



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

News From Mount Rogers Fire & Rescue Squad

By Ralph Norris

The fire department began the year with festival preparations and completed helicopter pad training in March. Members practiced lighting the pad and received guidance from the helicopter crew. Volunteers are needed for driving, EMS, firefighting, and support roles. **A burn ban is in effect:** No burning before 4 p.m., monitor all fires, add no materials after midnight, and check wind and dryness beforehand.

Helicopter Pad Update

By Ralph Norris

On March 3, 2026, at 14:30, Medflight did a practice run. The landing and takeoff went flawlessly and Medflight was very pleased with the practice run. The pad is designed to seamlessly accommodate the newer helicopter models which are twice as large as previous versions without requiring modifications or adjustments.

If you are coming into the community center and you see a helicopter coming in and/or the green lights on the landing zone, please

stop and turn off all of your lights until they land. Once the helicopters are on the ground you can resume your normal driving but please do not shine your headlights or parking lights at the helicopter. Also, please maintain a safe distance of at least 100 feet away and follow directions from the responders on the scene. We would like to extend a big thank you to The Wellspring Foundation for the grant to get this landing pad built.

Cell Phone Update

By Tom Revels

Construction on the access road to the **Whitetop Tower** began in March with the tower completion scheduled for the end of April, pending weather conditions. Construction on the **Quillen's Ridge** tower has begun. Site work and access road development is underway with completion of the work scheduled for April 15th, weather dependent. The site on **Walnut Knob** is still in the permitting stage. Additional evaluations are underway led by the Federal Interior Department. It is expected that this review will be completed by June 1st and construction will begin shortly thereafter.

Remembering Cornetta Price Through the Voices of Those She Touched

The true measure of a person's life is often found in the memories others carry. For many who knew Cornetta Price, those memories are filled with compassion, dedication, humor, and an unwavering willingness to help anyone in need. Through the words of three individuals who experienced her kindness firsthand, a portrait emerges of a woman whose care extended far beyond her professional duties.

One colleague remembers Cornetta as someone whose commitment to her patients never ended when the workday was over. According to her coworker, "All of our patients loved her." People frequently called Cornetta seeking guidance about illnesses and health concerns, trusting her knowledge and her heart. Even after long and exhausting days, she would sometimes deliver medicine to people who might not otherwise be able to get it.

Their work often extended beyond regular office hours. The two occasionally partnered with home health services in the evenings and on Saturdays, making visits to patients who needed extra care. They visited Hazle Pennington's home to check the vitals of her bedridden mother and help bathe her. They also traveled to Edna Eagle's home to care for her mother as well.

Despite the demanding schedule, Cornetta had a way of bringing warmth and comfort to those around her, including her coworkers. In the early days at their office, there wasn't even a proper kitchen. Instead, they had one large electric skillet. Cornetta would cook meals for the team



during late nights, including a memorable tuna and her macaroni and cheese dish that became a favorite among the staff. "George loved that," colleague recalled with a smile.

Her dedication to patient care also extended into the community. Cornetta often accompanied dentist Dr. Tebbenkamp on house calls, ensuring that people who could not travel still received the care they needed. For those who worked alongside her, her compassion and work ethic set a powerful example.

Another individual described Cornetta's impact in deeply personal terms. "Cornetta Price was a wonderful lady. She meant a lot to me," the individual shared. "She was always there for me anytime, day or night. She was someone I could always count on for advice when I needed it."

To this person, Cornetta's role grew even more significant after the loss of her own mother. "She was always like a mom to me, especially after my mom passed," she explained. Cornetta became not just a trusted advisor, but a mentor, a dear friend, and a second mother. Her presence provided guidance and comfort, leaving a lasting mark that words can scarcely capture.

A third individual reflected on several moments that illustrated Cornetta’s caring nature and sense of humor. One memory dates back to childhood illness. After contracting chicken pox and temporarily losing the ability to walk, the individual was taken to see Dr. Gable. A shot was ordered as part of the treatment. Cornetta gently laid the young patient on a couch in the lounge and administered the injection. Though the moment was startling at the time, it remains a vivid memory of her hands-on care.

Years later, Cornetta was present for another life milestone. When the individual went to the doctor’s office for a pregnancy test, both Dr. Gable and Cornetta delivered the news together that the test was positive. When asked if nausea had begun yet, the patient replied no. Cornetta quickly joked, “That comes when they turn 18,” sending the three of them into laughter and easing the nerves of the moment.

But Cornetta’s support was perhaps felt most strongly during times of sorrow. That same pregnancy ended in heartbreak at 34 weeks with a stillborn child. During the difficult days that followed, the grieving mother wanted a small frame for the baby’s picture. Cornetta and her daughter searched from place to place until they found one at the Jewel Shop. The frame, given with love, still holds the child’s photograph today—a lasting reminder of compassion shown during one of life’s most painful moments.

Reflecting on those experiences, the individual summed up Cornetta’s character simply: going out of her way for people is what made her so special. She had a way of making everyone feel welcome, no matter where they were or what they were facing.

Through these memories, a consistent theme emerges. Cornetta Price was more than a healthcare worker or a community member. She was someone who showed up—late at night, during difficult times, and in everyday moments when kindness mattered most.

Her generosity, humor, and dedication touched countless lives, and the love she gave continues to live on in the people and families who carry her memory forward.

Whitetop Community Center

By Ralph Norris & Gary Rascoe

The Whitetop Community Center Board of Directors has demonstrated significant engagement throughout the community this year. We extend our gratitude to Tom Revels for his service as Board President; he retired from this position earlier in the year.

During our annual elections, two new board members were elected, and all officer positions were filled. Please join us in welcoming and supporting the following individuals: Ralph Norris (new President), Gary Rascoe (new Vice President), Lisa Blevins (Financial Advisor), Joey Sells (Treasurer), Marlena Phillips (Secretary), Ronnie Richardson, Beryl Greer, Tia Young, Michael Hensley, and Janie (Edith) Powers. If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to one of the board members.

Several fundraising events are scheduled to support ongoing maintenance and necessary repairs for the community center. We started the year with our bingo games and in March, we held a 50/50 raffle following the Maple Festival. On April 11, at 6 p.m., we invite you to participate in Basket Bingo; tickets are \$25 for two cards, with additional cards available for \$5 each.

Prizes are valued at a minimum of \$25 per basket and most are worth much more.

On May 30, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., we are planning a **Family Fun Day** featuring a nine-hole putt-putt event. Entry is \$3 for children, \$5 for adults, or \$10 per individual for unlimited plays. Food trucks and vendors will be present for this family-friendly event.

Starting in April we will begin to sell tickets for a gun raffle. The grand prize will be a Weatherbee Vanguard Synthetic Compact 243 Win rifle. It features stock spacers, which are included. The second-place prize is a David Walton handmade knife donated by Chris Shumate of the Railroad Market and Café. The third-place prize will be a gift certificate donated by Ralph Norris. Tickets are \$5 each or five for \$20. The drawing will be held on October 4th at 4:00pm at the Molasses festival.

On May 17, at the **Ramp Festival**, there will be a silent auction with three items that you can bid on. The bids will be visible so you can decide whether or not to bid higher if someone outbids you. The items will be on display at the Community Club booth where T-Shirts will also be available for sale. The three items will be a Bowflex home gym, a wreath made by Julie Norris, and a piece of artwork by local artist, Louise (Lou) Rascoe.

For all of the great cooks in the Whitetop area, we would like to collect recipes that you're willing to share. We plan to put together a recipe book for sale in the future. Recipes can be dropped off at the community center or given to one of the board members. If you happen to have a typed version, you can email it (them) to either Tia Young at tiajade1213@gmail.com or Gary Rascoe at Gary.Rascoe@gmail.com.

We have other activities in mind that will be announced as we have more information.

All proceeds will support the preservation and ongoing maintenance of the Whitetop Community Center. In light of increased expenses for maintenance, utilities, and repairs, we encourage your participation to help address these rising costs and ensure that the Community Center continues grow and to serve our community.

Tourism News from Grayson County

By Christian Cooke

The **Ag & Art Tour** takes place on Saturday, September 12, 2026, from 10 AM to 4 PM. A free tribute concert honoring Elk Creek native fiddler Otis Burris will be held on Sunday, September 13, hosted by Legends of Grayson Old-Time Celebration. Artisans are invited to set up during Saturday's tour at their own studios or galleries, or at participating farms throughout Grayson County. Farmers are invited to open their gates to visitors interested in learning about the deeply rooted agrarian culture that defines life here in Grayson.

The tour encourages visitors to get out and explore, meet artists, purchase artwork, experience a taste of Appalachian farm life, and plan to come back for more. It's a long weekend road trip full of discovery that bridges the gap between locals and tourists and invites everyone to come together to enjoy Grayson County's proud Appalachian heritage.

We are so excited to celebrate the fifth year of this unique art and agriculture tour through our beautiful region. The adventure would be nothing without our dedicated participants: the artisans, farmers, and musicians who come together to

demonstrate their talents, farms, and tradition-honed craftsmanship. Thank you to all who have joined the adventure in the past and welcome to the new folks we hope to see join us this year!

Over the last five years the Ag & Art Adventure has continually evolved, reflecting the needs and feedback of our community and the visitors who so enjoy the rare glimpse at life in Grayson County offered by the tour. We will continue to evolve this year as we celebrate our 5th anniversary in conjunction with the 250th anniversary of Independence Day.

The Grayson County Tourism Department has received a special events grant of \$5,000 from the Virginia Tourism Corporation in partnership with the VA250 Commission to bolster our marketing budget for this year's Adventure. We intend to weave the story of American Independence into the fabric of the Ag & Art Adventure to commemorate the 250th and Grayson County's unique role in that shared history.

We invite you to join this year's very special tour in the hope that we can expand on years' past and open the gates to new discoveries here in Grayson for our ever-growing cadre of visitors.

Applications for artisans and farms are now open on our website, linked below. You can request a paper copy if you prefer—just let me know and I will send one to you. We require participants to pay a \$100 fee to hold your place and ensure full participation, half of which will be refunded after the tour. Participants who do not sell wares during the tour will be refunded the full fee. Scholarships are available on a case-by-case basis. Please reach out to me or Tracy

Cornett to learn more about fee waivers. We want everyone to be able to participate.

As a reminder, participation in the Ag & Art Adventure is only open to residents of Grayson County, Virginia, or artisans who work in the county.

2026 Ag & Art Farm Participant Form | Visit Grayson County Virginia

<https://www.graysoncountyva.com/2026-ag-art-farm-participant-form/>

2026 Artisan Application for the Ag & Art Adventure | Visit Grayson County Virginia

<https://www.graysoncountyva.com/2026-artisan-application-for-the-ag-art-adventure/>

Participation fees can be sent to: Grayson County Tourism, PO Box 336, Independence, VA 24348. Applications will close on April 14, 2026. Ag & Art participants will enjoy targeted, paid marketing by Grayson County Tourism including: a full bio on our website; social media marketing on our Facebook & pages; print marketing materials; print and digital advertising in major publications; and a video spotlight posted to our YouTube page.

We can't wait to draw our map for this year's tour so that we can celebrate each and every one of our wonderful artisans and farms here in Grayson County. We encourage you to spread the word to your friends and neighbors who might be interested in joining the Adventure!

