



Wellspring Foundation of Southwest Virginia

The Wellspring Foundation of Southwest Virginia began operations as a private foundation on July 1, 2022. The Wellspring Foundation is a philanthropic organization dedicated to enhancing the health and wellbeing for the Virginia residents of Washington, Grayson, Russell and Smyth counties through purposeful partnerships. As of September 2023, the Wellspring Foundation has committed a total of \$595,045 to projects impacting Grayson County in the form of fourteen grants. Wellspring Foundation's five areas of interest are: Health, Children & Families, Workforce Development, Education and Economic Development. While the full list of grants can be seen on the Wellspring Foundation website, they include Appalachian Highlands Community Dental Center – clinic expansion, and Mission of Mercy clinic, Grayson County – New River Connected, Virginia Highlands Community College – Advanced Technology and Workforce Development Center, and United Way of Southwest Virginia Shared Services Alliance (support for childcare providers). The Wellspring Foundation offers two grant opportunities for organizations identified by the Internal Revenue Service as not-for-profit organizations or governmental entities. The HOPE grant is designed for organizations requesting one-time funding up to \$25,000 for a project. The IMPACT grant is designed for organizations requesting either a single- or multi-year disbursement of funds for projects totaling more than \$25,000. To learn more about the Wellspring Foundation and the grant guidelines, please visit wellspringva.org.

Free Dental Screenings for Grayson County Residents

On Friday, April 19, 2024 from 8am – 3pm, there will be free dental screenings available at the office of Dr. Gordon J. Miniclier located at 150 W Main St, in Independence. No appointment is necessary, and if you need transportation assistance to and from the event, please call (276)782-9300. Be sure to mention your destination is Independence for the dental screening event and please bring a list of current medications to the screening. The event is being sponsored by the Appalachian Highlands Community Dental Center with the support of the Wellspring Foundation of Southwest Virginia. For general questions, call (276) 525-4487.

Looking Forward – What People are Working on Now

Whitetop Clinic

On March 22nd at 2:00 pm Dr. James Werth, Director of the Tri-Area Health Clinic system will be at the Whitetop Community Center to discuss with citizens his ideas about establishing a clinic in Whitetop. He desires to learn as much as possible about the needs and interest that citizens have for such a service. Dr. Werth will be joined by Mr. Stephan Boyer, County Administrator, and Mr. Brantley Ivey, Wilson District Supervisor. Please plan on attending if you would like to provide your input.

The **Whitetop Community Center Club** is looking into grants to build a helicopter landing pad.

VDOT is planning to enhance safety by building a new bridge over the creeper trail on Old Whitetop Gap road where the old

bridge used to be located. Construction will take place this Spring or Fall.

The **Folklife Center** is working on raising funds to replace the swings and perform repairs due to vandalism at the Mount Rogers School. They are getting quotes to restore electricity and water for the convenience of the patrons. If you would like to contribute to this effort, please contact Hunter Blevins at Skyline Bank.

Did You Know

There are at least five different groups working to make Whitetop better? These include: Friends of the Library, Whitetop Fire and Rescue, The Whitetop Community Center Club, The Folklife Center and Friends of Whitetop. Mike Garber, better known as Kelly Boyd's husband, is building a website for the community that will bring all the information for the five groups together in one place. The first templates have been completed, they look great and promise to be another communication tool that anyone can access on-line.

It is hoped that this newsletter can provide information about what these groups are doing and how you can help.

Volunteers Needed!

Whitetop Station was remodeled last year by local volunteers and is now receiving visitors riding down (or up!) the Creeper trail. It looks great and riders appreciate having a place to learn a little about the history of the trail as well as pick up bottles of water, snacks and coming soon – T Shirts! The sales revenue (generated by Friends of Whitetop) is used to maintain the Station and provide support to the Whitetop

community. We need volunteers this summer to help greet visitors, share the story of our history, keep the station clean and sell merchandise. You do not have to know much about the trail, there is training available for frequently asked questions. If you're interested in volunteering, or just want more information, please email us at: friendsofwhitetop@gmail.com

Maple Syrup Festival 2024

The Maple Syrup Festival, the main fundraiser for the Whitetop Fire and Rescue, is being held April 6 and 7 at three different locations - The community center will host breakfast and sales of maple syrup and candy, the fire house will have live music and food as well maple syrup related items; and just down the hill from the community center, the metal building will be hosting local craft vendors. Please reach out to the Fire and Rescue department if you're interested in volunteering. Your attendance will help support this important fundraiser while enjoying a delicious, homemade breakfast!

