

Bethel Rural Community Organization

Newsletter

www.bethelrural.org

June 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



As we look forward to a summer filled with festivals once again, I encourage everyone to stop by Shelton House in Waynesville on Blue Ridge Heritage Weekend on June 18-19. The two-day Arts and Crafts Fair will feature many artists and artisans, a variety of demonstrations, food, drink, and several local bands featuring Appalachian music. BRCO will be there sharing a tent with the Haywood County Historical and Genealogical Society. BRCO members are invited to help staff the tent and share with the public the good works of BRCO and the many volunteer opportunities we have to offer.

I am pleased to report that we recently completed our participation in the Strategic Planning Pilot Project sponsored by WNC Communities. We were eligible to participate because we had earned the "Best in Class" award at the Mountain Laurel level in the WNCC Honors Program last December. After gathering information from our members and Partners and those whom we serve, we developed a Strategic Plan that will guide us during the next five years.

Susan Garrett, Community Programs Coordinator at WNC Communities, was very pleased with our Strategic Planning effort: "I am so thrilled to see all your hard work come to such a well thought out, thorough, clear, and inspiring rendition of how you will accomplish your vision, mission and values in the coming years!" wrote Susan, "This is a truly outstanding example of a community strategic plan. Congratulations to your board, volunteers, and everyone involved in creating this stellar plan. I would love to share it with other communities as a shining example of excellence."

Beth Cook has posted our Strategic Plan on our web site. You can view it by visiting www.bethelrural.org and clicking on the "About BRCO" tab. You will see the link following the paragraph entitled "Organization." We will continue to update the plan in the future as we become aware of new opportunities. During the strategic planning process, we were also able to gather a number of new ideas from our members and Partners that we will explore in more depth in the coming months.

BRCO and other Community Clubs across western North Carolina will be completing the 2022 WNC Honors Application during July and August—our annual opportunity to be recognized at a regional level for all that we have accomplished in the past year. I encourage you to tally your BRCO volunteer hours and write down your contributions to BRCO activities (for the period July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022). We will be asking you to submit this information during July so that we may use it to complete our application.

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

The 4th annual Blue Ridge Heritage Festival at the Shelton House will be June 18-19. BRCO will be sharing a booth with the Haywood County Genealogical Society. Volunteers are needed to man the booth. Please let Mike McLean know if you are interested in helping. memclean@aol.com

With July date, North Carolina ready to launch 988 Mental Health Crisis Hotline

In July, there will be a new universal phone number — 988 — for people across the United States to call when they or someone around them experiences a mental health crisis. The idea is that it's short, easy to remember and the same everywhere.

Congress passed the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020 which created the 9-8-8 hotline. It's supposed to launch nationwide in July, but most states do not have a legislative plan for the rollout of the service.

North Carolina, on the other hand, is ready and on track for the July launch date. Right now, North Carolina already participates in the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline — 800-273-TALK. When someone calls that number, they are routed to their local crisis center. Starting in July, that same crisis line will be reachable by dialing 9-8-8.

9-8-8 callers will immediately be put in touch with a trained crisis counselor. Many times, the counselor can help de-escalate the situation over the phone.

If the caller is still in need of help, a mobile crisis team of mental health professionals will respond. The hope is that when people dial 9-8-8 during a mental health crisis instead of 9-1-1, crisis teams will be dispatched to respond to these situations, not law enforcement.

This article first appeared on North Carolina Health News and is republished here under a Creative Commons license.

2022 BRCO Scholarship Winner Announced

BRCO's Education Committee has selected Gabe Nussman as the recipient of the 2022 Scholarship Award. He is the son of Scott and Nan Nussman. He graduated with a 4.28 weighted GPA and is attending Carson Newman as an Exercise Science major. He will be playing football for them also. Some of Gabe's extracurricular activities were football (captain sophomore and senior year), wrestling, track, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, National Honor Society and Unified Sports. He is active in Crestview Baptist Church and was also involved in the United Student Conference, Generosity Feeds, and participated in numerous flood cleanup projects last August in our community.

BRCO Committee News

Beautification – Carol Litchfield, Acting Chair-

Carol wants to thank her fellow Committee Chairs Stephanie Quis-Garrett (Food Pantry), Evelyn Coltman (Historic Preservation), and Ted Carr (Building and Grounds) for helping to put in order the Fellowship Hall so that it is more attractive for holding events and renting to the public. In addition, all of the BRCO historic prints are now displayed in an orderly manner on the walls of the Fellowship Hall.

A custom-made door has been ordered to replace the double doors at the entrance to the Fellowship Hall. Ted Carr has been overseeing the development of the design features as well as negotiating the final cost. We hope to have the new door in place later this summer.

Food Pantry Committee - Julie Green and Stephanie Quis-Garrett, Co-Chairs - During March and April the Food Pantry served 102 families and 241 individuals.

Rural Preservation – Carol Litchfield, Chair

On April 22nd, Carol celebrated Earth Day by attending the dedication ceremony of the Chestnut Mountain Nature Park in Canton. The park was Hanni Muerdter's idea. Hanni is a Bethel and Pisgah High School graduate and has been the Conservation Director for Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy (SAHC) since 2007. Hanni was a keynote speaker at the ceremony and had the honor of cutting the ribbon during the dedication.

On May 10th, Hanni was the program speaker at the BRCO membership meeting. She described the coordination effort that was required to establish Chestnut Mountain Nature Park and also explained how individual landowners can take steps to protect their land from future development. Hanni has helped to implement many conservation projects in Haywood County and is looking forward to helping BRCO and Bethel landowners with land conservation efforts in the future. Contact Carol if you would like more information on how to protect your land.



Hanni Muerdter speaking at the dedication ceremony on April 22nd



Hanni (at center next to Mayor Zeb Smathers) prepares to cut the ribbon at the entrance to Chestnut Mountain Nature Park

BRCO Committee News (continued)

Historic Preservation - Evelyn Coltman, Chair

The fellowship hall is much improved in appearance with the Beautification Committee rearrangement of the Historic Preservation art prints so that all twenty-six are now on display. Several had been stored in the closet for years while we decided how to configure them. We have determined that with further rearrangement in the hallway, we should be able to collect twelve more prints. The art print collection includes either paintings or reproductions of original photographs or paintings of the following historic Bethel subjects: bird, bridge, cabin, churches, farms, houses, logging map, mill, patent drawing, portrait, post office/train station depot, schools, store, tree. The North Carolina Society of Historians awarded the Historic Preservation Committee's art print collection with the Multi-Media Award as well as one of the top five awards (Lighthouse Award) in 2020.



Pigeon Gap Water Hole after restoration in 2013.

This year's decision by the Historic Preservation Committee to have an artist create a rendering of the Pigeon Gap Watering Hole that sits atop Waynesville Mountain (known as Pigeon Gap) resulted in a competition. Five artists submitted samples of their nature images, and the Historic Preservation Committee selected the winner. Competition was tight, requiring a run-off vote. We are pleased to announce that the committee selected Stephanie Quis-Garret to portray the historic watering hole that was used in the 1800s and early 1900s as a rest area for weary travelers and their animals. The Community Club of Waynesville installed a plaque there in 1924. Joey Rolland cleared the site of overgrowth and built a

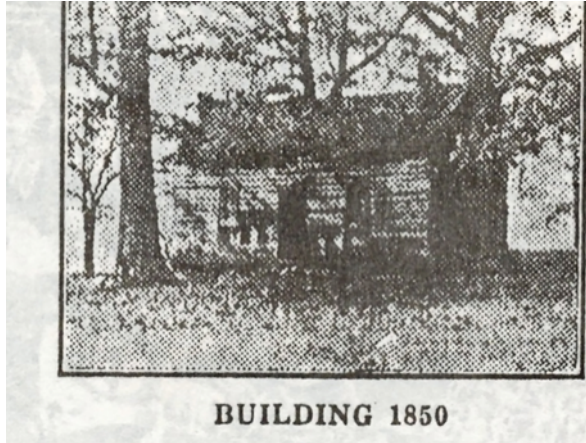
bridge at the site in 2013. The Historic Preservation Committee installed a local historic marker at the location in 2016.