Also, a free tribute concert honoring Elk Creek native fiddler Otis Burriss will be held on Sunday, September 13, hosted by Legends of Grayson Old-Time Celebration.

Please don't hesitate to call with any questions.

Christian Cooke, Grayson County Tourism
Office: 276-773-8002, Cell: 276-768-0721
www.graysoncountyva.com

Whitetop Public Library

The library is planning an exciting Summer Reading Program for Kids and Adults. Here is a schedule of events that we have planned so far:

6/2 Screen Printing from 1-3

Bring a shirt to get this year's Logo

6/9 Build-a-dino friend stuffed animal activity @ 2:00 this is limited to 15 kids ages 3-17

6/25 John Alexander walking stick @ 4:00-5:30

7/9 Dino painting w/ Tesse @ 2:00-4:00 Limit 12

7/10 Shana Banana singing and puppet show for Kids @ 5:00

7/14 Oyster Pearl Pendants @ 2:00 Limit 15 kids will dig out their own pearl and then choose a pendant to put it in creating a one-of-a-kind necklace to take home

7/17 DARIN HANDY! @ 6:00

7/25 Kids Cave painting w/ Megan @ 11-1 ages 3-17 Limit 12

7/28 Whitetop Finale. Gemstone and Fossil Digging with a Hot Dog lunch provided by the friends of the library.

Rugby Volunteer Fire & Rescue

The annual Children's fishing tournament, which is sponsored by the Rugby Volunteer and Rescue Squad, will be held on May 2nd. It is open to children ages 15 and under. If interested, meet up at the Volney Baptist church by 9:30 to register. After registration, the rules will be read and then the

tournament will officially begin. Last year saw some large trout caught and the winners were twins, Troy and Hunter Finely with Troy winning first place. Both had their picture in the Gazette along with their catch. Since Troy and Hunter, both known as good fishermen, have reached the age where they can no longer enter this contest, it leaves room for other boys and girls to capture the winning fish! Refreshments will be served. There is no fee to enter the tournament, but donations will be accepted to help cover the cost of the food. Good luck to all who enter!

50-year Celebration!

On June 20, the Rugby Volunteer Fire and Rescue Squad would like to invite all community members to their 50-year anniversary celebration! It will be held at the newly renovated firehouse and there will be refreshments, games, and door prizes. This is a great opportunity to visit with your neighbors. After a very successful Rugby Community Thanksgiving Meal last November, we expect an even larger turnout. This event will be catered, so it isn't necessary to bring a dish. Instead, bring your appetite, come hungry and if you would like to bring a dessert, that would be fine. The celebration will start at noon, and food will be available at about 2:00.

Friends of Grayson Highlands State Park

The friends had their monthly meeting March 9, 2026. Many projects are coming up in the next couple of months. The park is going through renovations in the campground and visitors center. This has created a need for volunteers to assist park staff or friend members to help with projects that benefit the park and its visitors.

On March 28th there will be a workday from 8:00am to 3:00pm at the campground. Students from Oak Hill Academy will be helping that day. Additional volunteers are welcome; just bring a shovel, rake, and gloves!

Additional projects coming up are landscaping the gardens at the visitor center, cleaning out trails, pruning, and brush removal.

April 22nd will be the High-Country Cleanup Day from 9:00am to 3:00pm. This is an annual multi-organization project to improve the trails in the high country. Everyone is welcome to join.

For more information, please visit https://www.graysoncountyva.com/event/_trashed-2/

Friends of Grayson Highlands State Park is a volunteer organization that works in conjunction with park staff to accomplish various projects in the park. There is a \$10.00 annual membership fee. The money raised by the Friends has been used to purchase a new swing set for the campground, memorial benches for park employees that have passed away, appreciation lunches for park staff and many other park needs.

The Friends meet on the second Monday of each month at 6:00 pm. Our next scheduled meeting is April 13th. Currently we are meeting at Rugby Fire and Rescue Squad.

Please join us and be a part of helping make Grayson Highlands State Park a welcoming place!

Grayson Highlands General Store

By Jef and Paula Biehler

In the rolling mountains of Southwest Virginia, the Grayson Highlands General Store has become more than just a place to pick up supplies—it's a welcoming stop where neighbors meet and visitors feel at home. At the heart of the store are its owners, Jefry Biehler and Paula Biehler, whose journey to Grayson County, Virginia began many miles away.

Both originally from Oklahoma, Jefry and Paula first met while attending Oklahoma Christian College. During their college years, Paula pursued a degree in Medical Technology while Jefry studied biology, laying the academic foundation for the careers that would follow. Their shared values, faith, and commitment to helping others brought them together, and in 1982 they were married. That partnership would guide them through decades of professional work, family life, and eventually a new adventure in the mountains of Virginia.



After college, Dr. Biehler went on to medical training and began a long and meaningful career in pediatric emergency medicine. For three decades, he worked in the emergency room at Miami Children's Hospital, caring for countless children and families during some of their most difficult moments. During his career, he also became involved in the important field of child abuse and neglect, helping identify and care for vulnerable children who needed protection as well as medical treatment. This work required both clinical skill and compassion, and it reflected his deep commitment to advocating for the safety and well-being of children.

After 30 years in medicine, Jefry retired and the couple began thinking about a new chapter—one that would bring them closer to nature and to a slower pace of life. They found exactly what they were looking for in the beautiful mountains of Grayson County, Virginia. There, they embraced the opportunity to become part of a close-knit rural community.

Before the Biehlers took ownership, the store had long been a familiar landmark in the community and was previously owned and operated by the Osborn family. Many local residents remember the Osborns fondly and the important role the store played as a gathering place over the years. Jefry and Paula appreciate that history and see themselves as caretakers of a place that already held a special place in the hearts of many people in the area.

