

# NOTES FROM THE PINE MOUNTAIN SETTLEMENT SCHOOL

PINE MOUNTAIN • HARLAN COUNTY • KENTUCKY

Summer

Dr. Geoff Marietta, Director

2015

I am delighted to write to you as the Executive Director of Pine Mountain Settlement School. My family and I have made the move from Boston, Massachusetts to Big Log on the beautiful grounds of the School. This is a big change in our lives, but it is one that we undertake with intentionality and excitement. We believe, as have so many others touched by this place, that the natural world of Pine Mountain creates a richness of experience for children and adults that can exceed any offered in a city setting. We love having hemlock trees and newts as neighbors, as well as the fellowship of the staff and visitors to Pine Mountain Settlement School.

My journey to Pine Mountain began long ago. Although I am not from Kentucky, I grew up on the Iron Range in Northern Minnesota—a place where my family moved after coal mining opportunities left the Poconos of Pennsylvania. My great-grandfather died in a coal mining cave-in. I grew up longing to connect with the natural world in the way my forefathers did—before television, phones, and the internet—and went to the University of Montana where I studied Forestry. On campus, a job in an emergency shelter for children permanently changed the direction of my life. I left Montana to teach high school special education on the Navajo Nation in New Mexico.



*Harlan Marietta, age 5, runs  
towards Big Log, his new home*

There, I met my wife, Sky Brosi Marietta, the daughter of former Community School teacher Connie Fearington Brosi. Sky brought me to Harlan County for the first time. It was her idea to get married in the Chapel, and we did in June of 2005. I am eternally grateful to Connie for

*Continued →*

Pine Mountain Settlement School  
36 State Highway 510  
Bledsoe, KY 40810

(Continued from front) connecting this place to Sky and then on to me. Connie passed away on June 27 one month after my family arrived to Pine Mountain. We celebrated her life in the Chapel and in many ways I felt that I had come full circle.

Before we moved here, I worked on issues of collaboration, education, resource conservation, and technology at Harvard University, where I received my MBA and Doctorate. While still living in Boston, I worked with Appalshop to pilot a high-tech startup in Whitesburg, and the experience cemented my love for Eastern Kentucky.

I enter this new role as a learner. I am eager to listen to staff, community members, visitors, supporters, church leaders, business owners, educators, and children to hear their visions for this great campus so that we can, together, both honor and expand the legacy of the School. I encourage you to reach out to me with your comments or questions by phone, e-mail, in-person, or by attending one of our monthly community meetings.

Of course, I bring with me my own excitement for the possibilities of Pine Mountain Settlement School. I am eager to continue and expand the legacy of education and sustainable agriculture. I want to bring visitors to this site to learn about ecology and to preserve the folk traditions of the region. To meet these goals, I would also like to expand our outreach and presence. I have a vision of a dynamic campus that can serve as an example of best practices for other rural communities and educational organizations across the country and world. As my family and I begin this new journey with you, I am humbled by the wisdom and vision of those who came before us to make the School what it is today. May we all make William Creech, Sr. proud to know that Pine Mountain Settlement School continues to “look after the prosperity of our nation....and make a bright and intelligent people.”

Yours in the Spirit of Pine Mountain,

Geoff Marietta

*A New Old Look*

To honor the 100 year old tradition of publishing “Notes,” we have changed the format of our quarterly update to match the signature masthead and font from the publication’s earlier days. To further connect our present with our past, we are also returning to a black-and-white design, along with hand-drawn illustrations (drawings are by Sky Marietta). You can expect full color photographs in our annual report and in social media.



## Calendar of Events

October 1	Community Meeting
October 2	Family Fun Night
October 3	School Reunion for Community and Boarding Students
October 9-11	Fall Arts Weekend
October 16-18	Fall Color Weekend
October 31	Fall Party and Hayride
November 5	Community Meeting
November 6	Family Fun Night
November 7	Harvest Festival
November 21	Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon
December 3	Community Meeting
December 4	Family Fun Night
December 13	Nativity Play
December 17	Pine Mountain Homemakers Christmas Dinner
December 18	Community Children’s Christmas Party
January 22-24	Winter Arts Weekend
February 26-28	Winter Naturalists Retreat



For more details on pricing and registration, please visit our website <http://pinemountainsettlementschool.com/events.php> or call 606-558-3571

## Upcoming Workshops

Join us during the beautiful fall season at Pine Mountain for our adult and family workshops. Come to campus to reconnect, relax, and learn.

### Fall Arts Weekend—October 9-11

During Fall Arts Weekend, learn and work with experts in workshops in nature photography, dry stone masonry, weaving, woodcarving, and hickory bark chair bottom making. For the tenth year, award-winning dry stone mason Richard Tufnell will be returning to Pine Mountain to teach the School's dry stone masonry workshop. This workshop will cover the basics of how to construct a dry stone wall. Harlan County native and renowned photographer Malcolm J. Wilson will lead the digital nature photography workshop where you will learn composition, lighting, and how to prepare photos and files for print or display. At Fall Arts, you can also learn the fundamentals of weaving on a loom, the basics of woodcarving, and steps to making hickory bark chair bottoms.

