



Arkansas Log A Load For Kids

For the last 25 years, Arkansas timber harvesters, foresters, affiliates and members of communities in which timber and forests are central to lives and livelihoods, have made a significant impact on the health and lives of children treated at Arkansas Children's Hospital (ACH). This year marks the 25th anniversary of Arkansas' Log A Load For Kids program, administered by the Arkansas Forestry Association in cooperation with the Arkansas Timber Producers Association. The program anniversary will be celebrated on April 21st at the Clinton Center in Little Rock and at fundraising events planned around the state. So much has been accomplished by the program, not only in the support it has provided to sustaining and even improving care programs and services at ACH, but also the ways in which Log A Load for Kids has brought communities together in recognition of their commonality: that forests might be one of our state's most critical sustainable resources, but without a doubt Arkansas' children are our most precious resource!

Met with Skepticism, AFA's Jacquelyn Kelley Kerley Recognized the Possibilities

Twenty-Five years ago, then AFA Communications Director Jacquelyn Kerley (Kelley) Kerley attended a meeting with other forestry association communications professionals where she had heard about two loggers in South Carolina who had donated the value of a load of logs to their local children's hospital. The act had garnered attention of their local media, but also played on the heartstrings of those in the industry. It seemed, as people began talking, that people knew people who had children who had been treated by a Children's Miracle Network (CMN) hospital.

Kerley returned from the meeting inspired that this would be a great campaign in Arkansas as well given the reputation and reach of Arkansas Children's Hospital in Little Rock. A native of Hamburg, Arkansas, Kerley understood the power of close-knit rural communities like her own, and she was very much in her new job at AFA coming to better understand and appreciate the soft heart of the often strong and burley hardworking loggers with whom she was working. In her Public Relations hat, she knew that showing loggers in this light

Celebrating 25 Years



would be a positive contrast to the often negative portrayal of loggers at the time, as the climate was being shaped for several sustainable forestry efforts to emerge.

With the AFA board's buy-in, she approached the ACH to pitch the idea, but was met at the onset with some skepticism. But that didn't stop her from trying, and after three meetings, the ACH Foundation approved.





“Log A Load For Kids remains the best initiative in which I have ever been a part.”

- Jacquelyn Kelley Kerley remembering the work to get Log A Load for Kids off the ground.

A Meeting of the Minds

Together with AFA member Berlie Bess of the Morrilton, Arkansas area, who had himself seen family members and community members positively impacted by the care of ACH, Kerley reached out to the AFA leadership, including Allen Bedell of then Circle B Logging, and held their first organizational meeting at the Klappenbach Bakery in Fordyce. Timber Harvester and AFA/ATPA member Frank Wilson of then Tri-W Logging and Wilson Bros. remembers the meeting over baked goods and coffee, recounting the initial plans for a few events around the state. “I am pretty sure that was the quickest that any group of us had reached a unanimous decision on anything,” Frank recently shared with ATPA communications consultant Courtney Johnson-Woods in a discussion of Log A Load’s beginnings. “It never really was about creating a positive image of loggers, even though I guess we knew it could help,” he notes. “I think it was something we all had in common. Most of us knew someone whose life had been improved by the care they received at Arkansas Children’s Hospital.”

Kerley thought they ought to utilize what rural and forestry communities were already doing to foster a sense of togetherness as part of fairs and other events: fish fries.

Before they knew it, a few communities were identified by the gathering of loggers to test the idea. And she set out to give the effort a more centralized coordination, developing a logo with cartoonist Vic Harville, whose cartoons were a mainstay in the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, and donning it on bumper stickers and coordinating tee-shirts to stamp the brand. She also held a press conference at the ACH parking lot in front of a load of logs that were to be auctioned off. Arkansas’ Log A Load For Kids campaign was a media darling right from the start, and the logging and forestry community put their all into the program with a heartfelt commitment to the young patients of ACH.

“Log A Load For Kids remains the best initiative in which I have ever been a part,” says Kerley in remembering the work to get the program off the ground. “Working with loggers and people in their communities, and seeing everyone come together for a common cause, was really gratifying and special,” she adds. In their second year, the program sought to partner with sawmills and forest products companies, and AFA member and then International Paper Forester Richard Stitch dedicated a great deal of energy to expanding the program. In the first two years alone under Kerley’s watchful eye and energy, Log A Load For Kids raised nearly \$100k for the ACH Foundation, and that landed a Log A Load For Kids team a spot answering telephones for the CMN annual telethon. “We were the only group there in matching shirts,” she recalls of their participation in bright yellow that couldn’t be missed. “And the next year, all the groups were in matching shirts,” she adds proudly.



Log A Load Grows and is Recognized by ACH Foundation as Valued, Permanent Partner

As was the case in Arkansas, the generosity of the loggers in South Carolina under the Log A Load umbrella had inspired campaigns in 13 other states when Kerley left for a job with Potlatch and her successor, Courtney (Johnson)-Woods (who still provides communications help to ATPA), worked to expand the program, providing community campaigns with centralized help. AFA helped publicize events, supported the program financially to purchase items and give-aways, and helped provide volunteer support for local auctions. Woods said she and her husband, a forester at IP then and chair of the AFA Tree Farm committee, cooked breakfast two years in a row for all the volunteers representing Log A Load For Kids who manned the phones at the telethon to give back to them for their work, citing this as one of the best days on the job in her three years with AFA.

“I think what I remember most was being in awe of the generosity and hard work of all the volunteers in communities that held events,” says Woods. “To this day, my husband and I, after moving back to Northern New York for his job, still talk about how much we miss not only the catfish and hushpuppies on which we happily sustained ourselves every weekend for many months those years, but the people. We miss the people. There are no better or kinder people than those who make the Natural State their home,” she says.

As the program grew, others joined including the family of Shelby Taylor, who together with his wife and children became deeply engaged in Sheridan and the

Central Arkansas region, and son Bobby later helping to launch the first Log A Load golf tournament. The program by then had tripled its totals, approaching \$150k a year. This established Log A Load as one of several high-earning fundraising programs that raised funds for ACH patients and programs. “We also became the first state Log A Load campaign to use in our tagline, “Caring for our state’s most precious resource,” a tagline now used at the national level as well (it’s on the national website!) Woods said she is very proud of her work with Log A Load.

“Working with loggers, foresters, companies and communities, we had expanded the program, showed a dedicated commitment to the campaign, and had raised significant amounts of money,” says Woods. In recognition, the ACH Foundation announced before she departed her position with AFA it would be providing dedicated staff, centralized donation collection and accounting, and even a small budget to support local campaigns. “I felt like this was my small contribution to Log A Load, on the hard work of the loggers and volunteers I cared for deeply of course,” she says. “Jacquie started the program; I helped formalize it as a mainstay, and Anna Swaim who took the helm and stayed the longest, helped galvanize the program into a well-oiled network of volunteers, respecting their ideas on how they wanted their efforts to benefit ACH patients and helping to make that happen.”

And that came in the form of significant and valuable endowments.

From the 1995 AFA Newsletter Vault:

“...A number of new events were planned for a total of 16 around the state with a growing cadre of volunteers. **Malvern** held a Log A Load Fish Fry coordinated by Donald Draper of Anthony Timberlands and a number of area businesses. The first **Little River County** event was held, coordinated by the staff of Buck Timber Company and sponsored by Georgia-Pacific, Steve Ward Timber, Tim Brotherton Logging, and other services. In **Fordyce**, Allen Bedell of Circle B Logging coordinated an event in the “Hog Barn,” and in **Prescott**, Jim Cornelius of Potlatch coordinated an event that included the area’s famous fried pies. David Meshell of Meshell Timber and Ray Marcentel of ARM Marcentel Logging coordinated an event in **Strong**, and **Molnairds Sawmill** turned its annual community-wide crawfish and BBQ extravaganza into a Log A Load event, including an auctioning of a load of logs. Tim Zorsch of Deltic Farm & Timber coordinated an event in the **Waldo area** and raised the highest event total that year when Bobby Neill of Neill Forestry Consultants added a matching contribution. Don Raymond of Deltic Farm & Timber, with the assistance of Bill Lovett of Lovett Logging and Berlie Bess of Bess Logging, coordinated three big events in Northwest Arkansas (**Rusellville, Morrilton and Waldron**). Sam Westbrook and Lynn Dyer of Clear Creek Tie Company held a Fish Fry in **DeQueen**, and Rob Loomis of Potlatch coordinated a big event in **Warren**. Steve Bolin and his wife Rosa, of S&R Wood Company once again held a successful event in **Hamburg** and Frank and James Wilson of Tri-W Logging and Wilson Bros, Inc., assisted by Kip Queathem of International Paper, held their inaugural event in **Pine Bluff**. Robert Frye of Weyerhaeuser Co. helped coordinate a first-ever event in **Mountain Pine**. Richard Shaw and Greg Swede, both of International Paper, helped coordinate a catfish and chicken dinner in **Gurdon** sponsored by ArkTrac, Suttle and TAC Equipment Companies, and veteran fundraiser Mike Pennington of J.P. Price Lumber Company held a big event at the **Monticello Country Club**.”

