

# NEWS FROM THE RIDGE

Photo and logo from bymamps.org



## Baltimore Yearly Meeting Camp signs on as RRC's New Partner Organization!

We are delighted to announce that after two fruitful years of discussion, discernment, and deliberation, Baltimore Yearly Meeting Camps has officially joined the Rolling Ridge Conservancy! The connections between our organizations go back more than 40 years when the Niles family (Rolling Ridge founders) participated in Baltimore Yearly Meeting (BYM). Today, the mission and values of both RRC and BYM Camps dovetail beautifully, connecting the legacies of the past with our hopes for the future. This new chapter of life on the mountain carries forward the Niles family's vision for Rolling Ridge as well as FLOC's commitment to empowering kids' learning and growth through outdoor education opportunities. The Rolling Ridge Conservancy Board, joined by Study Retreat Associates, Friends Wilderness, and the China Folk House, look forward to a long and life-giving partnership.

Last year BYM celebrated 100 years of residential camping experience at three different locations, providing opportunities for kids to grow into their own best selves – physically, socially, and spiritually. BYM's camping programs operate under the principles of Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) and alumni have taken that to heart by establishing an outreach program to enable kids from MD, DC, and Philadelphia to have access to camp opportunities. Having taken over the outdoor education center here at Rolling Ridge, BYM will spend this year maintaining and upgrading the facilities, tending to much needed roadwork, and building new cabins in preparation for welcoming campers for the 2024 season.

Camp Opequon, the BYM camp that will be relocating to Rolling Ridge, emphasizes connections between nature, creativity, and spirituality. Campers' days are filled with art workshops, physical challenges, team-building games, and environmental activities. Jared Wood, director of Opequon, describes his vision of creating spaces "where people from disparate backgrounds can engage in dialogue, reflection, and making that moves us past the destructive ideas we've inherited to the collective love, brilliance, and liberation we all deserve."

RRC welcomes the BYM Camping Community and looks forward to hearing sounds of joy, camaraderie, and outbursts of creative expression here on the ridge!



**KIDS MEET KIDS!**  
Campers visiting from Opequon enjoying newborn goats at the Friends Wilderness Center and hanging out together



*Read more on page 2...*



## MEET OUR NEW CONSULTANTS



**Luke Bauer** has been hired to fill the “boots on the ground” role of Land Steward, monitoring the wellbeing of woods and wildlife, and working with volunteers to carry out conservation projects from trail maintenance to invasive species mitigation.

Luke came to Rolling Ridge with his family in 2014. Luke doesn't just live at Rolling Ridge – he inhabits this place with body, heart, and soul, nurturing kinship relationships with genuine curiosity. A runner, wanderer, forager, permaculturist, observer, and teacher, Luke has intimate knowledge and experience of the woods and waterways, the rhythms of the seasons, the plants that grow here from fungi to willow, and all the wild beings that live here. He has worked with our former land steward, taught wilderness classes, planted and coppiced trees, and led numerous groups into the woods.

Luke's primary focus at the outset of this job is attending to outstanding issues that challenge forest health and looking for opportunities to restore balance within the ecosystem.

**Carl Benson**, RRC's new Conservation Manager, will work with the Board to implement conservation work, coordinate outreach and communications, oversee the NFWF grant, handle administrative tasks, and establish an RRC office.



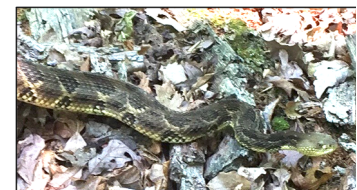
Carl brings legal skills and experience with environmental activism that will serve RRC's strategic vision well. Major projects for the next two years include re-writing the conservation easement and networking with neighboring landowners to encourage protection of lands beyond Rolling Ridge. Carl spent 15 years practicing patent law. For the last decade he has been active in climate work at the local level, organizing events, facilitating state level lobbying, bringing people together for bi-monthly gatherings, and participating in many volunteer activities. As his daughter became involved with the Youth Climate Movement, Carl was helping provide technical support for worldwide zoom events long before CoVid. Now living at the Niles Cabin with his family, Carl has already been developing relationships with neighbors.

### Elusive Teachers in the Woods

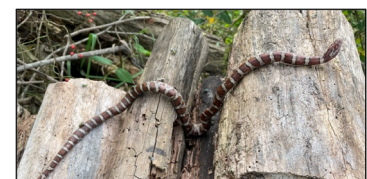
Preparing for a weekend of outdoor activities at Rolling Ridge for adult-child duos, we often ponder how to enable opportunities for “nature novices” to feel comfortable in the woods. How do we give enough information about ticks and rattlesnakes and poison ivy to be prudent without feeding their fears? One of the wiser leaders said we should consider these beings as teachers. They are not “out to get us” - they are just living their lives. Our understanding of their potential for inadvertently harming us can motivate us to enter this wilder world with respect. One of the best lessons they can teach us is how to pay attention, how to set off into the woods with curiosity and mindfulness.

Once you begin to attune your senses to your surroundings, to adapt to a more open awareness, you begin to not just notice...

*(Cont'd on page 3) ...*



Timber Rattlesnake



Harmless Kingsnake





There are more life forms in a handful of forest floor than there are people on the planet. ~ Peter Wollheben.

...the occasional copperhead but myriad other beings, too. Perhaps it's the young toad nearly hidden on the fallen log, the tiny emerald beetle skittering across the path at your feet, or the funnel-web spider patiently awaiting its prey.

What are our expectations of nature? Are we looking for a lovely, photogenic, comforting haven of wood thrushes and swallowtails and waterfalls? Then gnats and chiggers become a great annoyance and disillusionment. Or do we crave "Wilderness"? How wild, fierce, challenging, uninhabited, and remote does a place have to be to qualify? Then pedestrian trails become boringly dull and disappointing as we hurry past on the way to grander things.

Perhaps when we set off into the woods, we can let go of all our expectations, both positive and negative, and open ourselves up to the invitation to just look and listen and learn. When we pay attention to the here and now, we awaken possibilities for experience and unexpected encounters that may lead us to glimpse our kinship with all beings.



## Miners' Lady Endurance Runners Brave the Heat

The 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Miners Lady Endurance Race took place on July 29<sup>th</sup> during one of the hottest spells of the summer. As usual, though, preparations were thorough, with plenty of ice, watermelon, pickles and assorted liquids and treats. The community of runners maintained a spirit of good humor, support for each other, and amazing endurance. Runners finishing laps after nearly 8 hours still came in smiling and proud, to well-deserved cheers and cowbells!

