

This applicaton is for:	J. Mitchell Graham Memorial Award
Project Title	Georgetown Outdoor Adventure Trails
County or Counties	Georgetown
Application Contact	Jackie Broach
Application Email Address	jbroach@gtcounty.org
Presenter(s) Name and Title	T.L. Staub, Georgetown County Trails Coordinator
Main Presenter's Email Address	tlstaub@gtcounty.org

Project Written Submission

Project Summary

The Georgetown Outdoor Adventure Trails (GOAT) program is Georgetown County’s signature outdoor wellness initiative designed to promote physical activity, environmental appreciation, and community connection through diverse outdoor experiences. Launched in 2023 by Georgetown County Parks and Recreation, the program encourages residents and visitors of all ages and abilities to “Join the Herd” and explore trails, rivers, beaches and parks throughout the county. GOAT includes guided hikes, paddling excursions (a.k.a. GOAT floats), youth and senior programming, navigation challenges, individual fitness challenges (including FIT GOAT and IRON GOAT), and more. By providing accessible outdoor programming across the county’s vast natural resources, the initiative fosters active lifestyles, improves physical and mental health, and instills a sense of environmental stewardship. In its first full year, the program engaged more than 2,528 participants who logged 20,766 miles and has continued to grow in 2025. As of August 1, 24,514 miles had already been logged this year. Programs such as the Golden GOAT for seniors and Kids TRACK Trails have made outdoor recreation inclusive, educational, and family-friendly. With more than 20,000 miles logged annually across hiking, biking, and paddling, GOAT exemplifies how a county can creatively utilize its natural assets to deliver meaningful public health and community-building outcomes.

Project Effort/Difficulty

Launching and sustaining GOAT required significant coordination, creativity, and staff dedication. Georgetown County Parks and Recreation Director Beth Goodale and Trails Coordinator T.L. Staub, among other staff, identified and developed trails across multiple ecosystems—from dense woodlands and creeks to beachfront and urban corridors. Trails were marked, mapped, and are maintained. Unique elements like Compass Navigation Courses and “Forest Bathing” Guides were developed in-house to create deeper engagement. Staff were/are responsible for:

- Mapping and maintaining more than 20 trails, including signage and safety evaluations.
- Planning and hosting more than 100 events per year.
- Developing seasonal and ongoing programs such as FIT GOAT, GOAT Float, and Golden GOAT, along with Hike and Seek, Compass Navigation and more.
- Cultivating partnerships with agencies and nonprofits for shared programming.

Partnerships added depth and reach, though coordination across agencies also presented logistical challenges. Scheduling, volunteer management, transportation, and weather-related cancellations (nine events in 2025 so far) required constant flexibility and communication. Funding remains limited; GOAT is operated largely through staff time and minimal public resources. Yet by creatively leveraging partnerships, volunteers, and social media promotion, the program continues to thrive. Unresolved goals include expanding paddling opportunities and adding more TRACK Trail locations, but overall, GOAT has exceeded expectations.

Benefit/Importance of Project

The GOAT program was initiated to address several community needs:

- Increasingly sedentary lifestyles
- Isolation of senior citizens
- Lack of youth engagement in nature

Georgetown County recognized that encouraging outdoor activity could not only improve physical health, but also enhance mental wellness and strengthen community ties.

Since its launch, GOAT has proven transformative. It offers an ongoing calendar of free, inclusive events—such as guided hikes and paddles, cleanups, educational activities and family festivals—that connect residents with nature and one another. Activities like the FIT GOAT/IRON GOAT challenge encourage individuals to set and achieve personal fitness milestones. In 2024, participants logged over 20,000 miles, with 70 participants completing the Iron Goat challenge. In 2025, more than 24,000 miles have already been logged, including 14,500 miles of outdoor walking and hiking.

Programs are intentionally designed to reach key demographics:

- Seniors: The Golden GOAT program, coordinated with the county's Bureau of Aging Services division, promotes gentle, accessible hiking through the "Walk With Ease" model. In 2024 alone, seniors logged 569 miles. The goal is to help seniors increase mobility and decrease pain from arthritis and other ailments. Participants who couldn't walk a mile in an hour when they started are now doing multiple miles in that same time.
- Youth: Through Kids TRACK Trails, family festivals and events like "Take a Kid Fishing" and "Take a Kid Camping," the county introduces children to nature and teaches stewardship. More than 600 children participated in 2024–2025 youth-focused events.
- All residents: Events including Hike and Seek, Compass Navigation, and the GOAT Float paddle series build outdoor skills and awareness for residents of all ages.

The program also emphasizes community wellness and environmental responsibility. Events such as the Rocky Point Landing cleanup (in partnership with Winyah Rivers Alliance) and "Take a Kid Fishing" are rooted in environmental education. GOAT has hosted 112 events in 2025 alone, including trail maintenance, outreach, and environmental awareness programming.

The program's growth is rapid: Facebook membership increased from 1,334 in 2024 to 2,100 by August 2025. The county is proud to see GOAT become a movement, in which residents not only explore but also take ownership of their outdoor spaces.

Project Originality/Innovation

While other South Carolina counties promote outdoor wellness, GOAT is distinct in its scope, integration of multiple activity types, and innovative engagement strategies. Unlike single-focus initiatives, GOAT unites trail development, physical fitness, environmental stewardship, and inclusive programming under a single cohesive identity.

Key innovations include:

- FIT GOAT / IRON GOAT Challenge: Tracks outdoor miles across multiple activity types and awards participants based on their accumulated mileage.
- Golden GOAT: Focused on older adults and structured around low-impact walking programs.
- Compass Navigation Trails: Teaching real-world orienteering using analog tools and smartphone apps.
- Forest Bathing / Mindfulness Guides: Encourages mental health through sensory-focused trail walks, a rare offering in government recreation.
- Hike and Seek and Goat Float: Blends recreation with playful competition and river-based exploration.
- Kids TRACK Trails: Interactive kiosks and brochures, with prize incentives, create educational and fun experiences for children.

Furthermore, GOAT maintains a strong identity through branding (T-shirts, patches, group names), social

engagement (2,100+ members), and storytelling. Residents connect with each other, share photos, and find a sense of belonging in the "herd."

Concluding Remarks

GOAT has become more than a recreation program—it's a movement that has helped Georgetown County redefine how local government promotes public health, community, and environmental stewardship. In just two years, the program has engaged thousands of residents, fostered a love for nature, and turned passive green spaces into vibrant community assets.

By focusing on inclusivity, wellness, and education, GOAT has inspired people of all ages to get outdoors—whether walking a forest trail, paddling a blackwater creek, or hiking downtown with friends. Through innovation, partnerships, and staff dedication, it has transformed lives without requiring major funding or infrastructure.

Georgetown County is proud to submit the GOAT program for the J. Mitchell Graham Memorial Award as a shining example of how local government can meet community challenges with creativity, collaboration, and a passion for the outdoors.

Georgetown County
Parks & Recreation
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EASE**



60+

FREE

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Angie Weaver 843-833-1851

**BEACH SIDE
GOLDEN GOATS**



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Feb 19-21 Waccamaw Bikeway Willbrook Section
Feb 24-28 Stables Park
Mar 3-7 South Parking Murrells Inlet to Oyster landing
Mar 10-14 Marsh Walk
Mar 17-21 Trace Road Bike Path
Mar 24-28 Trace Road to Boyle

