

Livability In Action



In The New River Valley

August 2015

The Livability Initiative was a three-year regional planning process which provided an opportunity for New River Valley residents to develop a vision for the future and develop strategies that businesses, community organizations, local governments, and individuals can use to make this future vision a reality. This newsletter provides a progress update on the partnerships, projects and initiatives underway in the region that are contributing to the vision and goals outlined in this plan.



NRV Expands its Affordable Childcare Options

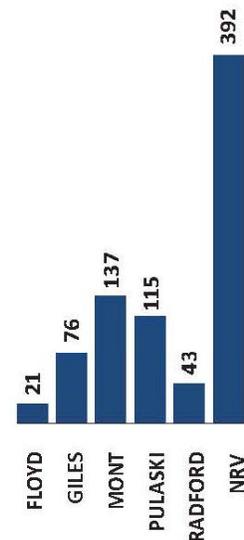
The Radford Child Development, Inc. (RCD) is making steady progress towards opening a state-of-the-art early childcare center to serve the Radford community. This facility, named the Radford Early Learning Center, will be operated by Rainbow Child Care Center, a nationally accredited provider (not affiliated with Rainbow Riders in Blacksburg). The center is now accepting reservations for their January 2016 opening, for infants through Pre-K aged students, with both full and partial week options. Radford University Foundation is providing a no-interest loan to support the building's construction by Price Williams. RCD is currently focused on a marketing and fundraising to support its operations and establish a scholarship fund to ensure that the center is accessible and affordable to everyone. For more information: connect via Facebook or <http://www.radfordchilddevelopment.org>.

Rainbow Riders in Blacksburg is currently working with TAP (Total Action for Progress) Head Start in the Roanoke Valley, who was awarded a \$2.7 million grant to partner with child care programs in the NRV to expand high quality early care and education. As a result, Rainbow Riders has located two small classrooms for a new early Head Start program at St. Michael Lutheran Church in Blacksburg. There will be two classes of eight children ranging in age from six weeks to three years. Rainbow Riders is currently moving through the approval processes with an ambitious goal to open on September 8. Eligible families must meet federal poverty guidelines, work at least 30 hours per week or be enrolled as a full time student, as well as meet other criteria. For more information: [Kristi Snyder, ????](#)

Did you know?



There is a greater demand for quality childcare than is currently available in the region.



CHILDREN ENROLLED IN HEAD START PROGRAMS (2011-2012)

In 2010, 22% of children in the NRV under age 5 were living in poverty and less than half of these children were receiving the benefits of Head Start or the VA Preschool Initiative.

Enhance Living and Working Environments

Goals

1. Provide Support for an Aging Population
2. Ensure Affordability of Housing Energy and Transport
3. Improve Transportation Options for Residents
4. Improve Building Energy Efficiency
5. Expand Renewable Energy Systems



Community Collaboration Helps Non Profit Save Energy & Money

For the 15th year in a row, Community Housing Partners continued its annual tradition of participating in a community-based project as part of National NeighborWorks Week by teaming up with the Community Foundation of the New River Valley (CFNRV) to help another nonprofit organization with a sustainable solution to budget-busting energy bills.

The Mission, which ministers to low or fixed-income individuals and families who struggle with chronic or emergency food and clothing needs due to sudden loss of income or property, re-located two years ago to a historic, 5,000-square-foot brick building in downtown Pearisburg, Virginia. The brick building was highly energy inefficient, costing the nonprofit up to \$3,400 each year in utility bills. For the past five years, the Mission has requested funding from the CFNRV to cover their high utility costs. This year, however, CHP and the CFNRV worked together to reduce the Mission's need for annual funding requests by improving the facility's efficiency, comfort, safety, and sustainability. Since CHP volunteers insulated the attic space and reduced the attic's air infiltration levels, they have noticed a big difference in their electric bill, saving they can now use to serve more people.

Living Well at 50+ Conference this September

Today's seniors are redefining what it means to age successfully, shifting from a preoccupation with loss and decline to an exploration of ways to achieve greater meaning and joy in daily life. The LivingWell@50+ conference, being held on September 8th 2015 at the Virginia Tech Inn, is designed to stimulate thinking about successful aging, to learn strategies that can be incorporated into daily life, and to provide resources for active engagement in the New River Valley. There is a \$30 Participant registration fee which includes lunch and breaks. For more information: <http://www.cpe.vt.edu/livingwell>



