

Going Green

By Nancy Fitzer
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Even after I graduated from school and before I had children of my own, turning the calendar page to September has always brought butterflies of anticipation to my stomach. Fall is a time for new beginnings—new routines, new approaches, fresh purpose. So with all of us suffering from the double whammy of high gas prices and severe drought, now is the perfect time to go green.

As individuals and families, we can make changes in our daily habits that really make a difference to our health, the health of our planet, and our pocketbooks. Walk or ride your bike for trips of a mile or less. Fill up a water bottle at home instead of buying drinks from the store. Hang your laundry outside. Take shorter showers. Plant a garden. Pack lunches in reusable containers. And to have an even greater impact, join together with your neighbors in supporting groups that help make the Upstate greener.

One of those groups is Upstate Forever, a nonprofit, membership-based organization that promotes sensible growth and the protection of special places in the Upstate region of South Carolina. We seek to accomplish our mission through three main programs: Land Trust, Sustainable Communities and Clean Air and Water.

Our Land Trust program works with landowners to protect significant properties and resources in the region, primarily through conservation easements. We now have received 54 easements, protecting more than 10,000 acres of important lands in the Upstate. Some of our successful projects include Stumphouse Mountain and Issaqueena Falls, Camp Spearhead, Nine Times, and key “missing pieces” in the Mountain Bridge Wilderness Area.

Our Sustainable Communities program promotes economically, socially, and environmentally sound growth in the Upstate by supporting green development; energy efficient and environmentally friendly design; parks and natural areas; active living initiatives; land use and infrastructure planning; and adaptive reuse and revitalization of existing communities. We accept and welcome the fact that our region will continue to grow and develop. The great challenge that we face is how and where this growth occurs. Our Sustainable Communities Program is focused on these “how and where” issues.

We recently released with the Strom Thurmond Institute at Clemson University a growth projection study that shows what the Upstate will look like in 2030 if growth and development practices and trends do not change. The study is truly a “wake up call” for our region to get serious about growth issues and for local elected leaders to adopt the ordinances and incentives that are needed to manage growth effectively, reduce impacts (fiscal and environmental), and protect quality of life. This, in turn, will ensure that the Upstate remains an attractive place for economic development.

Our Clean Air and Water program advocates for low impact development; improved stormwater and erosion control measures;

the protection of floodplains and river and lake buffers; improved air quality; and increased awareness about climate change. Our water quality efforts are organized geographically, focused on mountain streams, urban rivers, and rural waters.

Across all three programs, through publications, workshops, presentations, and field trips, we work to educate the public, developers, and policy makers about land use, conservation, and growth management issues in the Upstate.

For more information on Upstate Forever, please visit our website at www.upstateforever.org. 2008 marks Upstate Forever's 10th anniversary. We have planned several exciting events to mark this special milestone, so please join us!

• **Tuesday, September 16, 6:00 p.m.**

Dinner of the Decade: 10 Years, 10 Courses

Join us at the beautiful home of Anne and Bill Masters in Greenville for a 10-course meal featuring fresh, organic, and green cuisine from local farms and Whole Foods Market! 33 Liberty's John and Amy Malik are creating the menu with help from Executive Chef Alex Castro of Larkin's on the River, renowned caterer Don Rizer, and other top-notch Upstate chefs. Tickets are \$125 per person, and space is limited. For information or to purchase tickets, contact LinningsmoakCrawford Public Relations at (864) 235-8330 or email kerry@linningsmoakcrawford.com.

• **Tuesday, September 30, 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

Conference: Conservation Agreements

Conservation agreements are one of the most popular and widely-used means of protecting natural, scenic, agricultural, and historic lands in the United States. These voluntary contracts may enable a landowner to realize significant income, estate, and property tax benefits. Whether you are a landowner, professional advisor or concerned citizen, this conference will be of great interest to you. Professional development credits will be available. Cost: \$50. Location: Carolina First Center, Greenville. Conference brochures are available at www.upstateforever.org/events/ConservationAgreementsConfBrochure2008.pdf. For more information, contact Erin Knight at (864) 250-0500x26 or eknight@upstateforever.org.

• **Saturday morning, November 1**

10k/5k Swamp Rabbit Dash

Race on the new Swamp Rabbit Tram Trail! Visit our website www.upstateforever.org or call (864) 250-0500 for details.

• **Saturday evening, November 1**

GreenGrass Festival

Bluegrass with a “green” twist! Visit our website www.upstateforever.org or call (864) 250-0500 for details.