



HOPE Newsletter

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HOPE serves the counties of Wythe, Bland, Carroll, Grayson and Smyth and the city of Galax.



From the Executive Director

This first quarter of the 2017 calendar year will be marked forever for many reasons, both bad and good. There's no sense in ruminating on the bad, so let's pause instead to celebrate the good, and hope it carries all of us through this year and beyond.

One of the highlights so far was a visit by a group of college students from the University of Maryland (pictured below). Rather than spend their spring break at some southern beach, 13 students opted to come to Bland for a service learning week. They stayed at the Bland Ministry Center, visited the Bluefield Mission, attended a lecture at Emory and Henry College's Center for Public Policy, and devoted their Wednesday to a couple of HOPE projects.



Curious about their passion to come here instead of beaching it, and what they had seen after only three days in the region, I asked them what programs they might design if they were plopped down here working for a non-profit whose name is *helping overcome poverty's existence*. Mind you, they had just glimpses of extreme poverty in this region, from the Bluefield Mission, and had heard much about the depleted natural resources of Appalachia at E&H. Without hardly blinking, this engaged group of college students, whose majors ranged from journalism to economics and bio-engineering to international education policy, listed off at least three needs they thought needed more attention:

- ◆ substance abuse prevention and counseling
- ◆ job creation and training
- ◆ food security

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HOPE provides tools to build community sustainability and independence.



Homeownership Spotlight—Long Meadows

For nearly two years, we'd experienced a bit of a bump in the road with our new Long Meadows subdivision near Ft. Chiswell in eastern Wythe County. Now, literally after a conversation with Governor Terry McAuliffe last October, the road has been re-paved, and authorities will accept the improvements, meaning we can get on with building permits and selling lots for working income households.

Sixteen of the remaining lots are restricted to households earning 80% of the area median income, which equals roughly \$41,000 for a family of four. We are also required to build the homes to Energy Star certifications, and have the homes HERS rated. We have averaged a Home Energy Rating Score in the low 70s, which means the homes are 30% more efficient than a home built to standard code; this also means there is a 30% savings on energy usage!



Through our financing for this subdivision, eligible homebuyers are also required to put in 100 hours of sweat equity.

Next Step in Manufactured Homes

In partnership with Next Step and partnering dealer, LUV Homes in Dublin, HOPE offers additional opportunities for *affordable housing done right*. Modular and manufactured homes through the Next Step program are constructed to meet Energy Star specifications making them more efficient than a standard home purchased off the lot. Energy costs in a Next Step home are 30-50% less than a similar sized home.

In March, construction was completed on the first home through HOPE's Next Step program. Constructed on a scattered site located in Wythe County, from start to finish, the on-frame modular home set up was completed in six weeks, and that included a slight delay for weather. This 1,560 sq. ft. home features three bedrooms and two full baths, a covered front porch and two decks. The home came in at a cost of \$83/sq. ft., making Next Step an affordable option for families interested in a new construction home that can increase in value and become a true investment for the future. With Next Step, the home is turnkey before the owner ever makes their first house payment.



Contact Amanda Romans in our office at aromans@wythehope.org or 276-228-6280, Ext. 216, if you are interested in becoming the owner of a new, energy efficient and affordable home.



Shirley McCormick

Over the years, we would receive an occasional call from a donor here in town. She would ask questions about this or that non profit, including HOPE. Frequently, in the mail there would be two or three checks in the same envelope, made out to various non profits, as the donor was saving on postage stamps.

The next-to-last check we received from Shirley McCormick, was written on August 29th. We received it the next day—the same day we learned that she had passed away, at the age of 84. Four months later, as her estate was settled, HOPE received her bequest of \$50,000, as did other non profits and churches in the community.

She was a retired educator, with 24 years teaching at Wytheville Community College, and a member of St. Paul United Methodist Church. Since retiring in 1992, she devoted much of her time and energy to volunteering, and a dedication to others, including museums here in town, her church, Relay for Life, among others.

Her presence and generosity will be missed, but her gift lives on in the mission of HOPE and other agencies!

From the Executive Director *(continued from page 1)*

This was enlightening as HOPE's work really only touches one of those three perceived needs. There are other agencies charged with substance abuse work, particularly around the epidemic of opioid addiction in Appalachia. And certainly there are public programs near and far charged with missions around job creation, retention, start-ups, and industrial development. These students though saw through that shortcoming, and while coming from an urban campus, recognized that in rural places like ours, something more has to be done to educate, retrain, and retain our human resources, less we become nothing but a depopulated and played out desert.

Through their day of service with HOPE, they saw both of our foundation programs—housing and food security. They helped move a family with a disabled child within our Hillcrest community, and then they assisted with the wonderful weekly Wednesday packing of 835 bags for our HOPE Packs program.

Another group of nine visitors, some of the staff from the Federation of Appalachian Housing Enterprises (Fahe), an intermediary providing housing financial support throughout central Appalachia, visited HOPE's office and programs on the previous Wednesday. They also shared in the HOPE Packs experience with about 40 others from Sunny Hills Church, a Rural Retreat Girl Scout troop, and the Kiwanis Club, and commented that witnessing and participating in this community experience was the highlight of their mission tour.

If your civic group, church or family would like to help out with a Wednesday HOPE Packs, contact Mike Pugh at mpugh@wythehope.org or at 276-228-6280, Ext. 213.



Top (left to right): Andy Kegley, Executive Director of HOPE, Harvey Atkinson, Vice-Chair of HOPE's Board of Directors, and Mike Pugh, HOPE Packs Program Coordinator, accept a \$2,500 donation to HOPE Packs from Robert Waschler with Waste Industries. Bottom: members of Fahe staff from Berea, Kentucky volunteered at a recent HOPE Packs weekly packing.

