



MAY 2026 NEWSLETTER

OZARK HIGHLANDS TRAIL ASSOCIATION

OHTA's Mission is to Build, Maintain, Promote, and ENJOY the Ozark Highlands Trail.

- OVERSEEING THE TRAIL -

OHTA Board of Directors for 2025-2026

Phil Brown, **President** (Board term ends: June 30, 2026)
Adam Higinbothom, **Vice-President** (Board term ends: June 30, 2028)
Todd Wells, **Treasurer** (Board term ends: June 30, 2028)
Brent Umphlett, **Secretary** (Board term ends: June 30, 2027)
Chris Adams, **Maintenance Coordinator** (Board term ends: June 30, 2026)
Tiffany Mallard (Board term ends: June 30, 2026)
Wade Colwell (Board term ends: June 30, 2027)
Peter Cooper (Board term ends: June 30, 2028)
Randy Soeung (Board term ends: June 30, 2027)

Ancillary Services

Website Development and Maintenance
Social Media Coordinator
Online Store Coordinator
Brochure Business Coordinator
Adopt-A-Highway Program Coordinator
Trailhead Register Data Processor
Arkansas Trails Council Representative
Trail Navigation Partner
Ozark Keystone Trail, Buzzard Roost Gap Lead Developer
Trail Angels

Brent Umphlett and Leslie Wright Productions
Tiffany Mallard
Mel Zabecki
Elizabeth Granderson
Randy Soeung
Yvonne Liske
Yvonne Liske
FarOut – <https://faroutguides.com/>
Yvonne Liske
Mike Lemaster • Billy and Donna Hignite

- FAREWELL FROM THE TRAIL -

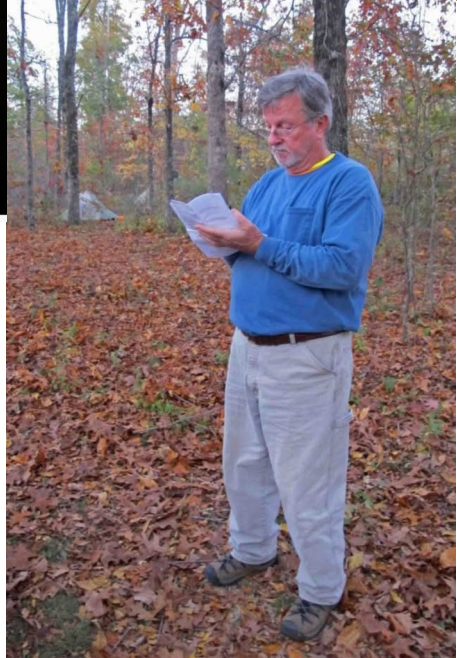
During the evening hours of April 21, 2026, Mike Lemaster departed from the trails of life. Each of us who ever had the good fortune of spending time and conversation with him walked away knowing the special man he was. To his family, the OHTA expresses its deepest sympathy . . . he is missed by all.

To say the least, Mike's passing leaves a huge hole in the canopy of our organization that will never be filled. The best we can do is to honor him, and we have come up with a couple ways of doing just that. The first is in the form of a newly created recognition, the Mike Lemaster Sawyer of the Year Award (sponsored by Stihl), which will be awarded annually to the sawyer whose efforts on the trail went above and beyond in keeping the OHT cleared for all to use.





Our second honor is the dedication of Mike's favorite segment of the OHT, the Cherry Bend section, to him. Signs will soon be designed, created, and installed at each end of the section as reminders that though Mike's song may be ended, the melody lingers on . . .





Here's to you, Mike!



*See you on the other side
our dear friend . . .*

- Looking Back on the Trail -

OHTA RENDEZVOUS AND 2026 ELECTION RESULTS

This year's Rendezvous, held at Tyler Bend, is history, and there were some memorable moments for all in attendance. First and foremost, Mike Lemaster's family participated in this year's event, and though we all wish their presence could have been under more pleasant circumstances, it was a pleasure to meet and interact with them all!

As is tradition at Rendezvous, our organization's annual meeting was held and the evening potluck meal was consumed. Following that, Jim Liles gave a brief talk and was awarded one of the newly minted WWJLD (What Would Jim Liles Do) t-shirts. Following that, a drawing for prizes was held, and virtually all in attendance had a shot at walking away with a giveaway.



Of course, there was some important business addressed. Specifically, the results of the 2026 Board of Directors election were announced. Since all of our members were not in attendance, here are the results for everyone to read:

- Five members ran for the three open positions on the board.
- 22 percent of the eligible OHTA members voted in the election
- The outcome is as follows:
 - Gordon Brown – 27%
 - Yvonne Liske – 25%
 - Tiffany Mallard – 23%
 - Nicholas Johnston – 18%
 - Angela Houser – 8%

Hope to see you all at the 2027 Rendezvous!!

– Cruising Another TRAIL –

Needless to say, there are trails other than the Ozark Highlands Trail, and not all trails are just for walking. That being said, one of our very own—actually, the secretary of OHTA's board, Brent Umphlett—embarked on a trip along one of those trails a little less than one month ago. The trail is America's Historic Route 66, and Brent is cruising the entire 2,448 miles of the "Mother Road" not on foot, but on his State 4130 All-Road 12-Speed bike! The Route cuts through eight states, and Brent embarked on his journey in Santa Monica, California. His goal is to travel the entire distance over the course of nearly two months, and to do so, he plans to cover roughly 50 miles each day.



The last we heard from Brent, he was somewhere in Arizona, but it is likely that by now he has made it into either New Mexico or even Texas. Since Brent is an avid photographer, he plans to snap a few shots of fire hydrants, and of course, many other features highlighting his journey. As he travels along, he is posting on Facebook and Instagram, so if you'd like to keep up with his progress, check him out!

*May your journey be
safe and supremely
rewarding!*

– ASSURING THE FUTURE OF THE TRAIL –

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

As we have been doing for some time, we want to give a special thanks to everyone who has renewed their Ozark Highlands Trail Association (OHTA) membership! The response from those unsure about the status of their membership has been amazing and is greatly appreciated! For those among us who remain unsure about the status of their membership, please drop us an email at OHTA@ozarkhighlandstrail.com. We promise we will respond quickly.

We are aware that there still are numerous memberships that have either expired or are about to expire, and if you're unsure about where your membership stands, please feel free to contact us at the above-mentioned email address. We will provide you with an answer in a very timely fashion.

For 44 years, the OHTA has brought people together to build, maintain, and enjoy the Ozark Highlands Trail (OHT). From its start, the board has relentlessly looked for alternative funding sources and contributions, and those efforts have yielded some remarkable results. Despite their efforts, though, one reality remains: The OHTA cannot exist without the support of its members. You are our lifeblood.

Now, for everyone but those with "Life" memberships, renewals are required annually. While we aim to send annual reminders to each person whose membership is about to expire, technical issues have prevented us from being fully successful at getting those notices out. So, please check your status and renew if necessary.

We truly appreciate your continued support in preserving the beauty of the OHT and in assuring the viability of the OHTA.

– LOOKING AHEAD ON THE TRAIL –

HARE MOUNTAIN HIKE-IN

Here's yet another reminder that the OHTA's 45th year of existence occurs a few months from now. In keeping with tradition, we're having a celebration for this special birthday. The big event will be held very near the summit of Hare Mountain on Saturday, November 7, 2026, and we suspect it will be one to which all previous celebrations pale. In keeping with tradition, a deluxe potluck meal will be served in the late afternoon, and, of course, there will be a wonderfully warm bonfire for all to enjoy while dining and sharing stories through bond-building conversation with others. So, bring your family, invite your friends, prepare your gear, and, for now, dream about the wonderful experience of the Hare Mountain Hike-In of which you will be a part in a mere 6 months. Yes, more details will come as the event draws nearer, so stay tuned!

