

Preserve, conserve is the motto for Upstate Forever

*Organization works in tandem
with development in the area*

By Rebecca Roper
Contributing Writer

Ten seems to be the magic number for Upstate Forever. The nonprofit organization that supports local land preservation, conservation of natural resources and sustainable communities is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year. In that time it has preserved 10,000 acres of pristine Upstate land and has multiplied its initial membership 10-fold.

But while those are great accomplishments, Upstate Forever's founder and executive director, Brad Wyche, said there's a lot more work to be done.

PROFILE

■ **Name:** Brad Wyche, executive director of Upstate Forever
■ **Education:** B.S. in geology and environmental studies, Princeton; J.D. from University of Virginia; Master's in natural resource management, Yale
■ **Time in position:** 10 years
■ **Family:** Wife Diane Smock; children, Charlie and Jessica
■ **Hobbies:** Tennis, whitewater kayaking and piano

With development occurring at a rate of 90 acres per day, the organization is more important than ever, he said. The organization's plans for the next 10 years involve pre-

serving an additional 100,000 acres of land, growing its member base to 10,000 and getting local counties, developers and builders to adapt sustainable growth practices as the norm, rather than the exception.

Wyche left his career as an attorney of environmental law to start the organization in 1998. He said he was inspired to start it after playing a key role in organizing Friends of the Reedy River and seeing the outpouring of community response.

"I thought we could take it further, and I saw that no one was looking at environmental issues from a regional perspective," he said. "Plus, I knew I didn't



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Brad Wyche is Upstate Forever's founder and executive director.

want to practice law full time for the rest of my life."

In June of 1999, Wyche sent out Upstate Forever's first newsletter, asking people to become members. Then he held his breath. Two days later he had 300 memberships in his hand.

Today, the organization boasts 3,300 members, a staff of 18 and two offices,

one in Greenville and one in Spartanburg.

Wyche attributes some of the success to the way the organization tries to work in tandem with development, not as an adversary to it.

"If anybody's paid attention to us for 15 seconds, they know we are not trying to curtail growth. It's not a matter of whether we will grow, but where and how," he said.

He's also pleased with the national trend of "green" moving into the mainstream.

"I think people are starting to realize that economic prosperity and environmental protection are not in opposition to one another. We just have to be serious about growth issues."

Wyche points out the

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By joining, you can help keep our quality of life



GEORGE GARDNER / Staff

Erwin Maddrey serves as board chairman of Upstate Forever.

By Erwin Maddrey
Guest Columnist

As someone who lived and worked in the Upstate for more than 30 years, I truly appreciate the quality of life we enjoy here. With Upstate Forever, we have the unique opportunity to preserve that quality of life and the land that so graciously provides us with its resources.

I've been a donor to Upstate Forever since it started in 1998. Then five

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Erwin Maddrey is a retired CEO of Delta Woodside. He and his wife, Nancy, live in Greenville and enjoy a lake house in the North Carolina mountains.

years ago, when Brad Wyche asked me to serve on the board of directors, I had the opportunity to become more deeply involved. I'm glad I did. As chair of the development board I was able to help this organization focus its mission. When I was responsible for the capital

campaign a few years ago, I was able to witness the outpouring of community response to the work we are doing. This year, I am serving as chairman of the board.

It is so wonderful to see how the ideas Upstate Forever espouses have started to become part of the consciousness of the general community. Green buildings are starting to pop up across the area. Governments and organizations are starting to plan developments and write ordinances that take the envi-

ronment into consideration.

But our work is far from done. As the area grows, forests are being clear cut and paved over at a rate of 90 acres per day. It is important for you to speak up and show your support for the work Upstate Forever is doing.

You can join for practically nothing — just \$35 for a year's membership. That lets us know we are not alone in wanting to keep the Upstate natural for future generations. Plus, you get a great news-

letter that tells you what's going on — the good, bad and the ugly — in our community, so you can keep abreast of issues and make your voice heard. You'll also be invited to participate in member activities where we explore some of the most pristine and unique properties in the Upstate and learn ways to lessen your global footprint through conferences and seminars.

Please join us in planning for the future, not letting the future do things to us. Go to www.upstateforever.org and click on "Join Us."

Upstate Forever educates public about sustainability

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land protection, the Saluda River watershed project and the organization's part in bringing about some of the Upstate's first Earth-Craft houses as some of his proudest accomplishments.

But he said educating

the public about sustainability is key. The agency has hosted numerous conferences, workshops and speakers over its first decade. Upcoming events include the ongoing "Flicks for Thought" film series about sustainability and a rain barrel workshop Sat-

urday.

To celebrate, Upstate Forever is holding a series of events over the course of the year, all centering on the number 10. The group is holding a 10-course organic meal Sept. 16. On Oct. 11-18, members will tour 10 of the

properties they've helped to protect, and they will cap off the year with a "Greengrass" music festival in November.

YOU CAN GO

What: Rain-barrel workshop

When: 10 a.m. Saturday

Where: Carolina Garden World, Spartanburg

How much: \$50 (includes rain barrel which retails for \$100)

Registration: Ned Barrett, nbarrett@upstateforever.org, 864-327-0090

Details: Shows participants how to install a simple system involving gutters, downspouts and a barrel to collect rainwater runoff

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— Brad Wyche

Volunteer believes organization is good advocate for area

By Rebecca Roper
Contributing Writer

As a transplant from New England, Donna Astle isn't about to suggest the Upstate attempt to curtail growth. But she is interested in protecting the natural resources that make the area such a desirable place to live.

"As we become more populate and developers come in, you've got to have some guidelines so we don't end up with a free-for-all," she said.

That's why she and her husband, Lou, volunteer with Upstate Forever.

"About five years ago, a neighbor of ours, Carlton Owens, had a group meeting where we learned about Upstate Forever. We wrote a check on the spot," she said.

Astle has done clerical work such as stuffing envelopes and making copies. She has helped set up for events and helped when the organization moved to a new office.

"Whatever they need, we do," she said.

The work varies. Sometimes she will spend 15

PROFILE

- Name: Donna Astle
- Time volunteering for organization: Five years
- Occupation: Retired
- Family: Husband Lou, grown son and daughter
- Hobbies: Exploring national parks

YOU CAN HELP

- To join Upstate Forever or find out about upcoming events, call 250-0500 or visit upstateforever.org
- To volunteer, contact Kirbie Crowe at 250-0500, ext. 21

hours doing odd jobs for Upstate Forever. Some months she and Lou take off and visit America's National Parks.

Astle insists she gets a lot more from the organization than she puts in. She loves the outings, such as hiking and kayaking. Recently, she was among a group of members who got to tour a chestnut plantation. The American chestnut is pretty much extinct, but a local conservationist has a property where he is trying to revive them.

She also loves the conferences. She recalls one at the Carolina First Center featuring speakers who

had put their property in land trusts.

"It's just inspiring listening to people talk about why they made the decisions they did," she said. "It will be there for their grandchildren to just enjoy."

The Astles are avid conservationists who also belong to the Sierra Club, Nature Conservancy, the World Wildlife Fund, Audubon and the Humane Society.

Lou is a retired chemical engineer, so the couple is particularly interested in ways science and nature coexist. They offer as an example the Earth Craft house built by Owens, the same neighbor who introduced them to Upstate Forever.

Donna Astle said she was disappointed in the county's watering down of the tree ordinance, but she believes Upstate Forever will press on.

"I think most people would gladly pay an extra \$1,000 for a house with old-growth trees around it," she said.

Upstate Forever is a good advocate for the area, she said. "It's good to have someone looking out for us."