



Along the Gooney

July 2026

Volume 34, Number 7

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Denny Pennington
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Scheduling
Patsy Pennington
540-635-5568



A fresh coat of paint is applied to the walls of the kitchen by Jim Sylvester, Steve Merz, Lisa Merz, and Roxanne Campbell (l. to r.). (Photo provided by Jim Sylvester)

Project Kitchen Sink

(a.k.a. Updating the BCCA's Kitchen)

By Jim Sylvester

Work continues, Steve Merz's activity schedule is holding, we are on budget, and – after two months – we are still on schedule for completion at the end of July! Our contractors and volunteer teams are doing a great job. Key accomplishments during June included:

- The new stove and hood arrived, and 'the Imperial', our 700# stove (Old Ironsides), has left the building after preparing thousands of meals and putting up a good fight getting it out the door.
- Damon tackled the new hood-vent wall penetration. Turns out the skin of our Center is not plaster, but concrete. Lots of sweat and burned out blades, but Damon won!
- Electrical rough-in wrapped up, and the inspection passed! The new in-wall circuitry provides a much cleaner appearance and many more work areas – without the need for extension cords (if you need one, do catch our Fall Flea Market).

(continued on page 4)

Inside the BCCA

Upcoming Events

- July 13 BCCA General Meeting
7:30 p.m.
- August 10 BCCA General Meeting
7:30 p.m.
- August 15 Grand Reopening
2-4 p.m.

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

Center Temporarily Unavailable

The Center remains unavailable for rental until the end of July due to ongoing renovations.

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](#).

Submission Deadline

Submissions for the August edition of the newsletter should be submitted by July 24.

President's Message

Greetings Fellow Browntowners,

Well here it is July already and although the Community Center has been closed for Kitchen Remodeling, there has been quite a lot going on.

First, I want to remind you that the minutes of our meetings including the draft minutes from the last meeting are posted on our website www.browntowncommunity.com under the Library tab. Although we have a good turnout for our meetings, often times people can't make the meeting but still want to know what's going on. Our Newsletter and Website Manager is Gène Raymond and he has really stepped up to the plate to keep us up to date with both of these platforms. Take the time to browse the website when you get a chance.

The Kitchen Remodel is coming along nicely. On schedule and on budget, so special thanks to all on our Remodel Team who have worked so hard to make this happen. Here's our crew: Steve Merz, Jim Sylvester, Bill Lacy, Ben Short, Damon Sutton, Roxanne Campbell, Mary McKinney, Lisa Merz, and Martha Buracker. They are working hard to have an end of July completion date and we have scheduled Saturday, August 15 for our Grand Opening Celebration! We will have more details in our August newsletter and on Facebook once we've finalized everything. Right now all we have nailed down is that the music will be provided by the Browntown Boys and the date of August 15, so be sure to save the date.

Our Fall Yard Sale is scheduled for September 18 and 19, and we are currently accepting donations! Please call Patsy Pennington at 540-635-5568 to schedule a drop off if you have items. We are hoping for a great sale as we've spent a lot on our much needed kitchen remodel and need to replenish our account! *(continued on next page)*

(President's Message, continued from previous page)

Finally, I would like to encourage our community members to volunteer in some way at our center. We are a community of diverse talent and while attending meetings may not be your thing, getting on our volunteer list for what you can do would help us tremendously. For example, our bake sale bakers! Our little community has always had great bakers who baked their special item. Bea Frame was famous for her Lemon Meringue Pie! People would wait in line to grab one of her pies at our bake sale. Sadly, many of our original members have passed on and our Bake Sale Bakers list has been dwindling. If we could add you to our list, Patsy Pennington would call you when we have an upcoming event. Our [Volunteer Form](#) is on our website under the Volunteer tab! Let us know what your talent is and we would love to have you be part of our BCCA team!

That's all for now!

Take care,

Martha Buracker, President BCCA

Treasurer's Corner

Happy 250th Birthday America!

Our Kitchen Renovation is well under way and nearing completion; therefore for the next couple of months, the bills will be rolling in! The Kitchen Renovation Committee has done an outstanding job.

