

Trail group honors volunteers

SPECIAL TO
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The Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA) held its annual meeting November 3 at Coker Creek Lodge in Tennessee. The state of the trail report showed that maintainers turned in a record 5,079 hours working on the trail — 63 maintainers had 30 hours or more and 21 maintainers had put in over 100 hours maintaining the trail.

Larry Dumas of Mineral Bluff was the recipient of the prestigious BMTA Maintainer of the Year Award.

He and his wife, Joyce, moved to their favorite vacation spot, Mineral Bluff, in 1999.

"If this is a good place to come on vacation, it's a good place to retire to," Dumas said.

An avid hiker, Dumas thru-hiked the Appalachian Trail in 1978.

A regular participant on the twice monthly BMTA work trips, Dumas adopted his own section of the Benton MacKaye Trail to maintain ... from Brawley Mountain to Dial Road.

Dumas said "The toughest challenge of maintaining my section is a mile-long patch of weeds that in the spring grows to five — six feet tall in a six-week period. I have to go in with a weed eater to keep the trail open."

Dumas' favorite pastime on trail is sitting down and talking with day hikers and thru-hikers.

Joy Forehand of Blue Ridge was the recipient of BMTA's Volunteer of the Year Award.

When Joy and her husband moved to Georgia in 2011, it was BMTA's hiking program that first drew the couple to the association.

"When you're new to the area, it's great to have someone leading you on a hike. You won't get lost trying to find the trailhead and you get to try hikes you may otherwise not have known about," said Forehand.

A former magazine editor, office manager and horse show architect and manager, Forehand's office and planning skills were soon put to work for BMTA. She has been Secretary of the association for five years and

at this year's meeting, she was elected Vice-President. However her favorite activities revolve around hiking and maintaining a section of the Benton MacKaye Trail that she and her husband adopted in the Aska Adven-

ture Area.

Whether it's hiking or maintaining the trail, there's no better place to be than in the woods," Forehand said.

Volunteers with the BMTA constructed and now maintain the 300-mile long Benton MacKaye Trail that begins on Springer Mountain in Georgia, and ends at Davenport Gap in the Smokies.



Larry Dumas of Mineral Bluff was the recipient of the prestigious BMTA Maintainer of the Year Award at the annual meeting held November 3. Pictured, from left, are Larry Dumas and Tom Keene.



Joy Forehand, shown left, is pictured with Tom Keene. Forehand is a resident of Blue Ridge and was the recipient of BMTA's Volunteer of the Year Award. She was also elected Vice-President at this year's meeting.