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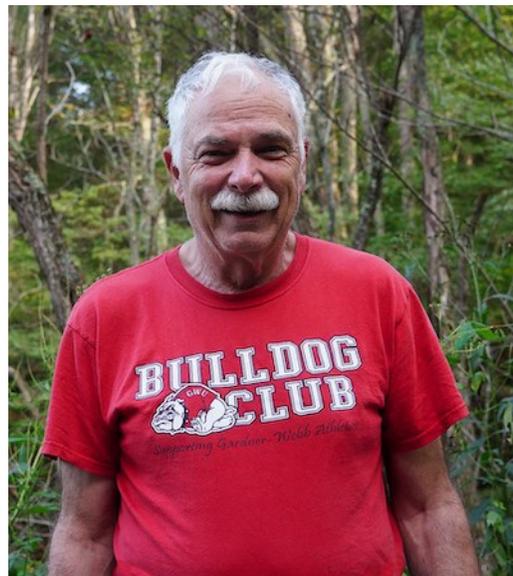
Carroll Vigilance Award Honors the Group's 18-year Commitment to Annual Cleanup Event



BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.— For the last 18 years, Dr. Tom Jones, Gardner-Webb University professor of biology, has given Honors Students the opportunity to join the annual cleanup event at New River in West Jefferson, N.C.

The weekend event is aptly name “Mud, Sweat and Volunteers.” Participants sleep in tents and spend a day paddling down the river in canoes picking up trash as they go. Last year, 27 GWU students and eight guests made the trip and were among a group of over 100 volunteers who covered approximately 23 river miles. They pulled 204 tires and 3,860 pounds of trash out of the river.

For his continued support of the New River Conservancy, Jones will receive the Wallace and Peggy Carroll Vigilance Award. “Though the award is for me, it actually should be about the great students who get involved each year,” observed Jones, who also serves as the associate dean of the Honors Program.



The Carrolls were early supporters of the New River, successfully fighting a dam which would have flooded the New. Their efforts resulted in Congress approving legislation to place 26.5 miles of the New River into the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. This designation prohibits impeding the flow of any Federal Wild and Scenic River.

Chelsea Blount, New River’s restoration director, said the Conservancy wanted to present Jones with the honor for “the continued love and support that you have shown the New River over these many years.” The award will be presented in a virtual ceremony on July 30.

Several students in the Gardner-Webb Honors Program go every year they are at the University and continue to join the group as alumni. Joy Smith, who graduated in 2020, went three times as a student. “I always go back, because it feels so great to know that you are helping the environment by cleaning the New River,” Smith shared. “Also, it’s a great bonding experience to be in the woods with other students for two nights with no cell phone service. The best part about the trip is the times that we are all together cooking, eating, and talking. It’s really nice to get to meet new people and enjoy nature.”

Andrew Bounds, a freshman computer science major, went for the first time last year. He said the best part was being able to see the mounds of trash and tires the volunteers pulled out of the river.



Jones has coordinated the trip every year with the State Park and New River Conservancy to provide canoes for the students. After spending the day on the river and camping out, the honors students hold a church service in West Jefferson at St. Mary's, one of the churches of the frescoes. On the way home, they enjoy a luncheon at Daniel Boone Inn in Boone, N.C.

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[Learn more about the GWU Honors Program.](#)