THE G.O.A.T. HERD

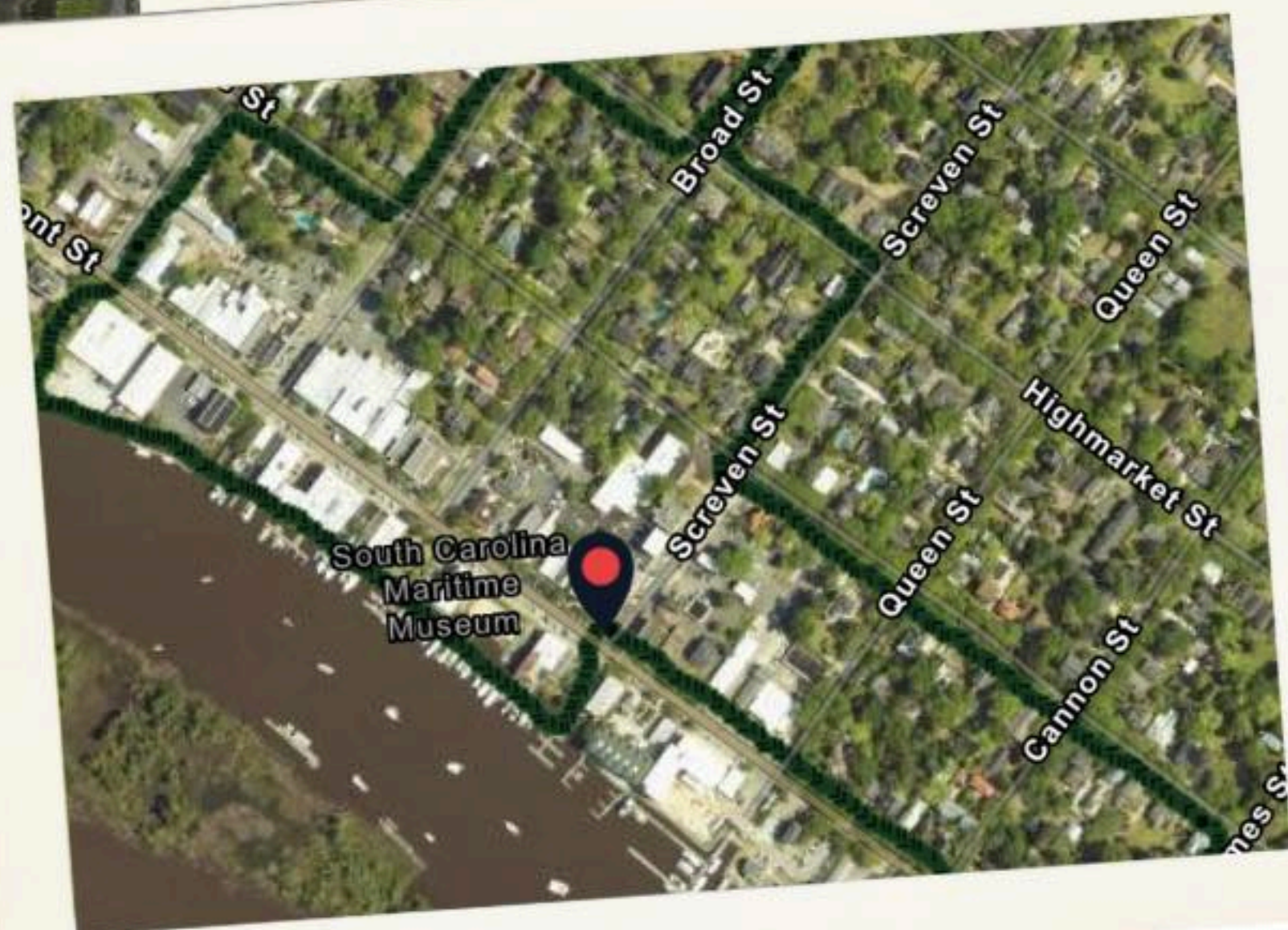
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SC7



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JULY 22 9 A.M. | PADDLE THE BLACK RIVER

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Email goatherd@gtcounty.org for more information



G.O.A.T. HERD PROGRAM

Annual Summary Report - 2024

Program Overview

The Georgetown Outdoor Adventure Trails (G.O.A.T.) Herd Program launched in 2024 with the mission to promote outdoor recreation, wellness, and exploration of Georgetown County's natural assets. The program featured hiking, biking, paddling, educational events, and individual outdoor challenges designed for all ages and abilities.

