

An Independent Newspaper Founded in 1885

*The Laurens County Advertiser*

South Carolina's Award-Winning Weekly Newspaper

# FOCUS

## Moving mountains: Culbertson protects history



**RISING ABOVE THE LANDSCAPE** — Technically called a "monadnock", an ancient remnant of a larger mountain range, Warrior Mountain stands about 300 feet above the surrounding landscape just east of S.C. 14 near Metric Road. The mountain is geologically similar to Paris Mountain in Greenville and Little Mountain in Columbia

Photo by Cory Engle

## Upstate Forever recognizes Culbertson, Pitts as ambassadors for environment

By Cory Engle  
Staff Writer

Dianne Culbertson is investing in real estate, and she's perfectly happy not turning a profit. Instead of building a nest egg in her retirement, she is building a legacy that is more valuable to her than financial gain.

Culbertson has always had a fondness for what she calls the "special places" in Laurens County. As a result, several years ago she became active with Upstate Forever, a local conservation group.

"When I was little, we grew up going to the creek to swim at a swimming hole that families had gone to for 200 years," Culbertson said. "We caught red horses in the spring and looked at lightning bugs and played in the fields and the forest, we learned all the constellations. I always thought all that would always be there."

Culbertson said she became aware of the need for conservation as she traveled around the country and saw how irresponsible development could destroy historic and natural landmarks.

"I think it's real important to do all we can to save our special places," she said.

As she worked with Upstate Forever, Culbertson became part of a task force designed to promote the conservation of Laurens County landmarks. Those meetings led to a dream of creating a protected corridor in Gray Court and Owings between Interstate 385 and S.C. Highway 14.

"My son and I started putting maps together," she said. "We just started thinking and dreaming about it."

Then, one day last year, Culbertson was driving down Metric Road when she saw

something in front of the Little Knob in Barksdale.

"There was a sign that said it was for sale," she said. "So my son and I decided we would bite the bullet and just do it and preserve it."

Culbertson's family pooled their resources and purchased almost 300 acres of the Little Knob, which is listed on a 1772 land grant map as "Warrior Mountain".

The knob, which can be seen to the east of the intersection of Highway 14 and Metric Road, carries with it a history that goes back to the days before the first settlers.

Stories can be traced back as recently as the 1800s of a Cherokee Medicine Woman known only as "Kit" who lived on top of the mountain. Arrowheads have been found at the site dating from 11,000 to 12,000 years ago.

Three springs emanate from the western side of Warrior Mountain, forming the headwaters of the southern fork of Warrior Creek. Silica was also discovered at the site, which was then purchased by Laurens Glass Works.

For Culbertson, Warrior Mountain is a big part of her dream to create a protected corridor in northern Laurens County. The property is bordered to the north by the Culbertson Backcountry Settlement, which the Culbertsons have already put into conservation easement. Another neighbor has protected about 950 acres of land on the west side of the mountain.

Still, Culbertson said there is a lot more land in the area that she would like to see preserved for perpetuity and she hopes her example inspires others.

"I hope other people will see this and say, 'I want to be a part of that,'" she said. "They might put their own land in conservation easement. If they do it will forever be theirs. They can sell it or they can hand it down to family, but they will preserve it and it won't be developed in a commercial way."

On Thursday last week,

Culbertson was recognized for her efforts when Upstate Forever named her their Land Conservation Champion at their Annual Awards Banquet in Greenville. Culbertson received the honor alongside Rep. Mike Pitts, who was named Public Servant of the Year for his work on the Saving Lake Greenwood campaign.

"Dianne Culbertson has not only protected her own properties but also advocated for the protection of additional significant lands in her area," a spokesman for Upstate Forever said in a press release. "This year she took a huge step toward completing the corridor by acquiring the 297-acre Warrior Mountain. ... At the end of the year, Upstate Forever was honored to sign a conservation easement with Culbertson, ensuring the permanent protection of the Warrior Mountain tract."

Culbertson sees a bright future for Warrior Mountain, one with trails for hiking and horseback riding, educational programs and other ways for the community to enjoy the site, but that's still a long way off.

"We have a dream," she said, "and we're just beginning."



Photo courtesy of Upstate Forever

**HONORED GUESTS** — Above, Rep. Mike Pitts, left, and Dianne Culbertson, right, received awards at Upstate Forever's annual banquet in Greenville last week for their efforts to preserve local landmarks. Culbertson received her award in recognition of her conservation of Warrior Mountain, near Gray Court. Below, A marker at the peak of Warrior Mountain was left after a U.S. Geological survey of the area measured the elevations of various sites. A similar marker can be found near a creek bed at the Joe Adair Center.



Photo by Cory Engle

**A THRIVING ENVIRONMENT** — Delicate mosses growing among the exposed granite atop Warrior Mountain is a testament to its fragile ecosystem.





Photo by Cory Engle

**WHAT A VIEW** — From the peak of the mountain looking north, hikers can sometimes see all the way to Paris Mountain on the north side of Greenville on a clear day.



Photo by Cory Engle

