

Riley spreads the word about Firewise

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS – Director of the Chestatee-Chattahoochee Resource Conservation and Development Council Frank Riley relayed updates on current projects to members of the Mountain Movers and Shakers at their weekly meeting on Friday, Aug. 12, at Mary's Southern Grill.

According to Riley, Chest-Chat RC&D was created in 1962 as a sector of the Agriculture Act as a means to assist members of the community in projects geared toward conservation of natural resources, the well-being of the environment and overall standard of living for residents. The Chest-Chat RC&D covers 13 counties over the state of Georgia.

Of the many ongoing programs within the Chest-Chat RC&D, Fire Adapted Communities carried the most weight during the meeting.

This is the fourth-year implementation of the FAC pilot program, and the Chestatee-Chattahoochee area is one of the eight original communities nationwide chosen to test the FAC program.

Fire Adapted Communities are those that have implemented the "wheel" that consists of 11 points of consideration that every area needs to have to be a fire-ready community.

This "wheel" involves all those in the community who play any role in wildfire education and maintenance. The goal is to have everyone following the same protocol and course of action if a wildfire were to occur.

"We're the only ones east of the Mississippi, which is a pretty big honor to be chosen to do this," said Riley. "It's all because of our Firewise work and the people who partner with us, such as (the Towns County) Fire Corps."

"We implemented the Firewise program in Towns County, which got us national attention. I'm proud of it, really. It puts a spotlight on Towns County because of all the people here and all the work we've done on this project to get us that recognition."

Co-sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, the U.S. Department of Interiors, and the National Association of State Foresters, Firewise is an essential component of Fire



Frank Riley, executive director of the Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D, discussed Fire Adapted Communities and the Firewise program at Mary's Southern Grill in Young Harris on Friday, Aug. 12

Adapted Communities.

Through the Firewise program, members of the community learn how best to prevent fires on their property through proper disposal of vegetation as well as other steps that can reduce the possibility of a fire.

Since the program has shown great success in Towns County, Riley will now be serving as the State Firewise Liaison for Georgia. Riley will be traveling to all 159 counties for fairs, homeowner's association meetings and community events to raise awareness of wildfire protection.

"Again, what we've done in Towns County, I'm not taking credit for it," said Riley. "This is just how we make sure that we're a Fire Adapted Community. We don't get a book or a plaque or certificate, but if we do all these things for the community, then we can feel confident knowing we have many things in place to be prepared for a fire."

"Everything starts with the Firewise Community, which several of you are involved. Then we have fuel reduction, which means you do as much as you can to reduce the use of fuel in outdoor areas and only do so under controlled circumstances."

Riley went on to explain how forest management can reduce wildfire probabilities by making sure there is not excess debris in hazardous spaces. According to Riley, internal safety zones are also huge components of wildfire

prevention, especially in mountainous regions.

Internal safety zones are designated areas for residents to congregate after a necessary evacuation. Losses can be assessed more accurately if everyone relocates to the same area. Local capacity plays a part in this aspect of fire safety as well. It allows firefighters to better determine what equipment is best suited for specific communities based on local water capacities as well as population and population distribution.

Finally, Riley explained the importance of implementing a concrete Community Wildlife Protection Plan.

"We plan one of these every five years," said Riley. "All the resources are in this plan. So, if someone in the county needs to know what to do or where something is, it can be found in that plan."

Since becoming a Firewise and Fire Adapted Community, Towns County wildfire calls have gone down by 75 percent from historic numbers. From 2013 to 2014, there were only six wildfire calls and only one wildfire call in 2015.

Neither Union County nor Fannin County has a Firewise Community, but Riley hopes to begin implementing the program soon.

More information on the Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D and how to become a Firewise Community can be found at www.chestchattgcd.org.

Market...continued from Page 1A

Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center.

GMREC Community Council members, as well as the Georgia Mountain Branch Experiment Station, set up shop at the front entrance of the market, giving market-goers prime opportunity to brush up on local wildlife with informative pamphlets and educational activities for adults and children alike.

"Our goal is to showcase the three different areas of the council, primarily education," said Ray Covington, GMREC and experiment station superintendent. "That's why we have little activities here with the kids with leaf rubbings. It's an educational opportunity, too, because they're learning what type of leaf and the tree that it goes with."

"We want to get the kids interested in agriculture. That then leads into preservation, which discusses the gardens that are kept up at the experiment station, native plants and their uses, and sustainability."

"We let people know why they should plant these plants and how they promote native wildlife and pollinators, that sort of thing. Finally, we have information on outreach, which includes the programs for adults such as plant management in home gardens or how to manage a fruit tree. These are just a few of the free programs that we're offering."

"It's been very steady and a lot of people seem interested. We have a lot of people ask us what exactly we do up here, and we love to dispel those myths. We're just excited about all of it."

GMREC Community Council is a volunteer-based extension of the Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center. The council coordinates workshops available to the public as well as outreach and preservation projects within the community.

Volunteers from the council offered leaf rubbing and stamping activities for kids (and even some adults) as a fun way to learn more about local trees and plants. Many of the volunteers are also Master Gardeners and were there to lend an ear for those with pressing plant-related questions.

"What we are is a community-based volunteer group that puts on events for children and adults, education-wise," said Cathy Haist, who volunteers with GMREC and the Towns-Union Master Gardener Association. "We also have preservation gardens that have native and medicinal plants. There are tours of our gardens, on Mondays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m."

