Greetings Fellow Friends of the Forest,

I hope everyone is enjoying a healthy and happy Holiday Season. I know many of you have traveled on to other locations to be with friends and family for the holidays. I for one am happy to be here among the red rocks. The weather locally has been great, the red rocks are beautiful as always and it is a great time to be out in the forest.

A very busy and in many ways successful year for the Friends of the Forest is coming to a close. Our trails, the Visitor Center and the Cultural Heritage sites have been as busy as or busier than ever. We have once again exceeded our previous volunteer hour records even though the beginning of the Forest Service year was hampered by a period in which we could not do our regular volunteer duties and for much of the summer Oak Creek Canyon was closed due to the Slide Fire. Our membership numbers continue to increase at a steady pace and many of our new members join because they are introduced to our activities after visiting the Visitor Center, Cultural Heritage sites or one of our Interpretive Program events. Many of these new members join because they want to participate and they become involved quickly and intensely. We continue to have approximately 50% volunteer participation by our membership. This is an extraordinary rate compared to other organizations of our type.

The Keen Grant successfully resulted in the planned for maps and following their creation, we started up a new FOF based website to host the maps and provide information related to the Red Rock District to not only our members but also all visitors to the area. To date, it appears to be a great success. During the review process following the grant award, I had the opportunity to communicate with Keen Corporation management, their professional consultants and some of the other American and International grant award recipients. It was very clear during those discussions that the Sedona Friends of the Forest are known far and wide for our activities and we are held in very high regard. I have been told a number of times in the last several years at a variety of venues and situations that we are the standard to which other organizations try to model themselves and emulate our success. This is clearly the result of the passion and efforts of our members.

We have established several new committees with activities related to making the forest more accessible to everyone, offering our knowledge, experience and love for the region via the Interpretive Program and taking on many special projects to assist and support our friends and partners in the Forest Service. The Trail Maintenance and Construction Committee and the Hotshots, VIS and Trail Patrol have been somewhat re-organized and are busier than ever. Encounter Monitoring, 20th Anniversary and the Sedona Red Rock Memories Slide Show committees very successfully completed their runs.

At our December meeting we will be voting in our next President, Jennifer Young. Jennifer has been an incredibly supportive and active Vice-President during my tenure as the 10th President. She has been the driving force behind the Interpretive Program including Friday talks and Nature Walks by a number of our members. She spearheaded the 20th Anniversary Program and is the key author and director of the FOF History project besides heading up the Nominating and Awards Committees. I have no doubt that the greatest contribution I have made to the Friends, while President, was to bring Jennifer in to carry on for the future. I hope that everyone will give her the same support and friendship that was provided to me. I have no doubt that the best years are ahead of us.

I would like to thank everyone for the incredible support
and friendship provided during my tenure. Every crisis, real or imagined, that emerged over the last several years has been quickly and ably handled by a large number and wide variety of members stepping up to offer their knowledge, experience, ideas and efforts. Being President of the Friends has been a far easier and enjoyable experience than I originally had anticipated because of the support provided. It has been a wonderful experience. I look forward to the next 20 years of ever expanding projects and successes in this beautiful forest area that is our home. I will be re-prioritizing my organization time back to forest activities in a variety of things that the Friends of the Forest do and having a lot of fun doing it. My recent "promotion" from FOF President to a junior member of Smokey Bear’s team is a very welcomed opportunity to interact with residents and visitors alike while having fun, learning a lot and enhancing the experience of visitors to the Red Rock District at the same time. I look forward to both seeing and working with all of you in the near future.

Once again, many thanks for your friendship and support. I wish everyone a very enjoyable and healthy holiday season.

Best Regards

Spence Gustav

FOF iContact Email Service

Between October 2013 and October 2014, Spence Gustav and I have sent out 23 broadcast email messages to our membership. Our email contact list is 240 members and on average about 130 members open the message. There is no data reported on the remainder of recipients, however, in some instances their email provider blocks that information so probably more than 130 of our members read the emails.

There are a number of members who do not have an email address on our contact list and I would like to encourage them to subscribe. We have changed our iContact subscription from 250 to 500 contacts.

If you are a member of the Friends of the Forest and would like receive our broadcast emails which includes color versions of our quarterly newsletter, Branching Out, please contact me at 19ward48@q.com.

Member Website:

www.friendsoftheforestsedona.org

Our FOF member website received 3,116 hits this past year with 10,899 pages viewed. The most visited page is the Home page with 35% followed by our Activity Banner page at 25% and the Calendar page at 20%. The
Member News page and Activities page each receive about 10% of our visits each.

If you access our website Home page using a browser bookmark and you have an interest in the many educational programs sponsored by the Friends, type in our web address and you will be taken to our Activity Banner page before being redirected to our Home page.

New Visitor Website: www.sedonaredrocktrails.com

In August, our District Ranger, Nichole Branton, asked if the Friends would create a visitor web site to replace their old www.redrockcountry.org web site that had been deactivated because of the difficulties in keeping the website updated within the ranger district. For a variety of reasons we could not simply take over the old website, so I created a new website from scratch named www.sedonaredrocktrails.com.

In the two months from its inception on the web on September 12, 2014 through November 12, 2014, the website received 1,079 hits and 5,014 separate pages viewed. As might be suspected, the most visited page is the Home page with 57% followed by our Recreation Trail Map pages at 26%, the Visitor Center page at 8%, and the Things To Do page receiving 7%.

The website offers visitors the ability to view and print all of the 150 Recreational Opportunity Guides for each of our Sedona area hiking trails. Mountain bikers can access pages recommending five separate areas of interconnected trails from which the viewer can combine a number of trails and trail segments for a wide variety of riding distances and experiences.

In addition, there are pages for scenic drives split between the west and east sides of the Sedona area. Although not yet web html optimized, there is also a link to the software available on our 3D Terrain Model at the visitor center. Because the software is still in the process of being optimized for web browsing by our contractor, cropping of the viewing and access to all of the buttons is governed by the individual monitor size and resolution. I have the ability on my personal monitor to see all but the very bottom and right side of the screen, so try it out.

There are also specific pages for the Visitor Center and an information page for our Red Rock Memories DVD as well as the You Tube embedded link to our Friends of the Forest Video produced last year. The Things To Do page offers links to all of the National Monuments, State Parks, Forest Service heritage, camping and day use sites and many other tourist activity websites.

The Forest Service is currently attaching stick and peel labels for our website on the Red Rock Ranger District Recreation Guides distributed at the Visitor Center and other locations around Sedona. Once the remaining 100,000 copies are distributed, hopefully permission will be given by the Forest Service Region to have the new web address printed on the next edition of the Recreation Guide.

If you have not already done so, visit our site and share it with friends and relatives that may be thinking about visiting Sedona. The number of page hits influences the ranking given by Google and other search engines for the web. The first time I searched for the new web site, we were on about the 55th page. When I searched Sedona Red Rock Hiking Trails last week, we were listed on the 5th page.

From time to time, someone points out an error, needed correction or requests that additional information be presented on the web site. Whether it be a misspelling or defective link, please let me know at 19ward498@q.com if you find something that needs attending to.

Mike Ward, Webmaster
An enjoyable time was had by our members at the Annual Volunteer Picnic and Board Meeting on October 25, 2014 at the Beaver Creek Work Center. Special Recognition was made to all of the ten past and current Presidents as we celebrated our 20th year, Mary Lee Dunning, Dennis Parker, Justine Kusner, Al Cornell, Helen Campbell, Chuck Jenkins, Mike Ward, Roy Julian, Carol Wirkus and Spence Gustav. The following new members Bob Beltz, Marilyn Painchaud and Sam Serrill along with returning members Jerry Walters, Noreen Lisowski and Jennifer Young were voted onto the board. Volunteer Hours report was given by Bill Kusner, Friends of the Forest has 430 members, 49 of whom joined in the 2013-2014 business year. We have 207 active members that helped the Friends break all previous volunteer records with a total of 27,469 hours of service. District Ranger Nichole Branton said she is “incredibly lucky” to be able to work with a volunteer group like the Friends of the Forest Sedona. Special guests for the day were Smoky Bear and Woodsy Owl.

