



# The Mountain

## Retreat & Learning Center

🍁 2020 🍁

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## ANNUAL REPORT

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### Mission

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The Mountain enriches lives, fosters an appreciation of the natural world, honors the interconnectedness of all things, and inspires people to build inclusive, meaningful, sustainable communities throughout their lives.



# About The Mountain

The Mountain was founded by Unitarian Universalists in 1979 as a nonprofit camp and conference center. This is an ecologically conscious retreat and learning center serving congregations, businesses, schools, and other Unitarian Universalist and community groups.

Located on 4,200 foot-high granite cliffs of the Southern Blue Ridge Mountains, we offer a unique opportunity - come refresh your spirit in the natural beauty of this magical place we call The Mountain.

The Mountain offers a full range of dining, lodging, and meeting facilities while supporting Mountain programs hosted throughout the year. In addition, a wide array of other groups and organizations rent our facilities for their retreats and events.

## CORE VALUES

The Inherent Worth and Dignity of Every Individual

Justice, Equity and Compassion in Human Relations

Acceptance of One Another and Encouragement to Spiritual Growth

A Free and Responsible Search for Truth and Meaning

The Right of Conscience and the Use of Democratic Process

The Goal of World Community with Peace, Liberty, and Justice for All

Respect for the Interdependent Web of All Existence of Which We Are a Part

## VISION

An exemplary retreat, camp, and learning center that celebrates Unitarian Universalist principles, inspires people of all ages, transforms lives, and builds a more compassionate world.

## MountainCamps & Programs for Families

The Mountain's largest and strongest program is its summer MountainCamp. From mid-June to late-July, our mountaintop is filled with children and youth from 1st to 12th grades. Open to all, our camp program is designed to instill in children an appreciation of the natural world. Sadly, this year with COVID, we made the hard decision to not hold camp in 2020. With the cancellation of MountainCamp in 2020, we took time to prepare for 2021. We created the Lee Knight Scholarship fund in honor of long time friend of The Mountain Lee Knight. Lee has continuously brought joy to countless children with his songs and stories. Having an active presence with The Mountain since its creation over 40 years ago.



MountainCamp is a very special place for me and my children. It's a community of like-minded people who are striving to be closer to nature and each other. We were so grateful for our son's first summer this past year getting to forge solid friendships and have memorable experiences at The Mountain. He has been looking forward to coming back to camp and hasn't stopped talking about all the fun he had last summer. The staff put in so much love, care, and acceptance into every aspect of camp. We feel like they are our Mountain family, and we are so grateful to be a part of it.