"I think it's important that we preserve the mountain way of life. Not only the education of the outdoors, which I'm very involved in, and taking care of our planet, but we also need to demonstrate that we, too, are helping to preserve the history of the area."

For those who were already well-versed in wildlife education, there were plenty of unique homemade goods and fresh fruits and vegetables to peruse throughout the market.

Nana's and Papa's Ice Cream dished out sweet, frozen treats by the dozens to customers, and Matt's Farm Fresh Eggs had a continuous line of shoppers all morning long.

Linda Starr, sculptor and owner of Blue Starr Gallery Pottery, displayed her uniquely designed pottery and sculptures, and had a little something for everyone. Starr, a California native, has been churning out one-of-a-kind pieces for right at 10 years.

"I make all handmade pottery and sculptures, I don't use the wheel," said Starr. "All of the designs that can be found at my booth are things that I make up in my head."

"When I was in California, I had a lavender farm and I wanted to make a couple of vases to sell my lavender. So, I started at the community college, just taking a couple of classes, but I really enjoyed it so I just stuck with it."

"We moved from California to Florida, so I started selling my pottery there. Now that we live in Blairsville, I sell my work at the Farmers Market and a few other places."

"I have my work in Art 'n' Antiques, and I'm also thinking of getting my work out to John C. Campbell and into Blue Ridge."

Starr can be found in stall No. 9 of the market every Saturday.

This upcoming Saturday at the Farmers Market will be the Honey Bee Jubilee, something no honey enthusiast will want to miss.



This little girl learns about fossil imprints at the Farmers Market on Saturday, Aug. 13, from a volunteer with the Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center. Photo/Lily Avery



The Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center, aka the Experiment Station in Union County, set up an informational booth with activities for kids and market-goers at the Union County Farmers Market on Aug. 13. Photo/Lily Avery



Michael Surles of Michael's Mountain Honey talks business with a customer. Surles is one of many honey vendors at the Union County Farmers Market. Photo/Lily Avery



Leaf rubbings were just one of the activities available to kids at the Farmers Market last Saturday. Photo/Lily Avery



As usual, the Union County Farmers Market bustled with excitement on Saturday, Aug. 13, for fresh produce and homemade goods

Kuykendall...continued from Page 1A

ago. "There was a fellow in there that had a barber license, Mr. Wilson. On the first day, I cut about 12 head."

"I worked there for a couple years before moving to a place near Leon Swanson's store in Young Harris. Then a few years later, after I got out of the Army, I started cutting hair again and worked for seven or eight years before moving over to Blairsville. I believe that was in 1973. The shop was on the square in Blairsville and I stayed there about three years."

"Then I moved to a place across from Blairsville Restaurant and worked there for 10 years. After that, I moved to where I have The Hair Shoppe now in 1985, and I've been cutting hair there ever since."

Kuykendall opened his other shop, Chatuge Barber Shop, in Hiawassee in 2008.

With steady hands and a smile, Kuykendall offers his clients classic haircuts, most of which are done traditionally without the gear and gadgets that modern hair stylists use for precision.

From 1956 to now, he has cut close to 250,000 heads of hair, and to this day, a good old-fashioned flattop is still his favorite of them all.

The flattop, with its high square crown and slim cut sides, gained popularity in the 1950s. Since then, the infamous haircut has weaved in and out of style, but has always remained a staple in many barbershops across the country. According to Kuykendall, this love for the hairstyle was actually a contributing factor in becoming a barber so many years ago.

Throughout the years, Kuykendall has witnessed many changes, not only in hairstyles but also in the community. Born and raised in North Georgia, he has seen the area evolve – especially Blairsville – from one-horse towns to the ever-growing cities seen today.

"When I first came to Blairsville, there wasn't anything on the four-lane, there wasn't even a four-lane," said Kuykendall. "There wasn't a Wendy's, no bank, no Home



Kuykendall's favorite hairstyle to cut is the "flattop."

Depot or post office. There was nothing. Where the bank sits now there was a baseball field, a pretty good size one. I was up on the square at that time."

With the change of times, so came the change of prices. A man's haircut was only 75 cents when Kuykendall started his stretch in the business. Now, men can get a haircut from Kuykendall for \$12.

"I went up to a dollar around 1965," said Kuykendall. "Back when I only charged 75 cents, I could buy a Coca-Cola for only 5 cents. I remember when they first went up on prices and started charging 6 cents for a soda. Nobody liked to pay that because you'd have to put a nickel and a penny in the machine, which just seemed like hassle at the time."

While prices may fluctuate, at the end of the day it is not the prices that keep people coming back to Kuykendall's shops – a good barbershop would not be the same without the passing of stories, and Kuykendall has plenty to go around.

From former Gov. Zell Miller to music icon Ronnie

Milsap, Kuykendall has countless tales to tell about his many haircuts throughout the years, and he still revels in the laughs and company of locals, some of whom have been coming to him for decades.

One customer, Clifford Cearler, has been a client of Kuykendall's since 1965. Cearler lived in North Carolina at the time and would drive to Young Harris to Kuykendall's shop. Cearler has stayed with Kuykendall throughout the years, visiting the shop every other week, always ready for a good laugh and a walk down memory lane.

While most people find themselves retiring after 50 years on a job, Kuykendall is still going strong after 60 years in the business, and he does not see an end date any time soon.

"I like people, it's why I do what I do," said Kuykendall. "I have a lot of fun and I get to tell a lot of stories. That's the perk of this job, getting to spend time with people and talk and catch up. It doesn't get much better than that."