



Mission Statement

The mission of SRA is to help sustain the natural beauty of the Riceville Valley while supporting a sense of community.

Riceville Advocate

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Upcoming Event

Looking Ahead to Life in Riceville

The Coordinating Team from Scenic Riceville Advocates will host a public gathering on Saturday, Jan. 16th from 1PM to 3PM at the Riceville Community Center.

"Week in the Life of Riceville"

Enjoy recent Riceville photo project results. Representative images selected from October's "Week in the Life of Riceville" photo project are being arranged in a slide show and on (portable) table top



display boards so we can share them. The creative energy of 20 resident volunteer photographers, from 8 - 87 years old, yielded over 500 photos. The subject matter chosen by the photographers illustrates what they love about the Riceville Valley, what they worry about, why they choose to keep living here, and more.

Opportunities to move from words to action

Throughout SRA's almost three years of existence, residents' ideas, concerns, and hopes for both near- and long-term projects that could benefit our beautiful valley and preserve its uniqueness have been collected and catalogued. The ideas have stayed consistent. Some could be pursued with energized volunteers at very little expense. Others await the energized volunteers combined with effective fund raising and professional knowledge and skills. At the gathering on the 16th we invite you to look over six "feasible-in-the-near" projects. See which ones interest YOU. We will have a table set up and staffed for each of the six project areas, where you can meet with others sharing similar interests.

Ask questions, share your own ideas, hear what others think. Those projects with enough volunteer energy will move from the "Wish List" to the "Do List." For projects making the cut, the idea is to get a list of volunteers who will also schedule an initial spinoff meeting to begin working together. Someone from the SRA Coordinating Team will establish liaison with each spinoff project group.

Nature Corner – Jeanie Martin

The Groundhog

With colder weather settling over Riceville, we find ourselves slowing down from the busy pace of summer and fall. This is the time of year to put on a pot of soup and snuggle up with a good

book. We aren't the only ones

who enjoy winter's rest. The groundhog takes to its burrow around late October and hibernates until February or March.

Also known as the woodchuck or whistle pig, the groundhog is the only true hibernator in our area. Burrows are located in brushy or wooded areas and are up to 45 ft. in length and 5 feet below ground. With short limbs and large claws, groundhogs are well adapted for digging and can move up to 700 lbs. of dirt from a burrow. During hibernation their respiratory rate and body temperature drop and heartbeat decreases to 5 beats per minute. They live off their body fat and will lose up to a quarter of their weight over the winter. Waking about every ten days to stretch and take deep breaths, they clear their respiratory system and settle back to a deep sleep.

Shortly after emerging in the spring, groundhogs mate and about a month later females give birth to 4 to 5 blind, hairless young. In 2 weeks the young are covered with downy fur and eating small amounts of soft plants brought to them by their mothers. At a month old they emerge to graze on grasses and other vegetation. At 6 weeks they are weaned and seeking their own burrows. Over the course of the year they will eat grasses, berries, nuts, and garden crops if available. Adults typically weigh 6 to 13 lbs. in the wild, and if they make it to adulthood groundhogs average a 3 to 4 year life span. Common predators of groundhogs in our area include dogs, coyotes, hawks, bears, bobcats and hunters.

In the southern Appalachians groundhogs have been a source of food, medicine and hides. Groundhog grease was used as a base for medicinal salves or rubbed onto the chest to break up congestion. Old timers have cut spirals from groundhog hides to create shoelaces for

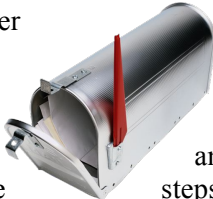


their boots. Folks use them to forecast spring's arrival, and they have become the subject of one of the first tongue twisters we learn as children.

*How much wood would a woodchuck chuck
if a woodchuck could chuck wood?*

Points of View – Joyce and Ron Sousa

We talk a lot about individualism in our country, but that can mean many different things to different people. We all live in communities, some closely knit and others more loosely formed. It's our belief that who we are as individuals is to a greater or lesser degree shaped from what the people around us are like and what they tell us, directly and indirectly, about ourselves. None of us are islands unto ourselves. We all have ties to our communities—however fragile—and to pretend we leaves us vulnerable to ignoring those ties. When ignore them we can easily and sometimes unknowingly take steps that fail to nurture those connections, and the results are often unpleasant.



Seeing ourselves as separate from our communities leaves us thinking that we can make decisions about ourselves as individuals and that those decisions don't impact the community. Simultaneously, seeing ourselves as separate from our communities makes it possible to make decisions about the community—or fail to think we need to make decisions about the community—thinking that this will not impact us as individuals. Either way, something is lost.

Ignoring this essential fact—that we are maintained through connections—is to live in an imaginary world in which we are likely to find ourselves unable to respond to real life needs that involve looking after the threads of togetherness. Acknowledging the interconnectedness of the individual and the community is hardly a hindrance to the development of individualism; it is instead an integral and healthy part of that process.

