

Bethel Rural Community Organization

Newsletter

www.bethelrural.org

August 2022

2022 BRCO Officers and Board Members

Officers

- President: Carol Litchfield
- Vice President : Greg Christopher
- Secretary: Beth Cook
- Treasurer: Mike McLean

Board Members::

- Frances Adamson, Vice Chair
- Carol Litchfield
- Lucas Sorrells
- Pat Carr, Chair
- Eleanor Porter



A Word from Our President, Carol Litchfield



With summer now in full swing, how nice it is to live in a place where cool mountain breezes and ice-cold streams are in abundant supply! In mid-July, when the national news was filled with reports of drought, triple-digit temperatures, and wild fires plaguing much of the nation, I set out on my annual trek to Sliding Rock. As I headed east from Bethel, I took in the beautiful scenery and marveled at the resilience of the farms and homesteads along the river. Tropical Storm Fred devastated the area less than a year ago, but evidence of it was not immediately apparent.

The closer I got to Cruso, the effects of the devastation were clearly visible. The fallen branches and other natural debris that one could see on the banks of the river gradually transformed into larger piles of man-made debris. It soon became obvious that the growing accumulations contained far more than “debris.” They contained the remains of treasured possessions, family homes, and community gathering places. While tremendous progress has been made in “cleaning up” the area, it will likely take years to complete all that needs to be done. The landslide east of Cruso still looms large on the south side of HWY 276, and the devastation on the north bank of the river still brings to mind memories of heartbreaking loss; however, it *is* reassuring to know that countless individuals, churches, public and private entities, and non-profit organizations (including BRCO) continue to work together to achieve positive outcomes.

In 2021, I visited Sliding Rock prior to the flood. I was not quite sure what to expect during this visit. I was relieved to discover that the “Rock” itself looked just the same, and the rushing water flowed as clean and clear (and *cold*) as always. The floodwaters had washed away the viewing platform at the bottom of the Slide, exposing large rocks which now serve as a natural viewing platform. According to newly installed signs, the flood created a larger, 10-foot deep pool (two feet deeper than the old pool). It all looked good to me, so I proceeded with my slide—my 22nd year in a row to be refreshed and rejuvenated! When I first moved to WNC 22 years ago, I set a personal goal to slide every year in hopes of one day being the oldest person to slide. I am not quite there yet, but sixteen years from now, when I visit Sliding Rock, I look forward to people pointing at me and saying, “Hey, look at that! It’s an 80-year-old woman sliding down the rock!”

Evelyn Coltman recently completed our WNC Communities Honors Application—our annual opportunity to be recognized at a regional level for all the good work that BRCO members have accomplished in the past year. Thank you, Evelyn, for your dedicated efforts in gathering, organizing, and entering all of the information that was needed.

Carol Litchfield, President

2022 General Meetings

Tuesday, January 11, 2022
Tuesday, March 8, 2022
Tuesday, May 10, 2022
Tuesday, July 12, 2022
Tuesday, September 13, 2022
Tuesday, November 8, 2022



Blue Ridge Heritage Festival at Shelton House

BRCO members were pleased to share a booth at Shelton House's Blue Ridge Heritage Festival recently with the Haywood County Historical & Genealogical Society and the DAR. We met many people, handed out dozens of BRCO brochures, sold DVDs, and brought in donations. Thanks to helpers: Don Brown, Pat and Ted Carr, Evelyn Coltman, Beth Cook, Polly Edwards, and Eleanor Porter.

BRCO Welcomes New Members



At our July meeting we welcomed two new BRCO members - Len May and Roxie Billings.

Although Len is originally from Wilmington, NC, Roxie and Len moved down from the Boston, Massachusetts area in September 2021. They rented at first while searching for a house in the Hendersonville, Brevard and Waynesville areas. It was love at first sight when they saw their home to be in idyllic Bethel - they made an offer the next day and moved in in December.

A native of Massachusetts, Roxie has a son and his family in Stoneham, Massachusetts, and a daughter living in Houston, Texas. They look forward to getting to know BRCO members.

BRCO Committee News



Beautification – Carol Litchfield, Acting Chair- After a recent “sprucing up,” the BRCO Fellowship Hall is ready to accommodate gatherings of all kinds. You can find more information about renting the facility by visiting the BRCO website at bethelrural.org. At the center left on the Home Screen, you will see “Click here for Facility Rental Information.”

