



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

Cell Tower Updates

By Tom Revels

Good afternoon neighbors,
Construction of the first cell tower on Quilens Ridge is complete and is awaiting the installation of the cellular and 911 System equipment. The tower on Old Park Road is up and we are awaiting AEP's crew to install electric service to the base of the tower.

Once completed, fencing and other equipment will be installed on the ground followed by the cellular and 911 equipment. Surveys are complete and engineers are designing the access road and tower pad for the Walnut Knob site. Depending on when winter weather arrives, construction may extend into spring 2027. The County is awaiting T-Mobile's installation schedule for the first two towers.



The beautiful view from the base of the cell phone tower on Old Park Rd, Whitetop.

Whitetop Community Center Receives Grant Funding

By Gary Rascoe

The Whitetop Community Center Board of Directors is pleased to announce a grant from the Twin County Community Foundation to help purchase much needed Heating & Air equipment. A contractor has been selected, and work is expected to begin soon. The Community Center is a beautiful building in a very picturesque setting. It is a hub for many community activities, especially those serving seniors. However, funding shortfalls have delayed needed repairs and upgrades. Several board members have volunteered their personal time to address urgent issues, including frozen pipes last winter. This grant will help replace aging equipment with more efficient models, reducing energy use and ongoing repair costs.

Although we are thrilled to receive this funding, many needs remain. The Board's goal is to provide a safe, comfortable environment for people of all ages and to continue to increase community involvement. We want to expand upon our offering of fun activities for the entire family. To help accomplish our goal, we will continue fundraising to sustain and expand the activities we offer. Please join us—and bring a friend or two! In 2027, we plan to offer an expanded calendar of events that builds on the major festivals hosted by the Community Center and the local Volunteer Fire & Rescue Department.

Special thanks to Mariah Edwards, Executive Director, as well as all of board members of Twin County Foundation for supporting our needs and vision! There will be a formal award presentation in October.

You may support the Community Center by making a contribution into the Community Center account at Skyline Bank. Thank you!

Whitetop Community Center Upcoming Activities

By Marlena Philipps

The always popular Basket Bingo will be held on SATURDAY— October 17 at the Whitetop Community Center, located at 16309 Highlands Parkway, Whitetop VA.

Doors will open at 5:00 pm and Bingo Starts at 6:00 pm. There will be 20 Baskets available to Win and you can play all of the games for \$20 which includes 2 cards per game. Extra cards are only \$5 each. The baskets are donated by local individuals and businesses, and while individual basket value will vary, all are valued at \$25.00 or more.

CONCESSIONS will be sold between 5:00 and 6:00. At halftime, there will be drawings for numerous Door Prizes.

All Proceeds Benefit The Whitetop Community Center. For Information call 388-2873.

The Whitetop Community Center will be hosting our 2026 Annual Memory Lights Tree.

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

You can reserve a memory light by mailing the names of the people you would like honored with a \$5.00 donation for each. You can also drop them off to Marlena Phillips at Whitetop Library or Joyce Stamper (at Bingo or Seniors).

Our annual ceremony will take place November 21, 2026 6:00 pm. The roll of names being honored will be read aloud, followed by the lighting of the tree. Refreshments will be served following the ceremony.

The tree will remain lit until January 1, 2027. A list of the names will be displayed in the Whitetop Community Center Lobby.

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

Chasing Your Dreams

By Suzin Sciabarasi

There are memories in your life you will never forget. I like to remember a very old childhood memory. Especially now. Now that I have gray hair, now that I am retired, now that I know that this memory has become a reality and

it will keep me active as I approach this senior chapter of my life.

I was 12 years old when my parents decided a trip to Italy to visit relatives who did not emigrate to the US was a good idea. While driving through the Sicilian countryside, we came upon a tourist attraction near a rest area. There, a small, petite donkey was all dressed up in traditional Sicilian attire with the feather plume on his head, his colorful harness attached to a more colorful, traditional Sicilian cart. It was love at first sight for me. A little donkey that wasn't a stuffed toy, but instead a real, live, brown, hairy, sweet-eyed burro waiting to be petted and stood only as tall as me.

I must have carried that image for the longest time somewhere in the back of my mind, but not consciously. I was 42 years old when I found a two page spread in my local newspaper about a nearby farm that sold Sicilian miniature donkeys. My eyes couldn't read fast enough, my heart started racing and I hollered out to my husband who was in another room, "Quick! put Jackson in his car seat...we are going to see some miniature donkeys!" That's when this very serious affliction was unleashed from the tiny crevices of my childhood. I just had to see and touch a Sicilian miniature donkey again! I have photos of that trip still on my refrigerator today; my then 3 year old son, sitting atop a little donkey named Willie Nelson (the name of this farm was Country Music Miniatures, need I say more?).

After a short time, we found a local breeder and enjoyed several visits with her and her miniature donkeys. But life rolled on and as much as I wanted to sell my home immediately to acquire property suitable for two donkeys, the career demands, the marriage demands, the child demands, the aging parent demands all demanded that they were a greater priority. Before I knew it I was turning 50. My only request for that significant milestone was that I get a weekend away somewhere that had farm animals with miniature donkeys as part of the pack. So, this was how I kept my interest alive; I dabbled in my dream of owning miniature donkeys.

When I finally retired twelve years later, I decided to challenge myself...was this interest in miniature donkeys real or perceived? It was winter in Texas and the Ft. Worth Stock and Rodeo Show, was about to happen 4 hours away so I made arrangements to go, not sure what I would do there other than to seek out people who knew something about these adorable creatures. After watching them perform their tricks and routines from a seat in the arena, I ran to hunt for a door that would lead me to the bowels of the arena where they entered and exited the dirt ring. I just knew I would find them eventually and told myself that the people who love them might be sitting around, just waiting to tell me more. They were all there....removing halters, changing outfits, eating a sandwich on an upturned bucket, friendly and with open hearts so willing to answer the one question I had: "How do I do this, too !!!!!".

One thing led to another, connections were made and for two years I was mentored by a renowned breeder in the donkey world who was as glad to have me assist her at her farm as I was glad to be there every day. I learned everything I could as to how to care for and train these unique creatures.

Today, I own the two miniature donkeys that I have worked with and loved for 3 years and while I feel fortunate to have fulfilled my dream of owning donkeys, it is not an end all, be all in this life for me. I still pursue and enjoy many other things that interest me. I don't believe we were meant to have only one career skill or only one interest or passion but instead we are, by the grace of a higher power, multi-skilled and multi-talented if only we can find our matching passions. To not dabble, chase, or try to fulfill our dreams or interests is being unfair to ourselves and creates a void for personal joy and fulfillment.

Whether you are a young person, a middle life person or a person in later years like me, there is ALWAYS A WAY to either dabble or fully pursue our interests and dreams. The only thing that can stop us is our own attitude. There's an old saying, CAN'T NEVER COULD DO NOTHIN' and after 40 years of working with people, a better saying was never said when we say CAN'T. Power up your imagination and for now, forget about the "dream stealers" of time, money, and people you might need to make it happen.... life has a way of presenting

opportunities for dabbling or fulfilling your dreams if you just open your heart and start the journey.



Suzin Sciabarasi is a retired Human Resource executive who enjoyed helping people find personal and professional fulfillment in their life's work.

My Adventures Hiking the AT

By Jeff Davis

Good day to all,

I hope this finds everyone in good health and great spirits. First thing I would like to do is give a huge Thank You to Gary and Lee for taking their time to create this for our community to enjoy.

Where I left off was in Hot Springs, NC at Elmers with my Daddio and amazing friend Jessica who were joining me on the next 36 miles. Not much went on for the first day besides going for a walk with two amazing people. This was the first time I realized that I am getting in really good shape. Jessica and I had hiked several times together and she was always a bit faster than me. Well on

this day hiking seemed so easy. Having to slow my pace so I could walk with them was not as easy as it seems. I would be chatting having the time of my life and looking at Daddio and Jessica and seeing them tired and struggling.

On the second day of our hike, we were passing a road when we saw a sign that said trail magic 1/10 of a mile down the road. So there we went, I was so excited that my Dad and Jessica were getting to experience this. We arrive, knock on the door, and a gentleman answers. He brought us into this incredibly beautiful living room and fed us waffles and homemade blueberry ice cream and banana pudding. What a treat, Daddio and Jessica got to experience trail magic firsthand.

