

Bethel Rural Community Organization Newsletter

www.bethelrural.org

April 2020

2020 BRCO Officers and Board Members

Officers:

- President: Mike McLean
- Vice President: Carroll Jones
- Secretary: Beth Cook
- Treasurer: Stephanie Quis-Garrett



Board Members:

- Frances Adamson
- Tom Kolaski, Chairman
- Lucas Sorrells
- Pat Carr
- Mike McLean

A Word from our president, Mike McLean



Even as we met recently at the BRCO membership meeting (March 10), none of us could have predicted what was about to happen. In short order, the global COVID-19 crisis has become a real challenge for all to prepare for the unknown. We listen to our Nation's experts while at the same time feel somewhat helpless. We hear daily about the statistics and the "worst case scenario" that is coming. Although that knowledge will help us prepare for certain situations that may come our way, it is the actions of individuals and organizations helping each other that will make the most difference as the crisis emerges in our community. There is no formula for how each can help, but there are many examples present in our local community. Here are a few:

Mike Graham at Jukebox Junction has supported his employees and the community preparing free food until it ran out. First Baptist Church in Canton is asking volunteers to take on a mask-making project that will benefit the community kitchen workers as well as volunteers. Kaye Riddle from BRCO is involved with this project along with her daughter Lora Inman. Another BRCO member, Catherine Hertle, also volunteered to help with the mask-making. Our Food Pantry has made changes – not cancellation. Some of those changes are that food boxes will be assembled the day before pantry, no clients and limited personnel allowed in the building, food boxes will be delivered to individual cars, volunteers will be kept at a minimum (Julie, Danny, Glen, Steph, Carroll, Ted). For our tenant, Harmony Baptist Church, we decided to waive the lease payment for April, and review again in late April.

So what will provide the most comfort in this difficult time is to know that our members, our community, and our County all have a greater desire to help others than to just be prepared and wait. Whatever preparations we have individually, I know that sharing and supporting each other is on all our minds. Find a way to stay informed and help where you can. If you or someone you know needs help, I am sure we can help. That help may only be with prayers or guidance, but nevertheless it helps. Our Board, Officers, and members are all volunteers. Without their formal titles, I like to refer to all as good neighbors. Although tragedy is likely within our extended network, what we will remember when this is over is the support that each received. That is what our community is all about, and that is who we are. If you need help of any kind, call me at 828 275-4057.

BRCO General Meeting - May 12, 2020



Make plans to attend our next general meeting, Tuesday, May 12, 2020. Pot luck supper will begin at 6:30 p.m. followed by a program featuring speakers from Mountain Projects. **NOTE: In the event that the "Stay at Home Order" is extended beyond April 30, you will be notified by email about any changes to the scheduled general meeting.**

COVID-19 Resource Guide

Southwestern Commission has compiled a comprehensive list of resources pertaining to the COVID-19 response. They will be updating this guide regularly, so please click the link below for the most recent update.

<https://myemail.constantcontact.com/COVID-19-Update.html?soid=1127920557861&aid=xbcXXjwTpxg>

APRIL SPOTLIGHT:

BRCO's Rural Preservation Committee

(note: Each newsletter will spotlight the work of one of the BRCO Committees)

The BRCO Rural Preservation Committee works to preserve the rural character of Bethel by promoting good stewardship of the natural resources in the Pigeon Valley. The Committee supports activities that help sustain a healthy local economy based on agriculture and tourism and has formed productive partnerships with other organizations that share these same goals.

One way to ensure that rural land stays rural is to protect it from future development. "We share information with landowners on how to protect their land with conservation easements," said Carol Litchfield, Rural Preservation Committee Chair. "Since 2007, landowners in the Pigeon Valley have used conservation easements to protect 543 acres of rural land, 5,048 feet of river footage, and 15,436 feet of stream footage." BRCO provides funds to help offset some of the costs that are incurred by the landowner during the conservation easement process.

The Rural Preservation Committee works in partnership with the BRCO Food Pantry Committee and local produce stand operators to ensure that those in need can obtain fresh produce. Food Pantry patrons receive coupons that they can use at local produce stands to obtain fresh produce. The produce stand operators are reimbursed by BRCO for the coupons they collect.

The produce stand operators that accepted coupons in 2019 included Bethel Grocery; The Ten Acre Garden; Chambers Farm Produce; Lenoir's Creek Beef, Bakery, & Produce; Frank's Fresh Produce Market; and Leatherwood Family Farms. Ted Carr has been instrumental in implementing the process with the produce stand operators. He also maintains close contact with Haywood County Farm Bureau and Haywood Electric Membership Corporation, both of which have generously funded BRCO Rural Preservation initiatives.

If a natural resource issue is identified that impacts landowners in the Bethel area, the Rural Preservation Committee can arrange for a workshop to be presented to convey the latest information about how to address the issue. On November 9, 2019, instructors from the Hemlock Restoration Initiative presented a BRCO-sponsored workshop at Lake Logan. The participants learned how to identify hemlock trees, how to assess the level of infestation of Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, and how to choose and safely apply chemical treatment. During the field session, participants treated hemlock trees on four different sites. Everyone enjoyed the training, and the Lake Logan staff was pleased to provide the conference space for free in return for getting their trees treated. (continued on page 3)



Instructors demonstrated the safe handling of chemicals during the Hemlock Restoration Workshop at Lake Logan on November 9th.



Thanks to the good stewardship efforts of local farmers, the highest level of water quality is maintained in the river and streams around Bethel.

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BRCO's Rural Preservation Committee

Each year, Carol Litchfield establishes and maintains the Monarch Waystation in the large garden beside the barn at Shelton House in Waynesville. She uses it to show visitors how and where to establish the native pollinator plants that nourish Monarch butterflies and the native Milkweed plants that are needed to nourish Monarch caterpillars. Carol will also visit landowners' property to help them identify the best site for establishing a Monarch Waystation. The more Waystations that are established across the country, the greater the likelihood that the Monarch population will be able to recover and thrive after decades of suffering habitat loss.

Bethel Middle School FFA (Future Farmers of America) students are utilizing BRCO funds for their project in building butterfly cages that can be used to raise Monarch caterpillars which will later be released as Monarch butterflies. A caterpillar will feed on Milkweed leaves while in the cage and then form a chrysalis from which it emerges as a butterfly. The cage helps to protect the caterpillars from predators and other threats and also provides a means of educating students and others about the Monarch lifecycle. In past years, Bethel Middle School FFA has utilized BRCO funds to purchase FFA team jackets which FFA students are required to wear if they want to participate in team competitions.

Each year, the Rural Preservation Committee helps to sponsor the "Buy Haywood" Agritourism Guide and also supports the Haywood Waterways Association. In 2017, the Committee produced a Douglas Chambers DVD, "The Fertile Fields of Bethel." The DVD showcases how Bethel farmers maintain environmentally friendly agricultural operations that help drive the local economy.

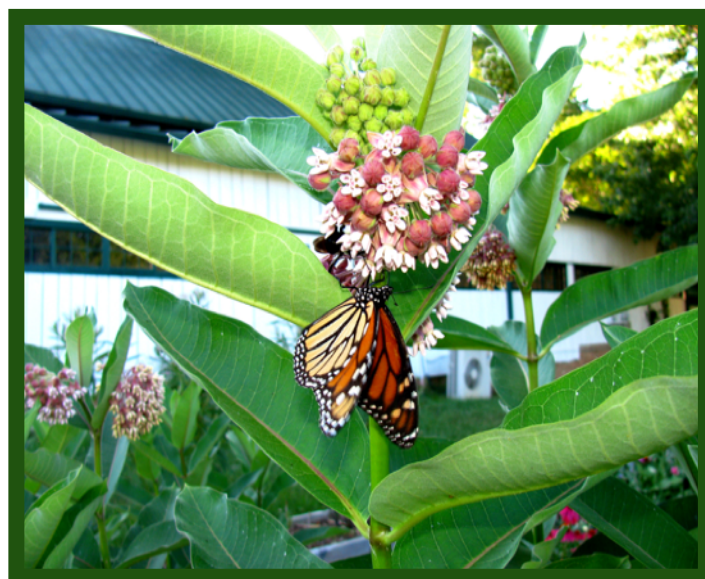
"I encourage BRCO members to obtain a copy of the DVD," said Litchfield. "You will enjoy watching the Bethel farmers describe their love of the land, and you will see how their efforts have helped to ensure that the highest level of water quality is maintained in the river and streams around Bethel." To order the DVD (or watch the 60-second trailer), click on this link:

<http://bethelrural.org/rural-preservation/fertile-fields-of-bethel-dvd.html>

"I also want to thank the BRCO members who have actively participated on the Rural Preservation Committee including Ted Carr, Frances Adamson, Carroll Jones, and Bill Holbrook," said Litchfield.



Carroll Jones identified this site on his property as the best site for establishing a Monarch Waystation-- it gets plenty of sunshine and has easy access.



During the summer, Monarch butterflies can be seen enjoying the milkweed blossoms at the Shelton House Monarch Waystation.

