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Farm Coordinator : Ingrid McNair

**PRESS RELEASE – Dec 29, 2009**

**Historic Johnson Farm announces its February events:**

“Before You Go Outside” will be held Monday, February 22 at 7 pm at Historic Johnson Farm’s Interpretive Center. The class will be led by Gary Eblen, the Community Outreach Coordinator for Diamond Brand Outdoors. The cost is \$5 per person. The class will include helpful hints, tips and ideas to make your camping, hiking and outdoors experiences a pleasure. The class is suitable for adults and students ages 12 and older.



Eblen says: “My goal for this ‘class’ will be to encourage people to ‘go outside and play’ in our own backyard whether it be a day hike, car camp or backpack trip. I’ll offer suggestions on gear, food, books, maps that are now available that will help make their outdoor experience simple and fun. The emphasis will be on people ‘finding their own level of adventure’. At Camp Mondamin (in Henderson County where Eblen worked many years), we

often heard Chief (Frank Bell Sr. – the camp owner) define adventure as ‘activity on one's personal frontier.’ “

Gary Eblen has enjoyed a long, extensive career in the outdoor recreation and camping field. He came to NC in 1969 from University of Kentucky to work as a counselor at Henderson County's Camp Mondamin. He worked at Mondamin 13 summers primarily as a Hiking and Rock Climbing counselor. During his time there, Eblen was also a guide for Wilderness Society Backpacking trips in Joyce Kilmer and Great Smoky Mountain National Park. There were two summers where he ran a youth outdoor program in Maryland. In 1979 he was a seasonal ranger at the goat barn at Carl Sandburg Home.

This is Gary's 30th year in the Outdoor Retail business, first in NYC from 1981-83 and at Diamond Brand since September of 1983. He is in his third year as Community Outreach Coordinator at Diamond Brand Outdoors. In that capacity he works with groups such as Friends of Blue Ridge Parkway, Friends of the Smokies, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Friends of DuPont Forest as well as conservation groups like Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy, RiverLink and ECO.

Gary also enjoys trail maintenance. As a Carolina Mountain Club member he works on a Wilderness Trail Crew in Shining Rock and Middle Prong Wilderness. He spent a week the past three summers as a volunteer on a SWEAT (Smokies Wilderness Elite Appalachian Trail) Crew in Great Smoky Mountain National Park. He has taught Day Hiking Classes for the NC Arboretum. This will be his third year of offering 2-4 miles walks in the Hendersonville area as part of his position at Diamond Brand.

Eblen also works with youth oriented programs such as Muddy Sneakers, Bullington Center Nature Camp, Buncombe County Parks and Recreation Department, scout troops, and Henderson County Young Leaders.

Eblen has camped and backpacked in British Columbia, the High Sierras, the Wind Rivers in Wyoming, the Catskills, Adirondacks, the Everglades and Cumberland Island as well as many areas in the Southern Appalachians. In his spare time, he occasionally backpacks, and also enjoys cay hiking and car camping.

Eblen says: “My trips to the woods are ‘my visit to the psychiatrist’.”

Pre-registrations is suggested by calling the farm office at 891-6585. The farm is located at 3346 Haywood Road, Hendersonville, NC 28791, across from Rugby Middle School.

Website is [www.historicjohnsonfarm.org](http://www.historicjohnsonfarm.org) .