

## The Center for Pioneer Life Creates Partnership with Participate Learning Inc.

Over 75 international teachers will be hosted by The Center for Pioneer Life this summer as part of a partnership recently formed with Participate Learning, a Chapel Hill based company that is the largest J1 international teacher exchange program in the United States.

These highly selected teachers spend up to five years teaching in American public schools. As part of their required training, they must engage in activities that help them understand American history and culture. This requirement encourages teachers to be more effective in their work in the United States, but of equal importance, they take this knowledge back to their native countries to share with their students.

The teachers will train at the Center for Pioneer Life, located in the Shoal Creek valley in Yancey County, in groups of 15 per week, ensuring an intimate and cohesive learning retreat. Grounded in the facts and history of the Appalachian people and their lives, The Center's program aims to share with these teachers a more authentic picture of the people of the southern mountains that has been commonly depicted.



The distinctive tastes, sights, and sounds of the region will all be part of a curriculum designed to give teachers a visceral understanding of this area and whet their appetite for learning more. They will leave with an enriched vocabulary, reference materials, lesson plans and creative exercises for classroom use as well. This experiential learning opportunity will allow teachers to explore American culture in a unique and fun way while building community with other teachers.



Geraldine Plato, CEO and President of The Center, says she anticipates replicating this program for regional teachers as well. "We want teachers to leave with a memorable mountain experience and a deeper understanding of the parallels between the resilience the 1850 mountain settlers exhibited, and the kind of resilience required to meet our own 21<sup>st</sup> Century frontiers. And if we do our job right, they will also leave with a love for a place they didn't truly know before".

David Young, the CEO, of Participate Learning, said "we are delighted to have access to The Center for Pioneer Life for our international teachers. The US Department of State requires that our teachers secure two cultural immersion experiences annually to renew their visas. We look forward to continuing a mutually beneficial relationship with The Center as they grow this unique on-site training program". Since its inception in 1987 Participate Learning has hosted over 30,000 teachers in the United States and recently celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary.