



# Ruritan

Volume 91, Spring 2026





# Ruritan

Volume 91, SPRING 2026

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## Leading with Purpose: A Journey of Service, Change, and Commitment in 2026

It is truly an honor to serve as your National President for 2026, but I would be remiss if I did not recognize the unwavering support of my family, as well as the mentors, Past National Presidents John Hancock, Richard Weakley, and Braxton Bell, who encouraged me to take this journey. These men believed in me. They encouraged me, guided me, and shared profound and lasting wisdom throughout my time at the District and National levels. More than leaders, they were true friends and outstanding Ruritans. I am deeply grateful for the influence they had on my life and my journey.

I would like to start with my “Why” story. Why am I a Ruritan? As a teenager, I was part of the United Methodist Youth at my church. Our youth group was very active in our community. We did more than meet, eat, study the Bible, and sing songs. I was fortunate to have two ladies (Glenice Townsend and Phyllis Williamson) who mentored and guided our group and helped us understand the true importance of helping others and serving our community. As a fourteen-year-old, I did not fully grasp the significance of what we were doing, but helping shut-ins, the elderly, and the sick with small projects around their homes left a lasting impression on me that still resonates today. I am so grateful to Glenice and Phyllis for instilling those values in me and giving me the opportunity to serve. That volunteerism followed me into adulthood, where I worked with the volunteer rescue squad and earned EMT certification. I later volunteered to coach numerous sports and eventually joined Ruritan once my children were older. I hope I have made a difference, but most importantly, the journey of serving has been incredibly rewarding for me.

My focus this year is Project FOCUS. I encourage every District, Club, and member to host projects and fundraisers to support Project Focus. Project Focus was there to help those devastated by Hurricane Helene, but we need to replenish those funds, so we are prepared for the next disaster.

My expectations for 2026 are simple: I ask each of you to embrace change. As Maya Angelou once said, “Without change, we would not have the beauty of butterflies.” We all agree that change is necessary. We talk about it. We acknowledge it. Yet when it is time to implement change, it can feel difficult and uncomfortable. Over the past several years, the Board has initiated important changes, and yes, some of those changes were met with resistance, which is natural. But the good news is this: the change is working. We are growing clubs. We are adding members. Most importantly, we have stopped the drastic decline in membership that has challenged our organization. We will continue making the adjustments necessary to strengthen and grow Ruritan, but it takes all of us. I ask each of you to embrace the change, support it, and give it the opportunity to succeed. Our Long-Term Plan is working. We must remain steadfast in our commitment to “3+5 Keeps the Dream Alive” as we move forward together.

I am truly excited about working with our Board this year. The enthusiasm of those returning, combined with the energy and willingness of our new members to get started, gives me great confidence and hope in what we can accomplish together. I firmly believe this team of men and women will do great things. They are ready to go to work and hit the ground running. We will operate as a team, as a family, supporting and encouraging one another every step of the way. I promise I will never ask them to do anything that I am not willing to do myself. It is essential that our Board remains united in its decisions. We may not always agree, and healthy discussion is important, but ultimately decisions are made by the Board as a whole, not by one or two individuals. When we move forward, we move forward together.

I want to thank President Becky for her leadership this past year and her ability to work through difficult issues. And a huge thank you to Executive Director Sarah Kelly, who endured so much but never wavered, and to her staff for all the hard work they do to keep this organization operating as smoothly as it does. Words alone are not enough but know that all of you are appreciated.

In closing, I want you to know that I am just a phone call, text, or email away. I may not always respond immediately, but I promise I will follow up with you. I consider you my family, and that is one of the greatest things about Ruritan. God bless each of you, and thank you for what you do for Ruritan.



## Executive Director Sarah Kelly



### Choosing Community Over Division: A Call to Build Connection and Belonging

Across our country, across generations, people are lonelier than ever. Many struggle to feel seen, valued, and connected. Instead of community, they are too often pulled into tribes—groups defined by who agrees with them, who looks like them, or who thinks like them.

That tribalism is everywhere. It exists in society and in our institutions, and, if we are honest, in Ruritan as well. Acknowledging this does not mean we have failed. It means we are human—and it reminds us why our mission matters.

Recent conversations in the national spotlight have shown how people retreat behind labels and boundaries meant to protect themselves. Unfortunately, instead of healing, this often leads to deeper isolation. People do not need more sides to choose from. They do not need more labels or tribes. What they need is community.

Strong communities are built when very different people choose to work together toward something larger than themselves. Unity does not mean agreement on everything, nor does it mean sameness. It means commitment—to one another and to a shared purpose. When divisions slow us down, we lose momentum. In a fractured world, momentum matters.

When people feel disconnected, they stop engaging. They stop volunteering. They stop believing they matter. Ruritan must stand in direct opposition to that trend. We must bring people together. We must give them a reason to show up. We must create places where people belong. But we cannot do that if we turn inward or allow differences to create distance.

This is why growth matters. Our goal for the coming year is for each district to open three new clubs. Three new clubs will not solve loneliness or erase tribalism, but they will make a difference. We do not open new clubs for the sake of numbers. We open them so future generations will have places to connect, opportunities to serve, and communities where they are not alone. Every new club is a door opened and an invitation to belong.

Our vision—*Creating Thriving Communities*—does not happen by accident. Thriving communities are built intentionally and together. That requires choosing collaboration over division, listening before reacting, and remembering that purpose matters more than preference. If Ruritan cannot model healthy community, then who will?

This is our moment to surge forward—with intentionality. Surging forward means recommitting to our mission, opening new clubs where community is missing, choosing unity over tribalism, and believing that what we do truly matters.

People are searching for connection, purpose, and belonging. Let Ruritan be that place, so communities today and tomorrow can truly thrive.

## Long-Term Planning Committee

### The Tale of Three Districts: Lessons for 2026

In the same year, with the same national resources, growth message, and Long-Term Plan goals, three districts had very different results.

Each district heard the same call to action: focus on growth, strengthen clubs, build leaders, and use the Long-Term Plan as a guide. Each had access to the same tools and support. Yet the outcomes were not the same.

This is not a criticism of any district. It is a reflection — and a reminder — that leadership choices matter.

#### **District One: Focus Builds Momentum**

The first district stayed focused. Leaders met regularly, talked openly about growth, and kept cabinet discussions centered on priorities. Struggling clubs were identified early and given support.

Leaders understood two simple truths:

Growth starts with mindset.

Progress comes from steady effort.

By year's end, the district added new clubs, grew membership, and built excitement for the future. Leaders did not get distracted by what they couldn't control. They focused on what they could do — finding new communities, encouraging new leaders, and setting clear goals.

The result was growth and a belief that success was possible.

#### **District Two: Energy Drives Growth**

The second district saw strong membership gains fueled by energy and engagement. Leaders were visible, responsive, and willing to try new ideas, especially with youth and RuriTeen programs.

District and zone leaders visited clubs, answered questions, and promoted national events. When problems came up, they were addressed directly.

The lesson here was simple: energy spreads. When leaders show up, listen, and act, members follow. Growth wasn't just about numbers — it rebuilt confidence and reminded members why Ruritan matters.

#### **District Three: Leadership Gaps Hold Things Back**

The third district had size and history, but those strengths didn't lead to growth. Lack of communication, inconsistent engagement, and unresolved conflict slowed progress.

Ideas for growth and training were shared but not used. Requests for help went unanswered. Over time, participation dropped and membership declined.

This district shows an important lesson: structure alone does not create success — leadership does. Without trust, communication, and openness to change, even strong districts can lose momentum.

## 2026 National Committee Communications

### **Key Lessons for District Leaders in 2026**

Across all three districts, clear lessons emerged:

- Growth requires intention. It won't happen by accident.
- Communication matters. Responsive leaders build trust.
- New leaders bring new energy. Fresh voices spark momentum.
- Great leaders never stop growing and they make sure others grow with them.
- Club visits make a difference. Presence builds connection.
- Culture drives results. Positive cultures grow; negative ones don't.
- Know your role and responsibilities and Just Do It!

### **Moving Forward**

The Long-Term Plan is more than a document — it's a call to action. The experiences of these three districts show that success in 2026 will depend less on circumstances and more on leadership choices.

Districts that focus on growth, communicate openly, develop leaders, and work toward shared goals will be positioned to succeed.

Every district is different, but the path forward is clear: lead with purpose, stay focused, and build momentum together.

The moral of the story is go out and start a new club and Fellowship dammit!



## Training Committee

### Never Stop Learning: Advancing Leadership Through Ruritan Training

We've all heard the saying that you can't teach an old dog new tricks—but the Training Committee is here to prove that learning never stops. Whether you've been a Ruritan member for one year, ten years, or more than twenty-five, there is always something new to learn. These are exciting times for learning within the Ruritan community, from the club level all the way to the district level.

We recognize that everyone learns differently, which is why the committee is committed to offering three distinct learning opportunities: online courses, in-person training, and virtual town halls.

New online training modules for club roles will soon be available through a learning management system developed in partnership with the University of Maryland, Baltimore. These modules are in the final stages of implementation. Stay tuned for announcements on how to access the system, complete your training, and document your progress. The committee will also host a Ruritan Connect session to walk members through the new platform. We are confident you'll enjoy the updated system and its interactive content.

One of the committee's major goals this year is to develop a train-the-trainer program that districts can use to train both club and district leaders. Our members have consistently asked for more uniform and reliable training throughout the year and at district conventions. While many of us have experienced inconsistent—or even ineffective—training during our leadership journeys, this initiative will help create a stronger, more consistent foundation for current and future Ruritan leaders. The program is expected to debut at the 2027 Summer Leadership Conference.

The committee will also continue using Ruritan Connect as a virtual training tool for our membership. This year, a key focus will be on Zone Governors. This role is vital at the district level, yet many districts currently have unfilled positions. These sessions will not only support and train current Zone Governors but also provide insight into the role for members who may be considering stepping into it. We encourage you to invite potential Zone Governors to participate in upcoming Ruritan Connect sessions.

Let's make a collective commitment to learning and make training a top priority this year!

Your 2026 Training Committee,

*Brian Grove, Chair, Bonnie Hartman, Rufus Hisghman, Julie Marshall, Roger Peterson, Marshall Ross, and Ron Snow*



# 2026 National Committee Communications

## Communication Committee

### Connecting Communities: Inside the 2026 Communication Committee

Clear, effective communication is the backbone of any thriving organization—and for 2026, the Communication Committee is stepping up with a focused mission and a dedicated team to keep clubs informed, engaged, and growing.

This year's committee brings together a strong group of leaders: Raymond Cade, Debi Davis, Patty Hamilton, Lynn Fillers, TJ Garrison, Kevin Smith, and Dave Wingett. Working in alignment with the Long-Term Planning Committee, their efforts will center on achieving key goals and objectives designed to strengthen communication across all levels.

#### Building on Momentum

Rather than starting from scratch, the 2026 team is carrying forward several important initiatives from the previous year. One of the top priorities remains ensuring that every club designates an E-Contact person and enters that information into MMS. Having a reliable communication point is essential for timely updates and coordination, and clubs are encouraged to confirm that at least one contact is listed.

In addition, members are reminded of the growing library of online videos available on a variety of topics. These resources continue to serve as valuable tools for training, leadership development, and general knowledge—accessible anytime, anywhere. And for those who enjoy staying informed, the Ruritan Magazine will also be available online, making it easier than ever to stay connected to the latest news and stories.

#### A Wealth of Resources at Your Fingertips

When questions arise or inspiration is needed, the Ruritan National website remains a central hub of information. Members can explore:

- Project ideas and focus areas
- Official handbooks and guides
- Training materials
- Insurance information for club events
- Archives of past Ruritan Magazine issues
- Downloadable brochures and resources

This digital library continues to empower clubs with the tools they need to succeed.

#### Embracing Modern Communication

In today's connected world, social media plays a vital role in outreach and visibility. The committee strongly encourages every club to establish and maintain a presence on platforms like Facebook. A simple page can help share events, celebrate achievements, and attract new members from the community.

## 2026 National Committee Communications

### The Power of a 30-Second Message

Finally, the committee is challenging members to think about their “elevator speech.” Imagine having just 30 seconds to explain what Ruritan is and why it matters. What would you say?

This brief but powerful message can make all the difference in sparking interest and bringing new people into the organization. Whether at an event, a meeting, or even by chance, being prepared to share your story can open doors.

As the 2026 Communication Committee gets to work, their message is clear: strong communication builds stronger clubs—and stronger clubs build better communities.



## GROWTH COMMITTEE

### DO MORE. GROW MORE. SERVE BETTER

At Ruritan National, growth is not just about numbers. It is about building strong, healthy communities across America.

That kind of growth does not happen on its own.

It takes effort. It takes focus. And it takes a willingness to do more than what is average.

It is easy to fall into a routine. Meetings happen. Projects repeat. Things feel steady—but steady is not the same as growing. If we want to make a real impact, we must move beyond what is comfortable.

We must be willing to do the extra work.

That means opening new clubs and doing it the right way. Strong clubs take time to build. They grow through relationships, leadership, and a shared purpose to serve their communities.

Our Growth Committee is working to support this effort with simple, practical tools. This includes a **Start-a-Club Toolkit**, better training, and stronger communication to help districts and clubs succeed.

We are also encouraging each **district and zone** to take a more proactive role in growth. Your National Representative will be having more conversations with you about this. This means creating a simple growth plan - identifying communities, setting clear goals, and checking progress throughout the year.

We are also helping identify where new clubs are needed and encouraging partnerships with local businesses to strengthen community impact.

But tools alone are not enough.

Growth depends on people leaders who are willing to take one more step. Make one more call. Invite one more person. Small actions like this lead to big results.

This work is not always easy. It takes time and commitment. But the result is worth it: stronger clubs, stronger connections, and stronger communities.

This year, we say, “3 + 5 Keeps the Dream Alive.” That dream only works if we put in the effort.

If we want thriving communities, we must go beyond average. We must choose to do more.



# 94th Ruritan National Convention

Lexington, Kentucky, January 23 - 24, 2026

## Official Delegate Action

### **Adopted – Bylaws Amendment #1**

**ARTICLE III – Membership/Members, Section 2 Ethical Standards A**  
new subsection was added to the Ruritan National Bylaws: **Ineligibility for Membership:**

*“Any individual who has been convicted of a sexual offense crime that requires registration on a sex offender registry shall be ineligible for membership in any Ruritan Club.”*

**Result:** Adopted (172 Yes / 45 No)

### **Failed – Bylaws Amendment #2**

Would have required clubs to terminate membership of any current member subject to a sex offender registry requirement under club bylaws.

**Result:** Failed (123 Yes / 91 No)

### **Adopted – Bylaws Amendment #3**

**Article XII – Electronic Meetings (Revised in Entirety)**

The revised article:

- & Authorizes the Board of Directors, Executive Committee, and committees to meet electronically.
- & Requires advance designation of meeting type (in-person, electronic, or hybrid).
- & Clarifies participation expectations.
- & Confirms quorum and voting standards for electronic meetings.

**Result:** Adopted (159 Yes / 55 No)

## **ELECTION RESULTS:**

### **National President-Elect**

- & Roger Davis (VA)

### **National Directors (Three-Year Terms)**

Elected:

- & Bryan Flanagan (WV)
- & Bonnie Hartman (TN)
- & Dr. Christopher Poff (VA)
- & Richard Rambo (NE)
- & Kevin Smith (VA)
- & Steve Smith (AL)
- & Ron Snow (NC)

## **Ruritan National Foundation Trustees 5-Year Term**

& David Hogan (NC)

## **Two-Year Unexpired Term**

& Barry Sides (VA)

## **CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS**

Delegates unanimously adopted six resolutions:

- & Appreciation to the 2026 Convention Committee and staff
- & Gratitude to President Becky Lane and national leadership
- & Continued support for U.S. Armed Forces and veterans
- & Recognition of members responding to Hurricane Helene
- & Celebration of 40 Years of Women in Ruritan
- & Appreciation for first responders





## Fellowship, Fun, and a Little Snow: A Convention to Remember

From the moment attendees arrived in Lexington, it was clear that the 94th Ruritan National Convention would be one to remember. The photos and comments shared on the *I Am Ruritan* Facebook page captured what words alone sometimes can't — genuine fellowship, shared laughter, meaningful conversations, and the unmistakable feeling of belonging that defines Ruritan.

*"This convention reminded me why I joined Ruritan in the first place — the people, the laughter, and the friendships."*

Throughout the convention, familiar faces and first-time attendees alike reconnected and formed new friendships. Between sessions, hallways and gathering spaces buzzed with conversation, proving that some of the most meaningful moments happen outside the meeting rooms.

*"The best part wasn't on the agenda — it was the time spent connecting with fellow Ruritans."*

One of the most talked-about highlights was Hank the Horse, who quickly became a favorite subject for photos and smiles. Hank brought lighthearted fun to the convention atmosphere and reminded everyone that fellowship and joy are essential parts of who we are as an organization.

*"Hank the Horse stole the show — smiles everywhere you looked!"*

The convention also offered moments of reflection and inspiration. Captain Ed Gallrein's presentation resonated deeply with attendees, reinforcing the values of service, sacrifice, and commitment to community that unite Ruritans across the country.

*"I came home tired, inspired, and grateful to be part of this organization."*

Throughout the event, the presence of Jack and Davis Reid added to the sense of camaraderie and connection — meaningful conversations, shared stories, and relationships strengthened simply by being together.

Then came the unexpected. When winter weather left some attendees snowed in, plans shifted — but fellowship did not stop. Instead, it flourished. Conversations continued in hotel lobbies and common areas, turning an unforeseen delay into one of the most memorable parts of the experience.

*"Being snowed in just meant more time together. Wouldn't trade that experience for anything."*

*"So much fellowship packed into just a few days. Already looking forward to the next one!"*

The photos shared afterward told the story clearly: this wasn't just a convention that people attended — it was one they experienced.

*"This wasn't just a convention — it was a reminder that Ruritan really is family."*

### Growth in Action: Galloping Towards Growth

The spirit of fellowship carried directly into action through the inaugural Galloping Towards Growth – Run for the Roses competition. Districts across Ruritan embraced the challenge, earning points through growth-focused efforts and leadership engagement.

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The Top 10 Districts were:

10. Spartan – 35 points
9. Holland – 36 points
8. Dan River – 43 points
7. Smoky Mountain – 48 points
6. Upper West Virginia – 61 points
5. Rappahannock – 56 points
4. Davy Crockett – 57 points
3. Rockingham – 67 points
2. Appomattox – 78 points

And the Winner of the Inaugural Run for the Roses Award:

New River District – 105 points

Congratulations to all participating districts for embracing growth and momentum. Be on the lookout for new and expanded ways to earn points in 2026, leading up to the announcement of the next Run for the Roses winner at the 2027 National Convention.

### Looking Ahead: Start Planning Now for 2027

If this year's convention reminded us of anything, it's that the Ruritan National Convention is far more than a meeting. It's an opportunity to learn, to serve, to grow as leaders, and to strengthen the bonds that hold our organization together.

Now is the time to start planning to attend the Ruritan National Convention on January 22–23, 2027, in Lexington, Kentucky.

District leadership is strongly encouraged to attend, and this is a great opportunity to bring along up-and-coming leaders who are ready to take the next step in their Ruritan journey.

*“If you’ve never been to a National Convention, you’re missing something special.”*

Incoming and outgoing District Governors and Lieutenant District Governors are eligible for reimbursement from Ruritan National, and in many cases districts also reimburse leaders who attend and support the convention by serving as Sergeant-at-Arms. Serving in this role provides a behind-the-scenes look at how the convention operates while offering a meaningful way to serve fellow Ruritans.

*“Serving behind the scenes gave me a whole new appreciation for how much goes into the convention.”*

The National Convention is also an ideal place to introduce emerging leaders to Ruritan at the national level — exposing them to education, leadership development, and the fellowship that keeps members engaged for years to come.

*“I brought a newer leader with me this year — and now they’re hooked.”*

*“Education, service, and fellowship all in one place. Worth every minute.”*

Mark your calendars, start the conversation in your district now, and make plans to join us in Lexington in 2027. We promise — you'll leave with more than memories. You'll leave with connections that last.

*- Rick and Juliann Poff, Convention Program Chairs*





# 2026 Ruritan National Convention Highlights



## 2026 Foundation President Josh Adams



Greetings from your Ruritan National Foundation!

2026 is starting off on a good note. Well, except for the severe cold weather! My goal this year as Foundation President is to get more people investing in our Invest Today Impact Tomorrow program. Below is the program:

The question we get is "Where does the money for this program go? The answer is that it goes where you tell it to go! You can start a new fund or contribute to an existing one. Those who complete the 5-year program will receive a nice new Polo Shirt.

At the recent 2026 Convention, I was pleased to tell you that the Build Your Dollars amount this year was \$650! All of the clubs that paid the \$300 deposit are receiving \$650 in return! I can't think of any other investment program that gives you that much of a return!

The Foundation Weekend this year will be June 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> in Galax, Virginia! I am thankful that Pat Davis is assisting me. We are working on the details, and once everything is arranged, we will send out the information! In 2025, we went to Blackwater Falls, WV. Guy Cox (2025 Foundation President) knocked it out of the park! It was a packed weekend, and everyone who came had a good time!

If you have any questions at all, please reach out to me or any other Trustee! I look forward to seeing you all this coming June!

Josh Adams  
2026 Foundation President





# Foundation Fellowship Weekend

## Blue Ridge Mountains

### Galax, VA

### June 19-20, 2026



**Reservations: 1-276-238-4605, Call Hampton Inn Galax, 205 Cranberry Road, Galax, VA 24333. Group: Ruritan National, Cutoff date for Room Registration is 5/19/2026 or when full, whichever comes first. Free hot breakfast.**

**Event Venue:** Pat Davis's park property at 589 Tee Time Dr, Galax, VA. Bring your auction items and snacks for sharing at the park. Multiple events are planned. Saturday night banquet meal. Music entertainment.

Make plans today to attend this exciting weekend of Ruritan fellowship and fun! Registration cost is \$50 for each person. Send the below form with payment to **Ruritan National Foundation, PO Box 487, Dublin, VA 24084**, postmarked by **May 19, 2026**.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Member number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name Badge: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse/Guest Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Member Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Guest Name Badge: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Payment Information

Check No. \_\_\_\_\_

C.C. No. \_\_\_\_\_

C.C. Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Security Code \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

District: \_\_\_\_\_

Club: \_\_\_\_\_

## CARRSVILLE GROWS!

**Carrsville** recently welcomed new members, Roger Groves, Beth Futhrell South, Greg South, and Kevin Bliss. They were installed by Zone Governor Clay Byrum.



## DEEP CREEK STARTS THE DAY WITH FUN

**Deep Creek** club hosted a “Breakfast with Santa” in December to benefit Toys for Tots. Club members provided complimentary breakfasts for everyone who brought a toy to donate to the Marines. Club members also delivered Christmas stockings to patients at the Hampton Veterans Administration Hospital.



The club recognized the Studley family as their Family of the Year, and Stan Gavel as their Ruritan of the Year.



**DRIVER AND GRASSFIELD SHARE HOLIDAY JOY**

**Driver** held its annual Holiday Family Dinner and celebrated a successful Toys-4-Tots toy drive.



**Grassfield** celebrated Christmas with a donation to the Toys-for-Tots campaign. Pictured with the collection of over 150 toys are Club President James Ramsey and Past President Sue Abernathy.

**KNOTTS ISLAND STARTS WITH TRADITION**

**Knotts Island** held their first annual Oyster Roast. This event was a major fundraiser to support the club's community outreach projects. The event included oysters, barbecue, fried chicken with all the fixings, a live band, and a raffle.



## PRINCE GEORGE CELEBRATES MAJOR MILESTONE

**Prince George** celebrated their 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in December. Special guests included 2025/26 District Governor Phillip Bradshaw and 2025 District Lt. Governor Donald Worrell. 2026



District Lt. Governor Bill Willman presented each Veteran in attendance with a Ruritan Veteran pin. The club's Ruritan of the Year was awarded to Bonita Baxter.

Other fourth quarter activities included the Fall Shrimp Feast fundraiser in October, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Christmas Market in November.

## MEHERRIN MEMBER HONORED

Past National President and **Meherrin** member Bobby Wrenn was recently honored for his role in organizing a community event with the Rise Against Hunger Program. For the past 16 years, club and community members have met at the Meherrin Ruritan Clubhouse and packed over 160,000 nutritious meals, which were delivered to those in need.



## SURRY COUNTY SHARES SWEET TREATS



Members of **Surry County** had fun taking part in the Surry County trunk or treat.

Club Secretary Chelsea Skinner was named Holland District's Ruritan of the Year for 2025.



## News From Ruritan: HOLLAND District #1

### SMITHFIELD CELEBRATES CARS AND COMMUNITY

**Smithfield** held its annual Car Show at Windsor Castle Park. Pictured are Chuck and Millie Handle with their 1948 Ford 1 truck.

The club also donated to the Angel Quilters of Smithfield. Pictured are Angel Quilter Nancy Thruudeau, Club President Kirk Ring, and Angel Quilter Julie Hopkins.