After 3 days of hiking, we were getting close to Daddio's car, the conversation came up from Dad saying I seemed to be in my better place in my mind and that I would fit in the car if I wanted to go home with them. The truth, there was no way that I was getting in that car and leaving. I felt as though my trip was just beginning. We sat by the car as they changed and did some preparation for the ride home. I was truly happy and what a feeling it was. I cannot lie, wow, watching them drive away was kinda hard for one moment. I thought to myself, "what am I actually doing and why?" Then looking up the trail, I saw the white blaze and realized the truth, I am going for a walk to Maine and there is no place I would rather be.

As I continued, I walked past Badger and Ron Paul and actually hiked for half a day with them, they are becoming my good friends on the trail. I was just content hiking myself at this point.

I reached Bald Mountain Shelter and settled in for the night. Because the weather was warm and clear, I skipped the tent and planned to sleep under the stars. Just as I lay down, my friends arrived. Since it was still early, I got up to greet them. The shelter was crowded, so they asked to camp near me and share my fire. When they came down and saw me sleeping on the ground, they called it stealth camping. They settled on the other side of the fire. That night, April 1, they truly became my brothers.

The next morning, we got up and together hiked into Erwin, TN. I needed to get to town and resupply, so they continued and I went to town.

Thank You so very much if you are taking your time and reading this. I hope everyone is ready for the winter. Stay warm my amazing Grayson County community.

Your friend,
Jeff Davis

What's going on over there?

The smell of bacon has a way of bringing people together. And a hot biscuit opened to your choice of gravy with some fresh scrambled eggs. Pancakes??! Now you're wanting to sit down next to some neighbors that you haven't seen in a

while. A cup of hot coffee and an update with people you've missed.

This is what's going on at the Konnarock - Green Cove-Laurel Valley community center on the second Saturday of each month. (8:30 - 10:30 a.m.)

In an effort to keep the lights on and be more supportive in our community, the long tradition of feeding our neighbors has been re-kindled.

After the Hurricane Helene event and recovery, people in this area have had some physical and emotional needs that linger. Coming together to eat is always soothing. As it has been throughout this spring and summer in Konnarock. Stories tumble out. Reuniting this distance from Sept 27, 2024, allows for a new appreciation for this building. Supplies and support were coordinated from here.

Volunteers from so many places were organized and fed here. Many slept in their cars/ trucks in our parking area. Neighbors walked into the homes and hollows, carrying water and food. Hugs and tears. Nobody will forget the significance of this Community Center being available and operating for us then.

Coordinating a recovery from any potential event was part of the reason that people worked so hard to establish this building. That was 45 years ago. And it's worked!! Volunteers had a place to check in for directions and people in our community got their immediate needs met. This was repeated throughout

the region that this hurricane ravaged; many, many community centers just like ours.

As the rubble cleared and the large wounds healed, the need to gather grew. Though breakfast has been made throughout the history of this Center, we had to regroup. Members who have been vital to this kitchen had to be replaced with other able bodies. Breakfast on the second Saturday was renewed. The smell of bacon and the hum of conversation has increased the number of those served every month since then.

In May of this year, the yard was full of tables of flea market items and a few of our talented, local crafters. That experience bloomed into a larger event in August. We were encouraged to keep it up. Seemed rejuvenated. Old and renewed folks shared food and fellowship. Neighbors looked toward the next breakfast. Steadily, on the second Saturday through November, this opportunity has been a great chance to give support to each other. It also helps keep our Center open. More of our highly skilled crafters are joining us again at the November 9th breakfast.

Membership to the K-GC-LV Association is open to any resident (over 16 years old) of Washington, Grayson or Smyth counties, Virginia. Community Center meetings are held on the second Monday of each month at 7 p.m. Everyone is welcome. Come early and help with breakfast (7-ish) on the second Saturday morning. October 10th is the next opportunity where a local crafter will be featured.

Also, we'll have some local produce from a Green Cove farmer. Look for a larger group of crafters at our November 14th breakfast. Come shop! Come eat! Come support local. Come chat with neighbors! Come help us maintain what was vital during our recovery. After 45 years of effort by so many to build and maintain this Community Center, help us in any way you can. Volunteer!

Building rental is for birthday parties, reunions, weddings, holidays, ...tell us what you need. Kids have a restored playground!

Make plans to get together. Call for more information: 276-780-1000

Bring a friend to breakfast. Come shop for some holiday gifts. Let the smell of bacon lead you to the Konnarock- Green Cove- Laurel Valley Community Center.

Little Wilson Methodist Campground

By Ed Clayton

Western Grayson County abounds with beautiful campgrounds; they are found at Grayson Highlands State Park, and Forest Service campgrounds at Grindstone, Beartree, and others.

Many years ago, there was another type of campground in the area: a church campground. It was located near Volney and called the Little Wilson Methodist Campground. This campground preceded the existence of church buildings and provided a place to hold religious services when a

minister passed through. Today we might call these services all-day and multi-day revivals.

The sale of land for the campground is documented in a deed recorded in Book 9 Page 163. The deed, dated March 9, 1843, records the sale of 216 acres by Philip Perkins and his wife Rebecca to Shadrack Greer and others. The wording of the deed implies that the "encampment" existed prior to the date of the deed. The best description of this campground is in the booklet, "Sketches of the Grant Circuit," written by Rev. J. W. Morris in 1926. An article in "Sketches" locates the campground "Two miles down the State Highway East of Grant just as you cross the bridge over Little Wilson Creek, to your left." When "Sketches" was written, VA 16 did not exist, and the dirt road was on the opposite side of Little Wilson Creek that is VA 16 today. So today, going toward Volney, the campground would be to the right of VA 16. "Sketches" provides some insight into what we might have seen at the campground. "The following persons had cabins there: T. F. Perkins, J. A. Hash, Wilborn Ross, a licensed exhorter, The Preachers' Tent, John Baker, Zeke Young, Fielden Young, William Baker, The Negro Tent, Hezakah Perkins, Rev. Philip Perkins, Joseph Jones, and Dr. Alexander Perkins, in the order given, beginning on the N. W. corner."

"Sketches" suggests that the preachers included Rev. J. M. McTyre, Rev. Mitchell, and Rev. Perkins. Other sources suggest that Rev. Robert Sheffey, a well-known evangelist from Ivanhoe in adjacent Wythe County held services at the campground.

A deed recorded in Book 9, Page 163 and dated January 18, 1849 records the sale of 86 acres of the original 216 acres, possibly because the entire original tract was not needed. The formation of local churches and the construction of church buildings eliminated the need for the campground. A deed dated 1883 records the transfer of property for the Little Wilson Church, and a deed transferred property in 1874 for the Grant Church. One source suggests that the campground was abandoned by 1885.

Today, there are no visible remains of the Little Wilson Campground. As you drive by the site on VA 16, listen carefully. Possibly you will hear the echo of a sermon preached there in the 1800s.

Community Spotlight: Renny Gambrill

Editor's Note: Renny is well known as a key member of the Whitetop community, especially for her work with seniors. She does a fantastic job in making the senior get-togethers entertaining and always has a few jokes to tell, and games to play. Personally, I have assisted Renny as one of election workers. She is the key that keeps us organized and efficient.

I was born in Illinois and grew up in a Lutheran pastor's family of four in the Chicago suburbs. I attended Carthage College in Kenosha, Wisconsin, where I studied English Literature and History, with special interests in Medieval Liturgical Drama and the Beat Poets.



Renny Gambrill

In 1977 I was honored to be inducted as a member of Sigma Tau Delta, a National English Honorary Society and have had poetry published in *Wind* and *Vega* literary magazines.

After moving to Southwest Virginia in 1977, I later met and married Glenn Gambrill, a transplant from Annapolis, Maryland. We have been married for 39 years. Upon marrying Glenn, I became a stepmother to three, a grandmother and now a great grandmother. I enjoy reading, gardening, canning, spending time with our dog and cat, as well as tending to our chickens and honeybees. I can be found two days a week at the Whitetop Community Center as the Site Manager for District Three's Whitetop Friendship Cafe, a

senior congregate nutrition program. I feel lucky to be part of the Whitetop community and try to give back by Whitetop community and try to give back by volunteering at Feeding Southwest Virginia, working as an election official and as President of the Friends of the Whitetop Public Library.

Healthy Living

by William Scarpa, Jr. MD

Cranberries hmm?

No Longer Boring Side Dish,
Cranberries Offer Health, Versatility

Those little red berries relegated to oh-hum side dishes on everyone's table at Thanksgiving have gained new stature as a health food, a glamorous dessert, and as a versatile ingredient of everything from pies to ketchup and salsa.

Despite their low status on the hierarchy of Thanksgiving foods, cranberries are American originals. Appropriately served during the holiday season, they were introduced to European settlers by the Indians who gathered them wild, cooked them with honey and maple sugar, and dried them for winter use. By the 1840's, notably in Massachusetts and our own New Jersey, cultivation of the low, trailing, woody plants in bogs and other places with wet, acid soil had become a thriving industry.

A good source of Vitamin C, sailors ate cranberries on long voyages to ward off scurvy. Over the years, "old wives' tales" also grew about the

cranberry's prowess as a fighter against asthma and skin ailments, and as an intestinal antiseptic, particularly for kidney and bladder infection.

Now there's scientific evidence that at least one of these old wife's tales are true; cranberries do indeed help to fight bladder infection, particularly in older women. Scientists originally thought that reports of its bacteria-fighting abilities might be due to the cranberry's high vitamin C content, which may stifle bladder infection by making urine too acidic for bacteria.

We have all heard of prior studies which indicates that the juice may contain a chemical that keeps bacteria from adhering to the bladder. One group of women were given cup-a-day regimens of cranberry juice, while the other control group was given a berry-free imitation. After four to eight weeks, bladder infections were only half as prevalent in the cranberry group as in the control group. Aside from its apparent medicinal power to fight urinary infection, the lowly cranberry has also stepped out from its role as a traditional Thanksgiving side dish. Over the last 10 years, cranberries have begun appearing in pastry shops and dessert carts in dishes often combined with apples and other berries. They're found in cookbooks and menus as salsas and sauces; in flash-frozen form on supermarket shelves, and dried form in gourmet shops and markets. Mixed with honey, cranberries make a great topping for a dessert, or garnish for a pudding or pie. Some imaginative

chefs are now blending cranberries, bell peppers and/or jalapeno chili pepper, orange juice, and onions in a combination of sweet, spicy and tart cranberry salsa. Others make an unusual and tasty cranberry ketchup by combining the flavor of the berry with oranges, onions, garlic, and a concoction of pickling spices, vinegar and a little brown sugar.

Aside from the cranberry's health benefits and growing versatility, 3 1/2 ounces of cranberries have just 46 calories, while the juice has just 65 calories and the sauce, 146 calories. Here's another example of the cranberry's versatility that would look great and taste great at your Thanksgiving feast.

Cranberry/Walnut Bread

Ingredients:

2 cups unbleached, white flour
3 tablesp. white vinegar plus enough water to make 2/3 cup
1 teasp. baking soda
1/4 cup canola oil
1 teasp salt
1 cup halved or coarsely chopped raw cranberries
3/4 cup granulated sugar
1 egg
1/3 cup orange juice
1 cup chopped walnuts
1 teasp. grated orange rind

Preparation:

1. Start heating oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 9" X 5" X 3" loaf pan.
 2. In mixing bowl, sift flour, soda, salt, sugar.
 3. With fork, beat egg; stir in orange juice and rind, vinegar-water mixture, canola oil. Add all at once to flour mixture; stir just until all flour is moistened.
 4. Add cranberries and walnuts; turn into pain. Bake 60 to 70 minutes or until cake tester, inserted in center, comes out clean.
 5. Cool in pan 10 minutes, remove. Cool overnight before slicing.
- P.S. This bread freezes well, too.

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

United Disaster Preparedness Symposium

By Daniel Rice

On September 22, United Way of Southwest Virginia hosted the inaugural United Disaster Preparedness Symposium (UDPS) at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center in Abingdon. This symposium brought together professionals in emergency management, local leaders, non-profits, funders, plus state and federal partners. There were education courses provided by the National Weather Service who discussed forecast models for upcoming seasons and also how communities can become Storm Ready,

plus a course led by the Washington County Long-term Recovery Group (LTRG), Trails to Recovery, who discussed the steps, benefits, partnerships, case management, and funding sources to establish a disaster-ready LTRG. Marcus Coleman, the Vice President of Community Resilience Strategy at United Way Worldwide gave a keynote address for how citizens and communities can work together to be better prepared.

United Way of Southwest Virginia's preparedness initiative also includes providing community trainings across SWVA. If you have a group who would be interested in scheduling these free training sessions reach out to their main office at: 276-628-2160.

News From Independence

- The 2026 Southwest Virginia Tourism Awards were held on Wednesday, August 5, 2026 and Grayson County took the Best Print Ad Award with a marketing budget of \$50,000; Grayson County also tied with Giles County Tourism for the Best Visitor Guide with a marketing budget of \$50,000 or less – proud of Tracy Cornett and all she does!
- Chelsey Hodge has been hired as our grant writer for the next two years – she will begin in November and as a reminder, her position is funded utilizing the Wellspring grant that we received.

Rugby Volunteer Fire & Rescue

Due to low water level conditions, numerous households have had their wells/springs dry up to the point they no longer supply water. Rugby Volunteer Fire & Rescue has helped by providing 1,000 gallons of water to those in need. There is no charge, but donations are suggested.

When “Dry Land Fish” Fed the Mountains Before It Fed Fancy Restaurants



John William Peace II

In the hills of Southwest Virginia and Eastern Kentucky, spring didn't always arrive by the calendar. Sometimes it arrived when somebody came through the kitchen door holding a paper sack full of “dry land fish.”

Now if you didn't grow up in Appalachia, that phrase “dry land fish” probably sounds like something from a tall tale told on a back porch after dark. But old mountain families knew exactly what it meant. They weren't talking about fish at all. They were talking about morel mushrooms.

“Families planned spring walks around warm rains and blooming dogwoods. Some swore mushrooms appeared when oak leaves grew “big as a squirrel's ear.” Others watched for certain moon phases or soil temperatures without ever using scientific terms.”

Long before upscale restaurants in cities started charging premium prices for morels beside steak dinners and imported wine, mountain people were frying them in cast iron skillets with bacon grease because they had to. They were free food. Good food. Filling food.

And in hard times across Appalachia, that mattered. In many coal camp communities and isolated hollers throughout Southwest Virginia, Eastern Kentucky, East Tennessee, and Southern West Virginia, spring mushroom hunting was as much about survival as was gardening, canning, or hunting squirrels. Families often guarded their mushroom patches with the same secrecy used for trout fishing holes or ginseng locations.

You didn't tell outsiders where the dry land fish grew. Some old timers would carry them home in flour sacks. Others used poke sacks or old buckets. Kids learned early to keep quiet about good mushroom spots. Morels might appear around dead elm trees, old apple orchards, creek bottoms, poplar groves, or sunny hillsides after a warm spring rain. Finding them took knowledge passed down through generations.

That knowledge did not begin with modern Appalachia. The tradition likely carried traces of European, African and Native Appalachian plant knowledge blending over centuries in the mountains. The West Africans and Europeans who arrived in Appalachia brought with them old world traditions of foraging wild foods. In the old world, rural families gathered berries, greens, nuts, herbs, and mushrooms to survive extreme weather and lean years. When they pushed into the Appalachian backcountry during the 1700s, they adapted those traditions to the forests around them. But they also occupied lands where Cherokee, Yesq and Moneton already possessed generations of knowledge about local plants, roots, medicines, and seasonal food cycles. Like many Appalachian traditions, "dry land fish" likely emerged from that history of cultural blending and conquest. The mountains themselves became the teacher.

Over time, practical survival knowledge became folklore. Mushroom hunting turned into ritual. Families planned spring walks around warm rains and blooming dogwoods. Some swore mushrooms appeared when oak leaves grew "big as a squirrel's ear." Others watched certain moon phases or soil temperatures without ever using scientific terms. Dry land fish belonged to working people. Coal miners. Farmers. Country mothers & grannies. Timber men. Factory workers. These were families scraping through hard winters and layoffs. During the Depression, wild food helped keep many mountain families fed. Morels might

be fried crisp, mixed with eggs, added to gravy, or eaten beside soup beans and cornbread.

That was Appalachian knowledge; observation passed hand to hand. And for generations, nobody thought of it as gourmet. Then something changed. The same foods once associated with poverty and isolation became fashionable in urban America. Chefs discovered morels. Food magazines celebrated "wild foraging." Suddenly wealthy tourists were paying top dollar for ingredients mountain people once gathered in poke sacks after church on Sunday afternoon. That story has happened before in Appalachia. Soup beans became "heritage cuisine." Moonshine became boutique craft liquor. Cast iron cooking became trendy. Ramps showed up on expensive restaurant menus. And now dry land fish have followed the same path.

Yet the heart of the tradition was never really about food alone because it was more about memory; that's and that's something you can't serve as a gourmet. A grandfather pointing toward a hillside. A grandmother frying mushrooms in an iron skillet. Children learning woods knowledge before they were old enough to drive. Families walking ridges together after a spring rain. In many ways, dry land fish represent something Appalachia and all of rural America has always understood better than cities. The memory that goes along with the food can't be bought; can't be sold. And the land itself can feed you if you learn how to listen to it.

