



Friends of Pine Grove Furnace S.P.
1100 Pine Grove Road
Gardners, PA 17324
December 2025

Dear Friends,

Thank you for supporting the *Friends of Pine Grove Furnace State Park*. We hope you will renew your membership for 2026, or join for the first time. Members receive a discount on our merchandise sold in the State Park Office. Memberships run from March to March; if you join now, we'll extend your membership through March 2027. In addition to Individual memberships (\$10 per year) and Family memberships (\$15 per year), we offer Lifetime memberships (\$200 for individuals and \$300 for families).

We are a chapter of the non-profit *Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation* (PPFF) which has around four dozen similar groups across PA. Friends volunteers and supporters provide "value added" to State Parks and State Forests serving the public using limited resources and personnel.

Since 2010 our Friends group has fostered volunteerism and supported recreation, education and conservation at Pine Grove Furnace State Park, a very busy spot in the South Mountain region. Over the past decade Pine Grove Furnace averaged over 350,000 visits annually, quite a lot for a park of less than 700 acres.

Pine Grove Furnace has a new Park Manager, Andrew "Drew" Leidich. Originally from Berks County PA, Drew has been with the Bureau of State Parks since 2019; he comes to us from Bald Eagle State Park where he was Assistant Park Manager. Departing manager Corie Eckman will take the helm at the brand-new Laurel Caverns State Park in Fayette County. We wish her the best in her new position, and are grateful for her leadership here.

We mourn the deaths of two dedicated volunteers: Mike Barlup in September at age 72, and Dotti McNichol in December at age 95. Our condolences to their families and friends.

Last February a falling tree smashed the playground at Fuller Lake (the swings nearby were spared). The Friends coordinated fundraising for a replacement, helped by an especially generous anonymous donor who covered almost all of the \$20,000 project. Other donors stepped up, including the Michaux Forest Association. Thank you! The new playground was installed by the park's Maintenance crew and opened in early October.

As the designated maintainers for the park's five and a half miles of hiking trails (not including the Hiker-Biker-Appalachian Trail segment), the Friends coordinated more trail volunteers in 2025 than ever before. The talented rock installers from the Susquehanna A.T. Club returned to Pine Grove Furnace in September to build a major rock stairway on Koppenhaver Trail. Through 2025, other volunteers on our hiking trails came from local businesses, schools and scout troops, the Keystone Trails Association, and many smaller individual efforts. Volunteers also worked on trails for Earth Day and National Public Lands Day. Together we have made significant improvements to the hiking experience at Pine Grove Furnace.

Looking forward to 2026, we'll work with the State Park educator to celebrate the country's 250th anniversary, the Semiquincentennial (or simply the "Semiquin" which is a lot easier to say!). For the Semiquin we anticipate music and history activities highlighting the role that the local iron industry played during the American Revolution and beyond.

We continue to work with the Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources to interpret Pine Grove Furnace as first an industrial center beginning in the 1770s, then as a tourist destination in the 20th century. We also help DCNR with removal of invasive plants like barberry, and replacement with native vegetation – including financial support of native habitat restoration along Mountain Creek led by the Michaux Forest Association.

We hope to see you around the park for the annual First Day Hike on January 1 at 1 PM, the Earth Day volunteer cleanup on Saturday April 25, and National Public Lands Day volunteer activities on Saturday September 26. We also support numerous educational activities and free concerts in the park, mostly during the busy season from Memorial Day through Labor Day weekends. Please look for monthly schedules shared by email and posted on park kiosks and on Facebook, and the DCNR online calendar at https://events.dcnr.pa.gov/pine_grove_furnace_state_park.

One of our major activities is working with State Park staff to hold Fall Furnace Fest. With over 9,000 visitors through the weekend, it is the major community event each year in our State Park. The fun-filled two-day family event includes craft and food vendors, history demonstrations including making candles, apple cider and charcoal, hayrides by DCNR, live music, scarecrow making and pumpkin carving, and the famous pumpkin parade and pumpkin float on Fuller Lake with the Legend of the Hairy Hand. The festival is always the 3rd full weekend of October – so in 2026 it will be **Saturday and Sunday, October 17-18**. Hope to see you there!

We continue to cut, split and stack firewood for sale in the Family Campground. This is not just a fundraiser; it's a service to campers so they have wood readily available when they arrive. Plus, using only *locally sourced* wood avoids long-distance movement of forest pests and pathogens that can be hiding in wood brought by visitors. Volunteers are needed for splitting, typically on Mondays in good weather.

We are always looking for volunteers to help us with major events like Fall Furnace Fest, as well as trail maintenance and other park improvements. If you can help us help the park, please send us an email at PGFvolunteers@gmail.com.

Thanks to memberships, donations, money raised during special events, and the sale of firewood and merchandise, the Friends have been able to contribute substantial amounts of money to Pine Grove Furnace State Park. We recently tallied our expenditures on park programs and infrastructure since we were founded in 2010. It came to more than \$420,000! That includes our direct funds as well as a few grants we obtained for major projects such as large hiking bridges.

As a chapter of the PA Parks and Forests Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, donations to *Friends of Pine Grove Furnace State Park* are tax-deductible as allowed by law. Won't you please join us?

Sincerely,



Andre Weltman, Chairman
PineGroveFriends@gmail.com
www.FriendsofPineGrove.org
“Friends of Pine Grove Furnace” at www.Facebook.com

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