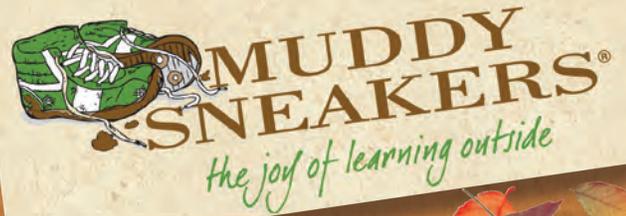


# Pathways

notes from the field

FALL/WINTER 2015



## MORE MUDDY SNEAKERS ACROSS THE CAROLINAS!

Muddy Sneakers has steadily grown in size and scope since it's founding in 2007. Around 2011, partners in neighboring Upstate South Carolina began to inquire whether the organization would ever expand south. This was also a time of great interest from communities across the country, each seeing Muddy Sneakers as a model experiential science program. Although the organization gave serious consideration to these inquiries, the decision was made to first focus near-term growth on the Carolinas. The goal was soon set to partner with 20+ schools in WNC and expand into Upstate SC by the 2015-16 school year. Muddy Sneakers is proud to announce it has met both of those goals.

In addition to 100% reenrollment, the program added two new NC schools to its roster in 2015-16. Programming in Rutherford County for the first time, the sixth NC county to date, Muddy Sneakers is excited to announce its partnership with *Lake Lure Classical Academy*, a growing charter school conveniently located near the breathtaking and bio diverse lands of the Hickory Nut Gorge.

Muddy Sneakers' second new school, and 21st to date, is *Sugarloaf Elementary* in Henderson County. With Sugarloaf, Muddy Sneakers has added four Henderson County schools in as many years and now serves more students in that county than any other in NC. Sugarloaf, a remarkable school with impassioned teachers, serves a diverse body of students (14 nationalities represented) and a high-need population.

The biggest news this fall comes in the form of multi-state expansion. Muddy Sneakers is thrilled to finally be able to bring its model program into South Carolina as part of a two-year Upstate SC pilot. Muddy Sneakers found an ideal partner in the talented staff and students at *Augusta Circle Elementary*.

By 2016-17, the organization expects to add as many as three additional public elementary schools in Greenville County. Students at Augusta Circle have spent their expeditions this fall exploring signature sites made available through Muddy Sneakers' gracious partners: The City of Greenville (Cleveland Park) and Greenville County Parks and Recreation (Pleasant Ridge County Park).



# Instructor Spotlight: Carlisle Rankin



## What is your background?

I am a NC native from Asheboro. I have a BA in Education from Centre College and I am completing a MS in Environmental Education from Montreat College. I worked as a third grade classroom teacher for three years in Nashville, TN and as a Development Associate at Asheville School for two years prior to Muddy Sneakers.

## How long have you been a MS instructor?

This will be my second year working with Muddy Sneakers.

## Why do you like being a MS instructor?

The younger generations have forgotten we are part of the natural world. Reigniting that connection on a daily basis is a true gift. I gain a definite sense of fulfillment as I watch children who may commonly struggle in a traditional school setting flourish out on a trail.

## What is one of your most memorable moments on a MS learning expedition?

Recently, I watched a group of young ladies from Brevard Academy build a shelter together for an activity related to body systems. We were testing how our heart rate would change as we performed "pioneer activities" out at the Pink Beds in Pisgah. The enthusiasm and attention to detail these children exhibited brought great power and meaning to what I do.

## What is your favorite expedition site?

This would have to be a tie between Rainbow Falls in Gorges State Park and The Pink Beds in Pisgah National Forest.

## What do you spend your time doing when not teaching for MS?

I really enjoy gardening and yard work. I also love to go on long hikes with my dog Nali and I enjoy live music around Asheville. I'm excited to dust off the snowboard this winter as well.

# Director's Report



Fall is in full swing in the Appalachian Mountains and again we are being treated to a dramatic display of color during this season of transition. For Muddy Sneakers, fall is typically a time of reflection, rarely a time marked by rapid change.... until this year.

As discussed, the '15-16 school season marks a programmatic high point filled with change in the form of continued expansion in WNC as well as the program's launch in Upstate SC. On the personnel side, change has come in the way of staff transition. Muddy Sneakers is sad to say goodbye to some of its senior staff and administrative team but thrilled with the fantastic group of new instructors joining us this fall. Recently, I watched a departing senior instructor model our 'bear bag' exercise for two new instructors before an expedition. The scene served as a reminder of how privileged we are to have an amazing team of invested naturalists who go out of their way to pass along field knowledge in an effort to maintain the high standard of instruction that has always defined the organization.

Continuing on the topic of fall change and transition, I am proud to have two significant recent achievements to announce. First, with the support of the Judith Haskell Brewer

Fund, Muddy Sneakers has been able to launch its two-year, NC State University research collaboration. The project is underway and the measurement tool to be created will be a key advancement in the organization's ability to more fully understand and communicate its scope of impact.

