



FRIENDS OF

# Pine Grove Furnace *News*

STATE PARK

Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation

WINTER 2025-2026

[www.FriendsofPineGrove.org](http://www.FriendsofPineGrove.org) • 1100 Pine Grove Road, Gardners, PA 17324 • pinegrovefriends@gmail.com

## FIRST DAY HIKE

A popular tradition at Pine Grove Furnace is the annual First Day Hike. On January 1st, 122 people and 6 dogs participated in two hikes – one route was shorter and easier, while the other was a little more challenging. The group enjoyed hot chocolate, mulled cider, coffee, and homemade cookies courtesy of the Friends, on a cold and windy but sunny afternoon. *Thanks for joining us!*



## ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURES

Pine Grove Furnace has a new State 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 new Laurel Caverns State Park in Fayette County. We wish her the best in her new position as the first manager at Pennsylvania's 125th State Park (and the first underground State Park!).



The past year also brought sad news. We lost two dedicated volunteers: **Mike Barlup** in September at age 72, and **Dotti McNichol** in December at age 95. Mike was a regular contributor to State Park activities, and was active with the Keystone Trails Association as well. Dotti's connection to the park goes back to 1944 when her family bought a cabin nearby. You may have met Dotti with her donation bucket at the Fall Furnace Fest hayride where she was a regular presence. We will miss these valued members of the State Park community. Our condolences to their families and friends.



Mike Barlup planting trees in the Group Campground



Dotti McNichol (holding can) and other volunteers at Fall Furnace Fest in 2022

## LEADERSHIP

Andre Weltman, Chair  
Mary Soderberg, Vice Chair  
Josh Burleigh, Treasurer  
Diane Velozo, Secretary  
Lyle Herr  
Crystal Hunt  
Rob Shaw  
Tyler Staley  
Brett Weiser  
Donna Weiser

## OUR MISSION

The Friends of Pine Grove Furnace State Park (FOPGF) exists to keep history alive and promote educational and recreational programs at the park and surrounding areas through special events and trail development while protecting the park's natural resources.

Email us at:

[pinegrovefriends@gmail.com](mailto:pinegrovefriends@gmail.com)

Visit us online at:

[www.FriendsofPineGrove.org](http://www.FriendsofPineGrove.org)

Follow us on Facebook at:

[Friends-of-Pine-Grove-Furnace-State-Park](https://www.facebook.com/Friends-of-Pine-Grove-Furnace-State-Park)

**Friends of Pine Grove Furnace State Park** formed in August 2010 as a chapter of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Official registration may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free within Pennsylvania 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

## THE SEMIQUIN IS HERE!

Looking forward to 2026, we will 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 will assist the State Park with music and history activities highlighting the role that the local iron industry played during the American Revolution and beyond.

The biggest single day of events will be on Saturday, July 11. Activities that day will include a free concert at 7 p.m. by singer-storyteller Matthew Dodd. The Friends will also sponsor historical music and tales by John Durant on Sunday, June 7 at 2 p.m.

## FALL FURNACE FEST

We hope you were able to join us at the biggest event of the year, the 16th annual Fall Furnace Fest. The 2025 festival was a roaring success, with more than 9,000 visitors during the fun-filled two-day family event.

Activities included craft and food vendors, history demonstrations such as 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 third full weekend of October – so in 2026 it will be Saturday and Sunday, October 17 and 18. Mark your calendar!



Scan QR code for more information on park events

– or go to –

[https://events.dcnr.pa.gov/pine\\_grove\\_furnace\\_state\\_park](https://events.dcnr.pa.gov/pine_grove_furnace_state_park)



Scan QR code to join the Friends of Pine Grove Furnace and to help support our state park.



**FOLLOW US**  
ON FACEBOOK

To keep up with the State Park and the Friends, follow us on Facebook. The Friends of Pine Grove Furnace State Park Facebook page is a team effort of volunteers and park staff to provide you information about the park and the region.

## —Activity Calendar 2026—

### FAMILY CAMPGROUNDS OPENS, MARCH 27

**EARTH DAY, APRIL 25:** Volunteers help clean up the park, followed by a grilled lunch.

### CHARCOAL CHALLENGE 5K FUN RUN, JUNE 13

**NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS DAY, SEPTEMBER 26:** A morning of volunteering then a grilled lunch.

**FALL FURNACE FEST, WEEKEND OF OCTOBER 17–18:** A family weekend with food and craft vendors, hayrides, live music, and historical demonstrations.

## IMPROVING HIKING TRAILS, A NEVER-ENDING TASK

Working with State Park staff, the Friends are 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 last 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. Watch for future trail volunteer days advertised on park kiosks, Friends emails and Facebook, and through DCNR's website.



Scout Troop 252 from Hagerstown  
volunteered on National Trails Day

## PLAYGROUNDS UPDATES

Back in February 2025, a windstorm dropped a tree onto the playground next to Fuller Lake. We are happy to report that a replacement playset was installed by the park's Maintenance Crew and opened for play by the start of Fall Furnace Fest last October. This project cost over \$20,000, an unexpected hole in our budget. The new playground was made possible by multiple donors, including a single very generous cabin owner (who wishes to remain anonymous) who contributed \$18,000 and a substantial contribution from the Michaux Forest Association too. Thank you!

The original Fuller Lake playset and the swing set next to it were purchased by the Friends in 2015. We also purchased a playground for the Family Campground in 2014 which is still in great shape after over a decade of play. More recently we financially supported upgrades to the Natural Play Area near Laurel Lake Bathhouse, installed by the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps and by the park's Maintenance Crew last summer and fall. The new features include precast concrete crawl tunnels sculpted like logs and a metal "tree" that plays musical notes when gently struck.



Members of the PA Outdoor Corps working on  
the Laurel Lake Nature Playground in July 2025

## REMEMBER YOUR VISIT AND HELP US HELP THE PARK

In addition to selling firewood, the Friends of Pine Grove Furnace State Park raise money through memberships and donations, special events like Fall Furnace Fest in October and the 5K run/walk in June, and by selling merchandise in the State Park Office. We offer a wide range of clothing, maps, history books, and various park mementos, including the annual embroidered patch series. Help us help the park by purchasing merchandise! Cash or check only, please.

**Friends memberships start in March of each year. It is time to become a new member or renew:** go to [www.FriendsofPineGrove.org](http://www.FriendsofPineGrove.org), or grab a folded green handout in the Park Office. Our gratitude to our volunteers and members. Annual memberships are \$10 individual/\$15 family, while Life memberships are \$200 individual/\$300 family.

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 tallied our expenditures on park programs and infrastructure since we were founded in 2010: it came to more than \$400,000! That includes our direct funds as well as a few grants we obtained for major projects such as large hiking bridges. Because we are a chapter of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, donations to the Friends of Pine Grove Furnace State Park are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

❖ We appreciate your support, and we hope to see you around Pine Grove Furnace soon! ❖