



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FAYETTE COUNTY FLY FISHING EXCURSION PUSHES BOUNDARIES, BUILDS BONDS

Uniontown, PA – GO Laurel Highlands Digital Marketing Coordinator Maddie Wirebach and Fayette Chamber of Commerce Membership Coordinator Ashley Howes recently forged a very close relationship – all it took was an outdoor excursion and stepping out of their respective comfort zones.

Wirebach and Howes spent a recent summer day on the Youghiogheny River in Ohiopyle State Park with Silver Hen Fly Co. owner and founder Christa Miriashtiani, learning how to fly fish – a skill neither of them had ever thought of acquiring.

Wirebach said the idea came from Miriashtiani, who reached out to her via Instagram.

“I run the social media accounts (for GO Laurel Highlands). I was just going through our messages,” Wirebach said, adding she came across one from Miriashtiani, introducing herself and inviting Wirebach to fly fish with Silver Hen. “She said, ‘I’d love to take you out on the boat.’ It was very out of my comfort zone, but I thought, ‘I’ll give it a shot.’”

Wirebach said her bosses also encouraged her to go, and then she decided to invite Howes to go with her.

“Since Ohiopyle is in Fayette County, I thought it would be a good chance for the Fayette Chamber and Fayette County TV, to be involved,” she said, noting GO Laurel Highlands also works closely with both. “And it was more exposure for Christa as well.”

At first, Howes was a little surprised by the invitation.

“I was really taken aback because I had never even been in a boat, can’t swim, never held a fishing pole ... when they said ‘novice,’ they picked the right person,” she said.

On the other hand, Howes also has an adventurous spirit and likes to push her own boundaries.

“I always want to try something new,” she said, adding that the Fayette Chamber’s relationship with GO Laurel Highlands also carried some weight. “You can’t really say no, but in the best possible way.”

So, Wirebach and Howes met up with Miriashtiani for a crash course in fly fishing on the Yough.

Miriashtiani is the first woman to get her fly fishing outfitter's guide permit within Ohiopyle State Park. She said the state park distributes only a limited number of business licenses, and getting one isn't easy.

"I've been in business since 2022, and it's super difficult for people to just come into the state park and do business," she said.

Miriashtiani said her license is "basically like a commercial use business permit. My whole strategy was that I'm a very small business, I'm woman-owned."

She went on to say there is a "huge need" for more female figures in the fly fishing industry in the Laurel Highlands because more and more women are taking up the sport. She also stressed her contributions to conservation efforts.

Miriashtiani reached out to Wirebach, she said, because there isn't much information online about fly fishing in the Laurel Highlands. Wirebach and Howes, who took photos and videos of the excursion, can spread the word on their respective digital platforms.

"Anyone who knows anything about the Laurel Highlands knows the fishing is world class," she said. "They'll be able to put some of that content out there and let people know that I also have that service."

Miriashtiani proved to be an excellent teacher to a couple of inexperienced fly fishers, as both Wirebach and Howes came away singing the praises of Silver Hen Fly Co.

"It was so much better than I had anticipated," Howes said. "It was like 14 hours bonding with my new best friends. We learned a lot about ourselves, each other and fly fishing."

Wirebach also was enthusiastic about the day.

"Oh, it was so fun," she said. "I was not sure how it was going to go initially. I had had no fishing experience at all, and neither had Ashley. We didn't know what to expect, and it ended up being one of the most fun days I've had in a long time."

Miriashtiani said they were good students and even caught several fish.

"They hadn't been any kind of fishing," she said. "Right away, I was grateful because they weren't starting out with any bad habits."

Miriashtiani joked that she always enjoys teaching women "because they listen," but she added women also often have a knack for fly fishing because of the finesse required for the sport. She said Wirebach and Howes caught a total of nine fish, a result she advised them not to expect every time out, especially as beginners.

"They picked it up really fast," she said. "They had a great time."

Wirebach and Howes said much of their enjoyment came from Miriashtiani's relaxed attitude and easy, open demeanor. Wirebach said she felt it was a "safe space" where she could learn without being afraid to ask questions or make mistakes.

“It was a wonderful “girls day” experience. It’s nice to see a woman-led business in Ohiopyle,” Howes said. “She’s so professional, and she’s so helpful.”

Howes plans to go on another excursion with Silver Hen, possibly with a few friends. Both she and Wirebach said the trip definitely forged a bond among the three women.

“By the time we were coming off the river, it felt like we had known each other forever,” Wirebach said.

“We went in as strangers, and we came out as sisters,” Howes added.

More information about Silver Hen Fly Co. can be found at www.silverhenflyco.com.

To learn more about GO Laurel Highlands, visit www.golaurelhighlands.com. To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.fayettecountypa.org.

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