seems safe, fun, well-supervised, and worthwhile.

"We look for discrete projects that help a younger person get a sense of fulfillment by actually doing something. So they get the benefit of how it feels to say 'I built that. I did that.' Rather than just having them scratch here, scratch there. [The trick is to find] discrete enough tasks they can walk away with sense of fulfillment and completion of the portion of the trail so they can achieve some level of success." Teresa Martinez, Continental Divide Trail Alliance

Be realistic about program timeframes. If it is a daylong event for families with older children, try building flexibility into your program so that if families must slip out after lunch they can do so without difficulty. If participants plan to leave early be sure to debrief with them either through a reflection over lunch or, at a minimum, through an evaluation form that is completed and returned before they leave.

Screen the Work Project for Family Readiness

To determine if a work trip is family-friendly use these considerations:^{xxxii}

- Access. This includes the proximity to the car, whether the work to accomplish is front country or backcountry, and its distance to the nearest hospital.
- Work requirements. This includes an assessment of the tasks that need to be done for the project to be completed. Heavy-duty construction and rock work would not lend itself to a family opportunity, but digging sidehill may be appropriate if the other considerations are favorable for families.
- Environment. This includes where the activity will take place to determine if the ecosystem poses dangers such as threat of lightening, lack of water, high altitude, etc.

It's About the Work, But It's Not About the Work

Organizations that run successful family programs do so by making all the volunteers feel important, valued, and part of something bigger. If the focus is primarily on getting a certain amount of sidehill dug or pulling a certain quantity of exotic-invasive plants the tone of event shifts away from fun and bonding time among volunteers to a rush to get the job done. Leaders should focus on ~~%~~planting the seed+of volunteerism among new family volunteers rather than solely focusing on maintenance results.

"It's as much getting to know the other people as much as it is getting the work done. Establish a rapport within the group to create the energy to get the work done. That might mean stopping to play a game, or just stopping for a snack break and engaging with them in a way that makes it feel like it's not just about the work." Sam Wilson, Volunteers Outdoor Colorado

This also follows the logic that new volunteers should not be too fatigued on their first time out. By providing an experience that is within their ~~%~~grasp,+they will enjoy the activity, appreciate seeing what they have accomplished, and return if it makes them feel good. One way to provided structured down time would be to invite guest speakers to present on interesting topics . presentations on raptors and reptiles are always a hit with youth.

Familycares.org places emphasis on creating a ~~%~~mood+of enjoyment and fun for the event since that can be as memorable for young participants as the labor/activity itself. This means it should be a welcoming environment where kids can be kids, and where kids have an important role, whose contributions and opinions are valued and respected.^{xxxiii}

No matter what amount of work is planned or accomplished, be sure that the volunteersqimpact is visible. As an example, they should be able to look back where they came from to see the difference where they have cut back spring growth; this may mean coordinating with section maintainers to ensure they do not undertake spring cleaning before family volunteers get a chance to ~~%~~share+the section. Another idea for demonstrating the accomplishments of volunteers is to take before and after pictures.^{xxxiv}

Project Leadership

Having the right work leader goes hand-in-hand with it not necessarily being all about the work. Leaders must focus on the quality of the experience rather than the quantity of work accomplished.

"There are nuances of how to talk to a family. Know what their interest is as a family. Balance (in the work) not dummying it down too much, but it should be hard enough and substantive enough that they feel like they're making a difference – but not thoroughly wearing them out. If a family comes out and the work is too hard for their kids, and the kids get tired and difficult, then parents and kids might not want to come back." Sam Wilson, Volunteers Outdoor Colorado

"Be prepared for a bailout that doesn't feel like a bailout. If a half-mile is good enough even though you planned for a mile and a half, and everyone feels good about what's

been done, then that's okay. You make a decision to make people feel like they've done the work; at the same time they're learning they can make a difference." Teresa Martinez, Continental Divide Trail Alliance

A.T. volunteers typically furnish their own lunches and snacks when on maintenance work trips, and this approach works well for dietary restrictions and allergies. But, organizers may benefit from bringing additional snacks and water to enhance the volunteer experience and add extra fuel for under-prepared or very hungry family volunteers. Alternately, providing lunch provides a way to say thanks for your work+if the club has the resources or ability to find sponsorship for this kind of recognition.

Training and Supervision

Introduce tools, their purpose, proper care, handling, and transportation to the worksite during a tailgate safety meeting. Trip leaders may elect to introduce the safety gear during the tailgate safety meeting and distribute it at that time. Reminders on safety gear for certain tasks should be reviewed at the worksite during the training session.

Specific training on tasks will be handled at the worksite. Training can be handled in one of several ways:

- Train parents and children side-by-side using language easily understood by both.
- Train in two groups . parents and children . so that parents can be briefed on their roles and children on theirs.
- Train by task. Participants are only trained on the task they are asked to perform. If a rotation of tasks occurs during the day training is provided to volunteers assuming new roles.

During training always explain why this work is being done so they understand its purpose. If there is an order to how the work must be done, clearly lay out the steps. Reinforce to parents and children that it is always okay to ask questions or ask for help. Authorize everyone to speak up if he or she sees something that is unsafe.

There are two models that can be used for supervision. Event organizers can supervise adults who supervise youth, or event leaders can supervise both the adults and the youth while they work together or independently.

Clearly communicate who is accountable for supervision and giving directions . volunteer leaders, staff, or parents. This will eliminate strain of defining who provides guidance to children as the activity progresses.

The leader must be able to communicate to the parent if behavior of children needs to be addressed. If a child's behavior is more than the parents can handle and it is a safety concern then leaders must be prepared to intervene.

"It's set by the crew leader what is safe and not safe. Parents may want to say 'I don't want my kid using that tool,' and that's fine." Sam Wilson, Volunteers Outdoor Colorado

According to a study by Seidman and Patterson whose findings were shared in Points of Light Foundation's *Family-Friendly Volunteering, a Guide for Agencies*, %Children may need to have a task broken down into individual components or into shorter time periods. Children should not be expected to work for periods longer than 60-90 minutes and should complete their assignments during the daytime. Adolescents may be able to handle longer periods of time and later hours of service.+^{xxxv}

Age Requirements

For general volunteer opportunities, clubs will have to make a determination of the suitability of the activity for certain ages.

Since children younger than 5 require more attention from their parents, they are not good candidates for work trips. Work trips will be most successful if participants are 8 and older since youth that age are able to work independently and demonstrate determination. They also are able to understand ~~why~~ why they are doing the work, which will enhance their good feelings about their contributions.

Youth that are involved as hikers and volunteers between the ages of 8 and 12 will be the most likely to continue as volunteers as they are teenagers since it offers the chance to be challenged physically and cognitively. Despite seeking independence from their parents, their commitment to the outdoors may be developed to the degree that they seek out volunteer work trips and trail crew participation.

The minimum age requirements for trail work will have to be determined by the tasks, skill level, and difficulty of the work project. Keeping in mind that varied tasks for a diversity of skill levels is preferable for ensuring all participants have a rewarding experience. Children may not get as much done as adults, and parents may have to take breaks from their work expressly to handle their children's needs.

"We typically look at 14 as the cut off (14 and under for family crews) The cut off for youth is actually 18 but the market that tends to show up is families with kids under 14." Teresa Martinez, Continental Divide Trail Alliance

Volunteers Outdoor Colorado projects are generally offered for children 8 and older, but for most projects the minimum age is 12. The minimum age requirement is dictated by the work required, the tools being used, and the specificity of the tasks.

"Invasive weed removal and tree planting are suitable to younger audiences; eight and up is appropriate for most of those projects. Leaders must use their best judgment on which participants can use which tools. Every trail project is different so I wouldn't say they have a particular age minimum. It depends on how technical the work is. As an example, we did a project at Hanging Leg Trail. It was almost all rock work, retaining walls, and steps. It was very heavy and much more dangerous work, comparatively. The minimum age for that one was 16. The average difficulty level bumped up the minimum age requirement.

"If it requires a heavy digging tool, meaning more than a shovel, that kind of work is less suitable to kids younger than 12. Even if they aren't using it (the heavy digging tool), there's a different level of vigilance to make the environment safe, because other people are using it." Sam Wilson, Volunteers Outdoor Colorado

"The minimum age varies by the trip depending on the activity level. It starts more or less around 13 and 14. The youngest age we've ever permitted has been 10. We don't have opportunities for really young-young people to volunteer." Libby Wile, American Hiking Society, Volunteer Vacations

Event Timing

Likely, there will not be participants younger than 5 on work trips. Generally, the younger the participant, the less time should be allotted for the volunteer project.

The activity should be three hours or less for children 7 and younger. The activity should be four hours or less for children 8-13. The activity may be scheduled for four hours and longer if youth are 14 and older, although the older the youth the busier his/her schedule is likely to be.

The event should be publicized far enough in advance to recruit family volunteers.

Children benefit from frequent rest breaks and constant refueling since they are at greater risk of sun exposure and exhaustion. Organizers should double the number of planned work day breaks when leading family work trips.

If participants are beginning to fatigue before the desired project is complete, the organizer should make a point to stop while volunteers are feeling good about their work and contributions. They should be able to see the difference their work has made even if the event is called early to have the most success.

