Meet NPS Native Plant Specialist
Ahsa Jensen

Junior Ranger Program Connects Kids to Our Precious National Parks

GCA Park Store Staff: Helping Visitors Help the Park

Grand Canyon Association Field Institute 2016 Classes
I’m proud to see how much work we have accomplished in such a short period of time with your support. Although GCA was founded 83 years ago, our philanthropy program has only been operating since 2008. The success of philanthropy is all around us! It’s seen in the new Bright Angel trailhead, the construction of a new, energy-efficient greenhouse, the park revegetation efforts, the revitalization at Desert View and the protection of our increasingly rare night skies.

A significant part of GCA’s future is philanthropy. Private support from members like you has never been more critical. To help us focus and realize our goals, we have added an important new staff member to the GCA family: Chief Philanthropy Officer Ann Schefflen. Ann brings more than 15 years of experience and a successful track record leading effective philanthropic programs. She has a passion and love for the Southwest—its people, its history and its sweeping landscapes. Ann is thrilled to be here to help us in our important mission to inspire people to protect and enhance Grand Canyon National Park now and for future generations.

Throughout this issue of *Canyon Views*, you’ll meet other people who call the canyon home and help make GCA-funded projects a reality. The people who live and work here come from all over the country and world. Their jobs vary, but they have one thing in common: a passion for Grand Canyon and a desire to share, protect and give back to the place they love.

It’s truly amazing what we accomplish together for this park we all love and cherish. Thank you for all you do to support Grand Canyon!
YOUR Impact at Grand Canyon

Thanks to you, GCA and Grand Canyon National Park are…

Restoring Native Plants throughout the Park

At Grand Canyon’s native plant nursery, the National Park Service’s vegetation team is working hard and putting your donations to work. With funding from the Grand Canyon Association, the team is growing plants to use at all of the park’s targeted restoration sites. Projects are taking place throughout the park—from the bottom of the canyon, along the Colorado River and across the North and South Rims. All of the nursery’s plants are propagated from seeds or cuttings collected in the park. Although the native plant nursery is located on the South Rim, plants are grown there for all the canyon’s life zones.

Thanks to GCA members and donors, the park has received funding to plant a demonstration garden to display the variety of plants found at Grand Canyon. The vegetation team carefully selected more than 60 plant species from different park regions for this educational garden. It’s an opportunity to showcase the canyon’s diverse plants—the Grand Canyon has the second most diverse plant collection within a national park unit, with over 1,750 known plant species!

The combination of restoration and design makes the demonstration garden a special project. You will find the garden on the north side of El Tovar Hotel, in a restored area filled with native plants to highlight their diversity. The plants will be grouped together based on their bloom time, bloom color and height.

Colorful native plants will bloom throughout the growing season in the park’s demonstration garden.
The vegetation team couldn’t do their work without a greenhouse that provides new seedlings and plants for the many areas the team restores in the canyon. The needs of the vegetation team and the park have outgrown the current greenhouse, which was built from a kit approximately 20 years ago. GCA donors and private foundations have made the longtime dream of a new energy-efficient greenhouse a reality at Grand Canyon National Park. Construction broke ground in August of this year and is slated to be finished in early 2016. The new structure will include:

- An energy-efficient solar design that includes a rainwater-harvesting system
- Automated climate control systems to maintain optimal growth conditions
- A seed storage facility that will provide locally harvested seeds stored at the appropriate temperature and humidity
- The capacity to propagate over 30,000 native plants annually

Grand Canyon’s greenhouse will be a model for other national parks as we look forward to commemorating the National Park Service Centennial in 2016.

The next time you’re at the canyon, come visit the garden and see firsthand what you are helping the park achieve by growing and restoring native plants! To make a gift, call GCA’s philanthropy office at (800) 858-2808, or visit www.grandcanyon.org.
Projects such as the greenhouse and demonstration garden could not happen without the dedication of National Park Service staff like Ahsa Jensen who live and work at Grand Canyon. It takes hundreds of employees to keep the park running smoothly and ensure visitors have a wonderful canyon experience. Although you may never meet Ahsa in person, you will see her in the projects she works on throughout the park.