One of Jefry and Paula's goals in owning the store has been to return it to the friendly, welcoming spirit that longtime residents remember. A traditional country general store has always been more than a place to shop—it's a place where neighbors meet, stories are shared, and visitors get a taste of

local hospitality. Along with everyday groceries and supplies, the store also serves simple, satisfying food including hot and cold sandwiches, hamburgers, hot dogs, and ice cream—favorites for both locals and travelers exploring the nearby mountains. The Biehlers have worked to make the store a place where everyone feels comfortable stopping in, whether they need supplies, a quick meal, or simply a few minutes of conversation.

That spirit of community comes alive on Thursday evenings at the store. Every other Thursday night, the store hosts a community Rook card game where friends and neighbors gather for an evening of laughter, friendly competition, and fellowship. On alternating Thursdays, the store hosts an old-time country music jam featuring local musicians along with visiting guests who enjoy sharing traditional mountain music. Players of all skill levels are welcome to join in the music or simply sit back and listen.

Both events are open to everyone, and there is never a cover charge. Families, neighbors, and visitors alike are encouraged to come enjoy the fun. In keeping with the welcoming spirit of the store, all gatherings are completely family friendly and are meant to bring people together in the simple, joyful traditions that have long been part of life in Grayson County, Virginia.

Grayson Highlands General Store & Inn
4249 Highlands Parkway, Mouth of Wilson,
VA 24363, Ph: 276-579-4602

Please check the website for store hours
Email: paula@graysonhighlandsinn.com

Troutdale's First Family

By Ed Clayton

Troutdale is unique among the small communities in Grayson County – it is an incorporated municipality with a town council. Troutdale's roots trace back to Washington Greear's move from Big Meadows (now Grant) to what was to become Troutdale.

Eli Washington "Wash" Greear was born in 1836 in Big Meadows. He was the third child of ten born to Shadrach M. Greear Jr. and his second wife, Sarah Baker. When gold was discovered in California, Wash Greear was a teenager. Within a few years, he joined the hoard of adventurers and headed for the El Dorado, one of the centers of gold mining in California. Discouraged by lawlessness and murders in the mining camps, he returned home in 1857.

In 1859 he married Ludema Young of Edgewater, a community a few miles south of Big Meadows. She was born in 1838. Her parents' home still stands today. Initially Wash and Ludema lived on his parents' farm in Big Meadows; then built a log cabin in what was to become Troutdale. The cabin was on Locust Ridge, a spot that would later overlook the railroad and the train station in Troutdale. Wash and Ludema had nine children.

Wash Greear served as a bugler in the 8th Virginia Calvary during the Civil War. While he was away from home, Ludema and their children left the log cabin in Troutdale and lived with her in-laws in Big Meadows and with her parents at Edgewater.

After Wash came home from the war, he and his family lived with his parents on the farm at Big Meadows. Around 1870 Wash built a

home and store in Big Meadows on what is today Grange Hall Road. After living several years in Big Meadows, Wash made plans to move back to Troutdale. He first built a sawmill on Fox Creek and then, using lumber from the sawmill, built both a store and a house in Troutdale. His sons helped with the operation of the store. Family history relates that two of the sons slept in a back room of the store in order to prevent burglaries.



Eli Washington and Ludema Young Greear

Around 1882 Wash moved his family to the new house he had built in Troutdale, within sight of the spot where his earlier log cabin had been located. Wash held title to a 1200-acre tract on Fox Creek that included much of the future Town of Troutdale.

The Greear's new house in Troutdale was not only their home but also functioned as a bed



Wash & Ludema Greear's Troutdale Home

and breakfast. There were so many overnight visitors that Wash expanded the house to accommodate them. He had selected for his home and store, a spot on the busy route used by people traveling from locations in Grayson County, Virginia, and Ashe County, North Carolina, to Marion and Seven Mile Ford, Virginia, and back. Wash gained approval for a post office at Troutdale which was located in his store and he was appointed Postmaster in 1882.

Wash's children played key roles in the development of Troutdale. His son John became a member of the Virginia Senate and in 1906 guided through the Legislature the bill that granted a charter to the Town of Troutdale. Two other sons, Lee and Shadrack, served as members of Troutdale's first Town Council. Sons Lon and Shadrack became merchants in the new town. John and Lee became key developers of the new town, selling lots to families and businesses.

And so, through Wash Greear's vision and determination, Troutdale took root in the Virginia highlands. Wash Greear died in 1901; Ludema died in 1905. After Wash's death, Troutdale continued to grow with a railroad, more people, more stores, churches, and a bank.

LEARN MORE – For more history of Troutdale, read ***A History of Troutdale Virginia: Living In the Land of the Rhododendron, the Balsam Tree, and the Mountain Trout***. By Ed Clayton. Available at the Troutdale Depot.

Trivia Question

Does anyone know when or why 'White Top' was changed to one word, Whitetop? If so, please email me at **Gary.Rascoe@gmail.com**. Thanks!

HURRICANE HELENE DISASTER RECOVERY UPDATES

By Dan Rice, Disaster Recovery Coordinator, United Way of Southwest Virginia

Long-term recovery from the impacts of Hurricane Helene remains strong in Southwest Virginia. Our work continues to be focused on home repairs, plus bridges, driveways and landscape damage. There is also the recently established Virginia Disaster Assistance Fund active for citizens who experienced damage from Hurricane Helene.

We are happy to announce our Community Preparedness Planning which will focus on providing citizens with the information and know-how to make you and your home ready if disaster strikes. These will be hosted in localities across Southwest Virginia through summer of 2026. For more information, follow us on social media, or reach out to our United Recovery Force at the number below.

If you are looking for assistance with the impact of Hurricane Helene, contact our **United Recovery Force at 276-268-2504**.

