



Along the Gooney

September 2026

Volume 34, Number 9

President

Martha Buracker
540-671-6349

Vice President

Mary McKinney
540-635-4725

Treasurer

Nancy McDermott
703-975-8668

Secretary

Kristen Pence
540-230-1155

Trustees

Bill Lacy
Denny Pennington
Wes Deavers

Scheduling

Patsy Pennington
540-635-5568



From blueprints to reality. The Kitchen Team welcomed community members at the Open House event on August 15, 2026. The event marked the completion of the project and the reopening of the community center. Pictured are Lisa Merz, Steve Merz, Mary McKinney, Roxanne Campbell, Bill Lacy, Martha Buracker, Damon Sutton, and Jim Sylvester (l. to r.) (Photo by Cindy Cunningham)

Project Kitchen Sink – DONE!

By Jim Sylvester

Renovation of our BCCA kitchen is complete! The kitchen officially reopened August 15 and is now ready for what the future brings.

You may recall that demolition of the old kitchen started the last week of April following our Redbud Festival. It has been a constant work activity since. But the work actually started well before that because – before we could start with new construction – we had to:

- understand the building condition and limitations,
- determine our requirements based on discussions with users of the old kitchen,
- design a new layout and workflow,
- identify what could be saved,
- develop and have our BCCA Board approve a budget for this work,
- clear the calendar,
- remove all supplies and appliances,
- strip the room to its bare walls,

(continued on page 4)

Inside the BCCA

Upcoming Events

September 14 BCCA General Meeting
7:30 p.m.
September 18-19 Community Yard Sale
9 a.m.-3 p.m.

View the entire online calendar of events at
<https://browntowncommunity.com/calendar>

Submission Deadline

Submissions for the October edition of the newsletter must be submitted by September 24.

Get the Newsletter

To get the newsletter delivered to you by email, send an email to
newsletter+subscribe@browntowncommunity.com

You'll get an email that acknowledges your request to join. Simply reply to the acknowledgement and you should receive a confirmation that you have joined.

Back issues of the newsletter are available on [our website](#).

President's Message

Greetings all,

Well September is here. School is in session and the gardens have peaked. I hope you've all had a great summer. We've had lots going on and events coming up so stay tuned for the Browntown news.

If you missed our Grand Reopening that showcased our brand-new kitchen, be sure to stop in at the Yard Sale so you can see what a community can accomplish together! Our team "Project Kitchen Sink" worked hard after we shut down after the Redbud Festival and demolished the old kitchen, saved the kitchen sink and stainless corner unit, refrigerator and freezer but the rest is new and it all came together just perfect! We've got a lot of talent and a lot of sweat that went into our project, thanks to the "doers" that showed up and got it done! And none of this would have been possible without the generous estate donations from the family of former Browntown residents Doodle Campbell and Sam Updike, and a \$5K Round Up Grant from Rappahannock Electric Cooperative. The volunteer labor easily saved us over \$20K and we actually came in under budget.

Sometimes we have volunteers that just show up on their own and get little things done that many people might not notice, so I'm going to give a shout out to a few that deserve a big thank you! I stopped in the BCCA prior to the Grand Reopening and there working hard to clean up our flowerbeds was Carole Tomhave! She's a wonderful gardener and while we were all worried about what the inside of the building would look like, she tackled the outside flowerbeds! Thanks Carole!

(continued on next page)

(President's Message, continued from previous page)

I would also like to mention that Mary McKinney made new curtains for the kitchen and our big main room for every single window. They look great and they are most appreciated! Roxanne Campbell suggested that we honor past school teachers from the Browntown School. She has framed photos of them and they are now showcased in our kitchen above the blackboard.

The Browntown Calendar is almost ready to go to press thanks to the Gooney Valley History and Preservation Group. Be thinking how many you want to pre-order as they cost less to buy in advance! Lots of historical photos and info about Browntown.

Our Fall Yard Sale will be September 18 & 19 and it will be huge! And we will need help! It's a lot of work to unpack, organize and price over 3 rooms packed full of donations. Plus we need help on the sales floor and kitchen the days of the sale. If you can help, contact Martha Buracker at marthaburacker@gmail.com or via phone at 540-671-6349. We will start unpacking the first of September! If you have donations, contact Patsy Pennington at 540-635-5568 to schedule a drop off.

