

PLATEAU

October / November 2020

MOUNTAIN LIFE IN HIGHLANDS-CASHIERS NORTH CAROLINA

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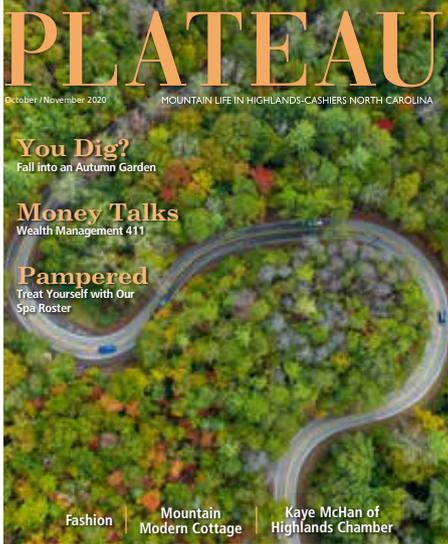
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from the editor



Reflections

Since our inaugural issue, I've been sending copies of Plateau Magazine to my grandmother, Charlotte, in San Antonio, TX. My mother's mother, my grandmother was a German war bride. While stationed in Europe with my grandfather after the war, she took to visiting estate sales. My grandfather was an airplane mechanic. While his wife found a new hobby in treasure hunting, he discovered a love for repairing clocks. When they moved back to the states, these combined hobbies turned into a thriving antique business, specializing in European antiques and fine clock repair. Growing up, my grandparents were akin to two walking encyclopedias. It was not uncommon for my grandfather to walk down the aisles of their antique shop with me, pick up unusual objects and place them in my hand. His engineer eyes would shine bright with pride and anticipation as he watched his eldest grandchild attempt to solve the puzzle of "what is it?"

In my first editor's letter, I used word-play to create a metaphor for this publication's name. Upon reading the magazine, my grandmother, the ever-witty encyclopedia, informed me that there was yet another use for the word "plateau." A mirrored plateau is also the name for trays commonly used in dining rooms and private vanities. She has one sitting on her bathroom counter, proudly displaying an antique silver comb set.

My grandmother has always had a sixth-sense way of revealing the right information at the perfect time. It's almost as though she plucks a thought out of the ether and hands it to you wrapped in a bow at the opportune moment. I have long been intrigued by the concept of mirroring in its poetic sense. The thought that we find pieces of ourselves reflected in others, which we can't quite see on our own. Just as a mirrored plateau reflects the beauty of the contents it displays, our plateau mirrors its people's spirit.

In this issue, we talk about the history of art and artists on the Highlands-Cashiers Plateau. For decades, artists have sought these mountains to create, nurtured in a serene environment. We also discuss the healing and relaxation found in our forests, lakes and rivers. Further still, we cover pristine backdrops that serve as elopement destinations, investment in our children and avenues to financial abundance. All of this we do while subconsciously mirroring back the goodness surrounding us. As we collectively prepare to move through the end of a very trying 2020, let us reflect on lessons revealed. In this season of thanks, may we have a spirit of gratitude for what the plateau has shown. Both the areas where we should re-evaluate and improve and the love that has always been present.

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6th graders Bradli and Alex stand in front of the sign designating the site for the new BGCP building. Bradli and Alex joined the Club in kindergarten when BGCP opened its doors in 2014 and are still regularly attending members.



Growing Up

The Boys & Girls Club of the Plateau expands youth development

By KAT FORD

NAVIGATING THE EVER-changing waters of adolescence is a skill we all must learn. It is an intimately personal journey; everyone experiences unique circumstances—a distinctive set of tools, a custom-made boat. As a child growing up in a rural community, I can say that there was fairytale-like freedom in country living for me. I can also say that at times I felt like an exciting yet foreign

movie was happening in a neighboring universe (in my case, that universe looked like a mid 90s MTV music video), and my friends and I were fixated on the possibility of getting there, wherever 'there' might be. So, it didn't take much of a stretch of the imagination for me to understand the excitement in the voice of two men as they made a presentation while standing under a white tent on a new plot of land purchased by the Boys & Girls Club of the

Plateau (BGCP). Josh Helms, executive director, and Nat Turner, president of the board of directors, pointed at blue stakes as they walked me through where a new building would one day sit. With a five-year track record of implementing proven strategies for excellence in child and teen development in southern Jackson County, the Club is ready for a larger place to allow rural children to flourish. A place to prepare young boats for navigating the waters of neighboring universes.