“Four years ago, I was visiting the North Rim and I met a National Park Service employee who was maintaining the plant restoration site at the Roaring Springs residence. I was amazed that her commute was by foot, from the North Rim down the North Kaibab Trail, and I was in awe of her job working with plants in the canyon. I immediately thought, ‘If she can do it, then why can’t I?’ I moved to Grand Canyon National Park less than a year later to work for the vegetation program and have been here ever since.

“After graduating from the University of Oregon with double bachelor of science degrees in geography and ethnic studies, I found myself drawn to plants, land restoration and conservation programs. I’ve participated in a variety of projects focused on preservation and maintenance, including building trails in state parks, working on organic vegetable farms, monitoring countless vegetation transects in our forests, planting trees as part of forestry restoration projects and working with Oregon’s master gardener program. Prior to working at Grand Canyon National Park, I managed a plant nursery in Eugene, Oregon.

“All of these experiences brought me to the Grand Canyon and allowed me to become a biological science technician for the Grand Canyon National Park native plant nursery. I have grown thousands of plants at the nursery from seeds and cuttings that I collected in the field. When I walk through the nursery, I have a personal connection to the plants and the locations from which they were collected. When I see our plants flourishing at our restoration sites, whether it is around a developed area on the rim or along the Colorado River, I feel a great connection to this park. My work is extremely rewarding.”

—Ahsa Jensen, Biological Science Technician, Grand Canyon National Park
“Ranger Ronnie! Ranger Ronnie! We did it!” the smiling family called out. I had first met this family at the Visitor Center the day before, when they arrived at Grand Canyon,” recounts Ranger Ronnie (Veronica) Colvin. “They inquired about hiking and other available family activities. I introduced them to the Junior Ranger programs and helped them plan their time at the canyon. Later that afternoon I saw them at my Kids Rock program, and they said they were having a great time and had almost finished their booklets. Much to my surprise, the next day while manning the Kids Table near the El Tovar Hotel, the father and older siblings came rushing up to the table, calling my name. They had just finished a morning hike on the Bright Angel Trail, and, although exhausted, they were exhilarated by the experience and were grinning ear to ear from their accomplishment. Their enthusiasm made me smile, too.”

—Ronnie Colvin, Interpretive Ranger, Grand Canyon National Park
Children Find Fun in Learning at Grand Canyon

The National Park Service Junior Ranger program is an activity-based program conducted in almost all national parks, including Grand Canyon. Many national parks offer young visitors the opportunity to join the National Park Service “family” as Junior Rangers. Interested youth complete a series of activities during a park visit, share their answers with a park ranger and receive an official Junior Ranger patch and Junior Ranger certificate. Junior Rangers are typically between the ages of 5 and 13, although people of all ages can participate.

“While the Junior Ranger programs are geared toward younger audiences, kids of all ages can learn and have fun with the activities,” Ranger Ronnie explains. “Many Junior Rangers I have sworn in are taller than me. There are a good number of 11-year-olds and up who are Scorpion Junior Rangers. They take pride in completing the activities in the booklets and willingly attend programs to earn and collect their badges from Grand Canyon and many other national parks.

“Recently at the Visitor Center, I met a lady who had completed all the pages in her booklet, had attended a ranger program and was ready to collect her badge. In conversing with her while I checked her work, she told me that she writes a seniors blog, and earning badges is a wonderful way for seniors to learn about the parks they visit. She told me Grand Canyon is rated highest for seniors, partly by not putting an upper age limit on their Junior Ranger activities and thereby encouraging lifelong learning and a continued appreciation of our irreplaceable natural places.”