Food Pantry Committee - Julie Green and Stephanie Quis-Garrett, Co-Chairs -

BRCO’s Food Pantry received a \$1,000 grant from Food Lion. (See related article on page 7.) During the period January through June of this year an average of 48 families per month are being served.

Education - Lucas Sorrells, Chair

In June, BRCO was notified that Bethel resident Tucker Smith was a recipient of the WNC Communities George H. V. Cecil Journey Scholarship to attend college. Tucker was one of eleven scholarship recipients in WNC (and the only one from Haywood County) to receive a scholarship ranging from \$500 to \$1500. To be eligible for the scholarship, students must live or participate in one of the 60+ communities that participate in the WNC Communities Honors program. The scholarship is awarded to high school seniors who demonstrate good character, academic achievement, and dedication to community service.



In the photo above, Karen Hammet presents a certificate of award to Tucker Smith of Bethel, at the WNC Communities Board Luncheon in Asheville on June 22, 2022. (Karen serves as a member of the George H.V. Cecil Journey Scholarship Committee and is also an active member of the Fines Creek Community

Benevolence Committee – We still have approximately \$10,000 in Flood Relief money. Lucas has identified two more contacts that are needing gravel hauled to repair driveways and another individual that needs help with lumber.

BRCO Committee News (continued)

Rural Preservation - Carol Litchfield, Chair

Produce stand operators in the Bethel area are once again accepting BRCO coupons from families in need who receive the coupons when they pick up their food boxes each month at the BRCO Community

Pantry. Each coupon can be used to obtain \$10.00 worth of fresh produce at local produce stands. RP Committee member Ted Carr meets with the produce stand operators each month to pay them for the coupons they have collected. He gathered a total of 31 coupons during July.



RP Committee Chair Carol Litchfield reports that the Monarch Way Station at Shelton House is now in full bloom with the first Monarch sighted in early July. Carol is available to assist landowners in establishing habitats that will benefit Monarchs and other pollinators.

Photo at left: Shelton House Garden

Historic Preservation - Evelyn Coltman, Chair

Western North Carolina is fortunate to have a lengthy history in which community organizations have played a prominent role. In 1949, the Asheville Agricultural Development Council (AADC) and the Chamber of Commerce initiated a group designated to create a balanced economy by linking urban and agricultural development. The first regional community development association was born. George Cecil, grandson of George Vanderbilt, and Lloyd Langdon (CP & L rural electrification representative) embarked on a fact-finding road trip to Mississippi where they learned about burgeoning co-operative projects involving farm and urban interests. Hiring Louisiana resident, Mac McGough, as the AADC Vice-President, his job was to find a way to bring power, plumbing, and productivity to rural communities via the development of community organizations.

McGough's territory encompassed eighteen of NC's westernmost counties plus the Cherokee Reservation. According to *In Pursuit of the Greater Good*, the book that details the history of the organization that eventually come to be known as WNC Communities, more than four hundred and sixty community organizations existed in the region over the next seventy years. From 1950 forward, the accomplishments of these organizations have been celebrated each year at an awards program.

During the history of community organizations in WNC, Haywood County has been home to thirty-five groups. Bethel's Community organizations during those years include the following: Bethel (Rural) Community Organization, Cecil, Center Pigeon, Cruso, Dix Creek, East Pigeon, Stamey Cove, and West Pigeon.

These organizations proliferated during the 1950s and 1960s but eventually ceased until 1990 when a group initiated by Steve West, Haywood County Extension Agent, and Marilyn Coleman, WNC Communities representative, began efforts to form a single community club in Bethel Community.

BRCO Committee News (Historic Preservation continued)

Bethel Community Development Organization held its first official meeting on January 22, 1991, in the Bethel Middle School library. At that meeting attendees passed a temporary constitution. The group elected officers and focused the organization's efforts on preserving the rural nature of Bethel. Thirty-two people attended. The group agreed to meet the second Tuesday of each month. During the years of existence, this original organization presided over Bethel Community Day during the 1990s and, in 1993, started the Bethel Half Marathon Race that evolved into the longest continuing half marathon event in the state. The organization came to be known as Bethel Community Organization and continued in some capacity until approximately 2000.