Spence Gustav presented the following awards:

New Volunteer of the Year: Bob Beltz and Ernie DiMillo
Volunteer of the Year Award: Kurt Starbuck and Sam Serrill
Heart of the Friends Award: Darl Rector and Jean Ober
President’s Award: Noreen Lisowski

Distinguished Volunteer Award: Jim Wilson and Mike Ober
Special Projects Award: Kevin Harding and Mike Ward
Committee Award Certificates were presented by the Committee Chairs
Cultural Resources: Paul Schwartz, Russ Harris, Paul Cooley
Trail Maintenance & Construction: Rich Spinelli, Sam Serrill, Jim Manning, Ernie DiMillo
River Patrol: Michael Campbell, Gene Rector
Visitor Information Services: Susan Cohen, Kay Bork, Buck Packard, Justine Kusner, Roberta Stockman, Norm LaDuke
Trail Encounter Monitoring: Sam Serrill
Water Sampling: Mike Vitek
Interpretive Program: Kevin Harding, Bob Beltz
Graffiti Removal: Susan Murrill, David Murrill
DVD Slide Show: Spence Gustav
Trail Patrol: John True, Pat Sexton, Thomas Modahl

The guests were treated to a fun skit (with hilarious awards given to FOF volunteers) and a Dutch oven meal prepared and served by the Forest Service Staff.

Susan Vitek
FRIENDS OF THE FOREST PRESIDENTS
Al Cornel, Carol Wirkus, Roy Julian, Mary Lee Dunning, Dennis Parker, Helen Campbell, Mike Ward, Justine Kusner, Spence Gustav and Chuck Jenkins

Spence in action. Left: receiving bear from Forest Service. Left bottom: Spence and Jennifer giving award to Sam Serrill
Above; Spence giving award to Darl Rector
See page 4 for complete list of awards.
Many took time to view the Memory Tree display showing photos of the Friends in action.

Forest Service says a big Thank You to Spence Gustav.

Food, Fun and Fellowship was enjoyed by all.

Pictures of the Volunteer Picnic are complements of Eric LaPrice, Forest Service, Vicki Garrard, Spence Gustav, Michael Vitek and Jean Ober.
Above: Norm LaDuke showing off his famous snake award alongside his sneaky snake at the VIS Center.

Below: Smoky Bear giving Norm a hand
A lot has happened impacting the VIS community since submission of the last article – the following are some notable highlights:

A welcome distraction to all the summer challenges was Smokey Bear’s 70th birthday party held at the visitor center in August. The ranger station put on quite a show and FOF volunteers Noreen Lisowski and Elizabeth Dean were on-hand to help entertain the crowd totaling over 1000. Smokey was kept constantly busy posing for photographs and a huge Smokey balloon attracted visitors in from the highway. There were large birthday cakes as well as face painting and game booths keeping the kids entertained.

(A trivia question – do you know Smokey’s original name? You may not; answer at the bottom of this article)

The visitor center took part in the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, helping to educate the public as to why wilderness areas - places like West Fork, Fay Canyon, and Devil’s Bridge – are so important to preserving our environment. The FOF sponsored a booth visually demonstrating our commitment to maintaining Sedona’s wilderness areas, such as trail maintenance & construction, river rafting aid, and graffiti removal. Crosscut saw demonstrations and the branding of “tree cookies” were also popular.

In other news, three training sessions hosted jointly by the ranger station and the FOF were held in August and November for new VIS and Chamber of Commerce volunteers. The training involved Forest Service policies and procedures, the center’s video, a tour of the visitor facility, and a presentation of the Sedona trails system. The thirteen FOF members trained are: Sam Serrill, Debbie and Jeff Brumbaugh, Dan and Penny Dunn, Irene and Richard Painter, Kathy Hayes, Linda Hogsett, David and Sharon Winkel, Gretchen Yager and Manny Romero. Thanks in part to our new volunteers the monthly shift calendar is now full. The word is out – VIS is a great volunteering gig.

Finally and most importantly are the awardees recognized at our volunteer picnic. There were more than a few, given the relative size of the committee and our desire to balance the recognition between dedicated frontlineers (not easy to select just a few) and others who have assisted VIS in important ways. These include: Norm LaDuke (our most active volunteer), Susan Cohen, Kay Bork, Buck Packard, Justine Kusner and Roberta Stockman. In truth, all of our volunteers beneficially impact the visiting public in ways we can never fully know, and that in itself can be rewarding enough.

