

Friends with the Forest Bryson City

22 Parrish Road, Bryson City, North Carolina 28713



Executive Summary

Mission: To create a healthy, compassionate, and regenerative community for all through events and programs to bring people together to learn about connection with ourselves, other people, animals, and nature.

Friends with the Forest Bryson City is a venue and collaborative effort to host educational events and programs that foster a deep sense of care and connection to people, animals, and the Earth. Our small and dedicated team has a strong vision to aid in expanding our community's consciousness through showing people how we are all connected, and how our conscious choices shift our realities. By transitioning our collective attention away from perceived problems to instead adopt solutionary thinking, we may all become a part of the world's solutions and ease unnecessary suffering. We intend to elevate awareness of practical life solutions and one by one show people how to let go of egotistical limitations to set forth a new path that allows for all species to coexist and thrive in harmony with Earth.

Friends with the Forest will include a small animal sanctuary (starting with an aviary for our two rescued Goffin cockatoos), education center for events & 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 food truck to provide healthy, affordable, and eco-friendly plant-based meals for the community, and to help with generating funds to support the operations of the sanctuary/gardens/educational efforts.

Many people have become comfortable with maintaining unhealthy lifestyle habits. We would like to help people to shift their awareness from life happening “to them” to life happening “for them” through setting examples for what healthy living looks like. On a regular basis, many humans in the United States are eating processed foods, putting poisons in their bodies, suffering from easily preventable diseases, and allowing cultural conditioning to control their lives. Additionally, being overloaded with information from sources such as social media, many have forgotten how to truly connect with others in social environments. People are in need of deep healing and regeneration to remember why we chose to be alive here on Earth. The members on our team wish 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

Our team with Friends with the Forest intends to 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 be able to engage with rescued animals such as parrots, goats, chickens, pigs, sheep, etc., as well as learn rescue stories and how to live consciously to benefit animals through daily lifestyle choices.

We plan to host monthly social events, such as evening fire pit gatherings, film screenings for educational documentaries, health and wellness workshops, small educational festivals, 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 like 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 distract from participating in unhealthy behaviors such as drug use and alcoholism).

Operations

Friends with the Forest operations will take place on 10 acres of unrestricted land at 22 Parrish Road, Bryson City, North Carolina. Our team consists of dedicated volunteers, artists, teachers, animal caretakers, and three members on our Board of Directors.

Two of our founding members operated a non-profit called Solutionary Species for five years, until it was transferred to new leadership after the onset of Covid-19. Our members took time to rediscover themselves through embracing solitude in the woods for 6 months and redefined their perception of meaning in life. With new mindsets, these individuals are excited to dive back into embracing meaningful work with the potential to expand life experience and benefit all

beings of Earth. We are also grateful for expanding our network of solutionary thinkers and welcoming new volunteers to engage in making a difference for 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. There will be a small suggested donation for entry to support operations and give the public an opportunity to contribute.

There will be a food truck and small market with art items, organic food & produce grown on site, and healing medicines such as CBD infused products and foraged medicinal mushroom supplements. We also hope to offer 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 is able to be either composted, upcycled, or responsibly burned. We also plan to 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 truly 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 of its 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 survival and connecting deeply with nature, along with dancing the fine line between life and death. Returning to society and sensing the dis-ease of humanity, the cruelty inflicted on animals, and the negligence of caring for the environment that sustains all of life, the two felt compelled to step back into action and continue the work they've always felt driven to do. Our team intends to inspire and remind people of our collective potential when we embrace being healthy, joyful, and compassionate/empathetic.

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

Marketing

In a small town, we have been developing many beautiful connections and friendships with members of the community and creating a network of like minded individuals who share our

passion to better the world within us and around us, starting with Bryson City. Word of mouth is a very powerful and effective method of marketing 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 spring festival in May 2025 to announce the launching of the non-profit and generate initial funding for our first projects.

In the past in operating other organizations and businesses, we had taken the route of more traditional paid marketing methods through newspapers, radio, television, etc. For Friends with the Forest, we intend to employ the most cost effective marketing strategies to reach the greatest 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 who align with our mission and want to be a part of a community movement.

The land that will be hosting 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)

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 tell their friends and continue spreading the word.