ARKANSAS SITE STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Interested in yet another way of developing a more well-rounded outdoor existence? How about connecting with folks in the archeological community? If this sounds interesting, there is still time left to enroll in this experience! So, if you want to learn more, here's some information about a great training opportunity you'll want to read:

The Arkansas Site Stewardship [Program](#) is a joint effort between the [Arkansas Archeological Survey](#) (ARAS-the professional archeologists) and the [Arkansas Archeological Society](#) (AAS-the volunteer avocational archeologists). After participating in a day-long workshop, becoming members of the Society, and submitting a successful application, stewards are assigned archeological sites to monitor 2 to 4 times per year. No formal archeological training or knowledge is necessary—you'll learn everything you need to know at the workshop. Then, if you become a steward, there will be additional training opportunities available for deeper dives into different aspects of archeological stewardship.

Not all sections of the Ozark Highlands Trail (OHT) have registered archeological sites, but many do. If you have a section assigned to you for maintenance, hopefully there will be sites you can visit as you do maintenance activities.

So come join in! The workshop will be on May 9th at the Ozone Community Building at 14137 AR 21 in Ozone, Arkansas. Click [here](#) to register. Mel will be happy to answer questions via email (mzabeck@uark.edu), by phone (479-236-3938), or at the April 25th Rendezvous meal and annual meeting at Turner Bend.

- TRAILSIDE READS -

What I Learned from the Trees – L. E. Bowman

Coming Back Alive: The True Story of the Most Harrowing Search and Rescue Mission Ever Attempted on Alaska's High Seas – Spike Walker

QUOTES FOR THE MONTH

“Those we love and lose are always connected by heartstrings into infinity.” Terry Guillemets

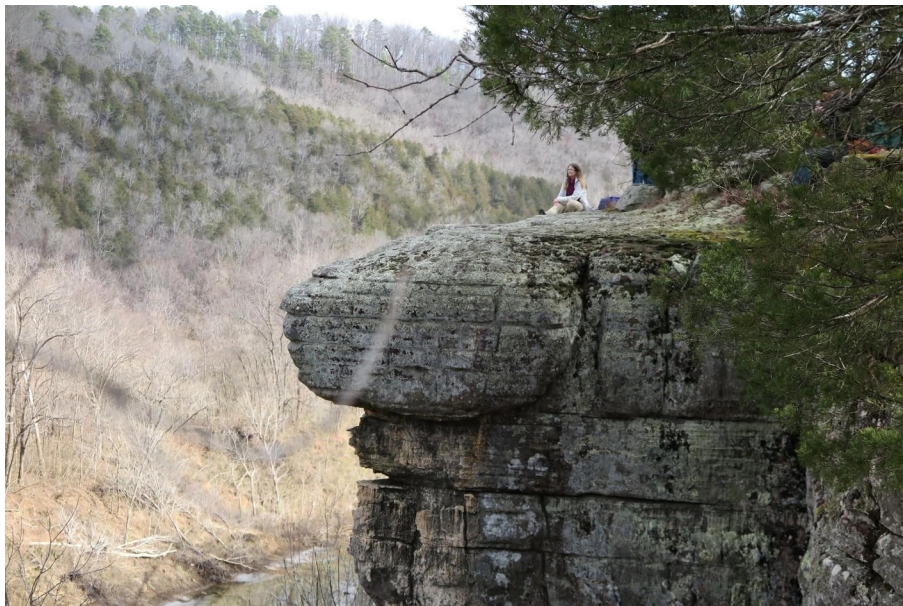
“What we once enjoyed and deeply loved we can never lose, for all that we love deeply becomes a part of us.” – Helen Keller



Secure the pack to your back,
say farewell to camp,
and venture on toward your next
starting point.
This is life, and so it goes.



Till the trails we travel alone become the trail that brings us together . . .





HIKE ONWARD!!

**YOUR ASSOCIATION WITH THE OHT MAKES THIS THE ASSOCIATION IT IS!
THANK YOU ALL FOR BEING A PART OF THE OZARK HIGHLANDS TRAIL ASSOCIATION!!**