### Fall Color Weekend—October 16-18

Skip the Smoky Mountain crowds and experience the unadulterated Appalachian fall beauty at Fall Color Weekend. This family-friendly event has activities for all ages including hikes, expert presentations, live music, and nature programming for children. You and your family can enjoy these and other activities while experiencing some of Kentucky's most beautiful natural areas and stunning autumn foliage.

### Harvest Festival and Bee Workshop—November 7

Celebrate the harvest Pine Mountain-style with a workshop on bees and beekeeping, and meals prepared with locally-grown food. Emory University Professor and leading bee expert Dr. Berry J. Brosi will give a talk on colony collapse disorder, and what we can do to help. Then, local honey-making experts Sonny Maggard and Geneva Brock will lead a workshop on making your very own honey beehive. You can admire your craftsmanship and contemplate what we can do to help bees while eating food made with locally grown ingredients.

#### Save the Date

January 22-24, 2016  
February 26-28, 2016

Winter Arts Weekend  
Winter Naturalists Retreat

## Environmental Education

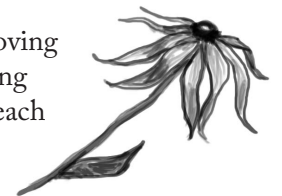
This spring and summer, we welcomed over 1,000 students, teachers, families, summer campers, hikers, and naturalists through our various programs. In April and May, campus was alive with the buzz of elementary school students throughout the week and dedicated hikers and nature-lovers on the weekends. This summer, neither hot temperatures nor seasonal storms could deter our young campers from getting outside and exploring the mountain as they participated in Reading Camp and Day Camps.

In addition to our many returning school groups, we had several first-time visitors this year, including one international school! For three days in April, Pine Mountain Settlement School was home to 128 students and faculty from Han Herreders Ungdomsskole, a high school in Fjerritslev, Denmark. These high school students came to Harlan County during a 2-week visit to the United States. At Pine Mountain, we had a great time hiking in the forest, introducing the students to Appalachian culture, and getting to know these talented and energetic teenagers.

In July, we offered our first Environmental Literacy Workshop for K-12 teachers in the region. With the help of experts from Eastern Kentucky University, teachers from Bell, Harlan, Knox, Letcher, and Woodford counties learned how to connect their students to the natural world and environmental issues using the Next Generation Science Standards.

As the dog days of summer come to a close, we are focusing our energy on tackling invasive species on campus and in the Bickford State Preserve, restocking our education materials, and planning some exciting new programs for the Fall. In addition to our regular school schedule, Fall Arts Weekend, and Fall Color Weekend, we are working with Kentucky Farm Bureau to co-host "Forestry Days" for elementary school students in Harlan County in September and October. We are also partnering with Eastern Kentucky University to host several workshops throughout the year in which folks can learn how to collect scientific data about Kentucky's air quality by investigating the lichen growing on trees in our backyards.

Although the environmental education staff is moving from one busy season to the next, we are also taking time to enjoy the beauty of Pine Mountain with each changing season and looking forward to a new school year!

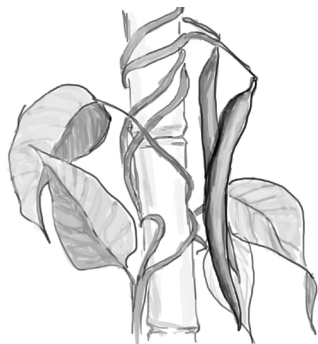


## Agriculture & Sustainability

As expected, the spring and summer months are our most active and challenging when it comes to food production for families in the community and our own kitchen. We battled torrential rains in early July and an unusually cool August to grow over 500 pounds of tomatoes, dozens of bushels of beans, and well over 3,000 ears of corn.

Our incredibly successful Grow Appalachia program has 45 actively-involved families, representing over 200 individuals from the community. Working with these families, we've plowed dozens of gardens, distributed seed, fertilizer, organic pesticide and fungicide as well as canning supplies. We also offered six educational workshops on topics such as garden planning, best agricultural practices, small farm marketing principles, rain barrel construction, organic garden maintenance, and food preservation/healthy cooking.

Turnout for the workshops has been terrific with an average of 38 attendees; our garden planning workshop had over 50 participants. Looking forward into late summer and early fall, end of season garden preparation will begin in September as well as fall garden planting. We will supply cover crop and fall vegetable seed and hold additional workshops on food preservation, mushroom production, season extension, and high tunnel construction. As a commitment to supporting community agriculture, we are now purchasing produce from Grow Appalachia participants and community members for use in student and adults meals at Pine Mountain Settlement School.