BRCO Committee News

Food Pantry – Julie Green, Chair
Stephanie Garrett, Vice Chair

Due to restrictions in place for the county and state, the Food Pantry Committee has instituted the following changes for the April 8th Food Pantry:

- Food boxes will be assembled the day before pantry except for frozen items which will be completed the day of
- No clients and only limited personnel allowed in the building
- Sign will be made and placed near parking lot alerting clients that food boxes will be delivered to individual cars
- Ted Carr is setting up a tent as a center point. Communication with Julie Green in the building will be via phone
- Volunteers will be kept at a minimum

Beautification Committee - submitted by Nancy Armstrong, Chair

The Beautification Committee met on March 9 to set up for the General Membership meeting. Kaye Riddle provided beautiful spring arrangements. Following the meeting, we did a thorough walk-through inspection of all the interior spaces. (Exterior was inspected in November and recommendations submitted to the Board in December). Recommendations were assessed and tenant responsibilities referred to Ted Carr. Karyn Kolaski is sourcing the new light fixtures, Carroll Jones is following up with the fire department regarding the outside access box, and Nancy Armstrong is sourcing a weather resistant door mat for the church stoop along with meeting supper paper goods. The driveway project headed by Tom Kolaski is ongoing; final grading and landscaping contracts are imminent. Evelyn Coltman will be working on rehanging the historic art with help from Karyn, this committee and the Historic Preservation committee.

Note: As of March 30 all above inside projects are suspended until it is safe for us to gather again.

Historic Preservation Committee, submitted by Evelyn Coltman, Chair

A few weeks ago, several members of our committee attended a meeting in Transylvania County. We were one of three community organizations detailing our attempts to collect and document the history of our area. During that session, we met Jay Fields who will be writing a book for WNC Communities. He is focusing on a few organizations that have made a point of collecting local history. I spent one afternoon with him, telling him about our art prints, books, CDs, DVDs, historic markers, the Cold Mountain Heritage Tours, and our Pigeon Valley Award. We spent a couple of hours driving to various historic site locations in the area.

Please take care of yourselves during this national crisis. If you decide to spring clean and make a wonderful historical discovery or if you come across a bit of local trivia, please pass it along to the committee.



NEW COMMITTEE - BUILDING AND GROUNDS

At the January BRCO Board meeting a new committee was created—Building and Grounds. This committee will work with the Beautification Committee, but will focus primarily on issues involving maintenance of the building and its exterior. We are still seeking an individual to chair this committee. If you would be interested in chairing this committee or serving on the committee, please contact Carroll Jones at ccrymes.jones@gmail.com

DID YOU KNOW? Fun Facts about the Bethel Community

- The name “Bethel,” meaning house of God, derives from religious camp meetings that were common in the area during the early to mid-nineteenth century. Camp meetings provided religious indoctrination but also enabled participants to experience an important social component to their busy rural existence.
- Bethel’s original Native American name, “Sonoma,” means “valley of the moon” or “earth village.” Sonoma Road and Sonoma Masonic Lodge still bear the legacy of the original Native American name for the community.
- Lush alluvial soils of Bethel attracted the first husbandry cultures, ancestors of the Cherokee, to the area thousands of years ago; fertile land continues to provide productive soils for the fields of today’s farmers.
- Bethel’s alternate name, Pigeon Valley, is associated with a previous, now extinct inhabitant, the passenger pigeon. The rich soils can be partially attributed to this avian species from Bethel’s past. Prior to the bird’s 1914 extinction, the valleys of Bethel provided a migratory resting stop for the birds, generally regarded as the most populous bird species ever to have existed. As the birds exited through a gap in the mountain, they were so numerous that they darkened the skies for days. Even though the bird is gone, the area retains several names attributed to the bird. The Pigeon River continues to flow, and Pigeon Gap still provides passage from Bethel to Waynesville. Pigeon Community and Pigeon Street in Waynesville also share this common local thread in their names. The fertile fields of Pigeon Valley (Bethel) owe much of their richness to these former inhabitants.
- An early alternate name for Bethel, “Forks of Pigeon,” like today’s alternate Bethel name, “Pigeon Valley,” relies on the prominent association the community has had with the passenger pigeon. Billions of now extinct passenger pigeons once traveled through the community on their annual migration route, leaving their legacy with several local names: Pigeon Community, Pigeon Gap, Pigeon River, Pigeon Street, and Pigeon Valley.
- Another name for Bethel that is listed on maps is “Woodrow.” Beginning in the late 1800s the Western North Carolina mountains provided raw material to feed the burgeoning logging and paper industry. Trains and railway lines accompanied the development of these commercial ventures. The nearby logging village known as “Sunburst” became connected to Champion Fiber, a paper plant in nearby Canton, via the T & NC Railroad. By 1914 the rail company located a depot and post office in Bethel and named it for President Woodrow Wilson. That name is the one listed on maps, even though many people living in Bethel have not ever called



the community by its Woodrow name. The train depot and post office were dismantled in 1927, and the rail lines were removed by 1933, but the name has lingered.



left: WOODROW DEPOT/POST OFFICE - Artist Nick DePaolo had only a historic photo of one end of the Woodrow Train Station from which to create an artistic rendering of the 1914-1927 structure that served as a depot for the T & NC Railroad in Bethel.