Registering Volunteers

Clubs will have to determine whether volunteers will be required to register for the volunteer opportunity. While not all volunteer opportunities require volunteers to register in order to participate, the process can be helpful to ensure that families are aware of the work project and ready to undertake what is asked of them.

Once volunteers sign up they may receive information confirming their participation and reminding them of what to bring and where to meet. For short, one-time events, screening volunteers is probably unnecessary.

For longer volunteer engagements or ones at more remote locations, interviewing families may help ensure that both the club and the family get the most out of the experience. Talking to the family together helps the entire family come together in support of the volunteer activity. It also shows each family member's conscious decision to participate.

Setting Expectations

As soon as participants sign up or show up to work, be clear about the work that will be done. Communicate that participants will get dirty and that if they are working with rocks they may encounter snakes.

Volunteer coordinators can facilitate parents' conversations with children about the importance of the opportunity by calling or sending an email before the event to see if there are any questions. This contact serves as a gentle reminder about the commitment they have made to participate. It is also a good chance to update participants on weather forecasts, what to wear, things they need to bring with them, or updates to the schedule. This will probably prompt a bit more discussion at home before the event and will help solidify the motivation and interest of all the individual participants.

"Youth, if given the right opportunities and support, can deliver just as much high-quality 'work' (volunteer provided) as adults. Youth want to be successful and are oriented to helping others if given the opportunity to do so. Youth want to be considered as capable and trusted as volunteer partners with adults, not as an afterthought or as 'second-class' citizens. [If] adults [are] not in tune with [the above, they] can sometimes come across as condescending to youth and belittle their efforts or not want to give them a chance to contribute." A.T. volunteer and parent^{xxxvii}

"The biggest thing I've learned is that kids have an amazing capacity to learn about and remember about the natural world. They work really, really hard when given the chance and expectations. We've gone out with eight kids and planted 200 trees in a day. Most adults wouldn't give them the credit to do it, but they can do it and do it with minimum supervision. Understanding how and why they're doing it is key." Kyrina Johnston, 4-H Club Family Programs.

Volunteer Protection and Collecting Hours

All volunteers on the Appalachian Trail are covered by either the VIP (Volunteers in Parks) or VIF (Volunteers in Forests) programs. These programs do allow children to participate, but they must have an agreement signed by a parent, before participating in any Trail work project. (Forms can be downloaded from our website at www.appalachiantrail.org/Volunteer_Toolkit).

ATC has always highlighted the importance of worksite safety for its trail maintenance volunteers. Safe work practices prevent injury. For all volunteer opportunities, likely hazards should be assessed; these hazards should be discussed at a tailgate safety meeting before work begins and again revisited after lunch.

Safety equipment should be issued and used for appropriate tasks. The Trail Maintenance and Construction Tasks, Hazards and Recommended Safety Gear compiled by the ATC is included as a resource for planning family work trips and crews.

In the event that a volunteer is injured during trail maintenance on the Appalachian Trail, the volunteer injury instructions state clearly the protocol for treating the injury that occurs during trail maintenance. Volunteer managers should follow the instructions found online at www.appalachiantrail.org/Volunteer_Toolkit.

Counting Volunteer Hours

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy is required to report all volunteer hours each year to the Appalachian Trail Park Office. Though this is a requirement, the A.T. benefits from an accurate count of volunteer hours. An accurate count also allows us to analyze trends, improve recruitment and retention of volunteers, and helps us compete for a significant amount of NPS funding from its national %olunteer in the Parks+program. Make sure that you track and report all volunteer hours.

Downtime

On adult work trips accidents tend to happen at the end of the day when workers are tired. For youth participants, fatigue will set in earlier, increasing the likelihood of injury earlier in the work day if frequent breaks are not provided.

Breaks are also important since feeling tired and hungry can lead to a deterioration of the experience for family members. Organizers should schedule frequent breaks and let family members know they can take breaks when they feel they need them. The younger the participant the more breaks they will require.

Children are especially susceptible to sun exposure and exhaustion; this makes frequent snack and water breaks all the more important.

Keeping children occupied even when there is downtime will increase the likelihood of their enjoyment. Ideas for keeping them engaged include riddles, games, scavenger hunts, tree identification, etc. The **hip-pocket activities** and ideas found in the hiking and outdoor activities portion of this manual (pages 47 - 52) may be used to occupy young participants during down time on work trips.

Reflection and Evaluation

Reflection is among one of the most important elements of the event because it allows participants to process the experience. They may reveal challenges they faced or general suggestions that will help organizers coordinate better events in the future. It also offers the chance for them to revel in feeling good for helping the Trail and the environment. See **Suggestions for Reflection (pages 39 - 40)**.

