Along the Gooney

November 2026

Volume 34, Number 11

President
Martha Buracker
540-671-6349

Vice President
Mary McKinney
540-635-4725

Treasurer
Brandy Poe

Secretary
Kristen Pence
540-230-1155

Trustees
Bill Lacy
Denny Pennington
Wes Deavers

Scheduling
Patsy Pennington
540-635-5568



Musicians perform at the 2025 BCCA Holiday Social. (Photo by Mike Prosise)

BCCA Invites Community to Participate in Holiday Social

By Gène J. Raymond

The Browntown Community Center Association (BCCA) is pleased to announce its annual Holiday Social, taking place on Sunday, December 6, from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the community center. This neighborhood tradition provides an opportunity for the people of Browntown and neighboring communities to take a break from the busy season and meet local families, seniors, and youth for a few hours of community connection, music, and refreshments. Admission is free and open to all area residents, though donations will be welcome.

The Community Engagement Committee (CEC) hopes to be able to host more events in varying interests during the coming year. For now, the Holiday Social is the first event since the group was formalized earlier this year. “The Community Engagement Committee is looking forward to hosting a holiday event where neighbors and friends will have the opportunity to gather and spend some relaxing time together in advance of the holiday. To visit with old friends, and perhaps make some new ones, is the idea behind our community holiday get together,” said Emma Bricker, who is leading the group.

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Inside the BCCA

Upcoming Events

November 9	BCCA General Meeting 7:30 p.m.
November 21	BCCA Holiday Bazaar 9:00 a.m.– 3:00 p.m.
December 6	BCCA Holiday Social 2:00–5:00 p.m.

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



Submission Deadline

Due to the Thanksgiving holiday, all submissions for the December newsletter must be received by November 16.

Get the Newsletter and Community Notices

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

For periodic announcements of items of interest, send an email to community-notices+subscribe@browntowncommunity.com.

Choose one or both! 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.

Executive Board Appoints Interim Treasurer

By Gène J. Raymond

At the general meeting of October 12, the Executive Board accepted the resignation of the current treasurer, Nancy McDermott. Pursuant to Article IX of the Association's bylaws, the Board appointed candidate Brandy Poe to fill out the remainder of Nancy's term, which will terminate at the end of the year. The resignation comes as a result of Nancy's pending return to South Carolina. Nancy will be working with Brandy, transferring valuable knowledge about the processes and procedures that she has been using. Brandy has indicated her intention to run for the position at the upcoming elections to be held in December.

A second candidate, Issac Elliot, withdrew from the running. In addition to getting ready to welcome a new member to his family, he has volunteered for the recently formed Technology Advisory Committee and he plans to train as a volunteer firefighter. The extensive training to qualify as a firefighter and an increase in Dad duties will certainly take up a lot of his time.

Take a moment to thank both of them for stepping up and offering their time and talents.

President's Message

Greetings all,

The cool weather has arrived along with the beautiful fall foliage, which brings a reminder to all of us that winter isn't that far away, so time to prepare!

I am happy to announce that we have a new Treasurer at the BCCA! Brandy Poe has been appointed to fill the vacancy as our Nancy McDermott is moving back to Greenville, SC. Brandy grew up in Browntown and has a financial background. So, we're super excited to have her coming on board and glad that Nancy has a month to work with her for a smooth transition. Nancy and her husband Dave had been very active in our community since moving here in 2021. They jumped right in and asked "how can we help?" Sadly, Dave passed away last December after a courageous battle with pancreatic cancer and Nancy's just feeling she needs to be back home where she grew up. We will miss her terribly and wish her much happiness on her new adventure!

The next event on our schedule is the Christmas Bazaar on Nov. 21, so "Save the Date". We are also planning a Christmas Social and also planning a Kids Movie Night! Once those dates are selected and we have the details we will let you know! I'd really like to get the "Kids Club" organized before the end of the year. We need volunteers (parents: this means you, lol) to head this up as our current volunteers are busy with fundraisers. We plan for the Kids Movie Night to be our organizational meeting. We need to start somewhere, include the kids for ideas and planning and grow from there.

