



## **Kristine Ebrey Medlen (NSS 58439RE), Tennessee**

I don't think I had ever seen something so intriguing as the first time I saw a picture of a wild cave picture. I was drawn to it so much that I had to find out more and soon after, went on my first trip to Anderson Springs Cave. Fast forward 11 years and I've built my life around caving and supporting the caving community. I moved to South Pittsburg, TN three years ago to live, work, and play in the heart of T.A.G.

In addition to my passion for caving, I am a successful small business owner and am active with the American Red Cross, Disaster Response Team. Both roles have given me the knowledge and understanding of complex budgets, project and asset management, and the organizational structure of non-profits.

Being a caver is so much more than how many caves you have surveyed, how many pits you have bounced or how many feet you have climbed.... it's the fragile environment that we have an innate instinct to protect; it's educating the community on the mysterious black holes, and it comprises the most incredible people that I have ever imagined to meet. It is quite a responsibility to be a caver not only to uphold the sacred duty of protecting the caves, but also to contribute to the caving community.

I have two goals that I would like to focus on if I am elected to the Board of Governors. I would like to increase NSS membership numbers and improve membership numbers by reaching out to previous and current members, and improve the relationship between grottos and the NSS. There is a major disconnect that we have to resolve in these two proposals. Caves are coming into the light, exploration is becoming the "next big thing", and yet our NSS membership numbers are dropping every year. We have to reach out to the public who are interested in caving. We have to be more proactive in educating the public. We need to have more positive landowner interactions, and we have to build strong grottos to raise the next generation of cavers. Grottos are the most valuable asset in the NSS. It is imperative that the NSS and grottos work to build a strong bond and continue increasing their membership, who will become our caving family.

Working closely with the Sewanee Mountain Grotto has allowed me to see exactly how important the role of a grotto is to the mission of the NSS. It has allowed me to see the incredible things cavers can accomplish when we unite. It has also taught me how unique each caver and a grotto can be and the need for the NSS to help strengthen an understanding between cavers. The glue that holds together the mixed bag of resources in every grotto, whether it is success or controversy, is the NSS. I will strive to strengthen this bond between the NSS and grottos. It is the strengthening of our grottos that is the path to increase NSS membership numbers and for the advancement of our current membership.

Below are my past and current roles in the caving community:

- Member of Sewanee Mountain Grotto, Chattanooga Grotto, Birmingham Grotto and Dogwood City Grotto
- Vice Chair, Sewanee Mountain Grotto (2015, 2017)
- Cave Fest Chair (2016)
- Gourdneck Cave Preserve Co-Manager, Southeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc.
- Membership Director and Treasurer of the Alabama Cave Survey (2016 – present)
- Treasurer 2019 NSS Convention