



Karin Rolett from SEARCH listens to members of Parkway Fire Department. The next community meeting will be held Tuesday, April 23, at 7 p.m. in Spruce Pine.

SEARCH shares healthcare concerns, philanthropy updates

SEARCH, Sustaining Essential and Rural Community Healthcare, will meet on Tuesday, April 23, at 7 p.m. at Trinity Episcopal Church, 15 Hemlock Ave., Spruce Pine. The group, which focuses on sustaining healthcare services in Mitchell and Yancey counties, invites anyone with an interest in local health, including the social determinants of health, to attend. Special guest speaker will be Colby Boston, who is a Community Engagement Specialist at Blue Ridge Community Hospital. He will describe the Healthy Neighbors Network which has been formed, primarily through local churches, to

address critical needs of individuals and families. In addition Karin Rolett, a leader of SEARCH Outreach who has organized Listening Sessions throughout Mitchell and Yancey counties, will with her team report on recent sessions at the Tipton Hill Community Center and the Parkway Fire Department. Team members have met with over 140 people in churches, at community centers, in fire departments, at nonprofits and schools to ask simple questions such as what are the strengths in our local health care? What do you wish were available in health care that would help your

friends and family? What kinds of issues are your friends and family dealing with? The sessions last about an hour and often are scheduled through a presentation to an umbrella group, such as the Yancey County Fire Chiefs or the Mitchell County Board of Commissioners. In association with the Health Equity Coalition of Asheville, SEARCH is organizing an open forum on philanthropy for May 24 in Asheville. Susan Larson will share details of the forum which will feature national speakers, at the April SEARCH meeting. It will focus on ways foundations can engage with their communities to learn about and address issues of greatest concern. Risa Larsen maintains SEARCH's website and will illustrate recent changes on it. She is also the liaison to the Faith ID project and will reveal the date, plans and need for volunteers to carry out the project, scheduled for June at Higgins Memorial Church in Burnsville. Another topic she'll cover is the Mitchell County Transportation Plan Public Forums scheduled for Buladean, Bakersville and Spruce Pine. Anyone with questions about the meeting may contact Susan Larson at 765-2652 or see the website: SEARCHwnc.org or Facebook: SEARCH wnc.



Mike Burleson makes a point about healthcare at the Tipton Hill Community Center listening session.

Blue Ridge Parkway facilities opening for season, visitors reminded of their role in successful season

National Park Service staff, volunteers, concession operators, and partners are working together to open facilities for the 2019 visitor season on the Blue Ridge Parkway; and the full schedule of operating dates is now available on the Parkway's website. Some park concession facilities and visitor centers are now open, with all other points of interest and recreation areas opening from now until Memorial Day weekend. Parkway visitors and neighbors are also reminded this season of their important role in the National Park Service experience. When visiting any section or

site along the historic 469-mile route, visitors can help protect wildlife, plant ecosystems, cultural sites, and historical areas by staying on trails and roads, packing out trash, and leaving park resources as you find them. "The millions of people that visit us each year have a tremendous opportunity to help preserve and protect the Parkway and its resources for future generations," said Parkway Superintendent J.D. Lee. "The protection of the Parkway, in large part, is in the hands of our users and dependent upon visitors treating this place and its resources with respect." Along with the complete

schedule of facility operating dates, information to help plan a memorable and safe Parkway experience is available on the Parkway's website; including regularly updated information regarding ranger programs, tours, music performances, and cultural demonstrations. In order to address ongoing maintenance needs along the motor route, visitors can also expect several road projects happening throughout the summer season. The Parkway website and real time road map are important planning tools that provide complete information regarding road projects or potential delays.

Notes from the backyard

Spring: A resurrection of the life cycle

By Barbra W. McKinney
Spring is my favorite season for no other truly evidences the magical/spiritual joy of nature. With the day-time temp reaching 73 today after so much cold, rain, snow, and yuck, I just had to get outside, not to begin all the yard-work waiting, but just to walk the yard and back garden to see what's happening, so travel with me. I begin on the patio where a perky little brown wren has been industriously building her nest in a small hanging gourd especially for her, and our phoebe has begun her construction on the ledge above the breakfast room window, as she does every year. Then I take the stepping stones through the backyard garden past the green budding lilac—a sweet-smelling gift from our dear Charlotte friend, and past the green iris and day-lily blades. Happy blue periwinkle blossoms smile at me from the bank above the back wall, and the spirea waves its white-blossomed fingers as I pass on. I spot left-over pockets of dried leaves missed last fall which will soon be added to the



Spring never disappoints.

mulch pile, but as I move around the yard, I'm not disappointed. I always forget where most of the daffodils are because I don't plant them in neat little rows; I stick a bulb or two here, there, and yonder, then I'm blessed each year when those bright yellow and white trumpets pop up and yell, "Surprise." I amble on around the yard to stop under our Yoshino cherry and wait for the breeze to bring a pink petal shower; then I clip a sprig for a bud vase by the kitchen sink. As I sprout, I notice the burgundy stalks of dear Granny's peonies, and a little later they'll give creamy white, deep rose

and vermilion blossoms. They were long-ago gifts from family, friends and Grandad and now have been with me for decades; eventually, I also will pass them on. As I wander along, in a nearby dogwood a cardinal calls a "pretty" day, and I hear the melodious twittering of bluebirds who, year after year, nest in the little house across from our good neighbors at the bottom of our drive. What special birds they are and such welcome spring harbingers. I end my stroll by our gloriously pink/orange Japanese Quince, another of those old-timey flowers close to my heart. She's in full blossom and will eventually produce "apples" which some make into quince jelly. I haven't tried, but it's on my to-do list because this shrub deserves the effort since she's a sturdy old girl and never fails to enchant. She blooms before leafing and will do so after a couple of warm days, so one spring not long ago, her flower buds were frozen five times yet she insisted on putting forth a few blossoms after each frigid setback. There's a lesson in there somewhere. Enjoy your spring.

High Peaks hikes on April 20 feature spectacular views

Join NC High Peaks Trail Association on Saturday, April 20, for one of two hikes along the Big Butt Trail, with both offering tremendous views of the Black Mountain chain. The strenuous hike will cover 5.6 miles from the Walker Knob Overlook, descending about 1,500 feet to Cane River Gap. The moderate hike will cover about 5 miles, going to Little Butt and returning to Walker Knob Overlook. Both hikes will include some strenuous climbs, especially the long staircase up to Little Butt, but the view is worth the effort. Hikers should meet at the Burnsville Town Square at 8:30 a.m. Yancey Transportation vans will shuttle folks for the more strenuous hike for a donation of \$5, but riders must contact the hike leader by Thursday evening, April 18, to reserve a seat. Dogs are not allowed on the vans, so if you want to hike with your canine friend you must provide your own transportation. Hikers for the less strenuous hike will form carpools in Burnsville for the ride to the Walker Knob Overlook, which is near Mile Marker 360 on the Blue Ridge Parkway. If you prefer to skip the meet-up in Burnsville, you can join the group at Walker Knob Overlook at around 9:45 a.m., when the main group coming from Burnsville should arrive. Bring lots of water, snacks, lunch, hiking poles if you use them and rain gear, as the weather is always changeable. Those doing the full hike will complete one of the 23 trails needed to receive the High Peaks Black Mountains Hiking Challenge patch. More information about the Challenge is on the club's website. For more information and to reserve your spot on the vans, contact hike leader Dennis Smith for the strenuous hike at dennismsmith4141@gmail.com or 284-4000. For the moderate hike, contact hike leader John Whitehouse trails@nchighpeaks.org or 682-3217.

As always, check the High Peaks Facebook page or website nchighpeaks.org for last-minute changes due to weather.

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