



**FRIENDS**  
of the  
BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY

PO Box 341  
Arden, NC 28704

PO Box 751  
Blowing Rock, NC  
28605

PO Box 20986  
Roanoke, VA 24018

## News Release

---

For more information contact:

Kitty Coleman

Director Marketing and Development

Phone: (540) 774-3570

E-mail: [Catherine\\_Coleman@FriendsBRP.org](mailto:Catherine_Coleman@FriendsBRP.org)

For Immediate Release

November 13, 2007

### **FRIENDS First-Ever College Chapter at Appalachian State University**

**Boone, NC** – FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge Parkway announced today the formation of its first college chapter at Appalachian State University in Boone, NC. The Appalachian State University chapter is currently recruiting members who love the Parkway and are willing to volunteer their time to help with Parkway projects that are brought to the attention of the FRIENDS organization by the National Park Service.

Due to federal budgetary shortfalls, the NPS was unable to fill 57 vacated staff positions this year. One in four unfilled staff positions has resulted in campgrounds, picnic areas, visitor centers and other facilities opening later in the spring and closing earlier in the autumn. Downed trees are cleared less frequently, vistas have become overgrown, restrooms are cleaned less often, and the mowing schedule is greatly reduced. The Park Service relies on FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge Parkway for volunteers and funding to help it continue at the level its visitors expect. FRIENDS engages Parkway communities to form chapters to carry on the workload and projects the Parkway requests.

The chapter held an organizational meeting of about 25 interested students October 18, 2007 under the guidance of faculty advisor, Heather Preston, Department of Communication at Appalachian State University. Preston notes that the chapter idea “was the brainchild of my students in Public Relations Practices. They chose the Blue Ridge Parkway as a client for the semester, so a student-run university chapter of FRIENDS was the ideal choice to help the Parkway accomplish its mission to preserve regional culture.”

The chapter completed all requirements for starting a chapter on campus by creating a constitution which was reviewed by the university’s Club Council and passed on to the Director of the Center for Student Involvement and Leadership where it was granted final approval. The chapter has designed its own logo for use on apparel and other merchandise to assist with their fundraising efforts. Membership in FRIENDS will be discounted for students with part of the dues going back to the chapter to assist them with planning their projects.

Dr. Neva Specht, University Liaison to the Blue Ridge Parkway, notes that “having a Blue Ridge Parkway FRIENDS’ chapter on campus provides a great opportunity for student involvement with the Parkway. As more faculty and staff work on Parkway related research, it makes sense that more

students will be interested in volunteering for the Parkway. The creation of the Chapter will now give them a way to get involved. I am especially excited because the idea for the chapter came from interested students; it shows how important the Parkway is to them and to the University.”

The first official chapter meeting will be held November 14, 2007 at 6:30 p.m. in the Multicultural Center, room 112, on the first floor of the Plemmons Student Union. The meeting will introduce club officers, the club’s mission, membership details, advisory staff, and upcoming events for next semester.

Preston anticipates an even greater attendance at this meeting. Using the social network of Facebook, the chapter hopes the 35 members of this group will all turn out for the inaugural meeting to help the chapter accomplish its objective of creating a strong club membership.

Caroline Thompson, president of the chapter, states that “Appalachian State is extremely excited about forming the first chapter of FRIENDS on a college campus, and we look forward to helping the FRIENDS organization with local projects and planning”.

In addition to the Appalachian State University chapter, FRIENDS has four other active chapters: Roanoke Valley (Va.), Rocky Knob (Floyd County, Va.), Fisher Peak (Galax, Va.) and Asheville (Asheville, NC).

If you would like to become a FRIENDS member or support FRIENDS projects and initiatives with a donation, please visit our website at [www.BlueRidgeFRIENDS.org](http://www.BlueRidgeFRIENDS.org) or call the FRIENDS office at 800-228-PARK (7275).

###

FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge Parkway, Inc. is a Blue Ridge Parkway partner organization. FRIENDS is a nonprofit membership organization that has served the Blue Ridge Parkway for over 19 years. Individuals or organizations interested in learning about other volunteer opportunities or ways to financially support Parkway programs should call, write or visit on the Internet: FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge Parkway, Inc. P.O. Box 20986, Roanoke, VA 24018 / Telephone 540-772-2992 or 800-228-PARK (7275) / E-mail: [staff@FriendsBRP.org](mailto:staff@FriendsBRP.org) / Website: [www.BlueRidgeFRIENDS.org](http://www.BlueRidgeFRIENDS.org)