



# “Along the Gooney”

Browntown Community Center Association

May 2026  
Volume 34, Number 5

## BCCA Executive Board – 2026

President	Martha Buracker	540-671-6349
Vice President	Mary McKinney	540-635-4725
Secretary	Kristen Pence	540-230-1155
Treasurer	Nancy McDermott	703-975-8668
Trustees	Bill Lacy	
	Denny Pennington	540-635-5568
	Wes Deavers	540-631-0016

## Upcoming Events

May 11 BCCA General Meeting  
7:30 p.m.

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

## Submission Deadline

The customary deadline for content submission for the newsletter is the 24<sup>th</sup> of the month preceding the month of publication. Send your submissions to Gène at [gene.raymond@browntowncommunity.com](mailto:gene.raymond@browntowncommunity.com).

## Center Temporary Unavailable

The Center will be unavailable for rental beginning May 1, 2026 through July 31, 2026 due to scheduled repairs and renovations. Should the project end early, this will be reflected on the online calendar.

## Local Music Group Postpones Scheduled Performance

Roger Tomhave announces that the “Open Mic plus The Browntown Boys” performance that was to take place on May 6, 2026, has been postponed. The event will be rescheduled after the Center’s kitchen renovation project has been completed.

## BCCA Awarded \$5000 Grant

By Gène J. Raymond

The BCCA recently announced that it had been awarded a \$5000 grant from the Rappahannock Electric Cooperative (REC). This new funding arrives at a time when volunteers have been working to ensure that the 100-year old structure remains viable and available to the community for another century.

“The kitchen has served us well,” said Martha Buracker, president of the BCCA. “But it’s 40-years old and it’s time for an update.” In particular, she cited the need to provide better safety measures as well as making the core area of the Center more worker-friendly during fundraising events, social events, and local food bank operations.

The Care Board of Rappahannock Electric Cooperative’s *Power of Change* program (formerly *Operation Roundup*) selected the BCCA after Buracker submitted a grant application earlier this spring.

“She stated how central this ... kitchen is to this community, so it sounds like a lot of good comes out of this kitchen,” said Tracy Woods, representing REC. “We are very happy to provide this [check] to the Browntown Community Center Association on behalf of our REC member-owners and our Care Charity board.”

A formal “Check Presentation” ceremony was held on April 24, 2026 at 11:30 a.m. at the Center. (Photo on page 10.)

## Self-Service Newsletter Options

Know somebody who wants to receive the newsletter via email? All they need to do is send an email to [newsletter+subscribe@browntowncommunity.com](mailto:newsletter+subscribe@browntowncommunity.com) to be automatically added to the list. They should start receiving them regularly when the following edition is published.

## 2026 Redbud Festival Entices Crowds With More Food, More Vendors, and More Cars

By Gène J. Raymond

Like the trees for which it honors, the annual festival has come and gone. There is no doubt that the festival, which took place on April 18, 2026, was a resounding success. Emma Bricker, who started her day before 7:00 a.m., wrangled about three dozen vendors and non-profit organizations, filling the yard and front room of the building. BCCA merchandise was displayed on a table in the back room of the Center, manned by Debbie Sutton. Another merch table was outside and made available some copies of the recent newsletters. The table was tended by Adina Short and Linda Arnold. Inside, there was plenty of food to choose from. The kitchen was running like a well-oiled machine, where Roxanne Campbell, Mary McKinney, Jessie Sprouse, and Peg Fryxell were moving the line. If you exited from the back side of the kitchen, your next logical stop might have been the Bake Sale in the back room. As usual, the table was full of tempting goodies. And as if that wasn't enough, burgers and hot dogs are even better when cooked outside, as did Steve and Lisa Merz.

There were several tables for the person with the green thumb: redbud saplings, tomato plants, herbs, and flower baskets. Other tables were manned by educational groups, environmental groups, and even a few farm animals... well, they were next to their table. Children got their faces painted and rode the barrel train.

The music started mid-morning when the group Caney Ridge kicked off their set. By noon, dozens of people set their seats up on the side lawn to enjoy the sounds of Ryan Jewel.

### *Lucky Quack: Victory at Gooney Creek*

The ducks were on the table just inside the front yard of the Center, where Nancy McDermott and her sister sold tickets for the Gooney Creek Duck Race. New this year was a purple commemorative duck sporting sunglasses. Shortly after 1:00 p.m., the race commenced as the ducks were dumped into the water below the bridge. The first duck crossed the finish

line shortly before the six-minute mark. This year's cash prize winners were:

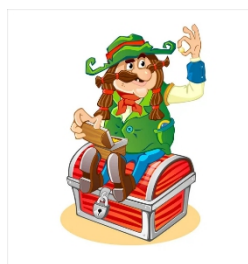
1. Susannah Herrada
2. Joseph Puglisi
3. Kris Iden

### *More Chrome and Character*

This year's vintage car show was renamed in honor of Dave McDermott, a well respected member of the community who passed away in December. The show, coordinated by Alan Thompson and Mike Prosis, drew 18 entrants – twice as many as the previous year. Certificates and cash prizes were presented in the following categories:

Best Paint	Ron Mahoney 1966 Ford F100
Best Interior	Ron Mahoney 1966 Ford F100
People's Choice	Tom Poe 1949 GMC Pickup
Participant's Choice	Greg Hulme 1969 Chevrolet Camaro

## Treasurer's Corner



Happy Spring!

Mother Nature keeps hanging on to that cool weather, but she graced us with an absolutely beautiful day for the Redbud Festival!

I was out of town last month so will catch you up on March and wait until Redbud totals are in to share April in next month's newsletter. I have "lots" of money to count, which is a great problem to have. We are expecting this to be the best year yet! Expenditures for March were the regular utility bill, propane delivery, Community Center repairs, fees for vendor, sponsors, and the car show, and Redbud Festival supplies.

### *March 2026 – Income ~\$1,532*

- Browntown merchandise and recycling - \$59.75

- Redbud vendor tables, car show, sponsors - \$1,092
- Browntown calendars and notecards - \$80
- facility rentals - \$300

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

### ***March 2026 – Expenses ~\$6,287***

The majority of the costs fall into these categories:

- Electricity (\$240)
- Propane (~\$750)
- Newsletter (~\$46)
- Redbud Duck Race ticket printing (\$225)
- Redbud T-shirts with new design (~\$634)
- Truist safety deposit box renewal (\$120)
- Chamber of Commerce dues (\$125)
- soffit and gutter contractor (\$4,040)
- website, Internet service, telephone (~\$127)

Many of our Redbud events had sponsors like the Duck Race so there will be no cost to the Community Center in the end.

Happy Mother's Day to all our mothers in Heaven and on Earth! Wishing you a day of relaxation, love and laughter!

Nancy McDermott  
BCCA Treasurer  
nancymcd.bcca.@bcca.com

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## **Browntown Baptist Church** **A Legacy of Faith**

*Dedicated to Seeking God  
and Serving People*

We are pleased to announce the return of our Drive-Thru Dinners. It is scheduled for Wednesday, May 13 from 4:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. The menu includes pulled pork BBQ, baked beans, cole slaw, and dessert, available for \$15.00 per meal. Please email the number of meals you would like to purchase by May 2 to [parishoner@browntownbaptist.com](mailto:parishoner@browntownbaptist.com). Payment may be made by cash or check at the time of pickup.

We thank the community for donating clothing to the Hike Kidz Foundation Boxes to Basics Campaign. We are a drop-off site and accept *new* clothing for children (newborn to youth size 16), as well as new shoes, socks, and underwear for all seasons. Donations can be dropped off at the Fellowship Hall on Thursdays (3:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.) and Sundays (noon–1:00 p.m.). The Boxes of Basics program partners directly with the Hike Kidz Foundation and other local organizations in Warren County, working together to provide basic clothing essentials for children in need within our community. Questions? Email [parishoner@browntownbaptist.com](mailto:parishoner@browntownbaptist.com).