Recognizing Volunteers

ATC and A.T. clubs recognize volunteers with a variety of pins, caps, patches, and vests once certain amounts of time have been dedicated. To reduce confusion, each member of a family should be assessed for his/her individual contribution of time and talents to the club. Families or individual participants are eligible for nomination to ATC's Volunteer of the Month program.

Smaller tokens of appreciation such as certificates of achievement for youth or photographs of them at work along with a follow-up thank you note are also ways to make the event more memorable for younger participants.

Clubs may consider a system by which the recognition builds as families return. An example of this is the issuance of rockers for Hard Core patches for volunteers who return year after year. A smaller scale model of appreciation can be stickers (stars) that are applied to a youth's volunteer tally card.

Clubs may host family potluck gatherings, annual meetings, or other non-trail mixers where families can gather to receive recognition.

The ATC offers a number of suggestions for recognizing volunteers on its website, provided below for your convenience.

Rewarding, Motivating and Retaining Volunteers^{xxxviii}

Recognizing volunteers for their efforts not only serves to thank and reward them, but also helps to motivate them. When people are recognized in ways that are meaningful to them, they are more likely to continue to volunteer. The challenge for a manager of a volunteer program is finding the form of recognition that best suits the individual volunteer.

People volunteer for many reasons, and those reasons may change over time as their lives . and the time and skills they want to give . change. Someone who starts volunteering because he want to "give back" after completing a thru-hike, for instance, may eventually want family friendly volunteer opportunities, or the chance to learn a new skill. Though some volunteers will move on as the interests or circumstances change, volunteer managers who pay attention to the needs of their volunteers can make sure they recognize their volunteers in a way that keeps them motivated.

Informal and Formal Volunteer Recognition

Of the two basic forms of volunteer recognition, formal and informal, formal recognition is the more traditional and structured form of recognizing volunteers. Typical examples include awards, annual parties or events held on a national service day. Formal recognition can be an inspirational and motivating experience for volunteers. It brings together all members of an organization . long-time volunteers and newcomers and offers an opportunity to publicly acknowledge and celebrate volunteer efforts.

Despite the value of formal recognition programs, they should not be the only way that volunteers can be recognized. Traditional formal recognition programs only get at one type of motivation . public acknowledgment of volunteer efforts. Many programs have restrictions on the number of people who can be honored; you can only have one "volunteer of the year" each year, for instance.

Informal recognition, based on the day to day relationship between volunteer and manager, is often an easier and more effective way of showing appreciation to your volunteers. Ranging from simple, but sincere, personalized thank you or a birthday/service anniversary card* to recommending a volunteer for a promotion or training opportunity, informal recognition can be

targeted at particular volunteers' motivational needs. Much more varied than formal recognition, informal recognition is an effective way of acknowledging efforts as well as a way to build a better volunteer program.

*The volunteer database can help you track birthdays and other anniversaries

Recognition Tips

Whether recognizing volunteers formally or informally, there are general guidelines to keep in mind.

Make Recognition a Priority: Recognition is a way of motivating your volunteers . and unmotivated volunteers will not stay with your program. It does not have to be expensive or time consuming, common courtesy and attention to your volunteers' needs are among the most effective forms of recognition. If your primary form of recognition is an annual dinner or other event . look for other ways to acknowledge and recognize your volunteers throughout the year.

Be Sincere: Be honest when recognizing your volunteers and recognize or acknowledge them for the types of work you want to see more of.

Be Balanced: Effective recognition involves a balancing act . you want to be fair and consistent in the way you recognize all your volunteers, but also need to take each individual's motivational needs into account. Have many ways of recognizing volunteers, and make sure that all volunteers are aware of the options available to them.

Appalachian Trail Recognition Programs

ATPO and the ATC have several programs that can help you recognize your volunteers, including the awards for hours and years of service to the A.T., America the Beautiful Pass, and the Volunteer of the Month feature on ATC's website. Volunteer hours and recognition received can be tracked in the volunteer database; clubs can also use the database to track recognition events that are specific to their club.

Volunteer Opportunity Ideas

Head outdoors! A study of family volunteers for conservation-based organizations in Canada found that 93% of those volunteers prefer fieldwork, preferably outdoors.^{xxix} On the other hand, not all family members prefer or are able to work outdoors. This list includes volunteer opportunities that are both indoors and outdoors to help infuse different ways of caring for the A.T.

Check the boxes beside types of family-friendly programs your club can organize.