The Citizen Recovery Program application can be found here:

<https://www.unitedwayswva.org/disaster-relief-efforts>

Healthy Living

By William J Scarpa Jr MD

Garlic's Health Benefits Are Fact Not Fiction. Remember this scene? The fair maiden lies helplessly in her bed asleep; hovering over her body is a large, fearsome bat. In seconds, the bat transforms into the dreaded Count. He approaches his victim,

ready to destroy the body and soul of yet another human -- then springs backward in terror. For there, hanging from the top of a bedpost is a sprig of garlic.

Garlic's fame as a vampire remedy may be the fiction of so many Grade B horror movies, but its powers to prevent and heal disease are not. The little bulb's medicinal powers were known in Biblical times. Egyptians fed it to their slaves to make them strong. Romans gave it to their soldiers to make them both strong and courageous. Perhaps inspired by the plant's strong, pungent aroma, people in India and China used it to ward off evil spirits. They also used it to cure all sorts of ills, including broken bones, tuberculosis, bronchitis, and the common cold.

Garlic has always been shrouded by mystery and even today, nobody is sure just what curative and preventive powers it has and why. We know for example, that men in Greece, Italy and other Mediterranean countries eat large amounts of garlic and have a lower heart attack rate than in northern European countries, but we don't know why.

What modern research has shown is that garlic does indeed promote good health and it's particularly good for the blood system because it keeps our modern-day "Count Dracula" - LDL Cholesterol, or "Bad Cholesterol" - from clogging arteries and causing heart attacks.

A lot of evidence was finally put together when a hotel full of garlic lovers (We'll bet none else stayed in the hotel that week) got together at the First World Conference on Garlic in Washington, D.C., in July, 1990, to report on garlic's curative powers. There, physicians and medical researchers from

many nations backed up the plant's long suspected preventive and curative powers by identifying a wide range of health benefits. They reported that garlic lowers serum cholesterol, especially the "bad" cholesterol; it lowers blood pressure, improves circulation by reducing the "stickiness of the blood", helps arthritis sufferers, and most important, makes the immune system more effective.

Other evidence has since weighed in. A recent analysis of the best international research available, reported in *The Annals of Internal Medicine*, found that patients with high cholesterol levels who ate the equivalent of one half to one clove of garlic a day reduced their total cholesterol levels by nearly 10% (Cloves are the individual segments on a bulb of garlic).

Additional evidence is also mounting that garlic helps the immune system fight cancer. Laboratory studies have also shown that something in garlic reduces the incidence of some tumors and inactivates some cancer-causing chemicals. Garlic is one of the key foods that has been studied by the National Cancer Institute in an attempt to find out what food elements actually protect against cancer so that anti-cancer "designer foods" can be formulated.

Some evidence shows that garlic's rich supplies of trace minerals, germanium and selenium, are extremely important in normal immune function and that an unusual form of sulfur found in garlic, sulfhydryl amino acid, is also known to enhance immunity. We still don't know for sure why garlic works to prevent and cure disease, we only know that it does.

The verdict: eat as much garlic as you find palatable; and of course, as others around

you can tolerate. A cooking tip: Use fresh garlic. The powdered or salted variety loses flavor when it's processed; garlic salt may contain over 900 milligrams of sodium per teaspoon. Jars of chopped or crushed garlic preserved in oil, and tubes of oil-based garlic paste, add unnecessary fat calories. While freeze-dried versions of garlic, chips and instant minced, may be somewhat closer to fresh garlic, but why not use the real thing?

The recipe below includes a combination of two great cholesterol fighting foods, garlic and olive oil:

Spaghetti With Garlic and Olive Oil

This quick, easy pasta dish can be prepared in the time it takes to boil the spaghetti.

Ingredients:

2 tablespoons olive oil
 2 tablespoons of chopped or sliced "fresh" garlic
 2 tablespoons salt
 1 lb. spaghetti or linguine
 Freshly ground pepper
 2 tablespoons fresh chopped parsley

Preparation:

1. Boil spaghetti in water salted with 2 tablespoons until desired consistency is reached (about 10 minutes).
2. Sauté oil, garlic, and salt in a small saucepan over low heat.
3. Stir the oil, garlic and salt frequently; the garlic should be sauteed until it turns a golden color - do not overcook or garlic will taste bitter.

4. Drain the spaghetti, transfer to warm bowl, and add the olive oil and garlic sauce.
5. Add olive oil and garlic sauce.
6. Add pepper and fresh chopped parsley to each serving.

Serves four

Troutdale Trading Post

By Meigha Umbarger

Nestled along the scenic stretch of Troutdale Highway, the Troutdale Trading Post has quickly become a place where locals and visitors alike can slow down, browse, and feel at home. Located at 10973 Troutdale Highway, Troutdale, VA 24378, the shop officially opened its doors on September 20, 2025, marking the beginning of a new chapter for this tight-knit mountain community.

Owned and operated by Meigha Umbarger, the Troutdale Trading Post was born out of a love for Appalachian charm, storytelling, and the simple joy of finding something unexpected. What started as a dream has grown into a welcoming space filled with unique treasures, rustic finds, and plenty of personality.

Meigha runs the shop alongside her fiancé, John Mooney, and her sister, Briana Umbarger, making the Trading Post a true family affair. Together, they've created a space that reflects both their roots and their sense of humor—where every item seems to have a story and every visitor is treated like a neighbor.

The Troutdale Trading Post isn't just a place to shop; it's a gathering spot. Whether customers are stopping in to browse antiques, thrifted gems, local finds, or just to chat for a while, the atmosphere is relaxed,

friendly, and unmistakably Troutdale. The shop has already become known for its welcoming porch, its ever-changing inventory, and its lighthearted spirit that keeps folks coming back.