The Seeds of the Junior Appalachian Music program was sown in Whitetop

I was talking with Emily Spencer about music and Mount Rogers School and how we'd love to see music and jams return to that space. According to Miss Emily, the person who originally had an idea for music lessons was Margaret Messick. Margaret served on the Board of Directors for the Mount Rogers Community Club from 1978-1982. She grew interested in bringing music lessons and dance to the Mount Rogers Fire and Rescue building. And so, the first seeds were planted. Audrey Hash Ham, Albert Hash, Thornton and Emily Spencer, Loraine Grim, and Flurry Dowe were the initial teachers at the fire department. Both music and dancing were

included. The teachers began volunteering to teach music at Mount Rogers school where they were known as the Albert Hash Memorial Band. Soon, Miss Emily was hired to teach music at Mount Rogers school. She taught elementary music and string band which eventually became a high school class for credit. An after-school series was added which in time turned into a Tuesday night jam for both students and adults. Some folks played music and others danced to it; some took turns doing both. Helen White, a fiddle player and guidance counselor at Sparta Elementary, asked the Mount Rogers students to come play for them. Helen was so impressed that she decided to start a similar program in Sparta. Her program, launched in the spring of 2000, became the first official “Junior Appalachian Musicians” (JAM) program. Today the JAM program consists of nearly 50 affiliates spread across North and South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. The Folklife Center committee began bringing community jams back to Mount Rogers school last summer. As the buildings are repaired and renovated, listen for the twang of the banjo and the high lonesome sound of the fiddle on the wind; pull out your Instrument, grab your dancing shoes and come on over.

Elaine Jacobs with Emily Spencer

Trees for Troops

Each year our local tree growers donate trees to the military for distribution around the world. Some even end up in submarines (the short ones that is!) This past December, tree growers and local volunteers worked together with Fed Ex to load over 250 trees to spread Whitetop goodwill in appreciation for all the military does for us. If you're interested in volunteering this season, reach out to Ronnie Richardson of the Whitetop Fire and Rescue.

Keep Whitetop Beautiful

Grayson County Public Works has posted the Large Item Solid Waste Pick Up dates for 2024. This is an excellent opportunity to dispose of unwanted items and unsightly clutter that takes away from the natural beauty of the area. Let's keep Whitetop beautiful for ourselves and for the tourists that travel here from every state in the nation as well as around the world. If you visit the Railroad Café, be sure to look at the map of the United States that has pins designating where visitors have traveled from. Let's do our best to show pride in our community. Below is the pickup schedule. If you need help bringing items to the curb, send a note to WhitetopGazette@gmail.com. All items must be placed out prior to the pickup date but it is best not to bring them out too early.

March 18, Monday's regular collection route

April 1, Tuesday's regular collection route

April 22, Wednesday's regular collection route

May 6, Thursday's regular collection route

May 26, Friday's regular collection route

Large pickup rules apply, including no hazardous materials, no building materials, no loose materials (must be in a disposable container such as a plastic bag). For more information go to Grayson County Public Works on the Grayson County VA website, click on the link to Public Works and then onto 2024 Large Item Schedule, or call 276-773-3181

In the Spring, a schedule will be published where volunteers will be asked to pick up trash along the roadsides. In the meantime, what you can do right now is to walk along your own property line and pick up trash that may be along the roadside. As always, be safe and watch for oncoming traffic.

Whitetop Seniors

The Whitetop Seniors are now meeting twice a week at the Community Center for a meal,

fellowship and activities. Food is provided by District 3 Governmental Cooperative. Membership is free and open to those 60 years and older. Meeting/meal days are Monday and Thursday, 10:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. All are welcome!

Friends of Whitetop Library

The Friends of the Whitetop Public Library encourage folks to stop by the library to check out the new books, magazines, DVD's and CDs. Keep checking back for information on the upcoming 2024 Summer Reading Program for all ages.

Mt Rogers Fire & Rescue

Mt Rogers Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department is a solely volunteer agency. To date this year the Rescue Squad has covered 15 calls totaling approximately 60 hours and approximately 484 miles. Additionally, the rescue squad had 1 community service assist. The fire department has assisted the rescue squad on 17 calls, and 2 community service events. Mt Rogers has been in existence for over 40 years and has always been an all-volunteer agency. We all volunteer to do what we do so we can help our neighbors and family. To us it's a feeling of giving back to our community. Just recently the county started giving volunteers incentives for our service. They are waving the yearly solid waste collection and disposal fee for active volunteers. We offer training on all sorts of items from basic medical all the way to paramedic as well as all sorts of fire training. Most of the training is free or department/county paid for. If you are not one that wants to rush into a fire or ride in back of an ambulance, we still have needs beyond this. We always need drivers, people to help load patients, roll fire hose, and assist with our festivals. Our festivals are our main source of income for our department. If you're interested in helping, please reach out to either Ronnie

Richardson or Ralph Norris and we can discuss what possibilities will work for you.

Whitetop Community Center

Bingo – First Three Saturdays of the month

Live Music – The fourth Saturday of the month.

Feeding Southwest Virginia

On the third Monday of the month (weather permitting) volunteers help distribute food at the Community Center to qualified families. If you would like to help, please show up about 1:30.

Donations & Involvement

Please show your support for the continued publication of this newsletter by donating any amount at the Skyline Bank in Whitetop under the account, "Whitetop Gazette". To print and distribute this issue cost a little over \$300, but print/paper prices have been increasing.

Special thanks to Gene and Virginia Roop as well as a few anonymous donors for their very generous contributions. The tentative plan is to issue this newsletter quarterly, but that may change based on feedback, funding, and the frequency of new content. If you have news that you would like to be considered for publication, please email them to the editor, Gary Rascoe at WitetopGazette@gmail.com

Also, thanks to Edith Powers, Irene Jasper, Elaine Jacobs, Emily Spencer, Tom Revels, Ralph Norris, Remy Gambrill and Lisa Blevins for their editorial support, promotion, and content contributions.