By 2000, rumblings from the County Commissioners indicated a desire by Haywood County to extend water and sewer services into Bethel. That announcement raised concerns among community residents that water and sewer extension would promote accelerated growth that would decimate rural landscapes with resulting degradation in water quality. A loosely organized group of approximately 30 citizens formed "Pigeon Valley Citizens for Rural Preservation" to counter the county's sewer extension efforts. By early 2006, members of Bethel Rural Community Organization, many of whom belonged to the concerned citizens group, encouraged Haywood County commissioners to allow Mars Hill College to conduct a telephone survey regarding the wishes of Bethel citizens. That survey revealed that a vast majority of Bethel citizens desired to retain the rural nature of the community, protect farmland and waterways, and emphasize the agricultural focus of the area. The survey ended the county's push to extend water and sewer services into Bethel.

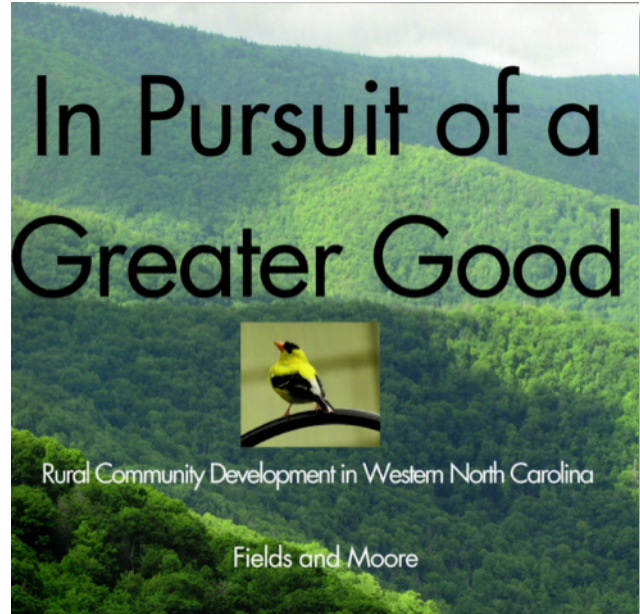
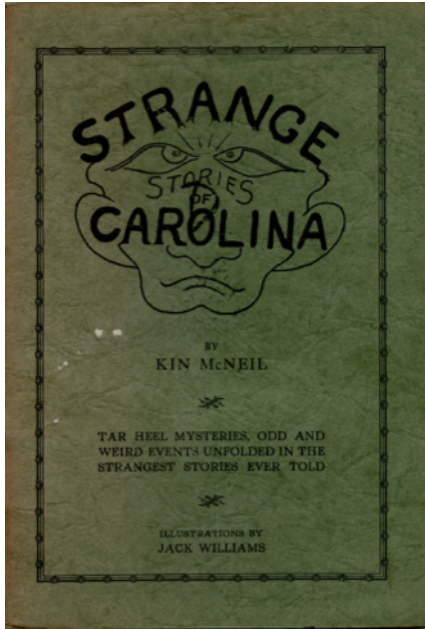
Bethel Community Organization, during this transition period, blended interests of the original community organization with concerns of the Pigeon Valley Citizens for Rural Preservation group, and the two concepts melded into Bethel **Rural** Community Organization. The first available recorded minutes were from a meeting held on April 24, 2001, though the group met for several months prior. A record of regular meeting minutes began on July 17, 2001. Bethel Rural Community Organization was incorporated on March 23, 2006. BRCO became a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization on May 30, 2008.

Continuing its affiliation with WNC Communities in 2005, BRCO joined approximately seventy other community clubs throughout the region to complete the umbrella organization's application that garnered recognition and monetary awards for community endeavors. In 2007, BRCO received the top award, Community of Distinction. During the next five intervening years, the organization earned second highest recognition with the Community of Promise Award. From 2013 – 2019, BRCO was a continual Community of Distinction recipient.

The pandemic allowed WNC Communities to reorganize its application process, with precise criteria outlined in order to attain distinction in one of four categories: Trillium, Mountain Laurel, Redbud, and White Oak. BRCO attained the Mountain Laurel Award in 2020, with recognition for achieving the upper level of the category. WNC Communities will once again host its awards celebration on Saturday, November 12, at DoubleTree Hilton in Asheville. BRCO members are welcome to attend this awards dinner.

BRCO Committee News (Historic Preservation continued)

Regarding *In Pursuit of a Greater Good*, co-author Jay Field paid a visit to Bethel and toured historical sites in the area. BRCO is fortunate to be one of the seven community organizations in the region whose stories the author featured in the chapter, "On the Road: Collected Stories of Community." (*In Pursuit of a Greater Good: Rural Community Development in Western North Carolina* by Jay Fields and Janet Moore, 2020, p.69-74).