Introducing the Solar Voltzwagon

SustainFloyd is unveiling its newest project – the Solar VoltzWagon. The VoltzWagon is a 6x12 utility trailer with 1500 watts of solar power which can run a small to moderate size house for one day on batteries alone. The solar panels are uniquely mounted to allow for an adjustable tilt and can power most devices that require 120V. The purpose of this project will be to provide power for the Floyd Community Market on a regular basis and to be used as an educational demonstration of renewable energy for schools, residents, and visitors. The Voltzwagon can also be used to provide emergency power during a power outage and may be rented out for a variety of outdoor events. For more information: www.sustainfloyd.org





The Transformation of Prices Fork Elementary

Imagination and collaboration are the special ingredients that will soon be transforming a beloved rural school into a rejuvenated community facility. The purchase of the old Prices Fork Elementary School by Radford-based Taylor Hollow Construction in July means that the doors will be reopened following extensive renovations. The NRV HOME Consortium will provide HUD funding to assist in the development of affordable housing units for low-income 50+ tenants. The Prices Fork Local Food Initiative, comprised of representatives of several local and regional organizations, is also working to obtain additional funding for food-based enterprises that will support local agriculture. Current plans include a commercial kitchen that will provide business incubation services for value-added food entrepreneurs and a farm to table restaurant that will serve the best of local agricultural products. Additional projects may include an on-site market, a community garden, a local music venue, and a rentable event space. Initial support has been received through the Appalachian Foodshed Project and the Community Development Block Grant program. To learn more: Ellen Stewart, estewart@blacksburg.gov.

Lifelong learning Institute at Virginia Tech

The Lifelong Learning Institute (LLI) at Virginia Tech is a new member-driven, volunteer organization that draws on the wealth of academic and community resources in the New River Valley to provide intellectual, cultural, and social experiences for curious adults 50 and older. Starting in October, thirteen courses will be offered this year by award-winning faculty and inspired community members – civil war history, Arab nationalism, watercolors, memoir writing, English novels, gardening, conversations with NRV artists, science in the news, and others. Special lectures and events give members opportunities to interact with visiting performers at the Center for the Arts and outstanding researchers. For more information: <http://www.cpe.vt.edu/lifelonglearning> or contact Pat Hyer, hyerp@vt.edu.

Lifespan Friendly Homes

The Town of Blacksburg and the Community Foundation of the New River Valley (CFNRV), together with several regional partners, have been awarded an \$84,000 grant from Partners for Places, a project of the Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities. The Lifespan Friendly Homes project emerged from the collaborative work of the regional Aging in Place Leadership Team, an issue group of the NRV Livability Initiative, when the group realized the region faces two inter-related challenges: a rapidly aging population and rising home energy costs. This grant will be used to launch an NRV wide home modifications program designed to improve energy efficiency and mobility within homes of lower-income older adults. Habitat for Humanity will carry out the home modification projects and Community Housing Partners, the NRV Area Agency on Aging, the Center for Gerontology at Virginia Tech, and the VA Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services will lend support and expertise. This grant award demonstrates the benefits of collaboration across multiple disciplines and service groups. For more information: Shelley Fortier, sfortier@habitatnrv.org.

Make the Business Environment More Productive

Goals

10. Enhance Education and Workforce Readiness
11. Support Infrastructure Needed for Economic Development
12. Support Small Business Development
13. Strengthen Agricultural Viability



Passenger Rail is coming to the NRV

In 2017, AMTRAK will begin passenger rail service to Roanoke, with daily trains to Lynchburg, Charlottesville, Northern Virginia, and Washington DC. The NRV Metropolitan Planning Organization is partnering with the NRV Regional Commission to identify potential passenger rail stops, as well as information about the types of travelers who would use passenger rail service in the region and the potential social and economic impacts.

As part of these efforts, the Commission is also gathering information about the travel habits of regional residents, visitors and university students, and has developed a survey to collect information from these groups. The survey results will help understand potential passenger rail use, and ensure that a new station would offer the services that travelers want the most. To stay up to date on the project, visit: www.nrvpassengerrail.org/. The links to recent project materials and serves as a portal for public engagement.

Floyd County Photo Lab

Rural Development, the Floyd County Economic Development Authority (EDA) and the Jacksonville Center for the Arts have teamed up to create a “Photo Lab” so that artists, artisans and other small businesses can get professional-quality images of their work, which is critical in this day of online marketplaces and online juried entry processes. Even great products would not sell without high-quality packaging, imaging and other print materials. The Virginia Commission for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts provided a grant to purchase a backdrop system as well as iMacs and software, where people can learn to work with their images. A private individual is loaning his high-end camera and light box for the project. To learn more: Lydeana Martin, lmartin@floydcova.org.

