

BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAIN TROUT UNLIMITED #696

Fall-Winter 2020 Newsletter



Blue Ridge Mayor Donna Whitener and BRMTU member Jim Reich stand with one of two information boards on display with the recently completed trout carving in downtown City Park in Blue Ridge. Jim handled much of the planning and installation of the information boards, which tell visitors about the Toccoa River and the trout it supports. The beautiful, leaping rainbow trout was carved by local saw artist Kary Kaley Jr. The project was co-funded by the city of Blue Ridge, Blue Ridge Mountain Trout Unlimited and the Fannin County Chamber of Commerce.

CHAPTER MEETINGS UPDATE

Due to the ongoing situation with COVID-19, BRMTU has suspended its monthly membership meetings. We are currently waiting for updated direction from city/county leadership about public gatherings before the 2021 membership meeting calendar dates are determined.

Learn more about BRMTU online at [BlueRidgetu.com](https://www.blueridgetu.com)

Straight from our leader's lips ?

S-L-O-W Going the Last Six Months ?

But We Have a Good Eye on 2021

I hope everyone had a safe, pleasant and Happy Thanksgiving with their families and friends. I'm also praying everyone has a Safe and Merry Christmas and Happy Hanukah.

As all our members know, 2020 has been a tough and challenging year for TU nationally, in the state and locally. We have only had one chapter meeting, back in June, due to COVID. We have had a couple BRMTU board meetings via Zoom to address what little business we have had. We had to cancel our Trout Festival in April for the same reason, costing us money, but we still stand in good shape financially.

COVID also claimed all of the Forest Service workdays as well as the Hatchery Fishing Days this past spring and summer. And about a month ago, the Board decided that it was not prudent to have a Holiday Gathering.

But not all has been stalled. We had one of our "Fishing Dayz" outings back on September 26 at Tammen Park but with minimal participation. And you can visit the Downtown Park in Blue Ridge to check out the progress on the TU-supported trout carving. It's beautiful! Most of the site's signage is in place now for visitors to learn more about trout and the Toccoa River watershed.

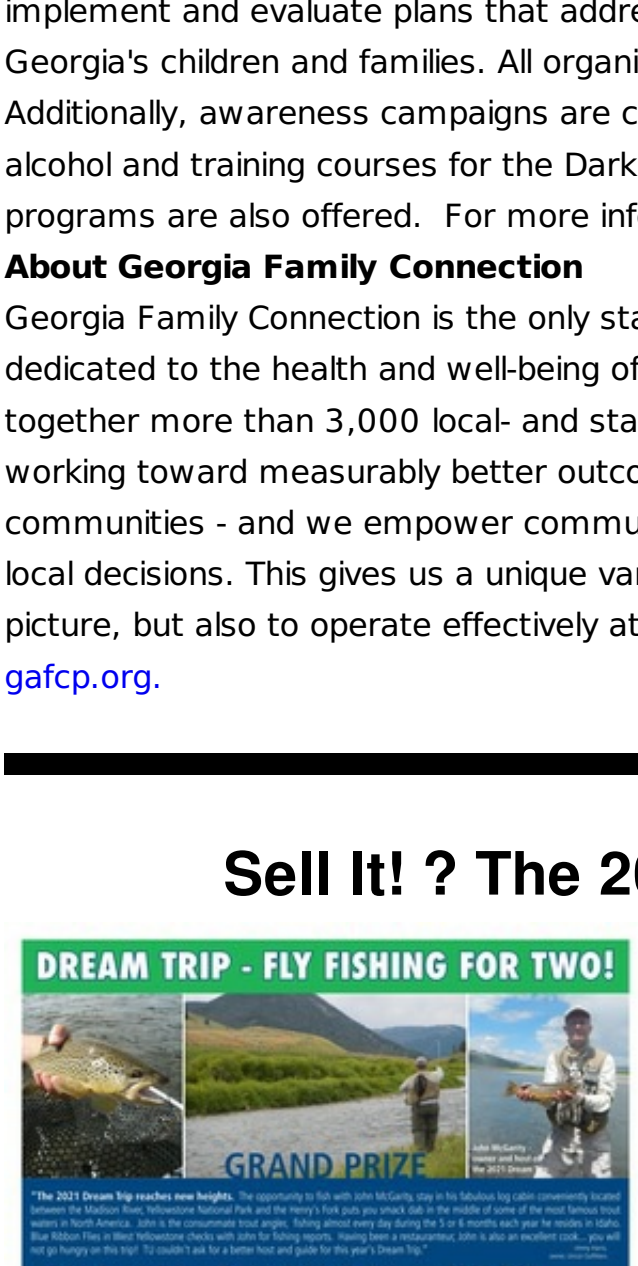
With all that said we are moving forward with 2021 with the intent of getting everything as much as possible back on track. Bob Borgwat and I met with the Mayor Donna Whitener of Blue Ridge a couple weeks ago to hopefully "look into the future" as far as events and gatherings in Blue Ridge and Fannin County after the New Year, but she was not able to give us firm direction as they are waiting on state of Georgia guidance. The Blue Ridge Trout & Outdoor Adventures Festival committee is moving forward at a modest pace, without committing too much financially in case events in Blue Ridge are not allowed by spring. We should know more after the first of the year. We also hope to resume Chapter meetings in some fashion after the New Year. We will keep everyone posted.

Thanks in advance for your patience and support.

Sam Miller

Connect This Weekend and Fill the Shelves

at the Fannin County Food Pantry



In the spirit of giving back during the holidays, the leadership of Blue Ridge Mountain Trout Unlimited asks its members, their families and their friends to help lighten the serious challenges of hunger and food shortages facing children and families in Fannin County community.

Your generous donation this weekend of non-perishable food to Fannin County Family Connection will help those in need, right here in the Trout Capital of Georgia, at a time when generosity and kindness is celebrated and food is most needed.

"We can get all of the canned vegetables and fruits at greatly reduced pricing. For example, a can of green beans at the grocery is typically around a \$1," says Family Connection executive director Sherry Morris. "We can buy a case of green beans for about \$3.50 (that's 24 cans). So those type of goods are best left on the grocery shelf and we'll purchase in bulk for the cost savings."

Things Sherry says they cannot often purchase from the regional food banks are jelly (to go with the peanut butter bought by the pallet), spaghetti noodles, boxed cereal, cooking oil, staples: sugar, flour, cornmeal; boxed mixes for cakes and brownies, condiments. "We have plenty of things like boxed mac & cheese, rice, beans, bread," she adds.

BRMTU president Sam Miller and his lovely sidekick Connie will be onsite at Fannin County Family Connection this Saturday, Dec. 5, from 1 to 2 pm to receive the bounty of food shared by our fellow Trout Unlimited brothers and sisters.

"While we were still planning a holiday party for our chapter members and their families, Sherry Morris, the executive director for Fannin County Family Connection, offered BRMTU free use of their organization's meeting room," Sam says, "a beautiful facility that would easily handle our annual holiday dinner and party. COVID closed the doors on that gathering, but that doesn't mean we can't give back to the good intentions Sherry and Family Connection extended our way. Your kind donation of canned and dry goods will help Family Connection reach out to many families here at home, in Fannin County."

And if you want to volunteer your time to lend a hand with the collection service, give Sam a call - 404-580-4121 - to arrange your assistance.

Fannin County Family Connection, Inc.

501 Fannin Industrial Park

Blue Ridge, GA 30513

Directions: From 515 and Hwy 5 - head East on Hwy 515/US 76 for about 1.8 miles - turn left at Industrial Park Road/McKinney Road stay on Industrial Park Road for about 1 mile - turn right at Industrial Park - go across two railroad tracks and continue straight up a little hill to Family Connection.

About Fannin County Family Connection

Fannin County Family Connection (FCFC) serves the community by operating the

Food

Pantry, distributing nutritious food to over 17,000 individuals annually and providing a free clothing closet. The FCFC Collaborative serves as the local decision-making body, bringing community partners together monthly to develop, implement and evaluate plans that address the serious challenges facing Georgia's children and families. All organizations are welcome at this round table. Additionally, awareness campaigns are conducted for underage consumption of alcohol and training courses for the Darkness2Light Stewards of Children programs are also offered. For more information, visit

About Georgia Family Connection

Georgia Family Connection is the only statewide network of its kind in the country dedicated to the health and well-being of families and communities. We bring together more than 3,000 local- and state-level partners in all 159 counties working toward measurably better outcomes for our children, families, and communities - and we empower communities to craft local solutions based on local decisions. This gives us a unique vantage point - not only to see the big picture, but also to operate effectively at a local level. For more information, visit gafcp.org.

