

**WNC COMMUNITIES HONORS AWARDS**  
**Community Achievements**  
**Saturday, November 2, 2019**

The WNC Honors Awards is built on a 70-year tradition of recognizing rural community development clubs for their innovative ideas and grassroots solutions. These centers and clubs are the backbone running through our beloved mountains. The culmination of this year's program occurred at a luncheon held on Saturday, November 2 with 250 community leaders from 13 Western North Carolina Counties and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

The 65 communities participating in this year's program made a \$6 million investment of time, talent, money and effort in our Western North Carolina Communities. Their fundraising efforts brought in \$950,000 with more than 5,5000 volunteers investing an impressive 195,500 hours of their time and talent in outreach programs dedicated to conservation, education, beautification, health, wellness, and economic development.

The following are highlights from achievements communities noted in their 2019 applications submitted for the 70<sup>th</sup> Annual WNC Honors Awards.

**Participating Communities:** Twenty-three communities received a cash award of \$250 for their successful projects implemented during the past year.

***BUNCOMBE COUNTY***

The **Fairview Community Center** focused on improving the standard of living in their community by increasing the rental of their building for small business vendor fairs from one in previous years to four this year. They also turned a challenge into an opportunity when a group of young adults were caught sneaking into the building to play basketball. Members came to a mutual agreement with the young adults to rent the space for a greatly reduced price after 9pm. Now the "Late Nighters" as they are called take responsibility for the building.

The **Newfound Community Club** has been focused on cleaning and updating their outside recreational area. They removed the old picnic shed that was crushed by snow, and they resurfaced their walking track, as well as performing needed ditching for water management.

***CHEROKEE COUNTY***

The **Martins Creek Community Development Club** is true to their stated mission "to build pride and cooperation," after some thefts in the community, community members contacted the Sheriff's Department and asked what they could do to help prevent crime and make their community safer. A community meeting was called to discuss a community watch program, and a crime panel discussion helped educate citizens.

The **Peachtree Community Center** has hosted holiday meal celebrations for their community, as well as an important Firewise planning meeting. They are being proactive with this important educational meeting and planning.

## ***EASTERN BAND OF CHEROKEE INDIANS***

The **Cherokee County Indian Community Club** take pride in caring for their community garden, walking track, and club building so that these resources may be used by all the residents of their community. They plan to offer several new classes in the upcoming year.

The **Snowbird Community Club** is working to keep their Cherokee language alive. They hosted Cherokee basic language classes and plan to continue to offer more of these classes.

**Towstring Community Club** values The Day of Caring tradition, this time specifically helping build a covered porch to provide shelter from rain and snow and deter falls. A focus is on supporting their youth; funds were raised to help Shalyn travel to Greece and Italy with the Health Occupations Students Association.

## ***HENDERSON COUNTY***

The **Mills River Community Center** is collaborating with neighboring community centers to determine ways that they can all improve the operation of their centers and serve as a resource for their communities

## ***JACKSON COUNTY***

The **Glenville Community Development Club** hosts such a successful thrift store that they needed to build an additional building to house their used furniture store. With almost \$51,000 raised from sells through the thrift store, they are able to fund their scholarship program and provide four of their local high school graduates 4 year scholarships of \$2000/per year for a total of an \$8000 scholarship per student.

The **Pumpkintown Community Development Club** community leaders learned from the Genealogy Society that there was an abandoned cemetery in their community, and they sprung into action, cleared the land, and installed a permanent monument. They also utilize a call tree to communicate community news to community members. A phone call is still appreciated by many community members to keep them connected to their neighbors.

## ***MACON COUNTY***

The **Clarks Chapel Community Center** has a long tradition of serving their community and making Clarks Chapel a better place to live, work, and play. They had a successful \$3000 fundraising letter campaign this year by letting people in the community know about their accomplishments and requesting their support. They also worked collaboratively with the youth of Clarks Chapel and other communities and churches to grow a very successful pumpkin patch. They gave away 2000 pumpkins to the youth in surrounding communities; with youth taking great pride in helping with this community initiative. Thanks to Clarks Chapel for their more than 60 years of leadership and service to their community and Macon County.

The **Cowee Community Development Organization** has been working on needed renovations to their community building. They are replacing decking and painting the deck, front doors, and window trim. Freshening up the exterior makes the building more welcoming.