December is also BCCA Election month, and we are looking for candidates! Typically, the Nominating Committee will start by asking the current board if they wish to continue in their position. People are also welcome to be nominated for any of the positions, even if the current board has agreed to continue. So, officially we have the following positions open: President, Vice President (both have agreed to continue to serve if reelected), Secretary and Treasurer. In addition, we have two Trustee positions open. Trustees are a 3-year term that are typically staggered. This year we have Denny Pennington retiring and Wes Deavers at the end of his 3-year term. Our Nominating Committee would be happy to get folks on the ballot, so if you are interested in any of the positions send an email to Nancy McDermott at nancymcd.bcca@gmail.com or Dr. Kristen Pence at kpencedvm@gmail.com. As of today we have a candidate for Secretary and one Trustee! Brandy Poe has said that she intends to run for the Treasurer position. In addition to Board positions, we are also looking for the following volunteers interested in helping with:

Silent Auction Coordinator – We do two Silent Auctions a year; one at the Redbud Festival and one at our Christmas Bazaar. You wouldn't be doing this alone and we are always saving special finds for our Silent Auctions.

Volunteer Coordinator – Keeping a list of volunteers, with their contact info and if they have a preference on what they can help with. This may include the Bake Sale volunteer list if Patsy Pennington decides to give this up.

Scheduling – You would be the contact person for keeping the Community Calendar for BCCA Events and Rentals for the public. We have an online form that people can download and complete. You would also be responsible for getting the info to our Website Manager so that our BCCA Calendar stays up to date. This also includes checking the building after a public rental to ensure it was left in good condition.

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Volunteer Opportunities

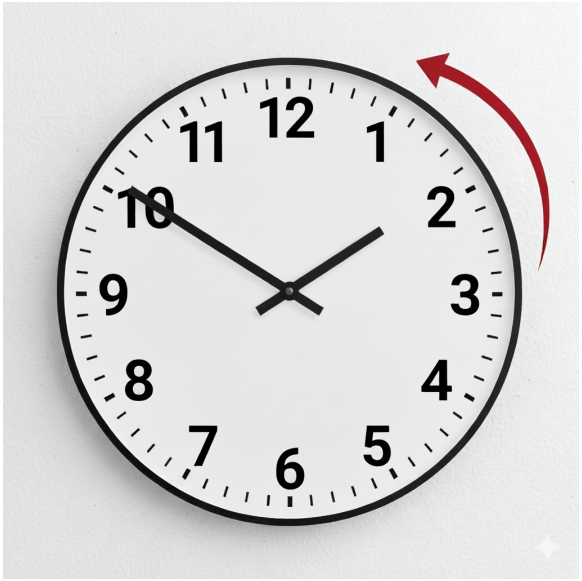
There is still time to consider running for Executive Board roles (officers and trustees) for the coming year. Refer to the President's Message on the previous page for a summary and contact one of Nominating Committee members if you or somebody you know are interested.

(BCCA Invites Community, *continued from front page)*

This year, the CEC is planning for some traditional holiday carols as well as a performance by The Browntown Boys. Community members always supply a varied spread of edibles for the event. This year, the CEC is trying something new: an event within an event. A cookie decorating mini-event for kids aged 4 to 12 will be running concurrently for about an hour. Under adult supervision, registered children will be able to adorn a couple sugar cookies, have them wrapped, and take them to share with their family when they all leave the center. There are a limited number of spaces available, so register early!

"We look forward to creating more opportunities to gather as a community and host events that will boost the social benefits of being a part of such a unique and lovely community," said Bricker. Among those will be the 3rd Annual Browntown Bowls Chili Cook-Off, typically held the Saturday before the Super Bowl.

Electronic sign-up sheets for the cookie decorating mini-event and for food items for the social should be on the website by November 7. Or contact Emma (browntownbowls@gmail.com) for food items and Gène (gene.raymond@browntowncommunity.com) to register your child for the cookie decorating mini-event.



Did you remember to turn your clock back an hour?

Treasurer's Corner

Greetings!

This month we give thanks for all that we are grateful for. What a blessing to live in this beautiful valley and this amazing Community.

September 2026 – Income $5,712,95

- Christmas Bazaar Tables/Tom Store Merch/Recycle ~$376.50
- Fall Yard Sale $5,336.45

September 2026 – Expenses ~$2,297

The majority of the costs fall into these categories:

- Electricity – $292
- Newsletter – ~$42
- Kitchen Renovation:
  - Supplies – ~$619
- Kitchen Supplies – $283
- Mowing – ~$345
- Phone – $119
- Substation Safety Check – $42
- Website/Internet Service
  - existing service – ~$8
  - Starlink – ~$140
- Yard Sale Cash Advance – $350

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. Also, bring your aluminum cans to Tom's. We got $26 last month!

Congratulations to Brandy Poe for being selected as the Interim Treasurer until the election in December. Brandy is more than qualified and loves Browntown. I look forward to getting her up to speed in the coming month. Thank you Brandy and Elliott for volunteering for one of our critical positions.

Blessings to all for a healthy and Happy Thanksgiving!