Friends of Grayson Highlands State Park

The Friends of Grayson is a non-profit organization serving as an advocate for the entire creeper trail and has been doing so for over 30 years. They have over 2,000 Facebook followers and are reaching out for donations. You can use the QR code below to donate. Using your phone camera, focus on the QR code and you should see the words, "give butter" displayed. Click on "give butter" and it will take you to the donation link. Thanks!



Stewardship Fund Launched for the Creeper Trail

The Virginia Creeper Trail Conservancy and Kiewit will launch a campaign to support long-term maintenance, repair and improvement of the Virginia Creeper Trail. Kiewit Companies Foundation will match the first \$10,000 to help build a durable funding source for the trail. The fund will be used for projects that protect and enhance the trail experience, including routine and deferred maintenance, infrastructure repairs, trail surface improvements,

signage, safety enhancements, accessibility improvements and environmental stewardship activities.

Blue Ridge Discovery Center

Join us at Blue Ridge Discovery Center on October 16-18 for the Mount Rogers Fall Naturalist Rally!

Dr. Carrie Fearer, Assistant Professor with the Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation at Virginia Tech, will be delivering a keynote presentation on Friday evening, titled, "Small but Deadly: How Pests and Pathogens Transform Our Forests."

Saturday promises a full day of expert-led nature programs for all ages! Phenology and trees, birding, freshwater mussels, wetlands and riparian zones, art, geology, weather, wild edible and medicinal plants, salamanders, and fly casting are just a few of the programs we have on the schedule. Youth programming is available all day Saturday, and free for kids 11 and under, so bring the whole family! Enjoy a concert by local talent The Boys on Saturday night! Stay in the historic Konnarock Schoolhouse and enjoy delicious home-cooked meals. Register online:

blueridgediscoverycenter.org/fall-rally.

In Memorial

Two very involved patrons of the Blue Ridge Discovery Center are Roy Brittain and Kitty Boyette. Sadly, Kitty slipped away into eternity on August 28. Her service was held at the BRDC, and a nephew wrote a song in her memory. The words are below, but if you would like to listen to it, go to Roy's website: **www.RoyBrittain.com**.

She's Gone Back to the Mountains

Kitty knew the old roads by the bend
and by the stone
She could name the creek by singing,
never walked them alone.
Virginia ridges held her like a quilt
around her bed
And every laurel branch she passed
bowed softly overhead.

[Chorus]

Kitty's gone back to the mountains,
The mountains called her home
Through the Blue Ridge mist and
morning pine
She'll never walk alone.
Kitty's gone back to the mountains
Though our hearts are left behind
Her laugh still turns the hollows green
And lives in every pine.

Her sisters sit on the front porch
where the evening settles low
Passing round the old-time stories
only sisters know.
One begins to laugh, then stops, for
Kitty's place is bare
And the quiet gathers slowly in the
rocking chair.

She had a way of making warmth
from any winter day,
A little light around the kitchen, a kind
word on the way.
Now the creek keeps on its talking,
hardwood leaves still turn,
But the ones who loved her best feel
the empty where she'd been.

[Bridge]

When the old road climbs the ridge
line
And the last light leaves the trees,

We will hear her in the mountain wind,
We will feel her in the breeze.
Not gone from us completely,
Though her hands are still and cold,
For the hills that raised our Kitty
Keep the story they have told.

[Final Chorus]

Kitty's gone back to the mountains,
We'll lay her there to rest
Beneath the trees and ridgeline
In the place she loved the best.
Kitty's gone back to the mountains,
And the mountains bear her name:
She's in the mist, the creek, the pine,
And, we'll love her there the same.

[Outro]

Gone back to the mountains...
Called her home at last...
Gone back to the mountains,
But never gone from us.

New Senior Memories Column

The Whitetop Gazette is seeking out
community seniors who would like to
share their memories of life growing
up in Whitetop and nearby.

Responses will be compiled into an
article for the next and following
editions of the Gazette. For our first
Senior Memories column, we'd like to
hear your memories of going to
school in the area. Please submit
your memories to either Gary Rascoe
at WhitetopGazette@gmail.com or
Diana Goodwin at

goodwindianak2@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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The Whitetop Gazette

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