

2023 BRCO Officers and Board Members

Officers

- President: Carol Litchfield
- Vice President: Greg Christopher
- Secretary: Roxie Billings
- Treasurer: Mike McLean

Board Members:

- Frances Adamson, Chair
- Carol Litchfield
- Carol Adams
- Brent McKee
- Will Thompsen



A Word from Our President, Carol Litchfield



With August upon us, I can think of no better place to be than the Pigeon Valley. While much of the country is suffering through extreme heat, we remain quite comfortable on most days. On July 30, with temperatures in the eighties, I headed for the popular swimming hole on the West Fork of the Pigeon River above Sunburst. What a happy place! There was lots of laughter and even an occasional scream from those newly arrived who were dunking in the cold water for the first time. I enjoyed a refreshing swim and was delighted (as always) to be able to see right to the bottom of the deep pool. There were lots of little fishes down there! How blessed we are to live in such a beautiful place where people appreciate the natural resources and the value of good stewardship.

Evelyn Coltman recently completed our WNC Communities Honors Application—our annual opportunity to be recognized at the regional level for all the good work that our organization has accomplished in the past year. In reading through the completed application, I gained a new appreciation of the many BRCO members, partners, donors, and volunteers that contributed towards the success of BRCO programs during the past year. Thank you, Evelyn, for your dedicated efforts in helping us to capture and showcase all of those amazing accomplishments! We will have to wait until November, when the WNC Communities awards luncheon is held, to find out which honors level we achieved. In the meantime, if anyone has any suggestions on how we can be more efficient or effective in meeting the needs of Bethel community, please let me know.

The program for our September 12th Membership Meeting will be presented by Jack Thomson, the Western Regional Director for Preservation NC. Jack will explain to us about easements and how they can be a very useful legal tool for protecting historic properties and community gathering places. We hope to learn from Jack how an easement would benefit/impact our community center, should we decide to pursue that type of preservation option at some point in the future.

I look forward to seeing everyone on September 12th!

Carol Litchfield, President

BRCO Board Meeting: Monday, September 11 at 6:00 p.m.
Next General Meeting: Tuesday, September 12 at 6:30 p.m.



Celebrating 25 Years

Haywood Waterways Association is celebrating 25 years! Come join on August 19th from 2 - 5 pm at the new BearWaters location in Hazelwood. There will be trivia and reminiscing about the past 25 years of accomplishments!

On September 23, 1998, HWA became a non-profit, member corporation. Since then, they have had the privilege to collaborate with numerous organizations, local municipalities, governments, and non-profits to work across the Pigeon River Watershed and French Broad River Basin. With the dedication of their amazing volunteers, they have successfully maintained the Volunteer Water Information Network (VWIN) to gather baseline water quality data for the Pigeon River Watershed since 1996 and currently have 25 monitoring stations across Haywood County. In addition, they continue to conduct micro-invertebrate sampling throughout the watershed, supporting the regional SMIE program since the late 90's.

Partnerships are the backbone of their success and through this approach they have supported local county organizations, town municipalities, regional CoGs, environmental nonprofits, plus various state and federal agencies to improve and protect the water quality in the Pigeon River Watershed. Results of these partnerships include the Pigeon River Watershed Action Plan and successful projects from over 12 million dollars of grant funding. One of their biggest investments is educating the community and more specifically, the youth. A great representation of this approach is their annual Kids in the Creek program, which provides an immersive learning experience for all our County 8th graders; over 16,500 since 1997.

With these notable achievements, and several others, HWA looks forward to the next quarter century! Come learn more about the organization and share some experiences.

Congratulations to our newest Board Member - Carol Adams

Eleanor Porter, BRCO Board Member and Vice Chair, is moving to Candler and has resigned her position as of July, 2023. At the BRCO General meeting on July 11, the Nominating Committee of Frances Adamson, Ted Carr and Evelyn Coltman nominated Carol Adams to fill this vacancy. President Carol Litchfield called for other nominations from the floor. Seeing none, Carol Adams was elected to BRCO's Board of Directors by acclamation.



The BRCO Officers and Board would like to hear from you. We want to have programs at our general meeting that will be of interest to our members. Let us know what speakers you would like to hear, what topics are of interest to you and any other suggestions you might have for programs. Email your suggestions to:

(rsbillings51@gmail.com) and your suggestions will be shared with the BRCO officers and board members.

Welcome to Bible Believers Baptist Church

BRCO welcomes our new tenant that is leasing the Sanctuary and facilities for the next twelve months. The pastor is Rev. Mike Wheeler. Wheeler is a prominent name in the Cruso and Bethel community. Earl, Howard, Gerald, Dale, Roy, Russell, and Linton are some names you probably know.

Rev. Mike and his congregation began a trial service on July 2. In typical Baptist tradition, it included a covered dish luncheon. This is something they were not able to do in the building they were renting – no kitchen facilities. Their mid-week service is each Tuesday evening, not the traditional Wednesday evening. So, naturally, they were concerned about being interrupted on the second Tuesday of odd months when BRCO has the General Membership meeting. July 11 was another trial service and all went well.

After a good bit of tweaking, we were able to agree on all points of the lease. The July and August rental fee has been paid. We look forward to a long and cooperative relationship with Rev. Mike and his wife, Karen. He is a bi-vocational pastor. His day job is lead IT tech for the Caldwell County School System.—*Ted Carr*

Cooperative Partnership with Ramp Builders

Interesting, and sometimes challenging, things spring out of our relationships with BRCO's pantry patrons. At the July food distribution, as the food boxes were being placed in her car, one of our patrons asked Roxie and Mary, "Do you know how I could get a ramp built? My husband is in re-hab after foot surgery and won't be able to come home if we don't have a handicap ramp." That, of course, caught them by surprise so their response was, "Ted, can you help this lady?"

Ted talked to the lady who lives less than a mile from BRCO on Bethel drive. Next, Ted talked to his ramp building buddies at Riverside Baptist Church. The labor aspect was no problem, but the material aspect was. Typically, Mountain Projects supplies the material for the RBC ramp projects. In this case, a technical issue prevented Mountain Projects from funding the material costs. Then, Ted and Greg Christopher, chairman of the BRCO Benevolence Committee conferred. The Benevolence Committee was able to cover the cost of over \$900 for pressure treated boards and posts to build a 24 foot long, 4 foot wide ramp for the husband to roll up to his front door.

This is an excellent example of two local organizations, Bethel Rural Community Organization and Riverside Baptist Church ramp building team, working together to solve a community problem – and in quick order. —*Ted Carr*



Pictured at left are the pressure treated boards purchased by the Benevolence Committee to build the ramp. The ramp is scheduled to be built on Tuesday, August 1.



TO ALL BRCO MEMBERS: If you get an e-mail, from one of BRCO's officers or Board Members, asking you to help them out by purchasing gift cards, delete the email. THIS IS A SCAM! Our officers and/or Board Members would never ask you to purchase gift cards on their behalf. This scam crops up from time to time so please ignore and delete any email with this type of request. Do not respond to the email!

BRCO Committee News

Beautification Committee – Carol Litchfield, Chair

Special thanks go out to Evelyn Coltman and Ted Carr for getting things in order during the transition from the departing church congregation to the new church congregation that began leasing the BRCO sanctuary in July. Ted made all of the arrangements to get a new lease in place to ensure a seamless transition. Evelyn made sure that the sanctuary was cleared of items no longer needed and the storage room/pastor office made ready. Ted removed the shelves in the library to create space for additional file cabinets. Evelyn cleaned out the cabinets in the kitchen and organized the eating utensils and cleaned both refrigerators. Evelyn and Ted have also been working together to hang pictures that were taken down during the pantry renovation.

Building & Grounds Committee – Ted Carr, Chair

If you have driven by BRCO a time or two in July, you should have noticed that the yard, is looking neat. That is because, we (BRCO) have taken over the caretaking responsibility, not the tenant. The grass is being mowed now by someone who knows what 'neat' means.