HOPE Partners with WCMA

When HOPE Board member Pastor Harvey Atkinson took on new churches in Smyth County last year, he notified his fellow members of the Wythe County Ministerial Association (WCMA) that he would have to give up his role as treasurer. There was more to this transition than meets the eye.

Pastor Harvey handled WCMA funds, which are frequently leveraged with other area program assistance for families in a crisis. He kept office hours here at HOPE, so was able to lean on HOPE's Intake Coordinator Gary Slep to check on a client's need for additional assistance.

Realizing his experience would be hard to replicate, members of WCMA and HOPE staff, including our AmeriCorps VISTA Hunter Fillers, began to visualize a different system, utilizing a shared spreadsheet on-line where church staff, HOPE, Bland Ministry Center, Grace Point and others could all see and manage WCMA discretionary funding.

Unveiled in January, participating church and agency staff now go to this real-time, on-line spreadsheet, enter a client's need for some assistance, and track which other agency is making a pledge for the same client. Importantly, while this system is enabling WCMA to manage its total annual assistance budget of \$11,400, it has also identified another \$13,313 in unmet needs. This helps justify increased funding from donors, churches and others in our community.

As WCMA Treasurer Pastor Chad Dunford says:

Proverb 19:17 says: "One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the Lord, and He will repay him for his good deed." Christ frequently equated the works done for the poor and destitute with works done unto Him. Whether we care for widows, orphans, or the poor, we are told that doing this will result in reward from the Lord Himself. C.S. Lewis said: "The proper rewards are not simply tacked on to the activity for which they are given, but are the activity itself in consummation." That is, the reward promised to us for caring for "the least of these" is not a mercenary affair, but rather a proper result of how Christ intended for us to treat our fellow man. The call of Matthew 25:40 is given to all in the faith community, and the work of the WCMA is a practical, powerful way for many others to get involved.

Big Pencil to Big Walker Ride



****INTRODUCING****

THE FAST AND THE FIORINI

Saturday, June 17, 2017, 7:30 am, Wytheville, Virginia



No one quite touched the lives of bicyclists and outdoors folks like Ian Fiorini. He was at the table as we planned and implemented the first Big Walker Century Ride back in 2004, in his role as co-owner of Treehuggers Outdoors, a local outing store and specialized bike dealer on Main Street in downtown Wytheville.

He rode bikes, sold bikes, repaired bikes, tuned up bikes on the morning of many rides, and rode sag year after year. After working away from here, he returned and threw himself into this charity ride with the same Ian spirit. He embodied the happiness of riding bikes and lived to share his passion with anyone that crossed his path. Sadly, last August, he died suddenly, leaving behind his wife Jody, son Roman, and hundreds of friends and kindred spirits.

HOPE, Inc. is honored to add Ian's name to our annual fundraiser, known as the **Big Pencil to Big Walker**, aka *The Fast and the Fiorini*, as a way to memorialize his contribution to area cycling. We hope to continue to bring friends and cyclists together so that we may spread a little of Ian's happiness to those who may need it.

Fare thee well, long may you ride, The Fast and the Fiorini!

This epic ride starts in downtown Wytheville, in the shadow of the Big Pencil hanging over Main Street at Wytheville Office Supply. Our metric century ride offers three climbs of Big Walker Mountain, just north of town.

The ride coincides with the opening day of the annual *Chautauqua Festival in the Park*, an eight day family oriented arts and music festival held in downtown Wytheville.

Three routes available

- Metric century (3 climbs)
 - 44 miles (2 climbs)
 - 32 miles (1 climb)

All riders receive a free custom-designed cycling jersey



For more information, email info@bigwalkercharityride.com or call (877) 818-8680 or (276) 228-6280, Ext. 211.

REGISTER NOW

www.bigwalkercharityride.com



Proceeds benefit HOPE, an umbrella human services organization supporting food security and housing affordability in the southwest Virginia counties of Wythe, Bland, Carroll, Smyth and Grayson and the city of Galax. Visit www.wythehope.org for more information about HOPE.



Help Wanted

HOPE is seeking a creative, experienced, visionary and entrepreneurial grant writer/development coordinator to grow our Community Food Kitchen program into a pay-what-you-can restaurant. We have raised about half of this project's anticipated development cost, but have decided to change sites and repurpose this project within our HOPE Ministry Center office building and Main Street location. This will enable the project to benefit from synergies of a co-located office serving a wide-range of programs for low wealth and disadvantaged individuals.

Key highlights of our project to date:

- ◆ Five year's experience managing our Community Food Kitchen project, averaging 150 meals per week, at an average cost of around \$2 per meal, supported entirely to date with over 50 unduplicated monthly volunteers.

- ◆ Raised \$270,000 in foundation support for new commercial kitchen to serve targeted, food insecure individuals.

- ◆ Identified optimal site in HOPE's Main Street property, for repurposing existing building while adding new space, in a co-located facility with five other human service agencies, serving thousands each year.

- ◆ Collaborations established with other food initiatives, such as the Culinary Arts program at Wythe County Technology Center.

If you know this ideal candidate, contact HOPE's Executive Director Andy Kegley at 276-228-6280, Ext. 211, or akegley@wythehope.org.

Sponsorship Opportunities

We're into our 14th year of the Big Pencil to Big Walker Metric Century Ride, aka *The Fast and the Fiorini*. This is our biggest annual fundraiser, and consistently scores high marks with cyclists. If you or your business, civic group or church are interested in helping to sponsor this event, or to volunteer at one of the rest stops, please give us a call. We'll be posting an image of this year's custom designed cycling jersey, which all riders receive as part of their registration, very soon. It's not too late to add your name to this jersey!



2015 and 2016 jerseys as designed by world record holder cyclist *Scottie Weiss* at *Starlight Custom Apparel*.