Blue Ridge Center for Chinese Medicine

For a number of years, The Blue Ridge Center for Chinese Medicine has been tending their own herbal medicine garden to help supply the treatments needed by their patients.

18 months ago, BRCCM, a non-profit in Floyd County received \$150,000 from a private donor and matching funds from the Tobacco



Commission to expand their efforts, which will help meet the burgeoning national demand for these herbs and provide an additional income stream for local farmers. So far BRCCM has helped plant medicinal herbs on 27 farms with over 13,000 plants, primarily in Floyd County. They currently have a waiting list of farms wanting to participate in growing another higher-value crop that can help diversify their revenue stream and sustain their operations. BRCCM has already purchased harvesting equipment but are now working on a way to dry and process these herbs at a larger scale as well as test, certify and ship the herbs.

and Resilient



Pearisburg Farm to Fork

In 2014, the Town of Pearisburg Farm to Fork Program received a Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) grant to increase the access and use of local and regional products. This year the town is partnering with Virginia Cooperative Extension to host several free workshops for local producers. It also established the Pearisburg Community Market, open from May through October the third Thursday of each month from 4-8pm. Thanks to funding from Carillion, low-income shoppers can now receive a one for one match for the first \$10 dollars that they spend at the market. The newest offering is the Farm Table initiative which aims to provide affordable, nutritious prepared foods that contain ingredients available at the market. The Farm Table is a collaborative partnership between Carilion, Virginia Cooperative Extension, FCS, Giles County AG-Lab, and local farmers. The partnership will offer demonstrations, hands-on cooking and beverage classes this August, September and October. For additional information: visit Pearisburg Community Market and Pearisburg Farm to Fork Facebook pages or call the Pearisburg Town Office at 540-921-0340.

The Kinder, Gentler, Shark Tank

This past spring the Floyd County Economic Development Authority held the **Floyd C4: Creators, Curriculum, Coaching and the New Business Challenge**. This event signified an important step towards Floyd's long term goal of strengthening and diversifying its local economy by spurring creativity and innovation. The challenge included a 6 week program of classes and mentoring drawing on the skills of successful local business people. Following one on one business counseling and coaching, participants were given the opportunity to pitch their business idea in a final challenge. Over \$11,000 was awarded to participants; the winner-Rhonda Withington- received a \$5,000 award for use in the development of her natural and organic body care product line. There are plans to host another challenge in spring 2016. To learn more: Lydeana Martin, lmartin@floydcova.org

Downtown Pulaski Needs Us

Beans and Rice sponsored a Community Economic Development forum: *Downtown Pulaski Needs Us*, this past April. The focus of the forum was to generate strategies grounded in best practice to get Pulaski to a point of success, strengthening and expanding existing businesses and supporting the development of new businesses. The forum featured a panel of experts who emphasized collaboration between organizations as a key to success in bringing Pulaski back after years of economic downturn as well as the need for long-term plans, breaking out of comfort zones, and encouraging the community to embrace individual leadership roles. A community planning asset exercise and business plan competition is also in the works for this Fall. Contact: Eric Bucey, ebucey@beansandrice.org to learn more.



Preserve Rural Heritage and Community Character



Goals

6. Encourage Development that Preserves Rural Character
7. Protect Natural Landscapes and Ecosystems
8. Recognize & Strengthen Natural, Cultural and Historic Assets
9. Support Arts Culture and Community Character

Oral History Project in Floyd

ROOTS WITH WINGS is an Oral History project and partnership between Floyd Story Center at the Old Church Gallery, Floyd County High School, and Radford University. The Project plants the *roots* of intergenerational community relationships, while introducing state-of-the-art technology *wings*. These partners spend every spring semester working with Floyd County High School students and their teacher to instruct how to conduct ethical, methodologically sound interviews, record using audio and video equipment, transcribe, archive, discover themes, and create movies. In 2015, 42 participants from 4 generations learned from World War II veterans and their families, while 73 community members followed the weekly activities via the blog: www.floydstorycenter.blogspot.com. To learn more and support the effort, contact: floydstorycenter@gmail.com



Loco Arts and Summit Place

Spring 2015 brought color to Summit Place, a new 55 and older supportive living facility in Rich Creek, VA. Near the end of the site's construction, LoCo Arts (Local Community Arts) entered with brushes, paint and newly framed artwork to transform the structure into a place of brightness and a bit of whimsy. LoCo Arts, which strives to provide creative education and cultural experiences for youth and adults in the NRV, was commissioned by the NRV HOME Consortium for the project. The opportunity to produce affordable artwork for Summit Place resonated with LoCo Arts mission. To increase the variety of work and include the community's artists and aspiring creatives in the project, LoCo Arts created a Call for Art. From the submissions, seventeen locally produced works were chosen and reproduced for installation. LoCo Arts is a non-profit organization, and runs an arts-based after school program, The Mayapple Preschool, children's summer camps, and workshops and classes for youth and adults. To find out more: www.loco-arts.org.