Since opening, the response from the community has been overwhelmingly positive. Locals appreciate having a business that celebrates the character of the area while adding something fresh along the historic highway. Visitors passing through Troutdale often leave with more than a purchase—they leave with a smile and a story to tell.

As the Troutdale Trading Post continues to grow, Meigha, John, and Briana remain grateful for the support they've received and excited for what's ahead. Their goal is simple: to keep the doors open, the shelves interesting, and the heart of the shop rooted firmly in the community they love.

For many, the Troutdale Trading Post is already more than a store, it's a small-town staple in the making.

Hours of operation:

Thursday-Saturday 10am to 5pm
Sundays 12pm-5pm

We are on Facebook: Troutdale Trading Post

News From Grayson County

- The Virginia 250 Mobile Museum is coming to the Independence town hall parking lot. It's a hands-on, interactive, and immersive "museum on wheels" celebrating the 250th anniversary of American Independence. It's free to the public and will arrive on Monday, April 27. Hours are Noon to 4:00 on Monday the 27th, 2:00 - 6:00 on the 28th and 29th, and 9:00am to noon on April 30. It's

housed in a quad-expandable tractor trailer and will bring key stories of Virginia's rich history, highlighting every region of the state.

In conjunction with the Mobile Museum celebration (same time and days), Grayson County invites all 6th grade students to participate in a special education program which will be held in the Historic Courthouse. It will include demonstrations of cooking foods of the 18th century, quilting and paper quilting, origins of Appalachian music, Slave Signatures, Broom Making, a Scavenger hunt, among others. Pre-registration is required! Parents and teachers of all 6th grade students in Grayson County, please contact visit@graysoncountyva.gov or call **276-773-8002** to register.

- Household Hazardous Waste Collection & Document Shredding will be held Saturday, April 11, 2026, from 1pm – 4pm at the Solid Waste Facility located at 1216 N. Independence Ave., Independence, VA.
- The county is looking to expand funding for Emergency Services to support local fire and EMS operations
- The county continues to pursue grants to help fund project priorities. These include Education: capital improvement projects, Emergency Services: rescue squad equipment and vehicles and paid staffing, Water & Wastewater projects.
- The Virginia Farm Recovery Block Grant has started releasing payments – so far 12 of the applicants are in the process of receiving a check – there were a total of 101 applicants.
- The Virginia Household Water Program is offering a well water testing opportunity.

Water sample kits are available for \$70 each. You may contact Kevin Spurlin at the Extension Office at **276-773-2491** if you're interested or if you have any questions.

Greetings Grayson County Neighbors – My Experiences Hiking the AT

By Jeff Davis

Good day once again Whitetop and surrounding communities. Thank you for allowing me to write my story and to those who suffer through and read it.

Let's get back to where I left off in my last article. So, after the bacon and pancake breakfast that morning at the church, the post office was open. It was like Christmas! I was going to pick up a package that contained a list of items I had given to my Daddio to send me. Yippee. Boring stuff, typical trail foods, Ramon, granola, mac and cheese, and blah blah blah. Hiker food that I thought at the time I wanted. Instead, just like all of us, we have cravings and want certain things. No different than being in a grocery store at home.

Once back on the trail, the next few days went well. I was getting miles done and feeling great. I had started walking with two men with trail names Spice Kit and Gety. On the evening of March 17th, we decided to venture off a side trail in hopes of finding a place to stealth camp so we could watch the sunset. Up to this point it was just a bit too cold to sleep outside under the stars with nothing but a bedroll or in a sleeping bag. Well, it was more than perfect. The view was amazing, the weather spectacular, and we gave up counting the shooting stars. A night I will never forget.

Before leaving Franklin, NC, I had asked Daddio to send me another package to the only hotel in the small town by Fontana Dam. From the AT community I had heard about the Hilton located there. So silly of me, I started heading for the Hilton. I got to the shelter at the dam where there was a couple of hikers heading to town. So, before I set my pack down, I went with them. They dropped me off in this small place where I saw a post office, a hotel and a little store. No Hilton - Hmmm what do I do? I walked into the post office, and asked the clerk if he would point me in the direction of the Hilton. He very politely explained to me that it was in the same direction I had just come from. He explained that the Hilton is just the nickname for the shelter I just left! OOPS, I did not know that, and it became a joke as miles were hiked back up the trail... Jeff Davis walking towards Fontana Dam looking for the Hilton.

Resupplied, I started walking to the Smokies. All I could think about was that I had never been there and was walking with only a 40-pound pack on my back. My destination, Mollies Ridge Shelter, was only 10 miles away. I arrived early in the day, and the shelter was already packed, so I continued walking. My new destination was the next shelter. Once again when I got to the shelter, it was also full. At this point I could not put out of my crazy head that I wanted to stealth camp my first night ever in the Smokey Mountains. My new destination, Beechnut Gap, was 5 more miles away. It would make my first 20 mile day of my journey. I made it and ate dinner barely holding my eyes open. I realized, no Jeff, you only walked 19.9 miles, so close. I slept so incredibly sound on the side of this beautiful little creek.

The following morning, I woke up to raindrops, not so fun. Of course I had left

everything outside. I fell asleep right after dinner and hadn't put anything away. After packing up I headed to my next stop, Clingmans Dome. I had heard about Clingmans, so it was something I was really looking forward to seeing. Not the best morning of hiking, LOL. The rain had stopped, which was good, but the fog was in full effect. To be honest, the long day yesterday had made my body tired. After a few hours into my walk, and eating all of my snacks, I ended up at another packed shelter. This one had no room even if I wanted to stay. I had already walked 10 miles. Since I was walking in a fog cloud, I was not stopping to look at everything. All I was doing was walking, so miles were just passing by. Three more miles and I would be at Clingmans Dome before noon.

