

# A decade of preservation efforts

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BY CHARLES SOWELL

staff writer

Ten years ago, when Brad Wyche left his law firm, Upstate Forever had one member - Brad Wyche.

Today, the Upstate environmental group has 3,300 dues-paying members and is an integral player in preservation efforts across the region. The organization celebrated its 10th birthday on Earth Day in Greenville.

Wyche has turned the art of land preservation into something of a science over the course of his first decade in business, attracting a small, but talented, staff of 18 that now occupies offices in Greenville and Spartanburg.

Over the course of its first decade the group has helped to preserve more than 10,000 acres of significant lands in the Upstate. These tracts include Stumphouse Mountain, Berry's Mill Pond, key portions of the Mountain Bridge Wilderness area, and the first conservation agreement in the history of Union County (N.C.) near the Landrum-Tryon area.

The keys to Upstate Forever's success lie in a willingness to work with developers with an eye toward sustainable growth and sensitivity to the natural wonders that make the Upstate such a special place.

An EarthCraft home, an energy-efficient and environmentally friendly program of home building, is but one example. With their demonstration Upstate House, a green home, the group demonstrates how incorporating the latest technology can make a big contribution to the quality of life in the region.

Upstate Forever also sponsors EarthCraft training sessions for local builders.

Other Upstate Forever projects over the past decade include:

Managing the Saluda-Reedy Watershed Consortium, managing watershed quality and land-use issues in the Lake Greenwood watershed.

The Active Living Initiative in Spartanburg County that focuses on pedestrian-friendly design, big-box developments and funding for parks and greenways.

Playing a key role in several successful projects including the Swamp Rabbit Tram Trail, Lake Conestee Nature Park and Camp Spearhead.

Perhaps the most significant issue addressed by Upstate Forever in the past decade is growth and how to manage it, said Wyche.

"What kind of region do we want to leave for future generations? Do we want to become another Atlanta or do we want



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**COME A LONG WAY:** Brad Wyche at the Earth Day celebration of Upstate Forever's 10th birthday.

to be a region that both accommodates growth and protects the quality of life?"

Erwin Maddrey, former Upstate Forever board chairman, said, "We've done a good job in protecting important lands and resources, but with development consuming land in our region at the mind-boggling rate of 90 acres per day, we must do more. Those goals will be our focus over the next 10 years - advocating for these policies and protecting more lands. We want to keep the Upstate as the best region in the world - forever."

Contact Charles Sowell at 679-1208 or [csowell@greenvillejournal.com](mailto:csowell@greenvillejournal.com).