Nancy McDermott
BCCA Treasurer
nancymcd.bcca@gmail.com



Gooney Valley History and Preservation Club

By Tom Lacombe

Updike History

Sam Updike lent me a book,"The Virginia Updikes-Updykes" written by Robert S Craig and it has some very interesting history of the Browntown area. But, I'm going to focus on one man: Amon Updike. All of this material is stolen straight from the book, so don't call me a liar. Amon was born August 15, 1831 in Warren County. In 1859 he married Louisa Frances Baggarly, who was born February 2, 1834, in Browntown. Amon farmed around his home "Mountain View," which we know today as the Dryer's House. Amon was once asked who built all the stone fences, his response, "I had no small part in that endeavor." Amon was known far and wide and entertained big parties at his home. The Warren Sentinel reported on one such party held in 1891. This was a reunion of the Updike and Brown families. Over two hundred people, spanning five generations attended The Sentinel again reported on the fiftieth wedding anniversary of Mr. and Mrs Updike on January 29, 1909 This was said to have been the first celebration of a "Golden Wedding" in Gooney Manor.

The paper described Amon and the party in the following manner: "The name of "Uncle Amon" in Gooney Manor and wherever known is a synonym of humor, veracity, liberality, and hospitality. He was as happy throughout the entire day as a boy with his first red top boots. A string band was in attendance and dispensed sweet music which was exhilarating. Imagine a man over seventy cutting the "pigeon wing" with as much lubricity of joint and muscle as a rubber ball on a solid floor, and you will have the picture of Uncle Amon at his golden wedding."

This all-night dance was attended by over a hundred people, who travelled as far as three hundred miles, in inclement weather. Amon died June 26, 1913; his wife died November 9, 1913. Both are buried in Browntown, in the C. H. Baggarly Cemetery.

Giles Nossett Found a Book

Giles came across this old book laying around, and thought I might be interested. "The American Family Educator" was published in 1904. It claims to be ten great books in one volume, a complete library of necessary information. Chapters include: modern inventions, facts of different nations, wonders of industry, things worth knowing, reading for sound minds, facts for the curious, how to do business, penmanship, shorthand, and ways to make money. The inventions chapter includes stories on aeroplanes, automobiles, x-rays, incandescent lighting, telephones. It is pointed out, that the writer does not wish to give the impression that there will come a time when horses will not be used to draw vehicles. Facts for the curious makes the claim that Washington, D.C. is the clearest city in the world and that the finest peanuts come from Nansemond and Isle of Wight counties in Virginia. I think the peanut fact is still true; the clearest city, I don't think so. The last chapter, "One Hundred Ways To Make Money" was the one I was waiting for. I'll give you a few of the ways, but am saving the rest for myself. The #1 way to make money on the side in 1904, according to this book, is raise asparagus, #2, string beans. I think our economy has changed a bit, so I'll skip on to #23 to get out of the garden. The next 33 are ways for women to earn their keep: #25, make book covers and pen wipers; #44, make lamphades out of crepe paper, they look almost like silk.

(*continued on the following page)*

(*Gooney Valley History, continued from previous page*)

Now I'll skip on to where the writer makes suggestions as to inventions that need to be invented: #65, scissors that will cut round and straight; #71, a horse fastener, that would allow a rider to fasten and unfasten his horse, without dismounting. The last item I will tell you about is #75, a well refrigerator. Farmers often have spillage when a rope breaks. Invent a way to make a well a safe icebox.

(*Editor's Note: Tom said that these two stories originally ran in the March 2000 issue of the newsletter. He also noted that Sam Updike passed away two years ago, and that Giles Nossett "has been gone for 17 years now.")*

Growing a Community Center in 2026

By Gène J. Raymond with contributions from Mike Prosise

It's been quite a year for the Browntown Community Center, with many things happening to strengthen the building and infrastructure in order to provide better, and sometimes safer, opportunities for the people who benefit from its existence.

Early this year, the Community Engagement Committee was formalized. The primary goal of this group is to bring opportunities for the community members to come together and join in some social interaction – a chance to broaden one's experience: a new face in the group, an interesting dish that you haven't tasted before, a new story, an innovative way to share a talent. Talk about growth, the group started with three or four people putting together a list of potential activities that the community might enjoy. As this issue goes to print, the group has about nine people working out the details for the year's Holiday Social, including a mini-event for the kids.

