

[Back](#)

Treat river like a prize

The Reedy is something special, and we need to keep it that way.

Published: Sunday, April 29, 2007 - 2:00 am

At last sighting, your intrepid adventurer (moi) was rapidly descending Big-S Slide on the Reedy River, a drop of seven feet. With rocks.

I was in a canoe.

This was Saturday a week ago, at the third annual Paddlefest, held partly on Greenville Tech's Brashier Campus on West Georgia Road. The other part was on the river.

Paddlefest is about kayaks and canoes. But mostly about getting people out on the Reedy so they can see for themselves the prize we've got here.

Advertisement

Its length runs much of the county.

Though as things stand now, you might think it ran, oh, a few hundred yards. From the River Street bridge in downtown Greenville, past the Peace Center, over the big falls, past the Governor's School, then bye-bye river.

OK, we know it winds through Cleveland Park too, with paths alongside it. We like that, but sort of take it for granted.

After the park, we hardly pay the Reedy much attention at all.

Know this. There's more pathway in the Reedy's future, south toward Conestee, north toward Travelers Rest.

This is an uncommonly farsighted project, not simply decorative. It's the kind of thinking that not only "gets" what could be, but is absolutely key to bringing it about.

The same inspired order of thought resulted in Falls Park and the Liberty Bridge.

And if you care to be reminded that fabulous potential isn't always obvious to everyone, reread the letters in the newspaper from back when the city of Greenville took down the car bridge that used to be where the pedestrian bridge is now.

Yet once accomplished, Falls Park and the Liberty Bridge unlocked a hunger for the beauty of green spaces and trees and moving water. Crowds flocked in.

The success of the park spread to the streets and stores of the nearby West End. Then everybody said what a treasure the river was.


Let's note a few things. The Reedy was always there. But people weren't careful with it. They let it get dirty.

They built buildings with their backs to the water. They didn't realize.

Realizing was the point of Paddlefest the other weekend.

Realizing the delights of being on the water's surface: scary/ thrilling rapids, and the otherwise lush quiet of the river current.

But also coming to realize that being next to the river is a prize all along its way, not just downtown.

STORYCHAT 
What's your view?
[Click here](#) to add
your comment to
this story.

From a canoe (in my case, the canoe belonged to Brad Wyche, of Upstate Forever), you can see subdivisions bordering the Reedy, but built as if the river were an accidental presence.

Houses have their backs to it, Wyche pointed out. Some cramp its edges.

The lesson of Falls Park would have the river as a subdivision's heart instead, the biggest selling point, with trees and maybe walking trails along the banks.

And with houses set well back to leave a wide natural buffer of shrubs and trees. But each house turned to face the water.

People having finally come to realize what we've got, and the importance of protecting it.

And of treating the river like the prize it is. All its length.
