



WNC Honors Program & Awards Application

2023

Updated 5/25/23

INTRODUCTION

The WNC Honors Program works with member community development centers across western North Carolina to help them improve the vitality of their organizations, programs, and communities. We provide workshops, best practices sharing, facilitation of collaboration among communities, grant opportunities, strategic planning events, coaching, and other assistance. The answers you provide on this application inform what programs we offer.

The WNC Honors Awards is an annual event to recognize these communities for implementing valuable programs to enhance the quality of life for their residents. We seek not only to celebrate WNC ingenuity and hard work, but also to highlight best practices.

The applications for the WNC Honors Program & Awards are reviewed by a committee using the WNC Honors Levels to determine which level of development each community has achieved: *Trillium, Mountain Laurel, Redbud, or White Oak*. Each eligible community that submits a complete application will receive a grant award. Within each level, at least one community that stands out for its accomplishments will be recognized as Best in Class and will earn additional cash awards. There are also Special Awards for specific achievements: the Calico Cat, the Youth Leadership Award, and the WNC Communities Impact Award. All communities are encouraged to compete for these.

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible to apply, a community must:

- be formally organized with at least a President, VP, and a Secretary-Treasurer working together to improve the quality of life for all residents, and be engaging a broad range of

community residents in various programs that have an impact on families, seniors and youth;

- submit an application by an individual authorized by your club to do so; and
- be an established community center that has been active in the WNC Communities' Honors Awards program in the past, or if a new organization, it must be replacing a club that is no longer active, or be in an area not being served by a current member community and be approved by WNC Communities. WNC Communities reserves the right to define eligibility.

Completion of this annual application is a prerequisite to being considered active with WNC Communities' WNC Honors Program and gives the community access to participate in various capacity-building training programs, our WNC Honors Learning Center website, consulting services, collaborative efforts with WNC Communities, and the George H.V. Cecil Journey Scholarship program.

INSTRUCTIONS

- **Only online applications will be accepted.**
- **Information on your application should be for activities from July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023 only unless otherwise noted in an application question.**
- Any uploaded photos must be jpg (jpeg) files. Please make sure your pictures are clear. We may want to use them in the event slideshow or otherwise feature them at the event.
- We recommend you compose answers for the narrative sections in Microsoft Word, use the "word count" feature to make sure you are within the word limit, then copy and paste them into the online application.
- Applications are due **Wednesday, August 9th, 2023**, by 11:59 pm.

COMMUNITY CONTACT INFORMATION

- **NOTE: This information will be used to update our mailing list, your Community Listing in the WNC Honors Learning Center website, and to cut your Award check. Please take care with accuracy. Thank you!**
- Your Community Center/Club's Official Name (spelled how it should appear on your award and your check): **Bethel Rural Community Organization**
- Your Community Club's Physical Address: **664 Sonoma Road, Waynesville, NC 28786**
- Your Community Club's Phone Number: **President, Carol Litchfield: 828-452-7536**
- Your Community Club's Email Address: **haywoodbrco@gmail.com**
- Your Community Club's Mailing Address, if different from the physical address above: **PO Box 1333, Waynesville, NC 28786**
- The NC County Where Your Club is Located: **Haywood**
- First and Last Name of person filling out this application: **Evelyn Coltman**

- Email address of person filling out this application: evelyn3226@charter.net

WNC HONORS LEARNING CENTER COMMUNITY CLUB LISTING

The information below is for the new WNC Honors Learning Center website we created just for our member communities. Aligned with our mission, we are seeking to enhance collaboration among communities in sharing their knowledge and helping each other. This private, password-protected, members-only website has a Members Directory where each community club has their own page, called the Community Club Listing. In the Community Club Listing (your page), you can describe your community's best practices. If your community chooses to do so, you can provide:

- A) a Community Description** for your page, which briefly describes your best practices or programs *that other communities may want to learn from or copy,*
- B) a Contact's Name**, and Email or Phone, which designates a person that other communities can contact to learn more about your club's best practices, and
- C) a Community Club Listing Administrator** Name and Email, which is a designated person in your club who will be responsible for accessing the website to update your Community Club Listing. (WNC Communities will provide training and it's not hard. Really!).
- D) your community's website and Facebook page links** so that members who want to check out your club can find you online.

- A) Your Community Description.** (Required for White Oak. Highly Recommended, but optional for other levels.) Briefly describe your best practices/successes in programs, fundraising, and/or collaboration. These should be things that other communities may want to learn about to inform creating their own programs. (This should *not* be a long list of everything your club offers.) Guiding question: What is something we do that is so great that other clubs would LOVE to know how we did it? (Limit: 700 words)

Bethel Rural Community Organization (BRCO) coordinates local and regional resources to implement programs and projects that enhance the quality of rural life in Bethel. Incorporated as a nonprofit in 2008, BRCO serves 3500 households in the Pigeon River Valley south of Canton, NC. This scenic, rural area extends southward to the Blue Ridge Parkway and westward to the outskirts of Waynesville, NC. Our BRCO facility (historic Presbyterian Church and Fellowship Hall) is located in Bethel, in the heart of the Pigeon Valley.

We invite our members and the public to attend our membership meetings which are held bi-monthly in our Fellowship Hall. Participants enjoy a potluck meal and a program on a topic that is of interest to the community. They also learn about the good works of BRCO Committees and are encouraged to join a

Committee where their skills and talent can be applied to worthy projects that benefit the community.

Each month, BRCO Community Pantry volunteers provide boxes of food to at least 50 families in need. BRCO also distributes Fresh Produce Coupons to the pantry patrons who use the coupons to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at local produce stands. BRCO reimburses the produce stand operators for the coupons they collect. BRCO also maintains a Benevolence Fund to help struggling families through challenging circumstances.

The BRCO Education Committee annually grants awards to students at Bethel Elementary, Bethel Middle, and Pisgah High School who demonstrate academic excellence. The BRCO David Curphey Citizenship Award is presented to an eighth grader based on attitude, behavior, civic-mindedness, and treating others with care and respect. BRCO awards a \$1000 Scholarship to a deserving High School senior.

The BRCO Historic Preservation Committee preserves and shares Pigeon Valley history by producing DVDs, CDs, books, art prints, historic markers, and digital files and archives. The North Carolina Society of Historians has recognized the Historic Preservation Committee and its members with six state history awards. The Committee invites individuals to share their historic documents, photographs, and knowledge of Pigeon Valley history with BRCO.

The BRCO Rural Preservation Committee recognizes that the quality of rural life is best preserved by retaining our farming heritage; promoting sustainable agriculture; and protecting farmland, wildlife lands, and waterways while also educating farmers and residents. The committee conceived of and continues to support the Haywood Advancement Foundation's Buy Haywood initiative. This initiative supports local farmers by marketing local farm products, events, and activities in an Agri-Tourism brochure that is distributed county-wide and is accessible online. BRCO has assisted in placing permanent conservation easements on 543 acres of land and 3.8 miles of stream and river frontage.

B) Your Community Club Listing **Contact's Name** (Required for White Oak. Highly Recommended, but optional for other levels.): **Carol Litchfield**

Your Community Club Listing Contact's Email (Required for White Oak. Highly Recommended, but optional for other levels.) haywoodbrco@gmail.com

Your Community Club Listing Contact's Phone (Recommended, but optional): **828-452-7536**

C) Your Community Club Listing Administrator Name (Highly Recommended, but optional): **Carol Litchfield**

Your Community Club Listing Administrator's Email Address (Highly Recommended, but Optional): cltchfld@aol.com

Your Community Club Listing Administrator's Phone (Optional): **828-452-7536**

D) Your Community Club's Website Link (Recommended, but Optional):

<http://www.bethelrural.org>

Your Community Club's Facebook Page Link (Recommended, but Optional):

<https://www.facebook.com/bethelruralcommunityorganization>

COMMUNITY PROFILE

1. Please list the names, phone numbers, and emails of your officers. If you do not have a listed title filled, please enter "0" in each field for that title. We strongly recommend entering an email address for *at least* two officers as this is our primary way of communicating with our members.

President: **Carol Litchfield, 828-452-7536 and 828-476-0048, cltchfld@aol.com**

VP: **Greg Christopher, 828-452-6768, Gregchristopher2324@gmail.com**

Secretary: **Roxanna Billings, 617-543-2676, rsbillings51@gmail.com**

Treasurer: **Mike McLean, 828-275-4056, memclean@aol.com**

Other: Frances Adamson, Board Chair: **828-648-7292 and 828-734-4804, mulemom9@gmail.com**

2. How many households are in your community approximately: **3,500**
3. Which of the following specific programs or initiatives presented by WNC Communities did your community club participate in during the past year (if any)? Check all that apply:
 - WNC Communities' Coffee Hours (any of the 11 offered on Zoom between July 2022 – June 2023) - **Yes**
 - WNC Honors Awards (November 2022) - **Yes**
 - Adult & Youth Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Workshop - **Yes**
 - Strategic Planning Workshop - **Yes**

- Grant Writing Prep Workshop (Prep for Cannon and Creating New Economies Fund grants) - **Yes**
- Cannon Foundation Grant Info Session (Program Officer presented on grants for buildings) - **Yes**
- Promoting our George H.V. Cecil Journey Scholarship to youth in your community – **Yes**
- Hemlock Restoration Initiative educational session on how to treat hemlocks for wooly adelgid
- None of the above

GOOD GOVERNANCE

- Does your community have written bylaws? Choose the description below that best matches your community's situation:
 - No, OR if yes, they have NOT been reviewed and/or updated in over 10 years
 - Yes - some have been developed and approved by the board, but they are weak or are not being used consistently
 - Yes - well developed, approved by our board, and we're using them regularly
 - Yes - fully developed, approved by our board, used regularly, revisited annually with appropriate adjustments made. We also have a Conflict of Interest section and a Whistleblower policy **Yes – whistleblower policy adopted July**
- How often do you meet on average and how do you run your meetings? Please choose one:
 - Regularly and at least 6x per year
 - At least monthly with some public attendance (open meetings)
 - Board meets at least monthly (open meetings) and we have committees that meet regularly
 - Board meets at least monthly (with open meetings) with report outs given by committees in advance of those meetings
 - Other: **Board meets bi-monthly with open meeting; membership meets bi-monthly with open meeting with advance notice/reports of both meetings.**
- Is your community center/club a 501c3 (or 501c4) tax exempt organization? Check one:
 - No
 - No, but we have a 501c3 fiduciary sponsor, which we can use to apply for grants
 - Yes, we are a 501c3 - **Yes**
 - Yes, we are a 501c4
- What is the status of your Strategic Plan? Please choose one:
 - We have no written Strategic Plan yet.
 - We are working on a plan and currently have strategic goals. They are attached.
 - We have a written strategic plan that is being implemented. We have attached our plan.

- d) We revisit our strategic plan annually and track our progress. We have attached our plan indicating which items we have already accomplished through June 2023. **Yes**
8. If you answered that you have strategic goals or a Strategic Plan or an updated strategic Plan in the question above, please attach. **ATTACHED STRATEGIC PLAN (SEE ONLINE)**

LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE

9. How many board members do you currently have? **5**
10. How many of your current board members are new this year? **2**
11. Which of the following best describes your board's level of leadership development?
Choose one:
- A) We have officers: President, Vice President, Secretary/Treasurer.
 - B) In addition to officers, we have other board members and recruit new board members annually, with a rotation of at least one new member coming on board.
 - C) We have officers/board members and other community leaders recruit and mentor community members to take on future leadership roles. We have ongoing rotation of officers and board members, and provide opportunities for volunteers to take on committee leadership roles.
 - D) We have all of the above plus a diverse board representative of our community with ongoing opportunities for the community to engage with the board. **Yes**
12. Board Training.
- a) In the past year (July 2022 – June 2023), indicate training that your board's current officers, committee chairs, or still-actively-involved past board members attended. This training could be through WNC Communities or other organizations or trainers, in person or online. Check all that apply.
- None
 - Volunteer recruitment & retention **Yes**
 - Financial management **Yes**
 - Grant writing **Yes**
 - Fundraising **Yes**
 - Recruiting and cultivating board officers **Yes**
 - Non-profit governance-related training **Yes**
 - Strategic planning **Yes**
 - Other - please describe below **Dogwood Trust/WNC Communities meeting, Blue Ridge Rising with Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation, Historic Preservation/WNC Historical: Appalachian Music, Bascom Lamar Lunsford, Racing in the Mountains, Maya of Morganton, Lost Cove, Carl Sandburg, Cherokee in WNC, Environmental History of WNC; Preservation NC: Women of the Land, Historic**

Plantation, Preserving Historic Buildings, African American Cemeteries, Preservation of Historic Cemeteries, Big Chair Lofts, Conservation Easements/Protective Covenants, Easements for Mid-Century Modern Houses; Folkmoot Learning Series: Early History of Haywood County , Rutherford Trace, Haywood County Communities, Civil War in Haywood County, Haywood County Industry, Cataloochee, Genealogy. (Light Blue items covers WNC History that does not apply to Bethel)

b) In the past year, indicate how many of your current officers, Board and/or your still-actively-volunteering, past board members attended the training you checked above:

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- **More than 3**

c) Were takeaways from that training shared with the rest of board or other members?

- **Yes**
- No

13. (Required for White Oak level aspirants. Optional for everyone else.) How have you developed youth leadership in your community? (Limit: 200 words)

We work with the Bethel Middle School Future Farmers of America to encourage advancement with horticultural skills. This year, BRCO purchased a storage unit “barn” that was delivered and placed adjacent to the FFA greenhouse to provide efficient storage of materials used in the horticulture program. The FFA leader spoke to our organization about what a significant improvement the barn has made to the FFA program and student participation at the school. To show their appreciation, FFA students created a large planter filled with flowers to place at the community center entrance. The students also “adopted” our circle garden at the main entrance to our facility and have agreed to weed and maintain it throughout the school year.

BRCO’s Historic Preservation Committee has been filming *The Historic Schools of Bethel* DVD for the previous five years in anticipation of release in 2024. The interviews include the current Superintendent of Haywood County Schools (a former Bethel student) as well as principals at both the elementary and middle schools. As a part of our filming, four elementary school kindergarteners volunteered to participate in vocal segments that will be used in our video as transition pieces between video sessions.

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

14. What is the status of your community club's financial planning? Choose the one that most closely represents your club's current situation:
- A) We have a bank account, a spreadsheet for tracking income and expenses, and someone in charge of keeping our books in order.
 - B) We have the above, plus an annual budget which includes utility and maintenance costs that is approved by the Board. We have attached our budget below.
 - C) We have the above, plus a fundraising plan showing how we will meet our annual budget goals for program and facility improvements through fundraisers, grant writing, and other money generating activities. We have attached our budget and fundraising plan below.
 - D) We have the above, plus we maintain a reserve fund with a fund balance of at least 3 months of operating costs. We have attached our budget for 2023 below, which shows our reserve fund. **Yes**
 - E) We have no approved budget, or no consistent way of tracking income and expenses, or no one set person who is doing that.

Please attach your budget if you answered B, C or D above on Question 14. (**Budgets may be for the calendar year rather than for the July – June timeframe used for other questions on this application**). **Attached budget**

Please also attach your fundraising plan if you answered C above.

15. For those who have an annual budget, what is the total amount of your annual budget? (If you have no annual budget and answered A or E above on question 14, please enter \$0. If you entered B, C, or D on question 14, enter your total budget for the current year: **\$58,379.57**)
16. What is the total amount of income you made for the past year (July - June) from rentals, fundraisers, grants, and other sources? **\$47,388.30**
17. (NOTE: When added together, answers to 17. A, B, C, & D below should total the amount listed in #16 above). When looking at the total money you brought in this past year, what amount did your community club bring in:
- a) from income-generating activities such as renting your facility?: **\$9,980**
 - b) from grants?: **\$29,150**
 - c) from fundraising?: **\$2,522.75 (Sales)**
 - d) other?: **\$5,735.55 (Donations)**
 - e) If you answered that you had other sources of income above, please describe briefly:
DONATIONS LISTED AS (OTHER)
Churches - \$3,715
Individuals - \$ 2,020.55
TOTAL DONATIONS (LISTED AS OTHER): \$5,735.55

GRANTS

Community Foundation of WNC - \$20,000

Food Lion Foundation for the Carolinas - \$1,000

Haywood County Development Corporation - \$50

Haywood County Farm Bureau - \$1,000

Haywood County Government - \$2,000

Haywood EMC - \$2,000

Vietnam Veterans - \$500

WNC Communities - \$2,600

TOTAL GRANTS: \$29,150

RENTALS

Church - \$ 9,000

Individuals – \$980

TOTAL RENTALS: \$9,980

SALES (LISTED AS FUNDRAISING)

Beautification – \$394

Art - \$485.80

Books - \$963.70

CD/DVDs - \$679.25

TOTAL SALES (LISTED AS FUNDRAISING): \$2,522.75

18. What grants have you received in the past year (July 2022 - June 2023)? Please include the name of the grant funder, what it was for, and the amount. If you received none, please enter N/A. Please also indicate if this is something you'd be willing to share about on a WNC Communities Coffee Hour. (50 words)

Community Foundation (WNC) - \$20,000 (pantry)

Food Lion Foundation for the Carolinas - \$1,000 (pantry)

Haywood Community Development - \$50 (general)

Haywood County Farm Bureau - \$1,000 (coupons)

Haywood County Government - \$2,000 (general)

Haywood EMC - \$2,000 (coupons)

Vietnam Veterans - \$500 (pantry)

WNC Communities - \$2,600 (pantry/coupons)

Coffee Hour – Yes.

19. (Optional) Narrative: If you've had a very successful fundraiser with lessons learned that could help other communities, please describe it below. Please include total income, expenses, how many volunteers were involved, any partners, what made it so successful, and any tips that could be helpful to other communities wishing to take on a similar project. Also, please indicate if someone from your community would be willing to share about it at a WNCC Coffee Hour. (Limit: 500 words)

These categories could be considered fundraisers: grants (\$29,150), rentals (\$9,980), donations (\$5,735.55). TOTAL: \$44,865.55.

Sales, while not as large, include income from products of creation, collection, and documentation that have their own intrinsic worth, the value of which cannot be estimated. Commissioning or acquiring art prints, writing or reproducing books that were previously compiled, filming and recording dozens of participants who know our history or are familiar with our rural heritage has enabled us to produce twenty-eight art prints, eight books, two history CDs, three history DVDs, and two rural preservation DVDs. All are sale items. Thousands of hours and tens of thousands of dollars have been devoted to the production of these items over the years; however, once production is complete, we can utilize these items for many years into the future to promote BRCO, celebrate the people who are a part of Bethel history, and earn ongoing income. These products also honor dozens of volunteers in the community who participated in the various projects as we partnered with individuals, farms, schools, churches, recreational religious center, small businesses, corporations, restaurant, stores, artists, historians, grist/sawmills, NDCOT, NC Department of Natural & Cultural Resources, historical societies, museums, college/university. We solicited sponsors for each filming project and hired a videographer. We submitted applications for art prints, books, and DVDs to the NC Society of Historians through the years and have received six state history awards, enabling prestige for our products while creating added interest in procuring our items. We receive orders by visits to our website where we set up a PayPal account to handle sales.

Once the products have been created, that one-time expense is behind us. But the work in selling/distributing these products continues each year. We use two local print houses to reproduce art prints we sell. Two of our books are reproduced student projects and required school board approval, printing at the print house, and a donation to a local school. We created write-ups about the items for our website (which has created more visitors to our website) and wrote publicity for local media. We hand-deliver or mail each item. Some items are also on sale at local sales outlets. These products create annual revenue, they preserve our historical and rural heritage, and they enable us to connect with people who love the history we are preserving.

In addition, our Beautification Committee creates beautiful floral arrangements for each general meeting. Members purchase the items. One member spends dozens of hours yearly purchasing flowers from local outlets/plant farms/nurseries. She creates arrangements, provides planting instructions, and decorates for meetings.

Creation of sales materials has spanned several years and can involve significant investment, but income from these products can be counted on annually.

TOTALS FROM July 2022 – June 2023

Flower income: \$394; Flower expenses: \$228; Net: \$166

HP income: \$2,128.75; HP expenses: \$758.75 (includes one-time book printing for \$529.45); Net: \$1,370

Total income: \$2,522.75; Total expenses: \$986.75; Net: \$1,536

Volunteers: 5

Hours: 131

Coffee Hour - yes

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

1. Please enter your total number of volunteers for this year (July 2022 - June 2023): **81**
2. Total volunteer hours for the year: **4,040**
3. How many active volunteers would you estimate you had this past year? (“Active” means a volunteer who helped on at least 3 different activities or on the same activity on at least 3 different dates for your club. They didn’t just support one event for a few hours but showed repeated engagement.): **Beautification – 5; Maintenance – 7; Benevolence – 3; Community Pantry: 17; Education – 7; Historic Preservation – 7; Rural Preservation – 3; Officers – 4; Board – 5; Committee Chairs – 8; Website/Facebook/Email/Nextdoor: 2; TOTAL: 68**
4. Total youth volunteers under the age of 22: **FFA: 12; elementary singers: 4**
5. What is the status of your volunteer recruitment and retention? Choose one.
 - a) We don’t provide volunteer appreciation.
 - b) We have regular volunteer appreciation to help with retention. **Yes. We give annual awards at a year-end meeting to recognize outstanding contributions: Par and Ted Carr, Kaye and Roger Riddle, Beth Cook; BRCO/DAR recognized Evelyn Coltman for historic preservation. We recognize volunteers via media releases.**
 - c) We have volunteer appreciation, and we advertise volunteer opportunities regularly on our social media site(s) and/or our local newspaper or newsletter. Links to our sites (Facebook, Instagram, articles published online in newspapers, our most recent newsletter, and/or other social media are included below.)
 - d) We have the above plus at least 10 youth volunteers *or* an active youth program demonstrating monthly programming organized from within the community club *and* at least 3 committees with volunteer Chairs. **Yes**

Enter your community’s Facebook or other social media site link, or a link to a newspaper article or newsletter if you answered C or D to the question above:

<http://www.facebook.com/bethelruralcommunityorganization>

<https://www.bethelrural.org/ewExternalFiles/June%202023%20Newsletter%20rev.pdf>

June 2023 Newsletter

If you answered D, also enter a very brief description of your youth volunteers/programming *and* list your committees and each one’s volunteer Chair from this past year. (Note for White Oak: if you answered the youth portion of this question already in question 15, please say so, and there’s no need to repeat it here.) (Limit: 100 words)

Youth volunteers: Bethel FFA will weed our circle garden during the school year. (see Leadership Excellence)

Youth volunteers at Bethel Elementary: participated in singing for our Historic Schools DVD (see Leadership Excellence)

Audit: Frances Adamson

Beautification: Carol Litchfield

Benevolence: Greg Christopher

Buildings & Grounds/Maintenance: Ted Carr

Community Pantry: Stephanie Quis-Garrett and Anita Montanile

Education: Greg Christopher

Historic Preservation: Evelyn Coltman

Nominating: Ted Carr

Rural Preservation: Carol Litchfield.

Media: Beth Cook and Bonny Chamberlin

BRCO's committees are the backbone of the organization. They plan, budget, implement, and analyze outcomes of each project while coordinating the efforts of other committee members.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

For each of the 5 categories below, check the programs that your community club has initiated or actively supported with volunteers and/or other resources through your club. These should **not** be programs your club members merely participated in, such as a neighboring church's activities. **These should be offerings created by and/or hosted by your community center.**

20. Education Access

These are programs that provide education access for youth or adults that contribute to elevating members' abilities to gain employment or otherwise support their families and enhance their lives, or for children to improve their access to growth and development. Check the ones your club provides. These should be offerings created by and/or hosted by your community center:

- Early childhood education
- Homeschooling support
- Afterschool enrichment program
- Summer camp enrichment program
- Literacy assistance
- Tutoring
- Higher education enrollment assistance

- Scholarships **Yes, and citizenship award for middle school student, and reading and math competency awards for elementary school students**
- Job skills training
- Workforce development courses
- Language classes
- Financial classes
- None of the above
- Other education access improvement programs:
- **Our meetings include a speaker who addresses topics that are important to membership and to the community.**
- **The Historic Preservation Committee subscribes to webinars from WNC Historical Association's Asheville Museum of History and Preservation NC. Some members routinely attend WNC Communities and PNC webinars.**
- **Several of our members also participated in the Folkmoot Learning Series, both as students and as teachers.**
- **BRCO's website is an instructional format designed to educate viewers about Bethel history, rural conservation, and about the organization's outreach programs.**
- **The BRCO newsletter is sent to members and non-members in the area; it educates about BRCO events and activities.**

21. Economic Stability

These are programs that support economic stability in your community by providing people with greater access to income, housing, internet, or other supports that help them stabilize financially. Check the ones your club provided in the past year. These should be offerings created by and/or hosted by your community center:

- Paid staff
- Youth stipend program
- Internships
- Long-term rentals to businesses **Yes – church lease**
- Marketing small businesses **Yes – local produce stands that are listed on our BRCO Fresh Produce Coupons which also benefit from word-of-mouth marketing provided by Community Pantry patrons. Buy Haywood Agritourism Guide we sponsor features local farms, markets, restaurants, etc.**
- Farmers market – **Yes – Sponsor Buy Haywood AGRITOURISM Guide that supports Farmers markets**
- Artisan market
- Other entrepreneurial support **Yes – list Bethel businesses on our website**
- Daycare program
- Financial workshops
- Housing access

- Internet access **Yes**
- Broadband coordination **Yes**
- Community garden
- Gardening classes
- None of the above
- Other programming that helps people gain economic stability:

22. Community Well-being

These are programs that support cultural preservation, social cohesion, and/or helping others in your community in need (benevolence). Check the ones your club provides. These should be offerings created by and/or hosted by your community center:

- Preserving heritage **Yes**
- Historic preservation **Yes**
- Festivals
- Dances
- Food pantry **Yes**
- Food deliveries **Yes**
- On-site meals for those in need
- Social meals **Yes**
- Thrift store
- Utilities assistance **Yes**
- Other bill assistance **Yes**
- Emergency shelter
- Storm recovery **Yes**
- Art or culture classes
- Speaker series **Yes**
- Candidate forum
- Veteran appreciation
- Programs that promote cross-cultural awareness, appreciation, and inclusiveness **Yes – (program about Cherokee river cane)**
- Programs that bring elders together with youth to foster cross-generational appreciation
- None of the above
- Other programs to support community well-being: **Yes**
- **Coupon program with our Rural Preservation and Community Pantry Committees to benefit pantry participants**
- **BRCO Fresh Produce Coupon program encourages Community Pantry patrons to buy fresh fruits and vegetables at local produce stands.**

23. Environmental Stewardship

These are programs that help your community protect the environment or natural resources, address climate change, or foster appreciation of nature. Check the ones your club provides. These should be **programs or projects** created by and/or hosted by your community center and **involving the broader community**:

- Trash pickup
 - Beautification **Yes – Osborne Boundary Oak and Pigeon Gap Watering Hole**
 - Recycling project
 - Energy conservation program
 - Reducing water use
 - Weatherization assistance
 - Renewable energy education
 - Wildlife habitat **Yes - Pigeon Gap Watering Hole**
 - Cleaning or protecting creek **Yes - Pigeon Gap Watering Hole**
Yes – Programs about river cane; Program about Upper Pigeon River Watershed restoration and flood mitigation
 - Removing invasives **Yes - Pigeon Gap Watering Hole**
 - Conservation easement
 - Farm preservation **Yes – met with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) District Conservationist when the District’s Farm Preservation staff person left his position to let him know we were still wanting to be in partnership with the District on Farm Preservation activities**
 - Stormwater management **Yes – Programs about river cane and about upper Pigeon River Watershed restoration and flood mitigation by Haywood Waterways**
 - None of the above
- Other environmental stewardship programs: **Yes**
- **Monarch Waystation garden oversight**
 - **Water garden and circle garden at our facility**
 - **Historic tree arborist treatment**
 - **Clean-up at historic site (Pigeon Gap Watering Hole and ongoing mowing)**

24. Health Access

These are programs that help your community members to understand and access health services and/or promote their own health. Check the ones your club provided in the past year:

- SNAP assistance
- Medicaid or Medicare assistance
- Telehealth
- Addiction prevention

- Addiction recovery
- Healthy eating and cooking classes
- Transportation services
- Mental health evaluations
- Health checks or clinic
- Walking trail
- Biking trail
- Athletic facilities
- Playground
- Basketball
- Soccer field
- Baseball field
- Pickleball
- Yoga classes
- Dance classes
- Exercise classes
- None of the above
- Other healthcare access programs: **Yes – We partnered with UNETE and provided flyers to our Community Pantry patrons. The flyers were in English and Spanish and explained that services were available for referrals for health insurance and financial resources, food and clothing assistance, referrals to community resources, and information related to free COVID-19 vaccine clinics and testing.**

25. Program(s) Narrative

Please elaborate on 1 - 3 specific programs you have checked above *that best illustrate your positive impact on your community or what you consider a best practice others could replicate.* In your description, include your club's role (planning, coordination, leading, or supporting, etc.), what staffing, and other resources you provided, who was impacted, how they were positively impacted, whether you partnered with other agencies to deliver these services and if so what those partners' roles were, and any other details that help us understand why you are proud of your program(s). NOTE: If you wish to maintain or advance your Honors Level (i.e. Trillium, Mountain Laurel, etc.), you will need to submit a new narrative each year sharing new information about your programs. We will not accept recycled content. Thank you for not cutting and pasting from narratives from previous applications. :) *For White Oak level only*, also briefly describe what you learned from the program self-evaluation of two of your programs. (Limit: 1500 words)

- **The Historic Preservation Committee (HP) has chosen to research the twenty plus cemeteries, document their history and location, and place the information on our website. Thus far, we have documented five cemeteries on our website. We have researched several others, including three previously undocumented sites.**

This project involves researching locations from historic cemetery catalogs, finding the location (including researching deeds and plot surveys), locating someone who knows the history, consulting with the Department of Natural & Cultural Resources regarding cemetery research, determining cemetery financial/maintenance arrangements, governance, gravestone types, unique arrangement, and whether the cemetery is listed on internet cemetery links. During our research, we have also enrolled in webinars about cemetery research with Preservation NC and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

We have, we believe, located two slave cemeteries. In addition, we have worked with a neighboring African American community club to assist with their research about a black cemetery outside Bethel. One cemetery is on land now owned by the U.S. Forest Service, so we have consulted with Forest Service employees and a historian regarding the history of the burial ground and potential future restoration of the cemetery that has been abandoned for a century.

