



The new Inspiration Gardens, Gibbs Gardens' newest feature garden, is delighting visitors. To learn about the gardens and what it took to build them go to "An engineering feat with petals and leaves," on page 13A of the News section. PHOTO COURTESY GIBBS GARDENS

Pickens County to receive \$15+ million via American Rescue Plan

BY ELLEN V. HARRISON
eharrison@smokesignalsnews.com

The American Rescue Plan (ARP) will bring more than \$15 million to several Pickens County governmental entities over the next two years. ARP was approved and enacted by Congress to help local cities, counties and school systems cover the cost of COVID's economic side effects. Businesses shuttered operations, schools shifted to distance learning, and emergency personnel responded to additional duties.

In Pickens County, the board of commissioners has held two meetings to discuss, plan and outline approved usage for their \$6,430,000 allocations.

The Pickens County School District will receive \$7,136,125 over the next two years, with 20% of that money required by the ARP law to make up for lost instructional time, enhancing learning and achievement for those students who were most negatively affected by school closures due to quarantine and economic hardships at home.

Jasper to receive funds

City of Jasper Finance Director Beverly Ragland confirmed the city will receive \$1,484,036. At city council's regular meeting June 14, Mayor Steve Lawrence and City

Manager Brandon Douglas explained that the Department of Community Affairs website giving them guidance on how to spend it had not yet launched. Their agenda did not include discussing ARP.

Pickens County Commissioners

County commissioners held a public, special work session on Monday, June 14 to discuss possible uses for the money and at their regular meeting Thursday, June 17, the commissioners took three official actions:

1. They approved receiving the funds.
2. They approved their plans about where the monies will go.
3. They identified the finance department as the clearinghouse for the fund, "so individuals responsible for accounting and auditing can easily find this information," according to chairman Kris Stancil.

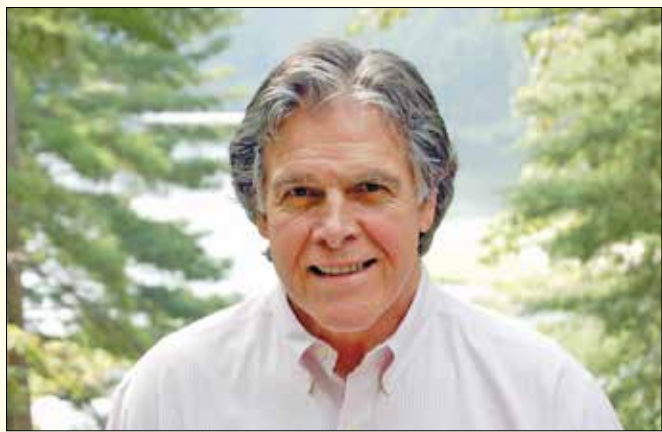
The Association County Commissioners Georgia (ACCG) condensed the federal government's 150-page guidance into about 45 presentation slides, said Stancil.

Salaries for Pickens County emergency personnel, law enforcements and firemen will be funded with this money. The county's list for the first half of the allocations includes:

- \$1.5 million: building a water service loop on the west of the county, along with a large water tank providing better service with fewer outages

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Bill Byrne, developer of Big Canoe from 1987-2016, died June 23 at home. His obituary with excerpts from an October 2012 interview with Smoke Signals about his years in Big Canoe is on page 10A. PHOTO BY ROBERT C. SMITH



"... everyone I talked to denied or dismissed the idea that we had a homeless problem—let alone that we had homeless veterans in our county."

Leave no man or woman behind the battlefield has changed but the creed still stands

"Leave No Man Behind" is a creed and ethos often repeated and adhered to by various units and soldiers. The interpretation of the phrase is applied to the treatment and extraction of the seriously wounded, the recovery of the body of military members killed in action, and the attempts to rescue or trade for prisoners of war. Despite being widely known and repeated in the U.S. military, "leave no man behind" is not represented in any official military doctrine or publication. It is a culture of the armed services, which carries significant risk.

It is important to note what "Leave No Man Behind" means to those in uniform. While not captured in doctrine, there are few things more reassuring to a soldier about to enter combat than the belief his brothers and sisters in arms would spare nothing in attempts to get him back. To the families of those fallen, the catharsis of being able to bury their own cannot be overstated or even understood by those who have not been in that sad and unfortunate position.

BY JIM LINDENMAYER
Ret. Captain U.S. Army, Director, Cherokee County Homeless Veteran Program

I recently found the above creed—embodying what we as professional soldiers believe when we prepare to go to war—when preparing to write this article.

Today the battlefield has changed; it is no longer Afghanistan or Iraq. The streets of America—where tens of thousands of our veterans struggle to deal with homelessness and mental health issues—have become the new battlefield.



When we first started the project we were told that there was only one homeless camp in the county. We have found 22 such camps across Cherokee County.

The Military Times reports that the number of homeless veterans rose during the 2020 pandemic; there are now an estimated 21 homeless veterans for every 1,000 veterans in America. As of January 2020, according to a March 18 HUD report, there are an estimated 37,252 homeless vets in the United States.

While the majority of homeless veterans are found in big cities, this issue hits close to home, too. Over the last few years, my team and I have worked with more than 700 homeless veterans, mostly in Cherokee with the rest in Pickens, Forsyth and Cobb counties.

At this time, we do not fully understand the impact that the end of the Eviction Moratorium will have on our Veterans and their families. We do know that we will need to provide housing at local hotels which will require additional funds we do not have or have budgeted. We also are looking at the transportation, jobs and food needs of these families as they will need all of these to get back on their feet. We are working on several plans at the time of this article and hope to have a more concrete plan in the next couple of weeks. We are looking to partner with any and all organizations that are willing to help affected veteran families in the area.

Local homeless problem denied

Back in 1980 when I was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Army after graduating from West Point, I wanted to take all that I was taught and learned from my four years to be the best officer that I could be. Part of my progression in rank and duty assignments required me to make sure that I was the leader of troops, but at the same time it was my job to make sure that the men who were under my command were focused on our mission and that they

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Dawson County awarded USDA grant

BY DENISE RAY
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The Development Authority of Dawson County was awarded a \$35,000 U.S. Department of Agriculture grant that will be used to guide the future support of the county's

small business community.

Director of Economic Development with the Dawson County Chamber of Commerce Betsy McGriff announced June 18 that the grant will be used to fund a feasibility study on the establishment of a small business incubator in Dawson County.

By definition, an incubator is an organi-

zation designed to help startup businesses grow and succeed by providing free or low-cost resources like workspace, mentorship, expertise, and others.

The Dawson County Economic Development Strategic Plan, which was completed in 2020, identified Tourism and Entrepreneurship as a target focus for economic

development, McGriff said.

The study will show what kinds of tools and resources are needed, such as where the incubator could be located from a business standpoint, including the re-use of a current structure or the creation of a new one, other partners, etc.

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Smoke Signals

News & Views From Big Canoe

A publication for Big Canoe and surrounding communities.

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A note from the editor

Smoke Signals is very fortunate to have a dozen regular contributing columnists and scores of volunteer writers who have expertise in fields ranging from literature to legal matters to pet care and medicine, and a desire to give back to the community. Smoke Signals' relationship with these volunteers is strictly as publisher, without board interference, of their writings that we find pertinent and of interest to our readers and community.

The opinions expressed by our op-ed writers are not necessarily endorsed by Smoke Signals Community Services, Inc.

Foothills IGA wins 5-Star Retailer award for 2021

BY SKYLAR ENGLISH

On Wednesday, June 2 John Ross, CEO of the Independent Grocers Alliance (IGA), visited Foothills IGA in Marble Hill to present the store with the 2021 IGA 5-Star Retailer award. The 5-Star status is the highest level of recognition in the company.

Of over 6,000 IGA retailers internationally—there are 1,200 in the U.S.—only a small fraction received this honor due to the rigorous standards the award requires stores to meet. What does it take to be the best of the best at IGA? It takes a series of assessments based on criteria such as store cleanliness, customer service, and quality of merchandise and operations. These assessments are made during multiple unannounced inspections each year through a third party. Results from each inspection are reported to the company to be compiled and analyzed.

The 5-Star Retailer award holds extreme value for IGA's brand: It ensures customers they are making the best choice possible when they choose to shop at an IGA. Foothills IGA has earned 5-Star status every year since the inception of



Foothills IGA received IGA's 5-Star Retailer award, the highest level of recognition in the company, on June 2. Receiving the award were (l. to r.) Foothills IGA Vice President of Operations Mark Butts and Founder/President Jeff Downing. John Ross, CEO of IGA, (far right) presented the award. PHOTO COURTESY OF IGA

the award. This local market is a prime example of the standard the IGA Company sets for all its stores. The goal of IGA is to increase the number of its 5-Star Retail-

ers each year. Come check out Foothills IGA; rest assured you will experience the excellence which makes it one of the most prestigious IGA's in the world.

Pickens

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- \$200,000 for upgrading outdated HVAC units at the county administrative and Georgia State Patrol buildings

- \$200,000 to complete work on the Tate Depot, recouping lost tourism monies, so that it may be leased for business. Insulation, water, septic, and a restroom are included

- Providing free summer swims at the Camp Road pool (families who have already paid the \$25 summer fee will be reimbursed)

- A hazardous waste amnesty day at the recycling center, perhaps two, including paints, tires and possibly electronics.

Commissioner Becky Denney expressed a desire to help families better afford summer camp and the commission discussed a possible needs-based scholarship program for next summer. This summer's recreation department camp has averaged 80 children per day, with 100 registered—the maximum capacity.

Pickens County Schools

The board of education invited parents to a June 8 noon meeting, hosted by Direc-

tor of Federal Programs Sunita Holloway. Holloway did not respond to emails prior to deadline, but on June 9, The district's Facebook page also advertised a Google form survey, seeking parent input on how to spend the \$7,136,12 in ARP funds. Those forms were requested by Sunday, June 13.

Holloway's June 8 presentation is currently on the district website, indicating that Holloway and central office personnel will be making a plan and budget to submit to the Georgia Department of Education for approval. There was no mention of the anticipated \$7,136,125 on the board's agenda for their regular June 10 meeting.

Holloway's presentation stated that face-to-face students in brick-and-mortar buildings missed 36 days of instruction due to quarantines, and some schools missed another 14 days — this totaled 13,894 days students missed.

The presentation offered facts: in first through eighth grades, more than 50% of students scored at the beginning and developing levels in reading and math, though exact percentages vary by schools and range as high as 60 and 70 percent. And, while most Pickens students earned As and Bs in their courses, course failures increased during the COVID pandemic. In 2019, there were 993 failures; in 2021—the pandemic year just ending - there were 1,626.

The survey echoed the presentation asking parents if they supported spending ARP monies on:

- At-risk populations
- Career tech. ag. programs
- Continuity of core staff and services (continuing existing programs)
- Distance/remote learning - hotspots or devices
- Facilities/equipment - related to sanitizing and disinfecting buildings and buses,
- Mental/physical health - counseling, nursing, clinics and therapeutic services
- Professional development of faculty and staff
- School meals
- Supplemental learning

The 20% required spending on bridging lost instruction opportunities may be focused on:

- Students from low-income homes,
- Students who are homeless or from migrant families
- Students with disabilities,
- Students who are from minorities of ethnic and racial groups,
- English language learners,
- Students in foster care.

The web site lists sunitaholloway@pickenscountyschools.org and 706-253-1700 as contact information.

DADC

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"We want to foster entrepreneurship in the community," McGriff said. "We will make a data-based decision."

McGriff said the next step in the process is to hire a consultant. She has spoken with others who have done such work and is confident in the information she has obtained.

"I have consulted with some folks who have recently done an incubator over in Gwinnett County and they're a good resource," McGriff said. "One sent me a list of consultants that do this type of work. Some in-state, some out-of-state."

It is a "quasi-governmental process", McGriff explained, and therefore the Development Authority will have to issue a request for proposal, or RFP, so the companies that want to do the work can be evaluated.

Once the RFPs are sent out, potential consultants will have roughly 30 days, which is pretty standard, according to McGriff, to submit a proposal for review. The process to get a consultant could conceivably take two to two-and-one-half months from issuing the RFP, evaluating the applications, and ultimately engaging the consultant.

The study itself could take six to eight months, McGriff said.

"It should tell us whether or not we need an incubator, which would be step one," McGriff said. "Then the next step would be to determine which type of incubator. It's like one of those 'move on from here charts' with 'if yes, then you would want to look at maybe this kind of space, this kind of business, this is the equipment you need, these are the partners you would want to bring in.'"

Partners would be SCORE (a Herndon, Virginia-based nonprofit that fosters small business communities through mentoring and education from retired executives), or a small business development center, McGriff explained.

Other resources that might be needed could be the type of space people need, how many days they should be at the incubator, workshops, administrative help and internet service, basically identifying resources that could support businesses in the incubator itself.

"We're looking at things that support the strategic plan that we operate under," Development Authority of Dawson County Board Chair Tony Passarello said. "It's the type of business, it's the type of entre-



Development Authority of Dawson County Board Chair Tony Passarello and Director of Economic Development with the Dawson County Chamber of Commerce Betsy McGriff discuss the next steps in the implementation of a feasibility study for a small business incubator in Dawson County. The study was made possible through a grant from the United States Department of Agriculture and will show the types of support that would benefit local entrepreneurs. PHOTO BY DENISE RAY

"Incubators can provide businesses a strong start, often reducing overhead while the company grows."

preneur that we would be looking for, and then, the next step would be to kind of put things in place to create that environment and then once the environments created, support those businesses."

Business incubators in a nutshell

Incubators can provide businesses a strong start, often reducing overhead while the company grows. Resources could range from office space and services to mentorship, expertise, influence, and sometimes capital. They may also offer business development programming such as workshops and panel discussions. Businesses in some incubators might have access to office must-haves like internet, administrative support, and production equipment. Office services vary from program to program, and it is expected that the feasibility study will provide which would be best for Dawson County fledgling entrepreneurs.

The structured environment and curriculum of an incubator can also help

a new business keep focus and grow in the right direction.

Typically, small business owners apply to be part of an incubator—sometimes a competitive process, requiring the submission of a detailed business plan and other documentation, a commitment of a year or so, and attendance at trainings and workshops. Regardless, they provide a professional environment in which resources and expertise are available, and ideally, conveniently located.

"To be able to have a business incubator would be a great win for our community," Mandy Power, Dawson County Chamber of Commerce president said. "An incubator will help the overall success of many businesses by providing vital resources they never knew existed. The heart of our community are our small businesses and to help them succeed is what the chamber is all about."

While many are hopeful that the incubator could come to fruition in Dawson County, there is a possibility that it might not. If that were the case, McGriff remains optimistic.

"I think what we'd do then is ask for recommendation of resources we'd need to provide and/or partners we'd collaborate with to foster entrepreneurship."

Second Front

Reporting on Big Canoe's finances: What's missing is not \$1 million

BY POA BOARD

There is a plausible and easily understandable explanation for the suggestion that \$1 million has disappeared from Big Canoe's coffers.

Nothing is missing.

Not only is there not a missing sum of \$1 million but there is an additional sum of nearly \$3 million in reserves in a restricted fund. The author who is reporting that money had been lost is mistakenly referring to the wrong fund.

What is missing from the communications of the author and her supporter is:

- research to understand the facts before publishing erroneous information
- knowledge and acceptance that there are multiple reserve funds
- courtesy to accept the numerous offers of assistance from the POA to provide and confirm facts before rushing to publish
- willingness to acknowledge what the Capital Reserve Study does recognize: Capital projects have never been funded from the Restricted Capital Fund, and are

now funded from Board Designated funds generated from Operations, Assessments, and Capital Contribution Fees

- respect for the POA employees and volunteers working to make life better in Big Canoe
- desire to work as a team to improve Big Canoe
- humility to retract inflammatory articles by publishing corrections like any reputable journalist and to acknowledge that this is not the first occurrence
- integrity to apologize to the community and exercise discipline in seeking out and confirming information before publication

These owners incorrectly reported the account mentioned in the Capital Reserve Study was the Restricted-Capital Reserve Fund when it was the Board Designated-Capital Replacement Fund. This is the fund correctly referenced in the Capital Reserve Study as it funds capital projects related to the reserve study. The Restricted-Capital Reserve Fund was designed for use in years of high capital expenditures or emergencies such as roads and dams. Their

error caused them to conclude that the referenced fund should have been roughly \$2.8 million. The \$2.8 million is available and is in addition to the \$1.8 million fund in the report. Therefore, these two funds had \$2.8 million more than they referenced, and not \$1 million less.

These erroneous publications cause additional staff and volunteer work to refute the inaccuracies and field questions from unnecessarily worried property owners regarding the POA's financial strength, accounting ability and, yes, its integrity and honesty.

They've posed accusatory questions about the POA management or board members that go well beyond attempting to merely get to the facts of the matter such as:

- "Did association management purposefully provide the reserve specialists information that was inaccurate?"
- "Has money actually been removed from the reserve fund without any vote of the board or notification to property owners?"

A supporter states of the self-described reporter: "She does good financial analysis

on a multitude of Big Canoe issues" and "Big Canoe's Financial Blogger . . . has just run two back-to-back stories detailing missing money."

He says, "A cool \$1 Million Dollars just went 'Poof.'" The full statement in the article was that it was missing "from the books" and "it is a 100% undeniable fact that it is!"

This speaks to his credibility and the standards of those promoting and applauding anything critical of Big Canoe while abdicating any responsibility to retract erroneous information or apologize to POA employees or volunteers.

It is well past time for these individuals to publicly own up to and retract their inflammatory statements and to issue a sincere apology to everyone they have criticized in every media platform used to forward these communications.

But if they genuinely want to make things right, getting their facts straight would be a great start.

To read more about the Capital Reserve Study and funds: <https://wp.me/p4w-MJH-4XD>

Homeless

Continued from page 1

were promoted on time. It was my job to teach them combat tactics and lessons that would help them survive if and when we ever were called into action and to develop a cohesive fighting unit.

What I was never taught or thought about was: What happens to the men who get injured, leave the Army or another service branch and return home to live the rest of their lives? I always assumed nothing bad happened to them and that they lived a full and meaningful life.

When I retired from the corporate world, I knew I wanted to do something to help others but wasn't sure what. I connected with Nathan Brandon, then Cherokee County director of Senior Services; he introduced me to many people and groups including Cherokee FOCUS, a collaborative of county non-profits so I could understand where some needs existed. I decided that veteran homelessness would be my focus.