Two hours into my trip I saw a sign that said Mt Lemont. I realized I had passed Clingmans Dome and didn't even know it. Sure did, oh well, I decided to just keep walking. I made it to Newfound Gap and there was trail magic! The trail angels had bratwurst and hot dogs. Due to no one out hiking because of the weather, they had an extremely large amount of food and were happy for me to eat as much as I could. That I did! By the time I was done I was exhausted. I got into a conversation with two day hikers, an Australian couple, Phillip and Matilda. They were in awe that I was walking from Georgia to Maine and I was in awe of them driving to all four furthest points of America; Northeast to Maine, Southeast to Florida and were on their way to Southwest California. After that they were planning to go to Washington, then back to Boston to fly out. The couple invited me to sleep on their couch that evening. With the weather and figuring out I had walked 21.9 miles for a total of just over 40 miles in two days, I

accepted their offer. The next morning my body was exhausted. Phillip mentioned they were site seeing in the area and if I wanted to join them I could, so I did. We went to Gatlinburg and several other places. What a great day off. My body really needed it and never mind the weather was awful.

Update on Trail Magic Whitetop Day

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) which manages and helps protect it, has moved the trail for the 2026 hiking season due to the rebuilding of the Virginia Creeper trail. The AT intertwines with the Creeper Trail as you exit Damascus VA. In my previous article I had written about organizing Whitetop Day, but with this new information, Whitetop Day CANNOT be on Whitetop mountain this year. Since the detour will go through Skulls Gap, Iron Mountain, I recommend we wait until next year when the trail returns to Whitetop Mountain. However, if you are out on the trail, I encourage you to become a trail angel!

"A Tapestry of Tales" Displayed at Goodwill Grange

By Deborah Clark

As part of its on-going series of community events and festivities, the Goodwill Grange together with the Independence Public Library hosted the second annual "Tapestry of Tales."

The Grange Hall, located on Grange Hall Road in the Grant community, offers spacious meeting rooms and other amenities that proved to be an ideal setting for the event, as inclement weather moved the activities from the grounds of the Hall to its indoor spaces.

Organizers called the event "a perfect fit" with both the Grange's mission to serve as a community center; as a place where local

talents, traditions, and entertainments can be presented; and a place where neighborhood and county concerns can be aired, and with the library's efforts to make its multiple resources easily available to all the county's residents.

The Tapestry of Tales is a celebration of the Appalachian tradition of storytelling and a showcase for some of the different ways in which storytelling is being done and used today. All of this event's "tellers" were local; their ways of telling included reading from their own published stories, telling anecdotes of rural life, combining traditional music with traditional tales and original art, using storytelling to understand and share the experience of living with serious health issues, and using the history of this and other locations to broaden and clarify our understanding of our communities. Even some animals got a share of the spotlight, as one presenter explained how her dogs accomplished their work as search and rescue volunteers and another made her audience laugh with stories about raising birds that seemed smarter than some of the neighbors.

Throughout the afternoon, presenters took turns reading, speaking, performing, and demonstrating the fine art of storytelling. Guests moved from display to display as their mood and preferences dictated. Most folks were eager to sample all of the kinds of storytelling that were offered. Several expressed their appreciation for the variety and quality of talent presented.

One example of storytelling that was on display at the Tapestry of Tales is the presentation of Ellie and Roald Kirby. This local couple used their storytelling, music, and art talents to build and demonstrate a "crankie," an old-fashioned, table-top theater with a story illustrated on paper wound onto a large spool. The story was pulled from its

spool and spread across the stage of the little theater to another spool, as music accompanied the telling of the story.

The Goodwill Grange, organized in 1959, is a part of the National Grange, which was founded in 1967 as an advocacy group for farmers. The early Grange actively lobbied state legislatures and Congress for laws that would be beneficial to farming sustainability, such as laws to lower rates charged by railroads for shipping agricultural products, and rural free mail delivery by the U. S. Postal Service. More recently, the Grange, both national and local, has moved towards the goal of supporting and strengthening family and community life and service.

The Goodwill Grange works to meet these needs by organizing and/or hosting various events such as a monthly community pot-luck breakfast and other regularly scheduled events; by working cooperatively with other agencies such as the Independence Library; and by housing the Grant Computer Center that offers computer use, printing and internet connectivity to the community free of charge. The large meeting room is also available to individuals at reasonable fees. The building is open 11am – 5 pm Monday through Friday.

The 3rd annual Tapestry of Tales will be on Friday 19th June 1-4 pm 2026 at the Goodwill Grange, 840 Grange Hall Road, Troutdale, VA 24378. Everyone is invited to join us.

For more information about the Goodwill Grange, call **919 597 0698**, email **grangehall959@gmail.com**, website **www.goodwillgrange959.org/**.

Branch Lettuce: A Taste of Appalachian Spring

By: Blue Ridge Discovery Center

At the end of every dragging, gray Appalachian winter, those of us who live in the high country long for the rush of green, verdant warmth that comes with the mountain spring. This yearning led the first mountaineers to the spring greens we know today as a crisp, crunchy delicacy that bursts fresh from the moss-covered stones and hand-sized islands of babbling brooks. The Lettuceleaf Saxifrage (*Micranthes micranthidifolia*), known locally as “branch lettuce,” is one of the first signs (and delicacies) of spring, named for a semiaquatic love for small creeks and streams with crystal-clear, cascading water.

On the rock outcrops of Whitetop Mountain, Cliff Saxifrage (*Micranthes petiolaris*) and similar species thrive in dry, exposed crevices with jagged, succulent-like leaves. The name “saxifrage” comes from the Latin *saxum* meaning “rock,” and *frangere* for “breaking,” either referring to the habit of these small plants sprouting from fissures in bare rock (or alternatively from medicinal uses to break up kidney stones). Instead of rugged cliffsides, branch lettuce thrives in the “hollers” or cove forests where rushing water provides bare rock to grow, and this beloved delicacy is found nowhere else in the world, aside from the colder, narrow headwater valleys of Central and Southern Appalachia.