On our website, we include precise directions to each cemetery (unless gravesites are on private property; then we list general location information with the suggestion that the visitor contact us).

Our connections have allowed us to form bonds with churches and with cemetery managers who, in two cases, have documented every gravesite in the burial area, including a book donated to us about all individuals in one cemetery. Many of these cemeteries are in excellent shape with adequate upkeep. We will strive to ensure that other forgotten cemeteries will receive future attention. In addition, we are providing a unique service to individuals looking for gravesites in our area that may otherwise be difficult to locate. We are also detailing historical data that would have been lost without our diligent efforts.

- A project of the Historic Preservation Committee (HP) is the annual recognition of individual(s) who have contributed to documentation of historical data, preservation of historic structures, or education about Bethel history. HP presented the Pigeon Valley Award for Historic Preservation to two individuals – one in September 2022 and another in May 2023.

Mack Ledbetter received the 2022 award posthumously for his mapping project that documented twenty-four logging outposts and every site at the early 1900s Sunburst Logging Village, a community that was significant in the development of Canton's downstream paper mill. Ledbetter's family donated the map to BRCO and gave permission for BRCO to keep proceeds from print reproduction sales. Ledbetter's

daughter provided the program at our September meeting about her father's dedication to the project over a several year span. BRCO's *Sunburst and Other Logging Operations* DVD has been the organization's best-selling product, and Ledbetter's other daughter was featured in that video with details about Ledbetter's map legacy.

Hugh K. Terrell, Jr. was the 2023 recipient of the Pigeon Valley Award for his oversight of the 1978 student project: *Sonoma – Valley of the Moon – Sunburst*. This student-written Foxfire-style book was based on interviews with individuals who had lived at Sunburst Village (1906 – 1925). Terrell and his students conducted interviews, collected photos, and organized/typed/distributed the book. Forty-five years after publication of that book, no copies were readily available for individuals desiring to learn about Sunburst. To honor Terrell, BRCO interviewed him for our upcoming *Historic Schools of Bethel* DVD. BRCO also obtained permission from the Haywood County School Board to republish/sell the book, which has been a primary fundraiser for the organization. A portion of the money will be donated to Bethel Middle School where Terrell taught eighth grade for many years.

The award recipient(s) (or their family for posthumous awards) are honored at a yearly BRCO meeting with a program given by HP about their achievements. The award includes a framed selection from BRCO's art print collection, a framed award certificate, and publicity in local media. These recognitions honor the individual, keep alive the history of our area, and educate members and others about the important legacy of individuals who have worked diligently to preserve Bethel history.

Self-Evaluation of the BRCO Pigeon Valley Award Program:

Since 2014, BRCO has honored eleven individuals for their significant artifact and document collections, preservation of a historic cattle herd/farm, restoration of a 1902 church and an 1800s school, successful applications for two state historic markers, producing two books and a map about Bethel, and participating in video collections of local history. BRCO ensures that accomplishments of the Pigeon Valley Award recipients are published in *The Mountaineer* newspaper, *Positively Haywood*, BRCO's Newsletter, and on our website. Feedback from the membership and the community indicates that recognition of these special individuals with this award is important, not only for their legacy, but also for the award's role in creating a sense of pride about the importance of Bethel and its history. Staff volunteers at Haywood County Historical and Genealogical Society have expressed how valuable it is to have this information easily accessible to individuals who are conducting research on history and genealogy pertaining to Bethel/Pigeon Valley. By doing an online search of *The Mountaineer* archives, a researcher can quickly find one or more articles that enable contact with BRCO's Historic Preservation Committee to request in-depth

information about Bethel/Pigeon Valley history and the people who have helped to preserve it. This fact was especially apparent during March of 2023 when Bethel/Pigeon Valley residents received devastating news that Canton's paper mill was closing after 115 years of operation. The original logging community for the mill – Sunburst – was on the West Fork of the Pigeon River. Coincidentally, BRCO's Pigeon Valley Award recipients for 2019, 2022, and 2023 were recognized for helping to preserve Sunburst history, something that is appreciated more than ever by those whose family connections are closely aligned with the mill's history. Mack Ledbetter's map is BRCO's best-selling art print, and Hugh K. Terrell's book is especially popular with researchers who want to read first-hand accounts of life at Sunburst. We learned from our evaluation of this program that historic preservation efforts (whether conducted by a dedicated cartographer over many years or by eighth grade students and their teacher over several months) are worth recognizing, showcasing, and sharing - especially when those preservation efforts are so critical to helping the community to heal after a devastating loss.

- Our Community Pantry chair secured a \$20,000 grant from the Community Foundation of WNC that allowed us to expand and enhance the efficiency of our pantry. She established an ad hoc committee that included nine representatives from the Beautification (BC), Maintenance (MC), and Community Pantry (CP) Committees to ensure that those knowledgeable about relevant issues could provide input during the implementation process. The group determined that an adjacent room could be cleaned/renovated to function as a pantry work room, thereby allowing the old pantry room to be utilized strictly for refrigeration/freezer space. Abundant shelf space would be available in the new pantry work room, along with a sorting/stacking table, carts/buggies for transporting boxes, and sufficient space for storing boxes.

BC and CP selected paint colors and lighting fixtures, and the ad hoc committee selected flooring. CP members ordered shelving, carts, a sorting table, and two freezers. CP and MC provided eight volunteers to upgrade the electrical system, install lighting, replace door hardware, coordinate with the flooring installer and painter, install freezers, and provide a meal for workers. CP purchased a tent (with BRCO name and logo) to provide shelter for the CP tables which are set up in the BRCO parking lot on food box distribution day.

The following businesses serviced the project: Arrowood Installation, E-Z Up Tent, Haywood Appliance, Haywood Builders, Hometown Flooring, Hometown Hardware, Lowe's, Lynn Trabaccino Painting, Seville Classics, and Uline Shipping Supplies. Twelve BRCO volunteers worked in various capacities to accomplish the upgrade. Some of the projects are completed, with expenditures totaling \$12,474. More renovations, including a new ramp, lighting fixtures, and other upgrades will complete the project by the end of 2023.

Self-Assessment of the Community Pantry Expansion Project

BRCO's pantry usage tripled after the pandemic and flooding episodes (from an average of 16 families served per month in 2019 to 57 families served per month in the first half of 2023). We anticipate more growth after the mill closure. The grant enabled CP to work productively bringing in food during MANNA's weekly deliveries, stacking food on shelves, organizing food into boxes, and rolling the boxes to the outdoor tent on distribution day. The new freezers were a priority since they permit timely ordering of frozen goods on sale (previously we relied on a borrowed freezer that was inadequate). The new set-up permits better organization and efficiency of the entire community pantry program while also enhancing the appearance of the community center. We learned that excellent planning, multi-committee cooperation, and meticulous supervision are absolutely essential to achieving an effective outcome.