Opening on September 15th of 2014, BGCP's charter covers both Jackson County and Macon County. While current programming serves southern Jackson County, with continued success, the Club plans to expand in future years to service the youth of Cullowhee, Tuckasegee, Sylva, Highlands, and Franklin. Possible options include seeking additional funding for a bus and staff member to transport



2nd grader Ceci Letson points excitedly as she realizes how much space the new building will have for her favorite activities.

children to and from other locations. As of 2020, BGCP enrolled 243 members, one-third of the school-aged children in southern Jackson County. While current demand can spike attendance to 130 members on an early fall day, space limitations make serving an average of 80 members daily in a facility adequate for 50 challenging. It should come as no surprise that demand is so high; it was the need for affordable after-school enrichment to assist working families that led a group of community leaders to found the BGCP, pulling from a nationally-proven curriculum. Full-time working parents lead most BGCP families, but 70% of BGCP families report a household income below \$30,000 annually. While 62.6% of Jackson County students qualified for free and reduced lunch in 2019, 84% of BGCP members qualified. With little wiggle room in many family budgets for after-school care, work schedules don't always allow guardians to offer children extracurriculars with the ease allowed to families in suburban areas. Young and curious minds left without supervised and enriching activities are at risk of being exposed to harmful behaviors and delinquent activities. For working parents in southern Jackson County, the affordable daily after-school programming and full-day summer programming provided by BCGP is life-changing.

Despite capacity challenges, BGCP is already producing measurable success. BGCP collects data as part of its mandatory reporting to the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, including the number of students per grade level, number of hours of academic tutoring and time spent on physical activity. BGCP also participates in an annual survey the Boys & Girls Club of America conducts

with Club members ages nine and older to determine the likelihood of positive outcomes in priority areas including academic success, good character and citizenship, and healthy lifestyles. BGCP regularly exceeds the national average in many categories. Having access to key resources from a national organization with over a century in youth development is paramount for BGCP. Gleaning from guidelines, management practices, programming and training means that staff and volunteers can spend more time implementing and less time inventing. Performance metrics show areas of quantitative concern. Qualitative guidelines offer actions derived from evidence-based research and drawing from academic studies pointing to best practices in youth development.

Youth development comes in various packages, from academic to emotional and physical, with a membership ranging from kindergarten through high school, BGCP programming is teaching critical skills at all ages. Early on, the decision to make healthy choices for 'you' and 'your body' is a strong foundational concept and can range from eating and an active lifestyle to academic studies and maintaining friendships. Reading through the list of BGCP targeted outcomes includes improved academics and communication skills, anti-bullying, civics, conflict resolution, coping skills for stress, exercise and a nutritious diet, literacy and respect for others and other cultures.

Later, when those more 'MTV universe' decisions appear along a cloudy horizon, a foundation of self-worth, both personal and communal, provides more precise navigational tools. A small but thriving teen membership is expanding developmental programming to include counseling against alcohol and drug abuse. BGCP also partners with other organizations to utilize and amplify their areas of expertise, such as the Jackson County Department of Public Health. Additionally, parents can choose concerning which program topics best suit their family; advanced notice encourages previewed curriculums with an option to opt-out. MTV doesn't own the only universe out there. Vocational forces occupy some universes that young minds could only begin to dream are at their potential fingertips. For this reason,

Happy Thanksgiving
We thank you for the opportunity to work together and for making us feel at home in our community.

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BUZZ

after school



Members are greeted by Club staff as they arrive for the day.



Kayley Bryson smiles with Club operations director, Vivian Weatherby, at her graduation from Blue Ridge School. Kayley was the first Club member to graduate from high school and participate in the North Carolina Youth of the Year competition, and she is currently an employee at the Club.

PHOTO JOANNE BRYSON



Club members have fun during a six-week boating course beginning with basic kayaking skills taught on land and eventually spending many days paddling on Lake Fairfield.

the BGCP is charting a course beyond academic success and providing teens with hard skills for future employment, creating informal mentoring with college students to inspire members to strive for postsecondary goals and expose them to diverse careers and trades. BGCP partners with nonprofits throughout the plateau to magnify exposure to other industries and vocational exploration areas, for example, The Bascom: A Center for the Visual Arts, Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust and the Literacy Council of Cashiers.