In 2014, when I started this program, there was a Mayor's Challenge and a VA program to end veteran homelessness by 2015. At the time there were roughly 100,000 homeless vets thought to be living on America's streets; today there are less than 40,000. The numbers are more guesses than fact as Congress gets its estimate from what is called a Point in Time (PIT) count that is done one night in January every other year. Here in Georgia, less than 35 of the 159 counties perform the PIT count, as a result, we are not close to knowing the real number of homeless veterans in Georgia. My estimate is between 3,000 to 13,000 homeless veterans—and not all of them are in downtown Atlanta.

Homeless veterans program launched

On Veterans Day, 2014, the Cherokee County Homeless Veterans Program was launched. Our first order of business was to get the other Veteran Service Organizations, like the VFW, Marine Corps League and others to support the program. At first the reception was warm, but the common point presented to me was programs like mine came and went. If I could survive the first year and show that the program works, they would get behind me. No pressure here.

Having met with the likes of Rita Barnhart of the Georgia Department of Veteran Services in Canton, as well as Chris Daniels, then director for MUST Ministries out of Kennesaw, I hit the streets along with Mike Satterly, Vietnam Air Force veteran and fellow Legion member from Woodstock, and Pat Kenny, program director for Cherokee County Senior Services who worked with aging veterans around the county. They are still with the program today.

Working as a team, we encountered a few veterans who were on the edge of homelessness but what became the watershed moment in our program was when we encountered a female Marine—she was living in her car and had been homeless for 31 years. This Marine only wanted to serve her county and when a NCIS drug sting went bad she was left taking the brunt of the blame. She had been sexually assaulted during the incident and was put out of the Marines for a personality disorder—meaning mental health issue—just shy of her two-year hitch. How could this happen and why?

She was still receiving humanitarian mental health from the VA in Atlanta, but as I found out, she did not qualify for VA disability or other veteran benefits due to what is called the "24-month rule." If you did not serve 24 months in military service you were not eligible for VA benefits, which included veteran homeless housing programs such as VA Supportive Housing (VASH) for single male veterans or Supportive Services of Veterans with Families (SSVF) a housing programs for veterans with families.



Homeless camp over by I75 that was inhabited when we did our count this year. It has since been demolished by the DOT. It was located in northwest Cherokee County.



Mentally ill homeless veteran lives in the woods near a convenience gas station. The owner of the station often lets the veteran sleep in the back of the store on rainy days. He also gets some meals from a restaurant across the street by coming to the back door. The manager did not want us taking pictures.



Landscape Day, veterans and the Jasper Home Depot team lead George Towle at the homeless veteran statue. The statue helps bring a physical presence to the homeless veteran issue. The female statue was designed after pictures of the female Marine helped who had been homeless for 31 years.

Taking on this veteran's case, we did a lot of research and realized that veterans experiencing homelessness are prone to mental health issues also. Roughly 40% of all homeless veterans experience mental health issues. MST—military sexual trauma—which this female veteran experienced, is another case of mental health where most of the women experiencing MST become not only homeless at some point but also suicidal as well at some time.

Over the next six months working with this 52-year-old female veteran, we found out that there were seven exceptions to the 24-month-rule and she could claim four of the seven exceptions. We took the case to the VA but they were not interested in changing their view of her even after we supplied over 400 pages of VA mental health treatments, so we did the next best thing, we took her case to the press.

I saw a segment on Channel 46 [CBS] in Atlanta that focused on "Helping our Veterans;" I reached out to Natalie Rubino, the reporter of this segment, and presented this veteran's case. It wasn't long after I called that Natalie and her team met with this veteran and developed a story that aired at 6 p.m. on a Thursday night. By 9 a.m. the next morning, this veteran received a call from the VA that she was not only going to get VA benefits, but they rated her at 100%

service-connected disability.

We had won a battle, but the war was far from over. The rating by the VA and the initial back pay for her disability provided her not only money to get her out of living in her car, but gave her a new view of her situation. She has since reunited with her family and now lives on her monthly disability pay out west.

Wide range of emotional issues

In working with more than 700 homeless veterans since starting our program in 2014, we have seen many reasons why veterans become homeless. Some veterans have had emotional issues from their time in service in combat areas; some have had to deal with the loss of loved ones, divorce, substance abuse, depression, PTSD; some are not able to cope with the non-structured life outside of the military. We have dealt with veterans from every branch of the service and veterans from private E0 all the way to Lt Colonel (O5). We work with veterans from the Vietnam era all of the way forward to today's war fighters.

Because we only deal with honorably discharged veterans, we are working with those who deserve our support. Our biggest issue is that we get called to help when veterans are really in need or having a crisis. Veterans are proud and do not want to ask for help, especially Marines. It is hard

for veterans, who have been self-reliant and trained to survive in the military, to realize finally they cannot fix things themselves. I think this is one of the issues that leads veterans to suicide more than anything as they find themselves at rock bottom and think there is no way out of their situation.

No magic formula

Over the past seven plus years of working with and helping veterans, my team and I have found that there is no magic formula to solve homelessness or veteran suicide. We treat each and every veteran based on what we find that person needs, whether it is helping with VA claims, help with short term and longer-term housing, food, clothing, transportation, finding a good job, or obtaining medical attention. Getting veterans in crisis stabilized is key to winning trust from them. They each most likely have endured broken promises about help from others and they are not sure we can help them in their particular case.

We cannot succeed if the veteran is not ready to be helped and not willing to change his or her current situation. When a veteran is not willing to accept our help, we move onto those who are ready and eventually the reluctant veterans will come back into the program.

This is especially true as our program requires the veteran to be clean and sober and if he or she tests positive for drugs or has an alcohol issue, we will help by referring that person to a partner or VA-sponsored program until the veteran is clean.

We don't promise that we can solve all of their issues, but we try. We tell our veterans that we do not provide charity and that everything we do for them is due to them having served, whether it was two years or 20 years. We do however, expect that when we do get them out of homelessness and back on their feet and back into society that we are going to reach back to them to help pay it forward to help another veteran in need.

Our services to the veterans we help is provided at no cost and we are thankful that we have such great community support for our program in all areas. Our staff is 100% volunteer based and no one takes any type of salary. To provide assistance to a veteran in need or in crisis, contact Cherokee Homeless Veteran Program at (678) 983-7590 or via email at jlindenmayer80@gmail.com. We do need volunteers for many of our programs. Our financial focus stays within Cherokee County, however, we will help a veteran anywhere.



Happy Independence Day!

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 4 Bedrooms/4.5 Baths

NEW LISTING

PENDING

219 WAKE ROBIN DRIVE
\$469,000 • FMLS #6878524
 4 Bedrooms/3 Baths
 Totally Renovated-Near Hiking Trails
 Great Outdoor Spaces

NEW LISTING

SOLD!

379 DISHAROON DRIVE
\$475,000 • FMLS #6864207
 3 Bedrooms/2 Full-2 Half Baths
 VIEW! Convenient Location
 Sunroom, Office, Exercise Room

NEW LISTING

PENDING

21 BEE BALM WAY
\$1,100,000 • FMLS #6893998
UNDER CONTRACT IN 3 DAYS!

NEW LISTING

SOLD!

2560 QUAIL COVE DRIVE
\$525,000 • FMLS #6843771
 4 Bedrooms/4.5 Baths

NEW LISTING

SOLD!

941 QUAIL COVE DRIVE
\$375,000 • FMLS #6787007
 3 Bedrooms/3 Baths
 2 Bedrooms on Main!
 Home recently painted inside and out!

VIEW! VIEW! VIEW!

SOLD!

29 WOOD FERN KNOLL
\$619,000 • FMLS #6713516
 4 Bedrooms/3.5 Baths
 ONE OF THE BEST VIEWS IN BIG CANOE!
 6 Minutes from Gate

NEW LISTING

SOLD!

40 LAUREL RIDGE TRAIL
\$299,000 • FMLS #6675162
 4 Bedrooms/3.5 Baths
 Walk to Amenities!
 Cozy, Cottage in a great location!

NEW LISTING

SOLD!

520 HUNTERS TRACE
\$455,000 • FMLS #6777061
UNDER CONTRACT IN 5 DAYS!

LAKE FRONT

SOLD!

102 CARDINAL COVE
\$798,000 • FMLS #6733327
 4 Bedrooms/3 Full, 2 Half Baths
 Fabulous Lake Front Home!
 Loaded with Extras

NEW LISTING

SOLD!

65 BUCKSKULL BROW
\$179,000 • FMLS #6737417
UNDER CONTRACT IN 2 DAYS!

GREAT LOCATION!

SOLD!

199 YANOO TRACE
\$345,000 • FMLS #6727417
 4 Bedrooms/4.5 Baths
 Near North Gate, Walking Trails and
 Dog Parks. NEWLY RENOVATED!

GREAT LOCATION!

SOLD!

7 CHOCTAW RIDGE
\$569,000 • FMLS #6733327
 4 Bedrooms/4 Full/2 Half Baths
 Near Clubhouse, Golf Course and Walking
 Trails. Studio, Office of Over Garage Apt

NEW LISTING

SOLD!

88 CINNAMON FERN LANE
\$399,000 • FMLS #6770995
UNDER CONTRACT IN 1 DAY!

NEW LISTING

SOLD!

77 CHEROKEE KNOLL
\$435,000 • FMLS #6631184
 3 Bedrooms/2.5 Baths
 Close to North Gate and Wildcat Hiking
 Trails. Spacious Rooms, Office & Workshop

PRIVACY AND A VIEW!