COLLABORATION

26. Please check all Community Partners with whom you collaborated on projects in the past year:

- Local schools (pre, K-12) **Yes – Bethel Elementary, Bethel Middle, Pisgah High, Haywood County School Board (permission for reprint of book), Haywood County Schools Buildings and Grounds (permission for FFA building), Bethel Elementary Principal, Bethel Elementary music teacher, kindergarten filming of ABC song, Haywood County Superintendent (filming); also, researched and filmed historic schools in the community.**
- Local community college or university **Yes**
- Churches **Yes – Crestview Baptist, Encouraging Word Baptist, Harmony Baptist, Lake Logan Episcopal Center, Riverside Baptist**
- Farms. Please list: **Yes – Chambers Farm, Christopher Farms, Cold Mountain Nursery, Fresh Corn & More, Leatherwood Family Farm, Sloan's Plant Farm, Ten Acre Garden**
- Local Businesses. Please list: **Appalachian Antique Hardwoods, Arrowood Installation, Best Buy, Canton Insurance Agency, Doug Chambers Productions, Duke Energy, Element Arbor, Food Lion, Go Grocery, Haywood Appliance, Haywood Builders, Haywood County Farm Bureau, Haywood EMC, Hendersonville Heating & Air, Home Trust Bank, Hometown Flooring, Hometown Hardware, Johnson Appliance Service, Jukebox Junction, M&T Maintenance, Mountaineer, Owl Market, Premier Portable Buildings, Print Haus, Positively Haywood, Spectrum, Staples, Stephenson Pest Control, Village Framers, WNC Stump Grinding.**
- Police/Sheriff Department
- Fire Department
- Council on Aging
- MANNA Food Bank **Yes**

- Goodwill **Yes**
- Community college or university **Yes**
- Chamber of Commerce
- Tourism Development Authority **Yes (TDA Quilt Trail)**
- City/County government **Yes – Haywood County**
- Health and Human Services
- Boys Club or Girls Club
- Boy or Girl Scouts
- 4-H
- County Extension **Yes**
- Other community clubs or other organizations - please list: **Beaverdam Community Club, Cruso Community Club, Fines Creek Community Club, Hazelwood Boosters Club, North Hominy Community Club, Pigeon Multi-Cultural Center, Saunook Community Club, Baptists on Mission, Blue Ridge National Heritage Area's Heritage Trail, Buy Haywood, Community Foundation of WNC, DAR, Dogwood Trust, Folkmoot USA Learning Center, Food Lions Foundation of the Carolinas, Haywood Advancement Foundation, Haywood County Development Council, Haywood County Historical & Genealogical Society, Haywood County Interagency Council, Haywood Gleaners, Haywood Waterways, Museum of NC Handicrafts in Shelton House, NC Department of Natural & Cultural Resources, NC Department of Transportation, Preservation NC, Revitalization of Traditional Cherokee Artisan Resources, TDA Quilt Trail, Vietnam Veterans, WCU's Mountain Heritage Center, WCU's Southern Appalachian Digital Collection, WNC Communities, WNC Historical Association.**

27. Collaboration Narrative

Please describe one of your collaborations above that you feel was particularly good or was a best practice. What was so great about it? How was it helpful and what impact did it have? Did you learn anything useful from the process? If it is something you feel other community clubs could copy or benefit from, please let us know if someone from your community would be willing to share about it at an upcoming WNCC Coffee Hour. This should be a different initiative from what was described in the Program Narratives above. **For White Oak only:** Your narrative should describe how you helped another WNC Communities member to develop a program or capacity and should be different from your Program Narratives. (Limit: 400 words)

The Haywood County Community Development Council (HCCDC) meets quarterly and is comprised of representatives from the eight community clubs in Haywood County (Beaverdam Community Development Club, BRCO, Cruso Community Development Corporation, Fines Creek Community Association, North Hominy Community Club, Pigeon Community Multicultural Development Center, Saunook Community Club, and Hazelwood Boosters Club). Each HCCDC meeting provides an opportunity for the Community Clubs to collaborate together to collectively identify and address common issues as well as share their experiences in implementing successful programs and initiatives.

This past year, a BRCO member, Mike McLean, served as HCCDC President. His leadership was instrumental in convincing HCCDC members to pursue a broadband initiative in which the broadband needs of all communities would be taken into account using a comprehensive, coordinated approach. It was his idea to use the county-wide, free newspaper “Positively Haywood” to promote a website where Haywood County residents could go to challenge the accuracy of the broadband map used by broadband providers. If the map indicates that the homeowner has broadband service, but the homeowner knows that the service is not available to them, the homeowner can challenge it. This proved to be a useful mechanism in holding accountable the broadband providers. As more reliable, site-specific information was made available to the broadband providers and Haywood County Commissioners, it became easier to justify the needed improvements in the broadband system and easier to secure grants.

New customers in the Cruso, Bethel, and Fines Creek communities are already benefitting from these efforts to get providers to “build out” their broadband service. The impact of eight community clubs working together to make their voices heard on a critical issue of county-wide importance has produced effective results far quicker than each club attempting to address this critical need on its own.

Carol Litchfield, BRCO President, attends Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter meetings. When the veterans expressed their desire to support food pantries, Carol told them that six Community Clubs in the county operated food pantries. Carol collaborated with the five other Community Clubs (besides BRCO) that operate food pantries to get their mailing address and how a donation check should be made out. Carol provided the information to the Vietnam veterans, and, as a result, each of the six clubs (the first six listed above) received a food pantry donation in the amount of \$500.

28. When was the last time you did a community survey to understand your residents' needs and what programs to offer?
- A) We have never done a community survey
 - B) Over 5 years ago
 - C) Within the last 2 - 5 years
 - D) Within the last 2 years **Yes**

PHOTOS

1. Please email up to 3 high quality, current photos that best tell the story of your accomplishments you described in your application. Please title each file to match what is pictured and describe each briefly below. You may upload a jpeg, jpg, or pdf file. By submitting this application, you hereby grant permission to WNC Communities to use any photographs submitted as part of the WNC Honors application to be used in WNC Communities' publications, mailings, brochures, websites, presentations, etc. (including

electronic and web publications) without compensation. PLEASE NOTE: Pictures must be 20MB or less in file size! Please compress your pictures if they are larger than this.

1. **PHOTO OF MICHAL CEMETERY (SEE AUGUST 2023 NEWSLETTER)**
2. **PHOTO OF PIGEON VALLEY AWARD PRESENTATION (SEE JUNE 2023 NEWSLETTER)**
3. **PHOTO OF GRANT - RESTORATION PROJECT WORKERS (SEE JUNE NEWSLETTER)**

SELF-ASSESSMENT & FUTURE PLANS

WNC Communities' goal is to help you build your club's capacity to deliver services and programs that help your community to thrive, and self-assessment is a valuable tool that helps all of our organizations improve and better serve our communities. This is vital information for us to understand your challenges and aspirations and how we can best assist you in the coming year, and possibly may guide what funding opportunities we will pursue. ***We will use this information (as well as everything in your application) to inform what training, coaching, and planning to offer to our communities, so please be candid. You will not be scored on these questions.*** A few examples of areas you could include in your self-assessment as either strengths or weaknesses are: the board's level of organization or effective communication, fundraising or grant writing ability, how focused and efficient your meetings are, your effectiveness at volunteer engagement or retention, recurring issues with building maintenance, computer skills, etc.

