

## **ATC and ATPO to launch a trail – wide volunteer management program**

In response to long-standing requests for assistance recruiting and managing volunteers from clubs and other ATC partners, ATC is pleased to announce we will be collaborating with the National Park Service's Appalachian Trail Park Office(ATPO) to establish a focused trail-wide volunteer management program by the end of 2007. With grant funds provided by *IMPACT: A Fund for Change Through Volunteerism*, the Volunteer Resources Coordinator – a new position created by the grant – will develop and implement this program.

We hired Jeanne Mahoney to serve as ATC's Volunteer Resources Coordinator. Jeanne comes to ATC from Volunteer Frederick, a community volunteer center in Frederick, MD. At Volunteer Frederick, she used a variety of strategies to find and connect potential volunteers with local nonprofit organizations that needed assistance. Jeanne's familiarity with ATC goes back to her childhood days - her mother was a trail maintainer on the AT NYNJ Trail Conference section. Jeanne is based in the Harpers Ferry office. You can contact her with your ideas and/or concerns at [jmahoney@appalachiantrail.org](mailto:jmahoney@appalachiantrail.org) or 304-535-6331 ext. 107.

Jeanne has already met with the task force formed to oversee the creation of this new program. The task force will provide advice and assistance to Jeanne as she conducts the initial needs assessment and develops a business plan for a focused, trail-wide volunteer management program designed to meet the needs of Trail management partners and volunteers alike. In addition to ATC staff from the Harpers Ferry office, task force members include club members and staff from each region, representatives from the Appalachian Trail Park Office (NPS and USFS) and consultants from the Points of Light Foundation and Energize Inc. During the next year, Jeanne will be working closely with Rita Hennessy, Outdoor Recreation Specialist with the National Park Service, and Karen Lutz, ATC's Mid-Atlantic Regional Director.

### **Progress to date, next steps, and timeline**

ATC has several goals to accomplish over the one year grant period, though beginning steps have already been completed. As noted, ATC has already established a task force to provide advice and guidance to Jeanne, and plans to conduct a trail-wide needs assessment and review existing surveys are underway. Based on the results of the needs assessment (and other feedback), Jeanne will draft a business plan that will best address identified needs. As part of this process, Jeanne and the task force will be evaluating web based volunteer management tools, training resources, and strategies for attracting new types of volunteers to ATC programs. Though some programs may be piloted in 2007, the trail wide program won't be launched until 2008.

The needs assessment will be ready by mid-April; the data gathered will supplement existing surveys of club needs. It will be brief, and in order to capture as many viewpoints as possible, it will be distributed as widely as possible. In addition to ATC staff, partners, and clubs (leadership and members), we will try to reach beyond the partners to anyone who uses the trail. Jeanne will also be conducting an informal inventory of clubs, staff and programs over the next several months in order to introduce herself and better understand this complex organization.