



**Serving the Mt Rogers' Community of Whitetop, Green Cove,
Konnarock, Troutdale & Mouth of Wilson**

Cell Tower Update

On Tuesday, September 16, 2025, the Planning Commission heard presentations addressing the question about where the 911/Cell tower should be located in Whitetop. The two options were the Greer property on Old Park Road, which was selected by US Cellular engineers after reviewing the possible sites in the Whitetop area, and the Mt Rogers Volunteer Fire & Rescue site across the road from the fire hall.

After listening to both presentations and hearing the comments made by three citizens who appeared to speak, the Commission voted unanimously to put the tower on the site recommended by US Cellular for the following reasons:

1. The fire hall site would reach 6.8% fewer homes in the Whitetop Community.
2. The tower on the firehall site would have to be up to 40' taller and would cost an estimated \$150,000 more than the tower on the Greer property.
3. To start the application process again for required federal permits for the fire hall site would delay construction of the tower on the site by 12 to 15 months.

Neither of the presenters argued against the need for better 911 and cell services in the Whitetop area. To accomplish this, a tower is essential in the area and regardless of which site was selected, people in the area are going to see a tower. Mr. Revels, the county's project manager said that "the engineers designing the tower are using the latest materials and designs to minimize the visual impact of the tower on the community. I think that is the best we can hope for."

The Planning Commission's recommendation will be reviewed by the Board of Supervisors in their October meeting, and pending a favorable outcome, construction should begin around November 7th on both the Whitetop and the Quillens Ridge towers with completion being in late January 2026. The third tower to be located on Walnut Knob is still in the design and permitting phase. Construction will not begin until spring of 2026.

News From Mount Rogers Fire & Rescue Squad

Mt Rogers currently has several individuals enrolled in EMT courses, with two additional members preparing for certification examinations. We are proud of these new

team members and their commitment to serving our community. We encourage continued support for them as they undertake these rigorous classes and exams.

We remain actively recruiting for additional personnel. Assistance is needed across a variety of roles, including emergency calls, driving, medical provision, as well as help at community events and festivals.

Our annual Trunk or Treat is scheduled for October 31, 2025, beginning at 6 p.m., with a costume contest at 7 p.m. and games provided for children.

Additionally, we are pleased to announce that our crash truck has returned to service after nearly a year of repairs due to damage sustained during Hurricane Helene. This vehicle is an essential asset for major incidents, crashes, and fires, and we are grateful to have it operational once again.

With the cold weather setting in, here are safety tips for wood stoves and electric heaters:

Safety Equipment & Preparedness

- **Smoke and CO Detectors:** Install working smoke and carbon monoxide detectors on every level of your home and near the stove. Test them monthly.
- **Fire Extinguisher:** Keep a fire extinguisher nearby, but away from the stove.
- **Ash Disposal:** Dispose of ashes in a closed, metal container kept outside your home at least 10 feet away from any structure and douse them with water after they've cooled.
- **Keep Flammables Away:** Store firewood and other flammable items safely and away from the stove.

Wood Stoves

- **Fire-Resistant Base:** Place the stove on a non-combustible, fire-resistant base.
- **Clearance:** Maintain a safe distance between the stove and walls, ceilings, and other combustible materials, typically at least three feet.
- **Annual Inspection & Cleaning:** Have a qualified person inspect and clean your chimney system annually.
- **Regular Checks:** Periodically check the stove's gaskets, latches, hinges, and other components for damage.

Safe Burning Practices

- **Use Proper Fuel:** Burn only dry, well-seasoned hardwood.
- **Avoid Flammable Liquids:** Never use gasoline, kerosene, or charcoal starter fluid to start a fire.
- **No Trash or Treated Wood:** Do not burn trash, paper, cardboard, treated wood, or painted wood, as these materials can release dangerous toxins or cause flash fires.
- **Burn Hot Fires:** Aim for hot, bright fires to prevent smoldering and creosote buildup, which can lead to chimney fires.
- **Never Leave Unattended:** Always put out the fire before going to bed or leaving your home.

Electric Heater

- **Clearance is Critical:** Keep heaters at least 3 feet away from furniture, curtains, papers, clothes, and other combustible materials.
- **Plug Directly into the Wall:** Never use a power strip or extension cord, as they cannot handle the heater's high voltage and can cause a fire.

- **Stable Surface:** Always place the heater on a solid, flat, non-flammable surface to prevent it from being knocked over.
- **Unattended Operation:** Never leave a heater on while you are sleeping or away from the room.
- **Inspect Before Use:** Before each use, check the heater's cord and plug for any cracks or damage. If you find any issues, do not use the heater.
- **Check for Safety Certifications:** Purchase heaters that have been tested and labeled by a recognized testing laboratory, such as Underwriter's Laboratories (UL).
- **Location:** Keep heaters away from high-traffic areas to prevent tripping and place them in a location where they won't be bumped into.
- **Supervise Children and Pets:** Keep children and pets away from the heater to prevent them from knocking it over or getting too close.
- **Water Hazard:** Keep electric heaters away from water and do not touch them with wet hands to avoid electrical shock.
- **Smoke Alarms:** Make sure you have working smoke alarms on every floor of your home and test them monthly.

What is a Will?

Why is It Important to Have One?

While most people know wills are important, many put off writing one. This issue was highlighted by a bank manager concerned about a widow unable to access funeral funds because she wasn't listed on the account and no will was available, resulting in probate delays. The following article from the University of Wisconsin Extension office (with some edits) is informational only and not intended as legal advice.

Planning for the end of life may be challenging and very emotional. Thinking about issues like end-of-life health decisions and what should happen to items you own after your death can be complicated. One tool that can help with these issues is a will. A will is a document that gives directions about what to do with your property and who should care for your children, and others you make decisions for, after your death.

It's important to know that if you die without a will, your wishes for how to handle your property and care for loved ones may not be honored and may require State legal intervention to make these decisions for you.

You have a few options to write a will. One option is to write your own will. All you need is a pen and paper, or a computer and printer, and 2 witnesses. Writing your own will may be a good option if your financial situation is not complicated.

However, a will is an extremely important document, and it may be important to you to know that your will is legally enforceable after your death. Because of this, you may wish to have a lawyer review your will to confirm it will be legally enforceable.

Of course, it may be best for you to work with a legal expert or service from the start of writing your will. To do this, you can:

- Get started by contacting your county's "bar organization or association" to learn of lawyers in your area, ask friends and family members for a referral, or use an internet search engine to find lawyers near you
- Use an online template that has been prepared by a legal expert like this form available to buy at <https://wilawlibrary.gov/services/forms.htm>

Definitions of Important Terms

Will: a legal document that determines

- Who you choose to inherit the assets you own
- What should happen to assets you own, and,
- Who you would like to be legal guardian for your minor children

Beneficiary: A beneficiary is a person you choose to receive an asset after your death.

Payable on death (POD) account: An account that allows you to name a beneficiary who inherits the account funds after your death. POD accounts include checking accounts, savings accounts, and others. If you name a beneficiary or beneficiaries on a POD account then those can receive the assets much easier and quicker than if the assets needed to go through the probate court.

Probate: After your death, the court reviews your will to determine what should happen to your property. This process is called probate.

Transfer on death (TOD) account: An investment account, also called a brokerage account, that allows you to transfer investment assets to a beneficiary after your death. TOD accounts include stocks, bonds, mutual funds, and others. If you name a beneficiary or beneficiaries on a TOD account they can receive the assets much easier and quicker than if the assets needed to go through the probate court.

Trust: A trust is a legal instrument that holds and manages assets for the benefit of the owner (you), also known as the grantor. If property is held in a living trust, it usually does not need to go through probate.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I make a will?

Working with a lawyer or legal expert to make your will is recommended. However, it is legal for you to make your own will.

A will may include any property you own. It can be most helpful if your will includes items you own that do not have a beneficiary designation on a payable on death (POD) account or transfer on death (TOD) account.

Why can it be helpful to name a beneficiary to an asset?

If you name a beneficiary to a POD or TOD account, it will not need to go through probate. Going through probate often takes time (as long as 12-18 months), includes fees, and is released as public information.

Can I make a beneficiary designation for my residence?

Yes, you can name a beneficiary for your residence. You will need to complete legal paperwork and submit it to your county office, which may be called the register of deeds, recorder of deeds, or the county clerk. You may also need to have the form notarized.

What can be done to avoid probate?

Besides creating beneficiary designations, it may also be possible for your property to be held as joint property and/or to establish a living trust.

The Whitetop Community Center will be hosting our 2025 Annual Memory Lights.

Our annual ceremony will take place November 22, 2025 6:00 pm. The roll of names being honored will be read aloud, followed by the lighting of the tree.

Refreshments will be served following the ceremony.

A \$5.00 donation will reserve a light in memory of family and friends. This is an opportunity to remember those who have passed away and honor their memories.

You can reserve a memory light by mailing the names of the people you would like honored with a \$5.00 donation for each. The mailing address is: Whitetop Community Center, 16309 Highlands Parkway, Whitetop, VA 24292, or you can drop donations off to Marlena Phillips at Whitetop Library or to Joyce Stamper.

The tree will remain lit until January 1, 2025. A list of the names will be displayed in the Whitetop Community Center Lobby.

In past years the memory lights tree has been a great success honoring our family and friends. We hope you will help us make this year a success, too. All of the donations will benefit the Whitetop Community Center, helping to keep it open for all to use and enjoy.

"An apple a day really helps keep the ... "

By Dr. Scarpa

Apples are to doctors what garlic is to vampires; it keeps them away, or so it's believed.

Europeans brought the apple with them to the New World, and people like John Chapman (Johnny Appleseed) helped to literally "plant" the dominance of the apple throughout the U.S. in the 19th Century.

Many people believe apples are a virtual cornucopia of health, good for relieving everything from intestinal infection to

cleaning teeth. Apples are said to relieve chronic enteritis, intestinal infection, inflammation of the colon, diarrhea, arthritis, herpes and viruses, acid stomach, help detoxify ingested metals, and protect against the danger from x-rays and radiation therapy.

They are also said to lower blood cholesterol, lower blood pressure, stabilize blood sugar, fight fatigue, hypoglycemia, urinary infections, nerves, serve as a bladder cleanser and help you to convalesce after surgery. Apples are even said to clean your teeth and stimulate gums to keep them healthy.

There's some truth to these claims since the average apple, with skin, supplies about 10% of your daily requirement of vitamin C and some beta carotene which the body turns into vitamin A. Both vitamins are antioxidants, known to help prevent a wide range of diseases ranging from cancer to heart disease. In addition, vitamin C fights off invading germs, it promotes healthy gums and teeth, helps heal wounds, prevents anemia (by aiding in iron absorption) and prevents sore joints by helping to keep connective tissue healthy and strong.

Apples also provide potassium, which plays a key role in transmitting nerve signals, and in metabolism, helping enzymes speed up chemical reactions in the liver and muscles that produce the glycogen fuel that powers our muscles. There's also evidence that dietary potassium can help protect you from high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol and strokes.

Apples also are a good source of fiber, providing about 2.8 grams per average apple. Fiber helps keep the intestines in

good working order and may lower blood cholesterol levels. While there are other fruits that supply much larger amounts of these nutrients, apples are the most popular – perhaps because they've been consumed by humans for some 2.5 million years.

