



CAMPAIGN IMPACT REPORT

JUNE 2018

In recognition of the trail's 40th anniversary, Friends of the MST launched a special campaign to raise \$200,000 to increase awareness of the trail and provide needed funds for signs and kiosks, bridges and boardwalks, and tools for volunteers. We're delighted to report that we blew past that goal and raised a total of \$274,838.

Read on to learn what the campaign has made possible - to date and for the future.

Raising Awareness \$105,070

A NEW WEBSITE

In January 2017, we launched a gorgeous new site with robust features that are helping people learn about the trail and how to hike it. Five times more people are visiting the new site than the old.

GUIDE BOOKS

In February 2017, we published a complete trail guide - in three regional books - and made the individual segment chapters available for download off the website. Last year, we sold more than 1,700 copies of the guidebooks (second editions are already underway), and more than 10,000 chapters were downloaded. UNC Press was so impressed with the guide books that it has invited us to partner on an MST day-hike guide.

GATHERING OF FRIENDS

In March 2017, Elkin hosted our first-ever, three-day Gathering of Friends. More than 350 members attended, including brand-new trail enthusiasts, recent trail completers, avid volunteers, and MST founders like Howard Lee, Doris Hammett, and Jim Hallsey. Festivities included a gala dinner, an annual meeting, and "trail and town excursions" throughout the Elkin Valley. The event was so successful that we did it again this March and are now planning for the 2019 Gathering in Surf City.

TRAIL COMMUNITIES CONFERENCE

In May 2017, Elkin again played host - this time to our conference for leaders of MST communities. Mayors, local government staff, and tourism leaders came from as far east as Burgaw and as far west as Sylva to learn how to build and promote their part of the MST. They got to see firsthand how Elkin uses the trail to strengthen its economy and enhance quality of life for its citizens.



Brew, Gus, Jen & Charley set off from Clingmans Dome. Photo by Steve Metcalf.

JENNIFER PHARR DAVIS

In August, National Geographic Adventurer Jennifer Pharr Davis set off on a four-month MST trek with husband Brew and two children under the age of five. She shared the wild experience through weekly blogs, Facebook posts, and four "Evenings with Jennifer" attended by more than 800 people. She completed at Jockey's Ridge State Park, accompanied by her family, a group of Dare County Special Olympians, plus many MST Friends. Jennifer is now travelling the nation promoting a new book, and it's great to have her as an MST ambassador, able to talk about the trail from personal experience. Her MST blogs - a literary feast - are on our website for all to enjoy.



Gay Rose and 11 friends on MST Segment 4, MST in a Day.

MST IN A DAY

On September 9th, the exact 40th birthday of the MST, more than 1,700 people working together completed 100% of the MST hiking route, from Clingmans Dome on the Tennessee line to Jockey's Ridge State Park on the coast. The day on the trail was a day of superlatives. Comments on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and on our website were dominated by three words: **Beautiful, Great, Amazing**. It was an over-the-moon way to celebrate our wonderful trail!



Bob Hillyer and Joe Hicks install an MST road sign. Photo by Joe Mickey.

Signs & Kiosks \$59,884

Our first project with these campaign funds is to install MST signs along all the road sections. The first signs are now up in Surry and Sampson counties. This summer and fall, we'll be installing them in Cumberland, Bladen, Pender, Onslow, Craven and Carteret counties. Next winter and spring, we'll focus on the Piedmont counties. Then we'll use the remaining signage funds to install new kiosks and enhance signage on popular sections across the state.



Fred Dietrich, Chris Meggs and Albert Shaw measuring for a bridge. Photo by Kip Godwin.

Bridges & Boardwalks \$59,884

These campaign funds will be used to cover design and permitting expenses for bridges and boardwalks. Bridge projects are underway now in Orange, Durham, and Bladen counties.



Photo by Shelton Wilder.

Tools for Volunteers \$50,000

Every year, hundreds of volunteers donate more than 35,000 hours to maintain and build the MST. They need tools to cut back vegetation, remove hazardous trees, prevent erosion, and repair bridges. We'll use \$10,000 of these funds to pay for needed tools over the next couple of years. We've invested the remaining \$40,000 in our endowment at the NC Community Foundation. That investment brings the endowment to \$70,000 which will provide an annual income of about \$3,500 to help meet future tool needs.

Friends of Mountains-to-Sea Trail

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