Filming of the *Historic Schools of Bethel* DVD continues with videography sessions with Zac Guy, Shawn Parris, and Bill Terrell. Terrell's interview included a segment in which he pointed to the predecessor of our current community center that the Presbyterians (built in 1885) – a meeting house, dating to the 1830s, used by Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians. The log structure also served as one of Bethel's earliest schools. Terrell also relayed information about the school buildings that preceded the current Bethel Middle School. In addition, videographer, Doug Chambers, filmed Terrell at the site of Bethel Academy, a post-Civil War school that was renowned for its excellent instruction.

Bethel Middle School Principal, Shawn Parris, recounted the history of Bethel Middle School and gave details about its outstanding academic history, its sports programs, its FFA/FHA background, and data about plans projected for the future.

BRCO Committee News (Historic Preservation continued)

Zac Guy, via communication with the previous owner of his home, revealed the site of what we believe to be the location of Bethel's first school building whose remains are buried in his front pasture. This poplar log structure was built in 1825 and served as a "pay" or "subscription" school. Guy also discussed the distinct types of schooling that were prominent in Bethel in the 1800s.



BUILDING 1850



BUILDING 1925

REAR OF BETHEL SCHOOL BUILDING - 1925

The committee is embarking on a several-year process of researching all of the known cemeteries in Bethel that George Augustus Miller, Sr. outlined in his 1979 book, *Cemeteries and Family Graveyards in Haywood County, NC*. Thanks to Bill Holbrook and Carol Litchfield from the Historic Preservation Committee for their assistance with the first cemetery: Bethel Community Cemetery. Also, thanks to Carl Ledford, Trustee with Bethel Community Cemetery, for his aid in completing the first write-up of twenty-two about Bethel Cemeteries. As we compile reports, we will place cemetery data on the BRCO website.



Bethel Community Cemetery

SPOTLIGHT ON BRCO Board Member -Eleanor Porter

I'm the newest member of the board and have lived here for almost 16 years.

I was born in Greenville, SC and lived there until I entered Winthrop College (still an all girls school at that time) in 1964. My major in college was the business end of Home Economics, at that time referred to as Fashion Merchandising. During my senior year, I married "Big John" a native of Rock Hill, SC, Winthrop's location. We lived there until 2006 when we retired and moved to Waynesville.



My work history is varied, from being a pre-school teacher, a Welcome Wagon hostess, establishing and being director of a large after school program at the Rock Hill YMCA, and working as Administrative Assistant to the YMCA director. In 1986 I became the Tourism Coordinator for the City of Rock Hill. My duties included planning/implementing tourism related events, developing an economic impact survey for large events and calculating the impact of those events on the city. I also oversaw the distribution of the city's accommodations tax on hotel rooms to organizations that could increase tourism dollars coming into our area. This was definitely a "more than" 40 hour a week job, but it was as fun as it was time consuming.

After retiring in 2006, we moved to the Bethel community of Waynesville. Since relocating, I have worked part-time at Biltmore Estate and have been working part-time in retail at Flawsome (formerly FiFi's) Ladies Upscale Consignment in downtown Waynesville for almost 11 years.

I have two married children and six grandchildren who live in South Carolina and Georgia. They love visiting the mountains, especially with our climate being much cooler than their locations!

I really enjoy living in the Bethel area. When I tell people where I live, they refer to it as "Beautiful Bethel", "Bountiful Bethel" (meaning our wonderful summer gardens/produce). Some local people refer to where I live as "the back side of the river," which took me awhile to understand! I'm a member of Longs Chapel United Methodist Church where I play in the chimes/handbells choir, sing in the Chancel Choir, and volunteer in the church Welcome Center. I've been a Fokmoot volunteer for many years and am a past member of the Haywood County Recreation Commission as the Bethel representative. I also usher at the HART Theater during their main season.

I feel that our BRCO group is vitally important to this area, it has done so much for so many. I would like to see our membership grow and continue to be a positive influence on our area as well as all of Haywood County.