Armed with baskets and paring knives, foragers must venture up shallow seepage streams in the chilly March or early-April air, before spring has truly arrived in the highlands, in search of these inconspicuous greens. While regional indigenous tribes such as the Cherokee and the Iroquois used

the plant, it was mostly a medicine. Foraging the plant as a food source likely originated from Scots-Irish settlers searching for similar plants to their water-dwelling saxifrages, some of which are known and foraged to this day as “lus nan laogh” in Scottish Gaelic. As the cultures collided in the Southern Appalachian Mountains, branch lettuce quickly became a local delicacy.

The trick is to harvest the young foliage of branch lettuce before it starts to flower, when bitter terpenes (chemical defenses) will fill the leaves. Instead of eaten as a raw salad, branch lettuce is often prepared as a cooked green, often with vinegar. The traditional recipes for “kilt lettuce” work extremely well for this perennial species, crafted by pouring hot bacon grease or melted lard over the leaves, causing them to wilt and pleasantly soften while soaking up hearty flavors, often with added spring onions. Recipes often include foraged onion-substitutes, like ramps or wild garlic. Kilt branch lettuce can be layered into soup beans, and eaten with cornbread, or even served with scalded milk, buttermilk or potatoes.

Unfortunately, branch lettuce is becoming easy to overharvest. Even some small grocery stores and farmer’s markets offer the wild-cut greens for sale, in the right season. As in the case with ramps and ginseng, where there is economic incentive to harvest, poaching and unsustainable



practices often take root. More and more of the branch lettuce's habitat is being encroached upon, and peaceful, undisturbed cove forest streams are becoming difficult to find. Sometimes, it takes two years or more before a single plant reaches maturity. They are perennials in a peaceful but extreme environment, constantly battling rushing water, powerful freezes, floods, drought, and grazing wildlife. Cutting the first spring leaves, especially when they are large enough to eat, saps energy from the fragile plants. Make sure to always leave a leaf or two after harvesting, and always let the areas you harvest rest and recover for a season before foraging there again. Respectful foraging is the only way this delicacy will survive long enough to be enjoyed by future generations!

Recipe: Ramp Smoked Trout

By Maria Shutters (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.

Konnarock Activities

Currently scheduled activities and fundraisers for 2026 at Konnarock, Green Cove, Laurel Valley Community Center.

Would the Community like to have the Old Fashioned Fall Festival Again? We need to add a dinner fundraiser and would love to add a couple of summer youth activities.

Please look at your calendar and sign up for an event. Remember we will need hands for decorating and prep before events and cleaning afterward. We want our building to remain presentable for potential renters through the year.

Breakfast Fundraisers, \$8 or less, to be held the second Saturday of the month, 8:30-10:30 (prep 7am):

April 11, May 8, June 13, July 11

Community Meetings to be held the second Monday of the month at 7pm:

April 13 (Alt date TH April 16)
 May 11 (Alt date TH May 14)
 June 8 (Alt date TH June 11)
 July 13 (Alt date TH July 16)

April 2026:

Easter Egg Hunt! FRI, April 3, 1pm

May 2026:

Community Yard and Craft Sale!

2 Basket Raffle Drawings 2pm
SAT May 9, 8:30am-3pm Set up as early as 7am, Outside FREE, \$5 inside, \$10 table/ \$5 refundable

July 2026:

July 4th Parade

Gather at the Community Center 2pm

Special Thanks & A Personal Note from Gary Rascoe, Editor

Thanks to those who contributed or edited articles. Also, a special thanks to a person who prefers to remain anonymous, but does the final layout work. Likewise, thanks to Sue Revels for her editing contributions and her quick response time.

The Wellspring Foundation of Southwest, VA has provided the majority of the money necessary to fund the print cost and home delivery. However, my grant is no longer renewable, and I have enough funds to cover the publishing and mailing costs for about another year. At that time, I believe I have five options:

1. Obtain other grant funding
2. Go to an on-line version with the option of fewer print copies to drop off at key locations instead of mailing to households
3. Continuing to rely on individual funding, combined with advertising revenue
4. Some combination of the above
5. Cease publication

Donations can be made at the Skyline Bank in Whitetop under the account, "Whitetop Gazette". If you cannot make it to the bank, email me and we can make other arrangements. **If every household donated a minimum of \$5.00 it would fund another year's publication.**

Thanks, Gary Rascoe



Home Repairs and Interior Design by Karen

By Karen Patterson

Home repair: (I've been in the carpentry business for over 20 years)

Plumbing Issues: leaky faucets, running toilets etc.

Walls and Ceilings: patching holes and painting, removing popcorn ceilings and repainting etc.

Doors and Windows: oiling hinges, adjust or level stuck doors and windows, seal drafts etc.

Electrical – (BASIC): Replacing bulbs, changing out old light switches and covers, install ceiling fans etc.

Design and Décor: (I've been in Décor and Design since 2020).

Want to redecorate? I've got you covered.

Painting, wallpaper, art, furniture and flooring.

Mobile Homes – Stick Built Homes - If You have a space to redo, I'll help you.

Designing interiors is my happy place.

I absolutely love helping folks love their home again. For more information -Take a Picture of this Flyer.

You can text me (calls go to spam) at

984-214-1719 or email me at

charmed753@gmail.com

Paid Advertisement

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 link.

The Whitetop Gazette

PRSRT STD
ECRWSS
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
EDDM Retail

**LOCAL POSTAL
CUSTOMER**