My grandson Cyrus Cornwell said there is not enough for older kids to do at the BCCA, so I suggested he work to get a group of kids and parents together and get something started. So how about it parents? We need the next generation involved in our little community and in order to do that a few of you need to step up to the plate. Help the kids get organized and figure out what events we could have for them! Call Cyrus Cornwell at 540-305-0537 or marthaburacker@gmail.com. He will be bringing his poster and sign up sheet to the Yard Sale on Saturday, Sep. 19 so if you want to chat with him, he will be there working in the kitchen. There is also a flyer in the newsletter with info.

We will have several openings on the BCCA Board for 2027, so if you're thinking of volunteering let me know!

Kristen Pence, DVM is our current secretary and does an amazing job. She is also Chairman of the School Board and on several other community non-profits, so she's a little over-booked. She's hoping to get replaced but would stay if no one volunteers. Kristen is not moving; just trying to slow the volunteer pace a little. We expect that she will stay active at the BCCA even if she's not our secretary.

Nancy McDermott – Treasurer – Nancy's beloved husband Dave passed away last Christmas and she has decided to move home to Greenville, NC. She took on the daunting task of being our treasurer for the last two years and is working on a "list" of what is expected from the Treasurer's position. Someone with a background in bookkeeping or finance would be a great fit. Nancy will be greatly missed in our community. She and Dave jumped right in to help when they moved here and we've gotten to be good friends. Plus she's on it with the treasurer's position.

Trustee – Trustees are a 3 year term with one Trustee replaced each year. If you've got a good eye for things that need fixin, we could use you! We also have a great Buildings and Grounds Committee to back you up.

I have separate info on the Browntown Fire Substation so please be sure to read that.

I think that's about it for this month. Be sure to Save the Date for our Christmas Bazaar on Nov. 21. Contact Emma Bricker if you want a craft space at browntownbowls@gmail.com. And congratulations to Emma, who is now the South River District Planning Commission Member

See ya at the Yard Sale in September!

Martha Buracker
President BCCA

(Project Kitchen Sink, continued from page 1)

- stabilize the ceiling, walls, and windows by repairing water and insect damage from the past, and finally,
- grab our pencils, draw some lines on the floor, bring in hammers, saws, other tools, and
- recruit a dedicated team of volunteers who worked wonders.

I want to personally thank Martha Buracker for her continuing support of Project Kitchen Sink and the volunteers who gave their time and expertise to completing this project on time and under budget.

Volunteers

Roxanne Campbell
Chris Gribbs
Bill Lacy
Dianne Lacy
Mary McKinney
Lisa Merz
Steve Merz

Adina Short
Ben Short
Damon Sutton
Debbie Sutton
Debbie Sylvester
Jim Sylvester
Carol Tomhave

And our contractors also deserve a mention for helping us meet our schedule and, often, discounting their fees.

Contractors

Best Exterminating – pest control
Buracker Construction – construction support
Clemente Aguila – carpentry
Coatings USA – metal refinishing
Countertops – Bill Lacy
Green2Ground – electrical work

Holtzman – plumbing (gas)
Lowe's / 84 Lumber – cabinetry, materials
Mark's Hardwood Floor Co – floor refinishing
MT Mechanical – plumbing (water)
Sherwin-Williams – paint
Twin Air – HVAC support

Please do take advantage of the space. It is a wonderful resource for both community and family gatherings.

Volunteer Opportunities

As noted in last month's edition of Along the Gooney, the BCCA is seeking candidates for officers, particularly for the Secretary and Treasurer roles. If you are interested in running, contact Martha at marthaburacker@gmail.com.

Cyrus Cornwell is looking for kids from the ages of 7 to 15 who would be interested in youth activities at the Community Center. Additionally, the proposed group will need some adult volunteers to help coordinate the efforts and provide supervision. For more information, contact Cyrus at 540-305-0537 or Martha at marthaburacker@gmail.com.

Volunteers are needed to assist with tasks related to this month's Community Yard Sale, including unpacking and organizing items, manning tables, and kitchen help. Volunteer for an hour or two, or stay the day. If you are able to lend a hand, get in touch with [Martha](#).

Treasurer's Corner

Greetings!

The kids are back in school and fall will soon be in the air. Project Kitchen Sink is wrapping up and everyone will be enjoying the new kitchen soon. The Open House was a huge success and showing off the new kitchen was exciting. The Kitchen Renovation Committee has done an outstanding job keeping us on track and on budget, and thank you Mary McKinney for the beautiful curtains!