For us modern humans, apples have an extra added attraction: They are low in calories and fat: A cup of sliced apples has just 59 calories, 19 grams of protein, 15 grams of carbohydrates, just one gram of fat and one gram of saturated fat, and no cholesterol or sodium. Apple butter, despite its name, has no fat; just spices ... but typically contains large amounts of sugar. Watch out for commercial sweetened applesauce, which may have up to 77 percent more calories than unsweetened varieties.

Aside from being a healthy and handy snack, apples offer great menu diversity. You can bake, saute' and microwave apples. Try apple grated in peanut butter sandwich, tuna or chicken salad, mix it with rice for a pilaf with roast chicken, or use chopped apple as a moist stuffing. You can even grate it into meat loaf or meatball mixtures to add moisture and flavor. Try it thinly sliced with a melted cheese sandwich or use hot applesauce as a waffle, pancake topping, or spread on toast.

You can also glaze meat or poultry with apple sauce but make it sweet and hot by mixing in some mustard, vinegar or curry powder. Try it with prepared horseradish and applesauce for a beef condiment.

With modern methods of preservation, apple season is year round. But there's still nothing like apples fresh off the tree. In our current area, now is the time to pick up a few bushels for the upcoming holidays and use them to make delicious desserts like this one.

Apple Pear Pie

Ingredients:

Crust

(A store bought crust may also be used)

1 cup whole wheat pastry flour

1 cup unbleached white flour

½ teaspoon salt

2/3 cup margarine, cold

4 ½ to 5 tablespoons very cold water

Filling

4 cups tart apples, peeled and thinly sliced

2 cups pears, peeled and thinly sliced

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice (optional)

2 ½ tablespoons unbleached white flour

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

¼ teaspoon salt

4 tablespoons pure maple syrup

Preparation:

Crust

In a large bowl, mix flour and salt together thoroughly. Cut in margarine with a pastry cutter until it is the consistency of small crumbs. Sprinkle water over mixture and stir lightly with a fork. It should be wet enough to hold together. Form mixture into a ball and cut in half. Flour the work surface well and roll one-half the dough out into a 9-inch crust. Use other half to line a 9-inch pastry plate. Set aside.

Filling

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Combine peeled and sliced apples and pears in a large bowl. Sprinkle with lemon juice, if desired, for tartness. Set aside. Mix flour, cinnamon and salt in a small bowl. Sprinkle flour mixture over fruit slices and toss lightly until slices are coated. Dribble maple syrup over fruit and mix gently. Place filling in the lined pastry plate. Cover with top crust and crimp edges. Cut slits into top crust to allow the steam to escape.

Bake at 375 degrees until crust is a golden brown and filling is bubbling, about 40 minutes.

Note: If pears are not available, use 6 cups of apples instead.

Come visit the Grant Computer Center!



Do you need free access to the internet? Or maybe an hour or two surfing the web, a computer to work on, documents printed or scanned to files, photos or a brochure printed, sensitive papers shredded, a little help figuring out a computer or tablet or software, advice on which kind of computer to buy, a small conference room for a meeting, or just some nice folks to chat with for a bit? Then come visit us at the Grant Computer Center on Grange Hall Road between Troutdale and Volney!

The Computer Center, located in the historic Grange Hall near Troutdale, was established nearly 15 years ago by the Wired Road Authority. For the last 10 years, the Center has been run by Grant Goodwill Grange #959, with financial assistance from Grayson County. The Center has no paid employees, but instead is staffed solely by a great group of volunteers, who selflessly devote their time to make this facility available to fellow community members.

The Computer Center provides many useful services available for community members and visitors, including 8 computers, 2 printers, 2 scanners, a FAX machine, a paper shredder, and high-speed internet. The Center is open every weekday from 11 AM

till 5 PM (except holidays), and Wi-Fi service is also available 24/7 in the parking lot and around the building. Volunteers at the Center provide help and advice to our customers on issues relating to computers, software, printers, cell phones, internet service and the like. Our volunteers differ in their computer skills, but when a customer has an issue that the volunteer cannot solve, they are directed to another volunteer or resource to help try to solve the issue.

The Computer Center provides broadband internet service to local residents who don't have good service (or any service) at home. In addition, we strive to provide connection and computer service during power outages. We have a backup generator that powers the Center, allowing us to stay open during power outages. Hurricane Helene unfortunately knocked out our broadband service from Gigabeam. After a few days, the service was back on and the Center then provided internet to many who still did not have their home service restored. Recently, we booked a backup broadband service that automatically kicks in when our main service is disrupted (in three out of four outages since, the backup system kicked in, providing much-needed internet). So come on by when your home service is disrupted and hopefully we can get you on the web!

Last year, the Grange and the Computer Center partnered with the Wythe-Grayson Regional Library (WGRL) system. Now, you can order books, DVDs, or other materials online and pick them up at the Computer Center. A library employee, who is also a Grange member, delivers and picks up your library items at the Grange every other Tuesday. Since then, we have expanded our partnership with WGRL. We installed a large commercial TV monitor in the Center that

projects slides, advertising and explaining various Computer Center and WGRL resources. We also recently started the “Last Wednesday” monthly Seminar Series, where an expert discusses a topic of interest, followed by free lunch. The topics to date included a summary of WGRL services, particularly how to access online books, magazines, movies, etc., and a session on avoiding internet and financial scams. The seminar series will take a break for the holidays in November and December but start up again in January. We have also added a dedicated computer workstation for on-line WGRL services including the library catalogs, access to thousands of free online magazines and newspapers, online book and movie download assistance, and the like. This workstation is very simple to use, ideal even for folks who have never used a computer!

