

Spring 2021

# Blue Ridge

L I V I N G · O N · T H E · M O U N T A I N

“The truth is, we all face hardships of some kind, and you never know the struggles a person is going through. Behind every smile, there’s a story of a personal struggle.”

*Adrienne C. Moore*

2021 has been a struggle for all of us. We have all felt loss and isolation, and we have experienced life in a way we could not have ever imagined. Hopefully, after this past year, we have all become kinder, more generous, and more tolerant. And perhaps we have learned more about ourselves through this ordeal.

The Board would like to wish everyone good health, and a well-lit path to happiness in the coming months.

## **Remembering Natalie**

*by Paz Andrae*

While gathering information for this edition of our Newsletter, I couldn’t help think of Natalie Evancheck. This will be the first Newsletter in a long time that she won’t have a hand in. The BRMCA Newsletter was something that Natalie always worked hard to make informative, interesting, and entertaining. Natalie was a proponent of communicating with the membership often.

Natalie was not only the Editor of the Newsletter, she was also the BRMCA Secretary, and she helped every Board Member with their committees. She wore many hats, and she wore them all well.

Most of us were lucky to call her our friend. I thought it would be appropriate to ask a few of those friends to share some thoughts:

**Janel Melgaard** “I will never forget my joy when I saw Natalie’s name on a text or email. It did not matter whether the subject was serious or lighthearted. It was going to be a joy because it was from Natalie!”

**Linda Martz** “One of the many things I remember about Natalie is her love of plants and all the hard work she put into landscaping her property (with George’s help of course.) I could always count on her to take my extra plants, even those ever-spreading Ostrich Ferns. I told her they would soon end up at Mount Weather.”

**Kathy Donovan** “Natalie created beauty in homes for both Blue Ridge Mountain Home Tours. She totally transformed décor for Checkmate Farm. For the Tour Welcome Tent she made pumpkin topiaries. She made every “Holiday Bow” for us. I was thrilled they moved to the mountain. I knew how lucky our neighbors would be knowing Natalie. We are all very blessed knowing and laughing with Natalie.”

*(continues next page)*

## Remembering Natalie ...*(continued from page 1)*

**Judy Whitehouse** “I don’t know where to start or what to choose – the memories are many and all still so part of my life. Natalie put her heart into everything she did – whether it was her family (George, Ashley, Allyson), Mountain Homes Tours, The Old School in Bluemont, Friends of Bluemont, Bluemont Citizens Association, BRMCA, The Bluemont Fair, and many others.

I remember her planning an 80<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration for Iris at the Tea Cart in Berryville. When we got there, we found out that it wasn’t Iris’ 80<sup>th</sup> birthday yet, and she didn’t drink tea. We had a good laugh over that one.

Natalie was one in a million and can never be replaced or forgotten. She was a true friend and a generous, kind, and loving person. It is too bad there aren’t more Natalie’s in the world. What a happier place it would be.”

**Paz Andrae** “I was looking back through the texts that Natalie and I exchanged. Most of them were lighthearted and funny (even when dealing with BRMCA business.) We had a similar sense of humor, so we always seemed to be laughing.

I learned a lot from Nat. In particular, in dealing with topics that might be controversial, Natalie handled them with grace, humor, and a sprinkle of sassiness. That takes talent. Natalie was such a positive influence in my life. I miss her every day.”

## Firewise Update

*by Mick Newman*

First, and most importantly, you probably know by now there will not be a brush collection this year. Our grant funds come from the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDoF). They have instituted a new funding policy that puts groups like ours on a three-year rotating cycle whereby we are eligible for (but not guaranteed) different grant amounts each year. This year we are in the \$0 category. Given that, please do not leave piles of brush near the road in anticipation of a Firewise pick-up this year. Stay tuned for next year.

Second, I’m working on a fire emergency evacuation plan for the group that will have some, if not all, of the following elements:

- Emergency preparedness kit (go kit) – what you need to have quickly available should you need to leave quickly;
- Pre-emergency preparation;
- Property inventory in case of loss;
- A primer on the research you should conduct to understand what your health plan will and will not cover in the event you find yourself using providers/services out of the ordinary;
- A “nearby neighbor” plan to ensure those around you who may need help in an emergency are accounted for;
- A primer for future administrators of this plan with the contact information and roles of all the parties involved;
- A to-do list of other actions that could be undertaken with said parties to improve the plan.



