

Transformational Body Politics

September 25, 2022

What can one small person do in a vastly complex seemingly indifferent world? Show up at Bluestem Conservation Cemetery in Cedar Grove NC at 9AM any Friday to be a volunteer trail builder.

You'll join six to ten other volunteers and at the end of a three hour playing-in-the-woods session you'll have transformed a rocky, root infested mess of woodland into a smooth, hike able trail. You get to see the transformation in real time.

Tools and gloves are provided by the co-creators of this green cemetery, of which there are only 13 in the U.S. Grab your implement: loppers, mattock, hoe, dainty 8 inch chain saw, shovel, pry bar and work away at it. There's usually someone expert in trail building to guide you.

If pulling grape vines out of the canopy is pleasing work, you become the grape vine specialist for the day. If lopping saplings out of the perimeter of the trail suits your OCD orderliness, then have at it, by all means.

Recently, I hauled a bunch of cedar logs out to a stockpile where they'll wait patiently for a future building project. There is satisfaction in seeing a difference in the land due to your efforts; you have voted with your body, and the results are right in front of you.

If I were Sam Clemens, I might try to convince you that we volunteers ought to be paying Heidi and Jeff for the privilege of building trails at Bluestem, so much benefit and fellow feeling flows from it!

Dave Deming is a writer living in Chapel Hill, NC, and a frequent Bluestem volunteer.