Board and staff recognized the need for facilities to empower the current five full-time and thirty part-time employees plus their 93 volunteers to serve both existing and growing demand. They embarked on a plan to build a facility worthy of the Club's success and were initially planning a smaller expansion. By January of 2020, the idea to purchase a parcel of land near the center of Cashiers was conceived, which would allow for more ambitious construction and members to easily access partner organizations such as the Albert Carlton-Cashiers Community Library and The Village Green. BGCP supporters immediately rallied around the idea, and donor dollars purchased the property by the summer of 2020. Design is underway for construction on a nearly three-acre campus with plans for a main K-12 build-

PHOTOS VIVIAN WEATHERBY



Summer Camp provides opportunities to think outside the box, or in this case, repurpose the box(es) for an afternoon of fun with oldest camper Jonathan Campbell disguised as Robot Man.

ing, a recreational pavilion, playground and room for expansion down the road. Excruciating detail is going into all aspects of the building plans, which consider aesthetics, modern childcare safety measurements and inspiration birthed through COVID-19 pandemic necessities. During COVID-19, social distancing has slashed the already low facility capacity. New building plans now include pod classrooms, each equipped with a bathroom and sink. In current events, these pods help keep groups isolated for health reasons, but in future planning, these will allow for various classes and programming to happen simultaneously. In partnering with local restaurants and Vision Cashiers, the Cashiers Emergency Food Collaborative (CEFC) brought the Club's long-term desire to partner with local organizations that feed the community to fruition. It is

partly because of CEFC that the Club decided to include a food pantry with drive-thru pick up. To complete the Capital Campaign and Expansion Fund, the Club is enthusiastically nearing the finish line, with only \$1.1 million in funding needed of the original \$4.5 million identified in January of 2020; \$500,000 would pay for the recreational pavilion. Annually, BGCP requires \$600,000 to operate. With the new facility, this number will increase to around \$785,000, primarily due to the cost of the increased staffing that will be needed to maintain meaningful relationships and experiences with BGCP's growing membership, like the addition of a part-time nurse. As the Club continues to close the gap in their fundraising efforts, they are excited to announce detailed construction plans in the future. As with all nonprofits, charitable donations come in both dollars

and service. For those with a background in childcare, teaching, or a specific skill or hobby that would be of interest to young members and programming, BGCP is always looking for new volunteers to help serve their expanding numbers.

When talking about barometers for success in youth organizations, it is easy to get caught up in graduation benchmarks. Healthy and drug-free lifestyles, academic success and postsecondary education are undeniable in their importance and necessities. But success is also measured much later, a little closer to 80 than 18. BGCP is considering this in their quest to lay foundations that enable young people to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens. Later, success is found in fulfilling careers, a lifetime of enjoying a job with ample financial provision. Success also lies in meaningful and loving relationships and resilience to life's struggles. It presents itself while offering your children the experiences you had hoped for them to enjoy. It identifies in caring for aging family members in a way you always believed you would and in using a lifetime of wisdom to help build a better tomorrow for a community you adore. Perhaps the most valid benchmark of success will never be witnessed by the BGCP. Instead, it will happen in a board room or town hall meeting on the plateau or in a neighboring universe wherever 'there' is—when a future leader aspires to build youth facilities like the Club where they grew up. A place to teach a new generation how to sail their one-of-a-kind boats, just like they learned to do years before. ■



Members look out over Satulah Mountain during a hike and educational program with Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust.

Right Tool for the Job

Financial advisors are ready to help you complete more than just the task at hand

By KAT FORD

WEALTH MANAGEMENT IS A HOLISTIC TECHNIQUE FOR MANAGING ASSETS; IT IS NOT A ONE-SIZE-fits-all approach, as different lifestyles require different needs. Furthermore, those needs may vary while moving from one stage of life to another. This means looking at both investable assets (those easily converted to cash value, like stocks) and non-investable, or tangible assets (those not easily converted, like real estate). Likewise, considering the right set of tools to help you achieve your life goals like college, estate, life insurance and portfolio planning.

Many of us have our plates full in the process of making money and less time available to effectively study how to organize and execute a long-term plan. There are several financial offices located on the plateau with professionals waiting to help clients find the 'holes' in the 'whole' and manage their assets in a way that lets their money work for them. Often, we find ourselves looking at the immediate plan of action – like setting aside money for college tuition. It's the financial advisor who will be thinking ahead and flipping through the playbook, simultaneously looking to move the ball down the field towards retirement.