SOLD!

776 BLACK BEAR TRAIL
\$725,000 • FMLS #6585058
 6 Bedrooms/6.5 Baths
 Inlaw Suite with Kitchen and Private Entry
 3 Car Garage/6 Minutes from North Gate

RIDGE LINE VIEW

SOLD!

95 TREETOP KNOLL
\$149,900 • FMLS #6536163
 2 Bedrooms/2 Baths
 Centrally located
 Walk to Amenities

NEW PRICE

SOLD!

291 WOODLAND TRACE
\$375,000 • FMLS #6650834
 3 Bedrooms/3 Baths
 Custom Home with recent Updates!
 Flowing Stream and Privacy!

NEW LISTING

SOLD!

64 HIGHLAND FARMS COURT
\$275,000 • FMLS #6539935
 3 Bedrooms/2 Baths
 Convenient to Village and Amenities
 Beautiful Renovation-Wheelchair Ramp

VIEW!

SOLD!

1239 MCELROY MTN DRIVE
\$350,000 • FMLS #6643625
 4 Bedrooms/3 Baths
 Convenient to North Gate
 2 Bedrooms on Main

NEW LISTING

SOLD!

142 BLACK GUM DRIVE
\$425,000 • FMLS #6564242
 4 Bedrooms/3.5 Baths
 Beautifully Maintained and Updated
 Near Amenities and Nature Valley

NEW PRICE

SOLD!

811 MCELROY MTN DRIVE
\$599,000 • FMLS #6562660
 4 Bedrooms/4.5 Baths
 One of the best views in Big Canoe!!!
 Updated and Move in Ready

NEW PRICE

SOLD!

40 TROUT LILY TRAIL
\$215,000 • FMLS #6539718
 3 Bedrooms/2 Baths
 Walk to Nature Valley
 Seasonal Interior View

NEW PRICE

SOLD!

84 SOURWOOD CIRCLE
\$375,000 • FMLS #6547506
 4 Bedrooms/3.5 Baths
 Beautifully Maintained. Sunroom,
 2 Fireplaces, Private Guest Spaces

NEW LISTING

SOLD!

34 SCONTI RIDGE, UNIT 405 • \$134,900
48 SCONTI RIDGE, UNIT 409B • SOLD
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'A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse'

Wildlife Refuge Adventures

TRAVIS H. McDANIEL

My infatuation with horses began when I was about five years old. My uncle Wilson let me ride his plow horse back to the barn from a cotton field he had been plowing. Although I was never around horses much and had ridden relatively little, the infatuation with them continued into adulthood. So, when I was transferred to Wapanocca Wildlife Refuge in 1962 and learned one of my neighbors had several horses, I took advantage of his generosity and began riding one of his bays whenever I had the chance.

In my third year in Arkansas, Wapanocca was selected to be one of several refuges in our region to be master planned. Among other things a master plan would identify all the potential developments needed to meet refuge objectives. One of the potential projects that interested me the most was the construction of several field impoundments in our agricultural areas.

It was readily apparent that the whole of the 6,000 acre refuge had been shaped over the eons by the changing meanders of the Mississippi River, the main channel of which was now four miles east of the refuge. Our cropland areas were made up of ridges and swales, ample evidence of where river channels had once been. The swale areas were perfect places to construct shallow field impoundments where agricultural crops could be flooded in the fall and winter to provide feeding areas for waterfowl. The areas suitable for planned impoundments showed up clearly on topographic maps, and I used these to identify the areas where impoundments could be constructed, if and when money was ever appropriated.

During a period of heavy flooding the spring after the master plan was finished, I was presented with the perfect opportunity to see how well these areas I had selected held water, and exactly where the dam for each impoundment should be placed. Vehicles were out of the question to get to these sites because all the roads were under water. Walking to the sites in the gumbo mud was also out of the questions since the planned impoundments were scattered over several hundred acres. After a little innovative thinking I came up with what seemed to be a perfect solution. I got a field notebook and pencil from the office and headed out to Dino Paranni's farm, where I found him in his service yard welding on a disc harrow.

"What do you say, Dino?"

"Not much. What's on your mind Travis?"

"I want to borrow that bay mare for a few hours. I've got a little project I need her for."

"What kind of a project could you possibly have that you need a horse for?"

I described the project, and after a



McDaniel slipping flashboards into the riser portion of a completed field impoundment. Impoundment will hold water up to the top board before the overflow exits out the horizontal portion of the structure.

good laugh at what I'm sure he considered to be a hair-brained endeavor, he told me to help myself to the bay. I saddled up and headed out towards the first proposed site, about a mile to the west of his farm.

The sticky gumbo soil proved only a minor problem for the horse and we made good progress checking out the first site. Then it happened. As we started through an area that turned out to be especially boggy, the mare began sinking down to her knees. This frightened her, as it did me, and she began to lunge forward wildly to get herself free. I figured she could do this much easier if my full weight was not on her back. As I was in the process of dismounting, she decided to lunge again. This caught me unprepared and before I could grab the saddle horn to hold on, I came out of the saddle and rolled backwards off her rump, turned a flip and landed face down in the gumbo mud!

I could imagine what a hilarious sight that would have been to an onlooker, had there been one. But, thank goodness I was alone in the middle of the 300 acre agricultural field. I recovered quickly and began making desperate grabs for the left stirrup as the horse continued to lunge forward in the knee deep mud. The mare finally regained her footing as the mud in front of her began to get a little firmer, and she high-tailed it for the barn without ever

once looking back to see what happened to her faithful rider.

Prior to moving to Wapanocca, I had heard the term "gumbo," but had never lived anywhere it existed. The Mississippi Delta is pure gumbo, probably 15 feet deep, or more. It is a fine clay that is unbelievably sticky when wet, and very hard when dry. When driving the refuge jeep through wet gumbo I have seen it build up on the tires until it fills the wheel wells and actually stops all forward movement until it is cleared out with a sharpshooter shovel. I have also seen mourning doves that could not fly because of the dried mud on their feet, and box turtles with gumbo so thick on their plastron that it raised them off the ground so high their feet could no longer make traction, and they were stranded. A man walking through wet gumbo with slip-on-type boots will not get far before he steps completely out of them. It happened to me before I learned to wear only lace-up boots at work.

And so, it was under these conditions I had to walk back to Dino's barn and my truck. It took a couple of hours to make it back, and I won't describe the horse laugh I got from Dino. "I'd have come looking for



McDaniel in a field impoundment planted with corn.



Another view of a field impoundment dike being constructed with the refuge dragline. PHOTOS COURTESY OF TRAVIS H. MCDANIEL

you if I'd known which direction to look," he quipped when he quit laughing. As for the mare, she just looked at me as if to say, "What took you so long?"

I carried out the caked on gumbo that covered the mare's legs and belly before leaving. As I was getting in my truck, Dino told me I could I could borrow the mare again the next day if I wanted to finish my project. I told him thanks, but no thanks.

I still think it was a good idea. Everything was going just as I planned. That is, until I fell off.

Afternote

We built several field impoundments in the last years I was at Wapanocca, and were glad to see they all received heavy waterfowl use. I came to Wapanocca in August of 1962 and transferred to my next refuge in October 1967. Next month's column will be the first about some of my experiences at Cape Romain, a 60,000 acre National Wildlife Refuge on the South Carolina coast, 16 miles north of Charleston, South Carolina.



Maintenance employee Franklin Robinson building a field impoundment dike with our crawler-mounted front end loader. Flashboard riser in lower right of photo.



Field impoundments help compensate, in part, for some of the wetland habitat already lost in this area. Here mallards, wood ducks, gadwall, and ring-necked ducks take advantage of this flooded corn and millet field.

A road from the past

Things You May Not Know About Big Canoe

JAN MURPHY

A few folks in Big Canoe may not be familiar with the term, CCC, better known as the Civilian Conservation Corps. I must admit when I first heard about the "CCC" road, I didn't have a clue to what it was. I had to Google it to find out what it meant. I found the history absolutely fascinating and even relevant in present day.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the Civilian Conservation Corps, or CCC, with an executive order on April 5, 1933. The CCC was part of his New Deal legislation, combating high unemployment during the Great Depression by putting hundreds of thousands of young men to work on environmental conservation projects.

The United States Army helped to solve an early logistical problem – transportation. Most of the unemployed men were in Eastern cities while much of the conservation work was in the West.

CCC Camps

The CCC enrolled mostly young, unskilled, and unemployed men between the ages of 18 and 25. The men came primarily from families on government assistance. Men enlisted for a minimum of six months.

Each worker received \$30 in payment per month for his services in addition to room and board at a work camp. The men were required to send \$22 to 25 of their monthly earnings homes to support their families.

Some corpsmen received supplemental basic and vocational education while they served. In fact, it's estimated that some



A photo of old stacked stone walls that ran along parts of the old CCC road. SMOKE SIGNALS SEPTEMBER 1997

57,000 illiterate men learned to read and write in CCC camps.

Enrollment in the CCC peaked in August 1935. At the time, more than 500,000 corpsmen were spread across 2,900 camps. It's estimated that nearly three million men – about five percent of the total United States male population – took part in the CCC over the course of the agency's nine-year history.

