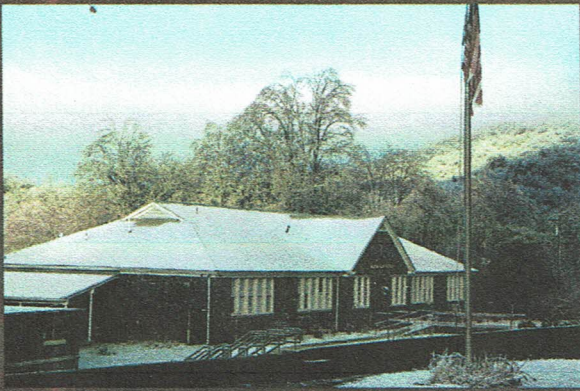


Woody Gap School

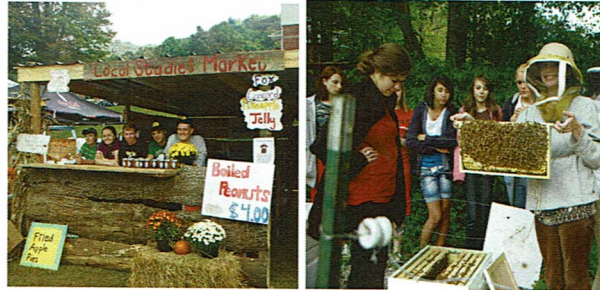
Mountain Heritage Preservation Program



*“Weaving the Past
with the Present
for the Future”*

Mission Statement

Woody Gap School's Mountain Heritage program is designed to engage students in grades K-12 in preserving their mountain heritage and environment, exploring agriculture, undertaking hands-on projects, and mapping related career opportunities. With community participation and support, the program equips our graduates to draw upon their roots to reach for their dreams as skilled, community-conscious adults.



Purpose

With each passing year, fewer elders remain in the community to share their first-hand knowledge of mountain customs. In a time when most families no longer rely on the land for sustenance, rapid growth and development and fast-paced lifestyles cost our students knowledge of their disappearing mountain culture and environment. The continued existence of these customs is in jeopardy! The Mountain Heritage Preservation program works with all teachers across all grade levels and subject areas to incorporate hands-on, place-based education into the curriculum. In conjunction, students learn the state-mandated standards as they document and preserve the customs, environment, and heritage for future generations through the discovery of, and application of, modern ideas and innovations. With this effective program, students will become more aware and appreciative of the rich history, culture, and beautiful environment in which they live. Working cooperatively alongside community members, parents, faculty, and staff, students learn lessons about civic responsibility, collaboration, and character.

A Brief History

Woody Gap School is the smallest public school in Georgia, with fewer than 100 students K–12. Nestled in the Appalachian Mountains of North Georgia, in the town of Suches, the school has enjoyed great community support since its construction and its opening in January of 1941. Upon opening, Woody Gap had no cafeteria or gym. Mothers prepared meals and served them in the cellar. This precedent of community support and involvement was only the beginning, as the Suches community would go on to raise funds for a baseball field, computers, and library books.

Volunteers built the original gym, the tennis courts, and baseball field. The community-based Sports Club continues to fund athletic and classroom needs through the annual Indian Summer Festival, and the Suches community lends academic support through many donations of school supplies and tutoring.

In the 1997–1998 school year, Woody Gap School was invited to apply for, and received, a Rural Challenge grant funded by the Annenburg Foundation. This grant encouraged using place-based education to teach students, focused on their environment and heritage. Woody Gap students, teachers, and community members were able to travel to schools similar in size and nature across the region and nation to gather ideas for implementing place-based education. A Local Studies class was added to the curriculum as a result of gathering ideas from other Appalachian schools. Local Studies allows students to learn and participate in hands-on activities involving mountain skills and customs.



Looking Forward

A turn-of-the-century mountain farm homestead site lies across the creek behind the school, on school property. Thus far, a smokehouse has been completed, and a cabin is in progress. A garden area has been established and apple trees and grapevines have been planted. The homestead is expected to take several years to complete, with the work done by students, faculty, staff, and community members. In the process, students learn many traditional skills used by the settlers in construction and maintenance. While planning, building, planting, cultivating, harvesting, and raising animals, students learn math, science, technology, language arts, social studies, and construction. Along with the smokehouse and cabin, the homestead plans include a grist mill, a root cellar, a wood shed, an orchard, the garden, and other necessities found on a mountain farm. Once complete, the facilities will serve as an outdoor living history classroom, a setting for music and storytelling events; and a tourist attraction during the Indian Summer Festival.

In addition, new Agriculture Pathways paired with the program will engage our students in learning horticulture and plant science, agricultural mechanics, and sustainable agriculture, equipping them to grow healthful food for home or market, to understand the science of integrated environmental systems, and to consider career paths in agriculture. Agriculture projects will be student-driven and will draw upon expertise in the community and area agricultural programs.

Envisioned Activities

- Collecting, writing, and publishing a history of Suches, along with other various items such as mountain recipes, old sayings, home remedies, etc.
- Planting, tending, and harvesting the homestead garden
- Learning food preservation techniques and food preparation
- Establishing plantings of native wildflowers and other native plants
- Grafting heirloom fruit trees for planting at the homestead and for sale
- Learning how to grow food sustainably and visiting area sustainable market farms
- Utilizing a new high tunnel for extending the growing season
- Exploring turn-of-the-century farms and customs
- Establishing and running school-community farmers market
- Saving heirloom seeds
- Developing and maintaining composting systems
- Mapping old home sites and cemeteries using GPS and other technology
- Performing plays dealing with the culture and history of the area
- Beekeeping
- Offering community educational workshops
- Utilizing various 21st century technology tools to educate and share learning through a Mountain Heritage Program website, presentations, videos, podcasts, and desktop publishing

How You Can Help

For our program to be a successful endeavor, we need your help. Help could be in the form of financial donations, sharing knowledge of mountain culture through interviews or stories, organizational skills, donating farm artifacts or needed materials, or simply letting us know you support our purpose and efforts.

If you are interested and want to help in any way, please call Althea Cantrell at

(706) 747-2401 ext. 1632

or email her at

acantrell@ucschools.org



You may send donations to

**Woody Gap School
2331 State Highway 60
Suches, GA 30572**

Specify that your donations are intended for the Mountain Heritage Program Fund.