We are planning our next Quarterly Community Gathering. These gatherings are designed to unite people in a warm, spiritual, and loving atmosphere, where we celebrate with each other through good food and joyful laughter.

Springtime joy,  
Tina Presley,  
Clerk of Browntown Baptist Church

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## Project Kitchen Sink

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

By Jim Sylvester

As our BCCA members are aware, our Center's kitchen is a bit antiquated and in need of a serious update. Although there have been improvements – a new refrigerator and upright freezer – much of the kitchen dates to the 1980s with power supplied by extension cords, small appliances and utensils sourced from community donations, a stove recovered from hospital renovations, and storage space severally limited. Despite these limitations, the kitchen and its volunteers provide food for festivals and other events, support receptions and family gatherings, and prepare care packages for residents.

Earlier this year, volunteers gathered to reimagine the BCCA kitchen. Monthly updates were provided at the BCCA's monthly meetings. The team considered:

- essential repairs and updates including fixing the ceiling, improving lighting, fixing rotted window trim, adding electrical outlets, updating our current stove, and accessing HVAC components.
- addition of essential storage space.
- who and how the kitchen is used and how it could better be used.
- what safety and ventilation improvements are needed.
- how new arrangements could create more efficient workflows and allow more cooks; and
- how client serving arrangements could be improved.

This work group considered both what components could be reused and what new components are needed; for instance a center island. They developed alternative floor plans and they brought a proposal for consideration at April's BCCA meeting where it was unanimously approved. Key dates and milestones associated with Project Kitchen Sink are noted below:

- April 19 Close kitchen and begin emptying all cupboards, shelves, and cabinets.
- April 30 Remove major appliances, cabinets, counters, and ceiling tiles leaving only the ceiling, walls, and floor.
- May 4 Begin new construction; includes opening walls to prepare for new plumbing and electrical work as well as repairing the windows and walls.
- June Lots of work! New plumbing and wiring. New cabinetry.
- July Paint walls, refinish floor, and install major appliances. Return supplies, utensils, and small appliances.

These dates are achievable and rely on both volunteer help and the services of contracted professionals. The result is a new kitchen with twice the counter workspace, twice the stove-top burners, twice the working ovens, more useable wall space, and significantly improved lighting, safety, and ventilation — all in the same footprint as our existing 1970's kitchen! County permits are already filed for approvals, and contracts are in progress.

As mentioned earlier, community volunteers have a role to play in making this transformation and our kitchen cleanout volunteers — Roxanne Campbell, Mary McKinney, and Adina Short — deserve special recognition for removing all small stuff from the kitchen and making it ready for next week's "demolition crew" that will move major appliances and remove all built-ins, with only the ceiling, walls, and floor remaining. As the new construction completes, if you enjoy painting, we should talk!

