

U.S. Cellular wants to sponsor youth organizations

SPRUCE PINE – Youth organizations in Mitchell County can earn up to \$1,000 through U.S. Cellular's Community Connections program. Now in its fourth year, Community Connections provides sponsorship support to help youth groups pay for uniforms, equipment, travel and other group expenses.

Since the program launched in 2015, U.S. Cellular has awarded \$1.3 million to more than 2,800 groups, including sports teams, STEM programs, marching bands

and dance squads.

Academic and athletic groups representing children and teens up to 12th grade can sign up now at www.uscellular.com/communityconnections to become eligible to receive sponsorship funds. Once signed up, groups then need to rally their friends, families and supporters to complete online activities that earn money for the needs of their group.

"We know there are Mitchell County organizations and clubs that provide meaningful experi-

ences for our youth every day, and Community Connections is one way that we can support them to achieve their goals," said Nathan Waddell, director of sales at U.S. Cellular in Western North Carolina. "As we enter the fourth year of this program, we realize it is all about helping our communities connect to the good in all of us, and we encourage western North Carolina youth leaders to visit the website and see how easy it is to earn money for their group."

Once an interested group signs

up, it has 10 days to generate support and complete online activities that include following U.S. Cellular on its social channels, watching a video or answering a short survey. The money goes directly to the organization, and each group can earn up to \$1,000.

U.S. Cellular has a longstanding commitment to the community and education.

The company has contributed more than \$10.65 million to K-12 education since 2009. For the third consecutive year, U.S.

Cellular directed its philanthropic efforts to STEM-focused youth education through a \$1 million donation to Boys & Girls Clubs of America, with \$84,500 going directly to clubs in North Carolina. Also, North Carolina U.S. Cellular associates spent 1,700 hours volunteering their time with Boys & Girls Clubs and a variety of other non-profits throughout the year.

Visit www.uscellular.com/communityconnections for more information and to view the official rules.

Home remedies hit a home run

Anyone who deals with pain knows it comes in countless shapes and sizes. Sometimes it is a dull ache that sets in when it gets humid or cold – or maybe it's a stabbing pain that makes concentration and normal daily activities impossible.

Just as there is no single type of pain, there is no single, simple cure to relieve it. Because opioid misuse has become an epidemic across the U.S., it has become increasingly important to avoid these medications as an initial pain relief option.

Thankfully, there is a long list of lifestyle strategies and complementary treatments that offer options for those who suffer from pain. Introducing area residents to those local options has been one of the primary goals of Home Remedies: Community Options Addressing Pain and Stress. A collaborative effort by the local nonprofit organization Partners Aligned Toward Health, or PATH, RHA Health Services and Blue Ridge Regional Hospital, Home Remedies' overarching goal has been to reduce opioid use for pain relief.

"I'm excited to say we have served over 61 individuals and have a core group of 15 faithful attendees since starting in May," said Margot Rossi, program director. "The program is meeting all of its objectives: helping participants relate to their experience of pain with more coping tools and positivity; and alleviating pain or suffering through complementary health

practices, including mindfulness practices, movement and health coaching."

This innovative program connects participants to local complementary medicine providers who share strategies and benefits of complementary practices that can be used in addition to or in place of pharmaceutical pain medication, or more invasive procedures like surgery.

"In addition to offering complementary health education, our goal has been to motivate participants to move more and shift their lifestyle," Rossi said. "There's no doubt our sense of purpose and worth can get stripped away by chronic pain. These classes build a community of support and inspiration, offer tools to improve one's health and help participants cultivate meaning and purpose. We talk about pain, how it affects us, how we can shift it, and why that's important to us. It's an hour packed with meaning and tools."

To date, Home Remedies classes have showcased complementary medicine practices including massage therapy, tai chi, Feldenkrais Awareness Through Movement, chair yoga, mindfulness, acupuncture, physical therapy, chiropractic, health coaching and resiliency tools. All classes begin with mindfulness practice and include active participation— either goal setting, motivational exercises or physical movement.

Barbara Pollard believes she's benefited from the program.

"The speakers have been wonderful," she said. "I've gotten a lot of good ideas for things I can do to keep myself in good condition. I particularly enjoy the mindfulness exercises we do every week."

Barbara Banks would love to see even more residents take advantage of the program.

"Sometimes I felt like throwing in the towel," Banks said. "This program has given me the courage to go on, especially when I see others dealing with the same sort of problems. This is a great support group."

Rossi says newcomers are enthusiastically welcome. She believes this fall is an ideal time to start. During October's first four sessions, Rossi will teach chair-based mindful yoga, which both new and seasoned practitioners can enjoy.

The last week in October, the program will begin a series on how to select foods and culinary herbs to help alleviate pain and avoid those that can increase inflammation, which will continue through November. Due to scheduling issues, the Monday, Oct. 22, session will be at the Spruce Pine Library.

The weekly programs take place 5:30-6:30 p.m. Mondays at Blue Ridge Regional Hospital's Mauzy Philips Center in Spruce Pine. Visit www.path-homeremedies.org, email PATH staff at info@pathwnc.org or call 828-682-7899 to learn more about the program.



The Rev. Tommy James, of First Baptist Church of Burnsville, and SEARCH member Risa Larsen listen to Director of DHHS's NC Office of Rural Health Maggie Sauer during her daylong visit to the area. (Submitted photo)

SEARCH hosts head of NC Office of Rural Health

More than a dozen elected officials and community leaders from Mitchell and Yancey counties met in Burnsville recently to discuss local health care with the Director of the NC Office of Rural Health Maggie Sauer.

She came to the area at the invitation of Sustaining Essential and Rural Community Healthcare, or SEARCH, whose leadership team had a separate meeting with her in Spruce Pine.

She shared information about what her office does for rural healthcare in the state, where it already provides services in Mitchell and Yancey counties and how the area might access additional services.

Top of mind was the sale

of Mission Health, including Blue Ridge Regional Hospital, to HCA. SEARCH members asked how the community could best position itself so it will continue to have good health care and a fully functioning hospital to serve the citizens of Mitchell and Yancey counties. While responding to questions about the local area, Sauer was able to paint a picture of rural health care both in the state and in the nation. She suggested ways to make our community stand out and keep services, saying in her experience the places where local citizens spoke up and pulled together were the locations where there were few hospital closures.

Visit searchwnc.org for more information.



MITCHELL COUNTY DEMOCRATS

Pictured, from left, is Democratic candidate for Mitchell County Commissioner Bruce Koran, Burke County Region 2 director Gale Jones, Democratic candidate for District 95 of the North Carolina House of Representatives Howard Larson, and Burke County Democratic Party chair Pamela Genant, who were guest speakers Tuesday, Sept. 25, at the monthly meeting of the Mitchell County Democratic Party. (Submitted photo)

Mayland Black Jar Honey Contest winners announced

The best-tasting honey in Mitchell, Avery and Yancey counties was featured at the third annual Mayland Black Jar Honey Tasting Contest on Thursday, Oct. 4, at Homeplace Beer Co. in Burnsville. Seven local beekeepers from Toe Cane Beekeepers Association entered their prized honey, and dozens of honey admirers and official judges chose the tastiest.

Winner of the contest was Leigh Knott of Five Apple Farm in Yancey County, with a summer wildflower honey that some judges commented "tasted like butter." Her entry was labeled "K" in the blind taste-testing. Knott's entry now advances to the International Black Jar Honey Contest in Asheville this winter. She won the "Best in the Southeast" category in the 2017 contest, so clearly her bees know how to make award-winning honey.

Second place was awarded to Michelle Mejia, of Poplar Creek Farm in Yancey County, whose honey was

labeled "C" in the contest. Mejia also placed second in last year's local contest.

Deborah Palmer, of Star Lane Apiary in Burnsville, completed the Yancey County sweep with third place. Her honey was labeled "Y" for the contest.

Silent auctions of gift baskets filled with jars of honey and other bee-related materials were popular and brought high bids to aid Toe Cane Beekeepers Association in future educational efforts. Honey is in short supply this year due to rainy weather this spring and summer, which kept the honey bees inside their hives. The rain also washed out nectar from some of the best sources like poplar and sourwood. All honey entries this year, except one, were of the darker variety.

Toe Cane Beekeepers meetings are open to the public. The next meeting is Tuesday, Oct. 23, at United Community Bank in Burnsville. There will be a roundtable discussion of beekeep-

ing techniques. Most meetings are the fourth Tuesday each month at 6 p.m. Check the club's website toecanebeekeepers.net for further information.



Leigh Knott, left, and Deborah Palmer were winners in the Mayland Black Jar Honey Contest Thursday, Oct. 4, at Homeplace Beer Co. in Burnsville. (Submitted photo)

Foxfire adds new book

BY TOMMY CULKIN
The Clayton Tribune
Staff writer

MOUNTAIN CITY, Ga. — Foxfire's latest book on Appalachian life hit shelves this week.

The book, titled "Travels with Foxfire: Stories of People, Passions and Practices from Southern Appalachia," was co-authored by retired journalist Phil Hudgins and Foxfire student Jessica Phillips.

Hudgins, a former publisher of *The Clayton Tribune* in Clayton, Georgia, said the genesis of the book was a desire to return to writing after he fully retired from newspaper work in 2015.

"I wanted another writing project to keep me busy," he said. "I always enjoyed interviewing people and telling stories."

And it didn't take long for him to decide on a topic. Hudgins, who previously served as a Foxfire community board member, said he wanted to support the organization. He discussed his idea with several members of the local organization, including former director Ann Moore, who supported his plans.

Work on the book began in May of 2015, and Phillips joined the project shortly after that.

"(Museum curator Barry Stiles) really wanted to make sure there was a student connection there, as is the case with all of our books," said Foxfire Director TJ Smith. "Jessica Phillips was a Foxfire student at that time, was very much a hard-working student, and her family has been affiliated with Foxfire since the beginning."

Phillips and Hudgins interviewed people throughout Southern Appalachia, including Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Kentucky.

"I think that's great because sometimes people forget that we don't just cover Northeast Georgia," Smith said. "Foxfire covers all of Southern Appalachia."

One of Hudgins' most memorable interviews came in Kentucky.

"This man had no phone or email, so the only way to contact him was by letter," Hudgins said. "We dropped in on him unannounced one day, but we weren't sure he wanted to talk. He ended up talking like we'd known each other for years."

Stories cover a range of topics, including southern gospel music, ginseng, moonshining and much more. Unlike other Foxfire books, "Travels with Foxfire" is not a collection of how-to stories. Most of them are just fun to read.

The book may be purchased for \$19.95, and is available at the Foxfire Museum and Heritage Center, through Amazon, and at various bookstores.