Last, although we will not be collecting brush this year, it is important that we collectively continue to report our in-kind activities so that we can remain eligible for future grants. To that end, I will be distributing a VDoF-supplied worksheet for members to use

“Sometimes late at night I dig a big hole in the back yard to keep the neighbors guessing.”

*- Unknown*

## Remembering Natalie

By Ashley Morris and Allyson Evancheck

Natalie Gale Evancheck, loving mother and the best partner a daughter could imagine. Her positive, energetic personality was undeniable as she always found ways to put others first. She enjoyed leading and being involved in various activities and social groups tied to the mountain community, and frequently was an unbiased confidant for friends and family. There are so many memories and positive impacts to our lives that it is difficult to limit them to a single page; however, it probably goes without saying that she is dearly missed.

Taking a page out of her figurative "book", it only seems fitting that we look forward optimistically and share some light-hearted notes from her experience while living "up on the mountain."

- "The Mountain" has a lot of history, mystery, and treasure; it is important to know where to look but once you find it, it becomes part of your purpose to help protect it
- The people you meet are not just neighbors; there is an extraordinary sense of community and inclusion "up on the mountain"
- The feeling of "living in the clouds"; Bluemont is a beautiful area with its own microclimate. The key is to dress in layers because the weather can seemingly change seasons in a matter of minutes, and it is always better to prepare for more snow than the weather report predicts.
- The "best time" time of day to take a few minutes for yourself and relax is at sunset; the sky tells a new story each time it fills with vibrant colors that dance across the horizon. As the sun disappears you could be delighted with the opportunity to view a late-night meteor shower and flickering stars.
- The local community also includes many, many "neighbors" like bears, coyotes, foxes, raccoons. Did anyone mention the deer? If you have outdoor plants and flowers, shrubs, trees, or even grass the chances are.. well you know...
- Hummingbirds love their "go go juice" and they are not afraid of Great Danes if they get in the way of their feeder. Side note: Great Danes do not seem to be big fans of those hyper little birds
- "Mountain CrossFit" is a full-body workout; there is always more yard work to do and your muscles will remind you of your accomplishments each day





## Appreciating—and Planting—Native Flora

by Laura K. Greenleaf

My childhood memories of early spring on the mountain are marked by certain botanical companions. Bloodroot pushed up through the crust of leaf litter decay, carrying with them the warmth and scent of the earth and staining my fingers when I picked them to join Spring Beauty and Rue Anemone in my little bouquets. Mayapples sprung open their little umbrella canopies, which surely sheltered magical faeries. I didn't know the word "spathe" and probably missed these late winter blooms of skunk cabbage, but I recall my annual visits to the streamside populations in full leaf.

The best ways we can protect and conserve these spring ephemerals and other native flora on the mountain are to:

- Avoid soil disturbance (a welcome mat for invasives, the seeds of which often hitchhike on equipment).
- Become familiar with what species are invasive. Control existing invasive species according to recommended best practices from experts like Blue Ridge PRISM.
- Learn more about our native flora.
- Plant mindfully.



Conventional landscaping has long favored "ornamentals" that not only are not indigenous where they are planted, but often not anywhere in North America. Many of our most destructive invasive plant species started out as garden escapees and some continue to be nursery standards. Yet choosing to "go native" can lead to mistakes; for example, purple coneflower has become a popular "native plant" almost everywhere—including many places where it isn't native at all, such as Virginia (a biologist colleague has informed me that hybridization with purple coneflower is a threat to Virginia's one native species of echinacea). "Native plant" labels are no guarantee; invasive plants sometimes stowaway in nursery pots, and cultivars pose their own potential problems.

So, what is a well-intentioned gardener who wants to support native pollinators, songbirds, and other wildlife to do? Fortunately, Virginia has the *Plant Virginia Natives campaign* ([www.plantvirginiannatives.org](http://www.plantvirginiannatives.org)). Here you can find the guidance you need to make well-informed decisions including webinars and regional guides to plant selection (the Ridge and Valley guide is not yet out, but mountain residents can turn to the Northern Virginia and Northern Piedmont guides). Other important resources include the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Natural Heritage Program and the Virginia Native Plant Society.