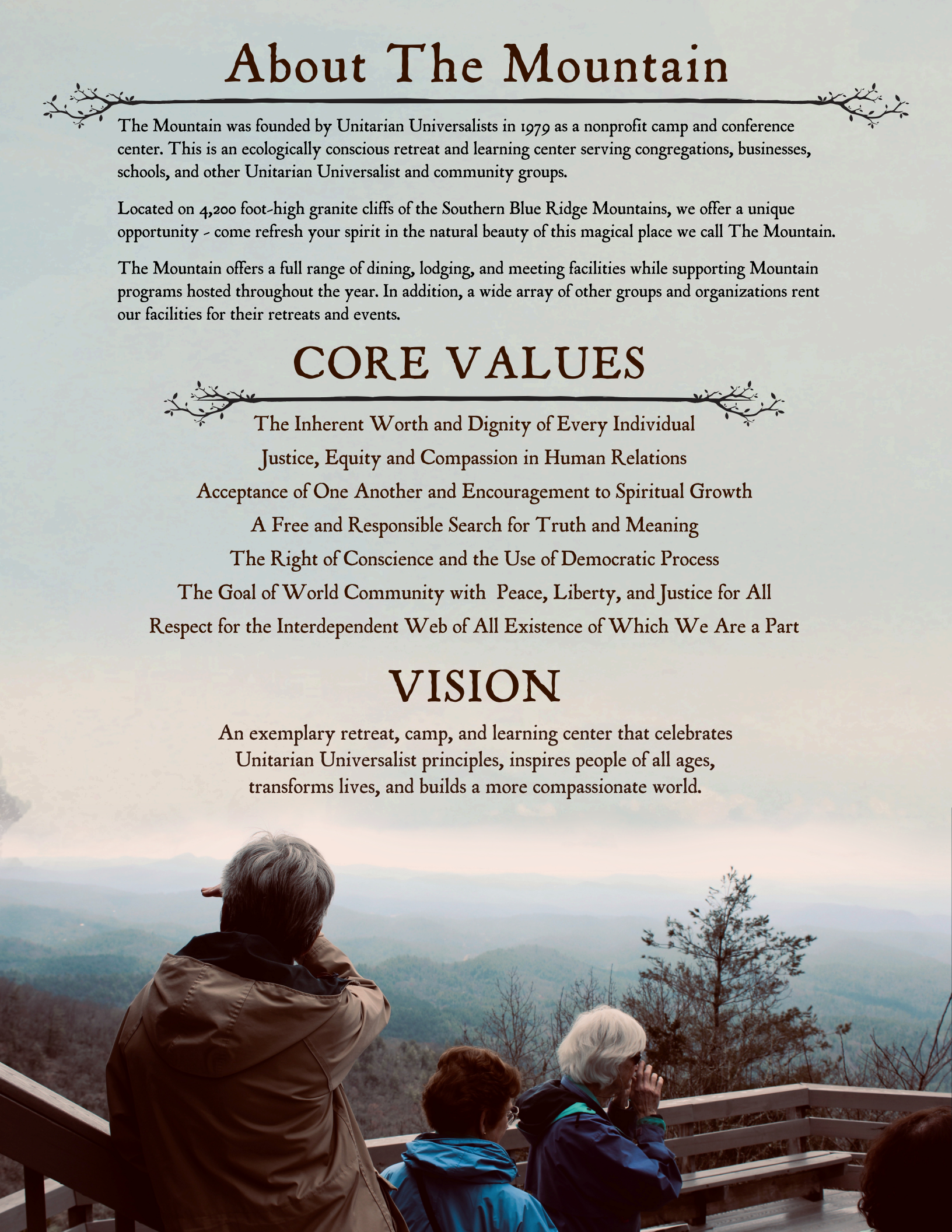
- The St. Germain Family



## Personal Retreats

During this time of minimal programming, we were delighted to offer a variety of personal retreats for families, friends, small groups, writers, and adventurers. This has been a great way for people who love The Mountain to return and for new people to be introduced to The Mountain.

[TheMountainRLC.org](http://TheMountainRLC.org)





# Thank You, Mountain Members & Friends

During the pandemic, as you can imagine, things shifted dramatically. I was so glad that staff, leadership, and our truly amazing volunteers collaborated for The Mountain to achieve a variety of goals, making a difference at The Mountain! All this, when our hearts were breaking each day to be here without our beloved guests!

I came to realize just how much all of you really missed being able to come to The Mountain for your retreats and events! It is you I am writing about. You opened your hearts and wallets to help The Mountain when our main source of revenue was no longer realized. Large and small donations, made in many different ways (outright gifts, new or increased monthly giving, full or partial forgiveness of refunds due, responses to fund-raising requests, membership donations, and more.) I have been witness to so much love! A number of gifts were accompanied by handwritten notes of support, encouragement, and appreciation of the work of our staff. There were many email notes as well as phone conversations, brief or lengthy, that expressed gratitude for, and appreciation of The Mountain's existence. Honestly, your repeated generosity of soul, spirit, and dollars felt like welcome rain on parched land to my own soul as I know how critical it has been for our special place to receive your support.

Many of your words accompanying these gifts were shared with our hardworking staff. Memories and feelings that were formed from my processing of these many gifts, large and small, during this time continue to warm my heart. I thank you again for all your contributions towards helping The Mountain thrive and for your continued needed generosity. Truly, you and your families are our life-blood, and you are loved and appreciated beyond measure.

With warmest wishes for your and your family's well-being,  
Bonnie Gramlich



# 2020 Mountain Programming

Despite having cancelled many events and gatherings at The Mountain, 2020 did host a handful of spacious yet intimate and, most importantly, successful and healthy programming! In winter, The Mountain hosted both new and returning guests who attended our own Mountain New Year's Vision 20|20 Program, Gay Spirit Vision Winter Meditation, Winter Awakenings, Black Lives UU, Emerson UU Choir, Americorps, Peer Advocate Leaders (PAL) Planning Weekend, SE UU Ministers Association, and Cultivating Inner Stillness.

