



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

Mel Leaman Free Clinic In Whitetop

By Harry Howe, PA-C

The Mel Leaman Free Clinic is planning to start a satellite clinic in the Whitetop area beginning in July. The clinic will be held in the Whitetop community center which we are currently setting up with our equipment so we can be ready to start seeing patients.

Patients who qualify for our services are individuals between the ages of 18 and 65 who do not have any kind of health insurance; which includes Medicaid, Medicare, and private insurance. Qualifying patients must live in Grayson, Washington, Smyth, or Russell counties and meet an income guideline which is currently \$55,850 or less for an individual, but greater if there are multiple family members. All services provided by the staff at the clinic are free to the patients.

The clinic will serve the primary healthcare needs of those in the Whitetop and surrounding communities who may have difficulty traveling to receive medical services elsewhere.

To find out if you qualify, please fill out an application, which are available at the Whitetop Library, located in the community

center or those interested can call the clinic at 782-2090 and have one mailed to them.

Harry Howe, Physician Assistant with the Mel Leaman Free Clinic, and Maria Briscoe, a Family Nurse Practitioner, plan to provide primary care services one to two days a month. Dr. William Handy and the PA staff and students from Emory and Henry School of Health Sciences plan to provide services beginning in the fall.

Services that will be available to patients include, annual health checks, diagnosis and treatment of chronic illness (hypertension, hyperlipidemia, thyroid disease, diabetes, COPD, etc.) and acute illness. Basic labs are also available. The clinic is able to get many maintenance medications through the Access to Medication Program and The Pharmacy Connection which allows patients to receive medications at little or no cost to them.

Patients at the Whitetop clinic will also have access to Counseling services at the Marion location.

The Board of Directors of The Mel Leaman Free Clinic approved a three-month trial period to assess the need for our services based on the number of patients seen. So, it is imperative that all qualifying patients get their applications in so that they can be verified and

scheduled. In addition to the application, we will need proof of income and a picture ID.

We would love to become a part of the Whitetop Community and provide services to the people in the area long term. So, if you or someone you know would benefit from our services, we are ready to serve you but we need you to get your application in soon so we can get you on the schedule.

Harry is planning to hold the first clinic on Thursday, July 16, from 9:00 to 3:30. If you have any questions, please call the Marion office Tuesday thru Friday 8:30 til 5:00 at 782-2090.

Editor's Note: This clinic offers an important opportunity to bring needed health care—and possibly future services—to our community while also supporting the Community Center. Since this is only a three-month pilot program to test interest, I encourage anyone who may qualify to submit an application as soon as possible and to share this information with others who may be eligible. Health care costs have risen sharply, especially for those affected by reduced government subsidies. For people who may have dropped coverage because of higher premiums, these free services could be especially valuable.

Cell Tower Project Update - June 17, 2026

by Tom Revels

Progress across all three tower sites has been slower than anticipated over the past quarter; however, each location continues to move forward toward completion.

Quillens Ridge – Rugby

Quillens Ridge, the first site to enter development, advanced on schedule until late April, when foundation work revealed unexpected granite rock beneath the surface. As noted in the original update, “special equipment had to be brought in to break through granite rock to create the 50 feet by 50 feet by six feet deep hole for the concrete tower foundation.” This unforeseen challenge required six weeks of additional work and caused delays not only at Quillens Ridge, but also at the Whitetop site, which relied on the same construction resources. The revised estimated completion date for Quillens Ridge is now mid-July.

Whitetop Tower Site

All necessary permits for Whitetop have been secured and construction is scheduled to begin June 22. The initial phase will focus on building the access road and preparing the tower pad. Once this site work is finished, crews will begin foundation construction. According to the document, “it is anticipated that the tower will be completed by the end of August 2026.”

Walnut Knob Site

Permitting for Walnut Knob is nearing completion and includes reviews by the EPA, FAA, FCC, the Cherokee Indian Nation, and various state and local stormwater and zoning authorities. Engineers are finalizing the site design, which must account for a challenging access road and pad location. The update states that this phase is expected to wrap up soon, with construction projected to begin by October 11.

Whitetop Ramp Festival

The annual Whitetop Ramp Festival was held in May at the Mount Rogers Volunteer Fire & Rescue Department. Volunteer bands performed throughout the event, and vendors showcased arts and crafts. The Fire and Rescue Department thanks everyone who attended, as well as the volunteers who cooked, organized, ran concessions, sold tickets and collected parking proceeds.



A highlight of the festival was the ramp-eating contest. Wyatt Taylor, pictured with his mother, Amy, won the junior division after eating 11 ramps in the one minute allowed, then 13 more in a tiebreaker for a total of 24. Ramp eating must run in the family—his father won the contest in 1985! Note that Wyatt is holding a bottle of Scope which was one of the prizes he won. Amy joked that they might have to ride home with the car windows rolled down! The other picture shows the adult participants along with some of the band members in the background. Always a fun day!

Rugby Volunteer Fire & Rescue

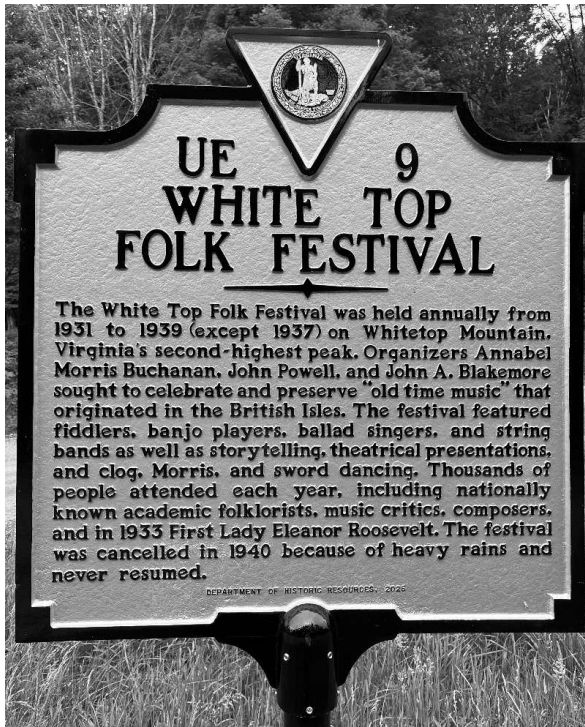
On June 20, Rugby Fire and Rescue marked its 50th anniversary with a well-attended celebration featuring local music, a catered lunch, a 50-50 raffle, door prizes, and desserts. The event also gave visitors a chance to tour the recently completed renovations, which included a new, ceramic tiled, walk-in shower, air conditioning system, ceiling, and walls. Long-time department members were also honored. The photos tell the story better than words can. Special thanks to all of those who helped make this major renovation an overwhelming success including Marty Best and Dana & Eddie Jones!



White Top Folk Festival Sign

The sign near the entrance to the road that leads to the top of Whitetop Mountain has been replaced after being removed some time ago. Recent road grading has made the drive up the mountain much smoother. The sign shares the festival's history and mentions one of its notable visitors, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. If you have never been to the top—or have avoided the trip

because of ruts and rocks—now is a great time to visit and take in the stunning view!



Konnarock and Green Cove Mountain Clinics

Reprinted from the August 1939 Virginia Department of Health, Health Bulletin

The story of the Konnarock and Green Cove mountain clinics is one of inspired and intelligent leadership. These two small communities, the result of extensive logging activities of previous years, form the centers for hundreds of families within a thirty-five mile radius in the mountains of Washington and Smyth Counties.

Isolated—the nearest doctor being twenty or more miles away—the folk of this section were desperately in need of health supervision a number of years ago. Then, in September 1930, under the tactful guidance of Miss Ida E. Twedten, R.N. .. who as nurse of the Konnarock Training School of the

Lutheran Church, is devoting her life to the betterment of conditions in this section, the local women began to organize mother's clubs. Through these groups, which had a slow but continuous growth, health education got its first start in the community.

From this small beginning, thanks to private contributions and funds patiently and ingeniously raised by the families of this section, supplemented by contributions from the Women's Missionary Society of the United Lutheran Church in America, a clinic building was erected in 1935, the labor being furnished without cost by the men of the neighborhood.

In the course of a year, more than five hundred women and children come to this building, where prenatal maternal, dental, chest, immunization and child health services are made available at regular intervals. Health information, in the form of institutes for doctors' helpers, Red Cross instruction, and motion pictures, is an integral part of the program.

The results are notable. Windows of one-room cabins, hitherto useful only for the admission of light, now are raised to admit the health-laden air. Expectant mothers receive the required attention and advice.



THE WAITING ROOM AT KONNAROCK

Adults and youngsters whose diet formerly consisted of salt pork, dried beans, and corn bread, with hot biscuits for breakfast if times were good, now get, in addition, fresh milk and home-canned vegetables. Children, who formerly were suffering with neglected after-effects of measles, whooping cough, tonsillitis, scarlet fever, children "thin and piddlin'," with teeth in all stages of decay, their mouths often blackened with snuff and tobacco, have received the essential medical help; and mothers have been taught to avoid the conditions that result in these childhood tragedies. These are but a few instances of the types of health supervision and service which have attracted attention to this practical application of health and medical altruism.

The Green Cove Health Center

Of the Green Cove Health Center a somewhat similar story can be told. Inspired by the success of the Konnarock venture, Miss Twedten joined with Mrs. W. M. Buchanan, the wife of the local postmaster and storekeeper at Green Cove, in developing the mothers' clubs and finally acquired a building, which serves not only clinic headquarters but as community center as well. This structure represents an unusual community spirit, inasmuch as the material was donated by citizens of the Green Cove section, the ground being the gift of Mr. Buchanan and the labor having been furnished gratis by NYA workers of the Green Cove and Konnarock section. The services and influence of this health center parallel those of Konnarock in practically every particular. But at Green Cove, in addition, projects including domestic economy and vocational training are conducted by the NYA boys and girls.

The State Department of Health has partially equipped the clinic at Green Cove, and affords medical and nursing supervisory service at both Green Cove and Konnarock.

These unique organizations are monuments to the untiring efforts, wisdom, and humanitarianism of their founders. Their value to the people in the communities they serve literally is immeasurable.

Fire and Ice: the early geologic history of the Grayson Highlands, A Different World

By Elaine Jacobs

The story begins about 780 million years ago, when this part of the Appalachians was a very different place. Volcanoes were erupting near what is now Pond Mountain, and later glaciers flowing from the west crossed Lake Konnarock, a large lake that filled today's Fairwood Valley. At that time, southwest Virginia and northwest North Carolina were located near the South Pole, a part of a large supercontinent named Rodinia that included most of Earth's landmasses. Life on Earth was dominated by microscopic ocean dwelling organisms and the land surfaces were mostly barren and rocky.

Volcanoes and a Failed Rift

The volcanic activity at that time was part of a failed rifting event that started to break Rodinia apart. Deep below the surface, a plume of hot mantle rose upward and began melting the continental crust. Magma that comes from the mantle is rich in iron and magnesium and usually contains less than 50% silica: this kind of magma forms basalt. It rose through cracks in the crust and spread out in broad, flat lava flows, much like the basalt flows we see in Hawaii today. A

metamorphic form of basalt called greenstone can be seen at Elk Gardens; where it is a blue-green color and contains white colored feldspars that occur in lines that often look like turkey tracks.

As magma continued to rise it began melting the base of the continental crust which added silica and aluminum from the melted crust to the iron and magnesium-rich basalt. With more silica, the magma became thicker and less able to flow. Instead of moving easily through cracks to the surface, it began to collect in large underground chambers near the base of the crust.

Explosive Eruptions

Eventually, heat and pressure built up underground until the magma chambers erupted explosively, much like Mount St. Helens in 1980. Superheated rock, ash, air, and steam blasted upward in columns as high as 30,000 feet. When the columns collapsed, they swept across the landscape as hot pyroclastic flows, some reaching speeds of 200 mph. The deposits they left behind, called ash-flow tuffs, can be seen along the Appalachian Trail between Elk Garden and Deep Gap.

The volcanic vents erupted from southwest to northeast: first Pond Mountain, then Whitetop Mountain, Wilburn Ridge, and finally Razor Ridge. This pattern shows the direction the continental plate was moving over the mantle hotspot.

Calderas, Rivers, and Landslides

When a magma chamber emptied and collapsed, it formed a broad valley known as a caldera. After these powerful eruptions, quieter intervals took place while new magma built up deep underground. During these quieter intervals, enormous amounts

of erosion occurred. Remember, there were no land plants yet. Plants would not appear on Earth for another several hundred million years (at around 460 Ma) so erosion was all that much more dynamic because there were no trees, no grass, no weeds, no anything to hold the soil. Without any plants to hold the soil, erosion quickly sculpted the landscape, carving large river valleys, sloughing off huge wedges of earth in landslides and depositing thick sequences of sediments containing mud, sand, gravel, cobbles, and boulders in the calderas. Over time, these loose sediments were squeezed and hardened into mudstones, sandstones, and conglomerates. The rocks we see today have been hardened and altered by low grade metamorphism, but their sedimentary origins are still easily recognizable.

Conglomerates are sedimentary rocks made of rounded fragments, ranging from sand-sized grains to boulders, that were carried and deposited by rivers and streams. Beautiful outcrops of conglomerate containing sand and pea size gravels, cobbles, and boulders, are found all over the Grayson Highland area from Cabin Creek to the roadsides along Highway 58, to the Listening Rock Trail in Grayson Highlands State Park. As volcanic activity continued, later eruptions produced large amounts of silica-rich rhyolite, the volcanic rock that now dominates much of the mountain landscape we see today.

Glaciers and Lake Konnarock

Near Roberts Cove in the northeastern Mount Rogers area, volcanic rocks are interbedded with sedimentary rocks. These rocks record the last gasp of volcanism in the area and the cooling of the climate as glaciers from the west filled the valleys.

The oldest sediments were laid down in a lake. Lake Konnarock was a large lake, occupying what is now the Fairwood Valley, and stretching from Taylor's Valley to Roberts Cove. The sediments laid down in Lake Konnarock now occur as rocks containing varves; laminated layers of sediment that record annual seasonal variations in deposition. Today, the varves often show up as red and green stripes in the metamorphosed sedimentary rock. Red layers formed where oxygen was abundant, while green layers formed where oxygen was limited. Whether these oxic- anoxic rhythms were part of the original deposition or occurred later is up to speculation. The colors come from iron in the rock. In fact, many Konnarock rocks are maroon because of their iron content: oxidized iron turns red, like rust, while reduced iron appears green.

Some Konnarock rocks look a bit like the conglomerates described earlier, but they formed in a very different way. These rocks, called diamictites, were deposited by glaciers. Diamictites contain a fine-grained, massive matrix filled with unsorted rock fragments of many sizes. Unlike conglomerates, which are sorted into layers by streams, diamictites are a jumble - like cookie dough packed with chocolate chips, walnuts, and cranberries.

The best evidence for the Konnarock sediments glacial origin is the dropstones. Glacial ice quarried and carried these stones across frozen Lake Konnarock and then released them into the lake as the ice melted. When the stones fell to the bottom, they deformed the soft lakebed sediment below. Years of accumulating sediments blanketed the tops of the dropstones and preserved the record of their fall from the ice.

These deposits became important evidence in support of ancient glaciation, first recognized

by Douglas Rankin, a U.S. Geological Survey geologist who mapped this area in the 1960s and '70s. More recently, geologists have pointed to the Konnarock group as evidence for a period called "Snowball Earth", a time of extreme cold when much of the planet was covered in ice during several global glacial cycles that occurred between 717 and 660 Ma.

Rodinia Breaks Apart

Rodinia finally broke apart around 570 Ma, when the Iapetus Ocean began to open. Named for the Greek mythological father of Atlas, Iapetus was the forerunner of the Atlantic Ocean. By then, the Grayson Highlands lay west of the rifting margin, and the shoreline was much closer than it is today, running southwest to northeast roughly parallel to the modern Blue Ridge. Southwest Virginia and northwest North Carolina still lay well south of the Equator at this time and would not move north of it for another 250 million years, when the next supercontinent, Pangaea, and the modern Appalachian Mountains formed. But that is another chapter in the long geologic story of the Grayson Highlands.

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Merschat, Arthur J., Southworth, Scott, Tollo, Richard P., Rankin, Douglas W., Holm-Denoma, Christopher S., Aleinkoff, John N. McAleer, Ryan J., Preliminary Bedrock Geologic Map of the Mount Rogers area, Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee. USGS. In press.

Goodwill Grange Kitchen Renovation

By Jean Shortall-Roznik

“But you will always find him in the kitchen at parties...” is a song lyric from my youth. The song, aptly named “You’ll Always Find Me in the Kitchen at Parties,” was written by Jona Lewie and Brett Marvin and (dating myself here), was a hit in 1980. I don’t recall any of the other words, but the chorus line stayed with me, like a decades-long earworm.

What is it about that particular hook? It’s the kitchen reference, of course. The song came out when I was finishing college. Studies behind me, I was happy to attend any party to which I was invited, and more often than not, I did end up in the kitchen. The cliché that the kitchen is the heart of the home is a cliché for a reason. And I believe the truism extends to public buildings as well. To Julia Child’s quip, “A party without a cake is just a meeting,” I would add, a community building without a kitchen is just a shelter.

All this is by way of explanation as to why I, and many others, are delighted with the recent remodeling of the kitchen at the Goodwill Grange. Over the past year, the kitchen has been renovated and rejuvenated. While functional, the old kitchen was tired and worn, and now the space is fresh, crisp and inviting. All the appliances are new and a dishwasher was added to the labor-saving lineup. Other upgrades include upper wall cabinets, an additional sink, granite countertops, a tiled backsplash, overhead fans, a broom closet... the list goes on.

Needless to say, it took a lot of planning and fundraising to bring about this transformation. A Kitchen Renovation Committee, along with the Grange Executive Committee, oversaw the fundraising and the work. In April 2024, local musical group The Water Peppers

kicked off the project with a “KitchenAid” concert; raising \$1,000, it was an auspicious launch. Over the next 18 months, donations rolled in from a variety of sources. The Twin County Community Foundation, based in Galax, gave an equipment grant of \$10,000. Private individuals and local businesses contributed upwards of \$35,000.

One sizeable group of donations was made in honor of cherished community member Brent Breedlove. Brent was on the original renovation committee, but sadly he passed away in August 2024. His wife, Heidi, asked family and friends to consider a donation to the kitchen fund as a memorial to Brent. Generous amounts arrived from all across the country. Even though Brent was not around to share his construction expertise, he still played a big part in moving the project forward.

With most of the invoices settled, it looks like renovation costs ran a little over \$50,000. Like all such undertakings, expenditures overran the initial budget, but thanks to the successful fundraising, there was even money left over to refurbish the women’s and men’s rest rooms.

During the work, which was capably led by general contractor Greg Blevins of Marion, a few artifacts from the Grange’s past were discovered, including books found stashed in the walls. Among the titles are *The Man Without A Country* and *Other Stories* by Edward Everett Hall, *Summer* by Dallas Lore Sharp and a *Teachers’ Manual to Accompany The Problem and Practice Arithmetics*, copyrighted in 1930. The tattered volumes are on display in the Grange china cabinet.

A quick online search for Edward Everett Hall reveals *The Man Without a Country* was first published in 1863, during the height of the Civil War, and was written to promote patriotism and unity in a divided land. Interesting that at least

one of our Grange predecessors was reading and thinking about issues that are as relevant today as they were then.

While researching, I decided to look up the complete lyrics of “You’ll Always Find Me in the Kitchen at Parties.” Turns out the song is about a guy who, unlucky in love, retreats on his own to the kitchen. Thankfully, his fortunes change. He meets “a pretty girl” who “laughed and talked with me.” Happy at last, he and she exit the kitchen together.

While I’m glad our hero found companionship, his is not the ending for me. I am still content to be found in the kitchen at parties. It’s the place where pretensions drop away, where the best secrets are shared and—most importantly—it’s where to find the food. And, the Grange kitchen, bright and airy as it is, still prompts memories of community gatherings past, of stories and sorrows shared, all suffused with the lingering smells of favorite dishes.

My Experiences Hiking the AT

By Jeff Davis

Happy spring everyone! I hope you’ve been enjoying time in your gardens. With all the recent rain, everything is growing beautifully.

My hike continued thru the Smokies with not much to report at this point. I was really hoping to see a bear, but I never did. At this point in my hike, I was averaging 12 to 17 miles a day. Much depended on the set up of the day, always planning to end the day in a shelter or campsite with an available water source. For any overnight hiker, water sources are more than just drinking water. Typically, anything a hiker eats for dinner (Dehydrated meals, Ramen, Knorr pasta or rice sides, instant potatoes, macaroni and

cheese) uses water, so instead of carrying all this water we tend to camp near the water source. It also helps with the cleanup process and storage back in the pack.

On my final evening in the Smokies I started walking with a fellow hiker named Dutchman. He mentioned that he was going to Standing Bear Hostel and was getting a ride to town to watch the NCAA basketball tournament game between Ohio State and Syracuse. LOL all of a sudden, I wanted to go watch the game. We reached Standing Bear and caught a ride into town, where we found a small gas station with a huge-screen TV. How perfect! We were able to buy food and a few cold beers. Topping off a extremely wonderful evening, I received confirmation that Daddio and my friend Jessica were coming to join me in a 4-night venture when I got to Hot Springs, NC.

A few days later (45 miles of hiking) I came to this place called Max Patch. It's the top of a mountain with a beautiful field of grass. The view was spectacular; the sunset was perfect. I really started to feel amazing from hiking and losing some weight. The sunrise was just as epic as the sunset. What a life I am living.

After another few days of hiking, I walked into Hot Springs, NC, the night before meeting Daddio and Jessica. I slept along the French Broad River, excited to see them both. They arrived the next afternoon and we stayed in Elmers Hostel. What makes Elmers special is that he does a sit-down dinner around a big table each evening and that he is an amazing cook. Some hikers I knew were also there, so it was really nice for them to meet Daddio and Jessica and for them to meet my hiking friends. Another fantastic evening. Have a safe and enjoyable summer. Until next time, your friend and neighbor, Jeff.

Scams to Watch Out For

Protect yourself against phone and internet scams

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www.swvacountry.com*

Protecting ourselves from theft and crime on the internet is becoming increasingly difficult. Scams and theft can happen to any of us.

- If you feel like you've been duped into giving up personal or financial information over the internet or phone, don't be ashamed. Scammers are sophisticated thieves and they've found endless ways to get your money. Reach out to a loved one, law enforcement, or your bank and ask for help.
- If you thought you were getting a great deal with an online purchase that never shows up, don't be embarrassed. Reach out to a friend and go over the steps that convinced you to trust the online purchase. Check the Strategy & Resources section at the bottom of this article for more resources.
- Talking about our experiences creates awareness and helps others from falling into the same trap. Tell authorities in your community and help spread the word so neighbors can be on the lookout.

#1 Searching for a Business's customer service number online can lead you to scams.

Do not search for 800 numbers (customer service numbers) on Google's search bar. Scammers have found ways to impersonate legitimate businesses so that if you search for a

customer service number, you'll end up calling the impersonator instead of the business. For example, individuals who searched for Amazon's customer service number on Google (or any other search engine) were directed to an 800 number that appeared to be official but turned out to be a scam.

Impersonators claimed that the caller's Amazon account had been hacked by an international crime ring. The caller was asked to hold while they connected them to the "FBI". They were told to keep the phone call strictly secret and warned that telling friends and family about the call would mean that they would also be investigated by the "FBI". Callers were asked to provide their social security numbers and other personal information.

In another 800-number search scam, callers were told that they would need to download an app (application) onto their phones to fix their Amazon accounts. Downloading the app actually gives the scammer access to everything on your phone. Brimfield Police Department in Ohio warned area residents: DO NOT search for ANY customer service phone number in a search engine. Only call the number(s) listed on the company's direct website. That goes for ANY company, not just Amazon.

#2 AI (artificial intelligence) Can Imitate Your Loved Ones

When the kids call home for money or a cousin asks for a short-term loan, you might not give it a second thought and follow their directions to transfer the cash to them ASAP. But scammers work with AI to imitate your friends and family. For example, the caller ID says it's your son and the voice on the other end of the line sounds like him too. Hang up the phone, take a deep breath, and then call

your son from your phone to make sure it's really him.

#3 Emails Can Imitate Your Loved Ones Too

This is similar to the situation above only, instead of getting a fake phone call, you receive an email. For example, the email comes from your friend or family member asking you for some help with a financial emergency or with questions about a family bank account. Do not answer the email. Pick up the phone and call the person and ask them if they really sent the email. If they didn't send you the email, it means that their email has been hacked by a scammer.

#4 Online deals can lead to online steals

Scrolling through Facebook or TikTok, we're bombarded with ads. If the deal offered in the ad feels "too good to be true", it probably is. You might think you're getting the coolest thing for an incredible price and these ads make it easy to buy it quickly. But after putting in your credit card or banking information the vendor suddenly cancels your order... or it never arrives in the mail. They got your money and you've been scammed. Reach out to your credit card company or your bank and tell them what happened. You might decide it's best to cancel your cards, freeze your credit, and get new ones.

#5 Fake charities claiming to represent orphans, veterans, or law enforcement

A fake charity will imitate the names of reputable ones and they will use words that appeal to your sympathy. The names of their charities might include words like "foundation" "operation" "hero" "wounded" "disabled" or "homeless". Real charities in the United States must follow laws governing charities and non-profits. For example, it is

illegal for a charity to call you before 8AM or after 9PM. It is illegal for a charity to contact you using a Robocall service. Before making any kind of donation over the phone or through the mail, be vigilant and do some research first.

#6 "Problems" with your "taxes", "late payments", "credit"

You know where your money goes better than anyone else. You pay your light bill, rent, and car payments. Scammers will exploit your insecurities about anything related to your bills. Robocalls and live calls alike will tell you that there are "questions" or "problems" with your accounts. Hang up. If you are concerned that a creditor hasn't received a payment on time, contact them directly and find out.

#7 Receiving a Package with no Return Address

You might get an unexpected package in the mail with no return address. When you open it, there might be a small "gift" and the sender has included a QR code for a discount on another purchase. The sender might reference that they have a store on Amazon or another online sales distributor. Scanning the QR code can give the scammer access to your phone. If you receive a package like this, take it to law enforcement.

Strategy & Resources

Report Fraud: The US Federal Trade Commission has a Consumer Advice page with details on the latest scams. To learn more about scams and how to report fraud, as of the date of this publication, the USFTC website is <https://consumer.ftc.gov/>

Donate Locally Instead: Make charitable donations locally to trusted groups instead of donating to national groups. A \$50 donation

will help our local Emergency Responders or 4-H clubs more than a national charity. Besides, our local groups need it more.

Freeze Your Credit: Every American has a Credit Score that is monitored by financial institutions. When you make a big purchase like buying a car or a house, a lender will run a credit check to assess your trustworthiness for paying off debt. Your credit score will be impacted if a scammer gains access to your name and social security number; they can open credit cards in your name. If you feel a scammer got your personal information, consider putting a freeze on your credit. Freezing your credit means that scammers can't open new credit cards, buy cars, or open bank accounts in your name. To freeze your credit, contact the primary organizations who handle your Credit Score: Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion. As of the date of this publication, here's the government link to resources that will help you put a freeze on your Credit: <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/credit-reports-and-scores/consumer-reporting-companies/>

Make a Plan with your Loved Ones Now:

Make a strategy with loved ones when money is involved. If you know that you could potentially help a loved one with finances, talk to them about how you will communicate about these transactions. Put a plan in place that protects you while you support your loved ones... not the scammers.

Think for yourself: Scammers find sophisticated ways to exploit our insecurities. In today's society, where loneliness and isolation are a part of daily life, remember to have faith in yourself. We're bombarded by media that constantly tells us that we're not "enough". If isolation and alone-time is getting too much, make some

connections in your community. Visit with a stranger at the store or call a friend. Join a local civics club like the Moose or Ruritans. Volunteer for a charity or join a Rec Center. Find a local knitting group and bring your projects. There's a lot of good stuff going on right here around us and getting connected will help us be stronger when those scammers aim for our wallets.

Special Thanks to VDOT and the United Way

Although remnants of Hurricane Helene remain, two were recently removed with help from the Virginia Department of Transportation, and Dan Rice, Disaster Recovery Coordinator for the United Way of Southwest Virginia. On Sturgill Road, a car that had washed downstream during the hurricane and came to rest upside down below the hillside has been removed. On Cabin Creek Road, most of the culvert pipes left along the roadside after repairs have also been cleared away. As you can see in the picture below, two of the removed culvert pipes were an eyesore on this picturesque road.



The Sweet Taste of Summer

Blue Ridge Discovery Center

Nothing beats eating a refreshing bowl of fruit on a hot summer day. Turns out we share this common interest with many local

critters—just like us, they too enjoy munching on the delicious fruits of the season!

Allegheny Blackberry (*Rubus allegheniensis*), Wild Strawberries (*Fragaria virginiana*), and other favorites like Blue Ridge Blueberry (*Vaccinium pallidum*), Common Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*), and Northern Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) are amazing finds for us, but they also play other environmental roles and aid in many species' survival. Likewise, the plants themselves rely on the surrounding wildlife to spread seeds and reproduce.

The Common Mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*) is one such plant that depends on a specific forest friend to help disperse the seeds of its toxic fruit—the Common Box Turtle (*Terrapene carolina*)! A turtle stands at the perfect height to reach the low fruits that hang underneath the plant's umbrella-shaped leaves, plus the seeds that pass through the turtle's digestive systems are more likely to germinate.



Many insects and pollinators will develop highly specialized relationships with certain plants called "host plants," and without them, the species could not survive. The Blue Ridge Blueberry (*Vaccinium pallidum*) is a host plant for the Brown Elfin butterfly (*Callophrys augustinus*), which favors blueberry plants by laying their eggs directly on their unopened flower buds. As the caterpillars hatch, they burrow into the buds and young fruits to continue their growth.



Fruiting shrubs like the Northern Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), produce small berry-like fruits that are consistent favorites of many species. The Spicebush Swallowtail (*Papilio troilus*) and several other insect species lay their eggs underneath the plant's leaves. Deer, rabbits, and birds enjoy eating the small fruits, especially the Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*), a small bird that thrives off of the high fat contents within the berry.

One of these amazing summer fruits we share with our wildlife is the declining American Plum. (*Prunus americana*) Shared by many animals, this amazing fruit is a delicacy to us humans as well as the critters. Sadly, there has been a rapid decline due to loss of habitat, pollution, and disease. The American plum is a keystone species within our forests providing delicious fruit, strength, and shelter to those who visit.

As summer foraging season kicks into full swing, remember who else might be enjoying a juicy snack deep in the leaves. It's so important to protect what our region offers so that we can all have a refreshing summer treat!

Mount Rogers Summer Naturalist Rally: August 7-8, 2026

Beat the summer heat at BRDC's Summer Rally! Join us for a weekend of family-friendly nature programs led by expert guides. Virginia DWR Aquatic Biologist Mike Pinder will deliver Friday's keynote presentation on Virginia's freshwater fishes and lead a much-loved snorkeling program on Saturday. Other program topics include mushrooms, beavers, butterflies, birds, art, astrophotography, and more! Tickets start at \$30, youth attend for free. Meals and lodging available. Register online at <https://blueridgediscoverycenter.org/mnr-summer>.

White Top to Whitetop

By Renel Gambrill

The April 2026 issue of the Whitetop Gazette contained a trivia question that asked how the two word spelling of Whitetop was changed to the current, one-word spelling. Renel Gambrill did some research and found the following:

During the colonial era, Whitetop was known as Meadow Mountain. It is shown as such on the Joshua Fry and Peter Jefferson map of Virginia (1751-1754). Peter Jefferson was the father of our third president, Thomas Jefferson.

For the next 100 plus years White Top is spelled almost entirely as two words. In 1891, the Whitetop company was incorporated

selling most of their timber to the Hassinger Lumber Company.

The two-word spelling was used by the Virginia Creeper rail line in most, but not all, cases. Local oral and written histories vary in the spelling throughout the 1920's and into the 1930's.

The 1935 US Geological Survey shows the one-word spelling, but no official record of the change exists. Thanks Renel!

Community Center Dumpster

Please remember the dumpster at the Community Center is for Community Center use only. When others put their trash in the dumpster there often is not room for trash generated by the Community Center. Frequently, bags of trash have been placed atop an overflowing dumpster and on the ground next to it. Mattresses, carpeting, furniture and other large items should not be put in or around the dumpster. Trash overflow attracts bears, raccoons, rodents and crows, who disperse the trash on the grounds of the Community Center. It is unsightly and unsanitary, and someone has to pick up the mess. Please be considerate and show pride in our community and the Community Center. It is important to note that if the unauthorized use continues, security cameras may be used and violators fined. Thank You!

Healthy Living

by William Scarpa, Jr. MD

Chili Peppers Can Be Too Hot To Handle

If you've ever wondered what it would be like to be in a five-alarm fire, try biting into a Habanero chili pepper, the Mexican gastronomic delight that is arguably

the hottest available. It's a delight only if you know what to expect; which is another way of saying, don't try it unless you can deal with the resulting reddened eyes, sweating and choking sensation that inevitably results from a first encounter with one of the world's hottest peppers.

We've noted in other columns that chili peppers are a healthy addition to a diet. They put zest into sometimes bland low-fat foods without adding additional calories or cholesterol, they're loaded with vitamins A and C, plus calcium, phosphorus, iron, potassium, thiamine (B1), riboflavin (B2) and niacin. They have been shown to improve metabolism, help digestion and break up congestion. And those are merely the nutritional benefits.

Chili peppers have shown some blood-thinning capabilities for treating high blood pressure and heart disease. And the chemical that makes chili peppers hot, capsaicin, may reduce stored fat in blood cells and increase fat-burning liver enzymes. Capsaicin is even used as an ingredient in topical remedies to reduce pain and swelling and can serve as an antiseptic.

But the downside is hot chili peppers can burn you if you're not prepared.

Whether you'll experience a five-alarm fire or a mild tingle depends on the chili pepper, since not all of them are hot. Chili peppers, a member of the night-shade family which includes tomatoes, potatoes and tobacco, can range in heat from the innocuous bell pepper to the flaming habanero.

Color is no indication of heat; the habanero, for example, can be red, orange, green or white. A better gauge is the shape ; the small, narrow peppers like cayenne or

serrano are usually hot while larger peppers like poblano and anaheim are milder.

Heat is based on how much capsaicin is concentrated in the ribs and inner membrane of the pepper. Capsaicin is a tasteless but potent chemical that makes pepper hot; it causes an intense burning sensation in sensitive nerve fibers in the mouth and -- if the person handling the pepper isn't careful -- on fingers and in the eyes. That's why you should wear rubber gloves when handling hot peppers, don't touch your children or pets, and wash your hands thoroughly when finished. If you're not sure just how hot the pepper is, try the tongue test -- touch your tongue to a small piece of the cut flesh. You'll know instantly whether to pile it on or use a light touch.