Key Accomplishments

- Total Participants (All Activities): 2,528
- Total Events Held: 102
- Facebook Members (by year-end): 1,334
- Total Activity Miles Logged: 20,766 miles
 - Hiking: 9,068 mi (44%)
 - Biking: 10,192 mi (49%)
 - Paddling: 1,506 mi (7%)

Special Programs

G.O.A.T. Hiking Series:

- Encouraged exploration of 8 trails across the county.
- 30 participants registered; 8 completed the challenge.

Walk With Ease - "Golden Goats":

- Seniors logged 569 total miles through 58 hikes.
- 6 completed the hiking challenge; 7 earned FIT GOAT status.

FIT GOAT/ IRON GOAT Challenge (June-December):

- 70 participants; 62 completed (89% completion rate)
- 46 achieved FIT GOAT status; 16 became IRON GOATS

Demographics

- Gender: 51% Female, 49% Male
- Age:
 - 60+: 36%
 - 30-59: 44%
 - Under 30: 20%

FLOAT GOAT Paddle Series

- 13 paddle trips conducted with local partners.
- 93 paddlers logged 457 participant miles over 55 miles of waterways.

Conclusion & Future Outlook

The G.O.A.T. Herd Program had a highly successful inaugural year. With over 2,000 community members engaged and more than 20,000 miles of outdoor activity logged, the program laid a strong foundation for future expansion. In 2025, the initiative aims to increase guided experiences, broaden outreach, enhance access to underserved groups, and strengthen its presence as a leader in outdoor wellness and recreation in Georgetown County.

Highlighted Programs & Participation

Event Participation:

- Informative/Educational: 9 events | 313 participants
- Hiking: 65 events | 278 participants
- Paddling: 13 events | 106 participants
- Special Events: 6 events | 370 participants
- Challenges: 2 | 30 participants (8 completions)
- FIT/IRON GOAT: 1 | 70 participants (62 completions)
- Take a Kid Fishing: 220 participants
- Rocky Point Halloween Festival: 80 participants
- GOAT Herd Outdoor Expo: 60 participants
- Take a Kid Camping: 50 participants



Angela Christian

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August 5, 2025

J. Mitchell Graham Memorial Awards Committee

South Carolina Association of Counties
1919 Thurmond Mall
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Members of the Awards Committee,

On behalf of Georgetown County, it is my pleasure to express our enthusiastic support for the nomination of our Georgetown Outdoor Adventure Trails (GOAT) program for the 2025 J. Mitchell Graham Memorial Award. This program exemplifies the very best of what local government can achieve when it listens to its residents, leverages its natural resources, and commits to building a healthier, more connected community.

Since its inception in 2023, the GOAT program has far exceeded expectations. It has provided thousands of residents and visitors with the opportunity to get outdoors, engage in physical activity, learn new skills, and rediscover the incredible beauty of Georgetown County. From guided hikes and paddles to senior wellness walks, youth TRACK Trails, and innovative fitness challenges, the program offers something for everyone—regardless of age or ability.

What makes GOAT truly exceptional is its inclusivity, creativity, and impact. Our residents aren't just attending events; they are forming walking groups, logging thousands of miles, and forming lasting connections with each other and the land around them. We are seeing healthier residents, stronger neighborhoods, and a renewed appreciation for conservation and outdoor wellness.

Equally impressive is the program's ability to thrive with limited financial resources. Through collaboration, volunteerism, and strategic partnerships with organizations like the SC National Heritage Corridor and the Winyah Rivers Alliance, the program continues to grow sustainably and equitably.

Georgetown County is deeply proud of the GOAT program and the staff who have made it possible. We believe it represents the kind of innovative, people-centered governance the J. Mitchell Graham Award seeks to honor.