Family-Friendly Volunteer Opportunities

Trail-Maintenance

- ☐ Spring and fall section walk-through
- ☐ Litter clean-up
- ☐ General Maintenance: trimming, cleaning water bars, collect leaves and duff for mouldering privies
- ☐ One-day Worktrips: digging sidehill, building steps, shelter and privy maintenance, cleaning out water sources, paint blazes, assist in relocation, etc.
- ☐ Trailhead kiosk maintenance and/or beautification
- ☐ Shuttle a ridgerunner

Environmental Monitoring

- ☐ Exotic-invasive plant removal
- ☐ Restoration of areas recently cleared of exotic-invasive plants
- ☐ World Water Monitoring
- ☐ Phenology
- ☐ American Chestnut Monitoring

Advocacy

- ☐ Write legislators in support of Land Water Conservation Fund appropriations for A.T. protection
- ☐ Write local cities, counties to encourage them to include language to protect the A.T. in their land-use plans, ordinances and guidelines
- ☐ Respond to USDA Forest Service or NPS public comment periods for projects that may have an impact on the Appalachian Trail.

Create your Own

What are some other needs your club has needs fulfilled?

Are any of these things that families would like to do?

Now that you've got some things narrowed down, check the volunteer ideas against this checklist for planning a family-friendly event:^{xi xli}

- ☐ Activity is active, fun and hands-on
- ☐ Activity includes a wide range of manageable tasks for adults and children with varying skills, experience, abilities or strength
- ☐ Work can be shared among family members
- ☐ Time is provided at the end of the event to allow families to reflect upon their feelings and what they learned
- ☐ Activity offers an educational component for young children
- ☐ Participants can interact with other families
- ☐ It is outside
- ☐ Volunteers are able to see results of their effort without a large time commitment
- ☐ Activity lends itself to a flexible time frame

If you selected at least three or four items above, you have created another volunteer opportunity. Be sure to share your suggestion with other clubs and ATC.

Family Program Volunteer Activity Planning Checklist & Worksheet

Activity Name: _____

Description: _____

Date: _____

Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

Location: _____

Logistics Checklist

- ☐ Estimated travel time to destination: _____
- ☐ Convenient meeting location
- ☐ Adequate parking for group
- ☐ Family-friendly distance to work site (loop or out/back)
- ☐ There are bathrooms or outhouse, or an opportunity to learn new skill in the woods.
- ☐ Kids can run, play, explore and be loud
- ☐ Cooperative management partners are aware of and in agreement with volunteer activities, if needed.
- ☐ Someone with First Aid and/or CPR certification will be present, if required.
- ☐ Required forms for youth and adults have been identified. (select any that apply)
 - ☐ Parental consent
 - ☐ Photo release
 - ☐ Other: _____
 - ☐ Medical and Allergy Information
 - ☐ Emergency Contact Form
 - ☐ Other: _____

Activity Checklist

- ☐ Activity is active, fun and hands-on
- ☐ Activity includes a wide range of manageable tasks for adults and children with varying skills, experience, abilities or strength
- ☐ Work can be shared among family members
- ☐ Time is provided at the end of the event to allow families to reflect upon their feelings and what they learned
- ☐ Volunteers are able to see results of their effort without a large time commitment
- ☐ Activity lends itself to a flexible time frame
- ☐ Participants can interact with other families

Optional Checklist for Success

- ☐ Activity offers an educational component for young children
- ☐ Families have been involved in the planning of this event.
- ☐ Organizers have one or two hip-pocket activities prepared to engage youth during periods of downtime.
- ☐ Worksite allow for the flexibility of early departure of family volunteers if needed.

Use the grid below to list the tasks associated with the planned activity as well as the ages capable of doing each task.

Task	Age Ranges
<i>e.g. lopping spring growth</i>	8+
<i>e.g. cleaning out water bars</i>	12+

Based on the results of your analysis above, is there a minimum age requirement to participate in this activity as a volunteer?

Briefly describe any benefits that families will gain by participating in this volunteer opportunity.

Based on the activity description, the tasks, any minimum age requirement, and benefits to volunteers, you are prepared to write your needed job descriptions for this activity. **Use the template on the following page to create the job description(s) for this activity.** Rely the guidelines presented in **Recruiting Volunteers (pages 29 - 36)**, if needed.

Position Description Template

Build Your Position Description(s) for Family Volunteers to attend work trips and maintenance projects. More information about position descriptions in the Recruitment section on page

Volunteer Position Title	
Purpose	
Responsibilities / Requirements	
Skills Required	
Who may participate	
Location	
Date / Time Commitment	
Benefits	
Training	
Support	
Contact	

What is the minimum number of adult leaders needed for this volunteer opportunity based on the number of youth participants and their ages?

Will the club seek partnership with another group for this event to recruit, plan, or manage the event? If so, list the organization(s) and their role(s)?

Is this an all-weather activity?