May 2026 – Income ~\$1,508

- Browntown Merchandise – \$371
- Recycling – \$25
- Redbud Vendors, Sponsors, Redbud Trees and Donations – \$250
- Browntown Calendars – \$40
- Browntown Boys Donation to Roof Replacement Fund – \$822

Reminder to bring your aluminum cans to Tom's shed at the store! We receive a small income from aluminum cans brought to the store for recycling.

May 2026 – Expenses ~\$8,431

The majority of the costs fall into these categories:

- Electricity – \$163
- Newsletter – ~\$42
- Kitchen Renovation:
 - ◆ Electrical – ~\$2,353
 - ◆ Building Permit – ~\$371
 - ◆ Supplies – ~\$4,729
- Mowing – ~\$590
- VA State Commission Fee – \$25
- USPS Lawn Tractor Mailing – ~\$31
- Website/Internet Service – ~\$127

We are only missing one Redbed sponsor now, so should have a final tally soon!

Reminder: if you want to make a donation to the BCCA, we have three 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. The new kitchen is going to be fabulous!

Wishing everyone a safe and Happy Fourth of July!

Nancy McDermott
BCCA Treasurer
nancymcd.bcca@gmail.com

We're back!

Almost! We are thrilled to announce that the Community Center will be officially reopening its doors after a complete renovation of the kitchen.

Join us for a first look at the upgraded kitchen space, light refreshments, and music from The Browntown Boys. Take a look at the completely renovated kitchen. It's also a good time to check out the recent soffit and gutter upgrades. The event will take place on Saturday, August 15, 2026, from 2-4 p.m.

We look forward to seeing you there!

(Project Kitchen Sink, continued from page 1)

- The plumbing (water) rough-in is complete, and provisions were made to remove the water heater from the kitchen and recover that space.
- The HVAC ducts were enclosed, and a new bead-board ceiling and crown molding were installed. What a difference – no more sagging ceiling tiles!
- Bill and Steve installed the south wall cladding. It will be a wonderful backdrop to the new room, complete with Bill's creation of an ogee-edged cap piece.
- Last month's teaser – everyone knew the kitchen had a chalk tray on the north wall, but Roxy and Lisa stripped the paint to recover the original slate blackboard!
- Ceiling, walls, and trim are freshly painted – it's amazing that donuts and coffee provide such motivation. Many thanks to The Paint Party - Roxy, Lisa, Jim, and Steve – who applied the first coats on the ceiling and walls. Hard work for a warm Saturday, but it looks great! The walls will get a second coat to ensure their longevity.
- Our vintage stainless-steel sink and work counter are getting a makeover.
- Bill Lacy built and delivered our new counter tops. They await delivery of new cabinetry in the second week of July.

At press deadline and with painting complete, the kitchen floors will be refinished the week of June 29, so the Center will be closed to all other work.



Damon Sutton, Roxanne Campbell, and Bill Lacy work together to ensure that every nook has a fresh glow. (Photo provided by Jim Sylvester.)



The BEARR Group

Keeping Our Community Safe

By Brian Wilkinson and Allan Brockway

Reflective Address Signs

The cost is \$25 payable on delivery with free installation on an existing post or fence. To order, text or call Alan Thompson at 520-730-4272 or Brian Wilkinson at 703-389-7288.

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We will help you to install your 911 sign in a location that ensures police, fire, and medical teams can find your home without delay, even at night. We focus on five key placement and visibility considerations:

- Bidirectional viewing: Emergency responders may approach from either direction, so your address should be printed on both sides of the sign.
- Distance to the Road: If your house is far from the road or hidden, place the sign at the end of your driveway.
- Height and Angle: Signs should be at least 3-4 feet off the ground for clear visibility.
- Number Size: Numbers to be at least 3 inches tall and feature a contrasting color e.g., white numbers on a blue background.
- 5. Maintenance: Ensure the sign cannot be blocked by overgrown bushes, tall grass, mud, or snow

Virginia's 4:00 p.m. Burning Law No Longer In Effect



Call Warren County Communications Center at 540-635-4128 to let them know before you start burning brush. If the fire is beyond your control, stop and call 911.

A Reminder About The Risk Of Boating Accidents

Two brothers drown in boating accident at Page County Government Pond

On May 7, three brothers, two aged 21 and one 19, attempted to turn their canoe when the wind picked up and their canoe overturned. One brother was able to swim to shore and call for assistance. The two other brothers drowned despite efforts to rescue them. None of the men were wearing life jackets.

Virginia law requires every kayaker to have a U.S. Coast Guard-approved wearable personal flotation device (PFD) and a sound-producing device, like a whistle, on board at all times.

Drowning remains the leading cause of recreational paddling fatalities, making strict adherence to state regulations and safety protocols vital, whether you are on the river or a lake.

Power Up: Evaluating Internet Options



Josh Bowle (l.) demonstrates the basics of Starlink mobile internet to Mike Prosize (r.) outside the Community Center. (Photo by Gène J. Raymond)

By Gène J. Raymond

The Browntown Community Center has long had Internet connectivity available to those who entered its doors. That's quite a feat in a time when small remote areas of the county often lack the infrastructure to bring quality digital services to its residents. To some degree, this 'digital inequity' has been recognized by the local government, and various plans to bring the architecture needed to make the larger network accessible to rural residents have been discussed. If you've attended recent meetings, you have heard Supervisor Cheryl Cullers talk about some of these plans. More recently, construction equipment used for burying the fiber conduit has been seen on Bentonville Road.

But how important is it to the Center, its neighbors, and its volunteers? Perhaps more than meets the eye. The Internet connection could prove quite beneficial during extreme weather events. If you're sitting in an area that is known to have little to no cell phone coverage, there's the parking lot outside the Center and, provided there hasn't been a power failure, you could connect to the Center's WiFi and perhaps make a cell phone call (or send an emergency text message). In addition, the Internet makes it possible to keep a digital eye on the grounds when nobody is there. Many telecommunications companies like Verizon and AT&T are dropping support for traditional copper telephone lines, replacing those older services with Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP), which runs over high-speed fiber. Eventually, our landline phone service will be Internet.

Now, most Internet service can be looked at like a water faucet. If you turn the handle just a bit, you get a trickle of water. Turn it halfway and you get a steady stream, while turning it all the way in the opposite direction gets you a quick sinkful of dishwater. You can't get any more than that out of the standard household configuration. The Center's current Internet service is a household grade Digital Subscriber Line (DSL). Not only is it made for an average household's worth of people and devices, it runs over the same copper lines that are slowly losing support. The digital water can't be turned on any higher than it already is. For everyday uses at the Center, it hasn't become a big deal... yet. But the inability to accommodate growth is starting to show. Many of the vendors who participated in the annual Redbud Festival rely on the ability to take cashless payments. For that to work, they need to be able to obtain a reliable Internet connection. The Center's WiFi was not able to consistently support the number of vendors in the yard, and the signal strength was weak at the outermost edge. If the needed service can't be provided, there's a certain risk that vendors will not want to come back, which then effects our own fundraising efforts. Last, but not least, the BCCA itself may adopt a cashless point of sales (POS) system in the future, opening the way to accept credit card payments for things like kitchen sales, tickets, and merchandise.

(Continued on page 9)

Over the Mountain and Through the Woods

By Tom Lacombe

(This article was updated from an Along the Gooney article published in January 2000.)

This is no big news flash, but a 95-year-old man from Woodville came to Browntown last week. His nephew was driving him around to look at some of his old haunts. Ned Johnson wasn't raised in Browntown, but his mother was — she was a Gore. His roots in Browntown go back to 1833.

There used to be quite a few Gores and Johnsons in Gooney Manor. I'm sure some of you have heard of the Gore field, which is about to be developed, or the Sally Johnson Hollow, which is just south of the Izaak Walton Park. Ned's family eventually moved on to Rappahannock, but they always returned to Browntown to attend the Old School Baptist Church. That might seem like a long trip today, but before the days of the Shenandoah National Park, it was not so far; visits across the mountain were frequent. In fact, going to Front Royal back then was a much longer journey.

Of course, automobiles and the Park changed things. Other than being used by hikers, runners, park rangers, and horseback riders, the Gravelly Springs, Land's Run, and Jenkins Gap trails are no longer used by locals to visit the other side of the mountain.