July 2026 – Income ~\$3,701

- Browntown Merchandise, Facility Rentals, Donation – \$460
- Insurance Refund – \$181
- Redbud Sponsors – \$1,000
- Christmas Bazaar Tables – \$60
- Warren County Budget Award – \$2,000

July 2026 – Expenses ~\$10,808

The majority of the costs fall into these categories:

- Electricity – \$153
- Newsletter – ~\$42
- Kitchen Renovation:
 - ◆ Electrical – ~\$2,405
 - ◆ Plumbing – \$1,000
 - ◆ Hardwood Floors – \$1,600
 - ◆ Supplies – ~4,994
- Mowing – ~\$230
- Website/Internet Service
 - ◆ existing service – ~\$149
 - ◆ Starlink – ~\$140
- BEST Exterminating – \$95

We received the last Redbud sponsor money in July! 2026 Redbud income of \$11,819.28:

- Kitchen – \$1,830.30
- Festival – \$9,988.98

Reminder: If you want to make a donation to the BCCA, we have 3 separate funds set up now – (1) Soffit and Gutter Repair, (2) Kitchen Renovation and (3) Roof Replacement. Please annotate on your donation if you would like it to go to a specific project. All donations are welcomed and greatly appreciated.

Lastly, as I mentioned last month, I will be moving back to North Carolina in the next few months. I purchased a house there in August and am busy packing to get my house on the market in September. *We need a new treasurer!* If you enjoy numbers, balance your checkbook, are detail oriented and proficient in computer software, WE NEED YOU! If you are interested, *please* contact Martha or me for more details. I would like to start training and transitioning the position soon. My time now is down to months. We will be electing new board members soon; the community would love, *love* for you to join our love for this community.

Nancy McDermott
BCCA Treasurer
nancymcd.bcca@gmail.com





The BEARR Group

Keeping Our Community Safe

By Brian Wilkinson

Browntown Residents Deserve Answers on Fire Station Closure

As most of you are probably aware, our substation in Browntown has been closed recently. A lot of people are working to ensure this action is reversed. In the meantime you may be interested in this Letter to the Editor of the Royal Examiner which was published on August 10.

Letter to the Editor of the Royal Examiner from Brian Wilkinson, August 4, 2026

In a recent (July 30) article your reporter, Roger Bianchini, wrote about the recent closure of the South Warren Volunteer Fire Department substation in Browntown. It is quite an extraordinary article in its brevity, poor grasp of the facts leading up to this closure, and its failure to understand why many Browntowners are concerned about the timing, rationale, and potential impact of this decision.

This substation has operated on a shoestring for many years with minimal support from both Warren County Fire and Rescue Department and the South Warren Fire and Rescue Department. Despite this – thanks largely to the untiring and highly professional work of its one emergency responder, Allan Brockway – it has been able to provide a fast response capability, in coordination with other Warren County first responders, to a large number of local accident and fire emergencies. Action sometimes really does speak louder than words.

The people living in the Browntown Valley are not stupid. They know one small substation cannot meet all of their needs with respect to the provision of emergency services. It would have been nice if your reporter had at least tried to put himself in their shoes and, in particular, to comprehend how their concerns are rooted in a unique geographical location – including the proximity of densely forested mountains, remote house locations, limited road access, and poor cellphone coverage – which puts them at high risk in case of a medical or fire emergency. Add to this the high percentage of senior citizens and people with disabilities living in this mountain community and it is not difficult to understand why people react strongly when they hear that their only local emergency response capability is being taken away without consultation or warning.

The people of Browntown understand that one highly experienced but poorly equipped firefighter can never meet all of its needs. They value highly all of the emergency response services provided by the highly skilled professionals of Warren County Fire & rescue. However, you would hardly be surprised to hear that neither I nor most of my neighbors are likely to feel reassured by your reporter's bold declaration that "Royal Examiner lauds Warren County Fire & Rescue for its proactive stance in addressing a deteriorating situation at the undermanned South Warren substation." Why would an experienced newspaper reporter even think that such a poorly informed and biased declaration is expected or appropriate?

Browntown would welcome any effort by the Royal Examiner – consistent with its normally high standards of journalism – to help the people of Warren County, and especially those living in South Warren – to better understand why the South Warren Volunteer Fire Department has taken this action now and also why no-one from Browntown (with the exception of the current Fire Chief) is currently willing to volunteer at SWVFD.

