

# Friends with the Forest Nature Haven

A 501(c)(3) Non-Profit



## Executive Summary

**Mission:** To support a healthy, compassionate, and regenerative community for all through a venue to bring people together and develop deeper connections with nature.

**Friends with the Forest Nature Haven** is a multidimensional venue that offers opportunities for peace, regenerative healing, and learning. The nature haven will include a small sanctuary for rescued birds and other small animals, an education center for events and workshops, upcycled art exhibits, and self-guided botanical trails to provide a therapeutic space for visitors to enjoy, learn, and explore. We plan to eventually include a health food market/concession to provide healthy, affordable, and eco-friendly plant-based meals for the community. The market will also help to generate funds for sanctuary/gardens/educational operations.

Many people have become comfortable with maintaining unhealthy lifestyle habits. We intend to help people shift awareness from life happening “to them” to life happening “for them” by setting examples of what healthy, sustainable, and regenerative living looks like. Additionally, being overloaded with information from sources such as social media, many have forgotten how to enjoy connecting with others in true social environments. Deep healing is necessary to remember how it feels to be truly alive. Our team wishes

to remind our community of the power of who we truly are as beings of unconditional love, kindness, and compassion for all.

## **Programs and Services**

Friends with the Forest Nature Haven will be open to the public 3-4 days per week to allow for self-guided tours through 10 acres of nature trails, gardens, and outdoor upcycled art displays. Guests will have the opportunity to meet and greet rescued animals including parrots, goats, chickens, and turkeys, and learn their rescue stories. Our goal is to show guests how to live consciously to benefit animals through daily lifestyle choices.

We plan to host monthly social events, including evening fire pit gatherings, film screenings for educational documentaries, health and wellness workshops, small community markets, and more. Our team has experience with directing large educational festivals, races, and walks, and we are confident in applying our advanced skills to achieve our goals.

We hope to be a venue for all ages to gather, find peace, socialize, learn, have fun, and connect with open-minded community members. We would also like to consider hosting game days to provide youth and teenagers with the option to engage in activities that will benefit their health and accelerate growth (and provide a productive alternative to participating in unhealthy behaviors such as drug use and alcoholism).

Friends with the Forest will also be available as a venue to collaborators for educational events, retreats, etc.

## **Operations**

Friends with the Forest operations will take place on 10 acres of unrestricted land just outside the town of Bryson City, North Carolina. Our team consists of dedicated volunteers, artists, teachers, and animal caretakers.

Two of our founding members operated a non-profit called Solutionary Species for five years until it was transferred to new leadership following the onset of COVID-19. Our members retreated to solitude to rediscover themselves and thru-hiked the Appalachian Trail for six months, redefining their perceptions of what it means to be alive. With new mindsets, these individuals are excited to dive back into embracing purposeful work with the potential to expand life experience and share the forest's lessons they received with others. With gratitude for expanding our network of solutionary thinkers, we continue to welcome new volunteers to make a difference in the community.

Trails will be designed by hand (using shovels, rakes, and other hand tools) and will include unique upcycled art exhibits to provoke positive thinking and inspire creativity. Entry will be free with the suggestion for donations to support operations and to allow the public to contribute. Fruit and vegetable gardens will be created entirely through veganic gardening methods, meaning only organic plant material will be used for compost. We intend to be certified through the Veganic Agriculture Network.

Friends with the Forest will also include a small market with health food items, locally-made art & upcycled creations, veganic food & produce grown on site, and healing medicines such as CBD-infused products and foraged medicinal mushroom supplements.

Additionally, we intend to offer affordable venue space for seasonal educational health & wellness retreats, guided hikes, gardening workshops, and foraging tours. There is a school located across from our venue, and we intend to provide opportunities for youth to participate in after-school activities or summer camps.

Our goal for the venue is to be carbon-neutral, where all waste can be either composted, upcycled, or responsibly burned. We also plan to eventually (with adequate funding) implement solar energy for all electrical needs and use composting toilets. The venue utilizes a natural mountain spring for all of the current water needs and we plan to implement rainwater collection/filtration to reduce the draw on the spring. We wish to set an example of self-sufficiency and create a realistic, affordable, and enjoyable life path for others to learn to thrive.

## **How We Started**

All founding members of Friends with the Forest have dedicated their lives extensively to being of service to the Earth and all inhabitants. Since childhood, we have volunteered, worked, and given of ourselves endlessly to be the change we wish to see in the world. Operating multiple businesses, a non-profit, and serving many other organizations, we have developed the skills, knowledge, confidence, and resources to accomplish all of our goals and fulfill our hearts' desires for humanity.

In 2020, two of our founding members left society to thru-hike the Appalachian Trail. Hiking over 2,400 miles, they gained infinite wisdom through learning wilderness survival and connecting deeply with nature, while dancing the fine line between life and death. Returning to society with heightened awareness, they became hyper-sensitive to the dis-ease of humanity, cruelty inflicted on animals, and negligence to care for the environment that sustains all life. The two travelers felt compelled to step back into action and continue the work they've always felt driven to do, in alignment with who they

are. Our team intends to inspire and remind people of our collective potential when we fully embrace being healthy, joyful, and compassionate/empathetic toward all life.