The club chose the Dashiell family of Berry Hill Farm for their Farmer of the Year award. The Dashiells provide crops and hogs for Smithfield Foods and have been farming for four generations. Pictured (l-r) are Club member Glen Schlickemeyer, Club President Kirk Ring, member Julie Hopkins, Jered Dashill, Jerry Dashill, Ashby Dashill, and Fisher Dashiell.

## News From Ruritan: CHESAPEAKE District #2

### MONTPELIER SUPPORTS CHRISTMAS MOTHER

**Montpelier** had perfect attendance for its Christmas Dinner on December 4<sup>th</sup>. Hanover Christmas Mother Ricki Smith was the guest of honor and spoke on the mission and success of the Christmas Mother program and expressed her gratitude for the club's support. The evening closed with club member Lee Bettis leading the group in singing Christmas carols.



## GLOUCESTER SHARES KNOWLEDGE AND HOLIDAY CHEER

**Gloucester** club member Jo Hurd (left) recently presented the program at a club meeting, sharing her experiences in caring for and raising mealworms. She displayed samples representing all four stages of their life cycle and explained that she initially began raising them to reduce the cost of chicken feed. Today, she also enjoys watching the bluebirds visit to feed and raise their families.



Club member Judith Williams delivered

Thanksgiving donations to volunteers at Bread for Life. Items included approximately 180 pounds of dry and canned goods, as well as \$120 of Food Lion gift cards. Pictured are Bread for Life volunteers Susie and Patty, and club member Judith.



Members wrapped and delivered 273 Christmas gifts to several assisted living facilities in Gloucester, including Walter Reed Post Acute, Cary House, Sanders Assisted Living, and Heron Cove 1 and 2. Pictured are



Doug Hibbs with Walter Reed representative Jennifer Caldwell.

## MECHANICSVILLE SUPPORTS COMMUNITY EFFORTS

**Mechanicsville** hosted their annual pancake supper. Proceeds from the event funded a \$2,500 donation to the Hanover County Christmas Mother.

Club President Paul Dorn presented a \$5,000 donation to Hanover County Sheriff Davis Hines for Project Lifesaver. Donations were also presented to Hanover High School for their music program, to Mechanicsville High School for their weight room project, and to Atlee High School.



## News From Ruritan: **RAPPAHANOCK District #3**

### **BEALETON-REMINGTON HELPS RUDY SHARE SUPPORT**

**Bealeton-Remington** had a busy weekend in December. Rudy and Mrs. Rudy (making her public debut) spread Christmas cheer at the annual fire dept. Christmas parade. The next day, Rudy joined Santa, the Marines, and the local fire department, riding through neighborhoods collecting toys!



Rudy assisted in presenting Sandra Shipe, MSN, BSN, RN, with a check in support of Fauquier County's Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) program. Mrs. Shipe teaches students from the county's three high schools, guiding them through the training and preparation needed to earn their Certified Nursing Assistant certification and begin careers in healthcare.

## News From Ruritan: **APPOMATTOX District #4**

### **CENTRAL CHESTERFIELD HONORS COMMUNITY LEADERS**

**Central Chesterfield** presented their annual Community Service Awards. Pictured (l-r) with 2025 Club President Matthew Maxey (far right) are Assistant Supervisor Melissa Bracciodeta, Chesterfield Emergency Communications Center; Pam Waterson, Manchester Volunteer Rescue Squad; Lt. Doug McWilliams, Chesterfield Fire & EMS; Career Officer Ryan McCullagh, Chesterfield County Police Department; Trooper Andrew Coe, Virginia State Police, and Career Deputy Marshall Townes, Chesterfield County Sheriff's Department.

Club member Roger Powers achieved an impressive triple honor, being named a Ruritan Forever, Club Ruritan of the Year, and Appomattox District Ruritan of the Year.

The club also participated in the annual Stockings for Soldiers program and filled 158 stockings, which were sent to soldiers serving overseas.





### GLADE HILL HOSTS FOOD DRIVE

Glade Hill Club Secretary Linda Howlett delivered the Nov/Dec food drive donations to the Stepping Stone Mission of Franklin County. Club President Gary Solomon welcomed new members Terry and Peggy Newman. Scholarship Committee member Dana Hayes presented their 2025 scholarships to Brayden Smith (pictured left) and Madison Ingram.



## News From Ruritan: **SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA District #6**

### **ATKINS SHARES HOLIDAY FUN**

**Atkins** sponsored a children's Christmas event that featured crafts and milk and cookies with Santa and Mrs. Claus. They also gave away coats, gloves, hats, toys, and snack bags. Albania



Kirk is pictured with Mr. and Mrs. Claus.

Club Director and District Lt. Governor Lester Owens recently installed new member Emma Wymer.



## News From Ruritan: **NATURAL BRIDGE District #7**

### **NATURAL BRIDGE HONORS EDUCATION, SERVICE AND COMMUNITY**

**Natural Bridge** Club member Scott Hannah handed out dictionaries to all 43 3rd-grade students at Natural Bridge Elementary School. Scott had a few games and challenges to help the kids learn how to best use their new dictionary.

The late Bob Gilbert, a longtime member, former club president, and member of Friends of Natural Bridge State Park, has been posthumously honored with the 2025 Governor's Volunteerism & Community Service Award in the senior volunteer category. The award was



presented to Bob's wife and daughter by Governor Glenn Youngkin during a ceremony at the Executive Mansion.



## News From Ruritan: **NATURAL BRIDGE** District #7

Along with a monetary donation, the club donated comfort blankets to Project Horizon and the Natural Bridge Volunteer Fire Department. They also made additional monetary donations to the Friends of Natural Bridge and the Natural Bridge/Glasgow Food Pantry.



## News From Ruritan: **WOODROW WILSON** District #8

### **BOLAR BRUNSWICK STEW FUNDS SCHOLARSHIPS**

Straddling the Bath and Highland County line, **Bolar** provides scholarship support to both counties. Through the annual Maple Festival in March and the Hands and Harvest Festival in October, the club awards two \$5000 college scholarships and a new \$2000 scholarship for technical school. Many recipients are the first in their families to attend college. One student, awarded a technical scholarship, completed a 2-year degree, returned to the county, and opened his own business. Another continued their education to earn a PhD, saying they were inspired by the belief that their community believed in and supported them. Students have attended almost every college in the state, with a few in other states. Establishing a scholarship program can be life-changing for students and their families. Bolar uses this powerful service to give back to their communities with a clear, positive effect, proving that even small clubs can make a big difference. Pictured (l-r) are Scholarship Committee Chair Lee Brauer and Club Vice President Del Simmons at the Hands and Harvest Festival. Member volunteers prepared and sold 88 quarts of Brunswick stew.



## **MASSIES MILL HOSTS SANTA VISIT**

**Massies Mill** joined with the Nelson County Parks & Recreation Department to hold their 2nd Annual Pictures with Santa at the Piney River Caboose. Santa visited with 104 children, who also enjoyed homemade cookies, hot chocolate, and an activities station in the Depot. Donations collected at the event went to the Nelson County Food Pantry.



## **STONEWALL AND STUARTS DRAFT PROMOTE WORD POWER**



**Stonewall's** 2025 Vice President Caleb Blagg, who is also a senior at Highland High School, was on hand to pass out dictionaries at Highland Elementary School.

**Stuarts Draft** continued their annual Dictionary Project tradition by presenting dictionaries to the third-grade students at Guy K. Stump Elementary School and Stuarts Draft Elementary School.



**WEYERS CAVE HONORS COMMUNITY, AND A LEGACY OF SERVICE**

**Weyers Cave** hosted Alison Meredith, Outreach Coordinator at the Wildlife Center of Virginia in Waynesboro, as the guest speaker at a recent meeting. The Center, one of three in Virginia, provides medical and rehabilitative services for native Virginia wildlife. At the time of the meeting, the Center had served 4,123 animals in 2025 and more than 100,000 animals since its founding in 1982. The Center's first location was on the grounds of the Ruritan Memorial Park in Weyers Cave.

The club welcomed the community to their annual Breakfast with Santa event. Highlights of the event included bounce houses, face painting, a reading corner,



a stilt walker, balloons, a police vehicle to explore, and photo-ops with Santa and Mrs. Claus. Goodwill donations or canned foods were accepted to benefit the Verona Food Pantry.

Club member E.C. Showalter Jr. was recognized at the District Convention for his 75 years of service with Ruritan. Mr. Showalter passed in February at the age of 100.



David Zimmerman served as the guest speaker at the January club meeting, presenting architectural drawings and design plans for a proposed military memorial. The memorial is intended to honor the citizens of Augusta County, Staunton, and



Waynesboro, Virginia, who have served in the United States Military. The Augusta County Military Memorial will be constructed at the Augusta County Government Center in Verona and will stand as a permanent tribute to the service and sacrifice of the area's veterans.

**BRIDGEWATER HOSTS AUCTION, HONOR, AND IMPACT**

**Bridgewater** held their auction fundraiser in December. Travis Bowman served as auctioneer. Proceeds from the event are used for their scholarship fund. This year, the highest-grossing item was one of the recently replaced Ruritan road signs!

The club also recognized members with service anniversaries, including Steve Craun with 45 years of service, John Harsh with 35 years, and Doris Harsh and Tracey Wright with 10 years each. Bridgewater Volunteer Fire Department Chief Joshua Shank received the 2025 Citizen of the Year award, and Adam Knicely was installed as a new club member.



**CROSS-KEYS MILL CREEK SHARES THE SPIRIT OF GIVING**



**Cross Keys Mill Creek** member Neil Sacra, along with several other members, volunteered for over 25 hours to help the Salvation Army during the holidays.

## FORT VALLEY EMBODIES COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

Members of **Fort Valley** remained active in community service throughout the year, completing projects and hosting events to support local residents. Volunteers constructed a wheelchair ramp at a Fort Valley residence, a project organized by Sonny Tamkin and assisted by members including Eric Guthrie and Terry Plauger. The club also held a Community Breakfast fundraiser to assist a local cancer patient, with Hank Zimmerman, Matt Spinks, Larry Cave, and Terry Plauger helping prepare and serve pancakes and scrambled eggs.



Additional fundraising efforts included the annual Turkey Trot to benefit Matthew's Food Pantry. The club also continued its support of local emergency services, with Public Service Chair Adam Selby presenting a \$2,500 donation to the Fort Valley Volunteer Fire Department and a \$600 donation to the Fire Department Auxiliary. Sonny Tamkin accepted the department's check, while Mary Fran Chrisman accepted the auxiliary donation.

During the year, Tamkin was honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award presented by Sandra Burner-Cave and Charles Lichliter in recognition of his 60 years with the Fort Valley Fire Department and 46 years with the Fort Valley Ruritan Club. Club President Sandra Burner-Cave also helped establish a new Ruriteen Youth Club to involve teens and their parents in community service. Ruritan and Ruriteen members supported Salvation Army bell ringing, organized the community Christmas Parade, and partnered with the DAR for Wreaths Across America ceremonies at Detrick Cemetery and Charles Emerson Walter's Cemetery.



## News From Ruritan: ROCKINGHAM District #9

### SEVEN BENDS SHARES COMMUNITY SPIRIT

**Seven Bends** spent a beautiful October afternoon enjoying the Community Trick-or-Treat event at Shenandoah Downs Raceway and passing out candy to dozens of trick-or-treaters. The Club was also honored with a donation from the Shenandoah Downs Amateur Club, which will help fund their community service projects.

Club members also helped fluff and place over 250 wreaths at Cedarwood Cemetery in Edinburg, Virginia, as part of the 2025 National Wreaths Across America Ceremony.



## News From Ruritan: POTOMAC District #10

### DISTRICT RECOGNIZES GROWTH

District Growth and Development Chair Randy Huffer (l) and District Governor Brad Kegarise (r) recognized two growth incentive recipients at the District Convention. Greatest growth for a large club went to **Downsville**, and greatest growth for a medium club went to **Lewistown**.



## DOWNSVILLE HOSTS GINGERBREAD MAGIC

**Downsville** recently transformed their clubhouse into a holiday wonderland, hosting two gingerbread-decorating events—one designed for adults with disabilities and another just for children. Participants frosted, sprinkled, and decorated their festive creations. Adding an extra touch of magic, Mr. and Mrs. Claus stopped by both celebrations.



## ROHRERSVILLE SHARES HOLIDAY TUNES

**Rohrersville** was accompanied by members of Mt. Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church for a special holiday event at Fahrney Keedy Home and South Mountain Rehabilitation Center in Boonsboro. During their visit, the group sang Christmas carols and filled the halls with holiday cheer by presenting each person with a pudding cup and an individual Christmas card.



## TUSCARORA TRADES APPLES FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

**Tuscarora** made apple butter for their Fall fundraiser, with the proceeds going toward their scholarships. Club members spent Thursday evening peeling apples, and Friday, they took turns stirring the kettles.



Club President Pat Henry presented a donation to Kay Barkwill from Horses with Hearts. Horses with Hearts is a local non-profit therapeutic riding center that has special programs for veterans.

## WILLIAMSON GIVES BIG IN 2025

**Williamson** reported a busy year in 2025. From January through March, they hosted a monthly community breakfast, and from April through October, they hosted a monthly ice cream social, offering homemade ice cream, seven varieties of soup, and six different sandwiches. Each event donated the proceeds to charitable organizations and individuals in the community. Donations totaling over \$20,000.00 were given in 2025, as well as \$3,000.00 in scholarships to deserving high school graduates. The Williamson Community Playground added a pickleball court named posthumously for Alan Meyers in honor of his dedication to Ruritan.



## News From Ruritan: POTOMAC District #10

At their Christmas Banquet, Dave Shives received the club's Ruritan of the Year Award and Most Distinguished Member Award. Curt Stoner, Don Blattenberger, and Herb Clark each received a Tom Downing Fellow Award.



### Earl W. Garvin, Jr.

Past National Director Earl W. Garvin, Jr., 93, of Chambersburg, PA, passed away on Friday, January 2, 2026, at Paramount Senior Living in Fayetteville, PA. Earl served honorably in the United States Army. He was employed by H J Tanner Inc. in Chambersburg, PA as the General Manager until his retirement. Earl was a member of the Kittatinny Historical Society and the F&M Go Club and enjoyed going on bus trips and traveling with those groups with his wife, Patricia. He was also a member of Orrstown Masonic Lodge No. 262 F. & A. M., Tall Cedars Valley Forest 145, and a lifetime member VFW Post # 1599. He was a Charter Member since 1957 of the New Franklin Ruritan and Community Association. He was a Ruritan Forever member and held various offices at the local level, district level including Zone Governor, District Lt. Governor, and District Governor, and at the national level as a National Director, District Growth and Development.



He is survived by two children Cindy Holmquist (Aldo) and Edwin Garvin; grandchildren Ben Holmquist (Emily) and Sarah Holmquist (Ben); great grandchildren Sullivan, Evelynne, Brechtlee, McClellan, Ellison, and Callahan; sister-in-law Nancy Swartz; and numerous nieces and nephews. In addition to his parents, he is preceded in death by his wife, Patricia Garvin, who passed away in 2020, and a sister Delores Gilbert.

Funeral services were held on Friday, January 9, 2026, at the Chapel of the Thomas L. Geisel Funeral Home, with burial in Grindstone Hill Cemetery in Chambersburg, PA.

## DURANTS NECK CONTINUES WITH FOCUS ON COMMUNITY

**Durants Neck** continued its core efforts in 2025 by hosting American Red Cross blood drives, uniting community members to help save lives. The club also maintained its support for those who served by partnering with Project Patriot, a local initiative aiding veterans and their families. During the holidays, members organized an Adopt-A-Family program and a Toy Drive to make sure local families and children enjoyed a joyful season. The club also invested in the future by awarding scholarships to graduating seniors, Jay



Roberts, Halee Mills, and Jada Lassiter, and hosting a school supply drive to help students start the year prepared.



Throughout the year, the club remained focused on strengthening community connections and meeting local needs. Senior Bingo and Lunch events offered fellowship and fun for older residents, while the club maintained a Little Free Library to promote literacy and access to books. Members also provided consistent support to the Open Door Food Pantry, donating 204 pounds of food and \$256 to help address food insecurity. Reflecting on 2025, the Club is proud of a year marked by



service and community partnership and remains committed to continuing this work in the year ahead.



**FARM LIFE AND ROBERSONVILLE HONOR LOCAL HEROS**

**Farm Life** honored local veterans and firefighters at their November meeting. Rev. Joey Brickhouse shared a message about commitment and serving our communities. Club President Marvin McAbee recognized Jake Lilley with the Firefighter of the Year award.



**Robersonville** recently held a banquet to honor their local veterans. The program included information about services available through the Veterans' Administration. At their Christmas dinner, the club recognized Tim Roberson (pictured left, with David Wynne) as their 2025 Ruritan of the Year. They also recognized Peggy Cochran with their Citizen of the Year award (pictured with Club President Victor Long).



Club members also built a ramp for a local resident.

## EFLAND PONIES UP FOR ANNUAL TRADITION

**Efland** hosted its 30th Annual Efland Ruritan Club Rodeo on October 31 and November 1, 2025. This annual fundraiser draws a big crowd and offers loads of fun. The event included a costume contest, and vendors handed out candy to the kids for Halloween. Club Director Kathleen Long managed the Cowboy Breakfast for rodeo contestants, and the local fire department was on hand to manage guest parking. Local EMTs and the Sheriff's Department also helped.



The club held its Christmas Party on December 7th. Club Director Jana Murdock-Doherty and her husband, Kurt, organized the decorations, the caterer, and some fun party games. Kathleen Long (pictured right with 2025 Club Vice President John Wagner) was honored as the club's 2025 Ruritan of the Year. After the party, club members took a donation of canned and dry goods to their local food bank.

## LIBERTY AWARDS SCHOLARSHIP

**Liberty** awarded Amelia Lackey both the Build Your Dollars Scholarship and the Liberty Ruritan Scholarship at their August meeting. The Liberty Ruritan Scholarship was generously funded by an anonymous donor committed to supporting the next generation. A recent graduate of Providence Grove High School, Amelia attends the University of Mount Olive pursuing a B.S. in Agriculture Production Systems and a minor in Communications. She plans to continue her education at NC State University, aiming for a career with the NC Cooperative Extension Service to promote sustainable agriculture and community development.



## **LYNNS CROSSROADS PICKS THE RIGHT NUMBER**

**Lynns Crossroads** hosted one of their biggest Bingo nights. As part of the evening, they collected items for their Warmth for Winter clothing drive. Items collected will be distributed to those in need.



## **SILK HOPE SHARES COMMUNITY SPIRIT**

**Silk Hope** members Michael Hecken, Rocky Cook, Mike Angeli, Elton Cook (front row), Jay Siler, and Harold Rogers (back row) came together to build a ramp for a woman in the community who was being released from rehab and wouldn't be able to navigate steps.



The club held their annual Ruritan Country Christmas at their Farm Heritage Park. The event featured face painting, a bouncy house, live farm animals, kiddie train rides, hayrides, and Santa Claus, who arrived in a Sil Hope Fire Department fire truck. The evening concluded with the lighting of the 40-foot windmill tower that can be seen from all directions.

**REDWOOD AND SYLVAN HONOR THOSE WHO SERVED**

**Redwood** members observed Veterans' Day by placing 400 flags on graves at Oak Grove Memorial garden in Durham. They also hosted their annual Veterans Appreciation Night, with eighteen local veterans in attendance. Club Vice President Debra Pond presented a special gift to World War II Veteran James Wheeler, who is 104 years young!



**Sylvan** hosted a Veterans' Dinner with a heartfelt tribute to service, sacrifice, and community. Cub Scout Pack 11 and Boy Scout Troop 11 presented the opening flag ceremony. Song leader Jeff Neese delivered a meaningful poem, followed by a video presentation of "I Will Stand" by Allegiance. Throughout the night, our honored veterans shared personal stories from their time in service and displayed treasured photographs from their military years. The program concluded with a flag retirement ceremony led by Boy Scout Troop 11.



**WEST EDGECOMBE HOSTS LADIES NIGHT**

**West Edgecombe** held a Ladies Night in December. District Secretary Ron Reid installed club officers, and Club Director Rusty Proctor presented



Tim Harris with a Tom Downing award. Pictured (l-r) are Gerald Pipkin, Ron Reid, Tim Harris, Jay Walker, and Rusty Proctor. Roy Bryant was recognized as the club's 2025 Ruritan of the Year. Pictured (l-r) are Roy Bryant, Jay Walker, and Gerald Pipkin.



**PINETOWN BRIGHTENS THE HOLIDAYS**

**Pinetown** Club Secretary presented donations of \$1000 each to Sgt. Les Ashby for The Salvation Army of Washington, and to Steven Knight for the Zion Men's Shelter and Kitchen.



The club adopted ten angels from the Salvation Army Angel Tree. They also provided extra toys, shoes, hats, and gloves to be used as fill-in items where needed.



**BUNNLEVEL SUPPORTS COMMUNITY NEAR AND FAR**

**Bunnlevel** member Tony Spears is pictured with supplies collected to support people in Jamaica affected by Hurricane Melissa. The club also hosted a smoked Boston butt fundraiser. They held a “Cash Bash” fundraiser in December, organized a Breakfast with Santa, and honored Don Temple as their Ruritan of the Year. Members continue to clean and restore broken gravestones in local cemeteries and provide fruit and vegetable giveaways as ongoing projects.



**JOHNSONVILLE WRAPS UP BUSY SEASON**

**Johnsonville** had a busy fourth quarter. Club members served hot dogs at the Annual Trunk or Treat Cruise-In on Halloween. Veterans Day was observed by decorating veterans' graves with flags. Scout Troop and Pack 713 presented the colors at the annual ceremony honoring all those who have served our country. Johnsonville Elementary School Eaglet Leaders joined the club in filling Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets for those in need. The kids helped unload and sort the food, fill the baskets, create greeting cards, and ensure everything was ready for delivery.

Two pickup trucks filled with Ruritans participated in the Annual Christmas Parade. The seventh annual Johnsonville Community Tree Lighting Ceremony featured pictures with Santa, Christmas carols, hot chocolate, and cookies. Mrs. Claus (Karen Cox) read "The Christmas Story" and "Twas the Night Before Christmas," and a local church choir performed Christmas music. Mrs. Claus, Rudy Bear (Ashley Holmes), and Santa (Rodger Nicely) visited the students and staff at Johnsonville Elementary School, handing out candy canes and sharing Christmas cheer.

At the Cape Fear District Convention, Karen Cox was recognized as the club and district Ruritan of the Year.



## News From Ruritan: SPARTAN District #16

### GENERATIONS SHARES THANKSGIVING OUTREACH

**Generations Ruri-Teens** completed 44 Thanksgiving meal bags for needy families. The boys organized the collected items and put together the bags during their November meeting.



## News From Ruritan: COLUMBIA District #17

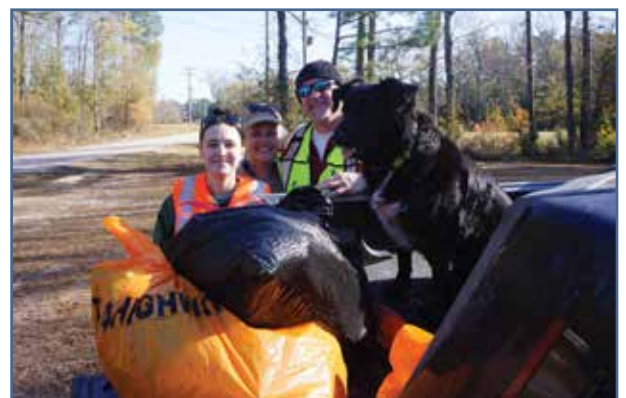
### SANDY RUN SERVES BIG FOR THE HOLIDAYS

**Sandy Run** took orders and delivered sweet potatoes before the holidays. Proceeds from the fundraiser will go toward the club's community service projects. Pictured (l-r) are Ginger Hardee, Sandra Pees, Becky Starnes, Kelley Roche-Sanders, Teresa Helms, Gene Crim, Jill Crim, Dennis Shanklin, Tyler Hearron, Sheila Shanklin, Zack Brooks, and Howard Pees.

Club members met to assemble Thanksgiving food bags for families in need. Items



were collected from their monthly Project 52 donations, along with gift cards for meat and other items. Pictured (l-r) are Jill Crim, Teresa Helms, and Kelley Roche-Sanders. The club also adopted two families for Christmas.



The club joined several other organizations for the Adopt-A-Highway Project to clean up Old Sandy Run Road 31 in preparation for the Sandy Run Christmas Parade. They collected 30 bags of trash.

## News From Ruritan: COLUMBIA District #17



Members also assembled baskets with fresh fruit, vegetables, canned and boxed foods, and gift cards, along with wrapped gifts for their adopted Christmas families.

In January, club members Sandra Pees and Gary Geiger were presented with their 25-year membership pins.



## News From Ruritan: UPPER WEST VIRGINIA District #19

### HEADSVILLE COUNTRYSIDE HONORS VETERANS

**Headsville Countryside** members and military Veterans Russ Haggerty, Rick Johnston, Eugene Tasker, and Ed Dennis rode in style for their community Veterans' Day Parade.



## CAPON BRIDGE SHARES KEY TO GROWTH

**Capon Bridge** Club President Todd Hulsey recently presented Elaine Lawson with the Golden Key Award with the 5-member bar. Elaine is on her way to earning her 10-member bar.



## BROWNS COMMUNITY SERVES UP ANNUAL TRADITIONS

**Browns Community** had a busy season with projects and programs that involved everyone. The Annual “Browns Stew” brought everyone out in October to cook 150 gallons of stew and barbeque chicken. Women from the House of Hope shared their testimonies and sang at the November monthly meeting. House of Hope offers a one-year recovery program for women that includes room and board, along with an opportunity to work in their restaurant and store. The participants are also involved in counseling and bible studies.

For Veterans’ Day, club members gathered on a bridge over I-40 to display and wave flags. People passing below wave and blow horns, making this a special annual project.



## News From Ruritan: HERMITAGE District #26

### *Jerry Fisher Ellis*

Jerry Fisher Ellis, age 92, of Pinson, peacefully passed away on January 25, 2026, at his home, surrounded by his loving family.

Born on November 15, 1933, Jerry was the son of Leonard and Vera Ellis. He grew up alongside his brother, Bobby Ellis (wife Jeanie), and his sister, Wanna Martin (husband Pepper), both of whom preceded him in death. A proud graduate of Pinson High School, Jerry began his career with the GM&O Railroad at the age of 16 and devoted 46 years of faithful service before retiring. On June 1, 1954, he married the love of his life, Becky Jean Lowrance. Together, they raised two daughters, Teresa Eubanks (Alan) and Anita Tucker (Don).

Jerry's legacy continues through his four grandchildren, Beth Stigall, Teri Miller (TC), Julie Gordon (Ben), and Mimi Dill (Lucas), and his seven great-grandchildren, Luke Stigall, Hope Stigall, Macy Miller, Lane Gordon, Tucker Gordon, Raylan Dill, and Faith Dill. Jerry was a devoted husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. He was a dedicated member of Pinson United Methodist Church, where he served in many capacities throughout the years. He was also an active member of the Pinson Ruritan Club, holding numerous leadership roles at both the local and national levels, including serving as President of Ruritan National. Jerry was an enthusiastic supporter of his children's and grandchildren's athletic and professional pursuits and was always present to cheer them on.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that memorials be directed to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, TN 38105, or online at <http://bit.ly/4a1OE7N>.



## News From Ruritan: OHIO District #28

### **KNOX GETS SAUCED FOR SERVICE**

**Knox** Club Secretary Mel Albrecht displays homemade spaghetti sauce the club has sold each year since 2002. Mel, his wife Robin, and their family grow the tomatoes and peppers used in the sauce. Proceeds from the fundraiser are donated to the North Georgetown and Homeworth Fire Departments.



### SMITHVILLE SUPPORTS EDUCATION GOALS

**Smithville** awarded academic scholarships to three Green Local School seniors who graduated in May 2025. Jenna Necko is attending The University of Mount Union, having received the Feusier Scholarship; Maren Thorn is at The University of Findlay, having received the Build Your Dollar Scholarship; and Taryn Fath is attending Liberty University in Virginia, having received the Maynard & Gloria Yoh Scholarship. The students were invited to the club's Christmas dinner and asked to share their first semester experience. Pictured (l-r) are Scholarship Committee Chair Phil Gresser, Maren Thorn, Jenna Necko, and Club President Bryan Woodward. Taryn Fath could not attend.



### WASHINGTON RESTORES THE FAITH



**Washington OH** updated and refurbished their Christmas display at Washington School. The Nativity figurines were gifted by a local church, and the Public Service Committee built and installed the manger display for 2025. The twelve figurines were restored by Troy Myers of Hot Pots Pottery in Alliance, Ohio.

### COLLETTSVILLE RECOGNIZES AWARD WINNERS

**Collettsville** Club Secretary Patsy Richardson presented Tammy Gragg with the Citizen of the Year Award in recognition of her community work in 2025.



The club announced their Ruritan of the Year award went to both Larry and Patsy Richardson (pictured with Club President Reuben Chandler). Larry has been with Ruritan for 54 years, holding many leadership positions at the club and district levels, and serving as a National Director from 1994-1996. Patsy has had multiple jobs and board positions, maintaining records, organizing fundraisers, and more.



School principal Amy Brawley (center) and teacher Brandy Story (r) were awarded the Ruritan Gold Key for bringing new members to the club, including several new youth members.

## HOPEWELL-HOLLIS SHARES THE BEARS

**Hopewell-Hollis** presented Rudy Bears to Sheriff Ellenburg at their recent soup-and-sandwich fundraiser. The club also offered some delicious homemade desserts at the Ellenboro fair.



## MANNINGTON TOWNSHIP STARTS THE DAY WITH FELLOWSHIP

**Mannington Township** held its annual Fall Breakfast Fundraiser. The club uses this event as a community outreach opportunity to advertise its mission.



## SUDLERSVILLE SERVES UP SWEET TREAT

**Sudlersville** enjoyed a steady flow of customers purchasing their funnel cakes at the Dover, DE, Amish Auction. The auction benefits the Amish Parochial School.



In November, club members completed their fourth wheelchair ramp of the year! Pictured (l-r) are Mark Eck, Mark Whalen, William Toulson, and Ernie Darling.

## PUNGOTEAGUE HONORS CUSTIS

Paul Custis, right, of **Pungoteague**, was named a Tom Downing Fellow in a presentation by Zone Governor Kevin Jenkins. In addition to serving as the club's long-time treasurer, Paul has led the annual Bayside Poker Run for 19 years. The event has raised many thousands of dollars that go toward scholarships for local students, wheelchair ramps for low-income families, and donations to numerous nonprofit organizations on the Eastern Shore of Virginia.



## SANDY RIDGE SHARES ACTIVE COMMUNITY PRESENCE

**Sandy Ridge** honored local veterans by hosting them and their guests at a local restaurant. The event featured a Missing Soldier Table display and student entries from the local elementary school's annual Veterans Day essay contest. This tradition, now in its 18th year, also included recognition of community veterans who have passed away, with their names

displayed in tribute. After the meal, veterans who wished to participate rode in a club-provided van to the Veterans Parade in Madison, North Carolina, where they were honored and warmly received.



The club partnered with the Northeast

Stokes Volunteer Fire Department and Rescue, Inc. to sponsor their first annual "Stuff the Truck" toy, clothing, and food drive. Several members of both organizations spent time collecting items at the fire department. The collected food items were donated to a local food pantry. Other items were donated to a local church that sponsors a yearly "toy store" for needy children. The club also filled 32 tags from the church's Angel Tree. The club also hosted a benefit Bingo for a community member facing dialysis and a liver transplant. Prizes were donated by local businesses and individuals.



## News From Ruritan: **PIEDMONT District #31**

The club made a generous donation to support the Stokes County Health Department's "Coat of Many Colors" event. Their goal was to provide new coats to children and other necessities to families in need. Another longstanding outreach project involves preparing and distributing Christmas treat bags to elderly and shut-in community members. This year, 128 bags were delivered.



Club member Andy Ferguson was chosen as the 2025 "Ruritan of the Year". Andy works tirelessly to support all of the club's projects and volunteers at many other community events.

For the second year in a row, the club participated in the Walnut Cove Christmas Parade. Club members dressed up in Christmas costumes and passed out candy to the children in attendance.



The club launched a new community tradition this year with the inaugural "Christmas on the Ridge," an event created especially for students at Sandy Ridge Elementary School. The celebration was organized into three separate one-hour sessions for different age groups. During each session, students rotated through 10-minute stations featuring story time, crafts, and holiday snacks. After visiting each station, the entire group gathered to sing Christmas songs with Santa. Several members added to the fun by dressing in Christmas costumes.

In 2011, the club launched the Backpack Program at Sandy Ridge Elementary School to help children in need by providing nutritious food for weekends when school meals are unavailable. The program began with a Bingo fundraiser and is now supported by generous contributions from local businesses, churches, and individuals, as well as food drives held throughout the year. This past December, at the school principal's request, the club prepared 30 special food boxes to support students during the Christmas break.

## News From Ruritan: **PIEDMONT District #31**

The club also recently completed a project it is especially proud of—providing new U.S. and North Carolina flags with mounting brackets for every classroom at Sandy Ridge Elementary School. Club President Andy Ferguson presented the flags to the teachers, with the project made possible in part through fundraising assistance from Patrick Dodson.