Gooney Valley History and Preservation Club

By Tom Lacombe and Brian Wilkinson

Some Memories Of Life In Our Area In Years Gone By

Over the last 150 years there have been several examples of people living in “old Gooney” publishing their memories of our beautiful valley. Each story tends to extol the virtues of times past while lamenting what has been lost in recent times. It's called nostalgia and it's part of the glue that helps a community connect to its roots.

It is interesting to speculate on what those living in Browntown today might recall of the 2020s if asked 30 years from now about current times. Perhaps they would lament the loss of our farms. Would they remember the impact of social media, our failure to preserve our historic buildings? Might they enthuse about the emergence of the Browntown Boys, BCCA yard sales and the positive impact of recent arrivals?

The opportunity is here today for us to create a history we and our families can be proud of. To achieve that will require that we each play a part in enriching our community, caring for our neighbors, and preserving the fragile and beautiful buildings and valley that we have been lucky to inherit from those who were here before us.

We have two interview reports that describe the recollections of some well-known Browntown residents. This month we will provide a story by Laura Morrison Manuel. It took place in 1989 when Mrs. Manuel was 95 years old. The second interview will be published next month. It took place in 1993. The interviewees were Ruby Updike Compton (born 1913) and her husband, Leroy Compton (born 1911), and Truman Baggarly (born 1913).

Laura Morrison Manuel Reflects On Her Life 85 Years Ago

“In 1904, the Thompson Hollow School taught reading, writing, and 'rithmetic to children of the hollow as far away as the village of Overall on the Page County line. Laura Morrison Manuel of Browntown remembers it well, for she used to walk the three miles through a path in the woods every day from that little village of Overall to the school. When she was a girl of 9 or 10, Warren County was so rural that most everybody walked most of the places they wanted to go. “Didn't very many have horses or buggies,” recalls Mrs. Manuel, who now lives with her son and daughter-in-law just off the Browntown Road. “You had your feet.” To make the occasional trip into Front Royal, most people took the train, which then stopped in Overall, located at the southernmost part of the county on the present Route 340, at that time a wagon road.

Mrs. Manuel's father farmed the fields around the village, raising corn and wheat, as well as whatever else the family needed to survive, and hauling wood when it was too cold to work in the fields. Overall village was and is divided by a creek. In those days, there was not much of a bridge across it—just a couple of logs with boards thrown across them.

Village folk around Overall generally had to make their own entertainment. In Mrs. Manuel's day, someone in the village would occasionally hold a dance and in those days there only was one kind of dancing. “I never saw anything but a square dance,” Mrs. Manuel notes. A banjo player and a fiddler would be all that was needed to have some fun back in the days before radio and television put a wide variety of sound at everyone's fingertips.

(continued on following page)

(Gooney Valley History Club, continued from previous page.)

About the time Mrs. Manuel had finished the sixth reader at Thompson Hollow school ("they didn't go by grades then,") she says, her mother became paralyzed. Mrs. Manuel stayed home to take care of her-for the next 14 years. In 1918, she moved to Browntown "and stayed the rest of my life". While in Browntown, Laura married Frank Manuel, and the couple had eight children, seven of whom are still living. She well remembers the construction of Skyline Drive, a project that changed the face of the Browntown area considerably. "Frank worked up there," she recalls, "till he got arthritis real bad. It was the last work he done."

(Source: Front Royal News, Volume 3, Number 6, 10 May 1989)

To learn more about the history of Browntown, visit the Gooney Valley History Club's website at gooneyvalleyhistory.com.

Update on Fire Substation Closure

I wanted this info sent out separately from the rest of the President's Message as it is important and I didn't want it to get lost.

After many negotiations from our side, it ultimately did not matter what we offered; the South Warren Volunteer Fire Dept. voted to close the Browntown Substation at their last meeting. Our lease was free to them; all they had to pay for was the power, gas and insurance. The county paid \$3,600 a year to SWVFD to cover that, but to them it was not worth it. The BCCA owns the building.

In reality, there was usually only a brush truck with Allan Brockway as the only responder. This has been the situation for years. Allan is also the Fire Chief at the South Warren VFD so this becomes a tricky situation for him. He was not in favor of closing, but was outvoted.

(continued on page 10)

Obituary

Jacqueline "Jackie" Beall, passed on August 6, at her home in Browntown, surrounded by the love of her family. Jackie was a devoted mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, whose greatest joy was her family. A Celebration of Life was held at the Cool Spring Church of God, officiated by pastor P.G. Coverstone.