In the event of inclement weather the program is: (select one)

☐ postponed ☐ cancelled ☐ taken indoors

How and when will participants be notified in the event of a change of plans?

Will participants be required to register beforehand?

If yes, deadline for registration:

If this is event that requires registration, will there be a way to incorporate families who show up unannounced?

What type of supervision will you provide for this event? (select one)

- ☐ Parents supervise children
- ☐ Family Event Leader supervise parents who supervise children
- ☐ Family Event Leader supervises both parents and children
- ☐ Other:

Family dynamics may strain or inhibit the work progress or compromise the safety of the work environment.^{xlii} **If, as a volunteer manager you feel the strain among family members is detracting from the volunteer work or creating an unsafe work environment, what would you do to address the issue?**

Complete the **Activity and Precaution Assessment** and the **Emergency Planning Worksheet** (pages 27 . 28) for this event and include as part of this event's material.

Use the list below to select the items participants need to wear, bring or may want.

Must Wear	Must bring	Might want	Item
			Sturdy, close-toed shoes or boots
			Layered clothes, appropriate for weather
			Daypack (children's school backpack is fine)
			Long pants
			Rain jacket
			Snacks, picnic lunch
			Water in water bottles
			Sunscreen
			Hat
			Bug Repellent
			Sun glasses
			Change of clothes (to leave in the car)
			Pad and pencil
			Binoculars
			Field Guide
			Whistle
			First-aid kit, with band aids
			Kite
			Magnifying glass
			Flash light
			Hand sanitizer
			Gloves
			Warm Hat
			Gaiters (for snow)
			Other:
			Other:

Day of the Work Trip Event Checklist for Leaders

Event Organizer's Day-of Checklist

- ☐ Personal hiking equipment (pack, water, snacks, hiking stick, jacket)
- ☐ Extra water
- ☐ Extra snacks
- ☐ Leader's First-aid kit
- ☐ Pens and pencils for any last minute paperwork
- ☐ Forms, if needed
- ☐ Any equipment for the day's activity
- ☐ Attendee list, if needed
- ☐ Emergency Plan Worksheet

Orientation & Welcome Checklist

Orientation may include any or all of these items. Given the specific hike and activity you have planned, *select the appropriate items* to include in your orientation:

- ☐ Identify yourself as the hike leader
- ☐ Welcome families . adults and children as they arrive
- ☐ Set the tone that children are important and welcome
- ☐ Provide an introduction of the club
- ☐ An introduction to the Appalachian Trail and its history
- ☐ Why volunteerism is essential to the A.T.
- ☐ What to expect from the work trip and what the goals are
- ☐ Parents responsibility to supervise their children, if required
- ☐ How the leader plans to keep the group together
- ☐ Communication strategies to use when outside and on a work site
- ☐ Specific safety instructions, related to the safety and precaution assessment
- ☐ When they will finish and return to their cars
- ☐ Where to find the outhouse or restroom, if one is available
- ☐ Relevant Leave No Trace information for this activity
- ☐ Review any rules or guidelines based on ATC or club policy

Training & Safety Checklist

- ☐ Tailgate Safety Meeting
- ☐ Participants equipped with safety gear for tasks
- ☐ On-site training with easy to understand instructions
- ☐ An explanation of why these tasks or activity are important
- ☐ All participants are empowered to point out unsafe work conditions

Supervision Checklist

- ☐ Assistant trip leaders are aware of their role and responsibilities
- ☐ Families with unenthusiastic children are paired with enthusiastic volunteers

Trail Maintenance and Construction Tasks, Their Hazards and Recommended Safety Gear

COMPILED BY THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY, REVISED FEBRUARY, 2008

This chart is intended as a guide and is not comprehensive. Basic safety equipment for **all** trail work includes a first-aid kit, boots, work gloves, long pants, and appropriate dress for the weather. Common sense and awareness are the best tools for any task.