*Pole beans grow up bamboo on campus; the farm supplies enough to serve year-round in Laurel House*

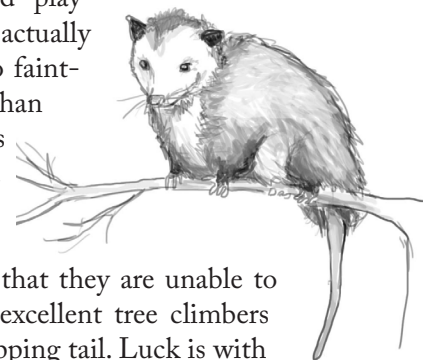
On campus, we launched Pine Mountain's first recycling program. Working with a local community member, we are now recycling all paper, cardboard, plastic, and metals on campus. Collection occurs three times a week and is running smoothly. We have plans to expand the program to the local community.

During your next visit to Pine Mountain we hope you see the results of our efforts in agriculture and sustainability—beautiful gardens, farm-fresh meals, thriving community programming, and recycling bins across campus.

## Lesson Plan: Opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*)

by Bucky Field

Contrary to popular opinion, the opossum is a beneficial mammal that receives an undeserving bad reputation. Not only are opossums important as scavengers, eating a substantial amount of carrion, they also prey on nuisance rodents such as mice. This solitary, nocturnal animal is a successful opportunist. Being an omnivore, they will eat grass, nuts, fruit, insects and even venomous snakes. The evidence suggests that they are immune to venomous bites. The incompletely developed young, are born ½ inch long, about the size of a honey bee, only 13 days after mating. The young then climb up the mother and into a pouch for further development. The opossum is the only extant marsupial native to North America. Often more are born than the mother can nurse, so up to half may perish. When the young become too large for the mother's pouch, at about 80 - 100 days, they will ride on the mother's back. The Opossum has 50 teeth, the most of any Kentucky mammal, which gives the impression of being fierce. In truth they are non-aggressive and as a common means of defense will feign death. This characteristic, called "playing possum", is not playing at all. It is actually a nervous shock condition similar to fainting. Most opossums live no more than 2 years in the wild. This mammal is nomadic with shifting home ranges. Opossums rarely carry rabies. Having a body temperature lower than most other mammals, it is believed that they are unable to support the disease. Opossums are excellent tree climbers that make use of their prehensile gripping tail. Luck is with you if an opossum takes up residence near your home.



### Environmental Education at Home

Late summer is an ideal time for tree identification because many species are producing seeds, yet their leaves are still on full display. Together, seeds and leaves make tree identification a snap, particularly with the help of a field guide (*Trees, Leaves & Bark* by Diane Burns is great for children). Encourage young naturalists to collect all the acorns, cones and spiny seed cases they can find, matching them to leaves. Make "picture notes" of the trees you identify by gluing the seeds and pressed leaves to sturdy notecards. You can bake your tree seeds in a 200° oven for 2-3 hours to kill any bugs or mold spores.

## People in the Neighborhood: Helen Harris

Helen Harris has been an employee of Pine Mountain Settlement School for more than 26 years. Helen was 1 of 10 siblings born and raised in Salt Trace on Straight Creek, a neighboring community on the outskirts of Bledsoe, Kentucky.

Helen met Eugene “Gene” Harris when she was a freshman at Pine Mountain Community School. Gene was a pastor at the Church of God and a school bus driver. They soon began dating and married 5 years later. They have been married for 51 years and have 3 children who have blessed them with 4 grandchildren ranging from 7 to 22 years of age. Helen raised her

family in church and recalls the good times they had at church conventions. Helen likes sewing and making quilts—“just basic stuff, nothing fancy.” She is currently making each of her children a quilt.

Helen works in the kitchen and housekeeping department at Pine Mountain Settlement School and takes pleasure in cooking foods the children enjoy such as chicken and macaroni and cheese. Helen recalls one particular time at Pine Mountain when they were preparing a Soup Bean Supper and the electricity went out. The kitchen uses propane so it wasn’t a problem to prepare the meal, but the guests had to eat their beans by candlelight and lanterns. Helen said everyone enjoyed it and had so much fun that evening!

Helen plans to continue working as long as she is able even though she has thought about retiring. She said she would probably enjoy it for a little while, but then she would miss seeing all the staff at Pine Mountain.



### *From the archives*

“I think there is a good place here where Greasy, Middle Fork, Line Fork, Straight Creek, Leatherwood, and Cutshin all head in against Pine Mountain -- pure air, pure water, and plenty of children to enjoy it, invest something in the character of these boys and girls and someday you will reap a good harvest, if not in this world it will be in heaven.”