While The Mountain did not host in-person group programming from mid-March until June, staff and volunteers worked creatively to pivot toward virtual programming. Our Zoom offerings to our community included: Adaptive Living: From Fear to Love, Living Your Life's Purpose, White Privilege and How to be an Anti-Racist.

In summer, with gathering restrictions beginning to lift, Christ in the Smokies, a father-son rite of passage event, was held, followed by The Mountain's own Intergenerational Family Camp and a new program, A More Beautiful World Weekend. These gatherings allowed us to test new ways of coming together and safely sharing space. This meant lots of programming in nature, encouragement of "pod" activities, and spacious meal service.

As the year progressed, more small groups and personal retreats were ready to visit. The Mountain hosted small pod-style congregational retreats, private farm-to-table dinners, an Italian Cooking Experience, as well as an Alcoholics Anonymous group, and Shamanic training event.

The challenges of 2020 provided many lessons to the people of The Mountain. We are happy to report that we collectively rose to meet those challenges and have our sights set on the good things ahead.





# Mountain Governance

## The Mountain's Board May 2020

### Board Chair

**K.C. Boyce**

1<sup>st</sup> Term: 2017-2020

2<sup>nd</sup> Term: 2020-2024 Chair

### Planning & Finance

**Kerry Keys**

1<sup>st</sup> Term: 2017-2020

2<sup>nd</sup> Term: 2020-2023

### Leadership Development

**Maggie Lovins**

1<sup>st</sup> Term: 2020-2023

**Megan Eckert**

1<sup>st</sup> Term: 2019-2022

Liaison to Mountain  
Endowment Fund

**DeAnn Perterson**

1<sup>st</sup> Term: 2017-2020

2<sup>nd</sup> Term 2020-2021

Liaison to Nominating  
Committee

**Ayanna Stringer**

1<sup>st</sup> Term: 2020-2023

### Institutional Advancement

**David Messner**

1<sup>st</sup> Term: 2019-2022

**Taryn Bledsoe**

1<sup>st</sup> Term: 2020-2023

### Institutional Performance

**Phil Sterner**

1<sup>st</sup> Term: 2020-2021

**Lee Reading**

1<sup>st</sup> Term: 2018-2020

2<sup>nd</sup> Term: 2020-2023

**Nancy Wylie**

1<sup>st</sup> Term: 2019-2022

Corporate Secretary

**Zoe Hansen-Burnet**

1<sup>st</sup> Term: 2018-2021

### Non-Voting Members

**Ted Wisniewski**

Executive Director, Ex Officio Member

**Chris Breivogel**

Recording Secretary, Appointed

## Board Intent

Our intent is to cultivate a highly effective and collaborative community of staff and volunteers that helps The Mountain thrive, consistent with its Mission and Vision, through the COVID era and beyond.

## Desired Outcomes

- A positive and high trust culture with an increased sense of purpose and inclusivity
- Clear evidence of success in achieving our Mission
- A well-informed and engaged Board that models exemplary leadership and integration of vision and values
- Clarity and alignment around The Mountain's short- and medium-term business model(s)
- Alignment between staffing plan, leadership, and business goals
- HR excellence
- Excellence in financial planning and execution
- Delightful customer/guest experience

## Message from the Acting Executive Director

As with individuals and organizations around the world, for The Mountain, 2020 was a year of challenges and opportunities. The COVID experience resulted in dramatically reduced numbers of participants for on-site programs. Typical of the people who love The Mountain, we were showered with support: from people developing online courses reflecting Mountain values and keeping us connected through ZOOM; volunteers engaging in a variety of essential work at The Mountain; staff building a personal retreat business; farm team continuing sharing knowledge and produce; as well as so many people sharing financial contributions to continue the work of our mission.

The opportunities emerging from COVID included launching extensive work on our facilities. By re-purposing and training many members of our staff, we are making progress on taking care of our buildings. This includes general sprucing up, and in some cases, major repair. These efforts have reflected our concern for staff as we kept everyone employed and our concern for guests as we can provide a better guest experience.