For more information on the Grant Computer Center, visit our new website, **www.grantcomputercenter.org**, or stop by weekdays between 11 AM and 5 PM. Also check out the new Grange website, **www.goodwillgrange959.org**, for all the exciting activities and events at the Grant Goodwill Grange.

Community Spotlight

Grim Pottery

Crooked Road and Round the Mountain member and artisan, Debbie Grim Yates, has been creating pottery in her home studio (located in Konnarock, Va, adjacent from Whitetop mountain) for over 34 years. Her mentors, Rob and Bet Mangum of Turkey Knob, North Carolina, ignited her love for the clay by trading pottery lessons for banjo lessons back in the early 90's. Debbie worked for Mangum Pottery for over 25

years and started selling her own wares out of the hatch of her Subaru at local fiddler's conventions and music festivals.



Debbie Grim in her Studio



From left to right: Sadie, Debbie, Molly and Tim Yates

Music and pottery go hand in hand with every aspect of the family business. Debbie, her brother Brian, and their mother Lorene toured the country as The Konnarock Critters in the late 80's and early 90's. Along with her old-time roots and bluegrass roots from her husband Tim, who toured with the Yates Brothers and Wyatt Rice, they formed a family band with their two daughters Molly and Sadie.

Once “Acoustic Heritage”, now “The Yates Family Band”, and sometimes “The New Critter Connection”, the family unit exemplifies the true meaning of Appalachian music through their heritage and love for these mountains.

The Critters were one of the most prominent old-time bands in the country as they toured both internationally and locally, spreading their love of traditional Appalachian music. Tim also toured across the country with his family band, The Yates Brothers, as well as with Wyatt Rice and other prominent bluegrass musicians.

Passing on their love of music to their two daughters, the family band has played at numerous venues throughout the years. From The Carter Family Fold, to IBMA, The Birthplace of Country Music Museum, and many other local establishments and events, the family's musical diversity can be seen in every performance, whether it be bluegrass or old-time, country, americana, or folk music, their genre selection changes with every venue to perfectly fit any occasion.

"There is a rhythm and tune that a potters wheel sings as it spins the clay within the artists hands much like a musicians instrument."

The musical heritage has been passed down through many generations and Debbie's daughter, Molly, has also inherited her passion for pottery. The two work together in the basement studio of the Konnarock cabin home alongside Debbie's mother, Lorene. Grim Pottery creates a plethora of different functional and decorative stoneware from coffee mugs, dinnerware sets, lamps, vases, and many more. Stop by their home studio in Konnarock, or find their wares at various shops all across the Tri-Cities/Southwest Virginia region.

Home Studio Location:

663 Acorn Lane, Damascus VA, 24236
Open Monday-Saturday 11am-4pm

Contact us by:

Telephone: 276-388-3543
Email: inntune@embarqmail.com
Or find us on Facebook!

Recycling Are we stuck?

By Cynthia F. Copolo, Ph.D.

For the last several decades we have been hearing, and we know that, by recycling items we can reduce trash materials from our landfills and incinerators. Landfills require large areas of land, produce methane and are frankly undesirable (no one wants them in their "backyard"), and incinerators are a source of air pollution, especially for individuals who live near them. So if we can decrease the amount of materials that end up in landfills or incinerators, we all tend to agree this is positive for the environment and our health.

Recycling also has the added benefit of providing jobs in communities for transportation, sorting and processing of recycled materials. Plus we can reduce the energy needed to manufacture goods by using recycled products initially instead of using raw materials, thereby reducing the environmental footprint. But we have not seemed to make as much progress with increasing recycling materials in general. The rate of recycling in the United States hovers around 34 percent, lower than other developed nations (Josephson, 2025). Why is this? And is recycling always the best way to reduce waste?

People and businesses vary with practicing recycling, but challenges exist with recycling items. Often people encounter barriers or frustrations. For instance, there may not be recycling services, curbside pickup or available recycling centers in one's community. Even if a person or business wants to recycle, the infrastructure may not be in place. Often guidelines or rules for recycling vary significantly from one community to the next, which can lead to

confusion and frustration. Because of these complexities, individuals and businesses often abandon efforts to recycle and all of their waste materials end up at the landfill or incinerators. Furthermore, a significant amount of contaminated items end up in landfills from those who intended to recycle because the items were not cleaned properly or at all before being put in the recycling bin.

Is recycling worth the effort anyway?

Recycling can be costly. Transporting materials and processing them require significant amounts of energy as well as additional heavy equipment at the processing centers. Material processing differs with some like plastics and glass being more costly than others. This cost may be higher than the price of land for landfills in some areas. In addition, the practice of shipping materials such as electronics presents its own set of problems from pollution to additional expense.

To complicate the matter further, much of the plastics we think are being recycled actually are not. An investigation by ABC News in 2023 found plastic bags end up in landfills, incinerators or are shipped overseas (Guttman, M. et al, ABC News, 2023) They tracked plastic bags placed in 46 different store recycle bins and found less than 10% of the plastic waste actually made it to recycle centers. Plastic bags cannot be included in curbside pickup efforts because the plastic gets caught in the machinery at recycling facilities. To be good citizens, stores such as WalMart and Target agreed to collect them and send them to a separate facility - except they do not always do that. As a consequence of these factors, more and more plastic ends up at landfills or worse, in our oceans and environment.

What are the alternatives to traditional recycling? Practicing the other two Rs (Reusing and Reduction) in the 3Rs of waste management are gaining traction. Reusing or upcycling finds ways to create something different from existing materials. On an individual basis, this could be as simple as making crafts from items that would have been thrown away such as is often done in education classrooms or children's camps. Reusing textiles is a fast-growing enterprise and supplies marketable items such as pocketbooks, upholstery and clothing articles. Individuals and businesses can practice reusing by simply donating items to animal rescues, food banks, Goodwill, and Salvation Army.

Practicing reduction has been proven to be the best method of reducing waste in landfills and incinerators because it avoids waste before materials are generated or manufactured. This directly decreases demand for raw materials and therefore reduces the environmental footprint of producing the items in the first place. By reducing consumption, the root cause of waste is addressed plus this practice saves the individual and business money by reducing unnecessary costs. A few reduction practices include using reusable water bottles instead of plastic water bottles, saying "no" to plastic straws, using your own coffee cup for the vendor to fill instead of using their disposable cups, going paperless for billing invoices and statements, and taking your own reusable bags to the store to bring items home instead of using plastic bags.

There is plenty we can do to have less waste and pollution in our environment. Practices that make it easier and clearer for households and businesses to recycle materials are needed as well as motivation

through rewards and incentives. When the concepts of recycling were introduced to the public decades ago, efforts to educate children with changing practices were made through public education. It was recognized that if children understood the merits of reducing waste, then they could bring the parents on board to change household practices. This was an effective strategy. Perhaps we need to have another education campaign at all age levels to redirect our thoughts on this issue so as to implement practices that are effective and sustainable. This education effort should not only provide the reasons for reducing landfill waste but also include the alternatives to simple recycling. Open dialogue and transparency to barriers should also be part of this campaign so people do not become frustrated and give up. Reducing waste is worth it, but we need to be more creative to achieve that goal.

<https://www.beyondplastics.org/news-stories/plastic-bag-recycling>

<https://www.cityofbowie.org/980/Reduce-Reuse-Recycle>

<https://www.terracycle.com/en-US/?srsId=AfmBOopxlZmAycGle6bZl1z9o0N-EQg3udYsonu4kC44marYfG5VmFcK>

<https://greencityrecycler.com/is-recycling-worth-it-the-real-truth-behind-the-bins/#>

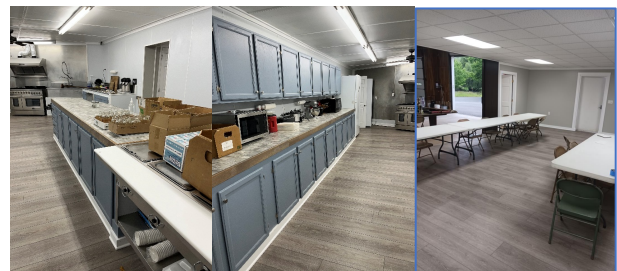
<https://abcnews.go.com/US/put-dozens-trackers-plastic-bags-recycling-trashed/story?id=99509422>

Rugby Volunteer Fire & Rescue

It wasn't long after an initial remodel of the Rugby Fire and Rescue was completed that the hurricane struck and reversed much of the hard work that had been done. After the initial feeling of frustration that upset so many people from the damage caused by the hurricane, the community banded together in many ways. The fire and rescue was no exception. The siding on the walls had to be cut down and new materials applied. Insulation was removed and replaced, new floor tile and heavy-duty laminate was installed throughout, and some new appliances were added.

Thanks to a combination of funding from insurance, personal donations, a special Wayne Henderson guitar that was auctioned off, and the help of many volunteers, the building is almost complete. The next planned phase of the project is to install a shower and a storage area.

Special thanks to all those that helped pull this together. This list starts with the F&R members who, along with some of the North Prison inmates from Independence, worked to clean out the building prior to reconstruction. The list also includes; Marty & Karen Best, Eddie & Dana Jones, Greg Davis, and Louise & Gary Rascoe. After finishing the kitchen, it has been used for activities like making Apple Butter. An open house is planned, but has not been scheduled yet.



Fall Phenology (Why Leaves Change Color)

By the Blue Ridge Discovery Center

As the seasons change, the natural world around us begins a beautiful transformation. Lush green mountainsides begin boasting brilliant displays of reds, oranges, and yellows that tell us the cold months are underway. Underneath the excitement and beauty of autumn is a question: where do these colors come from? And why does the change happen gradually, changing color in some locations before others?

The answer starts with **chlorophyll**, the pigment that gives leaves their distinctive green color. During the growing season trees produce chlorophyll, collecting energy from the sun through photosynthesis and creating that verdant green we see in the spring and summer. When days get shorter and the nights grow colder, trees cease chlorophyll production and begin preparing for winter dormancy. In the mountains where we receive colder average temperatures, leaves change colors much earlier in comparison to other elevations.

Chlorophyll isn't the only pigment that colors leaves. Carotenoids are another group of pigments commonly made by trees, but often outshined by the mass production of chlorophyll. Carotenoids produce a variety of yellows, oranges, and browns, and are responsible for giving carrots, corn, and bananas their characteristic hue, as well as fall leaves. When chlorophyll fades away, carotenoids become visible, causing trees like Green Ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*) and Tulip Poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) to display vibrant bright yellow color through the fall season.

The brilliant reds we see in the fall come from a pigment called Anthocyanin. After a tree is done producing chlorophyll, it breaks the pigment down and saves the nutrients to use again next spring, creating anthocyanin as a byproduct. If a tree makes a lot of anthocyanin, its leaves turn red in autumn—Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*) is a fantastic example. Outside of trees, anthocyanin also gives strawberries, blueberries, cranberries, and many other fruits and vegetables their distinct coloration.

Once the leaves fall, nature has a way of reclaiming them. When leaves fall to the ground in the autumn, they aren't wasted—they actually become very important parts of the ecosystem! Insects like lightning bugs, small mammals, and amphibians use leaf litter to hibernate through the cold months, and without these leaves their survival is unlikely. Leaf litter also serves as a way to bring nutrients back into the soil, keeping the forests thriving for generations to come! So, next time you spend time outside, take a moment to look at the leaves on the trees, and think about the science behind the beauty.

Upcoming Events at the Blue Ridge Discover Center:

October 17-19: Mount Rogers Fall Naturalist Rally

Come celebrate the beauty of the Blue Ridge with us at arguably the most gorgeous time of year! Festivities kick off on Friday evening with dinner and a keynote speaker, followed by a full day of expert-led programming on Saturday, and concluding with field trips on Sunday morning. Topics include salamanders, fall foliage, seed saving, weather survival, wildlife tracking,

birding, local history, bear mangle, medicinal plants, stargazing, apple cider, and more. Youth programming Friday night and Saturday.

Tickets are \$50 for non-members and \$37.50 for members. Youth are admitted free! Meal tickets and lodging in our historic schoolhouse are also available. Find more information and register online, www.blueridgediscoverycenter.org.

October 25: Creature Feature

Delightfully spooky, nature-themed Halloween fun for kids aged 6-12. From 6:00–7:30 pm, we'll dive into "crepuscular" activities—including creepy crafts, hands-on animal specimen exploration, and spooky storytelling and games. Then from 7:30–9:00 pm, we'll embark on a thrilling nocturnal adventure featuring three rotating stations: Creepy Crawlies, Creatures of the Lagoon, and Hunters of the Night.

Registration is required, and tickets are \$10 per child. Find more information and register online, www.blueridgediscoverycenter.org.

November 16: Centennial Celebration

The Schoolhouse turns 100 years old this year, and you're invited to the Centennial Celebration! Please bring a potluck dish to share and a small item to add to our time capsule. Plan to arrive around 2pm to tour the building, listen to a local history talk, and bury a time capsule. We'll conclude the festivities by sharing a meal together at 4pm. If you or someone you know attended Konnarock Training School, we'd love to hear from you! Please call us at 276-388-3155 or email us: info@blueridgediscoverycenter.org.

HALLOWEEN EVENTS



October 31 AT 6:00 PM

HALLOWEEN TRUNK OR TREAT

MOUNT ROGERS FIRE AND RESCUE

51 FIREHOUSE RD, WHITETOP, VA



Integrated Health Services Mobile Unit: A Place For Help

1. Mobile Unit Overview

- This is a collaborative, multi-sector project involving all eight localities in the Mount Rogers Health District: Bland, Carroll, Grayson, Smyth, Wythe, Washington, and the cities of Galax and Bristol.
- The initiative is funded through a five-year grant from the Virginia Opioid Abatement Authority, with each locality actively participating and contributing.
- The goal is to increase access to behavioral health, substance use, and public health services, especially in rural and underserved areas.

There are two mobile units:

- One serves Whitetop serves the Mount Rogers Community Services catchment (Grayson, Smyth, Wythe, Carroll, Bland, and Galax).
- The other serves the Highlands Community Services catchment (Washington County and Bristol).
- Each unit is staffed by a mix of public health professionals (MRHD) and behavioral health staff (MRCS or Highlands CSB), offering a truly integrated model of care.

2. Services Provided

- The mobile units are not designed to provide primary care. Instead, services focus on public health and behavioral health services, particularly those that address urgent community needs related to substance use, mental health, and communicable diseases.

- The goal is to bridge gaps in access, especially for individuals who face barriers like transportation, stigma, or lack of insurance, not to replace a primary care provider.
- The units are designed to meet people where they are, both geographically and in their recovery journey, and to connect them to longer-term care when needed.

Services available on the Whitetop mobile unit include:

- Counseling & intake services with behavioral health professionals
- Behavioral Health Medication Management
- Peer support and case management
- HIV and Hepatitis C testing. This unit will not treat Hep C, but it will refer to the health department and ensure care is received.
- Harm reduction services (including naloxone and fentanyl test kits)
- Referrals to housing, food, and other wraparound services
- Immunizations

3. Whitetop Area Relevance

- While the unincorporated community of Whitetop is located in Grayson County, the broader Whitetop Mountain region spans Grayson, Washington, and Smyth counties.
- This reflects a key reality of rural life: people often cross county lines to access the services they need.
- Our goal with the mobile units is not to limit care by jurisdiction, but to ensure individuals can access the right services — wherever those services are available.

- The mobile unit serving the Mount Rogers Community Services catchment is the one that would be active in and around Whitetop, helping to close gaps in access for this geographically isolated area.

4. Why This Matters

- This project is a response to real, persistent barriers in our region: transportation, rural geography, limited clinic hours, and stigma.
- Our region has higher-than-average rates of poverty, substance use, and communicable diseases like Hepatitis C.
- The mobile units are a data-driven, community-informed solution to bring care directly to those who need it most.

5. Resources for the Public

- Services overview:
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/mount-rogers/services-2/>
- Mobile unit schedule
(still being updated):
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/mount-rogers/schedule/>
- The mobile unit is scheduled to be at the Whitetop Community Center the first Thursday of each month from 10:00 – 2:00.
- Questions related to the mobile unit can be directed to:
Brienne Kilbourne, Population Health Manager, Public Information Officer
Mount Rogers Health District
Office: 276-706-3961
Email: brienne.kilbourne@vdh.virginia.gov

Help for Hurricane Helene

On September 24, 2024, Hurricane Helene formed as a tropical storm in the Caribbean Sea. On September 26, it made landfall in Florida as a category 4 hurricane. The storm continued inland, and on September 27 it reached southwest Virginia, where in a 72 hour period, 12.2 inches of rainfall was recorded in Grayson Highlands, and 8.6 in Galax. The resulting flooding from this amount of rain was unprecedented in our region.

On September 27, we celebrate the one-year milestone of this event. This is not a celebration of the disaster, but rather, a celebration of the recovery. It has been truly inspiring to see how much work can be accomplished when communities and citizens come together. In Virginia, there has been over \$18 million dollars distributed for disaster assistance by FEMA. United Way of Southwest Virginia raised an additional \$2.3 million that we distributed directly to the communities for their long-term recovery efforts. In addition to that, we created the Citizen Recovery Program to directly assist people who were impacted by Hurricane Helene.



**UNITED WAY OF
SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA'S
CITIZEN RECOVERY PROGRAM**



Still accepting applications!

Financial assistance to help our neighbors who were affected by Hurricane Helene and Winter Storm Jett.

We can assist with:

- Home supplies
- Landscaping clean-up
- Food shortage or loss
- Education and supplies
- Medical needs
- Vital documentation
- Rent assistance
- Utility assistance
- Minor home repair



Citizens must reside in affected counties.

To Apply Visit
unitedwayswva.org

For more information contact:
276-268-2504
drice@unitedwayswva.org

Apply on the United Way of SWVA website. Restrictions may apply. Income and supporting documentation may be required. This program is funded by United Way Worldwide and The Tupper Foundation.

The Citizen Recovery Program is still active and available for people in our region who experienced damages and/or losses from either Hurricane Helene or Winter Storm Jett. This can range from replacement of personal possessions lost by the storm, tree/debris removal, to minor home repairs. We also assist with consulting citizens who have experienced major home damage, and can help provide guidance on your recovery journey.

To learn more, you can email a request for an application to:

drice@unitedwayswva.org

Whitetop's Most Famous Family

By Ed Clayton

Possibly the Whitetop areas most famous residents – if even just for the summer – were Douglas and Corrine Robinson. Corrine had impressive family connections and Robinson had extensive property holdings in the Whitetop area.

A land grant to James Heron of Richmond dated December 14, 1795 gave Heron title to a vast amount of land in multiple counties surrounding Whitetop. Six months later, Heron transferred 87,000 acres of land to George Douglas, Sr. of New York – reportedly to settle a debt. The Douglas heirs filed a friendly suit in Washington County in 1846 in an attempt to divide the estate. This resulted in the formation of the Douglas Land Company. In time, Douglas Robinson, Jr. ended up controlling and managing the Douglas Land Company.

Douglas Robinson, Jr. (1855 – 1918) was a successful real estate broker, as well as a board member of numerous banks, insurance companies and other

corporations in New York. In 1882 he married Corrine Roosevelt (1861 - 1933). She provided connections to further wealth and to her politically positioned kin. Corrine was the sister of Theodore "T.R." Roosevelt, Jr., 26th President of the United States, and sister of Elliott Roosevelt whose daughter, Eleanor, would marry Franklin D. Roosevelt, 32nd President of the United States. In 1920, Corrine became the first woman to address a nomination convention speaking before a crowd of 14,000.

Douglas Robinson inherited vast tracts of property in the Whitetop – Mount Rogers area that was held in the name of the Douglas Land Company.

His wife's brother, Elliott Roosevelt, the father of Eleanor, was an alcoholic so the family made an effort to keep him out of the mainstream. He thus spent time in the Whitetop and Abingdon areas managing the property of his brother-in-law. Eleanor's visit to the Whitetop Festival on August 12, 1933 would have had special significance to her since she was visiting the area in which her father had spent several years.

The Robinsons established a large farm and summer home on a lower slope of Whitetop. Caretakers were employed to live on the land year-round and to operate the farm. The couple usually spent the month of May at their Grayson County home.



One story reports that they arrived by train at Chilhowie, riding in their own rail car. Although now reduced in size, the summer home, along with a large horse barn and other out buildings still exists on Whitetop Road. One map shows that the farm included seven houses for caretakers in addition to the Robinson's summer home.

Learn more about the Douglas Land Company and the Robinsons by reading the final chapter of the book *Smyth County History and Traditions*, Goodrich Wilson (1932).

How Hiking the AT Changed my Life

My name is Jeff Davis. I moved to Whitetop VA in December of 2023 for the beautiful scenery and to one day open an Appalachian Trail (AT) Hostel.

I have completed more than 5,000 miles of hiking on the Appalachian Trail, finishing thru hikes in 2012 and 2016. I'm writing to share how the AT has impacted my life and the lives of so many others.

When my mom passed away in 2009, I struggled to move forward. My challenges weren't with drugs or alcohol—they were about what I was going to do with my life.

On March 1st, 2012, my father (Daddio) recognized that I was facing challenges and suggested that I consider hiking the Appalachian Trail, something I had always wanted to do.

I used to run a small landscaping business and gave my clients notice before leaving. Seven days later, on March 8th, I headed to Springer Mountain, GA with Daddio, not knowing how far I'd go or what I was looking for—just certain that was where I needed to be.

March 9th, I started, Daddio right by my side. He walked with me the first 2 miles then returned to his car which he then drove ahead of me and walked Southbound to meet me walking to him. This continued for two more days. On the morning of the fourth day, my father left to return home. I ensured my backpack was fully stocked with provisions brought in Daddio's car. As I watched him drive away it really hit me, what in the dickens heavens to Betsy have I done now. I wish I could express how lonely the feeling really was. I tear up now just thinking about it and the reality of how big of a turning point in my life that it really was.

I turned to the only thing in the woods with me, the white blaze of the AT. The white blazes are 2 inches by 6 inches painted on a tree, maintained by volunteers. You walk to one, and with nothing blocking your view, you can always see the next trail marker ahead or behind you. They do this so hikers don't get lost, even in the worst of weather.