Branding

We chose the name "Friends with the Forest" to demonstrate 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 we share the world with. The colors of our logo are in alignment to colors boasted by the beauty of nature.

Finances

Expenses: All construction/building projects will be carried out by our experienced team members and 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 are able to convert to solar energy) - \$150/month
- Non-profit filing fees (est. \$350)

- 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)
- Barns for resident rescue farm 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 existing barn (est. \$5,000)
- Garden creation & food growing (est. \$1,000)
- Renovation of outdoor bathroom for public use (est. \$2,000)
- Event & education materials (tents, tables, chairs, etc. - est. \$3,000)
- Signs and marketing (est. \$1,000)

Income:

- Sponsorships and donations from local businesses to support events
- Events to create fundraising opportunities and raise community engagement, including a spring festival with a suggested donation for admission
- Applying for grants that support local nonprofits
- Small suggested donation for admission at FWTF Sanctuary
- 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
- YouTube revenue

Core Members

Registered Agent and Executive Director: Kevin Layton

Board Members:

President and Secretary: Jenna Bardroff

Vice Chair: Molly Isenbarger

Treasurer: Bradley Stutts

Advisor/Networker: Sean Parrish

For more information, please contact us at friendswiththeforest@gmail.com.

Or call/text Kevin at 727-455-1573

Upcoming Project:

Bryson City's inaugural Spring Chill Out Fest 2025

Website: <https://www.friendswiththeforest.com/spring-fest>

Facebook Event Page: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1172472931171639>

Date: Saturday, May 10, 2025

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Location: Great Smoky Mountain Event Park
1130 Hyatt Creek Road, Bryson City, NC 28713

Goals for Spring Chill Out Fest 2025:

- Create a social opportunity for the community to connect and meet new friends
- Benefit local businesses, artists, animal rescues, and non-profits
- Raise awareness for healthy solutions to benefit the Earth and all of its inhabitants
- Elevate consciousness in Bryson City through spreading a contagion of compassion, love, and kindness
- Educate on topics of self-sufficiency, healthy living, and conscious consumerism
- Chill out and have a great time with many activities for the whole community to enjoy
- Raise awareness for services available to the community
- Generate funds for local animal rescues & non-profit projects, including Friends with the Forest's sanctuary/nature center

Flyer: See next page

www.FriendswiththeForest.com

Free
Entry

BRYSON CITY Spring Chill Out Fest 2025

A FREE FAMILY-FRIENDLY EVENT BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

FRIENDS WITH THE FOREST

SUGGESTED DONATION: \$5/PERSON

FEATURING

Speakers • Workshops • Art • Health & Wellness Vendors
• Eco-Friendly Businesses • Live Music & Entertainment •
Animal Rescues • Earth-Friendly Food • Yoga &
Meditation • Kids Zone • Games • & More!

Saturday, May 10
10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

AT GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAIN EVENT PARK

1130 Hyatt Creek Rd, Bryson City, NC 28713



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

- **Orlando's Solutionary Peace Walk & Festival 2016**
 - Location: Lake Eola Park - Orlando, Florida
 - ~5,000 attendees
- **Central Florida Earth Day 2016**
 - Location: Lake Eola Park - Orlando, Florida
 - ~20,000 attendees
- **Spring Festival at Cedar Lakes Woods & Gardens 2016**
 - Location: Williston, Florida
 - ~2,000 attendees
- **Central Florida Veg Fest 2016**
 - Location: Orlando Festival Park - Orlando, Florida
 - ~20,000 attendees
- **Nature Ninja 5K 2017**
 - Location: Cedar Lakes Woods & Gardens - Williston, Florida
 - ~250 attendees
- **Eco-Friendly Adventure Day 2017**
 - Location: Cedar Lakes Woods & Gardens - Williston, Florida
 - ~500 attendees
- **Gainesville Veg Fest 2017**
 - Location: Westside Park - Gainesville, Florida
 - ~3,000
- **Central Florida Earth Day 2017**
 - Location: Lake Eola Park - Orlando, Florida
 - ~25,000 attendees
- **Orlando's Solutionary Peace Walk & Festival 2017**
 - Location: Lake Eola Park - Orlando, Florida
 - ~6,000 attendees
- **Central Florida Veg Fest 2017**
 - Location: Orlando Festival Park - Orlando, Florida
 - ~20,000 attendees
- **Tampa Bay Veg Fest 2017**
 - Location: Cotanchobee Fort Brooke Park - Tampa, Florida
 - ~20,000 attendees
- **Sarasota's Solutionary Health Festival 2017**
 - Location: Oscar Scherer State Park - Osprey, Florida
 - ~2,500 attendees
- **Nature Ninja 5K 2018**
 - Location: Cedar Lakes Woods & Gardens - Williston, Florida
 - ~500 attendees
- **Eco-Friendly Adventure Day 2018**
 - Location: Cedar Lakes Woods & Gardens - Williston, Florida
 - ~500 attendees
- **Cinema Verde Fair 2018**