Thank you for your consideration of this outstanding program.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in dark blue ink that reads "Angela Christian". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Angela Christian
County Administrator
Georgetown County, S.C.



Georgetown County Government

NEWS RELEASE

Jan. 3, 2024

Contact:

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Join the herd and take a hike with Georgetown County Parks and Rec.'s new GOAT program

GEORGETOWN COUNTY – On Jan. 5, Georgetown County Parks and Recreation announced a new program to help get people outdoors, moving and exploring. They call it the GOAT program, an acronym for Georgetown Outdoor Adventure Trails. The program encourages residents to “join the herd” and walk, bike or run a group of 10 trails — with more trails to be added in the future.

Eventually, the addition of river trails to the program will also add paddling to the mix. “The idea is to promote the natural beauty of our area and get more people out on the trails we’ve developed throughout the county,” said T.L. Staub, who manages and maintains the department’s trails. The program incorporates trails and routes in a variety of environments to make the program more broadly appealing.

At Rocky Point Community Forest, off Choppee Highway, herd members can choose from four wooded trails and two additional routes ranging from 1.3 to 4.5 miles. “We have approximately 16 miles of trails already developed just at Rocky Point with 7.7 more miles of trails and routes to be developed here in the next couple of months,” Staub said. “Again, these trails are mostly grass and woods. You’ll see a lot of wildlife, real pretty areas along Choppee Creek and the river.”

Five trails are located within 8 Oaks Park on Highway 521 between Georgetown and Andrews. There’s a 1-mile grass loop within the park, along with several more rustic trails. The 10th trail runs along the edge of Stables Park on Petigru Drive. For those looking for something more urban, there are routes in the Georgetown Historic District, along the MarshWalk, down roadways and along the beachfront.

Residents can sign up to be part of the herd online at gtcparks.org, and receive information about the program, including when new trails are added and when special outdoor activities and events are scheduled. Herd members will also get an as-yet-undetermined prize if they complete designated routes that are part of the program.

Membership in the herd is free and open to all. Look for more information about the GOAT program coming soon along with details on new trails and opportunities for group paddling excursions, hikes and more.

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Georgetown County Government

NEWS RELEASE

March 27, 2024

Contact:

Jackie Broach, Public Information Officer

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Parks and Rec.'s G.O.A.T. program introduces compass navigation trails

GEORGETOWN COUNTY – The Georgetown Outdoor Adventure Trails Program introduced two new Compass Navigation Courses this week. The courses are designed help both adults and kids learn or enhance navigation skills, as well as enjoy the outdoors.

The trails are located at 8 Oaks Park on Highway 521 in Georgetown and Stables Park off Petigru Drive in the Pawleys Island area. G.O.A.T. is a program introduced this year by Georgetown County Parks and Recreation with the goal of getting people to “join the herd” and get moving and exploring outdoors.

The goal of the Compass Courses is to have hikers use a compass for navigation and determination of distance. The courses are approximately .6 miles in length and are beginner level courses. Hikers will need to use their compasses to locate waypoints installed along the courses. The waypoints are metal squirrels with a letter on them. Once a waypoint is located, it provides details on the direction and distance to the next waypoint. Participants can use a traditional compass or the compass on their smart phone to navigate the courses.

Course instructions and a list of waypoints are located in a map box at the beginning of each navigation course.

Parks and Recreation staff have scheduled hours next week to be on site on the courses to offer assistance to anyone who needs help navigating the trails. Staff will be at 8 Oaks Park April 2 from 1-3 p.m. and at Stables Park April 3 from 1-3 p.m.

“This is a great outdoor activity for the entire family,” said T.L. Staub, trail coordinator for Georgetown County Parks and Recreation. “Compass navigation is a helpful skill for people of every age to learn for exploring the outdoors.”

For questions or more information contact Georgetown County Parks and Recreation at 843-545-3275 or email tlstaub@gtcounty.org.

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