



MUDDY SNEAKERS®



PATHWAYS

Salisbury Field Office Relocates!

This winter, the Muddy Sneakers' Salisbury Field Office moved into the Catawba College Center for the Environment. Dr. Jay Bolin, Chair of the Biology Department at Catawba College and Co-Chair of the MS Piedmont Advisory Council says "having a dynamic environmental education non-profit such as Muddy Sneakers working in the Center for the Environment generates energy and enthusiasm among students who can see and learn firsthand how environmental and educational nonprofits operate."

Muddy Sneakers is grateful to now have our office hosted at a philosophically aligned institution, all-the-while continuing to use the Fred Stanback Jr. Ecological Preserve as an expedition site for local partner schools.

Supporting Partner Schools and Educators with Remote Expeditions

Faced with the challenges of an ongoing pandemic, Muddy Sneakers adapted our traditional program model to engage at-home students to get outside.

Muddy Sneakers pivoted quickly in August to support our partner schools' transition to rich, high-value remote learning. Per Governor Cooper's orders, schools were given the option of continuing virtual schooling, alternating in-person classroom days, or a combination of the two. Drawing skills and experience from every level of our organization, we coordinated

a tiered team of 18 education professionals to develop a robust Remote Expedition Curriculum addressing all 5th grade NC science standards to meet schools' needs.

Our Remote Expeditions span eight topical science units, each aligned with multiple learning styles, varied delivery methods, and consistent cross-curricular integration. Activities are based on established Muddy Sneakers pedagogy and expertise,

encouraging hands-on, outdoor learning even in unexpected locations. Morgan Brown, teacher at Shining Rock Classical Academy, adapted the remote activities to connect both in-person and virtual students, "... the shared activity creates a sense of community where they are working, talking, and collaborating together."

Accessibility for all learners is a notable strength of the Remote Expeditions program. Each unit is based around core materials designed for both asynchronous, offline learning in a range of outdoor settings and synchronous learning incorporating live video sessions with Muddy Sneakers instructors. The combination of these materials filled a gap for many schools and educators faced with the ongoing challenges of teaching during a pandemic.

As the spring rounds the corner, we are eager to continue our traditional programming paired with these new remote expeditions connecting thousands of students to the wonders and curiosities of the outdoors. We're excited to continue our work with NC State University to understand the efficacy and impact of our programs, as the Remote Expeditions allow us to support schools further afield from our offices as we strive to serve more schools statewide.





Muddy Sneakers Updates Vision Statement and Core Values

MUDDY SNEAKERS VISION:

Muddy Sneakers envisions a world where every child has the opportunity to form a connection to nature and benefit from the wellness it provides. We are committed to becoming a national model for closing the science literacy gap, welcoming diversity into the outdoors, and instilling an understanding of one's role in the greater ecosystem. In doing so, we cultivate healthier generations committed to the stewardship of our natural resources.

CORE VALUES:



ACCESS



BELONGING



EXPERIENTIAL
LEARNING



CONSERVATION



WELL-BEING

To read more about our vision, visit our website at muddysneakers.org/about

"I've never had a chance to have complete silence like this."

– HURLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 5TH GRADE STUDENT FOLLOWING A SILENT HIKE.

Muddy Sneakers Welcomes Four New Board Members

Muddy Sneakers is proud to welcome four new members to the Board of Directors: Nicola Karesh, Jay Lanier, Michelle Leonard, and Carlton Murrey. These four members draw from diverse experiences bringing extraordinary talents to further bolster the Muddy Sneakers mission. With the addition of Michelle Leonard, located out of the Piedmont and previously on the PNC Advisory Council, we continue to expand our geographic footprint throughout the state.

Instructor Spotlight



Piedmont North Carolina
Field Instructor

Cindy Ramsey

Why do you choose to be an outdoor science educator?