Here is a short list of food items needed most of the time:

- **Jelly (to go with the peanut butter bought by the pallet)**
- **Spaghetti noodles**
- **Boxed cereal**
- **Cooking oil**
- **Staples ... sugar, flour, cornmeal**
- **Boxed mixes for cakes and brownies**
- **Condiments.**

Sell It! ? The 2021 Dream Trip



It's time now for each of us to step up and market the 2021 Dream Trip raffle for BRMTU. At its September meeting, the Georgia Trout Unlimited Council to conduct our 2021 Dream Trip raffle online. TU National has partnered with Eventgroove to offer us this service.

The council's goal is to sell 2,000 tickets = \$20,000. If all the tickets are sold, each Chapter who sells a minimum of 150 will receive a \$500 rebate. If each member in our chapter participates, we will easily make our goal. The winners will be announced at the Council meeting on Saturday, March 20, 2021.

Let's go for it! Currently, Dream Trip tickets can be purchased through the online raffle site at <https://go.tuonlineevents.org/georgia-trout-unlimited-dream-trip-2021>. Use this

link for your own purchase of tickets and to sell tickets to your family, friends, business colleagues and the general public. Anyone can access raffle tickets through this site.

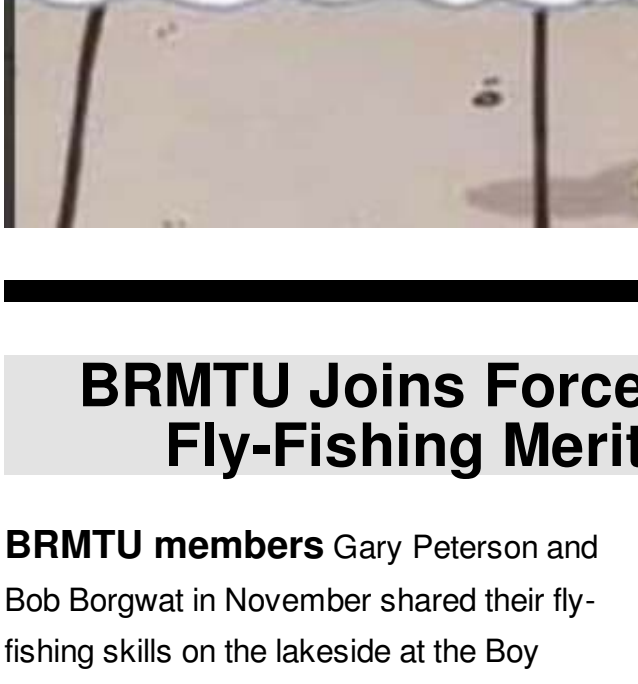
But let's not stop here. Please share your ideas on how best to market the 2021 Dream Trip raffle tickets for the benefit of BRMTU. Contact BRMTU president Sam Miller, 404-580-4121/malolact@yahoo.com or Bob Borgwat, 706-838-5259/bborgwat@gmail.com with your ideas, and we'll meet in early January to make a plan.

Thanks again to Laine and John McGarity for their generosity in providing us with this opportunity!!!!

April 24, Downtown City Park

2021 Trout Fest Planning Awaits

Local Decisions on Gathering Restrictions



The 2021 Blue Ridge Trout & Outdoor Adventures Festival

currently is on the slow track to presenting the official "Trout Festival of Georgia" to visitors in Blue Ridge this spring. Concerns with COVID-19 continue to hamper the organization of the event, planned for April 24, in downtown City Park in Blue Ridge.

BRMTU president Sam Miller and Trout Fest event coordinator Bob Borgwat met in late summer with city and community leaders to discuss the conditions surrounding the opportunity to present "Trout Fest ?21" amid

the many state and local restrictions now imposed on outdoor festivals.

