

Mother Nature's Keepers: Inspiring a Million Kids

Appalachian Trail Conservancy

1. What's the issue you're hoping to address? What are the key facts and figures that will help people grasp the challenge you will tackle with your Big Idea? What will really compel users to give you their vote?

The ATC needs to identify and nurture the next generation of volunteer stewards of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, a world-renown path for recreation as well as ecological biodiversity, wildlife migration, and watershed protection. Our challenge is to connect with today's youth, to capture their imagination and enthusiasm, and seed a lifelong passion to protect our treasured resources for years to come.

Kids and families find themselves living fully scheduled, pressure packed lives without hearing the peaceful call of nature. This lifestyle imbalance has been shown to lead to health and behavioral problems, imprudent overload of natural ecosystems, and a diminishing respect for places rightfully referred to as our nation's best ideas.

The challenge is to share the mystique, the awesome natural beauty, the power of volunteerism, and pride of national ownership that a place as special as the Appalachian Trail has to offer in a way that is fun and relevant to today's youth.

2. Provide an explanation of your Big Idea. How would your charity address the issue with \$1MM? Help Facebook voters see why your charity the best choice for the \$1MM!

ATC will engage one million kids, families, and communities in outdoor recreation, education, environmental stewardship, and civic engagement via:

- a youth membership program with website and e-zine;
- local and regional competitions via quarterly A.T. Virtual Faires featuring environmental studies, service projects, and other Appalachian themed material;
- enhanced creation and exchange of information and educational materials related to the A.T., trailside communities, and environment through web-shared curricula, podcasts, and apps for GPS-enabled devices;
- a youth scholarship program in science, literary & performing arts recognizing aptitude and interests promoting ecological, environmental, and trail ethics.

By extending our reach and developing critical communication links, these initiatives will enhance our work to engage communities, introduce kids to the Trail through classroom curricula, and build a corps of citizen scientists to monitor environmental health of Trail lands.

3. What goals do you hope to achieve with your Big Idea? How will your Big Idea make your charity and its services better? What's your proposed timeline for implementation?

By capturing kids' imagination we will, over 3 years, inspire 1 million new enthusiasts to enjoy the trail, outdoor recreation, and to engage in environmental stewardship through creative new outreach to kids and families, and the augmentation of ATC's current programs.

2010:

- 1st ATC Youth Faire & Scholarship Contest
- on-line app for curriculum exchange for K-12 Trail to Every Classroom program
- community network website to promote the A.T. as a source of economic development

2011:

- "just-for-kids" interactive website providing A.T. trip planning, activities, and education/entertainment

2012:

- 'classroom curriculum' site grown to 300 contributors
- 20 new communities enlisted to develop content for web app providing improved visitor services and trail-related events

Built by volunteers, the A.T. will net 100,000 additional hours in volunteer support through connections established in this campaign (up 50%) insuring the legacy will live on for the benefit of future generations.