29. What are your community club's current strengths and weaknesses, and what are your goals for self-improvement over the next year? (Reminder: **none** of the questions in this section are part of the scoring). (Limit: 400 words)

STRENGTHS:

- **BRCO has a mission and a vision that guides the organization's activities and directives and a logo that symbolizes our rural perspective.**
- **The organization conducts a bi-annual internal audit to ensure financial accuracy and stability.**
- **Review Bylaws bi-annually with changes made to strengthen organizational integrity.**
- **Implemented a five-year Strategic Plan that we review semi-annually.**
- **Developed a set of policies and procedures for each committee.**
- **Prepares a balanced budget; the organization and each committee operate within their budgets.**
- **Strong committee structure with committee chairs submitting a budget to the board annually with clear guidelines concerning each year's projects.**

- **Coordinates with other community groups under strong central leadership (Haywood County Community Development Council) to implement projects that benefit the entire county.**
- **Strives to meet the needs of the community regarding food security and other benevolence issues.**
- **Upgraded our facility and food pantry department so that it is able to operate efficiently (\$20,000 grant).**
- **Maintain impressive website, Facebook, email, and Next-Door accounts with constant upgrades to ensure that information is accurate, timely, and useful.**
- **Offer the community center to families and churches for rentals.**
- **Affiliate with local governmental agencies, churches, farms, schools, civic groups, non-profits, and businesses to implement programs and projects that benefit the community.**

WEAKNESSES:

- **Lack of creativity regarding a single fundraising event to replace our 5K/Half Marathon Race**
- **Lack of individuals willing to step up to implement fundraising**
- **Maintaining an ongoing source of revenue with church rentals being unstable as congregations come and go**
- **Creating a way to better utilize our facility for additional rentals.**
- **Our organization could benefit from more extensive outreach programs that assist individuals in the community with such projects as tutoring, and classes.**

GOALS – Our Strategic Plan outlines our goals:

- **Maintain a quality facility while upgrading the dining hall and kitchen**
- **Expand programs, services, and volunteer opportunities**
- **Contribute funds and necessities to promote the general welfare of its citizens while connecting those in need with governmental and non-profit services.**
- **Strive to encourage optimal educational opportunities for its students by offering incentives, awards, recognition, as well as a scholarship.**
- **Conduct research, document, and educate about the history of the community.**
- **Support environmental and conservation efforts regarding farmland and animal habitat sustainability.**

30. (Optional) Which of the following best characterizes your meetings and follow up?

Please choose one:

- a) Sometimes not well attended by officers and other board members. We sometimes don't have quorum to make decisions. We struggle to get things done in meetings and/or outside of meetings.
- b) Well attended by officers, and some other board members or volunteers attend occasionally. Meetings can get off topic or run long. Not enough board members

are pitching in to get things done outside of meetings or there's not clear accountability.

- c) Well attended by officers and other board members and/or volunteers. People are actively engaged and getting things done outside of meetings, accountability is ok. Meetings have an agenda and we do ok sticking to it.
- d) Well attended and well run, with a clear agenda for each meeting that is connected to our strategic plan. We have clear accountability for tasks and get lots done outside our meetings. **Yes**
- e) Other comments:

31. Based on your answers above (and any other needs you've not yet stated), what specific support, programs, and/or services would you like to see WNC Communities provide that would help your club to better serve your community? For example, what support (if any) does your community need with your governance or leadership (bylaws, 501c3 status, or strategic planning, running meetings, accountability, board training), finances (budgeting, financial controls, grant writing), or programs (rental contracts, how-to on specific programs or services, etc.)? (250 words)

BRCO is professionally managed to such a degree that we are pleased be able to operate efficiently at our meetings, with individuals in charge maintaining a high degree of competency regarding running meetings, budgeting, planning programs, and exercising financial controls. We have a handle on our Bylaws and Policies and Procedures as well as expectations regarding committee programs and projects. We have a wonderful website, a top-notch newsletter, and a good Facebook page. We have a Strategic Plan. One area that could be helpful would be specifics about grant research and writing. Though we have completed some successful grant applications, we would appreciate details about what specific information granting organizations are looking for and which grants are appropriate for our needs. Another area of concern is methods for expanding use of our facility to various entities without creating so much extra work for our members that we have difficulty enlisting members to play an oversight role. We would like to know the advantages/disadvantages of a rental manager.

32. How will you invest the Award funds, which will most likely be at least \$600? (Limit: 300 words)

BRCO is an organization that operates out of a historic facility, manages a variety of benevolence services (food pantry, benevolence gifts, educational support), and conducts extensive historic and rural preservation programs. Projects that our award could accomplish are as follows:

- **To make our facility more attractive for rentals and more user-friendly for expanded services to the community, we could spend on upgrades such as flooring for the dining hall and kitchen as well as a kitchen renovation to transform the cooking area from a 1960s appearance to a modern kitchen.**

- More likely uses, however, would involve our Community Pantry (CP) program that continues to consume more funding because of extensive fallout from the pandemic, devastating flooding of the area, and recent loss of over one thousand jobs due to the closing of Pactiv Evergreen in Canton that employed numerous Bethel residents. MANNA, while the hub of our pantry program, is frequently out of stock on popular items. CP director has to shop early each morning via computer to latch onto sale items before they disappear. MANNA shortages necessitate shopping at other venues that are more expensive. Our recent grant from the Community Foundation of WNC will save money since we are now able to have the freezer storage capacity to shop for sales.

In addition, our desire to ensure that local residents in need are able to enjoy fresh produce, we have established a coupon project that has enabled our organization to support local families whose health benefits from fresh, locally grown produce while also enabling local farmers and produce stands to earn more income via the CP sales that our organization funds.

33. Please help us understand your needs around connectivity to the internet and to each other. Check **all** that apply:

- A) We have no internet access at our community center.
- B) We have spotty internet access at our community center.
- C) We have very slow internet access at our community center.
- D) We have adequate internet access at our community center.
- E) We have high speed internet access at our community center. **Yes**
- F) We have fiber optic nearby, but it doesn't come to our community center.
- G) Most of our community doesn't have good internet service in general. **Yes**
- H) We don't have good cell phone service in our area to the point that it can be hard to contact board members and/or key volunteers.
- I) We have no computer or laptop at our community center. **Yes**
- J) We have one computer.
- K) We need another computer at our community center for volunteer/public use.
- L) We need 2 or more computers for volunteer/public use in the coming year.
- M) We need computers for online classes or job search support we plan to provide for our residents in the coming year.
- N) Other connectivity status notes:

34. Please help us understand your needs around "Digital Literacy," meaning your *organization's volunteers' (and/or staff's) ability* to use computers, email, the internet, software, and social media at the community center. Please select **all** that apply to your community center:

- A) We want to learn how to better use the internet, like how to do effective searches, organize bookmarks to find pages we use frequently, navigate a few open windows, avoid viruses, etc.