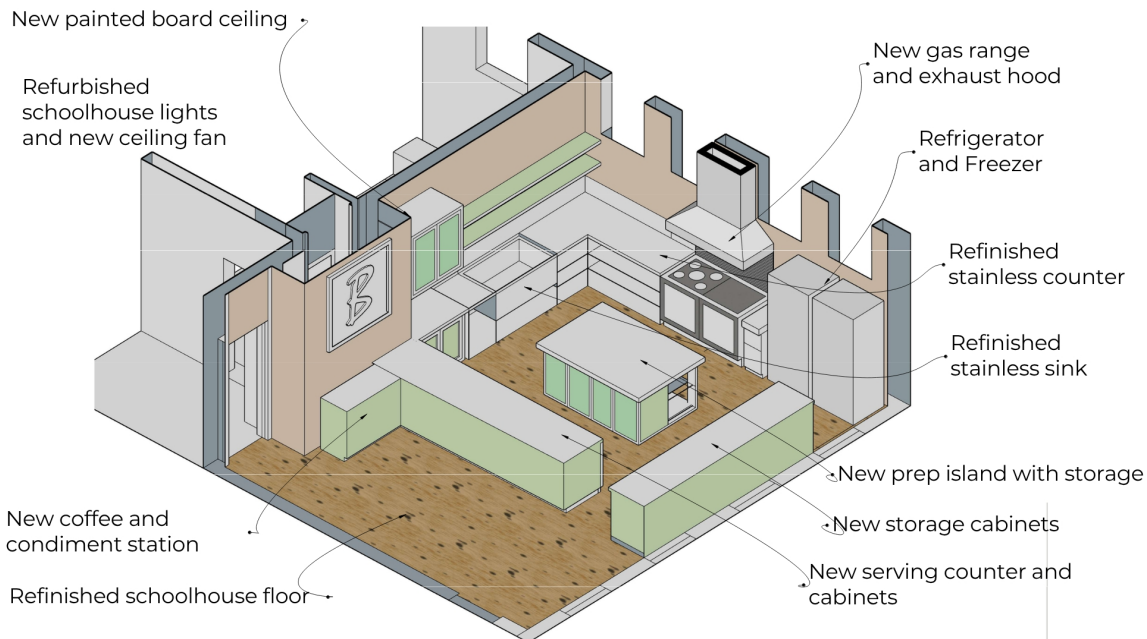
Join us for a Grand Opening on Saturday, August 1, 2026!

**The Kitchen Team**

- Martha Buracker
- Roxanne Campbell
- Bill Lacy
- Mary McKinney
- Lisa Merz
- Steve Merz
- Patsy Pennington
- Ben Short
- Damon Sutton
- Jim Sylvester



*The BCCA kitchen after volunteers removed the non-appliance items at the conclusion of the Redbud Festival. Renovation work is planned from May through July. (Photo by Jim Sylvester)*



**The New Browntown Community Center Kitchen**

*A conceptual plan of the soon-to-be renovated BCCA kitchen, which will be overhauled over the next three months. (Drawing by Steve Merz)*



## The BEARR Group Keeping Our Community Safe

By Brian Wilkinson

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



However, given current drought warnings for Warren County, a new outdoor burn ban may be issued at any time. Call Warren County Communications Center at 540-635-4128 to let them know before you start burning brush. Our sign in the center of Browntown will inform you of the daily risk of wildfires. For updates on local fire conditions visit <https://www.facebook.com/ForestryVA>.

- Never burn on dry or windy days because it is easy for your fire to spread out of control.
- Burn only yard debris. Open burning of any material that creates dense smoke or noxious odors is prohibited.
- Keep burn pile small or use burn barrel.
- Clear a 15' radius around a barrel and at least a 25' radius around a burn pile. Ensure no tree branches or power lines above. Wet down surrounding area before, during and after the burn.
- Always have water and fire tools nearby: a water-charged hose, bucket of water, shovel, and dirt or sand.
- Stay with the fire. Virginia law requires that you monitor a debris burn continually until the fire is completely out.
- Extinguish the fire. Drown the burn pile with water, stir the coals & drown again. Repeat until fire completely out.
- If the fire is beyond your control, stop and call 911.

## 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.

## Izaak Walton League of America Gets A Little Help From Friends

Damon Sutton is building relationships with groups of Warren County folks who would like to help the community. Cadets from Randolph Macon Academy (RMA) helped clean up the forest floor after a logging operation that was long overdue at the Izaak Walton League of America (IWLA). Victoria Haynes, the Falcon Scholar fitness instructor, helps get the postgrad students ready for the Air Force Academy. Out of this group of 14 students, 12 have already been selected for the Academy, one is still waiting for an appointment, and the other is an underclassman.