With the grass looking so good, Roxie Billings and Ted Carr took a look at the shrubbery and decided that it needed 'shaping up'. With the help of a local professional, Rick Owen, the three did exactly that. They 'shaped up' the five shrubs beside the Sanctuary and the shrub growing out of the 'wet hole'. The cuttings were piled into Ted's truck and hauled off to a place unknown. The grounds should look neat now until springtime.



Top Right: Roxie Billings shaping up the shrubs



Left: Ted Carr loading the cuttings to be hauled off

Food Pantry - Stephanie Quis-Garrett and Anita Montanile, Co-Chairs

99 families were served and 119 volunteer hours given during the months of May and June. To date, Jan-June, 323 families have been served. Two new freezers and two shelf units have been purchased, and the painting of BRCO's Community Pantry area has been completed.

BRCO Committee News

Historic Preservation - Evelyn Coltman, Chair

The Historic Preservation Committee offers a memorial tribute to a lady who impacted our focus, beginning in 2010, when she traveled back and forth to visit her husband at Silver Bluff Village. Dr. Doris Hammett was a pediatrician for many years in Haywood County, but her varied interests led her and fellow conservation-minded citizens as well as the Haywood County Historical Society to champion preservation of the historic Osborne Boundary Oak tree on Highway #110. The tree served as a boundary marker in 1792 when Adlai Osborne purchased land that included the description of a white oak as a boundary identifier. Dr. Gary Dills, Chairman of the Agricultural and Biological Sciences at Haywood Community College, corrected the documentation to indicate that the tree is a “scarlet” oak rather than a “white” oak. In the mid-1970s, when NC



Department of Transportation indicated that Highway #110 would be widened except that the tree’s location would be problematic for the expansion, numerous leaders in the county, including Dr. Hammett, Ernestine Upchurch, John Palmer at HCC, and local citizens joined the chorus to call for preservation of the historic tree regardless of NCDOT’s plans. After much debate and numerous articles published by Doris Burrell in “The Asheville Citizen-Times,” citizen voices prevailed, and the road direction changed enough to accommodate survival of the tree. Paying reverence to the reputed Native American connection to the tree, Burrell’s article stated that a buffalo and Indian trail passed by this oak, and there was an Indian Council nearby. White men, she claimed, erected a trading post nearby. In later years, Osborne children played around the tree.



Moving forward to 2010 when Dr. Hammett drove by the historic tree, she noticed that its branches were dying. She contacted BRCO’s Historic Preservation Committee, demanding that we do something to save the tree. We did. We hired arborists (2007, 2016, and 2022). We featured the tree on the Cold

Mountain Heritage Tours. Dr. Hammett spoke to WLOS-TV on our behalf about the merits of the tree. We partnered with dendrology experts at Haywood Community College to inspect the tree, with the Lake Logan Fire Department to water the tree in dry weather, and with Cold Mountain Nursery to transplant and pot seedlings from the tree. These seedlings have been distributed to several locations in the county to continue the tree’s genealogy. We erected our first historic



BRCO Committee News (Historic Preservation Committee Continued)

marker at the trees edge. Ernestine Upchurch researched the history of the tree which we published in Book 6 of *Legends, Tales & History of Cold Mountain*. The Museum of NC Handicrafts at Shelton House loaned us its painting of the tree by G.C. Monroe and allowed us to place the art print among our sale items. We filmed a session with key players that is awaiting an appropriate DVD. We partnered with DAR to commemorate the tree as a "Witness Tree" because the tree was witness to the 1776 Rutherford Trace March that passed by its massive branches on its mission to quell resistance to white settlement from the Cherokee.

Without Dr. Hammett's insight, determination, and fortitude, the Osborne Boundary Oak would now be logs at a lumber mill or kindling for next year's fire. Because of her efforts, the tree, though weathered after hundreds of years of existence, remains.



