

Upstate Forever celebrates 10th anniversary

Upstate Forever is pleased to announce a series of special events this year to celebrate its 10th anniversary. Focused on the number "10," the events include a visit to 10 significant properties protected by the organization, a 10 course meal of locally grown food, a 10K run on the Swamp-Rabbit Tram-Trail, and an exciting party at the end of the year.

Founded in 1998, Upstate Forever promotes sensible growth and the protection of special places in the nine county Upstate region of South Carolina through three basic programs: Land Trust, Clean Air and Water, and Sustainable Communities. The organization currently boasts over 3,300 members and employs 18 staff in two offices in Greenville and Spartanburg.

Upstate Forever's accomplishments over the last ten years include:

- Signing 54 conservation agreements, protecting over 10,000 acres of significant lands in the Upstate, including Stumphouse Mountain, Berry's Mill Pond, key tracts in the Mountain Bridge Wilderness Area and in the Landrum-Tryon area, and the first conservation agreement in the history of Union County

- Bringing the energy efficient and environmentally friendly EarthCraft program to South Carolina through "Upstate House," a new single family residence in Greenville that was constructed in a partnership with the Greenville Homebuilders Association

- Sponsoring EarthCraft training sessions for local builders

- Managing the Saluda-Reedy Watershed Consortium, a broad-based initiative addressing water quality and land use issues in the Lake Greenwood watershed

- Managing the Active Living Initiative in Spartanburg County focusing on pedestrian friendly design, big box redevelopments, and funding for parks and greenways

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

- Playing a key role in the passage of several important ordinances and programs, including the South Carolina Conservation Bank, increased funding for new and expanded parks in Greenville and Spartanburg Counties, and the parking lot, big box and tree protection ordinances in Greenville County

- Playing a key role in stopping several harmful projects and proposals, such as the proposed mega-land-

fill in Spartanburg County and the sale of lands in the Clemson Forest

- Hosting over 500 conferences, seminars, and presentations

- Releasing several important reports and studies, including the Growth Projection Model for the Upstate, Pavement Audits for Greenville, Anderson and Spartanburg Counties, State of the Saluda-Reedy Watershed, A Special Places Inventory for Greenville County, Clean Air for the Upstate, Spartanburg Area Active Living Assessment, and the Spartanburg County Big Box Inventory.

Brad Wyche, who left his law practice in 1998 to found Upstate Forever and has served as its Executive Director since then, said, "I'm overjoyed with how far we've come, with what we've accomplished, with the support we've received, with the Board that guides us, and with our phenomenal staff that gets the work done every day. But in a real sense, we're just getting started. Upstate Forever is directly addressing the massive challenge of growth and development across our entire region. What kind of region do we want to leave for future generations? Do we want to become another Atlanta or do we want to be a region that both accommodates population growth and protects quality of life?"

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Upstate Forever 10th Anniversary Events Calendar.

Field Trips:

- May 24 – Paddle on the Saluda River. Upstate Forever and Sunrift Adventures, Inc. will lead a paddle down the Saluda River via canoe.

- June – Visit to "Chestnut Return." This visit to Board member Joe James's Oconee County farm will educate participants about the American chestnut and the efforts being made to save it.

- July – Mountain Bike Ride on the Swamp Rabbit Tram-Trail. Upstate Forever and Sunrift Adventures will guide cyclists along the northern portion of the tram-trail, the Upstate's newest greenway.

- August – Hike on the Chattooga River Trail. Upstate Forever will lead a hike along the picturesque Chattooga River Trail complete with a camping trip under the stars.

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- November – Fall Photography Hike. Renowned photographer, Bill Robertson will share his skills and expertise with a group of Upstate Forever members.

10 Conservation Easement Property Tour

- October 11 and 18. Over the course of two Saturdays the public will have the opportunity to visit 10 properties that Upstate Forever has helped to protect in Greenville, Pickens, and Oconee Counties. Many of the properties are not ordinarily open to the public but this unique tour will provide access to each of them. The net proceeds will go to Upstate Forever's Land Trust Endowment.

10-Course Locally Grown Meal

- September 16. Upstate Forever is holding a special dinner to showcase the bounty of local produce, meat, and dairy and to promote sustainable, organic practices.

10K Swamp Rabbit Tram-Trail Run/Walk

- November 1. This 10K's route will include part of the Swamp Rabbit Tram-Trail, the greenway that will connect Travelers Rest to Conestee. The trail is scenic and ideal for an autumn run!

10th Anniversary Upstate Forever Celebration

- Fall. Details to be announced!

— article submitted