### **Land Use / Commercialization Oversight Committee** by Scott Seeberger

I've been appointed as Chairman of the BRMCA Land Use/Commercialization Oversight Committee. Our committee is responsible for informing residents of land use regulations and conservation efforts in both Clarke and Loudoun Counties. We also aim to ensure any commercialization plans on the mountain are conducted in compliance with all federal, state and county requirements.

Specific areas of concern the committee has recently been involved with include: ensuring Bear Chase Brewing Company complies with all county and state regulations, monitoring a campground application (that was subsequently withdrawn by the property owner) and monitoring the increased vehicle and pedestrian traffic on Blueridge Mountain Rd.

With regard to my background, I am a retired Navy pilot. My wife and I moved to Bluemont a little over five years ago and feel being involved in our community is an important privilege. I was drawn to serve on this committee in particular to help safeguard the unique environment of the Blue Ridge and ensure we all continue enjoying its beauty for many years to come. If you have a similar desire to serve, please reach out to the Association about joining this committee or others. Please also feel free to reach out should you have any questions or input regarding land use/commercialization.

## Loudoun County Update

by Margit Royal

**Zoning Ordinance (ZO) Re-Write** County staff from various departments are continuing revision and organizational work on the documents which govern Loudoun's ordinances. Two citizen's organizations, the Piedmont Environment Council (PEC) and the Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Coalition (LCPCC) were invited to submit early comments and suggestions. The LCPCC formed a Zoning Subcommittee; I've been the BRMCA representative to the LCPCC, and am on the zoning subcommittee, speaking for the Mountain Development Overlay District (MDOD). Details of the MDOD document, the Bear Chase Brewery chronology example, and other important documents crafted by various sub-committees can be found on the LCPCC website at [loudouncoalition.org](http://loudouncoalition.org).

There will be opportunities for additional public input on the new zoning document; currently the time frame for its finalization is between late 2021 and mid-2022, as several organizations have requested additional review time.

**Community Traffic** Loudoun (LC) and Clarke (CC) Counties have confronted complaints about traffic and safety at the intersection of Routes 601 and 7. Both counties are involved in the solution process. At the moment, VDOT CC is investigating the possibility of enlarging and/or paving the public parking lot at the head of the intersection. VDOT environmental "guys" have said, "No problem" per Mr. Ed Carter, VDOT spokesperson for the Staunton (CC) District. The cost is estimated at between \$250-300K, which would be covered by some combination of state and/or county tax dollars. CC District will be responsible for moving and requiring the flashing signs that warn of the intersection from both directions.

LC (Northern Virginia District) VDOT is undertaking study of lengthening the left turn lane (150-200 feet) on westbound 7 at the Route 601 intersection. No definite plans are yet underway.

Between now and June 2021, VDOT will undertake a traffic study, probably over two different 3-day weekends, to determine flow near the intersection as the tourist season perks up. 2019 counts revealed 25K vehicles pass the intersection daily, and 1,900 use the intersection to enter or leave 601 daily.

There is no discussion re: widening 601 at this time; there has been limited discussion re: creating pedestrian path shoulders along 601.

**Who will pay for any or all of the above? At the bottom line - tax payers.** According to Mr. Carter, usually the cost of such "improvements" is divided between state and county dollars. VDOT has a program entitled Smart Scale, to which counties with limited financial resources can apply; it takes about 6 years from application to project completion when using the SS Program.

**The Good News...** Signage to prohibit through truck traffic on 601 has been finalized, per Mr. Ed Carter. The signs requesting comments should be coming down soon, and law enforcement has indicated that they may begin patrolling to that effect.

## Covid Vaccination Update - Loudoun

by Margit Royal

The Loudoun County MRC (Medical Reserve Corps) will be recognized in May by Loudoun Cares as the 2021 Outstanding Volunteer Team. Since the start of LC's response to Covid-19, MRC volunteers have put in over 82,000 hours of volunteer time using over 2,900 deployable volunteers. The savings to the County is over \$5.5 million. There recently have been two positive news stories about the MRC. You can see them here: <https://www.rte.ie/news/2021/0409/1208754-world-us-vaccine-rollout/> <https://wjla.com/news/local/old-nordstrom-turned-into-massive-vaccine-clinic-in-sterling>

The MRC continues to seek volunteers of all backgrounds, not necessarily medical, to help with vaccination centers across the state. The Dulles Town Center site serves between 3,600 and 4,600 clients daily, and a second site is open in Sterling with evening hours. If you are interested in volunteering, contact: [www.loudoun.gov/mrc](http://www.loudoun.gov/mrc). You can also contact Margit Royal for inside details: [margiter@me.com](mailto:margiter@me.com).