And while we're talking history, I'd like to give Becky Poe's paper, The Warren Times, a plug. Not a week goes by that she doesn't print an interesting piece about the past. A couple of weeks ago, she mentioned how some of our local creeks got their names. As I've mentioned before, Gooney was once known as Sugar Tree Creek. Legend has it that Lord Fairfax changed the name in the mid-1700s when his favorite hunting dog, Gooney, drowned in the creek running through the center of his new Manor. Some folks have doubts about this story, but I'm a believer — probably because I have told the story to so many people over the years that I feel as if I were there when it happened!

Greasy is a creek that nobody seems to have a definitive answer for. I've never been able to find any written history of that name in the Browntown area, so I'm leaning toward the idea that an oily film on the water, caused by clay on the banks, gave rise to the name. I will point out, though, that the 1747 survey map of the Manor already uses Greasy as the name of the creek.

Now, on to the name of one more creek: Broad Run. In my mind, the name does not fit such a small stream. Most summers, Dry Run would be a much more fitting name. Regardless, one of my friends mentioned he always called it Fetchett Run, and another said he never heard it called anything other than the Sally Bradford Run. Neither of these longtime residents remembers it ever being called Broad Run.

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

Obituaries

Irene May Jenkins, 98, of Front Royal, passed away peacefully on May 25, in Conway, SC.

Mrs. Jenkins was born May 23, 1928, at home in Bentonville, daughter of the late Manley Cletus and Gladys May Ritenour Campbell. She worked many years for Aileen, Inc in Flint Hill.

Surviving are two sons, Robert Lee "Bob" Rector and wife Ellen of Conway, SC and John Wayne Rector and wife Brenda of Front Royal; two grandchildren, Pam Hock of Reno, NV and Cody Rector of Stephens City; three great-grandsons, Brayden Hock of ID, Jared Hock of CA and Jacob Rector of OK, and a very special niece, Sheila Showers.

She was preceded in death by her parents; first husband, William Rector; second husband, Robert Jenkins; one son, William Thomas Rector; infant daughter, Wanda Lee Rector; two sisters, Grace Atkins and Ruby Rosenberger; two brothers, Russell Campbell and Manley Campbell; a half-brother, William Kenney and grandson, Roger Rector. Mrs. Jenkins was a Gold Star mother having lost her son William Thomas Rector during the Vietnam War. Mrs. Jenkins was the last surviving member of her immediate family.

Larry D. "Dick" Smelser, 76, of Front Royal, passed away on June 13, at Blue Ridge Care in Winchester. Dick was born March 28, 1950, in Front Royal, the son of the late Benny Lee and Clare Matthews Smelser. He retired from the government as a mail carrier. He will be greatly missed by his loving family and friends.

Surviving are his loving and devoted wife of 54 years, Marsha Smelser; two daughters, Dixie Smelser and Jeanette "Punky" Hall; one sister, Lorraine Brannon; two grandchildren, Robert "Scooter" Hall and girlfriend Brandi, and Benjamin "Doobee" Hall and wife Caroline; and two great-grandchildren, Dexter M. "Doodle Bug" Hall and Autumn "Sissy" Hall. He was preceded in death by his parents and four brothers, Richard Smelser, Roger Smelser, Lee Smelser, and Lloyd Smelser.

Memorial gifts may be made to the family c/o Maddox Funeral Home, 105 West Main Street, Front Royal, VA 22630.

Volunteer Opportunities

It takes a lot of manpower to keep the Community Center available to area residents. We rely on volunteers to keep things moving a-long. While volunteerism is often equated with lots of hours, that needn't be the case, sometimes as little as an hour or two.

Grand Opening Preparation

We are seeking a few people to help clean up the space before the Grand Reopening – especially the dust from construction materials! If you are able to assist, let us know by filling out the [Volunteer Interest Form](#) or contact Martha Buracker. We'll let you know the schedule details when they become available.

In addition, we are asking for volunteers to provide finger food for the opening day. Think crackers and cheese, chips and dip, sliders or other small sandwiches, cookies, brownies, etc. Maybe a favorite from the BCCA Cookbook? Sign up at <https://forms.gle/jbZKFXtzCb8yvRtKA>

If your time is short, these are easy ways to support the center with just an hour or so.

A Little More Challenging?

Although the annual election of officers is still several months away, perhaps it's something that you might want to consider. In particular, the BCCA will be interested in candidates for the office of Secretary. The person in this position records the minutes of the meetings, summarizes discussions, and tracks action items. This position is also part of the Executive Board and may interact with various committees. Good listening and writing skills are key. Previous experience with collaborative tools is beneficial, but not required. If interested, [let us know](#).