Our previous Executive Director, Ted Wisniewski, completed his tenure at The Mountain October 15. During his seven years of service, Ted's contributions included building financial security of The Mountain, as well as supporting growth of the Endowment Fund, expanding the variety and quantity of programs, and extending connections with our wider community. We wish the very best for Ted and his family as their journey continues.

Over the years, thousands of adults and youth have found a home at The Mountain, a place which supports personal and spiritual growth. This experience has often evolved into a passion for The Mountain Vision, which includes inspiring people of all ages, transforming lives, and building a more compassionate world. As we continue together in this journey we call life, we have the potential to make a difference in the world. How would you like to be involved in this Mountain journey? What interests and skills would you like to share? Let's discuss the possibilities for writing the story of the future of The Mountain!



## A Word from KC, The Mountain's Board Chair

What a year 2020 was! Little did we know, as my kids eagerly looked forward to Mountaincamp in February, what a challenging year awaited us. Although the pandemic put an end to nearly all on-site programming in 2020, many of us found our way to The Mountain for socially-distanced personal retreats throughout the year. And even more of us found a way to stay connected to our beloved Mountain community through virtual programming and events held throughout the year.

We were – and are – fortunate in many ways. First, former Executive Director Ted Wisniewski left a legacy of sound financial management and a “nest egg” that meant that our financial challenges were much less acute than many non-profits faced during the pandemic year. Second, we have an amazing community that supported The Mountain financially and with their time during the year. Third, we have an extraordinarily dedicated group of staff that faced adversity with creativity and flexibility to deliver virtual programs and grow our community over the course of the year.

Thanks in large part to your support and a PPP loan that has been forgiven, many of our staff pivoted to taking care of our facilities needs. The Mountain's buildings are looking better than they have in years, and we're looking forward to when we can again host large groups on-site. On behalf of the entire Board of Trustees and staff of The Mountain, I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your continued support and partnership in helping The Mountain achieve its mission. The world needs The Mountain more than ever, and I can't wait to see you up here this year!

*KC*

As part of the board's stated intents and desired outcomes, the staff created a covenant in the spring of 2020. The multi-session process was facilitated by board member Maggie Lovins and resulted in a consensus-driven statement. The covenant describes how staff come together to work with common aspirations and hold each other in honest, caring relationship.



Rev. Maggie Lovins serves as the Community Minister for the Unitarian Universalist Church of Pensacola.



## Staff Covenant

Each day I make an intentional effort to respect and understand myself and others as wisdom-seeking people. We strive to form harmonious connections and balance with all that surrounds and all that is within. It is through collaboration that we join a legacy of passionate keepers in order to joyfully cultivate a thriving future for The Mountain, for all.



# The Many Hands Peace Farm



**MANY HANDS  
PEACE FARM**



## Nourishment

The Many Hands Peace Farm took a leading role in 2020 as much of the Mountain's retreat business suffered. The pandemic encouraged people to slow down, examine their patterns, and get back to basics as many found themselves in a new relationship with their local environments. Issues around food security and education, supply chain efficiency, and environmental health found themselves in the spotlight.

The Farm continued to participate in local markets throughout the year and to engage with the local community. We opened a roadside farm stand for nursery plants, fresh eggs, and seasonal produce. This created a new opportunity to connect with customers and to generate farm revenue, as did our new weekly food shares program. These initiatives brought in over \$15,000. We provided produce for Fishes & Loaves Food Pantry in Cashiers and the Highlands Food Pantry around thanksgiving in conjunction with the International Friendship Center and participated in "Plant for the Plateau," an initiative to fight food scarcity by encouraging gardening and sharing surplus harvest with food banks.

The Farm presented a well-attended Introduction to Wild Mushroom Identification workshop and worked with kitchen manager Jenn Tuft to host several farm-to-table dinner events, including an Italian dinner with guest chef Sandra Stefani. We also received several grants in 2020, including one from the Laurel Garden Club for an interpretive kiosk and 80 metal plant signs. We added to our food forest plantings with hardy kiwi, Chinese chestnuts, American persimmon, and spicebush. We also grew our online engagement with over 200 social media posts.



