

# Outdoor Leadership Newsletter

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## Teaching Excellence Award

Our own Dr. Mallory McDuff has been honored by the faculty and students of the college for her excellence in teaching. Dr. McDuff is a student-centered educator who projects genuine care and concern for each individual. She not only helps them with courses but also with career and general student life challenges. Students frequently remark that her courses are demanding but they respect her for her fairness, adherence to high quality standards, and the support that she is willing to give to them. They also point out that she is organized, prepared, available, supportive, clear about her assignments and expectations, and able to communicate the subject matter effectively. Dr. McDuff includes some excellent service learning opportunities, as well as community action/research projects to her courses, which the students have especially found challenging and important to their education.

## History on the Water

by John Bowers

“Paddling-mentor-in-residence,” Will Leverette, has just completed a new book: [WaterWise: A History of Whitewater Paddling in Western North Carolina \(1923-1980\)](#) (History Press, forthcoming; visit [www.historypress.net](http://www.historypress.net)). On the surface, the book is a history of whitewater paddling in the region. In the deeper currents, Leverette says, “It’s a memoir of my life growing up at camp and the remarkable people I was exposed to.”

“I realized if I didn’t tell this story, it wasn’t going to get told,” Leverette says. “I also realized that I have no real lasting legacy. I’ve taught thousands of people how to paddle, and that stands for something. But once those people are dead, I’m dead. My hope is that when the book is out, folks will read it and gain an appreciation for the people in it and what they achieved. This will be my legacy.”

He writes, “We will probably never know the full truth but we can be inspired by the tales of women and men who were there many years ago pioneering the way unaware of the importance and significance of what they were doing. This is a proud and interesting history that is filled with colorful characters doing amazing things. I can only hope that I am able to tell the story with some accuracy, a lot of humility and some humor—like the way they lived their lives.”



In addition to sharing his story with a wider audience through the book, Leverette continues to inspire the next generation of paddlers through his work at Warren Wilson College, where he goes by the title “Paddling-mentor-in-residence,” or, as he prefers to be called, “The Designated Old Fart.”

## Environmental Education Creates Connections



At the senior EE dessert gathering, several seniors commented on the highlights in the growth of the program, which included expanding the range of target audiences to include senior citizens and integrating climate activism into the academic program. In just one semester, EE students have focused their efforts in three areas: education, communication, and community organizing. Example

projects include:

- Created a partnership with the Council on Aging by leading a day of health and wellness for low-income seniors in the WWC garden
- Implemented a two-day event with 8 Buncombe Community School students and 85 WD Williams third graders focused on growing and cooking healthy foods
- Facilitated community meetings and events on campus on issues ranging from water conservation, climate change activism, and the women’s resource center.
- Presented their needs assessment results for Climate Corps, a proposed green jobs program for youth, to 60 business and non-profit leaders
- Raised funds to purchase a rainwater catchment system for the WWC garden and created a new water conservation crew, as a part of the plumbing crew
- Implemented a program focused on energy efficiency in first-year dorms, including the purchase of power strips for dorm rooms.



In the midst of these accomplishments, EE students have managed to create some fun as well, with gatherings at Mallory’s house each term to enjoy good food and desserts by our famed student baker Kuenzie Wiswall. The winter term featured a spicy Indian curry, while spring term, students enjoyed a spice cake and apple tart with ice cream. As busy as these students are, they need delicious food to fuel their good works!



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## Graduate Updates

**Christie Etter** is Program Director at the Egel's Nest Foundation. As Program Director she works all year round with the camp and the school components. During the school year she supervises the wilderness education component of the Outdoor Academy with some wilderness trip leading and teaching physical education twice per week. She also oversees risk management for the school.

**Elisa Austell** was hired this spring as the Outdoor Adventure Coordinator at Ghost Ranch in Abiquiu, NM. She manages their Challenge Course, supervises staff, provides programming for local schools and is in charge of risk management. "Sometimes I wish I remembered more from Initiatives class. Especially all the ways to debrief. I'm coming up with a lesson plan for a group of second graders on the low course on Friday. Me and kids.... who'd of think it."

**Suzanne Mayerchak** finished up her Masters Degree in December and in March was offered the position as Executive Director of a local YMCA in central Virginia. She is doing well and working very hard.

**Andy Biddle** has been working for Project SOAR in Balsam, NC for the past three years, starting out as field instructor/program specialists and has moved up to Program Director and Risk Management director. He will be winding down this season and heading off to New Zealand for a year or work and adventure.

**Billy Day** has been working full time for Fox Mountain Guides as a guide and this past year has been instructing our introductory rock climbing courses.

## Students Receive Educational Grants From the Leave No Trace Center For Outdoor Ethics and REI:

Izzy Albert and Morin Townsend wrote grant proposals and have been awarded the grants. Izzy will be teaching in Zion National Park and Morin will be working with scouts in Charleston, SC. The grant (Promoting Environmental Awareness in Kids) is a grant partnership between the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics and Recreation Equipment, Inc. (REI). The grant provides educational and curriculum packets to teach kids ages 6-12 about Leave No Trace through a variety of hands-on activities.



## Austin Wright Scholarship for Leaders

This award, created in memory of Austin Wright (class of 2005), is awarded each year to a student who has a passion for the outdoors; embodies the qualities of adventure, determination, and peer leadership and shows a commitment to helping others grow and learn through participation in outdoor adventure education. This year's recipient is Katlin Tripi.