To date, the organizing committee has not yet met to begin planning Trout Fest ?21, but that doesn't mean the festival - BRMTU's primary fundraising activity - won't again bring present vendors, services, programs and activities that support and draw visitors from all over the country to experience Fannin County's great outdoor recreation and destinations. Bob says he's prepared to move forward in January with his reach for sponsors of Trout Fest, but he doesn't want to move ahead more quickly than the committee can move backward if the event again must be postponed or canceled.

When the 2020 event budget was reconciled conclusively by Bob Borgwat, Bob Wetzstein (BRMTU treasurer) and Sam Miller in early October, the group confirmed the event realized about \$8,000 more in expenses than it did income (adjusted for vendor/sponsor refunds) when it was canceled last April. All of the 2020 vendor fees were returned, and while event sponsors also were offered and some received refunds of their donations, others chose to leave their funds with Trout Fest for use toward the 2021 event.

The reality is that any sponsorship funds that were deemed to remain in the 2020 Trout Fest budget were exhausted by the (non)event's expenses, leaving the books seeing an \$8,000 loss. Fortunately, Jan Hackett, president of the Fannin County Chamber of Commerce, asked Bob to prepare a revised invoice to recover the \$5,000 of the event's cancellation. That reduces the loss to \$3,000. Bob will again seek these funds for Trout Fest '21.

Bob, Sam, Jan and Donna Whitener (mayor of Blue Ridge) are optimistic about Trout Fest '21, but informal conversations among BRMTU leadership suggests the event may be scaled back to reduce expenses amid what might be a still-timid public ? perhaps, with an event that mimics the first Trout Fest in 2016.

Bob says he plans to make the 2021 Trout Fest sponsor's and vendor's applications available after there is a clear signal that state and local officials will lift the restrictions associated with COVID-19, when he will immediately follow up with personal calls to those vendors and sponsors who were on board with the 2020 event before it was canceled. Those will be telling conversations.

Support Them. They'll Support Us

Get 10% Off on Gear/Tackle at Cohutta Fishing Co.

Need a few flies? Looking for that hard-to-find fly-tying material? Ready to step up your fishing wardrobe? Need a cap? Leaders? Forceps? A gear bag? A guided fishing trip?

Andy Bowen, owner of Cohutta Fishing Company in Blue Ridge supports Blue Ridge Mountain Trout Unlimited in many ways and now extends a 10% discount on gear and tackle to the chapter's active members.

Thanks Andy!

