

PRESENTING THE VIEW  
FROM THE TOP OF THE WORLD

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2016 ANNUAL REPORT

GRANDFATHER  
MOUNTAIN  
Stewardship Foundation

## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear friends,

If I had to sum up the last year in just a few words, I'd say that 2016 was, as the song goes, a very good year.

Some highlights:

Attendance numbers that broke all the records.

A huge increase in volunteer hours.

More educational programs, of higher quality, than ever before.

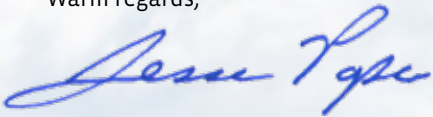
A renovated cougar habitat and two of the most beautiful cubs you've ever seen.

But as much as the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation accomplished last year — supported by the visionary leadership of our board — it was an equally notable time for what we put into motion for 2017. As part of a bold effort to promote responsible stewardship practices, we will launch a major fundraising initiative that will result in a fresh new experience for our visitors, with programs that could even change the face of conservation in North Carolina and beyond.

We have never undertaken such a significant project to stay true to Hugh Morton's promise to protect and preserve the mountain and its vast ecosystem so it will continue to exert its magical influence on our children and our children's children.

Thank you for your continued support.

Warm regards,



Jesse Pope



## TWO LITTLE ORPHANS NOW HAVE A HOME

In January 2016 in Idaho, sibling cougar cubs were found wandering around a neighborhood, emaciated, scared and starving. Grandfather Mountain — celebrated for its wildlife habitats, built around the animals' native environments — quickly agreed to adopt the cubs.

### But how to get them here?

Jesse Pope, executive director of the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation, contacted park friends and supporters Bob Wilson, philanthropist, pilot and vice chairman of Kemmons Wilson Companies, and his wife, Susan. The Wilsons are nature enthusiasts who saw the cougars as a prime opportunity to share their sense of wonder with others. They came through with flying colors.

"We own a Pilatus PC-12, which is the perfect airplane for the transfer of the cubs," Bob Wilson said. "I called two of my flying

friends, and they immediately signed on to help. We all were proud to be a part of making it happen."

The cubs arrived in March, are adjusting well to their new surroundings at Grandfather Mountain, and will be ready to meet the public in summer 2017. Through habitat visits, daily enrichment programs, behind-the-scenes tours and the Keeper for a Day program, guests can learn more about the cougars and other animals that call Grandfather Mountain home.

As if providing the cubs with a flight to their new home weren't impressive enough, the Wilsons' generosity has extended to financial help for renovating the mountain's cougar habitat.

The Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation would like to express great appreciation to **Bob and Susan Wilson** for allowing this project to become a reality.

## GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN

Stewardship Foundation  
Board of Directors

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Jon Barrett

Michael Leonard

Catherine Morton

Jim Morton, Chairman

Judy Morton

Mary Rinehart

Gordon Warburton



## OUR MISSION

To inspire conservation of the natural world by helping guests explore, understand and value the wonders of Grandfather Mountain.

## OUR VISION

At more than a mile above sea level, Grandfather Mountain offers its guests a unique vantage point to the natural world. By bridging outdoor fun with education, the mountain provides an experience in nature unlike any other, filled with wonder, warmth and adventure.

**ON APRIL 1, 2017, GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN LOST ONE OF ITS MOST DEVOTED CHAMPIONS.** James McKay Morton, chairman of the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation Board of Directors, conservationist, trailblazer, photographer and visionary, passed away at the age of 65. Morton leaves behind a mountain-sized legacy, having helped establish the nonprofit foundation to preserve Grandfather Mountain for generations to come. His dedication and devotion to the mountain were akin to those of his father, the late Hugh Morton, who established the Linville, N.C., park as one of North Carolina's leading travel attractions in 1952.

## OUR VALUES

### Passion —

With its incredible scenery and diverse ecosystems, Grandfather Mountain ignites a sense of wonder in its guests, volunteers, donors and employees.

### Community —

Grandfather Mountain provides a positive, uplifting atmosphere that embraces employees, guests, volunteers, donors and partnering organizations as valuable members of a larger team — and a bigger picture.

### Conservation —

Through education, research and science in action, the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation continues to protect the mountain's remarkable natural resources, including globally imperiled flora and fauna.

### Sustainability —

With tomorrow in mind, the mountain challenges its staff to seek out best practices to improve the organization's environmental and economic security.

## GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN VOLUNTEER PROGRAM



## FOR VOLUNTEERS, THE WELCOME MAT IS ALWAYS OUT

Ensuring that Grandfather Mountain runs smoothly takes mountains of effort — and the park can always use an extra hand.

