

12/13/18

Senior guides SDSA to become a nonprofit organization

By Harley Nefe

The Sustainable Development Student Alliance club at Appalachian State University is recognized this semester as a nonprofit organization in the state of North Carolina.

The idea of SDSA becoming a nonprofit randomly popped into senior sustainable development major Weston Medlock's head. Medlock is the president of SDSA.

"When I ran for this position, it kind of got dumped on me, and I didn't know how to go about this," Medlock said. "I was stranded."

The club was small, as there were about five members, junior sustainable development major Ciara Konhaus, who is the vice president of SDSA, said.

"I'll never forget that there was one meeting where I showed up, the vice president showed up and I think one other member did," Medlock said. "And I was like, 'Well this breaks my heart.'"

There were feelings of discouragement and being at fault for letting the club down, then the question of "How do I bounce back and get this together?" came about, Medlock said.

That is when Medlock had a vision "to form a nation-wide network of students that value their community and want to contribute to it and align under sustainable principles," Medlock said.

"I literally thought to myself, 'What is the extreme example of the opposite side? If we have nothing right now, what would the reverse of that be?'" Medlock said. "I couldn't get the idea out of my head, and I couldn't get it out of my head for a reason. The time to do it is now."

SDSA has about 30 members who come every week.

“We have definitely grown significantly since then,” Konhaus said.

After hearing the news that SDSA is now recognized as a nonprofit organization, Konhaus said she was excited.

“That’s a big deal,” Konhaus said. “That kind of recognition – that’s crazy. This was a big surprise.”

SDSA tries to accomplish two separate things, Medlock said.

“We try to provide hands on experience for students on the concepts and things they are learning in class to provide them avenues,” Medlock said. “We try to give students ways they can apply this knowledge. Secondly, we act as a bridge between students and community. Sustainability is for all and not the few.”

Some of the events SDSA holds include fieldtrips and going on homestead tours, where they learn about local farms and offer help planting. SDSA also hosts educational speakers, engages in plant identification workshops and participates in farmers’ markets.

“I feel for this club more than any of my classes,” Medlock said. “It’s cool to be able to put something on and then watch it. Everyone has such a good time and is doing something for the community. It’s very rewarding, but by no means will I say, ‘I did this.’”

SDSA meets on Wednesdays at 6 p.m. in Edwin Duncan Room 315.

“Show up,” Medlock said. “We don’t lack things to do. The only way we can get recognized is if people collectively start doing. There’s power in numbers.”