In December, members held their fourth roadside cleanup of the year. Six club members and one guest volunteered their time to clean the highway running through Sandy Ridge, an effort that local residents greatly appreciate for its hard work



and dedication to keeping the area clean and welcoming.

For the second year in a row, several members, relatives, and friends participated in the Polar Plunge sponsored by the Stokes County Arts Council on Thursday, January 1st, 2026.



Everyone enjoyed the parade of participants before the plunge. Many club supporters were on the bank, cheering them on. The

annual event is held at the lake in Hanging Rock State Park in Danbury, NC. It is a fundraising effort to support the arts in their schools and communities.



## **FRANCISCO HONORS PARKER**

**Francisco** recognized David Parker as their Ruritan of the Year. David has been a member since 1972 and has served as club secretary almost every year. David plays a variety of musical instruments and leads the Music Jam sessions every month. In lieu of a plaque, David chose to donate the amount to the Northern Stokes Food Pantry.

Club members met during the holiday season to assemble and deliver gift bags full of goodies to 20 local shut-ins.



## News From Ruritan: **PIEDMONT District #31**

### **SEMORA CELEBRATES 50 YEARS**

**Semora** recently celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a catered dinner. The club began in 1975 with 20 members. Six of the charter members, Van Barker, Harold Blackard, Joe Lucas, Wayne Moore, Jack Pointer, and Ricky Vernon, were in attendance. Jack Pointer and Ricky Vernon were recognized for 50 continuous years of serving in Ruritan. District Governor Ronald Snow spoke to attendees about the importance of Ruritan and congratulated Semora on 50 years of service to their community. A memorial plaque was dedicated in honor of the charter members who are no longer with us.



## News From Ruritan: **DAN RIVER District #32**

### **CHATHAM AND DRY FORK FIGHT WINTER CHILL**

**Chatham** donated coats to Pittsylvania County Sheriff's Office for their winter coat drive. The coats will be distributed to children in local elementary schools.

**Dry Fork** held their annual Coat Giveaway in November, with coats donated by community members. Pictured (l-r) are Club members Carla Kearin, Sabrina Myers, Marcella Heldreth, Alice Mullins, and Joyce Crane.



Club President Marcella Heldreth (pictured with Butch Meadows) was recently presented with the Tom Downing award.

## ARARAT CELEBRATES YEAR OF OPPORTUNITIES

**Ararat** celebrated another active year of service and recognition within the community. The club awarded three \$1,000 scholarships to deserving students: Mason Dellenback, who will attend UVA Wise, and Matthew Nester and Millie Clement, both of whom will attend Surry Community College.



In addition, longtime member Dale Horton was honored with a Ruritan Forever for his dedication and service to the club.

Club member Mike Noonkester also received special recognition as the Dan River District Ruritan of the Year.



During the holiday season, members participated in the Patrick County Christmas Parade.



The club also launched a new service initiative this year—providing firewood for elderly residents and others in need. Members recently gathered to cut four loads of wood, which will be distributed to community members who could use a helping hand during the colder months.

## **HYCO ROAD SHARES EXAMPLE OF GIVING**

**Hycro Road** organized a special holiday project to bring seasonal cheer to residents of a local nursing home. They invited their youth members to help assemble festive Christmas goodie bags. Each bag was filled with warm socks, candy, fruit, and other treats, and included a handwritten, decorated holiday card created by the youth. After the bags were completed, members delivered them to the nursing home.



## **RANGELEY ENDS YEAR WITH HONORS**

GW Carver Elementary School Principal Kim Foley (l) accepts a check from **Rangeley** members Sammy Draper (m) and Bobby Draper (r). Club members judge the school's classroom door decorations and award prizes to the top three.



Sammy Draper presented a donation to Pam Ellis (r), wife of Pastor Jamie Ellis, of the Traditional Christian Church in Collinsville, to be used for the church's homeless outreach.

Fay Moore was presented with the club's Ruritan of the Year award.



## STUART SHARES INFORMATION AND FUN

**Stuart** partnered with the Patrick Springs Ruritan Club to host a fair booth at the Patrick County Fair, welcoming visitors and sharing information about the organization's community service efforts. Pictured are Stuart members Bill Hines and Pamela Smith, and Patrick Springs Club President David Clement. During the Stuart Main Street Spook-tacular, club members handed out glow-in-the-dark bracelets. The club also participated in the DeHart Park Festival of Lights with a festive display and hosted a "Milk and Cookies with Santa" event at the Landmark Assisted Living Center.



## News From Ruritan: NEW RIVER District #34

### BARREN SPRINGS COMMUNITY ARE SANTA'S HELPERS



**Barren Springs Community** joined their local churches to host a community day. They fed over 500 people and gained two new members. They helped Santa and his crew visit a local assisted living home and deliver 78 goody bags to residents.

## News From Ruritan: DAVY CROCKETT District #35

### CAMP DREEK CELEBRATES HISTORY AND TRADITION

Camp Creek Elementary School kindergarten teacher and club member **Bea Brown** was recently honored by the **Camp Creek** Ruritan Club for her many years of service to both the school and the community. The club recognized her as the inaugural recipient of what will be named "The Bea Brown Community Service Award." This annual award will recognize and honor someone in the Camp Creek community who has given their time and service to improve the community. Bea was presented with a Memory Book by Club Vice President Joe

Donahay, which contained letters and notes from many community members, former students, and colleagues

praising her impact on their lives.



Club members **Lynn Fillers** (25 yrs) and **Betty McCue** (10 yrs) were presented with their anniversary pins by Club Vice President Joe Donahay. Lynn is very active and has held offices at the club, district, and National levels. Betty has served several terms as Club Secretary, is always willing to help, and does a great job of keeping club members informed.

## News From Ruritan: DAVY CROCKETT District #35

The club recently celebrated its 70th anniversary. Tim Smithson, a 45-year member, gave a brief history of the club and all its accomplishments. Special guests included National Director T.J. Garrison and National President David Thompson. Club President Robin Tullock also installed four new members, Greg and Chelsie Stauffacher, and James and Debra Witt.



## TELFORD HONORS SERVICE AND DEDICATION

**Telford** hosted an Open House in November to help introduce new members of the Telford community to the activities of their club. Free music, nachos and other refreshments were provided, and visitors could watch a looping video of Ruritan National's two promotional ads. Members were available throughout the club's building, the 1939 Telford Elementary School, to discuss both the former schoolhouse's history as well as the history and contributions of Ruritan in the community. Veterans were honored both during the Open House and the club's November BBQ fundraiser with free meals and bags full of various gifts including a custom-made mug, a calendar and candy.

The club also honored Lt. Vince Walters of the Washington County Sheriff's Office with their annual "Law Enforcement Officer of the Year" award. The award presentation, in appreciation of exemplary service to the Telford community, was attended by members of Lt. Walters' family, his Captain and several deputies in support of his accomplishment. Club President Carl Daniels presented the award to Lt. Walters. During the event, the club also presented the Sheriff's Office with ten Rudy Bears for use in their vehicles.



During the Davy Crockett District's Convention, Telford member Rick Chinouth (left) was presented with the District's yearly Ruritan Forever award by National Director T.J. Garrison.

The club supports Second Harvest Food Bank each month, in financial cooperation with neighboring Washington College Ruritan Club, as a monthly distribution site. Pictured are club members preparing for the December distribution.



## News From Ruritan: DAVY CROCKETT District #35

### BAILEYTON PROVIDES SWEET DREAMS

**Baileyton** provided cash donations and 16 cakes to Baileyton Elementary School for their 2025 Fall Festival.



The club also donated 170 children's pillowcases to Niswonger Children's Hospital in Johnson City. Pictured (l-r) are Barbara Barnett, Hospital representative Makayla, Wenona Jones and Sherry Perkins.

## News From Ruritan: SMOKY MOUNTAIN District #36

### GIBBS MEMBER RECOGNIZED

**Gibbs** member Eddie Jones has been named Ruritan of the Year for the Smoky Mountain District. Jones has been a member of the club for 25 years and served as club president for nine years. Eddie (l) is pictured with District Governor Zack McCallie.



## WOLFTOWN HUSTLE ON DISPLAY

**Wolftown** members participated in a VDOT Adopt-a-Highway road clean-up. The club set up its food trailer to serve lunch to those attending the Madison County High School FFA Jackpot show. Club President Mike Carpenter served as the show judge. The club also donated 13 Thanksgiving meals for clients of Madison County DSS.





Send Your Club and District News to:  
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Magazine Submission Deadlines:

Spring - February 1

Summer - May 1

Fall - August 1

Winter - November 1