(Power Up, continued from page 6)

At June's general meeting, Mike Prosis presented three potential upgrading scenarios for consideration. In the first scenario, the existing DSL service would be replaced by Starlink Standard Internet (satellite service) with built-in WiFi router. The equipment would be located along the north interior wall with the antenna facing north into the yard. The current telephone service running on copper lines would be retained. The anticipated result is increased Internet speed and reliability as well as increased range, although likely not completely sufficient for large outdoor events like the Redbud Festival.

The second scenario builds upon the first, adding a Starlink mobile antenna and router with a standby service package. The equipment would be stored until needed for a given event, then brought out and activated as part of the event set up. This configuration would extend Internet and wireless to the stage and outdoor areas, resulting in increased speed and access. A test with the mobile antenna set at the stage showed the signal coverage reached more than halfway across the yard. A larger coverage area, e.g. to the north fence line, could be attainable by setting the antenna northward into the yard.

The third and most extensive scenario would have the Starlink Standard Internet installed at the fire substation, where it would be connected to the power generator. A wireless bridge or mesh system would then extend the signal into the community center and then outside to the stage area. In the event of a power outage, an uninterruptible power supply (UPS) would provide brief coverage until the generator is activated, providing continued Internet connectivity during a power outage.

The monthly cost for the standard service was estimated to be about \$130, which is roughly comparable to the current cost of the combined DSL service and telephone service. Estimated costs for additional hardware run between \$200 (mobile system) and \$2000 (mesh network).

At the request of the president, Mike is working with the treasurer to establish a business account with Starlink and to arrange to obtain the appropriate hardware at the least cost to the association; essentially the first scenario. Mike is hoping to have the new system up and running before the end of July. There will likely be a period of overlap where the new satellite-based system is running in tandem with the existing DSL connection; a backup in case of unforeseen issues with the new system.

Become a Volunteer Fire-Fighter

Ensure The Browntown Fire Substation Will Continue To Serve Our Needs

For more information, please contact Allan Brockway, Fire Chief, South Warren Volunteer Fire Department, at 540-635-7783 or 703-915-4573.

Browntown Baptist Church A Legacy of Faith

Dedicated to Seeking God and Serving People

It was great to see everyone at our Ice Cream Social on Saturday, June 20. I believe the banana split was the treat of choice. We will be scheduling another Community Gathering soon.

We continue to collect for The Hike Kidz Foundation's Boxes of Basics Program. We accept new clothing, shoes, socks, and underwear for all seasons for children (newborn to age 17). Donations can be dropped off at the Fellowship Hall on Thursdays (3:30-6 p.m.) and Sundays (noon-1 p.m.).

We also are continuing to collect for C-CAP (Front Royal-Warren County Congregational Community Action Project) toiletries and hygiene products for all ages during the same day and time as the Box of Basics Program (see above). We will be dropping off what we have already collected this week. Thank you for your donations.

CHANGE OF DATE FOR VBS

The dates for Vacation Bible School are July 29-July 31 from 7-8:30 p.m. for ages 4 and up. Children under 4 need to be accompanied by an adult. Our theme this year is 'Jungle Safari Expedition'. There will be snacks, games, crafts and a lesson for the first two nights. The last night will be Fun Night from 6:30-8:30pm. It will include pizza, a lesson and water slide. Follow Jesus on life's greatest adventure.

Be Hopeful

Tina Presley

Clerk of Browntown Baptist Church

Questions? parishoner@browntownbaptist.com

	<p>Martha Buracker, Realtor Weichert Realtors 824 John Marshall Hwy Front Royal, VA</p> <p><i>"Your Shenandoah Valley Expert"</i></p> <p>Licensed in Virginia</p> <p>Cell: 540-671-6349 Office: 540-635-8000 marthaburacker@gmail.com</p>		<h1>Weichert</h1> <p>REALTORS®</p>
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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

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, Cookbooks, etc.

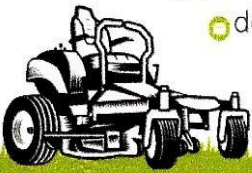
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