### The New BRMCA Website

Natalie Evancheck had been working on the new BRMCA website since early 2020. Her daughter Ashley Morris has taken on the project, and she has done an amazing job. Going forward, the newsletter will be posted on the website, and you will be able to post hours for Firewise and Road Cleanup there as well. Be on the lookout for information on how to access the new website.



## **Cicadas**

by Paz Andrae



Many of us have a very specific memory when it comes to our first encounter with cicadas. My memory? Louise, my high school friend, got into a car accident when a cicada flew in her car window and landed on her face. (Do you have a visual?) Why the window was down, I'm not sure.

Whether you dislike them, find them tasty, or are completely indifferent, the 17-year cicada will soon emerge in large (and noisy) masses. The very best website about cicadas (according to Claire Stuart of Clarke Monthly) is [www.cicadamania.com](http://www.cicadamania.com).

### **Luna Sighting**

by Kim Larson

If out after dark in early Spring, you may be fortunate enough to spy a large green moth. Although not officially on the Endangered Species List, this creature is considered endangered in some areas. The aptly named Luna Moth, also called the Moon Moth, has a wingspan of 4-½ to 7 inches. With wings ranging from pale, light, translucent green to lime and teals, furry white bodies, and feathery antennae, they are quite an exquisite sight.

They range from northern Mexico to Canada, preferring deciduous woodlands of Hickory, Walnut, Sumac, Persimmon, Birch and Sweet Gum. These are the plants on which the caterpillars feed. Their long, twisted tail is often mistaken for the head of this insect, allowing it to escape predators with only a torn wing.



The adult moth, being in the family Saturniidae (giant silk moths) is completely harmless. It has no proboscis, or mouth part, so it does not even eat. It appears in late May or early June and lives up to a week, only to mate and lay eggs.

The caterpillar produces a single strand of fine silk to form its cocoon. These strands are from 300 to 800 meters long! After boiling to loosen the thread, it is unwound from the cocoon, and rewound onto a spool. It is now ready to be woven into a soft, warm, very lightweight fabric. This silk fabric is able to accept dyes of many colors. Archaeologists believe this cloth has been produced since 3500-2000 BCE.

To learn more about these beautiful insects who occasionally grace our mountain, including the fascinating harvesting of silk, go to <https://animals.net/luna-moth>, <https://www.thoughtco.com/chinese-empress-discovers-silk-making-3529402>.

## **Dues**

Membership dues are now \$30.00 per household and are now due.

.....Please make checks payable to "BRMCA". THANK YOU.....

**BRMCA**

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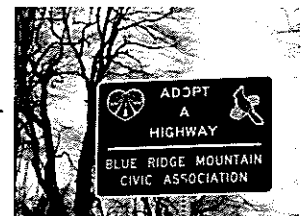
**Looking Ahead**

The 2021 calendar is still yet to be determined. If the virus is controlled, we can look forward to a FALL POTLUCK with a chili cookoff, Fall General Board Meeting with Elections, and a Fall Road Cleanup. FINGERS CROSSED.

**Road Clean Up**

*by Paz Andrae*

The BRMCA Road clean-up was held Saturday, April 24th. We filled a grand total of 53 bags! The most prevalent items found were 7-Eleven coffee cups, cigarette butts, and Ice House beer cans.



The Board incorporated a little fun into the event by holding its first-ever Interesting Headgear Contest. The winner, Carol Weare took home the grand prize, a \$25 Lowe's gift card. Carol's headgear, a fascinator, was unique because she made it out of trash that she had picked up. Kim Larson and Scott Seeberger were a close second.

The turnout today was impressive. It was great to see some new faces. A big thank you to Judy for providing coffee and donuts after cleanup. Thank you all so much. The mountain road looks beautiful!

**2021 Membership is Now Due**

Send payment to BRMCA • Post Office Box 303 • Bluemont, Virginia 20135