

National Barn Alliance chooses Mars Hill for meeting

President holds annual event with board members via Zoom

Courtesy of Appalachian Barn Alliance
Special to The News-Record & Sentinel

MARS HILL - The Appalachian Barn Alliance was honored to be chosen to host the president of the National Barn Alliance on the weekend of the Appalachian Barn Alliance ninth annual Barn Day tour and dinner Sept. 13-14.

President Michael Spencer chose this weekend to hold the National Barn Alliance's annual meeting via Zoom — as the board members who live in New York, Michigan, Illinois and California — Sept. 14 using the Mars Hill library.

Spencer's wife, Danae Peckler (and former president of the National Barn Alliance), as well as their daughter, Estella, were also on hand. The family lives in Fredericksburg, Virginia, where Spencer serves as associate professor in the department of Historic Preservation at the University of Mary Washington and director of The Center for Historic Preservation.

Peckler serves as the preservationist with the Historic Fredericksburg Foundation.

The National Barn Alliance was founded in 1995. It has close to 100 members carrying out its mission to "preserve and protect rural heritage through education, documentation, conservation and networking" striving to raise awareness for the need to save America's historic barns.

Later in the day, Danae, Michael and Estella were able to join the Appalachian Barn Alliance Barn Day tour, which was guided by Appalachian Barn Alliance researcher Taylor Barnhill. The tour included up-close stops at three farms in the Mars Hill area.

They learned more about the Appalachian Barn Alliance model and interacted with other tour participants to hear their comments and questions on the tour.

"We were surprised how engaged the tour participants were, how good their questions were," Spencer said.

On the morning of Sept. 15, Barnhill took them on a 90-minute tour of the barns on the Smith Farm.

Both Peckler and Spencer were im-



Michal Spencer, president of the National Barn Alliance was in Mars Hill to celebrate the Appalachian Barn Alliance 9th Annual Barn Day tour and dinner Sept. 13-14. PROVIDED BY APPALACHIAN BARN ALLIANCE

"It's very impressive to see and experience the work of the Appalachian Barn Alliance, in both the depth and breadth of its work: its database documentation, and the re-creation of actual historic barns at its heritage farmstead."

Danae Peckler, former president of the National Barn Alliance

pressed with the work of the Appalachian Barn Alliance, especially the depth of barn and family research and documentation, and its efforts to create an authentic heritage farmstead with actual reconstructed barns, a supportive museum exhibit and future interpretive displays and demonstrations.

"It's very impressive to see and experience the work of the Appalachian Barn Alliance, in both the depth and breadth of its

work: its database documentation, and the re-creation of actual historic barns at its heritage farmstead," Peckler said. "This is a holistic approach to the documentation of culture, the history, the built environment, and a community's voluntary participation in its own sense of place."

Spencer said he would like to connect the Appalachian Barn Alliance to his University of Mary Washington students'

curriculum and field work in the future. The Appalachian Barn Alliance welcomes their assistance and substantive support to help better document this rich history and culture. Hopefully we will have the pleasure to see them again in future and to share more of our county's agricultural heritage with them.

Their post on the Appalachian Barn Alliance Facebook page says it all.

"Many thanks to our friends with the ABA for showing us all such a great time & for working diligently to record, preserve, and advocate for the historic barns of Madison County, North Carolina, and surrounding area!" the post said. "Great work this gang has done to preserve the agricultural traditions, buildings, and memories of their area."

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