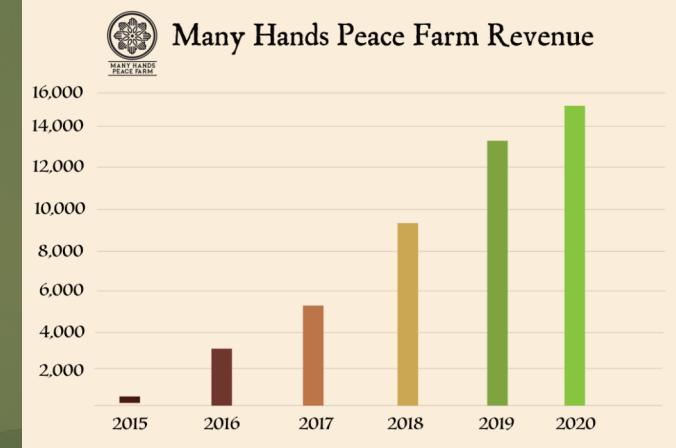
## Community



## Education



After glow from introductory games and harvest preceding dinner, for September's "A More Beautiful World Week".



**Above** - Proceeds come from workshops, classes, dinners, and farm product sales. You can support the farm and purchase products online through our online store:  
[www.themountainrlc.org/farm-products](http://www.themountainrlc.org/farm-products)

Join us on the farm and schedule a class:  
[www.themountainrlc.org/farm-events](http://www.themountainrlc.org/farm-events)

**Left** - MHPF's first honey harvest and full year wintering bees.

For 2021 plans are in the works for a new Environmental Education to highlight farm-centric ecological programming and to offer more onsite educational opportunities through growing food and preparation classes. Contact us to consider how you might be involved.



# Mountain Facilities

With the theme of getting back to the basics, 2020 gave us a year to assess our infrastructure and catch up on several years of deferred maintenance. Aided by two PPP loans, Staff was able to transfer their skills and energy to different departments. For example, Jenn our kitchen manager got to put her expanding carpentry skills to work as a project manager for a few renovation projects.



After coming as a volunteer after a pandemic-related job loss, Daniel Lacy joined the staff and brought strong carpentry and mechanical skills.



Instead of making patchwork repairs, Bob Fox opted to rebuild almost the entire wall and picture windows that had rotted from years of moisture.



The old director's residence received a dramatic overhaul to turn it into an attractive small group retreat space that we're calling Cliff Haven.



## Welcoming Andy Harris

Former MountainCamp Staff Andy Harris has reconnected with The Mountain, bringing his professional experience as a contractor to renew many of the buildings around campus.

The Tree House and Rec Hall have received extensive care and upgrades over the past year. This major project is nearing completion. Volunteer Bob Fox has spearheaded the work, and almost all staff and volunteers have participated on the crew.

Our White Oak facility has been transformed into a cozy meeting space.

The spruced-up laundry room reflects appreciation of the dedication of housekeeper Mary Beth Buck.

The Mountain's newly renovated small group retreat space, Cliff Haven, was previously the director's home. In addition to the amazing view of Blue Valley, this facility offers three bedrooms, a well-appointed kitchen, laundry facilities, and a bright bonus den.

Cabin 12 is being updated thanks to generous donations from the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Columbia. Thank you to those who donated specifically for upgraded walls and doors. This will enhance the guest experience and revenue potential.

Over 2020, Robert E. Smith worked to restore the Treehouse and Rec Hall that he actually helped originally construct back in the 1980s.



## Introducing Cliff Haven

Cliff Haven is The Mountain's newest retreat space. Centered on top of Little Scaly Mountain, Cliff Haven perches at 4300 ft. and overlooks Blue Valley's vast and pristine cloud forest. With vaulted ceilings, skylights, and a spacious floor-plan, Cliff Haven embodies an ethereal nature. Its grand study, large open kitchen, and sleeping spaces can comfortably accommodate group sizes of at least six people.





# Report of the Financial Advisor

## Overview of Financial Position

As the Board's Financial Advisor, I'm pleased to one again report The Mountain's financial health remains strong. Net assets increased \$119,225 to \$1,698,027 and other than usual operating payables we remain debt free!

## Summary of Revenue and Expense

Total revenue of \$837,545 was down \$391,875 from the prior year, which was anticipated due to the pandemic in 2020.