- B) We need help learning how to use word processing software (such as Word) to make and edit documents.
- C) We need help knowing how to use spreadsheet software (such as Excel) to manage contact lists, financials, task lists, etc.
- D) We need to learn how to better write, check, respond to, search for, and/or organize emails.
- E) We need help learning how to make a newsletter to send via email.
- F) We need help knowing how to create, make posts for, and manage a Facebook page or other social media.
- G) We want to learn how to use QuickBooks and have someone ready to take that on.
- H) We need help learning how to use Zoom.
- I) None of the above **Yes**
- J) We need other digital help:

35. The *people that come to our community center* would benefit from gaining digital skills in the following areas *and would likely show up for assistance* if it was offered at times they could make it. Please select **all** that apply:

- A) Safe and Effective Internet Use (how to do effective searches on the internet while avoiding spam, spyware, viruses, porn, etc.) **Yes**
- B) Computer/Digital Device Basics (how to start and log onto a computer or tablet, knowing the names of the parts of a computer, understanding how to get on the internet, use basic programs like Word, email) **Yes**
- C) Interacting with others Online (how to use social media, video conferencing such as Zoom, file sharing, etc.) **Yes**
- D) Family Health and Communication (telehealth) **Yes**
- E) Career Planning and Job Seeking online **Yes**
- F) Personal or Business Finance Online Tools
- G) Accessing Government Services online
- H) Online Tools for Business and Entrepreneur Management
- I) Tips for Working Remotely
- J) Managing healthcare (Provider Portals, Pharmacy Portals) **Yes**
- K) Learning new skills to advance in a career
- L) None of these apply to our community center's visitors
- M) Other:

36. We know farmers in our area who will be retiring relatively soon who want to keep their land in farming *and* we are interested in supporting farm preservation as part of our community center's efforts by hosting partner organizations to educate these farmers about farm succession/transition planning:

- A) Yes **Yes**
- B) No

- C) Other, please explain:
37. Please help us understand your current situation and future plans for renting space at your community center. Please check **all** that apply:
- A) We do not rent space at our center and have no plans to do so in the coming 1 – 3 years.
 - B) We currently rent out space and are looking for ways to increase our rental income. **Yes**
 - C) We are open to using income from our rentals to hire a part time Rental Manager.
 - D) We currently have small businesses doing long-term rental of space at our center and want to sustain what we are currently doing.
 - E) We currently rent long term to small businesses and want to expand the number of those rentals.
 - F) We want to provide services or equipment to support businesses who currently rent our space or who have expressed interest in renting our space.
 - G) We currently do not rent to small businesses, but would be interested in that and we have the space to do it in.
 - H) We have discussed renting long term to small businesses, and want to do it, but would need to do some building upgrades to make that possible.
 - I) We are not interested in any of the above this at this time.
 - J) Other: **Rent to a church long-term**
38. Please describe your community center’s relationship with your local Cooperative Extension office/agent in the past year. Check all that apply:
- A) We have had no interaction with them.
 - B) We host 4-H at our center.
 - C) We have volunteers provided by our center who run 4-H.
 - D) We have hosted workshops or lectures given by an agent on canning, cooking, or nutrition.
 - E) We have hosted workshops with agents on agricultural topics.
 - F) We attended an event where our agent brought us together with other centers from our county for education or collaboration. **Yes**
 - G) Our agent has helped us apply for a grant.
 - H) Other, please explain:

SPECIAL AWARDS

(Optional) Only communities wishing to be considered for recognition for specific initiatives need to answer these questions.

Calico Cat Award (Optional)

Please describe improvements you have made to your existing community building/space from July 2022 - June 2023 to make it rentable or usable for events, to house businesses you are

supporting, to make it more energy and water efficient, to adopt renewable energy, or to otherwise benefit your community. Roughly how many square feet (or linear feet, if doing wiring) were renovated or improved? Please also include whether the work was done by volunteers or contractors, and how you paid for the renovations/updates. Finally, please attach up to 2 photos below (required). (Limit: 500 words)

Youth Leadership Award (Optional)

Please describe a youth-led project or program that youth in your community club initiated and led this past year. For example, this could be a brand-new program the youth wanted to start, or it could be an initiative to revitalize or improve an existing program at your club, or a project to upgrade your facility. It is fine if the youth leader(s) enlisted adult help to bring their idea to fruition. The key is that the program or project was the youth's idea and its planning and execution was led by the youth. Please list the names of the youth leader(s), describe the project and outcomes, and clearly describe the youth leader(s) role(s) in the project. Please note that for your youth leader(s) to be eligible for the prize associated with this award - a free, weeklong outdoor course with NC Outward Bound - the winner(s) must be between 14 - 18 years of age in summer of 2024 and fully COVID vaccinated. We want to encourage youth participation, initiative and leadership, so up to three youths in your community may receive the Outward Bound Course award *if they all had clear **leadership roles** in the project*. This can be a program you already shared in a narrative elsewhere on your application, just be sure to give sufficient detail to be considered for the award. Please attach 1 photo. (Limit 500 words)

WNC Communities Impact Award (Optional)

Describe an initiative your community club led this past year that had a significant, measurable impact on your community or a group within your community. This should be something that changed lives over the long term and helped people get to a new level of well-being. A few examples would be advocating and coordinating to get broadband for your community, or helping people gain skills and get employed, or helping entrepreneurs have affordable rental space for their businesses and providing additional services that helped them get to their next level. This should be a project that empowered others that your club originated, organized, and staffed with volunteers. Include how you measured the impact on people and share the outcomes, plus any future plans. This can be a program you already shared in a narrative elsewhere on your application, just be sure to give sufficient detail to be considered for the award. Please attach up to 2 high quality photos. (Limit: 500 words)

The BRCO Rural Preservation (RP) Committee supports Future Farmers of America (FFA) students at Bethel Middle School.

How the Program Works: Each summer, the BRCO RP Committee consults with the Bethel Middle School FFA instructor to identify FFA needs for the upcoming year. BRCO has previously funded FFA jackets used in competition, materials for special projects, and equipment for the school greenhouse. The greenhouse is used to train future farmers and

horticulturists and is also important for growing the plants that are sold in FFA's end-of-year plant sale.

FFA's Identified Need for 2023 and Beyond: FFA needed a secure, convenient place on the school grounds to store the materials and supplies needed by the students to implement their horticulture projects throughout the year. The school principal expressed this need to BRCO when she participated in BRCO's Strategic Planning process.

BRCO Addresses the Need: Because a donor had made a large donation to BRCO to be used for an RP project during 2022, and because a new storage unit would make a lasting contribution toward the success of future FFA projects, the RP Committee deemed the purchase and delivery of the storage unit to be a worthy project to fund (total cost \$4,745). BRCO made a presentation to the Haywood County Schools Building and Grounds Committee in order to get permission to donate and deliver the storage unit to the school grounds. The Committee unanimously granted permission. BRCO purchased the 10' x 16' storage unit "barn" that the FFA instructor had indicated would meet the needs of FFA. The barn was installed on the school grounds next to the greenhouse.

Positive Impact on FFA Students: Because greenhouse materials and supplies no longer take up space in the workshop/classroom, the instructor is able to prepare and convey horticulture lessons in an efficient, effective manner, and students are able to enjoy an enhanced learning experience.

Positive Impact on BRCO's Relationship with Haywood County Schools: The project strengthened BRCO's relationship with school administrators who are challenged by budget cuts on a daily basis. They were grateful to have an organization like BRCO that could be depended upon to plan and fund a quality project that would benefit students for many years.

Positive Impact in Appealing to Donors: BRCO members can convince potential donors to contribute to BRCO by simply showing them the FFA storage unit located on school grounds adjacent to the BRCO community center. Donors are impressed that BRCO not only supports Haywood County Schools but also encourages youth involvement in farming.

Positive Impact on BRCO: At BRCO's May meeting, the FFA instructor told us about the significant improvement the barn has made to the FFA program and student participation at the school. In appreciation, FFA students created a large planter filled with flowers to place at our community center entrance. The students also "adopted" our circle garden at the main entrance to our facility and have agreed to weed and maintain it throughout the school year.

PHOTO OF BARN (SEE FEBRUARY 2023 NEWSLETTER)

PHOTO OF FLOWERS GIFTED TO BRCO BY FFA