Establishing a Series of Endowments Highlights Log A Load Legacy

With the ACH Foundation recognition of Log A Load For Kids as a major fundraising source and dedicated group, Anna Swaim set out to use her organizational talent to create a solid network of community events and volunteers under the guidance of an oversight and planning committee. This group worked with the ACH Foundation to not only set ambitious fundraising goals (that they often exceeded by leaps and bounds), but the group was also in a position to work with Foundation staff to make decisions about where they wanted that money to go. The accomplishments of this amazing network of planners, event organizers and volunteers accomplished the following:

- Arkansas Log A Load For Kids funded one \$4 million endowment in support of the ACH Emergency Department and Trauma Unit.
- Log A Load funded two \$1.5 million endowments—one in pediatric cardiovascular surgery and another in support of the Angel One helicopter transport program—and one \$1 million endowment in support of the hospital's imaging and radiation program.

New Endowment Established

Most recently, under the coordination of AFA Communications Manager Rebecca Neeley, now with ACH's Northwest Arkansas campus, Log A Load for Kids committed in 2017 to raising \$1.5 million over two years to fund the cardio thoracic surgery endowment chair. This year's campaign totals will fulfil this commitment.

Together, We Make a Difference

The Arkansas Forestry Association and the Arkansas Timber Producers Association are two organizations that through their collective memberships across our industry are critically important to our state and local communities for the work we do, the jobs we create, the services and businesses that spring up around us, and those who benefit from the products we produce. For the last 25 years, the members of our two associations and a network of exceptional and caring volunteers, have come together to make a difference in the lives of patients and their families, dedicated and talented staff, and critical programs engaged in exceptional care at Arkansas Children's Hospital. Our current volunteers include those who tagged along at those early events with their parents and grandparents as children themselves, and we hope their children, and their children's children will part of the Log A Load for Kids family for years to come.

"It is almost impossible to quantify the significant positive impact that the volunteers and donors, who give so generously of their time and resources, have had on the patients and families who depend on Arkansas Children's Hospital. The logging and forestry community continues to amaze me with their dedication and commitment to Log A Load For Kids."

-- Anna Swaim
AFA Communications Director
for nearly two decades

What Anna did best, in addition to her organizational prowess say volunteers, was to publicize the individuals who worked so hard on the ground. She arranged for Log A Load volunteers to participate in kick-off events and tours of the hospital. She made sure that those who were volunteering were acknowledged and thanked personally for their efforts, and she established formal recognitions to highlight those who made a difference. Under her coordination, and with a genuine support of those who were volunteering, Log A Load consistently raised an estimated and astounding \$500k annually. In 2015, the Arkansas Society of Association Executives awarded Swaim with its Excellence in Communications Award for her work with Log A Load For Kids. The program raised nearly \$7million during her tenure as coordinator for the program at AFA.



AFA honored Mike Pennington of Monticello with its first-ever Arkansas Log A Load For Kids® Volunteer Award in 2012. Here, Mike recognizes AFA's Anna Swaim's 18 years of dedicated service to Log A Load For Kids.