New River Water Trail

Giles County in the New River Valley boasts 50 miles of the Appalachian Trail, beautiful scenic drives, and recreation opportunities for the whole family. Now Giles County is coordinating efforts to market their 37 miles of the New River. This coordinated effort highlights local small businesses, community parks, and the destination of Giles County. The Giles County New River Water Trail™ designation will help visitors navigate the river and explore the various sections that are ready to be discovered! Information on the trail can be found at <http://newriverwatertrail.com> and includes information and downloadable maps that will direct river goers to find boat landings, river access points, suggested itineraries, nearby lodging, and great local places to eat.

Building Healthy Communities



Goals

14. **Enhance Access to Healthcare**
15. **Create Health Environments**
16. **Promote Healthy Behaviors and Lifestyles**
17. **Support Children and Youth Reaching their Full Potential**
18. **Protect and Improve Water Resources**

The Huckleberry Trail Extension Continues

In just a few months, the much-loved Huckleberry Trail will begin construction on its last leg, creating a connected trail system that will stretch more than 6 miles from the Jefferson National Forest on the northern edge of Blacksburg to the far side of Route 114 in Christiansburg via the newly-completed Renva Knowles Bridge. The Huckleberry provides outdoor recreation opportunities to countless residents, contributing to positive community health and citizens' quality of life. The last bit of work will be to create a $\frac{3}{4}$ mile connection across Glade Road and Heritage Park to Gateway Park at the southern boundary of the Jefferson National Forest. The trail's final portion has been planned with environmental conservation and education in mind. A 500 foot elevated boardwalk will be constructed over a wetland area both to minimize environmental impact and to provide local students, researchers and nature enthusiasts an opportunity to learn about and appreciate the ecosystem services and wildlife habitat provided by an intact wetland. Construction on this final phase will begin in the fall of 2015. It is expected to be completed and open to the public by the summer of 2016. For more information, contact: <http://huckleberrytrail.org/about-the-trail/>

Reducing Substance Abuse During Pregnancy

In 2014 Virginia Tech's, Institute for Policy and Governance and a team of community partners was awarded a grant to explore how community stakeholders in the New River Valley gain information on behavioral health and then use that information to enhance and/or develop programs and policies. Building on this initial work, this same team was then awarded an Innovation Community grant from the Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to develop and implement an early warning system for Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (problems that occur in a newborn when exposed to addictive illegal or prescription drugs while in the mothers womb), with the hope of reducing cases of NAS. The NRV represents 10% of the 2014 reported cases of NAS statewide and has the highest rates of NAS in the Southwestern Region.

Community Health Needs Assessment Underway in Giles

The Giles Community Health Needs assessment, began this year with the help of community organizations and leaders, who form a Community Health Needs Assessment Team (CHAT), The team collected primary and secondary data and held focus groups in our underserved areas in the Giles community. Upon The top five areas of concern and focus are: Tobacco use, general wellness due to lack of physical activity, poor eating habits and chronic disease, mental and substance abuse services, access to adult dental, and alcohol and drug use. The team is in the process of completing the final report and will have it available at www.carilionclinic.org/chna by October 2015. Once completed we will be having a strategic planning meeting to start implementing programs to better meet these needs. For further questions, please feel free to contact Shenika Dillard at sldillard@carilionclinic.org.

The Livability Partnership

The Community Foundation of the New River Valley (CFNRV) and the NRV Planning District Commission (NRVPDC) are proud to be leading partners in supporting implementation of the Livability Initiative's many goals and strategies. The partnership will continue to convene the community around critical issues, support collaboration, track progress on key indicators, and identify the resources needed to move vision to action. To learn more about the Initiative or download a copy of the report, visit www.nrvlivability.org or contact the CFNRV or NRVPDC with questions.

To support the Initiative with a tax-deductible contribution, visit www.cfnrv.givebig.org and make a secure contribution to the Fund for the NRV or any of the CFNRV's Future Funds supporting the Initiative's four main themes featured in this newsletter.



New River Valley
Planning District Commission



Contact Us

Do you want to share information on a project you are working on or would you like more information about the Livability Initiative or one of the featured projects?

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