Evelyn Coltman and Ted Carr at Michal Cemetery



Photo from the cover of Emily Lenoir Michal Gentry's book *Michal Family Cemetery*

A fifth Bethel cemetery is listed on the BRCO website under "Bethel Cemeteries, Churchyards, and Graveyards" – the Michal Cemetery. Located on Birdsong Trail, this lovely pastoral setting contains approximately twenty-eight graves. Thomas Isaac Lenoir was the first Civil War Captain of the 25th Infantry Regiment of the North Carolina Volunteers, Company F, known as the "Haywood Highlanders." Lenoir's wife, Lizzie, died in 1880, preceding him by two years. Theirs are the first two graves in the family graveyard. A handwritten deed, composed by the guardian of the three orphaned daughters, gifted the three-acre property to the Episcopal Diocese of WNC (Thomas Isaac Lenoir was a founding member of the Protestant Episcopal Church of Waynesville) with the direction that two of the acres would be used for the graveyard with the remainder designated for use by the local Methodist church. The original Bethel United Methodist Church parsonage, now approximately 123 years old and owned by Reba McCracken, sits adjacent to the two-acre burial ground on the remainder of the original deeded property. The deed currently lists the cemetery with two acres under the ownership of Bethel United Methodist Church.



Pictured at left is the original Bethel United Methodist Church parsonage.

BRCO Committee News (Historic Preservation Committee Continued)

Caretaker Emily Lenoir Michal Gentry is a Lenoir-Michal descendant from one of the Lenoir's three daughters who married a Michal and has compiled extensive historical and genealogical documentation about the Lenoir-Michal family in her book, *Michal Family Cemetery*.



BRCO began its relationship with the Lenoir-Michal family when it placed Lenoir Devon Acres on the Cold Mountain Heritage Tour (CD by the same name). We filmed Dr. Mary Michal discussing her growing-up years on the farm while Charles Trantham remarks about the Red Devon cattle he tends which are descended from the original cattle brought to the farm in the mid-1800s



by Thomas Isaac Lenoir. Their interview is in our *Walking in the Footsteps of Those Who Came Before Us* DVD. Emily Michal Terrell wrote about Lenoir family history in Book 3 of *Legends, Tales & History of Cold Mountain*. The Historic Preservation Committee placed its third local historic marker at the farm, denoting that it is the longest continuing farm with the longest continuing herd of cattle in Haywood County. One of our first commissioned paintings was Lenoir's Creek Farm by Janice Swanger. (see picture above at the right right)



Colonel Joseph Cathey's Mill - 1880s painting by Nettie Vance Penland from our art print collection

Captain Thomas Isaac Lenoir's close friend, Colonel Joseph Cathey, operated a mercantile and a mill in Bethel and, like Lenoir, owned slaves. Cathey's mill was situated in the curve of today's Max Thompson Road, and his house and mercantile were on property now owned by Silver Bluff Village. The Historic Preservation Committee has enlisted the services of Jennifer Cathey with the Department of Natural & Cultural Resources to locate Colonel Cathey's slave cemetery, one of two documented slave cemeteries in Bethel. Jennifer Cathey researched hand-written documents by Colonel Cathey to identify what we believe to be the location of the burial site. The presumed burial area is on private property, so we are collaborating with the son of

the owners to determine an appropriate time to investigate further.

BRCO Committee News (continued)

Rural Preservation Committee— Carol Litchfield, Chair

Bethel area produce stand operators have been collecting BRCO produce coupons from Community Pantry patrons who visit their produce stands to buy fresh fruits and vegetables. BRCO reimburses the operators for the coupons they collect. This is a popular program with the pantry patrons who enjoy being able to shop for and select their favorite fruits and vegetables.

Carol Litchfield is inviting BRCO members to help document the status of the Monarch population during the next two months. This is the time of year that it should be relatively easy to find Monarch caterpillars and chrysalis on or near milkweed plants. If you see milkweed leaves that have been chewed, there is a good chance that one or more caterpillars can be found in that vicinity. If you find some, please e-mail Carol at CLTCHFLD@aol.com to let her know where you found them and on what day. Please do not disturb the caterpillars, as they will soon be forming a chrysalis from which a Monarch butterfly will emerge. While this is not a scientific survey, it will at least give an indication how prevalent the Monarchs are this year compared to last year. If you want to know what milkweed looks like, you can see an abundance of it beside the sidewalk leading to the front door of the Waynesville library. Pollinator gardens often include milkweed, the leaves of which are the only food that Monarch caterpillars will eat.