The structure itself got some much needed TLC. First, the soffits and gutters were repaired. Later, Project Kitchen Team took off and literally rebuilt the kitchen. New features make kitchen work more efficient and safer for everybody. An accompanying new experience was the writing and then awarding of Rappahannock Electric Cooperative's (REC) Power of Change program. If I recall correctly, Martha Buracker had said at the time that she had never written a grant proposal before. And although a professional assessment of the roof says that there are probably up to 15 years left before replacement is necessary, planning for it cannot start too early,

Browntown. Small. Rural. Mostly lost to technology when you stand along the Gooney Creek, on the loop, or looking up at the vineyards at Glen Manor. Yet it's important for growth. The collaboration tools we have available to us through Google Workspace have made it easier for people to serve themselves to some of the BCCA resources, in particular the newsletter and community announcements. The Buildings and Grounds (B&G) and Community Engagement Committee (CEC) maintain a master project list for their respective groups, a document that can be reviewed by other team members without having to wade through several emails of revisions. Over the summer, Mike Prosise presented information about the phone companies' decision to stop supporting service over copper lines, effectively obsoleting standard voice and digital subscriber line (DSL) services. Although Browntown hasn't been officially advised of an ultimate service discontinuance date, it's not the type of thing you want to have only two weeks to address. Even though we've seen fiber installation in the area, nobody has really said when that will become active. So at least for the interim, Mike suggested and later implemented Starlink data services, with a network plan that allows for separate vendor connections at events like the Redbud Festival, and the ability to temporarily turn off the primary BCCA

(*Continued on page 9*)

Obituaries

Barbara Ann Mathews Smelser, 82, of Bentonville, Virginia, went home to be with her Lord and Savior on Tuesday, September 29, 2026, at her home in Bentonville. A funeral service will be held on Wednesday, October 7, at 11:00 a.m. at LifePoint Church with Pastor John Kenney officiating. Interment will follow in Panorama Memorial Gardens in Waterlick. Mrs. Smelser was born November 27, 1943, at home in Bentonville, Virginia, daughter of the late William Oswald and Pauline Corbin Mathews. She was an employee at Walmart in Front Royal for 32 years. She attended LifePoint Church, formerly First Assembly of God, in Front Royal. Mrs. Smelser loved the outdoors and gardening. She took great pride in keeping her flowers and gardens well-manicured. She could spend many hours in her flower gardens planting in the spring. Surviving is her devoted son, Jackie Smelser and wife Shelia of Luray; two brothers, Allen Mathews and Wayne Mathews, both of Bentonville; four sisters, Susie Henry and Mary Stoneburger, both of Bentonville, Linda McDonald of Front Royal and Lizzie Jenkins of Tennessee; three grandchildren, Jack, Tabitha and Bradley Smelser; six great-grandchildren; and four great-great-grandchildren. She was married to the late Noah Jack Smelser.

(*President's Message, continued from page 3*)

Kids Club Coordinator – Still in the planning stage but we need parents and kids!

For any of the non-board volunteer spots, please send me an email to marthaburacker@gmail.com! And there is also a volunteer form on our website www.browntowncommunity.com.

Finally, I want you to remember that there is a Library Box on the grounds of the BCCA. Help yourself if there is a book that you would like! Bring a few books and drop them off if you have some. Just a nice way to share in our community. Also, the Browntown Baptist Church has installed a Blessing Box in their parking lot. This little station has non-perishable food in it. Take what you need and if you see it getting empty, maybe make a donation of some food to go in it. No one should go hungry and thanks to Browntown Baptist Church for doing this!

Stay tuned to our Facebook Page and I'll see you at the Bazaar!

Take care,

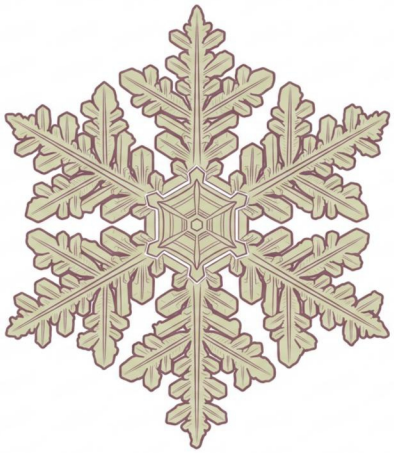
Martha Buracker, President BCCA



(*Growing a Community, continued from page 7*)

network in the event that vendors still don't have enough connectivity. The vendor network is password protected, and the password changed for each event. At the October general meeting, it was agreed that the primary network would be left open (i.e., no password required) so that in case of an emergency, a person who could get themselves to the parking lot would be able to connect to the WiFi and make a phone call. For the moment, this presumes that the center still has electricity. According to Mike, even if the center lost main power, the battery to which the WiFi equipment is connected could stay running for about 40 minutes. He has further recommended that the Association consider installing a power generator, which could make such emergency connectivity available over days instead of an hour. Mike is leading a small ad hoc group to consider Internet-based phone services to replace the soon-to-be-obsolete copper-based telephone. The group will also investigate and make recommendations for an Internet-based point of sales (POS) system, which would make it possible for the association to accept certain electronic payments, as well as the potential to collect analytics that might shape future purchase decisions (i.e., if only 80 hot dogs are sold, don't buy 150).

