

## **Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

July 7, 2017

### **There's a new sheriff in town at the Highland Games**

GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN, N.C. — Amanda Ford, a former Marine door gunner who served two tours in Iraq, dominated the competition in last year's women's Scottish athletic events, the first year women had competed at the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games.

Her charisma and athletic feats drew a lot of attention, and the number of participants doubled this year.

"Last year, people saw the entertainment we provide," Ford said. "We have a lot of fun and show it. We do cartwheels when we win! This year, we had a lot of talent out there."

One of those talents was Aslynn Halvorson, 26, of Anderson, S.C., a proud member of Clan Anderson, who won five of the six events and finished fourth in the other.

Halvorson won the clachneart (16-pound stone thrown for distance), the 28- and 14-pound weights, also thrown for distance, the hammer throw (weight on the end of a stick thrown for distance) and the 28-pound weight thrown for height.

She finished fourth in the caber toss, a 19-foot, 95-pound tree trunk picked up and flipped end over end.

Grandfather was only Halvorson's third Highland Games. She was a University of Tennessee track star, focusing on the shot put, discus and hammer throw. In high school at Butler High in Matthews, N.C., she set the state high school record for a discus throw by a female. She is now an instructor in kinesiology and the assistant track coach at Anderson University.

A friend wisely told her she should give Scottish athletic events a try. Now thoroughly hooked, she plans on participating in many more games and training properly for them.

"I absolutely love this," Halvorson said. "It is so much fun. It's a lot less serious than track. Their events get lost to the crowd, but this is the main focus at the Grandfather Games."

Placing second overall was Kelly Nickalson, 38, of Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., a graduate of East Carolina University, where her father played football.

The first Scottish games she saw was at Grandfather Mountain in 2009. She came with a friend who won the amateur category of the Scottish events. She decided to give it a try, and he became her long-time coach.

She competed for years, then stopped when she moved to Ft. Lauderdale to become an esthetician, where many of her clients are supermodels.

After five years away from competition, she started back with the Grandfather Games. Her participation had special meaning, as her coach died a month ago.

Nickalson set four personal records en route to second-place finishes in the clachneart, 14-pound weight throw, tossing the hammer and caber.

As for Ford, she finished third and said, "It looks like I have to do a lot more training!"

For more information about the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games, visit [www.gmhg.org](http://www.gmhg.org), or call (828) 733-1333.

*The not-for-profit Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation strives to inspire conservation of the natural world by helping guests explore, understand and value the wonders of Grandfather Mountain. For more information, call (800) 468-7325, or visit [www.grandfather.com](http://www.grandfather.com) to plan a trip.*

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#### ATTACHMENTS:

070717\_GFM\_gmhg\_athletics\_womens\_halvorson\_1\_SS: Aslynn Halvorson, of Anderson, S.C., won five of six events in Friday's women's Scottish athletic contests, including the clachneart (16-pound stone thrown for distance), the 28- and 14-pound weights, the hammer throw and the 28-pound weight thrown for height, placing first overall. The Grandfather Mountain Highland Games marks Halvorson's third Scottish games. When not competing, she is a kinesiology instructor and assistant track coach at Anderson University. Photo by Skip Sickler | Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation

070717\_GFM\_gmhg\_athletics\_womens\_halvorson\_2\_SS: Aslynn Halvorson prepares to turn the caber during Friday's women's Scottish athletic events at the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games. Photo by Skip Sickler | Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation

070717\_GFM\_gmhg\_athletics\_womens\_nickalson\_SS: Kelly Nickalson, of Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., turns the caber during Friday's women's Scottish athletic events at the Grandfather

Mountain Highland Games. Nickalson, an esthetician, finished second overall. Photo by Skip Sickler | Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation

070717\_GFM\_gmhg\_athletics\_womens\_ford\_SS: Amanda Ford, a former Marine door gunner from Wilmington, N.C., throws the 28-pound weight for height during Friday's women's Scottish athletic events at the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games. Ford placed third overall. Photo by Skip Sickler | Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation