



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

## **News From Mount Rogers Fire & Rescue Squad**

*By Ralph Norris*

Mt Rogers Rescue is pleased to announce that two members have successfully passed the National Registry EMT (NREMT) examination. Achieving this certification requires significant time, commitment, and effort. These members responded to our call for volunteers earlier this year, demonstrating their dedication to serving the community. Please congratulate these two individuals and show them support as they help our community. If you're interested in getting involved, please reach out to a member to discuss ways you can contribute.



Whalley Leach was a firefighter/EMT in Florida for over 31 years before retiring and

finding himself moving to Whitetop. Whalley first joined us a few years ago as a part time firefighter. Whalley talked with us after realizing we needed help on the rescue squad and decided he would get his EMT back. Whalley attended a traditional in-person class five days a week for three months. Whalley is a go-getter that loves to stay busy. He has a home in Florida as well and spends a lot of time with his wife traveling back and forth. You will never find Whalley just sitting around. He is always on the go and coming up with new ideas on how to improve everything.



Brittany Loggins, a native of Whitetop, also answered the call for help after we posted that we were looking for volunteers. Brittany has her hands full with her four beautiful children, her husband David, and all of her farm animals. Since Brittany has answered

the call to help us, her oldest son Landan as well as her husband David have joined our ranks to help our community. Brittany took a hybrid EMT class. This was one that was mainly online with very little classroom time. She is one of three who took the class, and is currently the only one who has tested. Brittany is incredibly energetic, constantly eager to find ways to assist, and she's always the first to take action.

Mt Rogers sponsored an Emergency Vehicle Operation Class on December 13-14. This course is designed to enhance safe vehicle operation by stressing theory and principles of defensive driving in both emergency and non-emergency situations. Virginia Motor Vehicle laws are pertinent to the operation of emergency vehicles. This class is not designed to teach the student to drive, but rather to explain how emergency driving differs from non-emergency driving. We had 14 students attend this class. Out of the 14, 5 were from our department. Please congratulate Rhonda Richardson, Bobbi Blevins, Brittany Loggins, David Loggins, and Alex Norris as they are now able to help by driving ambulances, brush trucks and fire trucks.

## **A Little Whitetop History**

Archie Blackburn was a fixture in the Cabin Creek/Bakers Branch and the Mt. Roger's Combined School communities. Archie lived at the end of Bakers Branch Lane in the last house before the park land began. He was the son of Fanny and Elisha. He had a brother, Garnett, and a sister, Lucy.

Archie was the custodian at Mt. Roger's Combined School. The school provided an education for children in grades 1 through 12 and then kindergarten through 12 when kindergarten was mandated by the state. The school was the hub for social and

community gatherings in Whitetop. If you remember going to school and being embraced by warmth on a cold winter's day, then rest assured that Archie had gotten up well before daylight and walked to school to stoke the furnace fire to warm the building up to cozy by the time the teachers, cooks and kids arrived for the day. Archie had no vehicle. He walked to school, or if he was really lucky, he'd catch a ride once he got down to Rt. 58 from Cabin Creek Lane. With feet the mode of transportation, Archie needed a good light to identify obstacles in his route of travel. Even after flashlights became in common use, Archie carried a lantern. Lamp oil was way cheaper than flashlight batteries.

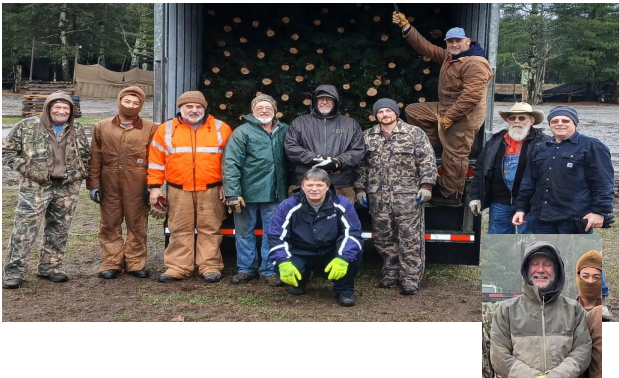
In his job as custodian, Archie had to bank the school's furnace to assure warmth and to avoid frozen pipes in the winter. Classroom floors, the gym floor and the hall had to be mopped, waxed and then dry mopped. During the lunch hour time, trash had to be taken out. During lunch, young children were assisted with screw tops and straws in milk containers. The cafeteria ladies appreciated Archie's help with toting large containers, pots, and boxes. Archie Blackburn was a gentle soul, a fixture in every activity or event held at the school. He took immense pride in his work. Archie was a good man.

## **Trees for Troops**

Local tree growers make an annual donation of trees to the military for the Trees to Troops program. Last year, volunteers loaded over 250 trees. This Christmas season, on December 2nd, donations more than doubled to 577. The trees were loaded onto a FedEx truck and transported to a local hub where they were combined with trees from other hubs for distribution to the military. Some trees have even ended up in submarines!

Thanks to both the tree growers and the other volunteers who helped load all the trees. Special thanks to these tree farms (in no particular order) for their generous donations: Mountaineer, Anders, Sexton Farm, Mount Rogers tree farm, Lonesome Pine, Wolverton Mountain, Powers Tree Farm, Wintergreen Farm and also to FedEx and the FedEx driver Jeff Stinson.

Pictured below are the volunteers who loaded the trees (Left to Right: Rob Richardson, Cameron Walls, Eddie Jones, Freddie Hamm, Dean Blevins, Cameron Wiles, Ralph Norris, Marty Best, Gary Rascoe. Sitting: Jeff Stinson. Inset is a picture of Simon Smith who took the group photo.



## Greetings Grayson County Neighbors

I hope everyone had a safe and memorable holiday season. Being without family made it tough. Really missed the, "Let's call them debates or conversations," that you get into with loved ones. Please enjoy your family while you have them around. It's time that you will never get back. Thank you for showing your support for my first article. It was the first one I've ever written. If anyone wishes to contact me directly for questions, friendship, chat, or a hike, my email is

**Jeff@JeffDavises.com**

Starting from where I left off in the first article, Dottie dropped me off at the trail,

and as I watched her drive off, I saw a hiker that I had passed earlier that morning. "Big Dumb Animal," a trail name he gave himself, came walking down the mountain. As he approached, I noticed that he was carrying a full-size shovel and a rake as walking sticks. When Big Dumb Animal put his pack down, I heard it hit the ground. I knew it was heavy. Right away I realized why he called himself that. Yup, true story. He sat down and we got into a conversation. Somehow in the year 2012 he believed he was going to the Appalachian Trail to find a place to live and build a homestead. He was carrying a 14-inch cast iron pan, spatula, seeds, a guitar, and as I said, a shovel and rake. Thank goodness someone had already told him the truth, and I didn't have to be the person to tell him. A truck drives by and Big Dumb Animal says, "I'll see you up the trail Jeff Davis. I have to get rid of half of this stuff and get the right things." Off he went.

Here is a side note from my experiences during thru hikes starting in the South heading North. The Appalachian Trail is a community. Example: people from all over go to the Southern terminus and walk north. Some people you meet you never see again, then there's the group that walks about the same pace as yourself. You pass them, they pass you. Each time you see them you become closer, and you actually start to remember certain people's names. Just as in a community you find people you like more than others. After enough time passes, these people become what is called Tramily (Trail Family).

Now I found myself at the North bound mile marker 69.6 (Hiawassee, GA), off I go climbing up the mountain. All I could think about was earlier this morning my pack felt lighter. I walked quickly right down the mountain to get into town. Now I have all

this food, and I need to climb up the mountain. It seemed as though it took forever to get to the top (1.6 miles). Truthfully, it was just over 3 hours, so it certainly wasn't quick. The next few days while hiking I met several other people, two of them, unknowing at the time, who would become my Tramily. Their trail names were Spice Kit and Gedy.

I had planned enough food for 4 days. Like a community the word on the trail was, rain was coming. Day 2, I had a big day pushing myself to get to Franklin, NC by the end of day 3, before the rain was due to start. Day 3, I set out early. As I'm hiking, I notice rocks formed on the trail that displayed the number '100'. Yes, I just walked 100 miles, WHAT! Right then it hit me, I had actually walked 100 miles. I am walking to Katahdin, nothing is stopping me now. I have a goal in my life, a purpose. After hiking another 1.2 miles, I came across a group of people from Ohio. In 1982 Paul tried to thru hike and made it to this point but decided his family was more important. He left the AT community and moved back home. Paul is the reason the folks from Ohio were there. Hats off to Paul; the trail made him realize what really mattered to him. Paul had gone home to save his marriage. With him on this hike was his wife and two kids, along with several other people spreading trail magic at Rock Gap. We played frisbee, threw a football and mingled. What a blessing. This is the list of what I ate: Oreos, Milk, Pizza, Coke, Fried Chicken, Coke, Oreos, Milk, Orange Juice, Burger, 2 Little Debbies, and another Coke to finish it off.

Before I walked out, I realized I had 3.7 miles to go before I reached town. I had eaten way too much not realizing I'm getting the "hikers eat everything calories matter diet"

I hugged everyone and then set off once again, I went for a walk. It started to rain the last mile and honestly, I didn't care. I was on cloud 9. I was going into town. When I got to the trailhead, a car stopped and picked me up. The driver knew exactly where I was going when I said, "hotel". He dropped me off, and just at the front desk, I knew three people. When I got to my room, I realized just about everyone there was a hiker getting off the trail because of the rain. After showering and in a fantastic mood, I went outside. There was a fire, and people were drinking some beverages. I met several new people that I would see throughout my venture; two of them stuck out. Their trail names were Ron Paul and Badger. That evening, I learned what "zero" means, it's when a hiker does zero miles (lol) and doesn't usually leave town.

The next morning, I got a knock on my door. I opened it and saw this beautiful-souled sister from a local Church. She was there to take any hikers who wanted a ride to go eat pancakes and bacon. She said we would be back in time to check out of the hotel. Heck yeah, every hiker there was in that van. I sat and ate breakfast with Ron Paul and Badger. At that point, we decided that we would all split a room instead of hiking out in the rain. That afternoon Spice Kit and Gedy and others showed up. We hung out by the fire, had a few drinks, told where we were from, and what made us want to do this. Such a peaceful evening.

The next morning there was a knock on the door. The same beautiful-souled sister was standing there again, and I told her, "I am so sorry I had pancakes and bacon yesterday, it was so good." I thanked her. She said, "Okay, the menu has changed. Today we are serving bacon and pancakes." She told us to

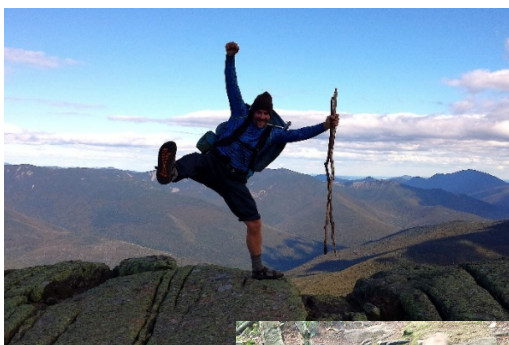
get our stuff and get on the van and come eat. Friends, where in life do you go where people are so friendly? No place that I have ever been, have people treated me as nice as they did while hiking along the Appalachian Trail. When I got to the trail, and as my ride left, once again here comes Big Dumb Animal down the trail. Now his pack is filled with the proper items to hike the Appalachian Trail, except he still had the guitar. We started hiking together. He was much faster up the mountain than me. Sadly, I never saw him again.

Sometime during the beginning of April, I am putting together a Whitetop Appalachian Trail Day with the main objective to spread some trail magic. The date, time and location will be shared in the next Whitetop Gazette. If anyone is interested in being a trail angel or has any suggestions, please contact me at **Jeff@JeffDavises.com**.

Be kind to one another during this chilly winter season. Thank you for reading.

Your friend,

Jeff Davis



## Keeping Your Resolutions

*By Dr. Scarpa*

It's late in the evening; you're ready for bed. But something is calling to you from the kitchen; more specifically, the refrigerator; the song of a piece of apple pie left over from dinner. It's got your name on it and it's waiting. If it seems that your New Year's resolution to lose excess weight and attain fitness are always ambushed by your inability to "stay the course", you've got a lot of company. Half of all Americans make New Year's resolutions, usually about some habit related to health such as losing weight, giving up smoking or reducing alcohol intake. But most don't succeed simply because it's hard to change lifelong habits. A study by University of Scranton researchers a few years ago found that only 40% of people who had made resolutions to improve their lifestyles in one way or another had actually stuck to their resolutions seven months later.

The researchers found that those who had stuck to their resolutions had three things in common; they believed in their ability to change, they didn't indulge in self-blame and they were realistic in assessing what the change would do for them -- they avoided wishful thinking. In short, you've got to believe you can change, forget about guilt, make the commitment, and expect to feel better after changing -- but don't expect eternal happiness.

So how do you begin? A first step is to forget about blame or guilt. Instead of worrying about guilt, think about your current lifestyle and any health risks that go along with it. For example, if you're overweight, the possibility of heart disease, cancer, plus other negatives.



Next, get the evidence; find out just how much you eat, drink or smoke. Chances are, it's more than you thought.

A third step is to prepare. Make the proposed change easier by trying a bunch of small steps, incremental changes that start to chip away at the bad habit or habits. For example, cut out the buttered roll with coffee in the morning, or the potato chips snack during afternoon work break. Instead, substitute a healthy habit for the bad one -- a bowl of hot cereal instead of the buttered roll; a healthy walk instead of the bag of potato chips during afternoon break.

Finally, the most important step; commit to changing permanently. Decide that your change is going to be lifelong. Reinforce your commitment by telling family and friends about your plans to change. If your problem is being overweight, make the lifelong commitment to increase physical activity and cut your caloric intake by decreasing fats, meats and sweets and substituting fruits, vegetables and grains. And remember, most attempts at change don't work on the first try.

For most people, relapses are part of quitting. If you have relapses, don't berate yourself; learn from your mistakes. You may relapse many times, but if you keep at it, you'll succeed in changing your lifestyle. One other point, eating healthy doesn't mean eating unpalatable food. There are thousands of great recipes to choose from just like the one that follows.

### **Linguini with a Leafy Green such as Kale, Escarole, Spinach, Broccolini or Broccolini Rabe**

#### **Ingredients:**

2 tablespoons olive oil  
Four cloves of garlic, minced

One head of your leafy green, about 1-1/2 lbs., cut into 1-1/2 wide shreds  
1/2 cup chicken broth  
1 cup canned chickpeas, drained  
1/2 teaspoon, salt  
1/8 teaspoon dried, crushed, red pepper  
1/2 lb. linguini  
Low-fat Parmesan cheese

#### **Preparation:**

1. In a large frying pan, heat oil over medium-high heat.
2. Add your leafy greens and garlic, cover and cook.
3. Stir occasionally, until your greens wilt, about 5 minutes.
4. Add chicken broth, chickpeas, salt and crushed dried red pepper and bring to a boil.
5. Meanwhile, in a large pot of salted boiling water, cook the linguini.
6. Drain the linguini and add the leafy green mixture to the pasta, toss and serve. Top with grated, low-fat parmesan cheese if desired.  
Serves 4.

### **Do's and Don't of Curing a Hangover**

*By Dr. Scarpa*

You shouldn't have done it, but you did! You partied into the wee hours of the morning and consumed a bit too many adult beverages. Now you're paying for it with aches and pains in what seems like every fiber of your body -- especially in the area of those brain cells. Despite aspirin and a wealth of home remedies, most are not nearly as good as their advocates claim. However, there are certain measures you can take that may speed up the dissipation of alcohol from your system and ease the overall negative effects it may have.

Here are some "don'ts." If your stomach is upset, aspirin isn't a good idea because it's rough on your stomach lining, especially when combined with another liner destroyer, alcohol. There's some evidence that vitamins like B6 may help prevent or ease hangovers when taken before you start drinking, but it's questionable whether any over-the-counter drug or vitamin actually helps much afterwards. The "hair of the dog" approach -- having another shot of what you drank the night before -- doesn't work either. Some medical experts warn that it may be a possible first step toward alcohol dependency. Moreover, eating food before imbibing in alcohol may help slow the rate of alcohol absorption and thus reduce the chances of a hangover, but it won't help after the alcohol has been absorbed. After the fact, it actually prolongs your hangover because it extends the amount of time the alcohol stays in your system.

Here are some "do's". It's hardly a panacea but a little toast with honey may help speed up recovery from a hangover. That's because the honey contains a sugar known as fructose, which helps alcohol burn off faster within the body. Drinks with electrolytes like Gatorade may help replace those minerals lost to your body from dehydration brought on by alcohol. If your stomach is upset from alcohol or for that matter, any other cause, the best thing you can do is give it a rest for a few days. Stay away from drugs and foods that can irritate it, such as aspirin; carbonated and caffeinated, alcoholic or sugary beverages. Instead eat bland, easily-digested foods like applesauce, toast, boiled eggs, baked or mashed potatoes, bananas, rice, oatmeal and boiled chicken or turkey. Milk may also help ease a jumpy stomach while providing nutrients. It may be too late for this year's

round of parties, but it's worth remembering for the next time you imbibe that the best remedy for a hangover is not to have one. Eat a good meal prior to partying to slow your body's absorption of alcohol. During the party, try mixed drinks containing fruit or vegetable juices, and sip them slowly. Again, the fructose in the juice will help your body burn off the alcohol faster. Finally, remember to moderate your drinking. To provide a little motivation, think about the double whammy effect that fatty food and alcohol have on your body. Fat contains nine calories per gram; more than twice the calories of a gram of protein or carbohydrate. Alcohol contains seven calories per gram. Combine the two and you are packing on fat. In addition, alcohol causes you to eat even more than you normally would because it interferes with the body's mechanism for regulating appetite. It's a lose-lose situation. Here's a win-win situation; a high carbohydrate, non-alcoholic drink that's packed with flavor and has no fat whatsoever.

### **Curried Tomato-Celery Cocktail**

#### **Ingredients:**

1 46-ounce can of tomato juice  
1 teaspoon curry powder  
3 stalks celery, chopped  
Dash of Tabasco

#### **Preparation:**

Combine 2 cups tomato juice with celery, and curry powder in blender. Blend until smooth. Add remaining tomato juice and Tabasco and heat to boiling. Serve hot or chilled over ice. Serves six

**Per Serving:** Calories: 44, Fat: 0 grams, Fiber: 3 grams, Sodium: 864 grams

## Rugby Community Day

The Rugby Volunteer Fire & Rescue hosted their annual Thanksgiving dinner on Saturday November 22. It was very well attended, with over 120 meals served. The Fire & Rescue donated ham and turkey for the main course and people brought a wide variety of side dishes and desserts as part of the potluck social.



The event was canceled the last four years due to Covid and the hurricane, but with the major remodel that has taken place over the last several months, people were able to appreciate the dramatic new look of the meeting room and kitchen. Rugby

Fire & Rescue would like to continue the remodel by extending it to where the emergency vehicles are kept.

Besides a great meal, guests were treated to live music by the Middlefork Bluegrass and Gospel band. The pictures show three young singers who also volunteered to sing: Destiny Loggins, Tenley Anders, and Perry Anders.

In addition, the winning raffle tickets were drawn at the end of the dinner. The grand prize winner, Dustin Cox, won a Henry Golden Boy 44 magnum rifle and second place won a handmade hunting knife that was donated by Brian Sales. It's estimated that the event raised about \$1,500 after expenses. The funds will be used to help fund ongoing operations and renovations.



The department would like to say thanks to all the community members who helped make the Thanksgiving celebration a success either by prepping and cooking, coordinating the event, serving food, and cleaning up afterwards.

## Whitetop Memory Tree

The 2025 Whitetop Community Center Memory Lights Tree was a huge success. We had 500 lights donated in memory of and honor of loved ones. The tree lighting was held on November 22 and will remain on until January 1, 2026. The money from this fundraiser helps us keep the Whitetop Community Center open for the community members to use and enjoy. We would like to thank everyone that participated.



## News From Grayson County

- A rabies clinic was held on November 1st and about 70 animals were vaccinated. This is an annual event that was conducted free of charge.
- The 1908 Courthouse has been undergoing renovations with the help of grant funds. The new flooring and painting should be completed by January 2026.
- A meeting with VDOT was held at the Whitetop Community Center on October 14th to discuss a request to resume maintenance of a .75-mile section of roadway on Pond Mountain Rd that has not been maintained for over thirty years. VDOT has agreed to resume maintenance of that section.
- There is a proposal for a new playground in Troutdale. The county is working to acquire funding for the project.
- The county (as of December 9th) had 60 open residential building permits and 24 open commercial permits. With help from Galax, an average of 10-12 inspections have been conducted per day. None of the commercial permits were for sites served by the Whitetop Gazette.

## Western Grayson Cellular Service Project

Construction for the first two cell towers has been scheduled. The Quillens Ridge tower work began on December 17, 2025, and should be completed and operational by March 1st. This tower will provide 5G wireless and cellular service to the Volney, Rugby, and western part of the Mouth of Wilson communities. Construction on the Whitetop tower on Old Park Road will begin

the second week of January 2026 and is scheduled to be completed and operational on or before March 31st. Like the tower on Quillens Ridge, this tower will provide 5G wireless internet and cell services for the Whitetop community. It is projected that construction on the third tower, to be located on Walnut Knob, will begin on March 1st and should take 65 days to complete.

## Little Winter Soldiers

*By Blue Ridge Discovery Center*

Many birds migrate to warmer areas during winter to escape frigid temperatures and a lack of readily available food, but some brave the cold and stay in their habitats year-round. What does it take to survive such an unforgiving time of year? The Black-Capped Chickadee (*Poecile atricapillus*) has a couple of tricks up its wing that make it a true little winter soldier!

Many people are familiar with the black-capped chickadee's close relative, the Carolina Chickadee (*Poecile carolinensis*), which is a common sight at bird feeders across the Blue Ridge.

One of the most distinguishing characteristics of the black-capped chickadee is its namesake black "cap" of feathers. This cap is accompanied by a black bib around the throat and white patches on the cheeks. The belly is white with buff-colored sides, and the back, wings, and tail are all a light gray color. Black-capped chickadees are very small birds; on average, they are only four to five inches in length with a six to eight inch wingspan.

With an incredibly fast metabolism, it is important for black-capped chickadees to have readily available food in order to survive

the winter. To do this, black-capped chickadees will create numerous seed caches across their territory during the late summer and fall. These caches can be stored in leaf litter, behind loose bark, or in small knotholes in trees. Most are able to remember the location of their caches for up to 28 days.

The black-capped chickadee has another neat adaptation to survive winter: a combination of torpor and avian shivering. During the night when temperatures drop, it is hard for these birds to maintain their fast metabolism and high body temperature to fight the cold. To save energy that they cannot afford to waste, these birds will enter a state of torpor, or reduced activity that lowers the metabolic rate and body temperature of an organism.

Most animals that enter a state of torpor do it for extended periods of time (think: bears and raccoons). Instead, black-capped chickadees enter a state of torpor daily during the cold months to survive each night. Their normal body temperature of around 107 degrees Fahrenheit drops up to 20 degrees colder. Torpor is paired with a behavior known as avian shivering, when a bird flexes its chest muscles to warm itself.

In the time before they wake up in the morning, black-capped chickadees are continuously shivering to warm themselves back up to their normal body temperature so that they are ready to be active and search for food for the day ahead. This level of torpor is not common in most bird species, making these birds much more suited to cold environments than many other species.

So the next time that you happen to see one of these little birds, remember that they are fierce winter survivalists capable of overcoming whatever winter throws at them!

## Mount Rogers Winter Naturalist Rally

Join us for the Mount Rogers Winter Naturalist Rally on February 21, 2026!

Even in the dead of winter, life abounds. Winter is the perfect time of year to observe resident birds, mammals, geological features, and other seasonal phenomena. We'll kick off this one-day rally with keynote speaker Kathleen Black, a district biologist with the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources. Black's talk will focus on human-wildlife conflicts, including recommendations for preventing and addressing them.

Following the keynote speaker, we'll have three sessions of two-hour programs, including freshwater mussels, cordage with Doug Meyer, geology, winter tree identification, vernal pools, camera trapping, wildlife tracks and signs, and pottery with local artist Debbie Yates.

Rally tickets are available for purchase on our website. Bundle up and come explore a winter wonderland with us!

## Grayson County Tourism Event

Grayson County Tourism & Legends of Grayson Old-Time Celebration invite you to the Breakin' Up January Jam with Brian Grim & Friends on January 31, 2026 at the Elk Creek Station. Free, community old-time jam led by the legends from 7 PM until 10 PM. Stay tuned for more information on upcoming 2026 events, jams, and festivals in Grayson County. Here is the event link: <https://www.graysoncountyva.com/event/breakin-up-january-jam-with-brian-grim-friends/> If you or your organization has an event scheduled for 2026, add it to the Grayson County Calendar! Fill out the form on our website, [www.graysoncountyva.com/submit-your-event](https://www.graysoncountyva.com/submit-your-event).

## Hurricane Helene Disaster Recovery Updates

Long-term recovery from the impacts of Hurricane Helene remains strong in Southwest Virginia. United Way of Southwest Virginia has recently received two new disaster recovery grants that have enabled us to continue the recovery efforts as well as add a new Disaster Recovery Specialist to the New River Valley region.

Our work continues to be focused on home repairs, plus bridges, driveways and landscape damages. There is also the recently established Virginia Disaster Assistance Fund active for citizens who experienced damages from Hurricane Helene.



If you are looking for assistance from impacts of Hurricane Helene, contact our United Recovery Force at 276-268-2504.

-Dan Rice  
Disaster Recovery Coordinator  
United Way of Southwest Virginia

## Mount Rogers Fire and Rescue Helipad Project

The new medivac helipad in Whitetop is nearing completion. The last remaining item is the erection of the lighted wind cone. This device provides valuable information to pilots as they attempt to land on the pad. Once this is completed, AEP will provide electric service to the pad, and the landing lights will be activated. Pictured are Dan Fleming (kneeling) and Dean Blevins performing the electrical work.



## Sounds of Skyline Song Competition

*Sponsored by Skyline National Bank*

Each year, the Sounds of Skyline Song Competition brings together talented songwriters from across our communities. Thank you to everyone who has entered, voted, and supported local music. We're proud of where we come from and we're proud of the music that comes from here, too.

The Sounds of Skyline Song Competition is a series celebrating the voices and stories of our region. Solo artists submit their original songs for a chance to record in Nashville with professional musicians. Winners are also invited to perform at community events Skyline sponsors, such as FloydFest and Bristol Rhythm & Roots, and are featured on local news and radio. It's our way of giving back to the artists who make this community sing.

Meet our past winners.



*Chris Link (left) and Alice Hobbs (right)*

Chris Link, from Floyd, has been writing songs for years and recently stepped back into the spotlight with his band, Deer Run Drifters. His song "Family Name" was inspired by his own family. His mother encouraged him to submit it to Sounds of Skyline 2025, and we're all glad she did. Chris shared the moving piece with the crowd at FloydFest, closing his set to an emotional response.

Alice Hobbs, a gospel singer from Woodlawn, Virginia, is a familiar voice in her church community. You can hear her blues and gospel history in the original song she entered for Sounds of Skyline 2025. With a clear vision for its sound, Alice worked with a collaborator on the accompaniment,

bringing her idea to life in a way that feels both personal and powerful.

The Sounds of Skyline will continue in 2026 with advertising beginning in January. In February, artists will be invited to submit their songs with voting to begin in March and winners to be announced in April.

Special Thanks to Skyline National Bank for their community support, including donations to the Whitetop Gazette.

## **Yoga at the Goodwill Grange**

*By Jean Shortall-Roznik*

What does yoga and animal husbandry have in common? At first glance, not much. However, both are ancient practices. Domestication of animals predates crop cultivation, while yoga also originated thousands of years ago. One practice teaches how best to care for our livestock, while the other teaches how best to care for our body and spirit. And, as it happens, both these traditions fall under the umbrella of services provided by our local Goodwill Grange.

The first time I showed up for yoga class at the Grange I was the only participant. Not being familiar with the practice or the most flexible of beings I was apprehensive, but teacher Martha Magroski immediately put me at ease. It was during the Covid years and the class took place outside. It was an idyllic setting. As Martha guided me through various poses I was charmed when the cattle grazing in the adjoining field came to the fence to low encouragement. It was a unique intersection of time, place and traditions and I was hooked.

Since then, I've tried to attend yoga class as often as I can. Martha taught until she was



diagnosed with cancer in 2022. I was struck by the poise with which Martha stood and led us until shortly before her death at age 80. Yoga calls for us to root down—plant our feet firmly on the earth—and years of practice left Martha with a balance, posture and spirit that belied her years.

For a time, there was no yoga at the Grange and my stiffening joints felt the absence. Then good fortune struck when yoga instructor and fascial stretch therapist Iva Unterwiser and her husband, Paul, moved to the area. After settling in, Iva agreed to teach a class. I happily retrieved my mat from the closet and once again set off for the Grange on the path of flexibility, rootedness, and peaceful connection. Iva started teaching in early 2023 and her Tuesday 9 AM class now has a permanent spot on my calendar.

I make it to class most Tuesdays, and when I do, I'm reminded of how much I receive beyond exercise. Our group of mostly women (we do have occasional male attendees) has forged a bond over tight muscles, bad knees, and the flow of life events. Iva greets us with a hug and checks in to see how we're feeling, mind and body. Once the talking and catching up settles we take to our mats, quiet ourselves and work on poses fellow yoga practitioners have repeated down the centuries. And—if we're lucky—the cattle in the field outside sense what we're up to and meander close to the building to bellow their approval.

Class time: Tuesdays at 9 AM at the Goodwill Grange, Troutdale

For more information contact Iva Unterwiser at **[stretchwithiva@gmail.com](mailto:stretchwithiva@gmail.com)**

## Grayson County's Sheriff's Office

GCSO has partnered with Senior Citizens & the Attorney General's Office to officially Charter a Triad Organization to educate seniors on crime prevention & how to avoid being scammed.

GCSO hosted a joint Triad meeting with nearly 100 Senior Citizens from across the county. The Whitetop District Three Seniors along with the Fries Seniors, traveled to the Independence VFW for a joint meeting with the Independence Seniors.

Olivia Bailey of the Virginia Attorney General's office was on hand to share information about crime prevention resources available through their office in Richmond and throughout the state.

Sheriff Richard Vaughan said he was very grateful for the great work District Three is doing for Senior Citizens throughout the county. Vaughan commended Renny Gambrill of Whitetop and Pat Toille of Independence for their outstanding support with the Triad partnership.



*From left - Renny Gambrill, Rhiannon Powers, Sheriff Richard Vaughan, Pat Tolley, Olivia Bailey*



District Three Seniors meet every Tuesday at 10:00 at the Independence VFW, every Wednesday at the Fries Recreation Center at 9:00 AM, and every Thursday at 10am at the Whitetop Community Center. GCSO is on-hand the second Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of each month to educate Seniors on current scams and crime prevention. District Three always provides a delicious meal. The only requirement to attend is that you must be at least 60 years of age.

### **Dreams of Spring Recipe: Smoked Trout and Ramps**

*Submitted by Maria Shutters from the multi-year Whitetop Mountain Ramp Champ.*

#### **Ingredients:**

12 trout filets.  
2/3 cup salt  
1 1/3 cup brown sugar  
10 bay leaves  
10 cloves  
1/2 teaspoon peppercorns  
1/2 teaspoon coriander seed  
3 whole ramps (fresh, frozen or dried)

#### **Preparation:**

Put all spices and ramps in a food processor and process until it is free of chunks. Place trout filets in a dish, skin side down and cover in seasoning. Lightly rub seasoning in. Place in refrigerator for 2 hours. Remove from fridge and rinse under cold running water to remove excess salt. Smoke with applewood at 150 degrees for 2-3 hours, or until flaky but still moist.

### ***The Neighborly Comes to Southwest Virginia***

A new, small newsroom opened in October 2025 to serve Grayson, Carroll, and Galax. Sara June Nottestad is a freelance reporter for national, rural-lens news magazines and she saw a need in the area to add a local media hub for area residents.



Nottestad (pronounced Not-es-tad) is from Winneshiek County, Iowa and Koochiching County, Minnesota. She knows what happens when rural communities slim down their newsrooms or worse, close their doors. With her background in writing, and as a member of the National Writer's Union, she began researching opportunities to establish a local publication.

Nottestad knew she didn't want to compete with existing print newspapers. Then one day while visiting with Shannon Watkins, reporter for the Galax Gazette, she hit upon an idea. Watkins shared that during consolidation at the newspaper, the human interest section had been cut. This opened a door to supplement local print papers.

A priority in Nottestad's publishing is to push back against urban-centric media representations of rural people and communities. It's important to her to publish sensitive stories about rural and small town places. She's also concerned about the impact social media has made in rural America. Having grown up in farm country

during a time that valued ideological restraint and good manners, her work today advocates for a restoration of this earlier culture in civic spaces.

Her efforts to build bridges across the divide and cover sensitive reporting in rural places came together in Southwest Virginia through her new publication called The Neighborly. Located at [www.swvacountry.com](http://www.swvacountry.com), The Neighborly's motto is "News without the Noise". Nottestad wants to put a focus on mutual respect, belonging, and political & ideological restraint. She also wants to add some good, old fashioned fun to local stories that need a spotlight.

The Neighborly is free and subscribers can sign up for free to get a weekly update or two. It's a fun way to keep in touch with what's happening all the way from Grayson's border with North Carolina to Carroll's Northern rim.

Independent newsrooms like **Whitetop Gazette** and **The Neighborly** need engagement from local audiences in order to be successful. Enjoy reading our articles and consider sending us notices with your business and community updates. Offer to contribute your own reporting on an event or activity you work closely with. Consider buying advertising space for your business or make a donation as a sponsor to help us cover costs for keeping your news local, free, and independent.

## Whitetop Gazette

### Special Thanks & A Personal Note from Gary Rascoe, Editor

My sincere thanks for the people that I've heard from who have expressed their appreciation for this publication. It provides the motivation to continue this work. And thanks to the Blue Ridge Discovery Center for placing an issue in their time capsule!

A special thanks to the Wellspring Foundation of Southwest, VA. Their grant money has provided, by far, the majority of the funding necessary to continue the print cost and home delivery.

Also, I'm extremely grateful to an individual, who wishes to remain anonymous, who donated \$2,000 to help with the continued publication of the Gazette.

Another individual, who also prefers to remain anonymous, spends numerous hours each quarter to put together the final layout, even though she no longer lives in the area. She refuses to take any payment for her services.

Also, thanks to all of those who contributed or edited articles and a special thanks to another volunteer, Sue Revels for her editing contributions.

To help enable the continued funding of the Whitetop Gazette, one reader suggested that people may be interested in posting notes about family remembrances, including birthdays, graduations, anniversaries, and celebrations of life for those who have passed. Please reach out if you would like to participate.

Thanks, Gary Rascoe

## 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.

The Whitetop Gazette

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