We hope to be operating as a non-profit within 2025-2026.

## **Marketing**

In a small town, we have been developing many beautiful connections and friendships with members of the community. We have been creating a network of individuals who share our passion for bettering the world within us and around us, starting with Bryson City. Word of mouth is a powerful and effective marketing method in a tight-knit community.

To begin spreading the word, we will place flyers and brochures with our mission and plans on local bulletin boards. We also plan to coordinate a summer welcome party in July 2025 to announce the beginnings of the non-profit and generate initial funding for our first projects.

In operating other organizations and businesses, we had taken the route of more traditional paid marketing methods via newspapers, radio, television, etc. For Friends with the Forest, we intend to employ the most cost-effective marketing strategies to reach our audience while also putting our funds directly into the needs of our resident rescued animals and creative projects. We intend to reach out to collaborate and trade services with local marketing businesses that align with our mission and want to be a part of a community movement. We are very grateful for The Pollination Project supporting us for our July event.

The land that sustains Friends with the Forest is located directly off of US 74 and is visible from the highway. There is ample road frontage for signage to advertise the location and welcome supporters. One of our team members is a sign/mural artist and specializes in designing creative handcrafted signage to attract attention (see example of art at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-qyaViYI\\_w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-qyaViYI_w))

We also will likely join the community's Chamber of Commerce and list our events and operations on local websites. Coordinating weekly and monthly events, we will encourage guests to share with their friends and continue spreading the word.

## **Branding**

We chose the name "Friends with the Forest Nature Haven" for the collaborative nature of who we are. Just as we are collaborating with the forest to create a healthy, compassionate, and regenerative existence, we intend to extend our partnership to all

beings with whom we share the world. The colors of our logo align with the beautiful colors boasted by nature.

## Finances

**Expenses:** All construction/building projects will be carried out by our experienced team members and the help of unpaid friends/volunteers. The estimated costs are for materials and resources unless professional help is required for unique situations (ie. septic service until composting toilets can be implemented).

### Recurring Operational

- Monthly land payments - \$1820/month
- Electric (until we can convert to solar energy) - \$150/month
- Property maintenance: gravel roadways (est. \$2,000/year)
- Property maintenance: septic service (\$1,000/year)
- Website Fees (\$450/year)
- Animal Care Expenses - feed, toys, bedding, etc. (est. \$500/month)
- Insurance (est. \$2,000/year)

### Projects

- Fencing for containing rescue animals (est. \$15,000)
- Housing for resident rescue animals (est. \$10,000)
- Aviary for rescue parrots (\$4,000)
- Custom mobile concession stand & commercial kitchen equipment for basic startup (est. \$5,000)
- Education Center - renovations to the existing barn (est. \$5,000)
- Garden creation & food growing (est. \$2,000)
- Renovation of outdoor bathroom for public use (est. \$3,000)
- Event & education materials (tents, tables, chairs, etc. - est. \$3,000)
- Signs and marketing (est. \$2,000)

### Income:

- Sponsorships and donations from local businesses to support events
- Events to create fundraising opportunities and raise community engagement, including a summer welcome party with a suggested donation for admission
- Applying for grants that support local nonprofits
- Small suggested donation for admission to the nature haven
- Concession with healthy plant-based meals and drinks for sale
- Selling art, produce, canned foods, baked goods, and more
- Selling vendor space for local businesses to promote their products/services
- Creating incentives such as raffles and auctions to encourage donations
- Paid services such as guided hikes and foraging tours

- Paid admission for special workshops and events

## Core Members

Registered Agent and Executive Director: Kevin Layton

Board Members:

President: Kevin Layton

Secretary: Jenna Bardroff

Treasurer: Bradley Stutts

For more information, please contact us at [friendswiththeforest@gmail.com](mailto:friendswiththeforest@gmail.com).  
Or call/text Kevin at 727-455-1573

## Upcoming Projects:

**Friends with the Forest  
Welcome Party**

HOSTED BY COCKATOOS, MUFFIN AND TOKEY

**Saturday,  
July 19**  
12:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

**FREE ENTRY!**

**FRIENDS WITH THE FOREST**  
HEALTH COMPASSION REGENERATION

Plant-Based Food Truck • Fresh Squeezed Lemonade •  
Earth-Conscious Vendors • Veg Food Samples • Games •  
Live Music • Visit with Cockatoos • Animal Rescue  
Fundraiser • Healthy Living Class/Workshops •  
Nature Trail Exploration

12:00 p.m. Welcome & Intro to Friends with the Forest  
12:30 p.m. Regenerative Health Class/Workshop  
1:30 p.m. Live Acoustic Music by TBA  
2:30 p.m. Live Music by TBA  
3:30 p.m. Wellness Trivia with Kevin Layton

[WWW.FRIENDSWITHTHEFOREST.COM](http://WWW.FRIENDSWITHTHEFOREST.COM)

**See pages below for History of Prominent Projects Coordinated or Co-coordinated by Team Members of Friends with the Forest (prior to Covid-19):**

**Video of Nature Ninja:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eESB8uzcrQY>





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