Partly guided by grade-level education standards (Shh, it’s like homework, but don’t tell the kids!), part activity booklet, part scientific field journal and all fun, each booklet aims to connect kids with park resources and rangers in a positive way. Guided by place-based learning, kids touch, smell, feel and create their own interpretations of the resources they fully experience. National Park Service Junior Ranger guidelines seek to connect young people to our precious national park resources to ensure future stewards for these national treasures.

The Junior Ranger program at Grand Canyon National Park is fully supported by Grand Canyon Association and offered at no cost to visiting families. The next time you see a child diligently working on his or her Junior Ranger booklet or getting sworn in at the Visitor Center, you can be just as proud and excited as they are. To make a donation in support of an educational program like this, call the GCA philanthropy office at 800-858-2808, or visit www.grandcanyon.org.
Meet National Park Service Educator
Graciela Avila

“I can relate to the many kids who tell me after their first look at the canyon that it doesn’t seem real, it looks like a poster on the wall. They become more fascinated, as do I, when examining the smaller details, like seeing elk close by and smelling the sagebrush.”

Graciela Avila was 12 years old when her family took a road trip to visit national parks in the Grand Circle. “I specifically remember a ‘death march’ in Zion National Park in the heat of August,” recounts Avila. “Even though it was a tough hike, I loved it.” That journey was also her first experience at Grand Canyon. Avila reflects, “I remember waiting for the tram with my dad on Hermit Road and witnessing a thunderstorm of biblical proportions. I had never seen anything like it and was amazed.”

Avila has been calling Grand Canyon home for the last nine years. Before then, she worked as an interpretive ranger at Mesa Verde National Park and as a naturalist/instructor for the Los Angeles County Outdoor Science School. After falling in love with the Colorado Plateau during her travels, she attended Northern Arizona University in pursuit of a master’s degree in elementary education.

Today Avila is an environmental education specialist in Resource Education, a branch of the NPS Division of Interpretation. “But sometimes I jokingly call myself the Junior Ranger Queen, as I manage all aspects of the Junior Ranger booklet programs in the park,” says Avila. “In addition, I conduct curriculum-based education programs for the branch.” Her duties include field trips, distance-learning programs, classroom visits by NPS rangers and more.
GCA Park Store Staff
Helping Visitors Help the Park

GCA runs eight stores on the South and North Rims of Grand Canyon and one at the Kaibab National Forest visitor center. Each features publications by Grand Canyon subject experts as well as fun and educational products to help you remember your visit.

Your purchases at our stores support Grand Canyon National Park in many ways, including providing Junior Ranger materials to help children connect with Grand Canyon, scientific equipment needed for park scientists to conduct research on the park’s diverse biology, and funding to train Preventive Search and Rescue volunteers who provide life-saving support in the canyon year-round.

At our park stores, visitors can interact with staff and get park information such as where to hike, what to see and where to find food and facilities. The stores are typically the first place most people learn about the partnership between GCA and the park—most likely you first learned about GCA and became a member at one of our park stores.

Grand Canyon Association’s stores are places to learn and give back to the park through your purchases and membership. Come use your membership discount to benefit yourself and support your park!

Meet Paula Bittner, Sr. Assistant Manager

Today Paula Bittner lives and works on the South Rim, but she’s a long way from where she started. Bittner spent her youth and much of her adult life in the Big Apple. But as much as she enjoyed city life, she also yearned to escape to the mountains and did so whenever she could.

For 34 years, Bittner worked as a nurse. In 1996, while she was living and working in Flagstaff, she received a welcome invitation to hike to Phantom Ranch at the bottom of the canyon. She was thrilled, but admits that she “didn’t have a clue” what she was getting herself into. The scenery was breathtaking and the company good, but coming back up was a different story. She met the challenge but also learned what to do and not to do the next time.

In 2011, while traveling with her partner, Pat, Bittner got word that the Grand Canyon Association was in need of seasonal employees. She readily accepted a job as a seasonal sales associate on the rim and worked there for a couple of years. In 2014, she was given the opportunity to become an interim manager at Desert View, and later, a seasonal manager on the North Rim.

When she’s not working for GCA or planning hikes, Bittner volunteers at the native plant nursery and has taken up photography after a long reprieve. She says she’s “just not ready to retire. I’m not done contributing.”
The Lucky Hat
by Matthew Henry Hall, illustrated by Jim Madsen
When Michael receives a hat his beloved grandmother made for him, he feels like the luckiest boy in the world. With his hat on, he and his grandmother take many memorable trips to the Grand Canyon.

One day, Michael’s hat blows away. As he searches for it, he discovers many other wonders in nature and life. Eventually, he comes to realize that, with or without his hat, he still feels like the luckiest person in the world.

The power of family and shared outdoor adventures shines as readers discover for themselves the magic the Grand Canyon holds.
Ages 4–8, 32 pages
$14.95
Member price $12.71
The Ravenous Raven
by Midji Stephenson, illustrated by Steve Gray
The ravenous raven is one hungry bird!

As he travels around the Colorado Plateau, he feasts on whatever he sees—fish, berries, nuts and some other less-appetizing choices. He’s not picky! After he encounters a family enjoying a picnic, Raven is too round and fat to move, which could spell trouble for the greedy bird.

With fun-to-read text and hilarious illustrations, children and parents will laugh out loud as they read about Raven’s tasty (mis)adventures.

Ages 3–7, 32 pages
$14.95
Member price $12.71
Experience Grand Canyon with the Experts

A class with the Field Institute allows you to learn while experiencing the wonders of Grand Canyon. Join us for your very own Grand Canyon learning adventure!

New in 2016

The Field Institute’s schedule of 60-plus classes will include a number of new offerings, including:

Grand Canyon Discovery Walk
Dates: Mon.–Fri., June–August
Member Fee: $45 Non-member Fee: $49
Hiking Level: 1
Enjoy dramatic canyon views, historic Kolb Studio and the upper tiers of the Bright Angel Trail—all in the company of a Grand Canyon expert. An excellent introduction to the grandest of chasms!

Hermit to Bass Natural History Backpack
Dates: March 20–29
Member Fee: $1,200 Non-member Fee: $1,225
Hiking Level: 4
Christa Sadler and Lisa Kearsley will combine talents once again to lead an ambitious backpack trip and share a comprehensive overview of the geology and biology found along this exquisite strip of the Tonto Trail.

Plein Air Painting Workshop
Dates: April 8–10
Fee: TBD
Hiking Level: 2
Acclaimed artist Bill Cramer will share his tips and techniques with fellow plein air painters during this brief but action-packed workshop on the South Rim. This workshop is a collaborative event with the Sedona Art Center.

Awake in the Wild Backpack
Dates: April 15–20
Member Fee: $925 Non-member Fee: $950
Hiking Level: 4
Following ancient spiritual traditions that value the transformative power of nature, this workshop will be spent meditating outdoors in the natural beauty and mystery of the Grand Canyon. Author Mark Coleman will lead participants on a New Hance to Grandview loop backpack trip while exploring the serenity of nature.

Boucher Canyon Tamarisk Removal
Dates: October 21–27
Member Fee: $570 Non-member Fee: $595
Hiking Level: 4
Join Christa Sadler of the National Park Service vegetation team on a moderate-intensity backpack trip to Boucher and Slate Canyons to monitor and remove the invasive tamarisk (aka salt cedar). This trip will be both educational and labor intensive. Participants will be carrying a portion of the tools in addition to their own backpacking equipment.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>22–24</td>
<td>Grand Canyon Winter Photography</td>
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<td>25–29</td>
<td>Hands-On Archaeology Backpack</td>
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<td>30–2/2</td>
<td>Phantom Ranch Natural and Cultural History Backpack (women only)</td>
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<td>February</td>
<td>10–11</td>
<td>Leave No Trace Trainer Course</td>
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<td>10–13</td>
<td>Phantom Ranch Natural and Cultural History Backpack (women only)</td>
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<td>15–17</td>
<td>Wilderness First Responder Recertification</td>
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<td>March</td>
<td>14–17</td>
<td>Indian Garden Backpack (family friendly)</td>
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<td>20–29</td>
<td>Hermit to Bass Natural History Backpack</td>
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<td>23–26</td>
<td>Inner Canyon Yoga Retreat</td>
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<td>29–4/1</td>
<td>South Kaibab to Bright Angel Backpack</td>
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<td>Horseshoe Mesa Circumnavigation Natural History Backpack</td>
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<td>1–6</td>
<td>Clear Creek Natural History Backpack</td>
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<td>Havasu Canyon Natural History Backpack</td>
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<td>6–11</td>
<td>Grand Canyon Springs Survey</td>
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<td>8–10</td>
<td>Plein Air Painting Workshop</td>
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<td>15–20</td>
<td>Awake in the Wild Backpack</td>
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<td>Nankoweap to Kwagunt Wilderness Skills Workshop</td>
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<td>May</td>
<td>2–9</td>
<td>Tanner to Grandview Geology Backpack</td>
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<td>7–13</td>
<td>Paria Canyon Geology Backpack</td>
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<td>10–13</td>
<td>Take a Load Off: Mule-Assisted Camping</td>
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<td>16–19</td>
<td>Indian Garden Backpack</td>
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<td>18–23</td>
<td>Rim-to-Rim Geology Backpack</td>
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<td>23–25</td>
<td>Geology on the Edge (GCA members only)</td>
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<td>30–6/4</td>
<td>Rim-to-Rim Natural History Backpack</td>
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<td>June</td>
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<td>Drawing on the Edge</td>
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<td>5–8</td>
<td>Indian Garden Backpack</td>
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<td>Wilderness First Responder Training</td>
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<td>North Rim Writing on the Edge</td>
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<td>Wilderness First Responder Recertification</td>
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<td>Nature Sketching and Journaling</td>
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<td>July</td>
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<td>Natural and Human History on the Edge</td>
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<td>North Rim Natural and Cultural History</td>
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<td>Monsoon Photography</td>
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<td>August</td>
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<td>Colorado River Geology Motorized Float Trip</td>
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<td>September</td>
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<td>North Rim Fall Colors Photography</td>
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<td>Fiber Arts and Wool Workshop</td>
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<td>Thunder River, Stone and Deer Creeks Wilderness Skills Workshop</td>
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<td>11–15</td>
<td>Women’s Havasu Canyon Natural and Cultural History Backpack</td>
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<td>South Kaibab to Bright Angel Backpack</td>
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<td>Take a Load Off: Mule-Assisted Camping</td>
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<td>21–27</td>
<td>Boucher Canyon Tamarisk Removal</td>
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<td>November</td>
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<td>Indian Garden Backpack (fully outfitted)</td>
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<td>4–7</td>
<td>Take a Load Off: Mule-Assisted Camping (fully outfitted)</td>
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<td>7–11</td>
<td>South Kaibab to Bright Angel Backpack (fully outfitted)</td>
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<tr>
<td>December</td>
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**These full- and partial-day tours are great for families and are offered at various times throughout the year:**

- Meet the Canyon Family Hiking Adventure (on-demand; year-round)
- North Rim Family Hiking Adventure (Mon.–Fri., June–September)
- Grand Canyon Discovery Walk (Mon.–Fri., June–August)
Carl Bowman is one of Grand Canyon Association Field Institute’s world-class instructors. With a degree in biology, he worked for the National Park Service from 1974 until retiring in 2015. His many roles included fee collector, interpreter, fire and trail crew member and resource manager.

What was your first experience at Grand Canyon?
It was a typical family vacation when I was in junior high, maybe 1967. We camped at Mather Campground, hiked to Cedar Ridge and went to the geology lecture at Yavapai Lodge. I was blown away by the volume of the canyon—I’d seen the pictures, but it was SO BIG and completely different from anything else I’d ever seen.