Education Committee - Greg Christopher, Chair

Bethel students who demonstrated academic excellence and winning attitudes were recently recognized by Bethel Rural Community Organization (BRCO). BRCO's Education Committee annually grants awards to students at Bethel Elementary, Bethel Middle, and Pisgah High School.

BRCO recognized the following students at Bethel Elementary School:



Emerie Underwood and Triniti Cornwell for Reading Growth
Jaylon Thomassin for Highest Reading Score
Christian Swilling for Math Growth
Janee Lancaster for Highest Math Score.

The BRCO David Curphey Citizenship Award recipient was chosen by eighth grade teachers at Bethel Middle School based on attitude, behavior, civic-mindedness, and treating others with care and respect. Eighth grader Rosie Burgess (*pictured at left*) received the Award and \$50.

BRCO's Education Committee selects the winner of the \$1,000 BRCO Scholarship from the applications of graduating high school seniors who reside in Bethel community. Lettie Jo Watson (*pictured at right*) was selected because of her accomplishments in wide-ranging areas of competence. She earned a cumulative weighted GPA of 4.6111 while actively participating in a variety of school sports and clubs. Watson learned veterinary techniques and processes at local animal hospitals in preparation for her future studies in veterinary medicine. She will attend the University of Tennessee and will pursue a degree in animal science with a focus on pre-veterinary medicine. Watson plans to graduate in eight years with a doctorate of veterinary medicine. After she completes her studies, she would like to come back to Bethel to start a mobile vet practice.



David Curphey - BRCO's Good Citizen



Mr. David Curphey, founding member of BRCO

At the end of the school year, when we presented the David Curphey Citizenship Award, newer members of BRCO began asking, "Who was David Curphey?" It is an excellent question that compels us to remember David and share his legacy.

When David Curphey arrived in Bethel in 1988, he immediately set about making his new community a more interesting, friendly, creative, and accountable space. Dave played a significant role in shaping his community into a more compassionate and caring neighborhood with his work with Lions Club International. He served as President of the Pigeon Valley Lions Club in Bethel and chaired the Haywood County Blind Fund. Always thinking about the children, Dave joined in the vision screening project at Bethel Elementary School, ensuring that every child who needed visual assistance would be entitled to receive it. Dave guaranteed that the blind and visually impaired were well cared for, not only for their vision needs, but also for their general wellbeing.

Dave was a founding member of BRCO. He served as a Director and President of BRCO and was an active member of many BRCO committees. Dave helped to coordinate the paving and lighting of the Bethel track, a feature that, for decades, has enabled Bethel families to stay in shape. He also helped to establish the Bethel Half Marathon which survived twenty-six seasons to become the oldest half marathon in the state.

As an engineer, Dave wanted local students to succeed and be competitive in the arena of science and math. He initiated an award to recognize achievement in these fields at Bethel Elementary School. That annual STEM award was taken over by BRCO and is named for Dave. BRCO's citizenship award was appropriately named the "David Curphey Citizenship Award" in

recognition of Dave's encouragement of active involvement in the community. The award is presented each year to a graduating eighth grade student who has demonstrated the traits of good citizenship.

David Curphey left a legacy of stewardship and leadership for BRCO as well as for the greater community. For his years of perseverance and commitment to Bethel Community and Haywood County, Dave was nominated by BRCO and granted by the Governor's Office a Governor's Volunteer Service Award in 2015. Dave passed away on February 19, 2020, at the age of 90. —*Evelyn Coltman*



David Curphey (left) and Lucas Sorrells. Mr. Curphey was able to attend the 2019 Bethel Half Marathon Race which he helped establish.