If you misjudge and end up with a mouth full of fire, don't try water or alcohol to relieve the pain; use dairy products such as milk or yogurt. Bread, bananas and rice may also help. To aid you in your search for the right hot pepper for you, here's a list of common chili peppers from the very mild to the very hot:

Anaheim, Cherry Pepper, Cubanelle, and Poblano - mild.

Fresno and Jalapeno - warm.

Ornamental and Serrano - hot.

Chiltepin - very hot.

Habanero, Scotch bonnet - super hot.

Here's a recipe featuring a variety of peppers.

Recipe: Hot Chicken Fajitas

Ingredients:

4 chicken breasts, skinned, boned
8 whole wheat tortillas

Juice of 1 lime
 1 tablespoon olive oil
 2 cloves of garlic, crushed 1 tablespoon of water
 3 scallions, chopped
 2 to 3 teaspoons of jalapeno peppers, chopped fine (use gloves!)
 Fresh-ground black pepper and salt to taste
 1/2 teaspoon of cumin Fresh cilantro, chopped to taste
 1 medium red bell pepper
 1 medium tomato, diced
 1 medium yellow bell pepper
 Salsa to taste
 1 medium green bell pepper

Preparation:

1. Slice the chicken into chunks about 1/2-inch square. Place them in a large bowl. Squeeze lime juice over chicken. Add the garlic, scallions, black pepper, and cumin, and toss to mix.
2. Slice the bell peppers into strips and set aside.
3. Wrap the tortillas in a thin, clean, dishcloth, place them on an ovenproof plate, and put the plate in the oven. Warm the tortillas at the lowest setting on your oven while preparing the fajita mixture.
4. Heat the oil and water in a large saucepan over medium heat and add the chicken, bell peppers, and jalapeno peppers. Add the greater amount of jalapeno if you like your food very spicy. Saute, stirring frequently, until the chicken and vegetables are cooked through, about 25 minutes. Add salt to taste.
5. Spread a spoonful of the fajita mixture in a thick line in the middle of each tortilla. Top with cilantro, tomato, and salsa to taste. Roll up the tortillas and serve them.

Makes 4 servings of 2 fajitas each.

William Scarpa Jr is a Cardiologist at UNC Health Watauga with offices in both Watauga and Ashe Counties

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 \$5000 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 & Instagram 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 Burris 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:

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 WTP Finale. Gemstone and Fossil Digging with a hot dog lunch provided by the friends of the library.

Sounds of Skyline

- Sounds of Skyline is Skyline National Bank's original singer-songwriter competition celebrating local musical talent throughout our service area.
- The Sounds of Skyline: Volume 2 winners are Fisher Freeman and Amanda Robinette.
- Winners were selected through a combination of public voting and judging by a panel of music industry professionals.
- Each winner receives and all-expenses paid trip to Nashville, where they'll record their original song at Compass Records with industry professionals.
- In addition to the recording experience, the grand prize winner will perform at FloydFest and at the Bristol Rhythm & Roots Reunion.

Skyline National Bank plans to bring the competition back in 2027 with Sounds of Skyline: Volume 3, continuing to showcase local songwriting talent throughout the region.

Family Fun Day

On May 30, the Whitetop Community Center hosted a Family Fun Day fundraiser. The highlight was a surprisingly challenging mini 9-hole golf course. Guests also enjoyed a food truck, local vendors, raffle tickets, and a booth with information and applications for the Mel Leaman Free Clinic. Thank you to everyone who attended, volunteered, or helped sponsor the event. With great weather and activities for all ages, it was a fun and memorable day for the community!



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. Thanks, Gary Rascoe

Introducing The \$aving Place, a Unique Thrift Store Serving Konnarock and Neighboring Communities



Serving via Clothing & Household Goods

- \$ Quality used clothing and household goods at affordable prices
- \$ Anything that will fit in a customer's car

Serving via Health

- \$ Diabetes Undone workshops
- \$ 8 Laws of Health seminars

Serving via Finances

- \$ Debt Reduction Workshop - Strategies for clearing away debt in reduced time

Serving via Education

- \$ Adult Literacy classes
- \$ GED Prep classes

The \$aving Place will be a fully volunteer 501c endeavor overseen by a six-person committee. We are presently fund-raising in order to purchase the 3,000 sq. ft. building in "downtown" Konnarock and get the \$aving Place open for service to the community.

Requesting start-up monetary donations to purchase and fit the building for use as a thrift store: Mail donations to: The \$aving Place, 590 Konnarock Rd, Damascus, VA 24236. Contact Mary Ann Walden, Director/Manager by email: **VTeach4Life@att.net**, or leave a message at 865-804-9676.



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

Editors Note: Karen has added two new customers as a result of this advertisement. Please consider placing an ad or note in the Gazette to get your message out while supporting this publication. Prices are very reasonable. To learn more, send an email to me at **WhitetopGazette@gmail.com**

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

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WhitetopVA.org then scroll down to the bottom of the page where you will see the link.

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