What makes Grand Canyon special to you?
No matter what your interests are, the canyon can teach you more: geology, history, politics, ecology, sacred landscapes . . . you name it. Grand Canyon is so much more than visual—it is sounds, smells, tastes and textures, and they’re all there to appreciate and explore.

How many years have you lived at the canyon?
My first job here was as a seasonal interpreter in 1980. I’ve lived here full-time since 1991. Most of that time, I was the park’s air quality specialist. It was a challenging job. Everyone agrees we should be able to see Grand Canyon with undistorted views. The challenge was working with states, tribes, industries, conservation groups, etc. to figure out how to make that happen.

Why do you work for the Field Institute?
I really enjoy sharing the Grand Canyon with folks, and the Field Institute tours are a wonderful way to do that. I generally do day tours and spend all day with an individual family or small group. It gives me a chance to speak to their interests, finding those facets of the canyon that appeal specifically to them.
Did you know that you can make a gift to Grand Canyon in honor of a loved one or friend? Tribute gifts are a meaningful way to celebrate birthdays, weddings and anniversaries or to remember someone who had a special connection to the canyon. Making a gift to Grand Canyon Association is a great way to show that you care and provides critical funds to Grand Canyon. It’s easy to make a tribute gift. Just click “Donate Now” at www.grandcanyon.org or call (800) 858-2808.

These tribute gifts of $50 or more were made from July through August 2015 and are a touching reminder of the importance of our friends and loved ones.

Jimmie and Harry Balling, in honor of Sally Clayton
Steve Breckenridge, in honor of my parents, who first introduced me to the canyon in the 1950s
Shannon Clancy, in honor of Helen and Wayne Ranney
Debbie Dorsett, in honor of Sally Clayton
A. Mark and Christine Flaschner, in honor of Sally Clayton
Jane and Jeff Forrester, in honor of Sally Clayton
John Gregg, in memory of James L. Gregg
Cynthia Klein, in honor of Pat Karlberg on the occasion of her 80th birthday
Lawrence Lessin, in honor of National Park Ranger Casey Merritt
Janice Parry, in honor of the paramedics who helped me on July 2 with dehydration at the North Rim
Howard Thiele, in loving memory of my father, Howard N. Thiele Jr.
Tara Williams, in memory of Robert Williams, who passed away during a canyon hike in 2009, and Thank You to all the tireless rangers

Do you have a most memorable tour?
I’ve had a number of really good experiences, even though they initially seemed like they were not going to turn out well. Once I headed down the Bright Angel Trail in a downpour, and on another occasion, I picnicked on the rim in the midst of a springtime gale. Both were great tours, but it’s the people who make them work; they appreciate what is there and find the fun along the way.

What is your most memorable experience with a visitor?
Once I ran across a lady on the rim weeping in joy. It was the first time I’d encountered someone so deeply moved. This is a place that can do that to people. I might be able to provide some insight or meaning, but it’s really all about the canyon and the impact it has on each individual visitor.
Our mission is to inspire people to protect and enhance Grand Canyon National Park for present and future generations.

Member Profile: TRACY MUTCH

This is Tracy Mutch’s first year living and working at Desert View on the South Rim. Tracy is a GCA member and seasonal retail assistant for the GCA Park Store at the Watchtower. When you first hear Tracy, you know she’s not a native Arizonan. Her accent is a sure giveaway to her origins north of London, where she grew up.

As a member and employee, she spends her spare time hiking, photographing and reading about the history of the canyon and its people. At an early age, Tracy was drawn to the ambiance and wide open spaces of John Wayne’s classic Western films. When she was old enough, she made it a goal to tour Monument Valley on horseback, and once she did, she knew she wanted to be a part of the American West.

Tracy joined GCA as a member in February 2015, prior to her first summer as an employee. She’s proud to personally support the organization and truly enjoys educating visitors about the association’s mission and purpose.

Visit our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/grandcanyonassoc
Click the "like" button to follow all Grand Canyon Association happenings!