Trail Tasks	Likely Job Hazards	Recommended Safety Gear	Additional Comments
Clearing Balds	Sharp tools, back and arm strain, dehydration, loud noise (if using power equipment), lightning, overexposure to sun, rain, or wind.	Gloves, boots, sun hat, sunscreen, eye protection*, Weed-eater harness, hearing protection** (if using power equipment).	Drink at least two quarts of water per day, keep proper spacing between workers, leave ridge-crest before lightning storms.
Cutting Brush	Sharp tools, spring poles, loose footing, flying brush, poison ivy, bee stings, snakebites, ticks.	Gloves, boots, eye protection*, shin guards.	Have soap and wash water available, know who is allergic to bee stings and poison ivy.
PowerMowing and Power Weed- Whacking	Loud noise, thrown debris, poison ivy, ticks.	Gloves, boots, eye protection*, hearing protection, long pants and sleeves.	Do not operate near other people; cool engine before refueling.
Carpentry	Sharp tools, splinters, flying nail chips or sawdust, smashed fingers or thumbs.	Gloves and eye protection*.	Measure twice, cut once.
Chain Saw Operations	Severe, ragged cuts from the chainsaw, kickback, fire, back or muscle strains, falling trees or limbs, loud noise.	Required safety gear: Gloves, boots, chainsaw chaps, hardhat, eye protection* and/or face shield, hearing protection, long sleeves, first-aid kit. Other: wedges, extra chain	Sawyer certification required , two person crew minimum (one as a spotter), cool saw before fueling, keep saw tuned and chain sharp and tight.
Crosscut Saw Operations	Severe, ragged cuts from the saw, back or muscle strains, falling trees or limbs.	Required safety gear: Gloves, boots, hardhat, eye protection* and/or face shield, first-aid kit. Other: chainsaw chaps, ropes or winches, wedges.	Sawyer certification required , two person crew minimum (one as a spotter).
Tree Felling	Falling trees or limbs, hollow trees, bee stings, barber-chairing.	See: using chain saws and using crosscut saws. Other: ropes or winches, wedges.	See: using chain saws and using crosscut saws.
Crush and Fill (site-made gravel)	Rock shrapnel, splinters or broken tool handles, carpal tunnel syndrome, working too close to others.	Gloves, boots, eye protection*, shinguards, hardhats, long pants and sleeves.	Keep wrists rigid when swinging sledgehammer; keep proper spacing between workers.
Log Work (peeling, rolling, setting)	Sharp tools, slippery logs, rolling logs, back or muscle strains.	Gloves, boots, shinguards.	Keep back straight, lift with legs or mechanical advantage; work in unison; keep tools sharp.
Rigging (winch work)	Frayed cable, improper attachment of load or anchors, standing in the light , use of inadequate climbing hardware, overhead loads, hard-to-see	Gloves, boots, hardhat.	Station lookouts, inspect gear frequently, protect trees from damage, avoid improper use of winch (don't be seduced by the power of the winch).

	cable, overloading system.		
Rock Work	Rock shrapnel or dust, crushed extremities, slippery or unstable footing, back or muscle strain, rattlesnakes.	Gloves, boots (steel-toed recommended), eye protection*, hardhat, shinguards.	Keep back straight, lift with legs or mechanical advantage, work in unison.
Sharpening	Cuts from tools, flying metal filings.	Gloves, eye protection*, file handle and knuckle guard.	

* safety glasses or safety goggles, ** ear plugs or ear muffs rated to 85 decibels

Event Planning Timeline and Task List For Volunteer Activities

At Outset

To Do	Person/Team Responsible	Action Needed/ Resources Needed	Due Date	Done
Establish planning committee				<input type="checkbox"/>
Reserve venue, if needed				<input type="checkbox"/>
Recruit partners, if desired				<input type="checkbox"/>
Determine scope of work				<input type="checkbox"/>
Complete Family Volunteer Activity Planning Checklist and worksheet.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Complete the Safety & Precaution Assessment and Emergency Planning Workseet				<input type="checkbox"/>

6-8 weeks before event

To Do	Person/Team Responsible	Action Needed/ Resources Needed	Due Date	Done
Ensure that project to be completed is agreed upon by cooperative management partners				<input type="checkbox"/>
Update or develop media list of reporters likely to cover the event and correct contact information				<input type="checkbox"/>
Begin to Promote Event with fliers				<input type="checkbox"/>
Post event to A.T. Volunteer Database, club Web site, and others				<input type="checkbox"/>
Announce event through club				<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify and source needed tools, materials, supplies, snacks				<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify an alternative activity or protocol for establishing a rain date in the event of rain.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Place event in community calendars and PSA schedules				<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify and secure any required technical				<input type="checkbox"/>

expertise.				
Identify qualified volunteers to assist as supervisors and leaders				<input type="checkbox"/>

4-6 weeks before event

To Do	Person/Team Responsible	Action Needed/ Resources Needed	Due Date	Done
Recruit or confirm volunteers to help manage the event, photographer, audiovisual techs, etc.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Refresh promotion with fliers				<input type="checkbox"/>
Plan hip-pocket activities for youth during down times.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Walk through volunteer work area, if needed.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Screen volunteers, if necessary				<input type="checkbox"/>

