Trail Working Costume Party
by Sabrina Carlson

On October 31st, 2017, twelve students from the Flagstaff Junior Academy Mountain Bike Club journeyed to the Deer Hill Trail to assist with the ongoing repair and reroute of that trail.

Deer Hill Trail, which runs low on the eastern side of the San Francisco Peaks was a trail with questionable sustainability in the first place. Though it’s low angle locations means no huge hills to contend with, the trail was built across multiple drainages using a fall line strategy across the entire length. In the aftermath of the Schultz Fire and subsequent flooding in 2010, this trail has become severely washed out and eroded.

Rather than attempt to repair a trail with suboptimal alignment, the Forest Service is rerouting it. This will not only retain access to this part of the forest via singletrack, but will give the new trail the best possible chance of remaining in good shape for as long as possible. This gave our students the unique opportunity to scratch in brand new trail on a shiny new alignment. They were able to study and compare the old trail, complete with steep angles, large rolling rocks and rutted tread, to the new smoother and more contoured alignment. They removed grasses and pine needles from the new tread and tamped the fresh new dirt to make it ready for traffic. Once they had completed their section, they set about closing the old alignment to allow the area to revegetate and be restored.

Being Halloween, students and adults were invited to show up in a trail work appropriate costume. While not everyone took up the challenge, we had appearances by a bear, Chewbacca, Rosie the Riveter, and Iron Man. The fancy dress feel of the day and impending trick or treating later on gave the event a light hearted and joyful feeling.
Studying the new alignment, these eager mountain bikers wanted to figure out when they could return to ride the trail they had built. Trail work is a powerful way to build a relationship with the land for students. But returning to the trail one has built or repaired to use cements the sense of pride and ownership even more. Two weeks later, their coach Mr. Ross brought them back to ride on the new trail so they could enjoy their hard work on their bikes.

This outing was made possible with support from Arizona Trail Association members, donors and grant funds from: