

**Volunteer Vibes** - *Volunteers play many crucial roles at the Preserve. They maintain trails, welcome visitors, conduct research, educate youth groups, support special events, beautify our gardens, capture breathtaking photography, and much more, contributing their time, talents, and thousands of volunteer hours annually. We will be regularly featuring our volunteers in Talus Talk so that we can all learn who they are and why they do what they do for the Preserve. Let's meet our volunteers!*

## **Tonda Highley**

### ***Where did you grow up?***

I was born & raised on a Kansas farm. Even as a young girl, I was always on the move walking through the woods and pastures. I moved to the Hudson Valley area over 40 years ago and discovered the beauty of the mountains here.

### ***What is your volunteer role(s) here at Mohonk Preserve?***

I am a Hike Leader Volunteer Coordinator for Mohonk Preserve. It is a role I have held for several years. I am a strong advocate for the hiking program. I started my hiking career at Mohonk Preserve as have so many others. Every day I am out on the land and am happy to assist new visitors and hikers when I encounter them or those on scheduled hikes.

### ***Why did you decide to volunteer your time and talents at Mohonk Preserve?***

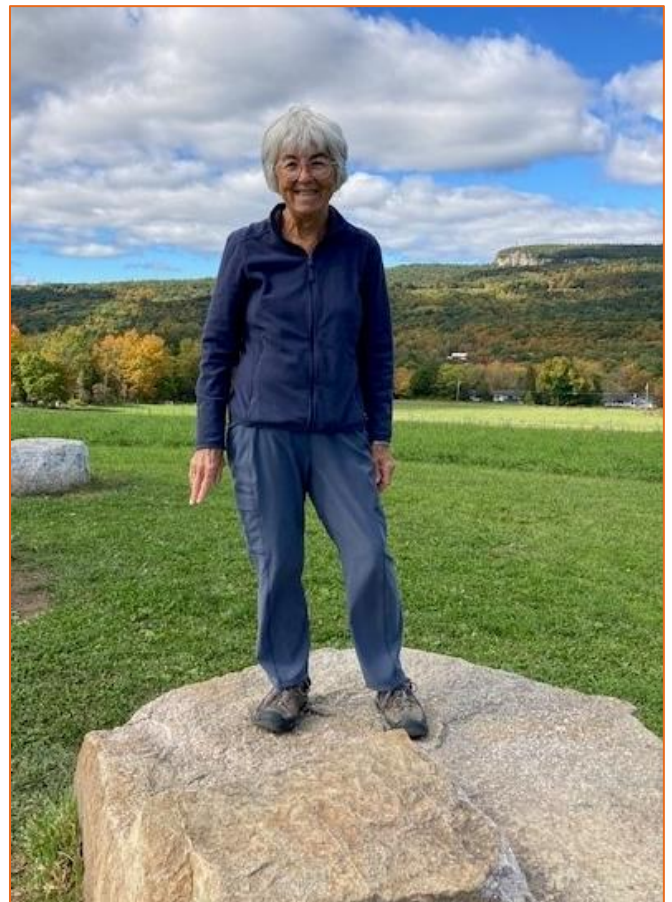
The "Gunks" are my local and go-to mountains. I felt it was important to give back to the place that gives so much to me. I've always had a passion for the outdoors and nature, so it is a perfect match for me.

### ***What is a volunteer accomplishment you are really proud of?***

I am most proud of working with Andrew Reynolds, the Preserve's Volunteer Programs Manager, to reinstate the hiking program after a lapse during COVID. This hiking program has consistently over the years brought folks together to enjoy time on the trails, build long-lasting friendships, and spark interest in others to volunteer.

### ***Where is your favorite place/trail on the Preserve and why is it your favorite?***

There are so many favorite trails, scrambles & places to wander. The views from the top of the Bonticou Crag and the Northeast Trail are special to me no matter the time of year.



*Tonda Highley; photo by her grandson, Stephen White Smith*