

UMNA General Meeting Minutes

Thursday, September 28, 2023, 10:01 - 10:50 am

Hybrid Meeting: OLLI CENTER, Charles Cheezum Educational Center, Clemson

UMNA Board Members present: Pam Shucker, Betsy Lewis, Cindy Hekking, Emmy Holt, Andy Chesson.

UMNA Committee Chairs present: Dave Redden, Polly Powell, Laura Godfrey

Pam Shucker welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending.

Officer Reports:

1. **Secretary's Report:** Emmy Holt
 - a. Carson Johnson moved that the minutes be approved: Laura Godfrey seconded. July 27, 2023, Minutes approved.
2. **Program:** Betsy Lewis
 - a. The November 16 membership meeting will be held at the Pendleton Branch Library. **Time change: 10:30 am.** Members can come earlier to see the bird-feeding stations that have been funded by UMNA.
 - b. Speaker for the November meeting is Dr. Melissa Fuentes, Clemson professor, who will speak about the adaptations of skeletons.
 - c. As tradition Annual meeting is a **potluck luncheon. Please bring a dish to share and your own reusable plate, cup, and utensils, to be good environmental stewards.**
3. **Membership:** Pam for Seth Harrison
 - a. 157 paid members; 6 Honorary; 56 unpaid.
 - b. The UMNA Class of 2022 is online on UMNA website.
4. **Treasurer's Report:** Cindy Hekking
 - a. Beginning balance: \$16,271.32
 - b. Dues, donations: \$95.00
 - c. Expenses: Zoom \$158.89
Meeting rental-Furman \$225.00
PayPal error \$47.51
 - d. Ending balance: \$15,934.33

Committee Reports:

1. Bald Rock Project: Dave Redden

- a. Restoration efforts are continuing; pressure washing rock has been stopped as it eroded surface. DNR and Clemson University are overseeing placement of soil in the potholes to cultivate plant growth.
- b. Eventually, there will be a change in road access and parking lot.
- c. Dave will send out emails for monthly volunteer information.
- d. A history of the Bald Rock Heritage Preserve has been written by Furman professor Dr. Courtney Tollison Hartness, and is on the Bald Rock website.

2. Newsletter: Laura Godfrey

- a. Deadline for October Newsletter is at the end of September.
- b. Laura is always interested in members submitting volunteer activities. Cindy Hekking is sending in article about the trail maintenance project.
- c. The Conestee Nature Preserve is no longer charging schools for field trips to Center. The children's programs need volunteers to help while teachers and chaperones stay with the groups. Follow link on UMNA website to volunteer opportunities. Password is UMNAis#1.
- d. Pam added that two other places to volunteer are Paris Mountain State Park and The SC Botanical Gardens.
- e. Pam also reminded members that Dr. James Blake sends statistics of UMNA members' volunteer hours to the state at the end of June to record participation in UMNA.

3. Alternate Activities:

- a. Pam stated that the UMNA needs a committee to plan activities for months that alternate with the monthly meetings. There is money in the budget for these activities. They could include hiking and paddling.

4. Grants: Polly Powell

- a. The Grants Committee has designed an accountable way to evaluate incoming grants.

- b. New grants:** 1) \$700 to Pickens County Career and Technology Center, located between Liberty Elementary School and the Career Center; 3 new bee colonies funded.
- 2) \$2,000 to Jocassee Wild Child Program for fourth graders from James Brown Elementary School. This is a 4-hour lake tour; last year, the program was awarded \$1,000. This year the Board was asked for \$2000 more to accommodate a total of 80 students.

Total of UMNA Grants to be awarded for 2023 will be \$2,700.

- c. Last year's grants:** Speakers described programs that were funded.

1) Pendleton Library Feeder Watch Program; kits with binoculars, field pocket guides, and purchase of bird books (fiction and non-fiction); bird-counting, submitting data to Cornell Ornithology Lab; enjoyed by people passively sitting in library. November will start next Feeder Watch, when kits will be circulated, can be checked out weekly; speaker for program on bird identification.

2) \$500 to SC Botanical Gardens. Sue Watts thanked membership; funding enabled SCBG to improve birding; purchased 12 little guides and banner to measure wingspan of a raptor. Engaged Jr. Naturalists (ages 6-11) to engage in discussions about bird sizes, shapes; and Sr. Naturalists (ages 12-14) for drawing pictures of birds of birds they identified. Also were able to purchase Rusty Birds- iron outlines of background birds for children ages 3-5 years to see. A bird banner was also purchased with the grant money, which is used in the gardens twice a year (Spring, Fall) for Saturday programs. The programs interest a new generation of bird-watchers.

3) \$1,000 to Jocassee Wild Child Program. Kerry McKenzie described the 4-hour program for 91 students from James Brown Elementary School on April 4 and 5. The students were on pontoon boats and engaged in activities; then kids pledged to protect lakes; letters from enthusiastic students were included in report.

- d. Pam congratulated Polly and her Grants Committee on their work. Members include:** Gail Brownlee, El Nault, Carole Walters; Pat and Don Hensley, Laren Palmer; Lyn McCurdy.

New Business:

Discussion of the budget; How much is in budget for funding? Cindy will have specific numbers later with her report at the November meeting. UMNA is down 45% of members from last year. Even with reminders that have been sent out, members are not renewing. Pam reminded members that no grants were awarded during COVID, thus additional funds are in the budget now.

Pam thanked the Nominating Committee for their work with filling positions for 2024. The members of the Committee were Jeannette Winn, Dennis DeFrancesco, and Bobbi Willett.

- 1. UMNA Class of 2023 Graduation Luncheon:** Carson Johnson
 - a. November 2 at Holly Springs Center, 120 Holly Springs School Rd., Pickens, SC 29671.
 - b. Carson thanked all members who have signed up to bring a dish, and passed the sign-up sheet around for others. Entire membership is invited.
 - c. Be there by 10:00 with food to set up; eat around 12:00.
 - d. There will be around 80 people.
 - e. Bring own plate and utensils to cut down on paper waste.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:50 am. Program followed.

Program:

Betsy Lewis introduced Rocky Nation, M.Ed., Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Biology at Brevard College. His inspiring program entitled Nature: Head, Heart, and Soul, was about stress management and the connection to nature. The Head component is the study of nature and other activities that spark our memories and learning; the Heart is finding joy in natural beauty, such as a sunset; and the Soul is the feeling in nature of something larger than ourselves. He explained the important connection between self-care and helpful practices such as mindfulness, meditation, journaling, and experiencing nature. Spending time in nature, especially with others, is a major predictor of resilience. Protecting nature develops from being inspired by the natural world. A question-and-answer period followed.