The playbook might be one of the most critical roles of the investment professional. Experience, historical examples and models allow for confident and calm decision making. When the market reacts to the upcoming presidential election, the financial expert will know from years of industry study to expect, not fear election cycle volatility. Wealth management counseling will also consider your assets' concentration and help you strategize accordingly. If your family business is in real estate or

construction, your advisor might encourage you to make portfolio investments that don't include these or similar industries, like timber. That way, if housing takes a hit, you're not taking it from all angles.

Wisdom from counsel is imperative when contemplating important decisions. For instance, when to sell major assets. Seeking the correct way or time to sell can



have significant tax ramifications, and an expert can steer you in the right direction. A professional can similarly offer a second opinion on financial language in legal documents- pointing out areas of concern. When it comes to estate planning, an advisor can help facilitate the legacy you leave behind, including charitable donations. This writer can say firsthand that after my father's sudden and unexpected death at age 65, the trust my family had in our financial consultant offered much comfort. That relationship allowed us to make crucial and timely decisions that we would not have the clarity of mind to make on our own for many months.

There is a toolbox full of instruments to be considered for various situations when it comes to wealth management. Seeking professional advice will ensure you are using the right equipment for the job. While we might not all know what SEC stands for, most of us understand how hard it is to patch a hole with a screwdriver. Find a trusted financial advisor, and you will be shoring up the foundation of your financial future in no time. ■

Mixology Magic

Shrubs are the missing ingredient in your artisanal arsenal

By KAT FORD

ME? I'M A TEQUILA GIRL-añejo, on the rocks, salted rim, extra lime has been my poison for over a decade. In the COVID-19 era, I don't get to belly up to a bar often, so going out is a treat. When dining with friends at Midpoint in Highlands one evening, I felt a little fancy and asked the bartender for a fresh-tasting margarita. His kind eyes and warm energy made me feel safe to stray from my trusty inebriant of choice. With one taste, I knew this wasn't just a margarita; this was 'the margarita.' The margarita that would bring me back to this same barstool when out with friends. My bartender, Carlton, smiled the kind of grin that knows a particular type of secret. In this case, the secret is the shrub, his shrub recipe, to be exact. My new favorite margarita's magic is thanks to Carlton Chamblin's artisanal line of shrubs, Farm2Cocktail.

Chamblin takes the word 'artisanal' to a higher standard when it comes to mixology. With an educational background in art history, he isn't only looking to create



Farm2Cocktail shrubs currently come in five fresh-tasting flavors.



Carlton Chamblin creates a mixology masterpiece with his collection of Farm2Cocktail shrubs.

a specialty cocktail. He is fascinated with each unique libation's history, seeking a way to offer his contribution to the drink's expanding narrative. Why just imbibe when you can bequeath?

Shrubs, also known as drinking vinegar, were common in colonial America. Vinegar was used in the absence of citrus juices in the off-season to preserve fruits and berries. Shrubs have seen a resurgence in popularity over the last decade or so in craft cocktails. Use this sweet yet acidic non-alcoholic mixer in various manners from soda water to your favorite distilled beverage; for the culinarily inclined, try a shrub in a salad dressing or marinade.

Farm2Cocktail currently offers five flavors for your creative palate: blueberry lemongrass, cucumber mint, peach lavender, strawberry peppercorn and vanilla pear—each made with farm-fresh and natural ingredients. Like any good student of history, Chamblin is always eager to teach. The Farm2Cocktail offerings don't stop with secret syrups to help you play mixologist. Chamblin offers classes to help you become a mixologist, creating cocktails every bit as beautiful as the ones he serves to his loyal clientele. Private events are

also on the menu, anything from weddings to corporate parties. Chamblin intends to expand his product and service options in the future, with items like salad dressings and marinades and low sugar sodas on the top of his list.

As the fall leaves turn, many will reach for a spirit that matches the season. For Chamblin, this is yet another way to share his love of artisanal mixology. Farm2Cocktail has a robust blog presence offering both the family-friendly (can you say shrub snow cone?!) and the liquor-inspired, with a dash of culinary delight. He recommends using his vanilla pear shrub for autumn sipping, and he plans on posting plenty of recipes to inspire fans. To purchase one of Farm2Cocktail's shrub products, visit the website or stop by Mountain Fresh Grocery in Highlands. With a collection of these naturally infused elixirs, you will be serving dinner party guests with that same secret-knowing grin. It's up to you if you want to share the magic. **P**

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