I spent most of my childhood days exploring the woods; there was this sense of freedom and exploration. As a young adult, I found teaching fulfilled my desire for lifelong learning and sharing experiences and knowledge with others. With every Muddy Sneakers expedition, I am brought back to my childhood woods: experiencing freedom and discovery with students who are just as curious and eager as I was and still am. Sharing this gift of nature and science provides my life with purpose, excitement, and wonder.

Share a favorite "Muddy Sneakers moment!"

On a recent expedition, it had been raining on and off and soon started pouring. I asked my group if they wanted to end the day, I got a resounding "NO"! The students were having an amazing day doing something they rarely got a chance to do: get wet and dirty and still call it school. One student was running with their hood up and said to me: "this is the best day ever!"

Biltmore Community Benefit Selects Muddy Sneakers as the 2020 Beneficiary

Ever since George Vanderbilt visited Asheville in 1888, Biltmore and Vanderbilt's family have created a legacy of investing in community and conservation. Every other year, the estate hosts the Biltmore Community Benefit, a community-wide fundraising event held in collaboration with their valued community partners. The event committee selects a non-profit beneficiary and Muddy Sneakers was honored to be chosen as the 2020 recipient, receiving \$174,697.82 supporting our programming throughout western North Carolina.

On September 23, 2020, Executive Director Ryan Olson accepted the donation at a virtual event, sharing:

"The complexities of the 2020–21 school year call on us to support teachers and administrators seeking safe educational models for in-person and remote instruction throughout this pandemic. Muddy Sneakers has created a virtual program and developed innovative methods for maintaining the hands-on feel that makes textbook instruction come to life. It is our hope that our dynamic approach will allow

the upcoming school year to not be one of limitations, but rather expanded possibilities. Thank you again for your support. It is an honor to serve the needs of WNC's youth on your behalf".

We share our immense gratitude to the Biltmore Community Benefit and the following businesses for investing in youth and conservation through Muddy Sneakers.

2020 Biltmore Community Benefit Sponsors

THANK YOU DIAMOND (\$15,000) SPONSORS:

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Wicked Weed Brewing

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THANK YOU BRONZE (\$1,500) SPONSORS:

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Joseph K. Oppermann – Architect P.A.
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Read's Uniforms
US Foods

SPECIAL THANKS:

Clark Communications
The Community Foundation of WNC



Grantor Spotlight NC Outdoor Heritage Advisory Council

Muddy Sneakers is proud to have partnered with the NC Outdoor Heritage Advisory Council (OHAC) to support school systems committed to building nature connections for their students but who were not fully prepared for the COVID necessitated transition to online learning. With \$100,000 of funding provided by the NC OHAC's Go Grant and the CARES ACT, Muddy Sneakers was able to create and provide rich online content and dedicated educator support during this time of great need. These Remote



Expedition materials (see cover story) and live support have filled a gap for many of our partner teachers while they are overstretched and giving everything they can to their students. Few organizations can offer the personalized relationship and direct support that comes with a Muddy Sneakers partnership, the OHAC grant made this work possible. Together we have provided a curriculum that enables curiosity to flow with meaningful enrichment that gets kids outside connecting with nature, whether out their backdoor, in their neighborhood, or on nearby public lands. We share our gratitude with the OHAC for their partnership during this time of great need.



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Did you know?

Have you ever wondered about how scientists find the height of tall trees? Scientists collect all kinds of information about trees (including their height) without ever having to leave the ground! All you need are a few materials:

- Journaling supplies
- String
- A tape measure, yardstick, or ruler
- A tree whose shadow you can see and measure

Gather your supplies, find a tall tree on a sunny day, and join the worldwide community of scientists working hard to better understand the world around us.




To see the full activity, head to www.muddysneakers.org/resources or scan the QR Code!



Do you have professional experience in sales, PR/marketing, fundraising, or journalism, events and would like to volunteer? Please contact us today at info@muddysneakers.org

If you'd like to continue to support the joy of learning outside, visit our website (or use the enclosed envelope) to make a meaningful donation today!

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All photos with students not wearing masks were taken on expeditions before Covid-19