



Meet “tree hugger” Jack Dalton: Environmentalist Extraordinaire

Jack Dalton, CMC member since 2003, was an environmentalist before being “green” was cool. Jack is a real outdoorsman and eco-involved guy; he not only talks the talk, but he walks the walk.

Jack is also a member of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), Hot Springs Mountain Club (HSMC), Sierra Club, Mountain True, the Nature Conservancy, and Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy (SAHC), among others. He is active in his Spring Creek community about 12 miles south of Hot Springs where he and wife Maxine have owned 85 beautiful, secluded acres since 1994. Eighty of those acres are in a conservation easement with SAHC, and they built a house on the other five. They spend many hours battling invasive plants, growing food, and hiking with friends. Jack worked with the HSMC creating two trails on the NW side of Bluff Mountain – Betty Place Trail and Bluff Mountain Loop. When Jack leads hikes for the CMC, he often chooses one of these trails. The ATC is also a recipient of Jack’s volunteerism. He is part of an ATC phenology (the study of organisms as affected by climate) project in which he, among others, is assigned tagged trees to keep track of throughout the year – when they bud out, leaf out, etc. Jack has helped with the Hot Springs Trailfest since 1998. The 21st Trailfest will be held April 21 - 23, 2017. Jack is a “yes-man” when it comes to active volunteering for environmental and community groups.

A truly serendipitous event: When the Appalachian Trail license plate was proposed and before enough had been sold to make it a “go,” Jack set up a card table on Hot Springs’ main street, explaining to passersby the importance of signing up for a tag to get the project underway. Then-Senator Joe Sam Queen happened to saunter by, and the two men had a good conversation. Later, to thank Jack for his volunteer hours, Queen appointed him to the tag committee which decides how the funds are allocated.

An interesting tidbit about Jack is that he has hiked to Mt. LeConte Lodge every year since 1972, except for the year that winter storm Sandy came through and the lodge was closed. He concedes that the trails have gotten longer and steeper over the many years he’s been hiking. On an A.T. hike in 1990, he and Maxine spent two nights at the lodge

and were treated as special guests, enjoying food other than the set menu which has not changed in 40+ years. That and hot showers made a lasting impression!

The Spring Creek/Hot Springs community is a tight-knit group of residents, including many A.T. hikers who settled there after completing the trail. Jack says, “We enjoy our very rich life among wonderful people in this beautiful area.” And the other residents are mighty lucky to have Jack and Maxine Dalton as neighbors.