Pickens CCC Camp

Pickens County did not have any government land where the CCC could set up a camp. Sam Tate, with his influence, did manage to have a camp established in his mountain community. Professor Perrow, a leader at the Pickens CCC Camp, stated in the November 16, 1938 Pickens Progress that, "the State Forest Service established the camp here at the request of the Pickens County Timber Association." What the article failed to say is that the land where the camp was built belonged to Sam Tate and it was adjacent to the Old Dude Ranch now

known as the Bent Tree community. The area where the workers built the roads and improvements were mostly the 10,000 acres of land owned by Sam Tate.

The CCC Camp was established on July 21, 1933. It was known as Camp #1449 with an address associated with the Tate Post Office and Train Station. The Pickens Progress announced on June 15, 1933 that, "A Reforestation camp will be established in Pickens County by July and there will be a total of 250 men at the camp including 180 men from Camp Benning." The article went on to say, that, "The work will include protection of the standing timber, construction of fire brakes, building telephone lines, roads and trails." Young men were selected from each local county to participate in the camp. Twenty young men were selected from a group of 60 applicants from Pickens County and began their employment in July 1933. Initially, the camp had tents to house the young men. The Army officers and civilians who assisted in training lived in some

of the houses associated with the Old Dude Ranch. One of the first projects to be built at the camp was a mess hall and bunkroom.

The CCC Road

The CCC road also known as a 3-C Road was built along the border of Big Canoe and Bent Tree and runs to Cove Road near The Bluffs. This road is not marked and is located at the very top of Ridgeview Road. In 1996, Warren & Lee Culpepper who live near the top of Ridgeview created a trail to the CCC road. It's a flat dirt road that gently slopes and curves around Toland mountain and ends up at the top of Mt. Oglethorpe. Many of the roads that run off the CCC road were built by private landowners. When you start out on the trail to the road, the view is of Bent Tree. The total distance from the end of Ridgeview to the Oglethorpe summit, via the Eagles Rest trail, is 2.0 miles. The elevation climb is 700 feet, and typically it takes an hour to hike.

In the picture provided, there are stacked stone walls that runs along parts of the CCC road. Recently, I discovered that there are two stone walls that are located in the Buckskull Hollow neighborhood that look similar to the ones in the picture. I wonder if there are any other stone walls that are located throughout Big Canoe neighborhoods. If you happen to stumble upon a stone wall like the ones in the photos, be sure to take a picture, notate where it's located and send it to me at jmurphy36867@gmail.com. If you haven't already, be sure to join the Big Canoe Historical Society (BCHS) group on Facebook. There's a lot more photos, trivia, and history available if you like reading about the history of Big Canoe.

Ed. Note: Resources used were History.com, Eaglesrestpark.org article written by Don & Diane Wells and a September 1997 Smoke Signals article.

"Our customers travel all around the world so we often get the most unique and interesting pieces."

A new, larger 'Twist' on consignment shopping

BY BARBARA SCHNEIDER
bschneider@smokesignalsnews.com

Timing is everything. Just ask Kelly Barnes. In December 2019 she decided to move the location of her thriving Twist consignment business and increase showroom space by 50%. Within days the COVID 19 threat—with predictions of lockdowns, recession and business failures—loomed like a black cloud over just about everything, everywhere.

"We had just signed a new lease for the new Foothills Shopping Center location and were preparing to renovate our new showroom—a space that had been empty for nine years—when the pandemic hit," said Barnes in a June 17 interview with *Smoke Signals*.

"Yes, it was scary and nobody knew what was going to happen next. Everybody dealt with the pandemic in their own way." For Barnes that included a lot of sleepless nights.

By March 2020, she had completely shut down the Brownstone Centre showroom and was investing time and money to make the new space inviting and functional before she moved her extensive stock of furniture, home furnishings, accessories, art, carpets and unique gift items in. It was a hectic and uncertain time for Barnes and her team.

"But I believed it was the right move for Twist," she said, "and was willing to go all in. With the business closed we were able to totally focus on preparing the new space."

Asking Barnes if the move was worth all the worry, hard work and sleepless nights,



Owner Kelly Barnes welcomes visitors to Twist at the consignment store's new Foothills Shopping Center location.



Twist offers a wide range of high quality merchandise—from suites of furniture to gourmet toffee. PHOTOS BY PAUL SAYEGH

produces a smile that lights up the room.

"We haven't even had an official grand opening yet but, yes, we are doing great. We love our new showroom, the Foothills location—and traffic is up," she said. In fact, Twist is doing so great Barnes is already adding more space to the new showroom. "We had an opportunity to rent the space next door for more storage and to add an office. That opened up the room upstairs in the current showroom for more selling space."

"We were also very fortunate to be able to retain our long-time employees Mike Melear and Leslie Seuffert when we opened back up in May 2020. We added Carole Talbott to the team and she brings her expertise creating venues to the table each and every week."

Together, she said, the Twist team was able to navigate the new normal.

Before the move and pandemic, Barnes had built a very loyal customer base. "We always strive to make Twist a happy place to come and shop," she said.

Twist's wide range of products and services—everything from complete sets of furniture to gourmet toffee—appeals to every shopping need from "forgot my wife's birthday" to "company's coming this weekend" to "have to furnish my new Big Canoe house before the family comes for Thanksgiving."

"We not only fill the need for furniture and home décor, we have gift lines and gourmet items. We can help people who are moving out of the area find a different home for their treasures and help people who are moving in find just the right unique pieces for their new homes. Our customers travel all around the world so we often get the most unique and interesting pieces," she said.

Twist is now open four days a week—Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday—because "it takes four people two days to remove what has been sold the prior week, get in the new inventory and then make it beautiful," explains Barnes.

"We are told over and over again that Twist doesn't look like a consignment store. That makes us smile. Our motto is 'new week, new showroom' and we remain true to that," she added.

"In addition to the store, we provide an additional service managing estate sales. We've built up a nice following and always have a line out the door before the sale starts. We've had feedback from our clients and customers telling us how organized our sales are and that everything is priced well."

For more information about Twist, go to twistconsignments.com.

Department of Public Safety May Report

Fire	Month	YTD
Structure	0	4
Wildland	2	3
Auto	0	0
Fire Alarm	4	10
Misc.	2	12
Total	8	29

By County		
Pickens	4	12
Dawson	3	15
Outside BC	1	2
Total	8	29

Citations	Month	YTD
Residents	3	15
Guests	1	7
Contractors	3	4
Speeding	2	2
Failure to stop	0	0
Other	5	24
Total	7	26

Training Hours		
Paid Staff	171.0	806.0
Volunteers	97.0	387.0
Total	260.0	1193.0

EMS	Month	YTD
Dawson (County)	12	58
Pickens (County)	18	83
Dawson Response	10	44
Pickens Response	7	36
BCDPS Only	13	61
Patient Asst	7	29
Transport	13	62
Non-Transport	10	50
Total	30	141

Comments: Reduced calls to essential service due to COVID-19 lock-down.

MVA	Month	YTD
Single Vehicle	4	9
Multi Vehicle	0	0
Total	4	9

Misc. Reports		
Theft	0	1
Pets	0	5
Security Alarms	0	0
Auto Jump Start	9	16
Vehicle Unlocks	3	5
Bear Incidents	0	1
Other	44	150
Total	56	178



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<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>164 BOBCAT RIDGE DRIVE 4BR, 6.5B ~ \$1,150,000</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>1358 COX MOUNTAIN DRIVE 5BR, 4F, 2H BATHS ~ \$1,000,000</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>32 RACCOON RUN RIDGE 6BR, 4.5BA ~ \$1,200,000</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>3088 SKITTS MOUNTAIN RD. 4BR, 3BA, 2HLF BA, ~ \$975,000</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>10 SUMMIT DRIVE WEST 4BR, 3.5BA ~ \$949,000</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>30 PONY LANE 2FPL's, 3 Car Garage, 2 Porches 4BR, 3.5BA ~ \$529,900</p>
<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>476 WILDCAT DRIVE 4BR, 4.5BA ~ \$849,000</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>80 TEABERRY LANE 5BR, 5.5BA ~ \$799,000</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>4900 GAIDREW, ATLANTA 3BR, 4 FULLBA, 2 HALF BA \$775,000</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>18 NUGGET LANE 4BR, 4.5BA ~ \$689,000</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>401 SUMMIT DRIVE 4BR, 3F BA, 3HLF BA ~ \$630,000</p>	<p>NEW LISTING</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>311 REDBUD PASS Immaculate Blackwell Creek home 5BR, 3BA ~ \$575,000</p>
<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>74 PETIT RIDGE DR. 4BR, 3.5BA ~ \$600,000</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>109 RED BUD PASS 4BR, 3.5BA ~ \$599,000</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>113 SCONTI KNOLL DRIVE 4BR, 5BA ~ \$547,500</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>17 MINERAL LANE 4BR, 3.5BA ~ \$545,000</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>18 BROOKSIDE POINT 3BR, 3 FULL BA, 3 HALF BA \$515,000</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>371 MYSTIC TRAIL, THE PRESERVE AT SHARP MTN. 3BR, 2FULL/2 HLF BA</p>
<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>65 RED FOX DRIVE 4BR, 3.5BA ~ \$510,000</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>521 WEDGEWOOD DR 3BR, 2.5BA ~ \$499,000</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>203 LAUREL CREEK 2BR, 2BA ~ \$476,301</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>78 HIGHLAND FARMS COURT 3BR, 3.5BA ~ \$475,000</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>369 CHEROKEE TRAIL 4BR, 4BA ~ \$459,000</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>74 CHEROKEE KNOLL 3BR, 4BA ~ \$515,000</p>
<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>236 SARATOGA DRIVE 4BR, 3BA ~ \$435,350</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>367 WINDFLOWER DR. 4BR, 3BA 1HLF ~ \$379,000</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>74 CHEROKEE WAY 4BR, 3BA ~ \$434,500</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>424 COLUMBINE 3BR, 2.5BA ~ \$422,000</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>129 SOARING HAWK 3BR, 3.5BA ~ \$399,000</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>31 PONY LANE 3BR, 3.5BA ~ \$449,000</p>
<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>1070 BROOK KNOLL LANE 3BR, 3BA ~ \$369,900</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>262 COLUMBINE 4BR, 3BA ~ \$364,000</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>78 PONY LANE 4BR, 3BA ~ \$349,000</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>158 WOODSTREAM POINT 4BR, 3.5BA ~ \$344,900</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>57 SHAGGY MAPLE 3BR, 3.5BA ~ \$325,000</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>211 FALLEN DEER PATH 4BR, 3.5BA ~ \$375,000</p>
<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>21 YEARLING LANE 3BR, 3BA ~ \$249,000</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>23 OWLS BROW 5BR, 3BA ~ \$265,000</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>1752 RIDGEVIEW 3BR, 2.5BA ~ \$249,000</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>293 BUCKSKULL HOLLOW DR Fabulous Rental Potential 3BR, 2.5BA ~ \$219,900</p>	<p>SOLD</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>183 DEER RUN RIDGE Beautiful Views and Waterfall Sounds 3BR, 3BA ~ \$315,000</p>	<p>NEW LISTING</p> <p>SOLD</p> <p>424 SANDERLIN MTN DR. "Original Plummer Cabin" w/incredible Views 2BR, 2BA & LOFT ~ \$349,000</p>