Program revenue of \$268,064 was down \$647,566 from the program revenue of \$915,630 in the prior year. The reduction in 2020 was due to program cancellations and youth camp cancellation due to COVID-19.

Contribution revenue of \$569,481 was up \$255,691 above the prior year. The support of our community during this pandemic year was a significant contributor to this increase.

Total expenses of \$718,320 was \$398,464 below the prior year. The reduced expenses were in personnel expenses, outside services, food expenses, fees, lease expenses, maintenance and program activities.

## Overall Observations

The Mountain's 2020 financial results continue to remain strong despite the revenue decline reflected in the year-end financials. Net income has now been positive for the 9<sup>th</sup> consecutive year and Total Net Assets have continued to grow. Total net assets in 2020 were \$1.7 million an increase of \$1.26 million above 2010.

# Statement of Activities

Dec 31, 2020 & 2019

	Audited 2020			Unaudited 2019		
	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total
Revenues and Support						
Retreats and conferences	128,376		128,376	437,830		437,830
Youth programs	475		475	271,545		271,545
Mountain Design programs	19,879		19,879	158,421		158,421
Personal retreat guest	-		-	11,549		11,549
Store revenue, net of expenses	2,586		2,586	6,680		6,680
Contributions	378,672	177,021	555,693	183,482	114,848	298,330
PPP revenue	83,000		83,000	-		-
Membership	4,760		4,760	5,720		5,720
Rental income	14,876		14,876	-		-
Interest income	4,834		4,834	1,449		1,449
Other	14,038		14,038	28,156		28,156
Gifts in kind	9,028		9,028	9,740		9,740
Net assets released from restrictions	32,608	32,608	-	80,609	(80,609)	-
Total Revenues and support	\$693,132	\$114,413	\$837,545	\$1,195,181	\$34,239	\$1,229,420
Expenses						
Program and services	487,451		487,451	628,571		628,571
Management and general	157,141		157,141	420,945		420,945
Fundraising	73,728		73,728	67,268		67,268
Total Expenses	\$718,320		\$718,320	\$1,116,784		\$1,116,784
Change in Net Assets	(25,188)	144,413	119,225	78,397	34,239	112,636
Net assets, beginning of the year, as restated	\$1,364,686	\$214,116	\$1,578,802	\$1,286,289	\$179,877	\$1,466,166
Net asset, end of year, as restated	\$1,339,498	\$358,529	\$1,698,027	\$1,364,686	\$214,116	\$1,578,802

# Statement of Financial Position

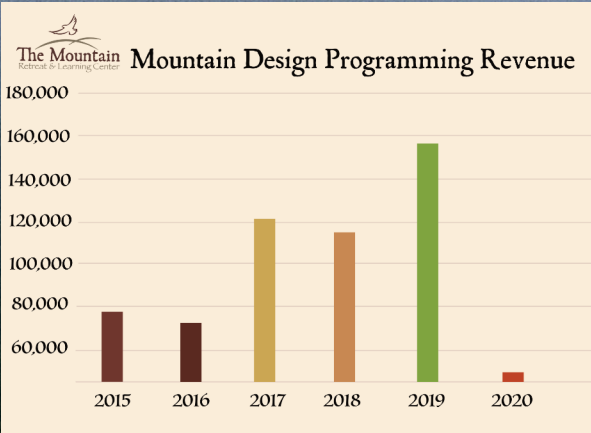
Dec 31, 2020 & 2019

Assets	Audited 2020	Unaudited 2019
Current Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	728,682	564,255
Accounts receivable	8,725	1,200
Sales tax receivable	1,630	5,101
Inventory, net	3,940	9,333
Prepays	2,952	10,662
Total Current Assets	\$745,929	\$590,551
Other Assets		
Investments	175,000	226,031
Property and equipment, net	819,620	845,939
Total Other Assets	994,620	1,071,970
Total Assets	\$1,740,549	\$1,662,521

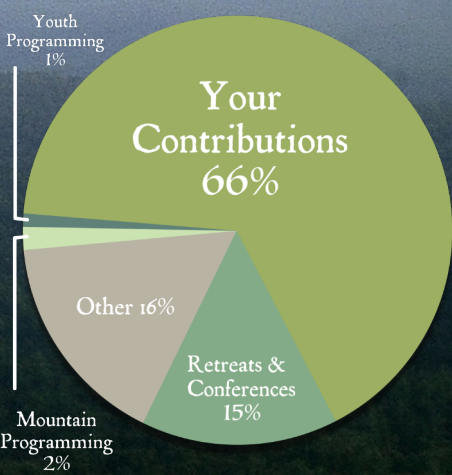
## Liabilities and Net Assets

Current Liabilities		
Current portion of long term gift annuities	6,273	6273
Accounts payable	7,833	15,090
Accrued expenses	18,732	24,928
Deferred revenues	8,308	29,780
Total current liabilities	41,146	76,071
	1,376	7,648
Long-term gift annotates, less current portion		
Total liabilities	\$42,522	\$83,719
Net Assets		
Without donor restrictions	1,339,498	1,364,686
With donor restrictions	358,529	214,116
Total net assets	1,698,027	1,578,802

Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$1,740,549	\$1,662,521
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The 2020 Mountain Designed Revenue was \$19,879.





# Endowment Report

Thank you to all our Endowment Fund members! 2020 was a great year for The Mountain Endowment Fund with assets increasing 25% over the prior year end.

Total assets at December 31, 2020, were \$486,648 vs. \$389,822 at year end 2019. The increase is attributed to donations of \$45,621 and investment returns of \$62,779 (approximately 15% annualized). The Mountain Endowment Fund donated \$11,575 to The Mountain in 2020 based on 2019 financial activity. This gift was used to provide COVID-related supplies for guests. This included picnic tables for outside dining, a refillable water station, masks, and hand sanitizer.

## Why Your Gifts Matter

### CHILDREN & YOUTH

At the heart of The Mountain's annual programming are our summer MountainCamps and the series of Youth Conferences hosted each fall and winter. The Mountain places a strong emphasis on being an inclusive, non-competitive environment where youth can develop a deeper understanding of themselves and form lifelong friendships.

### WELCOMING COMMUNITY

Magic occurs when people come together at The Mountain. This is a special place where children, youth, and adults experience the joys of connecting with one another and the natural world. We offer summer camps, leadership retreats, environmental programs, and outdoor activities galore to engage and inspire people of all ages. People are the heart, hands, and spirit of The Mountain. Our members, volunteers, donors, campers, and guests have loved and worked and supported this special place into being.

### IMPACT OF COVID ON THE ENDOWMENT

Direct donations to the Mountain Endowment Fund in 2020 were lower than they had been in the past as donors were encouraged to provide direct financial support to The Mountain to help offset some of its financial challenges related to the pandemic. The loss of revenues during 2020 could have put The Mountain in great financial peril had it not been for the generosity of our donors.

The Endowment Board is grateful to all who supported the staff in 2020. Now that the worst appears to be behind us, we will welcome new gifts in 2021 directly to MEF

[TheMountainRLC.org/the-mountain-endowment-fund](https://TheMountainRLC.org/the-mountain-endowment-fund)

#### Endowment Directors

2019-2020

Linda Sterner  
President

Lem Arnold  
Vice President

Rob Marcy  
Treasurer  
Deborah Holden  
Secretary

#### Directors

Kim Breivogel

Bill Cherry

Lois Lee

Margi Milburn

Erin Thompson

Megan Eckart  
MRLC Trustee Liaison

#### Ex-Officio Members

Ted Wisniewski,  
Executive Director MRLC  
(Jan-Oct)

Beverly Cree,  
Acting Director MRLC  
(Oct-Dec)

## 2020 Contributions to The Mountain Mission

Your  
Volunteering!



Volunteers  
Contributing  
6,363 hours

Federal PPP  
Forgivable  
Loan



2020  
\$83,000

Your  
Donations!