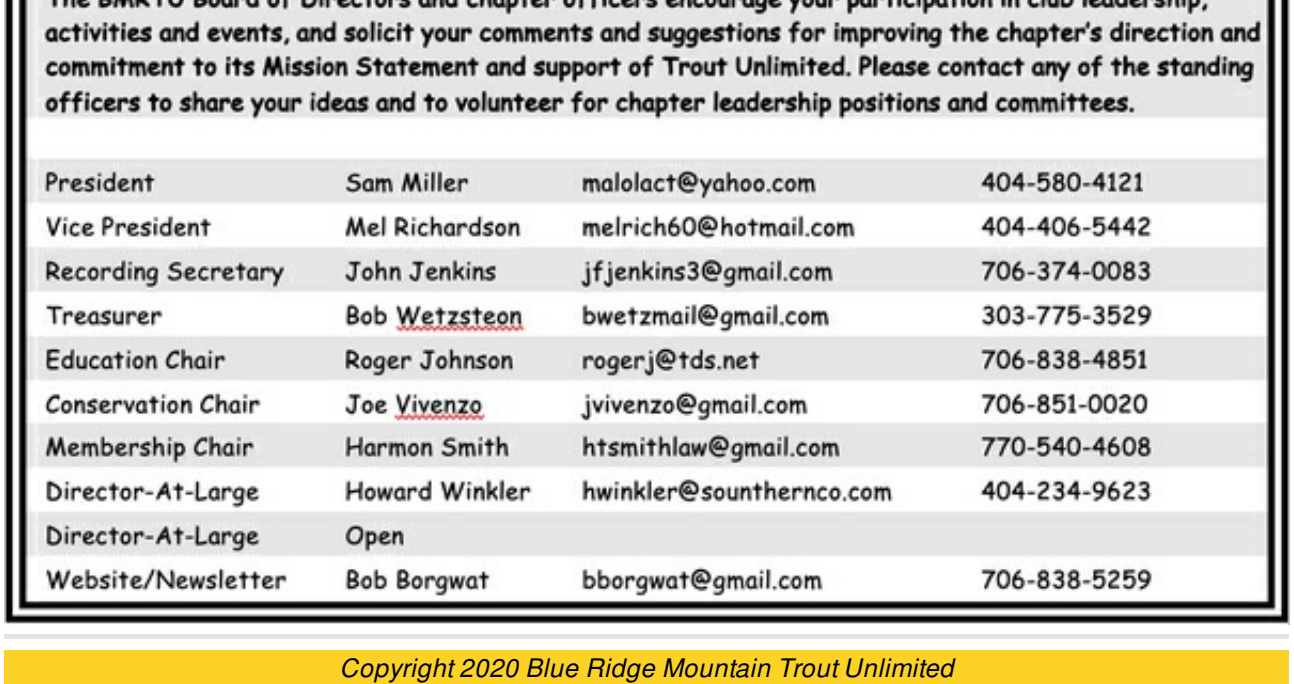


BRMTU Volunteers Stock Trout in their Secret Holes

Along the Toccoa River Delayed Harvest Section

BRMTU volunteers loaded their buckets and coolers with trout on the morning of November 3 and dashed up- and downstream on the Toccoa River at Sandy Bottoms to drop them in places no one else knows but them. Many of them said they had plans to return immediately and catch the fish they hid from all other anglers.

All joking aside, about two dozen volunteers joined the local federal trout hatchery technicians to help distribute about 1,600 trout (1,500 Fryboms and 100 browns) in the mile-long section of the upper Toccoa River designated with "delayed harvest" fishing regulations. Locally known as "Sandy Bottoms," the site where the stocking truck met the mad-cap volunteers is on Old Dial Road, about a mile upstream from Shallowford Bridge just off Aska Road. The truck was stationed a few times at sites where a "bucket brigade" could move fish easily into the river, and some volunteers used float tubes, rafts and canoes to place trout where the truck could not reach riverside.



The Toccoa DH section is stocked once a month from November through February and stocked twice a month from March through June. All fishing from November 1 through May 15 is restricted to artificial lures/flyes with single hooks, and all fish must be released immediately unharmed (catch and release).

Watch your email inbox for more information about volunteering for future stocking dates.

BRMTU Joins Forces at Scout Camp for

Fly-Fishing Merit Badge Sessions

BRMTU members Gary Peterson and Bob Borgwat in November shared their fly-fishing skills on the lakeside at the Boy Scouts' Camp Woodruff to help 38 Scouts earn their Fly-Fishing Merit Badge.

Along with five volunteers from Cohutta TU and a formidable arsenal of fly-fishing gear supplied by Upper Chattahoochee TU, on Day 1 of the Hornaday Conservation Weekend campout Gary and Bob put their fly-casting experience to work, helping two groups of 12 Scouts work learn the basic overhead cast and the roll cast. The one-hour session was part of two separate three-hour instruction sessions where the Cohutta TU volunteers helped the Scouts learn practical fly-fishing knowledge (accessories, tools, knots, etc.) and how to tie a Woolly Bugger trout/bass fly.

Bob also provided instruction to a third group of 12 Scouts on Day 2 of the campout with help from local fishing guide Trey Wall of Blairsville and his buddy, Garth Rich.

The Hornaday Conservation Weekend is an annual three-day outing at Camp Woodruff near Blairsville, GA. During the campout, volunteers from many organizations provide Scouts with instruction toward the earning of 18 Merit Badges. Scouts have the opportunity to enroll in up to three merit badges from a crew of dynamic instructors.

About William T. Hornaday Conservation Weekend 2020

Conservation and the Boy Scouts of America have been partners for a long time. Camping, hiking, and respect for the outdoors are a part of the Scouting heritage. Woodruff Scout Camp near Blairsville, GA is an ideal site for leading Scouts through the many requirements for advancement through the ranks from Tenderfoot through Eagle Scout.