FEATURED HOMESITES...

- 6501 Buckskull Ridge - \$149,900 - Fabulous Lake & Mtn Views from Central BC
- 1264 Grouse Gap - \$79,900 - Estate Lot w/180 Degree View!
- 470 Falcon Heights Lane - \$49,000 - Views to Amicalola & Beyond!
- 8256 Cox Mtn Rd - \$90,000 - Big Canoe's Finest View Lot - **SOLD**
- 238 Sanderlin Mtn Dr - \$165,000 - Level lot w/big view to Amicalola & Mt. Yonah. **SOLD**
- 8133 Wilderness Parkway - \$57,500 - Mature trees, natural hardwoods and 2 Streams!
- 8188 Willow Dr, - \$55,900 - Great Lot with View

- 58 Bluestern Dr. - \$99,000 - Wildcat Corner Lot. **SOLD**
- 2641 Sconti Point - \$90,000 - **RARE LOT** on both sides of rushing Blackwell Creek! End of cul-de-sac lot with bold creek views and sounds; Golf Course, Lake Sconti and Cox Mtn Views; Pre-approved septic permit for 3 BR home.
- 9070 Yearling Lane - \$38,500 Easy build on quiet cul-de-sac. Motivated Seller - Estate Owned.
- 8104 Wilderness Pkwy - \$56,900. - 3.9 Acre Estate Lot with Year' Round Views



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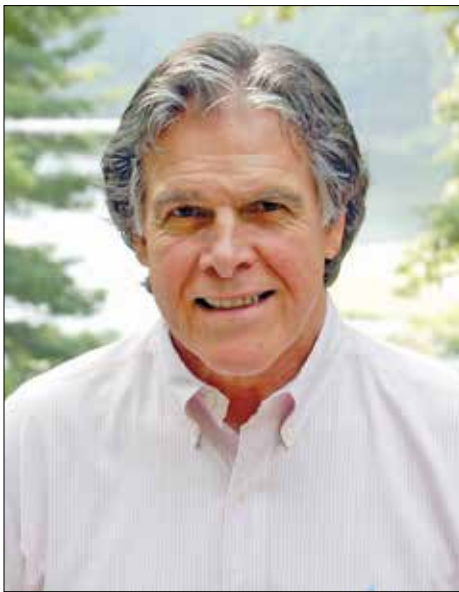
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In Memoriam



William J. Byrne

“What is Big Canoe?”
A question Atlanta developer Bill Byrne asked in 1987 when it was suggested he consider a large North Georgia property an hour north of Atlanta owned by banks. Riding through the covered bridge and manipulating the winding roads, he found a community reminiscent of a smalltown with neighborhoods set in pristine woodlands, green space and mountain terrain. Byrne was a visionary and saw potential.

The property had been in receivership for 10 years and the two banks that held it were entertaining bids. Byrne's was the only bid received.

Big Canoe in 1986 contained 300 single-family homes and a combined 220 Treetoppers, Lakewatch Villas and Buckskull condos and time-share units. Amenities included the old Sconti clubhouse, the Canoe Lodge, Chimneys restaurant, the swim club, tennis courts and 18 holes of golf.

After 10 years of bank management, Byrne said the property looked tired. “It felt tired. The property needed work, but it still looked good to me. I was excited. I could see the potential,” Byrne told *Smoke Signals* in an October 2012 interview. There was a perception in the marketplace Big Canoe had seen its better days when Tom Cousins was creator and owner.

Byrne and his staff spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to get the Atlanta market “comfortable” with the mountain property. The year 1997 marked significant advances for the developer. He joined forces with Greenwood Communities and Resorts out of South Carolina. His efforts received a big boost when Southern Living magazine put its Idea House in Big Canoe. More than 40,000 visitors came to see Big Canoe and the show house.

Over the years Byrne's firm improved amenities, adding more golf holes, the Wildcat recreation complex, miles of trails and the fitness center. Topping his achievement, Big Canoe received a Gold OBIE for Master Plan Community of the Year in 2011.

William J. Byrne, 80, died at home June 23, surrounded by his family after an extended illness.

Growing up in Montclair, N.J., Byrne attended Boston College where he played football and graduated with a degree in business. He was drafted by the Philadelphia Eagles in 1961 and spent five years in the NFL. He moved to Hilton Head Island, S.C. in 1976 and started Dunes Marketing Group, a real estate agency that grew to become one of the top residential firms on the island.

He is survived by daughters, Tara Byrne, Erin Byrne and Moire Byrne Menning; son-in-law Preston Menning; brother, Eugene Byrne; grandchildren, McCamy and Ellie Menning and nephew Michael Byrne. He was preceded in death by his parents and his former wife and dear friend, Mary Katherine Byrne.

The Funeral Mass was held June 30 at Holy Spirit Catholic Church 4465 Northside Dr., Atlanta. A private interment will be held at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made in William J. Byrne's honor to Daughters Against Alzheimer's, www.daughtersagainstalzheimer.org, 3215 Wood Valley Road, NW Atlanta, Ga. 30327 or Holy Spirit Catholic Church.

Margaret Chester Calhoun

December 8, 1954 – June 17, 2021

Margaret (Meg) Chester Calhoun, 66, formerly of Big Canoe, died in her sleep in Fairburn, Ga. June 17.

Born in Atlanta Dec. 8, 1954 to the late Lou and Margaret Chester formerly of Big Canoe, she graduated from Lakeside High School and Georgia Southern University. She raised one son and had the thrill of a lifetime visiting him in Costa Rica, picking bananas, marveling at volcanoes and zip lining through the cloud forest.

Calhoun, a longtime resident of Big Canoe, was well-known and loved among the community. She is remembered among her friends and family as quick to laugh, with an irreverent sense of humor. Late in life, she reunited with her high school sweetheart, Alan Shackelford, remaining with him until her death.

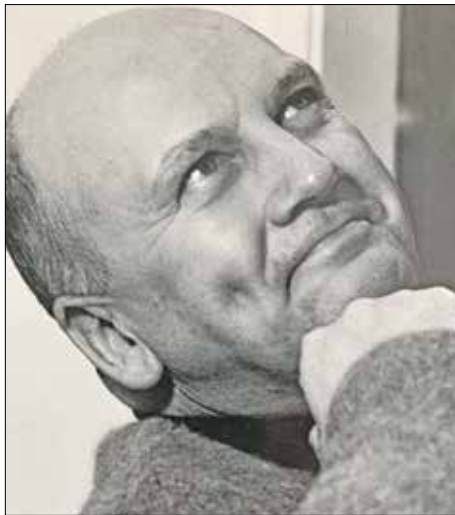
She is survived by her son Ian (Morgan) and his daughters Riley and Parker Calhoun; brother Mark (Linda) and his children Ethan and Cassidy; her partner Alan Shackelford and Mary Jane Chester, wife of her late father Lou Chester. Prede-



ceased in death is a brother Scott Chester.

The family will hold a graveside memorial service Sunday, July 11 at 3 p.m. at the Big Canoe Chapel Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, those who wish may donate to the Big Canoe Animal Rescue or the ASPCA.



Raymond E. Roth

July 28, 1926 – June 16, 2021

Ray Roth, a 32-year resident of Big Canoe, Ga., is now dancing with the angels. He was a comedian who couldn't leave a room without sharing a joke, a natural athlete, an imaginative parent who could turn any activity into an adventure, a skilled negotiator always seeking a bargain, an avid reader, a curious person who loved exploring the world, and a man who loved his family more than anything else.