That's why the foundation introduced a program in 2014 to offer its supporters a unique way to experience the wonder of Grandfather Mountain: by helping introduce it to others. Grandfather's celebrated volunteer program finds participants serving in several key areas:

**Hospitality** — in which volunteers welcome guests and answer questions about the facilities

**Animal Ambassadors** — in which volunteers interact with guests and provide information on the furry and feathered residents of the environmental wildlife habitats

**Environmental Education** — where volunteers assist the mountain's educators in program set-up and support interpretive rangers on guided hikes

2014

**1,570** SERVICE HOURS

In the program's first year

2016

**4,243** SERVICE HOURS

In the program's past year

2017

Every year, Grandfather's number of volunteers grows — from the program's humble beginnings of 35 volunteers with 1,578 volunteer hours to today's impressive total of 66 volunteers and 4,243 service hours.

Deserving of particular praise are **Monty and Brenda Combs**, the 2016 recipients of the President's Lifetime Achievement Award and providers of more than 4,000 volunteer hours on Grandfather Mountain alone.





## GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN FIELD TRIP SCHOLARSHIP

### ONE STUDENT'S LEGACY ENABLES OTHER STUDENTS TO CONNECT WITH NATURE

Grandfather Mountain offers students the unique and inspiring opportunity to learn about nature from nature itself. But with North Carolina schools facing sizable budget constraints, field trips to the mountain aren't always possible.

The Grandfather Mountain Field Trip Scholarship has gone a long way toward overcoming that problem and had a profound effect on hundreds of North Carolina students.

The scholarship was established in spring 2015 in honor of the late Nathan Pribble, a teenager who loved connecting

with nature — a wholesome, organic bond, enhanced only by sharing it with one's family and friends. And share it he did; Nathan and his family — parents William and Robin, sister Kit and brother Carson — traveled here frequently from their home in Apex, N.C.

When Nathan died unexpectedly in October 2014 at the age of 18, his parents decided to honor their son's memory by sharing his passion for nature with others; they requested that memorial contributions be made to the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation to help

provide field trips for schools that could not afford them.

In addition to individual contributions made in Nathan's memory, the scholarship fund is annually bolstered by a donation from Holbrook Field Trips, an Apex company that frequently brings school groups to Grandfather Mountain with additional contributions from Duke Energy, Wells Fargo, SkyBest Communications and Linville Land Harbor POA.

Scholarships are primarily offered to North Carolina public schools for spring and fall

field trips. The foundation is indebted to the Pribbles for their magnanimous support.

**“Nathan was a nature lover all his life, so it was only natural that we asked for memorials to go somewhere that would mean something to Nathan.”**

*-Robin Pribble, Nathan's mother*

## COMMUNITY COLLABORATION CONTINUES

In 2016, Grandfather Mountain's education department witnessed firsthand how its staff, community partners, volunteer groups and others could come together to support a vision and help fulfill the foundation's mission.

Staff continued to participate in citizen-science programs that connect Grandfather Mountain with the community. Several noteworthy examples include:

- High Country Audubon teamed with Grandfather Mountain's

naturalists to learn about Canada warbler nesting behaviors and the annual hawk migration.

- Appalachian State University students participated in a new study of the park's moth life.
- The Lees-McRae College Herpetology Club partnered with park personnel to monitor salamander plots on the mountain.
- Naturalists joined staff from the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission to participate in the annual bat survey of the Black Rock cave.

## MAGNIFICENT ANIMAL JOINING US SOON

Standing approximately five feet at the shoulder, the elk is an imposing, majestic creature. And at least two are coming to Grandfather Mountain.

The remaining white-tailed deer living in the animals habitats passed away over the last year, and the deer habitat is currently being converted into an elk habitat, with modifications that include renovation of the existing overlook, construction of a shifting paddock for the elk and a

larger barn, shifting fence lines to encompass new areas and remove problem areas, and grading of certain sections of the habitat for erosion control. The habitat is expected to be completed by the end of October 2017.

The Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation would like to thank **Jim and Barbara Goodmon and the A.J. Fletcher Foundation**, without whom this project would not be possible.

## Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation, Inc. Statement of Financial Position Income Tax Basis | 31-Dec-16

ASSETS	AMOUNT
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>	
Cash and cash equivalents	\$3,198,592
Inventories	290,668
Accounts receivable	26,144
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>3,515,404</b>
EQUIPMENT, NET	8,022,793
INVESTMENTS	3,365,212
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>14,903,409</b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	107,735
<b>Total current liabilities</b>	<b>107,735</b>
Net Assets	
Unrestricted	14,528,508
Temporarily restricted	267,166
<b>Total net assets</b>	<b>14,795,674</b>
<b>Total liabilities and net assets</b>	<b>14,903,409</b>
<b>UNRESTRICTED</b>	
Net sales	2,262,071
Cost of goods sold	918,136
<b>Gross profit</b>	<b>1,343,935</b>
Admission fees and other operating revenue	4,327,989
Investment Gains	163,083
Contributions	345,514
<b>Total net revenue</b>	<b>6,180,521</b>
Program expenses	3,091,757
Operating expenses	1,518,140
Fundraising expenses	18,498
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>4,628,395</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>1,552,126</b>

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