- The Historic Preservation Committee is continuing its study of cemeteries in Bethel. We know of twenty-two and are documenting them for our website. Burnette Siding (Old Spruce) Cemetery is the second listing. This cemetery is situated on the ridge behind Sunburst Campground. Its origin was prior to 1918, but most of the graves are a result of deaths during the 1918 flu pandemic. Our listing details the history of the, now untended, cemetery. Burnette Siding Church ceased maintenance decades ago and established another cemetery in proximity to their church that sits between Lake Logan and Sunburst Campground. The original Burnette Siding (Old Spruce) cemetery is now under the authority of the US Forest Service.
- The committee has been involved in a discussion about Abraham Lincoln's potential NC heritage. One of our Historic Preservation Committee members, Edie Burnette, wrote a newspaper article years ago about the topic. A Bethel native, Kin McNeil, in his book, *Strange Stories of Carolina* (1947), delved into the hypothesis that Lincoln was the illegitimate son of Abraham Enloe whose homestead is still situated near Cherokee (an area that was once a part of Haywood County). Another Haywood County writer, Samuel Edwards, traced the written origin of the Abraham Enloe/ Abraham Lincoln theory to a book by James H. Cathey of Sylva who collected testimony from people in the region familiar with the Abraham Enloe paternity narrative. *The Genesis of Lincoln* (published and reissued in 1999 by the Confederate Reprint Company of Dahlonega, Georgia) included photos of Abraham Enloe's son whose appearance is striking in similarity to Abraham Lincoln. We await patiently for DNA evidence that will confirm or deny this long-speculated connection between Abraham Enloe and Abraham Lincoln.

Bethel Rural Community Organization Receives Donation from Food Lion Feeds Charitable Foundation

Bethel Rural Community Organization (BRCO) Pantry has received \$1000 from the Food Lion Feeds Charitable Foundation to help feed neighbors in their time of need. BRCO will use the gift to purchase food for its monthly pantry.

"At our July meeting, the BRCO Board heard the wonderful news that we would be receiving a \$1000 grant from Food Lion," said Carol Litchfield, BRCO President. "The number of families served by our monthly Food Pantry has steadily increased during 2022 and reached an all-time high during June. The Food Lion grant arrived at just the right time to help us meet the summer demand."

The BRCO pantry is committed to responding to the needs of the community, specifically addressing local food insecurity. This mission promotes healthier individuals and families and thereby strengthens the community. Additionally, the pantry provides \$10 Produce Coupons for the recipients to purchase fresh local vegetables while also supporting the local farmers of the Bethel area. The pantry has seen a significant rise in need since 2019 serving 16 families per month to today averaging 48 families per month. The BRCO pantry greatly appreciates the help given by our Food Lion neighbor.

The Food Lion Feeds Charitable Foundation is committed to supporting families facing food insecurity across its 10-state footprint. Established in 2001, the foundation provides financial support for programs and organizations dedicated to feeding local neighbors in the communities it serves. Since its inception, the foundation has awarded more than \$15 million in grants.

About The Food Lion Feeds Charitable Foundation

The Food Lion Feeds Charitable Foundation is the philanthropic arm of Food Lion, based in Salisbury, N.C. Established in 2001, the Food Lion Feeds Charitable Foundation provides financial support for programs and organizations dedicated to eliminating hunger. The charitable foundation has provided more than \$15 million in grant funding helping to nourish communities with fresh food for backpack programs, Kids Café's, and other hunger-relief programs as well as funding for long-term programs to help shorten the lines at food banks. The charitable foundation partners with Feeding America, the nation's largest hunger-relief agency, in addition to local food agencies serving the 10 Southeastern and Mid-Atlantic states in which Food Lion operates. For more information, visit www.foodlion.com/in-our-community.

About Food Lion

Food Lion, based in Salisbury, N.C., since 1957, has more than 1,100 stores in 10 Southeastern and Mid-Atlantic states and employs more than 82,000 associates. By leveraging its longstanding heritage of low prices and convenient locations, Food Lion is working to own the easiest full shop grocery experience in the Southeast, anchored by a strong commitment to affordability, freshness and the communities it serves. Through Food Lion Feeds, the company has donated more than 800 million meals to individuals and families since 2014 and has committed to donate 1.5 billion meals by 2025. Food Lion is a company of Ahold Delhaize USA, the U.S. division of Zaandam-based Ahold Delhaize. For more information, visit www.foodlion.com