Known in his youth as “Jimmy,” Ray had fond memories of his early life in

Detroit, Mich., surrounded by relatives and friends. He graduated from Culver Academy in 1944 and from Michigan State University in 1949. Ray served in three branches of the military, including the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Air Force, and the U.S. Army.

A successful career in the insurance industry included positions at CNA Insurance, Humana, Blue Cross Blue Shield, and his own brokerage, Insurance Masters. He and his wife Miki retired to Big Canoe in 1988 where he was an active golfer. He then discovered bocce ball, and his final athletic triumphs occurred on the outdoor courts when he was in his 90s.

Ray was a member of Big Canoe Chapel, serving in a variety of roles over the years. He also served on the board of the Literacy Volunteers of Pickens County and once wrote a golf column for *Smoke Signals*.

Ray is survived by his loving wife of 68 years, Joan (Miki) Roth who now lives at Inspired Living in Alpharetta and his daughter and son-in-law Mandy Roth and Simeon Smith of Sandy Springs whose 2010 marriage happily expanded the family to include grown grandchildren, Andrew Smith and Julia Dragni; Julia's husband Andrei; and their children, Alina and Andrei. Ray is predeceased by his daughter Gretchen Roth, his mother Helen Wilke Roth, and father Edward Roth.

A memorial service will be held at Big Canoe Chapel at a future date.

Get to know the Marine Corps League

The Marine Corps League, North Georgia Mountains, Detachment 1280 Jasper, Ga. invites all active, reserve,

retired and honorably discharged Marines and FMF Corpsman to get to know the members and consider joining them.

The Marine Corps League Detachment 1280 foremost provides assistance to Marines, Corpsmen and their families. We participate in Toys for Tots, assist other veterans groups within the community, support of Boy Scout programs, support

young Marines, provide scholarships to high school students and hold fundraisers throughout the year.

We celebrate the annual Marine Corps Birthday Ball and other historic Marine Corps events.

We commemorate fallen Marines, host socials and assist a needy family during Thanksgiving and Christmas.

For more information on the Marine Corps League, what it does, and how you can join, call 706-253-0459 or email. USMC1280@gmail.com.



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Colonel turned judge shares war stories of Vietnam and border immigration

BY WAYNE TIDWELL

wtidwell@smokesignalsnews.com

Retired judge/colonel Anthony Rogers shared his experiences as an infantry officer and Army aviator as well as his time on the bench as federal immigration judge at the June 9 North Georgia Veterans luncheon at the Big Canoe Clubhouse.

Hoping to be drafted in the NFL, Rogers was instead drafted by the U.S. Army during the Vietnam war.

"The Army was starving for second lieutenants," Rogers said. He applied for flight school with little chance of getting in and hoped for a fixed-wing plane assignment but was offered rotary wing (helicopter) training. At the end of flight school, he was assigned duty as a "Bird Dog" pilot.

"The plane I flew was built in 1953. It flew about 80 knots, and I was typically between 500 and 800 feet in the air," Rogers said.

He was assigned to southernmost Vietnam supporting Vietnamese units "who were desperately trying to avoid combat."

Rogers said he mostly flew reconnaissance missions looking for North Vietnamese (NVA) troop movements. One day he ventured beyond the established boundary of his assignment to search for a gathering place for NVA troops and was shot down for the first of several times.

"Sometime later a Navy 'Seawolf' helicopter came and got me," Rogers said. "The pilot's name was Tom Calhoun from Thomasville, Georgia. I bought him a lot of beer."

He said once the enemy knew he had spotted them, they knew he was going to "bring hell" to them by reporting their whereabouts for bombing raids or artillery activity.

"They knocked me out of the air several times," Rogers said. "In the Delta there are 10,000 rice paddies that look like football fields and it was more like a forced landing (when he was shot down). Before I could get unstrapped, I had a helicopter there trying to get me out. Other than getting knocked around a bit, I had no problems with that."

"When I left Vietnam my 'comrades in arms' gave me an award from the North Vietnamese for destroying more aircraft than they could."

Later Rogers was selected to attend



Judge Anthony Roberts. PHOTO BY WAYNE TIDWELL

law school as part of a program to build the Army's JAG (Judge Advocate General) corps.

"That was the first time I thought about law school," Rogers said.

But Rogers still wanted to fly for an airline. He interviewed with several with no success. In a second interview with Delta Airlines, Rogers was asked to give them something that would help him compete with other candidates who had experience in planes that fly faster than 80 knots.

"I said I crash well," Rogers said. "What I meant is that I don't panic."

The recruiter told him he couldn't sell Delta on the fact that he crashed well. That ended his hopes of flying commercial so he decided to go to law school. He went to the University of Georgia but while there the Army offered him a position in the JAG program with pay and free law school tuition.

"So, I finished school and went back on active duty as a judge advocate and was assigned to Fort Stewart, Georgia," Rogers said. "For the first decade of my JAG career, I stayed in the courtroom all of the time as either a prosecutor or a defense lawyer. Then you get promoted and handle staff assignments that you hate. The only way I could stay in the courtroom was to become a military judge."

"I liked it. You get to yell at the lawyers."

When he decided to retire he was offered a position in the federal judiciary. He was required to have an extensive background investigation.

"I got a visit from an FBI agent who said during the investigation they talked to my next-door neighbor," Rogers said. "She said you 'could be in front of a judge but could never be one.'" The agent asked if it was true that I beat up her son every day of his life."

He got the position as an immigration judge.

"It was almost as big of a mess then as it is now," Rogers said. "The day that I retired I had 1800 cases pending on my docket. Since I left the bench in Dallas, they have had five judges. According to clerk of court who I have maintained contact with, each of them has just over 4,000 cases pending. And that has nothing to do with what's going on at the border."

Rogers went on to discuss what "catch and release" means in the immigration world.

"Let me give you a day-to-day perspective of what catch and release meant under the Obama administration," Rogers said to the group of veterans. "People were coming over in masse and they were doing what they do now, they were given a piece of paper and told that they will be told when to come to court. Then they leave. They were sending judges from all over the country to the border because there were thousands of cases that they couldn't cover."

He said that judges would be sent down for two weeks and assigned 25 cases

in the morning and 25 in the afternoon, but nobody would show up so they spent an hour and a half in the morning and hour and a half in the afternoon "spending all that money for no particular reason."

When assigned to that duty, Rogers said he told his boss "This is the most wasteful, stupid way to do business that I can think of." He pointed out that they already have video conferencing capability.

"About three weeks later his boss said, 'be careful what you ask for,'" Rogers said. "You are going to be the tele-video conferencing judge for Arlington, Texas with three hundred cases a day."

"So that's what we did. We did 19 nineteen days of hearings, 300 per day, and the only people to show up were the Chinese because they were guaranteed a lawyer and they pursue Chinese asylum cases. All the rest of the Central American and whoever else didn't show. In those 19 days in the month of April, I executed 5,480 orders of removal. I could do the same thing tomorrow. That is how much out of control it is. People have no incentive to show up."

He pointed out that economic problems in foreign countries are not a basis for asylum in the United States. He said the number of people involved in the amnesty program in the Reagan administration was three million. He said now there are 15 million and counting waiting to see if we will have another amnesty program.

Rogers said he spent 18 years in immigration and some terrorist cases after 9/11.

He is a member of the Florida Distinguished Flying Cross Society and currently a resident of Big Canoe.

A fond farewell as a dear friend moves away

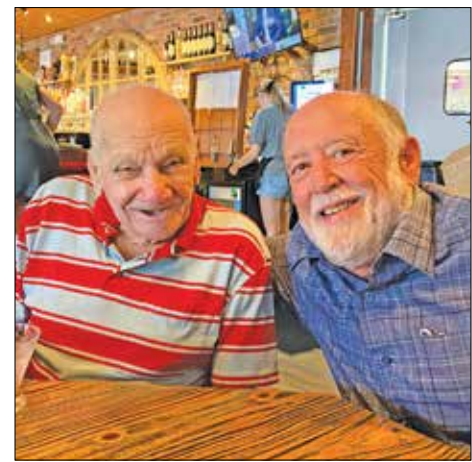
BY BOB ANDERSON

John D'Antonio, a resident of Big Canoe for over 12 years who lived on Deer Run, has recently moved to assisted living before he had a chance to say a proper good-bye and thank all of his many friends.

A WWII Navy veteran, John was highly active in Big Canoe even in his 80s and 90s! In addition to completing the Big Canoe Leadership course in 2018, he volunteered at Good Samaritan in Jasper and later at Good Shepherd in Dawsonville and played doubles tennis and golf with the Aces.

John was "old school" and coordinated many a dress-up Thursday Happy Hour at the Sconti Clubhouse or Home Restaurant for his many neighbors and friends in the pre-COVID days. When asked what advice he would like to share with his friends he replied "don't get old!"

To those of us that really got to know John, he was an unforgettable character. If you knew John, he would be "tickled pink"



John D'Antonio (left) and Bob Anderson share a beer at a restaurant in Decatur. PHOTO BY PEGGY ANDERSON

to hear from you by mail or phone (current cell number is 762-448-1692), or even drop by for a visit if in the Atlanta area. His address and contact information are as follows: Benton House of Decatur, 2711 Lawrenceville Highway, Decatur, GA 30033.