- Location: Heartwood Soundstage, Gainesville, Florida
 - ~500 attendees
- **Gainesville Veg Fest 2018**
 - Location: Depot Park - Gainesville, Florida
 - ~10,000 attendees
- **Central Florida Earth Day 2018**
 - Location: Lake Eola Park - Orlando, Florida
 - ~25,000 attendees
- **Orlando's Solutionary Peace Walk & Festival 2018**
 - Location: Lake Eola Park - Orlando, Florida
 - ~10,000 attendees
- **Sarasota Veg Fest 2018**
 - Location: Robarts Arena/Sarasota Fairgrounds - Sarasota, Florida
 - ~20,000 attendees
- **Sarasota's Solutionary Health Festival 2018**
 - Location: Oscar Scherer State Park - Osprey, Florida
 - ~3,000 attendees
- **S.A.F.E. Day Festival 2018**
 - Location: Sarasota Fairgrounds, Sarasota, Florida
 - ~1,000 attendees
- **Central Florida Veg Fest 2018**
 - Location: Orlando Festival Park - Orlando, Florida
 - ~25,000 attendees
- **Englewood Solutionary Conference 2018**
 - Location: Englewood Events Center - Englewood, Florida
 - ~150 attendees
- **Central Florida Earth Day 2019**
 - Location: Lake Eola Park - Orlando, Florida
 - ~30,000 attendees
- **Orlando's Solutionary Peace Walk & Festival 2019**
 - Location: Lake Eola Park - Orlando, Florida
 - ~5,000 attendees
- **Nature Ninja 5K 2019**
 - Location: Cedar Lakes Woods & Gardens - Williston, Florida
 - ~600 attendees
- **Eco-Friendly Adventure Day 2019**
 - Location: Cedar Lakes Woods & Gardens - Williston, Florida
 - ~600 attendees
- **Sarasota Veg Fest 2019**
 - Location: Sarasota Fairgrounds - Sarasota, Florida
 - ~23,000 attendees
- **St. Pete Health Fest 2019**
 - Location: Williams Park - St. Petersburg, Florida
 - ~2,000 attendees
- **Bradenton Veg Expo 2019**
 - Location: Bradenton Area Convention Center, Bradenton, Florida

- ~500 attendees
- **Central Florida Veg Fest 2019**
 - Location: Orlando Festival Park - Orlando, Florida
 - ~25,000 attendees
- **Sarasota's Solutionary Health Festival 2019**
 - Location: Oscar Scherer State Park - Osprey, Florida
 - ~2,000 attendees
- In addition to festivals, our team has hosted many other community events, including film screenings, beach/park cleanups, retreats, summer camps, and more. We have also volunteered for many of our partner organizations to coordinate sections of their events.
- In 2021, our team member, Jenna helped her brother to open a plant-based restaurant in Jacksonville, Florida to serve affordable nutritious food to a low-income community, formerly called Vegan Cafe Jax (now called the Hungry Caterpillar)
- See photos of past efforts on next page





2017 SPEAKER SCHEDULE

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|---|--|
|  | VeganEvan 10:00 AM |
|  | Jim Janolek 10:30 AM |
|  | Korin Sutton 11:30 AM |
|  | John 12:00 PM |
|  | Monica Aggarwal Cardiologist 1:00 PM |
|  | Sid Garza 1:30 PM |
| | Evelisse Capo 3:00 PM |



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