Many former Scouts have become leaders in conserving our environment and protecting it from abuse, growing their increased awareness and understanding of the natural sciences through participation in camping programs such as the William T. Hornaday Conservation Weekend. Scouts involved in this three-day outing learn outdoor skills and actively work to make a difference in the natural sciences.

A New Twist on Fund Raising

A group of yoga enthusiasts twisted in their unique ways in November to produce a \$300 check for Blue Ridge Mountain Trout Unlimited. Yoga instructor Christie Gribble of Blue Ridge led the workout under a program she has developed, "stretching" dollars from class fees collected from those who sign up for her "donation-based classes."

The proceeds from the November 14 class, held riverside at Old Toccoa Farm, were donated to BRMTU because "this organization does so many great things for our community," Christie says, "including stream and river cleanups and educational programs in our local classrooms."

The 75-minute-long Yoga class - consisting of an all-levels flow and a restorative practice - was taught by three instructors - Christie, Gwendolyn Cal and Sue Dodswoth. The class was outdoors, overlooking the Toccoa River (one of BRMTU's favorite conservation and fishing waters) in a flat, grassy area at the Old Toccoa Farm golf course.'

Learn more about Christie Gribble's yoga classes at <https://www.scheduledulicity.com/scheduling/YAOAKS/classes>

About Christie Gribble

Christie's love for yoga began more than 10 years ago when she was starting a career and traveling for work. She found a place of peace on her yoga mat wherever she was. After her mother's passing in 2019, Christie was inspired to learn more about the eight limbs of yoga and to deepen her yoga practice. Through this journey, she has decided to teach and share some of what she loves about yoga - mindfulness, focus, movement, strength, self-awareness, breath, acceptance! Currently, Christie teaches power flow and all-levels classes. Christie is a native to Blue Ridge but has lived in Chattanooga, Birmingham, and Atlanta. She completed her 200 hours of RYT in August 2020 at Yoga and Wellness of Blue Ridge under the instruction of Amanda Dilbeck. Outside of yoga, Christie works for Fannin County Development Authority and teaches professional development classes online with Outschool. She loves to cook and play golf with her husband in spare time.

Fannin County Middle School Awards

Honorary Membership to BRMTU

The Future Farmers of America chapter at Fannin County Middle School last summer awarded Honorary membership to Blue Ridge Mountain Trout at its annual FFA banquet (held by virtual stream) in June.

Honorary membership to the chapter is given to those who have helped to advance agriculture education and the FFA through outstanding service. The award requires a majority vote of the members. BRMTU president Sam Miller and vice president Mel Richardson received the award for the chapter.

"Trout Unlimited has spent countless hours with our agriculture students in the "Trout in the Classroom" program. They have also made donations and scholarships available to our chapter," according to the award statement.

Honorary membership also was awarded to Mr. Jake Williams, employee of Mason Tractor Company, who has helped FFA in several ways at the agriculture facility, maintaining and utilizing the tractor, and helping other students. Honorary membership was also awarded to Mrs. Martha Williams, vice principal at FCMS, who has helped the FFA chapter by supporting curriculum changes, leadership for the advisory council, providing support at local and state livestock shows, and by helping other students in our FFA chapter.

"We greatly appreciate both groups of honorary members this year and look forward to working with them for many years to come," the statement reads.

FLY FISHING & FLY TYPING TIPS

Courtesy of Bob Borgwat [blueridgetu.com](https://www.blueridgetu.com)

Click to view the [Regional Hatch Chart](https://www.blueridgetu.com)

12-02-20 ... With winter comes the coldest water of the season on our rivers, streams and creeks of the southern Appalachian Mountains. And baby, it's cold outside! Right now, the waters of the upper Toccoa River watershed measure about 44 degrees. Chilly!

Trout still are eager to feed in the coldest water of the year, but they won't spend a lot of energy to do so. Drop your best nymph right in front of their nose by keeping drifts tight and deep on the slow side of current seams and in "soft" water between the currents.

Experiment with both leader lengths and added weight (split shot). Most fly patterns in winter need to be on or very close to the bottom. It's an ever-changing formula for success that requires you to consider current speed, water depth, leader length and added weight (or none at all). Expect to change any or all of these factors many times on any trout stream -- and be prepared to lose several flies in the process -- for a successful day on the water in wintertime.