*-Letter sent from Rev. Lewis Lyttle to Katherine Pettit, May of 1911*

## Community

Pine Mountain Settlement School continues to provide and strengthen its services and programming for the local community. Long-standing events and programs such as the Nativity Play, Fair Day, Community School Reunion, Easter Egg Hunt, and Day Camps sustain the important values, traditions, and culture that strengthen the Spirit of Pine Mountain Settlement School. We are also working on new programming such as community potlucks, folk dances, walking clubs, sport recreation leagues, and parent-child playgroups. What follows is a summary of just a few examples of our old and new community programming that has happened since the last Notes.

Throughout April and May, nearly 50 community children played baseball in our Little League. The season ended with trophy night; each player received a trophy and classic ballpark food—hotdogs and cracker jacks. We would like to thank the sponsors for their support this year: Turner’s Grocery in Big Laurel, Nolen’s Lodge in Pine Mountain, Quantum Health-Care in Cumberland, Anderson’s Laws Funeral Home and VIP Sports in Harlan. Also, thank you to all the parents and former Interim Director Mim Pride who volunteered to coach and help run the concession stand.

In July, we held our annual Community Day Camps for Kindergarten-6th grade and 7th-12th grade students. This year’s theme for Day Camps was “Kentucky Pioneer Week.” Each day the campers experienced the way pioneers lived; they gathered veggies and made a pot of soup over an open fire after reading Stone Soup; they acted out how pioneers found shelter, water, and made clothes. As a new addition this year, each day the students, teachers, and helpers shared breakfast and lunch together in Laurel House. To conclude the week, young campers made a Pioneer Days quilt with each student contributing a square for the quilt. A very special thanks to Alpha Sigma Tau Alpha Chapter (Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, MI) and Beta Epsilon Chapter (Shippensburg University, Shippensburg, PA) for helping lead the camp.

In August, we celebrated Fair Day. Hundreds of people came this year to visit vendors selling crafts and arts, eat barbecue from Nolen’s Lodge, play games, and folk dance to music in Laurel House. Up next is our School Reunion for all alumni on October 3, 2015.

## Support Pine Mountain Settlement School

Without your continued support, Pine Mountain Settlement School would struggle to serve the people of the region and carry out our recognized Environmental Education program. Nor could we preserve our unique cultural and natural heritage for today and the future. The opposite page provides some specific reasons why we believe you should support Pine Mountain Settlement School. We are a 501c3 nonprofit organization. Contributions to Pine Mountain are tax-deductible. Please use the enclosed envelope to send your donation or make an online donation at <http://pinemountainsettlementschool.com/donate.php>

*If you would like, you may also donate for a specific need:*

Energy Star Certified Refrigerator  
Electric Work Utility Vehicle  
Chimney Inspection and Restoration  
2-Line Desk Phones  
Microsoft Office Business Software  
Adobe Creative Cloud Suite Subscription  
Two PC Laptops  
WiFi Extenders/Repeaters  
Storage Unit for Playground Equipment  
Leaf Blower  
Library Renovation  
Children's Books for our Environmental Education and Community Programs  
Digital Single-Lens Reflex (DSLR) Camera



*As summer comes to a close,  
many species of goldenrod  
(Solidago) bloom on campus*

## Why Give?

***Help us steward our unique natural assets and build the next generation of conservationists.*** Every year we welcome more than 3,000 school children to our 800-acre classroom. While we are proud of our Environmental Education program, we need your help to:

- ✿ Purchase high quality informational books and scientific equipment to enrich our program and better align with the Next Generation Science Standards
- ✿ Pay interns and Americorps service workers to staff our current programs and help them grow
- ✿ Maintain our trail system and create new maps to welcome visitors to our mixed mesophytic forests and summit views

***Engage and empower the people of the Kentucky mountains.*** Our current programming provides day camp experiences to local youth and struggling readers in the area, as well as an assortment of community engagement events and our Grow Appalachia program. Yet, we have only begun to meet the many needs of the residents of Eastern Kentucky. Your support will help us:

- ✿ Provide scholarships so that local community members and schools can attend our programming without charge
- ✿ Refurbish under-utilized spaces on campus for community meetings and events
- ✿ Provide health, nutrition, and exercise programs to local residents
- ✿ Expand our offerings to children, including creating literacy-focused infant and toddler play groups

***Preserve and protect our cultural heritage while making history accessible.*** Pine Mountain's 102-year old campus hosts a veritable treasure trove of items that preserve the traditional folkways of the mountains. However, these important items are fragile and require action to ensure that they survive for another 100 years. Your support will allow us to:

- ✿ Maintain our historic buildings, including urgent maintenance issues
- ✿ Create climate-controlled spaces and purchase archival materials so that we can safeguard important documents, photos, and artwork
- ✿ Inventory our collection across all buildings and work with experts to identify and catalogue the School's historic resources
- ✿ Make our artifacts more accessible on campus and online