The **Nantahala Community Development Club** has been working to secure funds for a multipurpose building which will house the community club and their local library. They are also showing creativity with their reuse of plastic grocery bags by weaving them to create mats for the homeless..

The **Upper Cartoogechaye Community Development Association** has been busy with renovations to their Chapel, thankfully with financial support of Macon County. They replaced the roof on the Chapel where they meet and the roof on the pavilion that serves as kitchen and storage area. They also repaired their front steps.

### ***MADISON COUNTY***

The **Greater Ivy Community Citizens Association** of Madison County saved up funds for several years with the thought of purchasing adjacent land; however, they decided to use the funds to refurbish their existing community center so it remains viable for years to come. They also showed great initiative when they went door to door to let seniors in their community know about their senior meal site. Participation increased from 9 to 45 enrollees, and even with all this effort, members still find time to enjoy a fun outing to the Biltmore Estate.

We welcome a new community this year, the **Laurel Community Center Organization** in Madison County. They have been busy getting the building cleaned up and their nonprofit organized this year. They are hosting high speed free internet for their community, and their vision includes business incubation and cultural heritage museum.

**Walnut Community Center Foundation's** largest project of the year supports My Sister's Place, a safe house for victims of domestic abuse. They coordinated with local churches to collect needed items, and filled a large truck with the donations. Walnut Community Center Foundation also donated money to help put a new roof on My Sister's Attic, which is the thrift store that supports My Sister's Place.

**Walnut Creek Community Club's** annual Fall Gathering and Fundraiser is a success with more than \$4000 raised with raffles, silent auction, 50/50 drawing, BBQ dinner and bake sale, all the while enjoying bluegrass, country, and gospel music provided by community members. They continue to designate 10% of all revenue raised into a fund to assist community members in need.

### ***RUTHERFORD COUNTY***

**Union Mills Community Development Club** realizes it takes constant care to keep up the community house which was built in 1939, and Union Mills is up to the task, with volunteers repairing the problems they can and with members raising money to pay for contractors when they are needed for repairs. Union Mills does a good job of community outreach by welcoming new community members with welcome bags that include their community contact info, as well as information on local churches, local businesses, and the post office.

**Whitehouse Community Club's** Country Breakfast fundraiser sounds yummy and successful. As you can see a community member is making it from scratch. Whitehouse also focuses on educational programs for their community, with a variety of topics from nutrition to wildlife laws. Congratulations to Whitehouse for their continued service to their community.

## ***TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY***

The **Little River Community Development Club** has been remodeling, and with the updates to their lower level, they will provide a space that 4-H can keep their materials in one area and not have to transport them for every meeting. Little River sponsors their local 4-H club and provides free WIFI for 4-H and community use. They also host a monthly potluck with guest speaker.

**Quebec Community Club** continues with needed renovations, beautification projects, and memorial benefits to help community members in need. They have placed a small community exchange library on the grounds for the public to use at anytime.

## ***WATAUGA COUNTY***

**Foscoe Ruritan Club's** annual Home-Grown Music Festival. The festival is their most successful fundraiser and supports Valle Crucis Elementary School, the Civil Air Patrol, Junior ROTC, the Foscoe Fire Department, two scholarships and medical assistance to community members.

**Engaged Communities:** There are 24 communities this year who are engaged in numerous projects of benefit to their residents and are being recognized with a \$500 cash award.

## ***ASHE COUNTY***

**Peak Creek Ruritan Club** continues careful building maintenance; they own and use the Laurel Springs Community building as their clubhouse; it is also the main asset to the entire Eastern part of Ashe county for a variety of uses, such as wedding receptions, anniversary celebrations, government agency meetings, voting, and fundraisers held by other groups. The pancake breakfast and indoor yard sale continues to be their biggest fundraiser, and it allows them to fund freshman scholarships. If the student chooses to attend a college which is a "partner" with the national Ruritan Foundation, then the college and the Ruritan Foundation match the award given by the club. Fifty percent of the Club's scholarship winners indicate that they plan to return to their area to work after graduation and serve their community.

## ***BUNCOMBE COUNTY***

"Progressing While Preserving" is the motto of **Avery's Creek Community Center**. They are focusing on educational programs and outreach with art classes for area youth, exercise classes for seniors, classes for medical transcription, a quilting class, as well as providing a meeting place for local pre-schools.