The second noteworthy achievement is arguably the most important organizational advancement to date. With the generous support of the Lastinger Family Foundation, Muddy Sneakers is excited to have the funding necessary to hire its first full-time Development Director by early 2016. This position will bring much needed expertise to the organization's development efforts while working to broaden the scope of support. Muddy Sneakers is fortunate to have board member and development professional Kristen Acquino lending her expertise to the search process.

Thus, while we can't help but be captivated by the changing colors and falling leaves this season, we find ourselves pausing to reflect less than in years past. Instead, we will stay busy, preparing for the exciting changes ahead and the expanding possibilities for Muddy Sneakers.



## North Carolina Superintendent of Education to Visit Muddy Sneakers in November

On November 16th, Muddy Sneakers is proud to host NC State Superintendent of Education, Dr. June Atkinson. DuPont State Recreational Forest will play host as Dr. Atkinson makes a special trip to WNC to observe a Muddy Sneakers expedition with one of its newest schools, Sugarloaf Elementary, as they learn about 'Energy: Conservation and Transfer'.

Along with the Superintendent and her staff, NC House Representative Chuck McGrady of Henderson County, representatives from non-profit Friends of DuPont Forest as well as both Transylvania and Henderson County Schools will be in attendance.



## CAMP MUDDY SNEAKERS

*the joy of being outside*



## 'The Joy of Being Outside': An Incredible Summer for Camp Muddy Sneakers

Camp Muddy Sneakers continued to grow by leaps and bounds in summer 2015, serving nearly 100 children from near and far! Last summer, Muddy Sneakers not only offered its traditional 'Trail Blazer' full-day camp sessions to rising 4th through 7th grade campers, but also half-day 'Nature Explorer' sessions for rising 1st through 3rd graders. Many adventures were had and new protected sites explored with rotating sessions offered via three 'base camp' locations in Brevard, Hendersonville and Asheville.

This summer's dry conditions afforded campers many beautiful days spent hiking through diverse ecosystems to waterfalls and vistas with eager and enthusiastic young naturalists in the making. Magical moments occurred daily while connections with our natural world were discovered and broadened. Catching salamanders, picking berries, playing camouflage and times spent wading in creeks are a few camper favorites. It was wonderful to see each group develop relationships while building forts and salamander habitats, playing games and encouraging each other to hike just a bit further to explore what was around the next bend in the trail. The end of each week culminated with each group creating a "Nature Museum" to showcase for family and friends some of their unique finds from the forest such as mushroom spore prints, plant identification and feathers.

Camp Muddy Sneakers' continued mission to nurture the joy of being outside was far and away exceeded by the amazing children that we had the pleasure to spend the summer with in some of the most beautiful areas in the region. One camper summed it up by saying "I now know about so many different plants, animals and fungi in the forest. Knowing this makes me feel confident when hiking and, like, a stronger person." The magic of Camp Muddy Sneakers continues in Summer 2016 with registration opening in December 2015. To learn more and register, visit [www.campmuddysneakers.org](http://www.campmuddysneakers.org).

*-Katie Lawn, Camp Muddy Sneakers Assistant Director, MS Field Instructor*

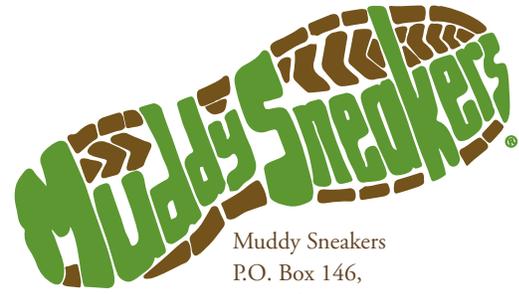
## NC State University/ Muddy Sneakers Research Partnership Launches

As previously reported, a two-year research partnership between NCSU and Muddy Sneakers launched this August and is currently in the research and development stage as the team from NCSU prioritizes time in the field getting to know the organization, its instructors, and methodologies. In addition to spending time observing the program, NCSU is working with a newly formed Muddy Sneakers research team comprised of staff and board members as well as teachers and administrators from participating schools.

This spring, the NCSU team will develop and begin working with Muddy Sneakers to introduce a draft version of what will eventually become a highly unique, elementary-specific environmental literacy measurement tool to be more formally piloted across all participating schools in the 2016-17 school year. The staff of Muddy Sneakers will be intimately involved in the research process and look forward to showcasing the experience and measurement results following the project's conclusion.



**NC STATE  
UNIVERSITY**



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# JOIN THE MOVEMENT!

## Become A Community Sponsor

With ever-increasing school interest, Muddy Sneakers relies on the support of its Community Sponsors to grow this incredible program and **we need your help!** 'Sponsors' serve as the organization's annual members, a group of donors committed to ensuring their financial contributions directly translate into more children connecting with the natural world. Visit [www.muddysneakers.org](http://www.muddysneakers.org) to learn how you too can join the movement!

Check out **Give!Local** for an exciting opportunity to renew your Community Sponsorship this holiday season! Now through December 31st go to <https://givelocalguide.org> to make your contribution.

