

Boy Scouts Tackle Appalachian Trail

by [Sally Litchfield](#)

December 17, 2014 Marietta Daily Journal



Boy Scout Troop 554 from Whitefield Academy, front row, from left: Sean Morris, Colson Gullede (son of Cobb Chamber's Slade Gullede) Crawford Folk. Second row, Patrick Spellissey, Ethan Powell and Daniel Justice. Back row, John Schwartz.

Backpacking any part of the famous Appalachian Trail is no easy task, even for an experienced outdoorsman. The trail extends 2,181 miles along the Appalachian Mountains from Springer Mountain, Georgia, to Mount Katahdin in Maine. Of that, 76 miles cross some of the most beautiful and rugged landscape in Georgia. The first white “blaze,” (a white paint trail marker) is on Springer Mountain at an elevation of 3,782 feet marking the southern terminus of the Trail. While on the trail, you cross over the sixth and seventh highest mountains in Georgia (Blood Mountain at 4,458 feet and Tray Mountain at 4,430 feet), hike past the headwaters of the mighty Chattahoochee River at Chattahoochee Gap and traverse seven counties before ending at Bly’s Gap near the Georgia-North Carolina border.

To the average person, these statistics might be staggering — which they are — but they are not too intimidating for **Boy Scout Troop 554 from Whitefield Academy**. Some Scouts have hiked 30 to 60 miles of the trail. In November, **Ethan Powell** became the first Scout to complete the entire Georgia section. He started his quest in 2012 and completed it in six hikes, the longest of which was a 21-mile section completed last January in the ice and snow with a wind chill factor well below zero. **Other Scouts who have completed at least**

three sections of the “Quest for 76” include Daniel Justice, Crawford Folk, Sean Morris, Patrick Spellissey, Preston Bates, JT Morris and Colson Gullledge.

Troop 554 is a boy-led Troop where the older Scouts provide the leadership. There is a tremendous amount of planning and preparation that takes place before one of these adventures. Each patrol — usually a group of four or five boys — is required to have their own meal plan and to pack in their food, tents, water filters and miscellaneous gear. The week of the hike, the boys participate in a “shakedown” where older scouts and adult leaders review each boy’s pack to ensure it is packed properly for his size. Then each backpack is weighed and adjusted if necessary. This helps younger scouts learn what to bring and what not to bring and that every pound counts when it is on your back for the weekend. While on the trail, the boys practice the “leave no trace” principles of low-impact camping.

The Troop has the unusual advantage of having an assistant scoutmaster, **Steve Howard**, who “thru-hiked” all 2,181 miles of the Appalachian Trail in 1999. He shared his exciting story with the boys on a number of occasions and has proven to be a tremendous source of enthusiasm, inspiration and energy for the boys.

These hikes have truly proved challenging and stretched the will and determination of these scouts from Whitefield Academy, but who knows, the challenge might reap a few thru-hikers in the future.

Sally Litchfield is a longtime Marietta resident. She formerly practiced law in Marietta and now stays home to raise her two children. Send Sally news at sallylit@bellsouth.net. Call Sally at (770) 425-8106.