**Cane Creek Community Center** has strong collaboration with various community organizations. A few of these collaborations are Room at the Inn, MANNA Foodbank, Kingdom Builders, and a clothes closet.

The **Ox Creek Community Club** have initiated new activities this year. They now have an official free library at the center. One resident built and installed the box on the grounds. They had an arts and crafts show and sale and have planned another. They have also started a ladies' hiking group, with planned hikes happening twice a month. Great exercise and fun!!

**Rosscraggon Wood** has been in continuous operation since 1939. Their most senior member's parents were charter members. Part of their mission is to develop a neighborly community, encourage interest in natural history of Western North Carolina and preserve historical artifacts. To this end, they enjoy having history and storytelling programs. Club member, historian, and historical interpreter JoyceAnn Jones provided a "visitor from the past" presentation of Miss Rose Chapman. Ms. Chapman helped found Mission Hospital, acted as a champion of nature preservation in their community over a century ago, and provided the 23 acres for the nature preserve. An interesting connection is that Rose Chapman is the daughter of Leicester Chapman, who is the namesake for the Leicester Community.

**The Spring Mountain Community Club** volunteers rebuilt the playground structure from the ground up. Their children now have a new, bright, clean, and safe play area. All made possible by the hard work and service of volunteers! Spring Mountain continues to host The Berry Pickers Slow Jam, open to all musicians who wish to participate and learn the music of their mountain heritage. A creative idea to help get the roadsides cleaned up was to instigate a "treasure hunt." Families turned out to pick up litter while "treasure hunting" for special litter which would earn them a cash prize. Congratulations on this creative encouragement!

### ***CHEROKEE COUNTY***

**Grape Creek Community Development Club** focused on education and outreach with a county agent educating the club on local bugs and how to control them, especially for those growing fruits and vegetables. A volunteer taught them how to make seat belt pads for breast cancer patients, and another volunteer taught them how to make sleep pads for the homeless. In addition to their community work, they are excited to announce they are building a new community center and hope to be in it by 2020.

**Unaka Community Development Club** in cooperation with the Department of Senior services, the Unaka Community center provides a convenient location for the Unaka Senior Center; a place for fellowship and meals to many residents that otherwise might not have the opportunity for a nutritious hot meal. Lunch is served three days a week, and the center is open 9am-1pm on those days to provide lunch, crafts, games, and fellowship. They shared that "this project has been an eye opener to the needs of our neighbors and how valuable our time is to make their lives more pleasant."

### ***CLAY COUNTY***

The **Brasstown Community Civic Center** have built a new schoolhouse annex to their main building that will provide more intimate meeting space for small groups at reasonable rates; it is set up as a classroom space, and can host ongoing classes. Also, their Type 1 commercial community kitchen is a great help to residents of both Clay and Cherokee counties. It can be used for canning and preserving, and provides the opportunity for farmers to produce value-added products to sell at market.

### ***EASTERN BAND OF CHEROKEE OF INDIANS***

The **Birdtown Community Club of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians** moved into their brand new community center in August of 2018. Based upon past experience, Birdtown recognized the need for a top of the line security system with six HD cameras and emergency fire and police lines. Their biggest and most exciting upgrade were the solar panels that they added to their baseball cages, a grant from

Duke Energy helped fund this. They also had a very successful Prime Rib dinner fundraiser, with more than \$8000 raised for Betty's Place Cancer Support Group.

**Wolftown Community Club** had a successful fundraiser this year by raffling off UNC vs. Duke Basketball tickets, netting a \$2994 profit. A member of Wolftown Club, Mary Jackson, started their first Community Club 4-H Youth Group for youth 8-18. They meet twice a month and do various activities and food is provided for the youth. Other community members also attend and help with this 4-H youth group.

At **Big Cove Community Center's** Halloween Karnevil they invited traditional story tellers to tell cultural "spooky" stories as the evening was getting darker. This help set the mood and engage everyone. Big Cove is proud of their Free Labor Group, which put in countless hours to assist their seniors and those with handicaps with wood, brush clearing, and small repairs to homes. The Free Labor group also digs the graves that are needed within the community. In return, community members provide them with a meal before they leave the job site. The community would not be able to get along without them. They support their own projects with fundraisers such as turkey shoots and raffles.

### ***HAYWOOD COUNTY***

**North Hominy Community Center** has taken on an almost total transformation by upgrading the meeting hall and kitchen. People who have rented or visited cannot stop talking about the upgrades. With these updates, they are hoping for more rentals, and they plan to start inviting local fitness coaches to teach classes. This will increase the health of the community members and support economic opportunities for those who teach classes. North Hominy continues to collaborate with MANNA Foodbank on a monthly food pantry, and they hold their Apple Festival the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday in October. Apple sauce, apple butter, apple fried pies, apple jelly; it sounds apple-licious!

### ***HENDERSON COUNTY***

In the interest of brotherly love and community spirit, the families of **Crab Creek Community Center** join together to promote goodwill and be a helping hand to their neighbors. Crab Creek takes this mission to heart and their members call and visit the sick and prepare food for grieving families who have had death in the family. Community members also drive those who cannot drive to doctor's appointments. Community members who are not able to drive, help out by calling other community members to check on them and see if they need anything.

The **Edneyville Community Club** had an estimated 5,380 volunteer hours. They hold a monthly meeting and have a speaker talk about a program of community interest. A notable program was "How to Grow a Pollinator Café" about the importance of pollinating insects. This hits home with their farming community; members had a chance to plant milkweed and passion flower seeds at their home gardens. They are also working with the program specialist with Parks and Rec to come up with new ideas for their facility, and the Executive Director of AgriBusiness of Henderson County provided updates on promoting agriculture in the area.

### ***JACKSON COUNTY***

The **Caney Fork Community Development Council** has been welcoming neighbors since 1956 and hopes to continue building a positive community for many generations to come. We love their mission

statement: *to ensure that each community member from our young children to our elderly, and everyone in between, that is blessed to call the Caney Fork Community home, feel like they have the opportunity to participate, enjoy and be proud to call this beautiful community theirs. We want to welcome all members with open arms, warm hearts, helping hands, and a friendly attitude!* Each of their monthly Youth Art Nights provides education, and they incorporate fun learning activities and games such as: socialization skills, math problems, playful interaction, team building, and critical thinking at all of their events when there are any youth involved.

## **MACON COUNTY**

The **Carson Community Development Association** residents have been interested in the care, protection and management of our natural resources for many years. Today, they follow in the footsteps of Jim and Esther Cunningham of Carson, and other environmentalists from Macon County, who were so active in environmental issues that they formed the Western North Carolina Alliance, and it was originally based at Carson Community Center. At that time, Western North Carolina Alliance was the only grassroots environmental advocacy group focused solely on conserving all of Western North Carolina's natural heritage. Founded in 1982 by residents in Macon County who organized to protect their local national forests from oil and gas exploration. After that successful effort, WNCA went on to work with the Sandy Mush Community to help defeat a proposed nuclear waste dump in Buncombe County in 1984. The organization has continued its important work and has joined together with other organizations to form Mountain True. This shows what a difference a small group of like-minded people can accomplish that continues to have lasting impact on our beloved Western North Carolina. In addition to their continued focus on conservation issues, Carson's vision for the upcoming year is to host a week-long summer day camp; several volunteers have formed a committee and started the planning. Thank you and congratulations to the Carson Community for their continued contributions to Western North Carolina.

The **Otto Community Development Organization** launched and underwrote the formation of a broadband services 501c3 enterprise to bring broadband Internet into the community to support local businesses including attracting new businesses. This initiative has become a model for how communities can facilitate bringing broad into the community to support economic development, public health and safety, education, and several personal development programs focused on seniors and youth. The community center will be able to provide after school programs, health care seminars and more based upon the enhanced broadband hotspot. We are excited to see these upcoming developments. Congratulations to Otto for their initiative!

## **MADISON COUNTY**

The **Center Community Center** has been working with young adults in their community who are interested in music. They have created a music room complete with equipment and practice areas for local, young musicians. A new activity this year, they were happy to host the 50<sup>th</sup> class reunion for a group in their community, and they even provided the catering for the event with all proceeds going back to the community center to fund future events. They served fried chicken with all the fixings, and they have already had several other groups contact them requesting a similar event for their groups. They hope to continue to build on this new initiative.