Jim Wilson, VIS

(Answer: A black bear cub later named Smokey Bear – officially no “the” in his name unlike in the song – burned his paws in a New Mexico wildfire in 1950 and so he was called “Hotfoot Teddy.” He lived at the National Zoo in Washington DC for 26 years before his death in 1976, and was buried in what is now the Smokey Bear

You will not want to miss the December 10 Board Meeting when the Hospitality Committee goes all out with holiday treats for all in attendance. See you all there.
Kurt Starbuck prepares to invite the public….but by day's end, Andy Beeler and Mike Vitek were all tuckered out

**CULTURAL RESOURCES**  
**JERRY WALTERS**

**Photo Digitization Project**

The project to digitize and catalog the historical/archaeological 35mm slides and prints for the Coconino National Forest continues in Phase 3 of the project. The slide portion of the project was completed in 2012. Work still continues on the print portion of the project. To date, we have processed 26,212 of 67,442 print images! Phase 3 entails transcribing the hand written comments, from the margins of the slides and back of the prints, into a “photolog” database (MS Excel). This phase is by far the largest in terms of hours required for completion. We are slowly nibbling away at this elephant and are 52% complete for the total project. The skills required to be a member of this team include a general comfort with using a Windows based PC, entering data into a spreadsheet, using an image (i.e. photo) viewer, and attention to detail. Training and group work sessions will be provided.

Please consider volunteering for this project. You do not need to be a docent to provide great value to this project.

If you are interested in helping with this project, or would like more information, please contact Jerry Walters at Fofdocents@gmail.com.

I would like to welcome new docents Jeff Brumbaugh and Dave Wallace. Jeff and his wife Debbi are recent arrivals from Ohio, while Dave works and lives in Phoenix but loves the Sedona area so much that he wants to spend more time here by volunteering on weekends. Thanks again to Spence Gustav for conducting the Palatki training.

If you are interested in helping protect our cultural heritage sites and learning more about the Palatki, Honanki and V-Bar-V sites, consider joining the Cultural Resource and Protection Committee. Please call or email (fofdocents@gmail.com) for more information.

Jerry Walters 284-1339

**RIVER PATROL**  
**MIKE VITEK**

The river season started in October with a trip from Childs to Horseshoe Lake. The drive to Childs enabled Dexter to complete the driver requirements for Marilyn and Brian Painchaud. This was their first time to Childs, but not their last. The pick up at Horseshoe Lake resulted in a call that there is no lake, remember this is Arizona.

November saw two trips, both with put in at Beasley Flats and take out at Childs. The first trip assisted with the completion of the driver requirements for Dave Kennedy, a new River Patrol member.

December will have two trips between Beasley and Childs to remove Salt Cedar plants.

Mike Vitek
I would like to thank all of you who turn in great articles and pictures for Branching Out.

Jean Ober, Editor
The fall educational programs continue to draw a positive response from the Sedona community, Friends membership and visitors to our area. Friends members provided two First Friday talks and four guided walks. We extend a special thanks to the Friends who lead these events (Kevin Harding, Roy Julian, Spence Gustav, and Ken Bork) and those Friends who attended and provided support. Please check the Friends of the Forest website (www.friendsoftheforestsedona.org) for upcoming event times and details. Note that hikes and walks require advance registration to limit group size. Call 203-2900 to register.

Upcoming events include:

December 17 Nature walk – Plants and animals, 9:00-11:00 AM with Kevin Harding
January 5 Birding walk, 9:00-11:00 AM with Kevin Harding
January 9 Nature Talk: Mexican Wolf Presentation, 11:00-12:00, Visitor Center Theater, Jeff Dolphin, Wolf Technician, AZ Game and Fish
January 14 Ethnobotany Hike, 9:00-11:00 with Roy Julian
February 2 Birding walk, 9:00-11:00 AM with Kevin Harding
February 6 First Friday, Topic TBD, 11:00-12:00, Visitor Center Theater
February 25 Nature walk – Plants and animals, 9:00-11:00 AM with Kevin Harding

We continue to seek speakers for activities at the Visitor Center Theater and leaders for nature walks and other community events.

Call Bob Beltz (928-554-4327) or Jennifer Young (928-284-0016) if you are interested in volunteering or have ideas for additional events.

Bill Beltz
The Friends of the Forest, Inc. is dedicated to assisting the U. S. Forest Service in maintaining, protecting, and restoring the scenic beauty and natural and cultural resources of forest lands for the enjoyment and use of present and future generations. The objective of this nonprofit, volunteer group is to work in partnership with the U. S. Forest Service in tasks it does not have the manpower or the funds to accomplish on its own.

IMPORTANT DATES FOR YOUR CALENDAR

Wednesday December 10, 2014  9:00 AM - Ranger Station
FOF Quarterly Board of Directors and Members meeting

All Members are welcome

February, 11, 2015
April 15, 2015
June 17, 2015
September 16, 2015
December 9, 2015