Foothills IGA awards scholarships to employees



Foothills IGA awards scholarships to employees. Pictured (l. to r.) are founder/president of Foothills IGA Jeff Downing, Summer O'Dea, Kirsten Thrasher, and Mark Butts, Foothills IGA vice president. PHOTO BY SKYLAR ENGLISH

BY SKYLAR ENGLISH

There are many ways Foothills IGA strives to serve its local community; one of which fosters the educational futures of employees or children of employees through scholarships for college.

Pictured above are Summer O'Dea, and Kirsten Thrasher, this year's recipients of the Foothills IGA Scholarships. O'Dea will be attending Valdosta State University this upcoming school year. She is the daughter of Mary and Kevin O'Dea of Jasper. Thrasher is currently pursuing her degree at the University of North Georgia. She is the daughter of Amanda and Lee Thrasher, also of Jasper. They were awarded the scholarships based on their outstanding performance at work as well as their exceptional application submissions.

The store has awarded many scholarships to members of the Foothills IGA team like O'Dea and Thrasher over its 19 years of existence. Foothills IGA not only provides these scholarships to aid their employees in pursuing higher education, but also to appeal to other ambitious, hard-working, young adults with the potential to be great additions to the store's incredible staff.

When you walk into the store located in Marble Hill, one of the first things you see is a bold display of words on the front wall, "Hometown Proud," the IGA Company slogan. The culture of Foothills IGA is centered around this slogan and is evident in everything they do, including updates to the store's appearance, evolving improvements to provide a great experience for its customers, a commitment to serving the community and the hard work of its employees.

SUSHI & SANDWICHES NOW AT FOOTHILLS IGA

Serving customers so they seldom need to leave the area for food.

Sushi provider Hissho Sushi, head-quartered in Charlotte, N.C., will have a sushi chef at the Foothills IGA in Marble Hill every day from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.



For our sandwiches, we bought two new state-of-the-art ovens, cooking with moisture and steam so you get a European crispy crust on the outside. A new toaster oven allows for heated sandwiches. A drink fountain with coffee, tea and soft drinks to supplement the meals-to-go and sandwiches on demand.



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We appreciate all of your real estate expertise and jack-of-all-trades skills. Your positive energy and attention to detail during our 2-year exploration of Big Canoe.

In particular, your thoroughness in tracking the myriad steps in long distance closings reduced our stress levels immensely and the specialists and contacts you provided simplified the process of becoming owners from the inspection stage to moving in. It was exciting to see drone photographs you went the extra mile to provide us in order to better view topographic aspects of the land!

—Stephanie and Jim B.

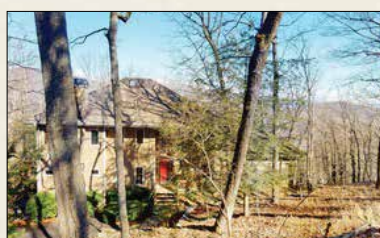
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Working with Steve Yambor was awesome! Not only was he professional, responsive, and conscientious, but he also went above and beyond providing us with high-quality contractor suggestions to get our house ready to market quickly, arranging talented photographer to take pictures, and aggressively marketing our the home to other realtors as well as to potential buyers. And, he literally had a Buyer for our home within 10 days of being on the market!

—Cynthia and Dave

See more of my testimonials on Zillow.com

Current 2021 Listings



846 RIDGEVIEW DRIVE
\$575,000 • 3BD/2.5BA

Spectacular Long Range Mountain Views. Includes keeping room/3 fireplaces. Plenty of deck space to enjoy the views. New roof.

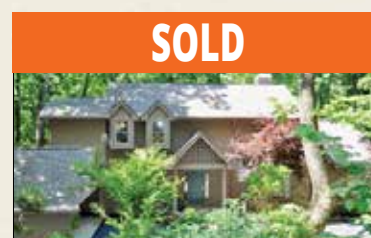


2291 RIDGEVIEW DRIVE
\$869,900

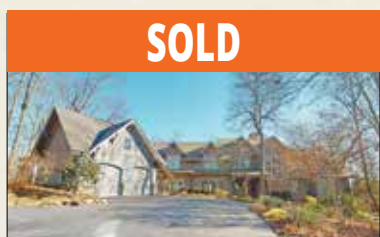
New construction to be built. Spectacular Long Range Views.



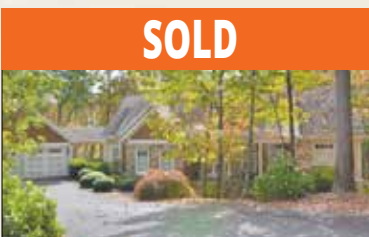
SOLD
158 TREETOP KNOLL
\$219,900 • 2BD/2.5BA



SOLD
2036 VALLEY VIEW DRIVE
\$535,000 • 3BD/2.5BA



SOLD
1149 COX MOUNTAIN DR
\$1,200,000



SOLD
762 WILDCAT TRAIL
\$750,000



SOLD
14 COLUMBINE DRIVE
\$479,900 • 4BD/3.5BA



SOON TO BE YOUR SOLD LISTING
YOUR LISTING HERE

HOMESITES

- 28 Petit Ridge Dr @ \$119.9k - Multi acre (3.86) homesite w/great mtn views. **NEW PRICE**
- 5588 Black Bear Point @ \$125k - End of cul de sac with stream. Easy build. Backs to Green Space. Very private. **SOLD**
- 6028 Buckskull Ridge @ \$119.9k - Multi acre (4.4) homesite near amenities with great mountain views **SOLD**
- 7320 Skyline Dr @ \$155k - Flat lot w/long range views, end of cul de sac/The Bluffs. **NEW PRICE**
- 5554 Black Bear Trail @ \$109.9k - Walk to the new High Gap hiking trails and Green Space directly behind this homesite... Beautiful, easy build with sounds of creek and views of mountains. **New Listing**
- 5544 Black Bear Trail @ \$95k Enjoy mtn views from 1.7 acre easy build homesite in the beautiful High Gap neighborhood. **New Listing**
- 3576 Blazingstar @ \$92k - Mtn views w/hiking trail behind homesite, end of cul de sac, in Wildcat. **Price Reduced**
- 870 Nashoba Trail @ \$89k - In Choctaw Village, on cul de sac, walk to Clubhouse. Mountain views.
- 5143 Sanderlin Mtn North @ \$85k - Great NE mountain views, lot staked out with floor plan developed.
- 5573 Red Fox Drive @ \$75k - Private 3.28 acre homesite w/beautiful NE views towards Amicalola Falls. **NEW PRICE**
- 4127 Crazy Bear Ridge @ \$49.9k - Easy build, on cul de sac, mountain views, very private street.
- 3461 Wild Pansy Ridge @ \$45k - Very low price in Wildcat neighborhood on cul de sac.
- 1118 Wrens Nest @ \$17k - Beautiful mountain views, Level 3 Soil Survey approved by County for 3 bed home. **Terrific value. SOLD**

Listing Results in 2020

SOLD 411 WEDGEWOOD DRIVE	SOLD 185 CRESTED FERN LANE	SOLD 1192 RIDGEVIEW	SOLD 804 ISUBA TRAIL	SOLD 7071 WILD AZAELA CIRCLE	SOLD 264 GROUSE GAP	SOLD 3036 FALCON HEIGHTS	SOLD 2283 AHOYKA KNOLL
SOLD 115 TWIN CREEKS	SOLD 33 CHOCTAW RIDGE	SOLD 129 WILD AZAELA CIRCLE	SOLD 837 WILDCAT TRAIL	SOLD 188 BLUESTERN SE	SOLD 316 HUNTERS TRACE	SOLD 559 LAKE WATCH VILLA	SOLD 532 RED FOX DRIVE
SOLD 356 BLAZINGSTAR TRAIL	SOLD 329 REDBUD PASS	SOLD 289 SANDERLIN MTN DR.	SOLD 80 SANDERLIN MTN DR	SOLD 2144 CRESTED FERN	SOLD 2146 CRESTED FERN	SOLD 75 BUCKSKULL HOLLOW	SOLD 18 CHOCTAW RIDGE
SOLD 	SOLD 898 PETIT RIDGE	SOLD 115 OWLS BROW	SOLD 71 WILD AZAELA CIRCLE	SOLD 1090 HUNTERS TRACE	SOLD 51 MUIRFIELD WAY	SOLD 6 LAUREL RIDGE POINT	SOLD 323 MCELROY MTN DRIVE
SOLD 6235 WINDFLOWER	SOLD 1105 VALLEY VIEW DRIVE	SOLD 18 BLUEBIRD COURT	SOLD 112 TWIN CREEKS DRIVE	SOLD 100 SUMMIT DRIVE	SOLD 263 HICKORY TRAIL	SOLD 64 WILD TURKEY BLUFF	SOLD 73 SUNUWA WAY
SOLD 7 CRAFTSMAN TRAIL	SOLD 51 INDIGO BUNTING TRL	SOLD 19 THRASHER WAY	SOLD 201 ROYAL FERN	SOLD 80 TWIN CREEKS DRIVE	SOLD 52 CRESTED IRIS CIRCLE	SOLD 183 DEER RUN RIDGE	SOLD 7207 RIDGEVIEW DRIVE
SOLD 1394 PETIT	SOLD 95 LAUREL RIDGE	SOLD 116 GROUSE GAP	SOLD 201 WOODLAND TRACE	SOLD 1364 VALLEY VIEW	SOLD 767 COLUMBINE DRIVE		



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Remember to *Ask For Steve*