2 weeks before event

To Do	Person/Team Responsible	Action Needed/ Resources Needed	Due Date	Done
Ensure tools and safety supplies are available and in good condition for scheduled tasks				<input type="checkbox"/>
Call or email families to ensure participation, answer questions, promote discussion about the activity at home, and to remind them of what to bring and where to meet.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Final push for recruitment				<input type="checkbox"/>
Prepare news release				<input type="checkbox"/>
Prepare the orientation, training speech, and demonstrations in advance of the event.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Screen volunteers, if necessary				<input type="checkbox"/>
Confirm venue, if necessary				<input type="checkbox"/>

1 week before event

To Do	Person/Team Responsible	Action Needed/ Resources Needed	Due Date	Done
Call or email families with the Volunteer Project Information Sheet				<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure club volunteers assisting with event clearly understand their roles. Circulate list of responsibilities.				<input type="checkbox"/>
E-mail participants project information sheet with overview, special instructions, and directions to site.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Follow up with reporters.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Collect release forms, if needed				<input type="checkbox"/>

1-2 days before event

To Do	Person/Team Responsible	Action Needed/ Resources Needed	Due Date	Done
Make nametags, if needed				<input type="checkbox"/>
Respond to final inquiries.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Double check supplies, tools, safety equipment to ensure sufficient supplies in good condition.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Pack extra water and snacks				<input type="checkbox"/>
Pack pens, pencils , evaluation forms, membership applications, required forms, and tools and equipment.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Pack any necessary items for activities with kids.				<input type="checkbox"/>

After the event

To Do	Person/Team Responsible	Action Needed/ Resources Needed	Due Date	Done
Write an article about the event for your organization's newsletter/web site,				<input type="checkbox"/>

and encourage any partners to do the same.				
Review notes from period of reflection and the evaluation forms as a resource for planning future activities.				<input type="checkbox"/>

Case Studies of Trails Organizations with Family Volunteer Programs

Continental Divide Trail Alliance

The Continental Divide Trail Alliance welcomes families to the trail as hikers and volunteers. The website details hikes suitable for families. Work trips and crews are open to families when they are appropriate for family volunteering. CDTA experimented with a model of offering family-only volunteer opportunities in 2007 but now offers the family-friendly label to existing projects, to extend the invitation to families with children who are at least the minimum age requirement. The family-friendly approach is the best way to balance the return on investment given the organization's resources since it allows them to affix the label to projects that are easily accessed, front-country sites in a fairly safe environment with lighter construction tasks. The general minimum age requirement for CDTA projects is 14 for crews. The intergenerational sharing and community building that occurs on projects with family volunteers and older, individual volunteers creates a legacy+project for CDTA. The Alliance continues to refine its messages for providing an understanding of the work environment, setting expectations, and requesting cancellations in advance of the program.

Volunteers Outdoor Colorado

Volunteers Outdoor Colorado offers family-friendly volunteer opportunities across the state. Volunteer projects are generally offered for children 8 and older, but for most projects the minimum age is 12. The minimum age requirement is dictated by the work required, the tools being used, and the specificity of the tasks. Anecdotally, VOC reports that families are among some of their most consistent returning volunteers since it serves as an opportunity for families to come together, give back, and take a trip to another part of Colorado. VOC educates participants on the scope of the project and its purpose before their arrival at the work site by providing thorough explanations of the work, what to expect and what will be expected of them; participants receive Outdoor Stewardship Briefs for each project that more fully explains the history of the project and the environmental impact of the project.

American Hiking Society

American Hiking Society's Families on Foot program was established to enable families to interact with America's hiking trails. The program works in partnership with trails organizations and land managers to offer hikes and volunteer opportunities for families. AHS offers Family-Friendly Volunteer Vacations along with host partners. These are standard volunteer-vacations that have been identified as suitable for families, to which the family-friendly label is applied.

The project is evaluated for its suitability for families if the work is appropriate for youth, if it is a shorter, weekend-based volunteer opportunity, and when accommodations are suitable for families. The minimum age requirement is generally at least 13 or 14. Family volunteers work alongside traditional volunteers, offering a chance for them to come together to share stories as well as share in the experience of working together, representing their own background. In addition to the host's work crew leader AHS has a volunteer crew leader on site to assess group dynamics, social leadership, and sleeping arrangements.

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- ⁱⁱ Charles, Cheryl, Richard Louv, and Sara St. Antoine. *2010 Report from Children & Nature Network* Children & Nature Network, Oct 2010. Web. 19 Mar 2011. <www.childrenandnature.org/research> (PDF)
- ⁱⁱⁱ "Special Report on Youth: The Next Generation of Outdoor Champions." *Outdoor Foundation*. The outdoor Foundation, 2010. Web. 14 Feb 2011. <www.outdoorfoundation.org> (PDF)
- ^{iv} Trail to Every Classroom webpage, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Web. 1 Feb. 2011. <www.appalachiantrail.org>
- ^v Ibid.
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