\$371,182 Toward  
General Use

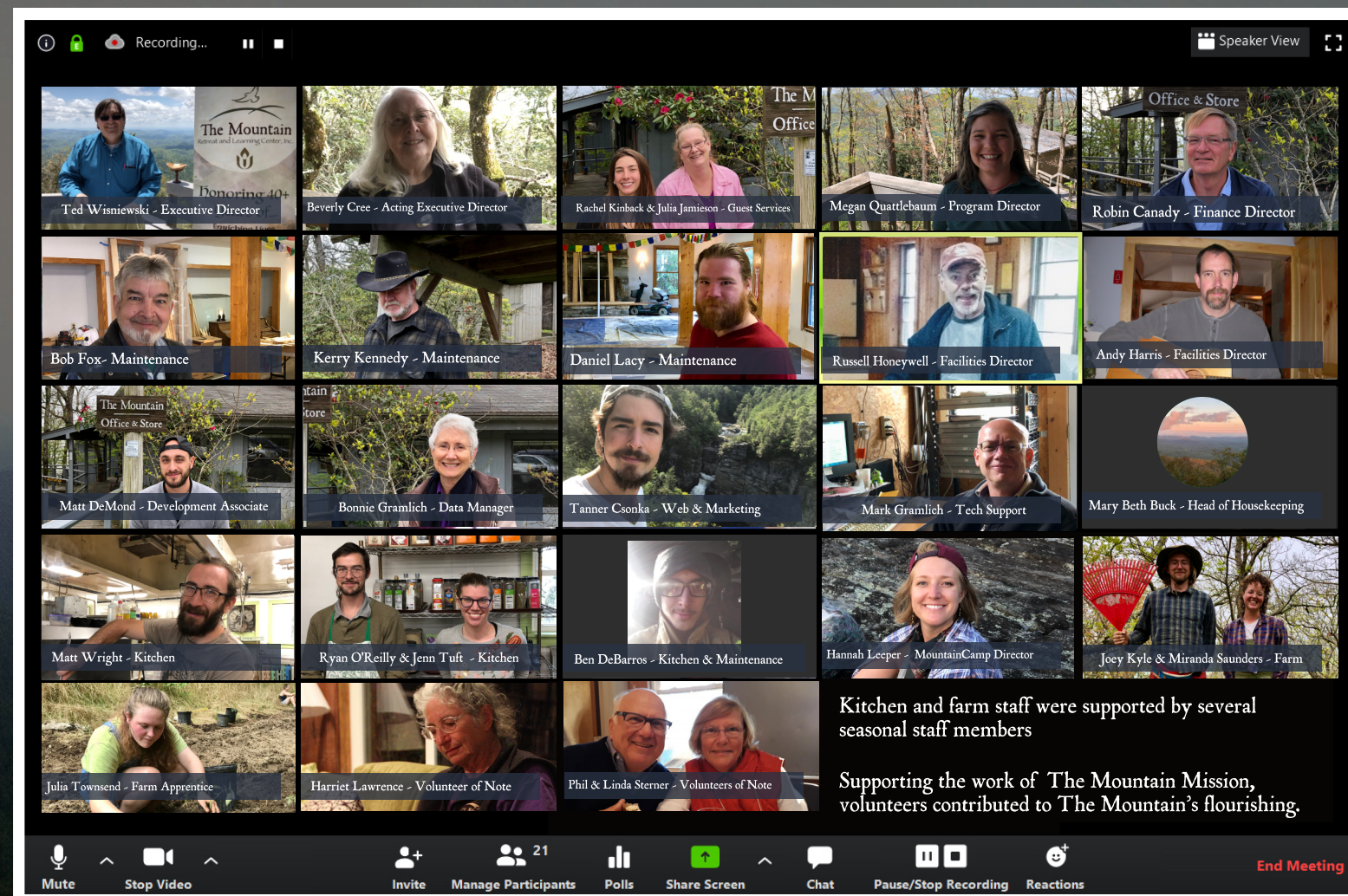
\$187,159 for Cabin  
Upgrades & Dam  
Repair



Thank You!

The extensive list of donors may be viewed at:  
[TheMountainRLC.org/giving](https://TheMountainRLC.org/giving)

## 2020 Mountain Staff





# The Mountain is Here For You



Since 1978, when the group of enthusiastic Unitarian Universalists, pictured above, discovered this amazing property on Little Scaly. Many dedicated groups and individuals have worked tirelessly to create what we know as The Mountain. It has indeed become a place for enriching lives, making connections and honoring nature.



Join us as we write the next chapter of The Mountain story  
- this will continue to be a story which has the potential to change the world.



Dreams at first seem impossible, then seem improbable, and  
finally, when we commit ourselves, become inevitable.

~Mahatma Gandhi