**Revere-Rice Cove Community Development Club** has added a new knitting class to help residents create home-based businesses, and their new cornhole games at Friday outreaches encourage

residents to get up and move as they have fun. Also, the Spring Little Sweep Rewards, a program of Madison County, enlisted residents to help cleanup other communities that would not have been picked up. Congratulations to Revere-Rice Cove for winning the 2019 Great Madison County Litter Sweep Contest!! They received \$1500 for collecting the most bags of recycling and trash pickup. A community member built a table for recycling to make sorting easier. This new activity brought in 30 residents to volunteer to help in litter management. They donated \$500 of their award to help the new Laurel Community Center with some of their start up funds. Congratulations to Revere-Rice Cove for their community spirit!

**The Upper Laurel Community Club** has been in continuous operation since 1976, and with 80 volunteers and approximately 20,000 hours, they continue to provide valuable service to their community with community beautification and upgrades to their building and grounds. They also host educational program for seniors at their Active Living Center, and their local 4-H club meets monthly with educational programs for youth. They are excited to share that they raised more than \$11,000 at their Christmas party for the volunteer firemen and EMS workers and their families. They provided each of the families with gift cards and gifts for the children.

### ***RUTHERFORD COUNTY***

**Gilkey School Community Center** raised more than \$8000 on their monthly breakfast. Fortunately, they also received a \$10,000 grant that they are using to replace their exhaust system in the kitchen and will use what is left over to help with some of the necessary repairs that are needed because of a roof leak. They are still working hard to raise more funds because they expect these repairs to cost between \$18-35,000. Even with all this extra work, they offered a new event this May. They held their first car show, which was educational for the younger people. Members of the car club brought their old, refurbished cars to show, and people enjoyed learning about how the cars used to be built and what had been done to restore them. Prizes were awarded for each category, and funds were raised through selling food. Congratulations to the Gilkey School Community for their perseverance and continued efforts for their community.

The **Golden Valley Community Club** put in new doors, painted barn quilts on the exterior, and upgraded LED lighting fixtures throughout the building. Golden Valley has made their building more welcoming and energy efficient. They hosted a candidate forum, with President Ron Gurley serving as moderator, they had a record turnout for this event. They also tried a breakfast fundraiser this year and plan to try that again, with biscuits instead of pancakes next time. While renovations have been their focus of the past three years, they are looking to the future and plan to offer more educational programs and hope to incorporate an Internet hub for students to use.

### ***WATAUGA COUNTY***

**The Deep Gap Ruritan Club** cleared more than \$11,000 on their Prime Rib Steak Dinner and Raffle this year. That money is distributed throughout the year to individuals and families in need, to local organizations who support those in need, and to provide scholarships for deserving students. Their reverse raffle drawing sounds like a lot of fun, and to learn more about those details follow up with them. One of the main goals of Ruritan is to provide service to the local community. Ruritan service projects are divided into 5 areas: Environment, Business, Citizenship, Social Development, and Public Service. Deep Gap members donated 4634 hours of their time and the club donated \$17,660 to help

enhance the quality of life in their community. Deep Gap partners with other organizations in the community to provide food, financial help, and support of those who need a helping hand.

**Communities of Promise:** Fifteen Communities of Promise received cash awards of \$1,000, were chosen because of the initiatives implemented by the community that show promise and can be replicated around the region.

### ***BUNCOMBE COUNTY***

The **Big Ivy Community Development Club** recognized the need for community members to be able to further their education, Big Ivy worked with AB Tech to organize a GED class that will be offered onsite at the center. Also, Big Ivy is bringing resources to their community at their weekly food pantry; various vendors set up tables and assist food pantry clients with personal needs. In order to support the various programs offered by Big Ivy, board members are working on their community outreach and soliciting funds from local businesses to support their community efforts.

The **Leicester Community Center** had a challenging year with their septic and water problems impacting their outdoor recreation. However, their community spirit has prevailed as they continue to provide valuable programs and seek to be welcoming and inclusive of their entire community. Their weekly Leicester Welcome Table serves more than 10,000 meals over the course of the year, with weekly blood pressure checks and regular socialization this helps promote a healthier community. Leicester provides an affordable and highly sought-after rental space for community members' needs. And they have elected their first woman president, Marie Whitner, signaling to their community that opportunities for recognition of accomplishment exist for everyone. Congratulations to Leicester for striving to provide opportunities and resources for your community.

The **Sandy Mush Community Center** with more than 90 community member volunteers serving more than 6,000 hours, Sandy Mush is exemplifying that "can-do" community spirit! Continued upgrades are being made to the center and the outdoor recreation area, with improved lighting inside the building and shade for the playground area. Sandy Mush has a strong focus on supporting youth programming, with their Monday morning playgroup and open recreation times, as well as their collaboration with two local youth programs, the Sandy Mush 4-H Club and the Mountain Lady Farm Project. They are also excited about the newly developed monthly class for home schoolers

**Shiloh Community Association** continues to be a leader in community development with a wide variety of educational programs and collaboration. A few examples that stand out this year are their ecology workshops, including ornithology, botany, herpetology, and permaculture, and their history programs which include storytelling and history celebrations. Additionally, their support of entrepreneurial spirit is to be commended. They have created a roadside stand where neighborhood residents can sell handmade objects at the stand during community events. They have also created a youth stipend program where they pay 10 youth from the neighborhood to maintain the Shiloh Community Garden property, cook weekly communal meals, assist in community art projects and attend educational programming.

### ***EASTERN BAND OF CHEROKEE INDIANS***

The **Big Y Community Club** tried a new fundraiser this year; their traditional dinner of Rainbows and Ramps was so successful that they ran out of ramps in just one hour! The crowd was lined up before

they even started selling. Next year they will be prepared for the response and will be able to raise even more money!! They say the best part was the ramp gathering day as it was a fun group activity and the youth learned about ramps. One of Big Y's favorite activities for the year is their Veterans' breakfast that provides a free breakfast for any veterans, and local youth wrote thank you notes to the veterans for their service and the notes were read aloud at the breakfast. Big Y also offers several cultural classes including quilting, sewing skirts and traditional pottery. Their Free Labor group makes sure wood is available for those needing heating assistance, and they plowed 53 gardens this year. Congratulations to the Big Y Community for their outstanding community efforts.

### ***HAYWOOD COUNTY***

**Beaverdam Community Development Association** gets right to the point in their mission statement: Neighbors helping Neighbors. And we are certain that residents of Beaverdam appreciate the help that is provided, such as the new playground, the monthly speakers from local organizations, monthly MANNA food distribution, and the collaboration with the Haywood County's Sheriff's office regarding crime prevention and the North Canton Fire Department regarding fire safety, as well as NC DOT regarding community roadways. Beaverdam is also working to support entrepreneurial spirit by providing use of the center's kitchen to a new wholesale baking business, by inviting local businesses to meetings to describe the services they provide in the community, and the use of community members businesses for mowing and building services.

### ***HENDERSON COUNTY***

The **Upper Hickory Nut Gorge Community Center** each year, for the last 21 years, Hickory Creek Players perform an original production at the Gerton Little Theater. This year's play "Cupcakes and Crazy's" was written by a resident who performed for the first time in last year's play. This year volunteers made cupcakes to sell at intermission, to go along with the theme of the play. The \$1930 that was raised was a new record for this event. Since 1958, their community has shared a meal and enjoyed an educational program on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month. Gerton continues to be the smallest community in the Hickory Nut Gorge. They have no schools, farms or local government, and yet they are the first in the gorge to have a LITTLE LIBRARY and to become FIREWISE certified. They continue to partner with other agencies to expand their reach for good. They have seen growth, like no other year, in their giving to Hickory Nut Gorge Outreach. Through better use of their technology and communications, they are bringing more canned goods and school supplies in to pass on. And, their medical supply closet continues to be well used.

### ***MACON COUNTY***

**Holly Springs Community Development Club of Macon County** are continuing to make updates to their building, including a keyless lock which will help with rentals, and the placement of a Holly Spring fire coverage map to allow residents to locate their applicable fire district. Holly Springs has worked to list every road and home in their community so that they can visit homes and meet community members face-to-face. They have already visited 60 community members giving them a brochure about Holly Springs CDC and inviting them to the next club meeting. The main focus of the club this year has been to bring broadband service to Macon County. Club members have attended several broadband meetings, completed speed tests and questionnaires. They are currently working with a local cable company who has provided service to parts of Holly Springs to extend that service further.

This is a huge effort, but will make a lasting impact on the community for years to come. Great job Holly Springs.

### ***MADISON COUNTY***

**Spring Creek Community Center** hosted their first annual Ladies Tea to bring together ladies of all ages in the community, with a theme of “Remembering the Old; Creating the New” their goal was to shuck their muddy work boots, put on their finest frocks, and to strengthen the network of women in the area. They have also focused on health initiatives with two weekly yoga classes, an annual Wellness Fair, and their Forever Fit Fitness program celebrating two years of fitness in Spring Creek. With 50 enrollees they applied for a grant to purchase fitness equipment for special needs; they share health and fitness info on their Facebook page, and classes are held 2x week and are free. They are also supporting community entrepreneurial spirit by hosting Dave’s 209 Restaurant and Salon 209 at the center. Additionally, they host a local market 2x month at no cost to vendors.

### ***MITCHELL COUNTY***

After hosting a community-wide meeting to address the roadside trash problem, the **Tipton Hill Community Foundation** made application to the North Carolina Department of Transportation and was approved to participate in the Adopt-a-Highway Program, a commitment of 4 years. Volunteers fulfill this program. As of 2019, given building code restrictions, Tipton Hill Community Foundation has accomplished all allowable renovations to the existing Tipton Hill Center. This includes several inside and outside projects, with the majority of the work done by volunteers. The Foundation has focused on health outreach, working on an information segment about the Tele-Medicine program to be aired on PBS, hosting a community meeting about the AirMedCare Program, an alliance of affiliated air ambulance providers, and hosting a flu-shot clinic. For an evening of fun, they organized and hosted the first ever Tipton Hill Jamboree, a free community-wide family night filled with music, food, and fun. Featuring volunteer local performers, it was an evening of gospel, bluegrass, rock and roll, and “oldies but goodies’ music. Attendance was beyond all expectations! A smashing success, requests were made before the end of the night for it to be scheduled again this coming Fall 2019.

### ***RUTHERFORD COUNTY***

The **Ellenboro Woman’s Club** started their Facebook page in December of 2018, and they immediately saw an increase in monthly rentals. They are working to continually make their Facebook page more interesting and marketable to reach a wider range of potential customers. They discovered renters were delighted to share photos of their own events at the clubhouse; these postings substantially increased the “views and likes” of their Facebook page. Using the revenues that generated they were able to increase their scholarship funds and made donations to other nonprofit projects and established a fund to replace their outside fence and designate money to an emergency fund. This is good financial stewardship. With the increased visibility, they are getting new members, and are now working with the town museum to create a display of the history of their organization. This all sounds very promising!

### ***TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY***

The **Balsam Grove Community Club** raised the majority of their funds through yard sales, bingo events, and their jam sessions. Balsam uses the money they raise to give back to the community, with

a special focus on supporting their youth. They give a scholarship to each community high school graduate who pursues further education and applies for the WNC Journey Scholarship. This year, they voted to make the scholarship available on a recurring basis to encourage college completion. They also provided space and support for three benefits this year that raised much needed money for families suffering catastrophic health care costs. As they look to the future, they plan to focus on two areas. One, increasing participation, especially by younger folks, since they are key to the future success. And their second focus area is to increase their service to the community, with one activity being an appreciation supper for their volunteer fireman. To help educate others about their community, they write a weekly news column for the local paper, including photos highlighting their events.

The **Cedar Mountain Community Center** hosted a program by the Transylvania County Sheriff's Office K-9 unit to raise awareness of their important role in our communities and the need to raise funds for another canine. They then contacted other community centers in the area to work together to raise funds for an additional canine unit. They are also working proactively with Transylvania County to establish a Small Area Plan for Cedar Mountain to help maintain their unique mountain community and support local businesses. Cedar Mountain's future plans focus on working to involve more young people in their Center – to make them aware of its benefits to the community and to get new and fresh ideas on programs and topics of interest. They stated, "we want to honor our past and also look for ways to remain relevant and adapt to the needs of area residents." Cedar Mountain has served its community continuously for 65 years and looks forward to meeting the needs of residents for many years to come. Congratulations to Cedar Mountain for your long- term vision and commitment.

**Dunn's Rock Community Center** is being celebrated for their monthly education with dinner presentations; their renovation work on the center, which includes painting, new electrical wiring, and National Sanitation Foundation approved shelving and a stainless steel table. They also tried a couple of new activities this year that proved successful. They purchased 72 new padded chairs through a "chair campaign", with people donating for the specific cause. They are also raising funds with their "Transylvania Strong – Dunn's Rock Proud" stickers which they sell for \$5 each. This also promotes community pride.

**Lake Toxaway Community Club** raises almost \$30,000 on their Friday night meals and music that they host from May1 through October 1. They serve approximately 125 meal per week, and the music is provided by local bands for donations. Any surplus food is taken to the homeless shelter in Brevard. Some of the key events they host are an Easter Egg Hunt, a Health Fair on their newly paved track, and a White Cross Memorial, honoring all those who gave their lives on active duty. They hope to make the Health Fair an annual event, and they are especially proud of their efforts to honor veterans; they are also partnering with a local military museum in these efforts.

**Communities of Distinction:** These communities were chosen because of their overall ability of working together to assess, develop, and implement strategies to address community issues, as well as having numerous, diverse programs to benefit community members. This year, we have three Communities of Distinction to recognize as the "best of the best." Each received a cash award of \$2,000 to enable them to move their projects forward.

**Bethel Rural Community Organization** has a history of excellence with their successful 5k-half marathon race, the oldest in North Carolina, and their many historic preservation efforts, the most current being the induction of the Truss Bridge #79 into the National Register of Historic Places.

However, at the forefront of their concern is that they assist in helping their citizens lead comfortable and productive lives, and they further this goal through their successful collaboration efforts with key partners; this collaboration is the chief reason that their committees are successful. They connect with individuals who are in need or who request guidance or information, and they also connect with and build relationships with schools, churches, sponsors, local businesses, fire departments, law enforcement, health services, non-profits, historical societies, farms, government agencies, and news outlets in order to serve their community. A couple of examples are their sponsorship of the Buy Haywood Agri-tourism Brochure; this project encourages support of local farming/sales of produce/value added products/restaurants/historic agricultural sites. And they helped establish a Future Farmers of America club at Bethel Middle School and continue to financially support the group. Additionally, on their website they have a listing for the Bethel writers and media contributors and they recently added listings of Bethel businesses. They hope to add another listing for all artists in Bethel. These listings help encourage pride in the accomplishments for Bethel people while also supporting their entrepreneurial spirit.

The **Fines Creek Community Association** understands that growth comes from a willingness to try new things, and Fines Creek hosted their first weekend Heritage Festival in September 2018. The festival was designed to showcase mountain crafts, skills, and music; however, hurricane Florence blew through that weekend and impacted the festival. Nevertheless, there was enough interest to attempt it again in 2019. We look forward to hearing more. Fines Creek is doing an outstanding job of supporting their community's entrepreneurial spirit. They continue to make upgrades to their facility that support these businesses and their community. Fines Creek has been functioning as a rural small business incubator center for the last two years. This year Better Bean Coffee Café opened a coffee shop in their facility. This brings the total number of community businesses operating in their facility to four: Ledford Produce, Smokey Mountain Artisan Crafts, Steve's Craft Supply, and the café. They also house a branch of the Haywood County Library, an artist's studio, Livengood studio artist's gallery, and a woodworking studio.

The **Pigeon Community Multicultural Development Center** raised over \$106,000 through grants and other fundraising efforts. Pigeon had a strong commitment to education and outreach. Their after-school program provides students with support from 3:30-5:30 each school day, including individual tutoring. A large evening meal is provided daily for students. They also provide a summer enrichment program; in its 17<sup>th</sup> year, this nine-week program was attended by 45 students. Students explored themes focused around "Keys to my Best Civic Me," and they also took weekly field trips to a variety of places they might not otherwise have the opportunity to experience. Two opportunities arose through their education and collaborative efforts. In collaboration with the Waynesville Department of Parks & Rec and the Planning and Zoning Dept, a new park and gathering space for families will be created: The Craven Street Park. Additionally, Pigeon had the opportunity to host the community for the Great Smoky Mountains National Park open house event concerning the history of African Americans within and around the park. The meeting yielded 65 community members who began the process of finding and collecting these stories. This ongoing project by the Parks service is one Pigeon is excited to walk along side as they both do this important work of collecting these often-forgotten stories.

**Generous sponsorships from Harrah's Cherokee Casino Resort, Harrah's Valley River Casino & Hotel, Biltmore Farms, Inc., Duke Energy, The McClure Fund, First Citizens Bank, Buncombe County Farm Bureau, Carolina Farm Credit and Wells Fargo brought in \$37,500 to award to the 65 community centers and clubs participating in the 2019 WNC Honors Awards. We appreciate our sponsors!**