(If you would like to contribute to "Points of View" please send your contributions to joyce@scenicricevilleadvocates.org.)



A Piece of Local History - The Davidson Trail

Near Warren Wilson College at the end of Riceville Road is the Davidson Trail. The trail ends at the top of Jones Mountain where a billboard placed by an Eagle Scout in 1985 tells the traditional story of Samuel Davidson, first settler west of the Blue Ridge. My own research, however, shows that many of the details of the well-known story are incorrect. From what I have uncovered, the story should read more like this:

In the early 1780s, Samuel Davidson, his wife, slave girl, and possibly one of his daughters moved from Old Fort to settle at the base of Jones Mountain near Christian Creek. At night Davidson would set his horse out to graze with a bell around its neck so he



could locate it in the morning. One morning he heard the bell ringing at the top of Jones Mountain and went to retrieve his horse. When he arrived he found that a group of Cherokee braves, upset by settlers again encroaching on their land, had detached the bell and lured him into an ambush. Hearing the gun shot that would kill her master, Davidson's strong-willed, teenage slave girl, Liza, took his wife, Mary Ruth Smith, and possibly Mary's daughter Ruth and led them 16 miles down the mountain to safety in Old Fort. After their arrival at the fort, several of Davidson's male relatives formed an avenging party, hiked back to Jones Mountain, buried Davidson where he had fallen, found the assumed group of Cherokees, and killed a number of them. For over a hundred years, Davidson's grave was marked by his initials carved into a pine tree. In 1913, his descendants gathered to erect a grave marker that still stands near the end of the Davidson trail.

(Many thanks to Anne Chesky for this article and John Weakly for the photos.)

Historical Note - Riceville Presbyterian Church

In the spring of 1876 a group of Christians gathered at the home of Sammy and Margaret Hughey to discuss building a church for the Riceville Community. The result was the establishing of the College Hill Presbyterian Church, led by Rev. Alfred Penland, who was paid a salary of \$10.



Initially, there were 19 charter members and 36 members of the Sunday School. Those members had names familiar to the valley, such as Hughey, Stroupe, Reed, Craig, Stephenson and Roberts. But there was no church building—so the congregation met at the Hughey home on Bull Creek Road.

After about two years a combination schoolhouse and church was constructed on what was then known as College Hill immediately opposite the current location of the Riceville Presbyterian Church Cemetery. Rev. Penland offered classes for all ages ranging from reading, writing and math for the younger children to Greek and Latin for the older youth. Services were held each Sunday.

Around 1895, the property the current building sits upon was purchased, and a new church was built with a manse soon to follow in an area that is now used for parking. In 1948 the Sunday School rooms were added.

Until 1952 the church shared its pastor with the Reems Creek and Beech Presbyterian churches. That year Rev. Keith Mitchell was ordained and installed as the first full-time pastor. He and his wife Elsa lived in the church while the manse that is currently located below the church was being built.

In 1953, College Hill officially became Riceville Presbyterian Church. Today, it has more than 100 members—many descendants of the founders—and is led by Rev. Chris Wingard.

(Thanks go to Sarah Thomas for contributing this article and providing the photo.)

Welcome to Anne Chesky
Anne Chesky, Riceville native and graduate student in Appalachian Studies at Appalachian State University, will be an intern with Scenic Riceville Advocates this spring from January to April. Two primary projects will anchor her work in the community. One will be collecting historical information by interviewing long-time residents and others who have collected data and stories over the past several decades. The outcomes expected are a

bibliography of these materials and a summary paper to

be made available to the Riceville community. A second project will focus on creating pathways for newcomers to the community and those who have long histories in the valley to meet and explore past, present and future stories and dreams. If you would like to talk with Anne, she can be reached at anne.chesky@gmail.com.



**Land Tips:
Acting
Voluntarily
to Conserve**

Many residents of the Riceville Valley area who support the protection of the scenic rural character of the area believe that voluntary actions taken by individual land owners are an essential way to

sustain the beauty of this area. By voluntarily agreeing to limit development without zoning, covenants or conservation easements, these neighbors help assure that the area will continue to sustain its quiet, unspoiled ridgelines, beauty, clean streams, and wildlife habitat. Creating a conservation land ethic within their own families helps protect these lands over generations.

An example is a medium sized tract recently sold to a developer. Three-fourths of the property is wetlands, so the new owner has sold the wetlands portion to the property owner next door who will not develop that portion of the land. These voluntary actions by sellers and buyers contribute to sustaining the beauty of the area.

The Riceville Advocate is a community-based, collaborative newsletter edited by SRA. Story content represents the work of the individual contributors. Submissions are encouraged. Submissions accepted for publication may be edited for length and form.

For more photos and information check out the SRA website www.scenicricevilleadvocates.org.

*Looking for
information
on:*

•the next SRA meeting

•land tips

•calling local officials

•North Carolina conservation agencies

•local wildlife photos

•upcoming events

Visit the SRA web site:

www.scenicricevilleadvocates.org