The next few days are really hard to put into words. The questions kept creeping in with absolutely no answers for them. On day seven, I planned to hike 13.7 miles on day eight to reach the trail's first 360-degree viewpoint. Let me be honest, the 3 days prior I only did 23 miles. All my muscles hurt, so I knew 13.7 miles was going to be a real challenge. I began early that morning, determined to make it. My muscles felt less sore as I set out. It had been beautiful all day and as I'm climbing the mountain, in rolled the clouds that would block my view. All the happiness, gone that quickly. I made it to the top but was utterly mentally exhausted and totally depressed.

At the time, my pack contained three creamy chicken ramen noodles, two granola bars, and a bagel with some peanut butter—

just enough to get me through the next 7.6 miles until I could resupply.

On that mountain sat a broken man, me Jeff Davis.

Out of nowhere a man's voice says, "Excuse me brother, are you hungry?"

I turned and there was a Trail Angel (A trail angel is a person who helps hikers on the AT by providing rides or giving out items, known as trail magic). Please forgive me for forgetting his name. He was at the top of that mountain because in 1958 he was hiking and someone gave him a hot dog and he said it changed his life. He was there to feed me a hotdog. Truth be known it was 3 hot dogs. Usually, when I received items at parks or other places, it was because the person had a surplus. This man took his time, money, and effort for me. Mind blown. He changed my entire outlook completely, and his positive impact was priceless.

The next morning I woke up with this pep in my step and my life was truly different. I made it the 7.6 miles and now it was time to go the 5.4 miles west to town to resupply. I set my pack down, took a breath and heard a truck coming. I stood up to put my thumb out and it hits me, I've never done this before. I never had to since I had two older brothers and a mom and dad that took me anywhere I needed. It felt so awkward. Instantly I turned to grab my trail book to be sure how far it really was. The truck stopped and a woman rolls the window down and asked if I needed a ride into town. I thought how crazy is this. In the middle of nowhere she's offering me a ride. I go to jump in the back of the truck and she yelled, "Please sit in front so we can talk," so I did.

My first question to her was, "Why would you stop and pick up a hiker alone?" Her reply was priceless, "I want to be a part of your dream." Her name was Dotty, and she drove me into town. She said when I'm done shopping, if I wanted, she would love to chat more and bring me back to the trail. She did and when I watched Dotty drive off I thought where in the dickens am I that people care about me.

The AT showed me that there are so, so many good people in the world.

I have many stories that I could tell if people are interested in reading more about them.

Why did I choose Whitetop to move to? Leaving Damascus, "Trail town America" with all the essentials for hikers, you find a long stretch without supplies. My goal is to encourage hikers, just as others have encouraged me.

NOTE- if you're walking from Springer Mountain GA, the thru hiker reaches 500 miles just before Massey gap; what an accomplishment.

Whitetop, let's put ourselves on the map and make memories that may possibly change people's lives.

Until next time neighbors, your friend

Jeff Davis

News from Grayson County Tourism

As the Fall colors settle in upon the mountains a little earlier than usual this year, Grayson County's festival season is winding down to a successful close.

The Annual Grayson County Ag & Art Adventure returned for its 4th year, opening the gates for visitors to farms, venues, and galleries across the eastern and central part of the county. In addition to the self-guided, free farm and gallery tours, visitors could purchase tickets for two curated bus tours guided by the Grayson County Historical Society. Attendance surpassed expectations across the board, with great weather and wonderful stops drawing folks from as far as Florida and Texas. Planning is already underway for next year's Ag & Art Adventure to expand the tours to the Western end of the county once again; interested Grayson County farms, artisans, and small businesses are encouraged to apply to be a stop when registration opens in February.

This year's adventure tour joined forces with local musical non-profit Legends of Grayson Old-Time Celebration, whose mission to honor one local Grayson County old-time legend a year continues to evolve. The free Legends of Grayson Tribute Show on September 7th honored fiddler Enoch Rutherford, bringing together family members, friends, and the living legends who keep the old-time tradition alive here in the mountains to celebrate his legacy. The next Legends of Grayson Old-Time Celebration event will be the Breaking up January Jam at Elk Creek Station on January 31st, hosted by local legends and open to all as a great way to chase away the chill of winter and welcome the New Year.

As we look onward to 2026, Grayson County Tourism is seeking interested farmers, artisans, and community organizations to help grow the 5th annual Ag & Art Adventure by joining the Ag & Art Planning Committee. Interested parties should contact Tourism Director Tracy Cornett at tcornett@graysoncountyva.gov with inquiries about planning the 2026 Adventure.

2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in the United States, cuing celebrations that have been in the works for years as a part of the Virginia 250th Commission. Grayson County has received a grant from the VA250 to host a traveling historical exhibition at the Historic 1908 Courthouse in the Spring of 2026 that will be open to all, with special consideration given to the Grayson County students. The mobile museum exhibition will coincide with historical demonstrations, talks by local experts, and other activities geared toward engaging students, visitors, and locals in the vital role Virginia played during the Revolutionary War for American Freedom. This event will kick off the 250th Independence Day celebrations throughout the county, and local organizations are encouraged to work with the Tourism Department to promote their special events in conjunction with the 2026 VA250 commemoration.

Grayson County Tourism & Economic Development Department invites all local organizations, businesses, and individuals to list their upcoming events on the county tourism website for free. Visit www.graysoncountyva.com or email the department at visit@graysoncountyva.gov to learn more about listing events or businesses.

Whitetop Gazette

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". If you have news or feedback that you would like to be considered for publication, please email the editor, Gary Rascoe, at

WhitetopGazette@gmail.com

Online Copies: You may view all issues of the Whitetop Gazette, as well as subscribe to future issues by going to the website: WhitetopVA.org then scroll down to the bottom of the page where you will see the links.

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The Whitetop Gazette

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