*Damon Sutton (center) and Victoria Haynes (far right) work with cadets from Randolph Macon Academy who clean the forest floor after a logging operation. (Photo provided by Damon Sutton)*



*(Image by katemangostar/Freepik)*

## President's Message

Lots of great news to report this month!

First on the list is the Redbud Festival. Wow, what a great day it was. Perfect weather, a great crowd, and we've had so many positive comments that this was the "Best Ever" Redbud Festival! We are still collecting money, so a grand total isn't available yet, but thank-you to all who sponsored, volunteered, baked for our Bake Sale, cooked, donated to the Silent Auction and for all who attended! It takes a lot of teamwork to get this festival done and our community came together for this fun day.

The very next day after Redbud, the kitchen was emptied of all the small stuff and is now awaiting our Buildings and Grounds crew to move out the appliances, remove the cabinets and start on the demolition for our Kitchen Remodel. So, we are effectively shut down till the end of July other than the Browntown Boys Music Night on May 6 and meeting or two in the front room.

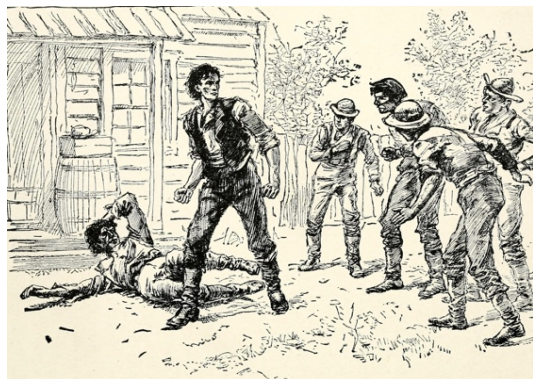
We are accepting donations for our Fall Yard Sale, so if you've been patiently waiting to donate, please call Patsy Pennington at 540-635-5568 to schedule a drop off. These items will need to go into the back room at the BCCA.

And finally, I am happy to report that the Browntown Community Center was the recipient of a \$5,000 grant from Rappahannock Electric Cooperative from their Power of Change program. When you pay your monthly electric bill you have the option to "Round Up" as a selection. The money collected is given out in grants to non-profits in their service area. I applied hoping to get a little help for our kitchen remodel project and we were selected as one of the recipients! That \$5,000 is a great kickoff to our fundraising for our new kitchen and we are so thankful for their support! Stay tuned for future fundraisers once our kitchen is complete!

That's all from me!

Take care,

Martha Buracker, President BCCA



## Gooney Valley History and Preservation Club

### *Don't Pick a Fight With One of the Updike Brothers*

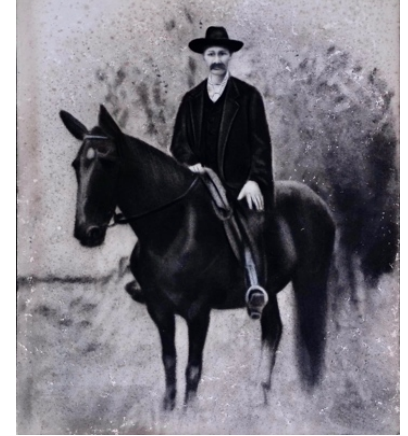
The three Updike brothers, Asa, Israel, and Samuel, moved over the mountain from their father's farm in Rappahannock County and settled in Gooney Manor in the early 1800s. For the next 100+ years, the Updikes were one of our area's most prominent and successful farming families. The brothers bought and cleared land for their farms about two miles south of Browntown, where there was good availability of water and good access, via dirt roads, (originally cleared to serve the needs of the Cover Tannery) to Luray, Browntown, and Bentonville.