This growth is what will make the BCCA exist for another generation to enjoy. As new people come into Browntown and the surrounding areas, we encourage them to share their ideas and talents. We hope that they will enjoy their interactions. We are ready to welcome the new leaders, innovators, supporters, and neighbors... and the inspiration they bring for the coming year.



BROWNTOWN COMMUNITY CENTER
HOLIDAY SOCIAL

Sunday, December 6, 2026
2:00 — 5:00 p.m.

Refreshments
Cookie Decorating for Kids*
The Browntown Boys

Browntown Community Center
96 Browntown Rd., Browntown, VA 22610

*Limited space and pre-registration required. Visit www.browntowncommunity.com/calendar for details



Beyond the Inbox: More Email Features That Can Help You Organize

By Gène J. Raymond

Last month I wrote about three common functions within most email programs that you can use to help you keep things organized: tags (sometimes called *categories* or *labels*), filters, and snoozing (or *reminders*). Here are a few more ways to plow through the e-noise and find that elusive tidbit in your mailbox.

Folders – Just like a filing cabinet has folders for different types of papers, you can use email folders to store messages that you'd like to keep, or to help keep your main mailbox low on clutter. Picture it: one folder for your work stuff, one for your hobby stuff, and one for your volunteer work. As you review your inbox, move the mail into the most appropriate folder. Maybe you have a folder to keep old mails sorted by the year you received them. Are your kids keeping in touch with you from college? Make a folder to keep John's emails from bogging down your inbox, but where you can easily look at them again.

Sort – In most email programs, you can define a default sort order. Some people prefer to see *Newest First*, so the most recent email is at the top of the mailbox. Others prefer the opposite; *Oldest First*. It is usually one of these two options that rules each time you open your mailbox. But you also have other options depending on what program you use. For example, in Microsoft Office, you can sort email by the name of the sender, resulting in all of Jane Doe's emails being listed one after another, then all of John Doe's, and so on, using the **Filter** menu item (in Web-based versions). In desktop versions of classic Outlook, Yahoo, and Thunderbird, you can click on the column header of the column you want to sort by. Click the **Date** column header once and the mailbox listing will sort first received to most recent (if it's not already in that order). Click it again to reverse the order, listing the most recently received message on the top and oldest on the bottom. You can usually do the same with the column header that represents who sent the email, often call **Sender**. Click it once and the list become sorted in alphabetical order by who sent the email. Click it again and the list is ordered in reverse alphabetical order. You might recall that last month, I mentioned sorting an email box by the colored tags so that all my red tagged emails are together, then my orange tagged emails, etc. Gmail doesn't offer as much flexibility in sorting options, but under the Quick Settings menu, you can choose to display all your unread messages first, or all the messages labeled Important first, and a few other Gmail-specific options.

Conversation Mode – Sometimes called *threaded messages*. In most cases, the list of messages in your mailbox are in some sort of sequential order, often by the time at which the message was sent. Let's say I send an email to Jane Doe, she replies once, I reply to her reply, and she sends one more reply to finish out the conversation. I may have received two or three other emails between her two replies, so the two entries are separated in the list. In Conversation mode, the two replies would appear in succession because they are part of the same conversation. There may be some indentation of the two entries; a visual cue that one reply was subordinate to another. A brand new Gmail or Yahoo box usually defaults to Conversation Mode. If you prefer the list in chronological order, you can usually turn off Conversation Mode in the application settings.

Of course the easiest way is to use the Delete function to get rid of what you really don't need. Sometimes that's hard, even for the best of us.

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





Are you interested in advertising with Along the Gooney?

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

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

O. J. Rudacille Gen. Mdse.

Check us out on Facebook for Browntown History
Phone 636-2149
Serving Browntown since 1884

Hours: Monday-Saturday 9 to 5
Sunday Noon to 4

Don't forget! We carry lots of Browntown merchandise year 'round: Hats, Sweatshirts, T-Shirts, Notecards, Denim Shirts, and Cookbooks, etc.



Browntown Community Center Association
96 Browntown Road
Browntown, VA 22610

Return Service Requested

Postal Customer
Bentonville, VA 22610