BROWNTOWN COMMUNITY Fire and EMS Information Session

**Thursday, September 10th
at 6:00 PM**

**Warren County Public Safety Building
200 Skyline Vista Drive, Front Royal VA**

**This event will review the fire and
EMS Response Service coverage of
the Browntown Community.**



Those were the days! Before (above) and after (below) pictures exemplify the extent of the transformation of the kitchen space. (Photos provided by Jim Sylvester.)



(Update on Fire Substation Closure, continued from page 8)

When our substation first opened, we had many volunteers. However, the training has changed and the sheer number of hours required to be a fireman are often beyond what most people have as free time. Nowadays, most families have both parents working and are running kids to their various activities. This isn't just a local issue; this is a nationwide issue. The result is that most fire departments are going to paid firefighters. To cover one week, that's 6 firemen and EMTs. As you and I know, everything costs a lot these days as compared to only 8 or so years ago. Firetrucks are 1 million plus, and you have to wait a year or two on the list.

Our previous Board of Supervisors had a voting block that 9 times out of 10 voted the way they wanted (not how the taxpayers wanted) and our Supervisor Cheryl Cullers was blocked out. So, for 3 years they did not raise taxes and flat funded everything including stripping the library of its funding. Thankfully in the last election the voting block was changed and although we experienced an 18% tax increase; it was needed. Schools had leaking roofs and past due maintenance. Now E. Wilson Morrison Elementary has issues and was closed for repair. The Schools and Public Safety comprise the majority of the county budget. In order for the county to lessen the tax burden on the people, they need to work hard to increase our commercial tax base. I'm not talking data centers. We have not had much new commercial business here in the county since the EDA scandal. But we do now have a new EDA director that is getting rave reviews. So hopefully that balance will shift in the next couple of years and we will get some new business here in Warren County.

So where does that leave us? I did time studies from both SWVFD, Front Royal VFD and Rivermont VFD, and in an emergency to reach the back side of Gooney Manor Loop or homes near the end of Smith Run Rd., Lands Run Rd. and Fetchett Rd. have a minimum of 22 minutes response time. And that is if they jump on the emergency vehicle as soon as the alarm goes off. If you are having a medical emergency, that could be the difference between life and death. We had an AED defibrillator and Allan had his emergency bag and he would respond if he was home. That's a lot of responsibility for one person. But he did it and we thank him for that.

99% of us in the Browntown Valley are also hampered by the lack of cell phone service. If your car breaks down, or if you have an accident, at night you are at the mercy of a neighbor if you can walk to their house. But if you are pinned in your vehicle you will be there till someone finds you, because we have no cell phone service unless we are in our homes. This is 2026, not 1986. Our beautiful mountains block the signals of towers on Rt. 340 and, because our population is not large, the cell companies don't want to invest money.

So, Browntown has two issues with the closing of the substation. Our lack of cell service makes us even more vulnerable in an emergency and the long response time for a majority of our area is now extra problematic with the closing of the substation. What is the answer?

The Warren County Fire and Rescue Department has agreed to have a public meeting for us on Thursday, September 10 at 6 p.m. at the Public Safety Building, 200 Skyline Vista Dr., Front Royal. They requested that we meet there as they have projectors and computers to use for their exhibit. Our big room at the BCCA will be filled up with yard sale items, so it's not available. So please try to make it to the meeting and bring your concerns, suggestions, etc. Please be considerate at the meeting; I know a lot of us are angry.

If you can't be there but want to give input please send it to our Supervisor Cheryl Cullers at ccullers@warrencountyva.gov.

Hope to see a lot of you there on September 10!

Sincerely,

Martha Buracker

Service Directory

Browntown Baptist Church

12 Browntown Road
Bentonville, VA 22610
Pastor: S. Kaipha Brown
Sunday School @ 10 a.m.
Worship Service @ 11 a.m.

Cool Spring Church of God

Pastor: PG Coverstone
Sunday School at 9:30 and Worship at 10:30.

Limeton Community Church

9 Limeton Main St., Bentonville, VA
Pastor Lorne Fyfe
Sunday School at 10 and service at 11



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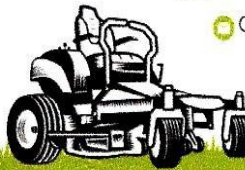
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www.marthaburacker.myrealtyonegroup.com



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Business card – \$6.00/issue
Half column – \$15.38/issue
Half page – \$30.75/issue

Contact gene.raymond@browntowncommunity.com
for more information.

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