



JAMES "JIM" MARION

HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

For more than a decade, James "Jim" Marion not only championed but also spearheaded Frost Valley's progress as it ushered towards a more sustainable future through facility and program enhancements that have benefited thousands of visitors. In this pursuit, Jim dutifully served as Frost Valley's Environmental Education Program Director from 1976-1990.

Jim believed that there was no better classroom than the great outdoors, and he dedicated his life's work to teaching young people how to cultivate an appreciation for our natural resources. Jim Marion's legacy of conservancy can be observed all around Frost Valley, from the bee apiary to the sugar shack, to the 4,500 square foot composting facility, which allows Frost Valley to compost all of the food waste produced on site, turning it into nutrient-rich soil amendment that goes into a potting mix for plants in our greenhouse.

Jim could also be found working in a number of other capacities at Frost Valley. At times, he served as the conference director and directed many of the non-summer programs. Jim hired and supported his staff with tremendous vivacity, kindness, and good humor.

Jim was hardworking and generous, with a proclivity for practical jokes. A graduate

of Cornell University and a Masters in Environmental Education from SUNY Plattsburg, he took immense pleasure in not only being a veritable superhero of environmental conservation and sustainability, but also in serving the community on numerous boards. Jim served on the Sullivan County Cornell Cooperative Extension Board, Tri-Valley Central School Board, NYS Outdoor Education Association, and the John Burroughs Woodchuck Lodge Historical Site.

He was an avid reader of John Burroughs, whose impassioned essays about the environment and especially the Catskills, further fueled his desire to preserve and protect our natural resources.

A proponent of the residential philosophy of Frost Valley's Environmental Education Program, Jim enjoyed working in conjunction with school curriculums to bring book-study to life in a real-world classroom without walls. He believed that Frost Valley connected the schoolchildren to nature in a way that simply transcended the pages of a book.

Jim Marion once described how, "at camp, living is cooperative and therefore learning is frequently shared. It's 24 hours a day, including the dark hours of evening, compared with the 9 am – 3 pm daytime format typical of most schools. Best of all, there are few distractions tugging students' attention away from learning tasks."

Many of the programs that Jim oversaw still inspire generations of students and visitors to this day. Such programs include: The WOW (Wonders of Winter Program), Project Adventure, and the Maple Sugaring Program. Easily adept at donning a full bee keeper's suit and showing a group of children the ins and outs of an active honey bee hive, explaining the alchemy that coaxes syrup from a clear, bland liquid to the delicious amber-hued nectar of pure maple syrup, and altering the prevalent mindset that winter creates a natural barrier to learning by showing students the ease of following animal tracks with the aid of a fresh blanket of new-fallen snow, Jim used absolutely every opportunity afforded him to give others the gift of his amazing penchant for knowledge, wonder, and appreciation for the natural world in all its splendor.

For his personal dedication and deep abiding passion for preserving the beauty of nature; for his tireless pursuit of educating schoolchildren and their teachers about the value of environmental responsibility; for

innovating new programs, which reduce the carbon footprint of Frost Valley and leave a legacy of minimal impact, preservation, and appreciation for the natural world; for becoming a champion



of progress towards a more sustainable future for Frost Valley and beyond; for all these reasons and more, Frost Valley's Board of Trustees is honored to induct Jim Marion into the Frost Valley YMCA Hall of Fame.