One shared but relatively unknown characteristic of the extended Updike family is the wrestling prowess of its men. According to an 1889 Genealogy Book, describing the descendants of John Updike Jr. (the father of Israel, Asa, and Samuel):

"The men have been large and strong, as a rule. In the days when wrestling was a favorite amusement and a man was honored for his personal strength and endurance, these Virginia Updikes were referenced. Many of them were so large that their appearance saved them from a

contest. Their smaller brothers had the fighting to do but, but none of them were ever whipped in all their fights. It made no difference whether they were on top or beneath, as they always managed to wear their antagonists out, although they were seldom got below. They retained much of their muscular strength to the age of 70 years and more. The smallest of John Updike's sons measured 5 feet ten inches and weighed 200 pounds. The sons of these sons have been of good height, and even the daughters have been tall. Intermarriages have been frequent," Robert S. Craig wrote in his 1985 book *The Virginia Updikes-Updykes*.

Sadly, we have no photos or other information about which of the Updike men were most renowned for their strength and wrestling ability. The one Updike photo we do have is of Amon Updike (1831-1913), one of the sons of Israel Updike and Eleanor Brown. There were many stories about Amon Updike in local newspapers based on his eccentricities and his enjoyment of parties and dances that often went on into the early hours of the morning. In particular, one *Warren Sentinel* article written in 1909 describes how at a masquerade party when he was 77 years old he was still able to engage in his "famous Cril-a-Crank dance, surprising everyone and putting to shame many of the younger dancers."



### ***Note On The Popularity Of 'Backwoods Wrestling' in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Virginia***

Backwoods wrestling was a rugged, often brutal, and deeply personal test of strength, emerging from Scotch-Irish traditions and the harsh realities of frontier life. In the rural, heavily forested area of the Shenandoah Valley, these bouts were a popular form of entertainment at local gatherings and rustic events, sometimes referred to as "rough-and-tumble" fighting. Key characteristics of 19th century regional wrestling:

- "No Holds Barred": Matches often allowed for virtually any tactic to pin, throw, or cause the submission of an opponent.
- Rough-and-Tumble Fighting: The style was notorious for its extreme brutality, sometimes involving techniques like gouging, biting, kicking, or stamping, which led the Virginia Assembly to pass legislation against maiming.
- Collar-and-Elbow Style: An Irish-influenced style often practiced involved starting face-to-face, each wrestler placing one hand behind the opponent's neck (collar) and the other behind the elbow.

See our website ([gooneyvalleyhistoryclub.com](http://gooneyvalleyhistoryclub.com)) to learn more about the history of Browntown.



**Martha Buracker, Realtor**  
Weichert Realtors  
824 John Marshall Hwy  
Front Royal, VA

*"Your Shenandoah Valley Expert"*

Licensed in Virginia

Cell: 540-671-6349  
Office: 540-635-8000  
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*Tracy Woods (l.) of Rappahannock Electric Cooperative presents a check for \$5000 to BCCA members Jim Sylvester, Ben Stone, Martha Buracker, and Mary McKinney (l. to r.). The presentation took place Friday, April 24, 2026. (Photo by Gène J. Raymond)*

## Tuning Up with Tech Tips

By Gène J. Raymond

Technology is good... when it works. Sometimes it's just a matter of learning a few tricks to make things work to your advantage. For example, if you've visited the online calendar, you're probably familiar with the default layout that shows the entire current month with events noted. Did you know that if you click the left or right arrow on the left side of the top of the calendar, you can review the previous month's events (left arrow) and the next month's events (right arrow)? To the right side on top of the calendar, there is a drop-down list labeled "Month." If you click the word "Month," you can change the calendar view to a single week ("Week") or to a list of upcoming events ("Schedule"). The next time that you visit the website, why not try it out?

Looking for a specific article in the electronic newsletter? Whether you're using a web browser extension or a PDF viewer like Adobe Acrobat Reader, you can view a list of articles by opening the Bookmark menu, then click on the article title to go directly to that part of the document. In the Acrobat Reader, click the bookmark icon located on upper right-hand side of the screen. In Google's Chrome web browser, click the hamburger menu on the upper left corner, then click on the second icon below that menu. Both these actions bring up the list of article titles. Click on the title you want to view and that page will be displayed.

## 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.

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