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50 MUST-DO EXPERIENCES THIS YEAR

BEST of the FESTS 2020

See page 80

Picture THIS!

Check out the winners of our annual #ImagesofWNC photo contest

See page 50

A sunset view from Jane Bald in the Roan Highlands

Plus!

- Wildwater World Championships
- Southern Highlands Reserve
- Pro tips for attracting pollinators

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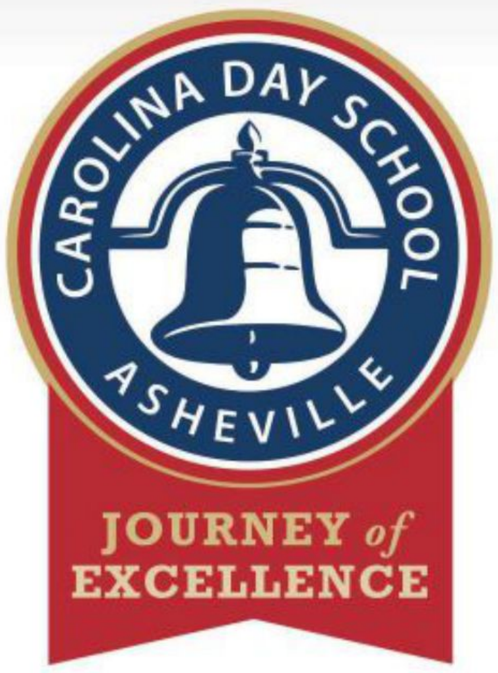

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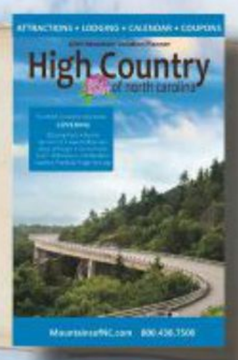

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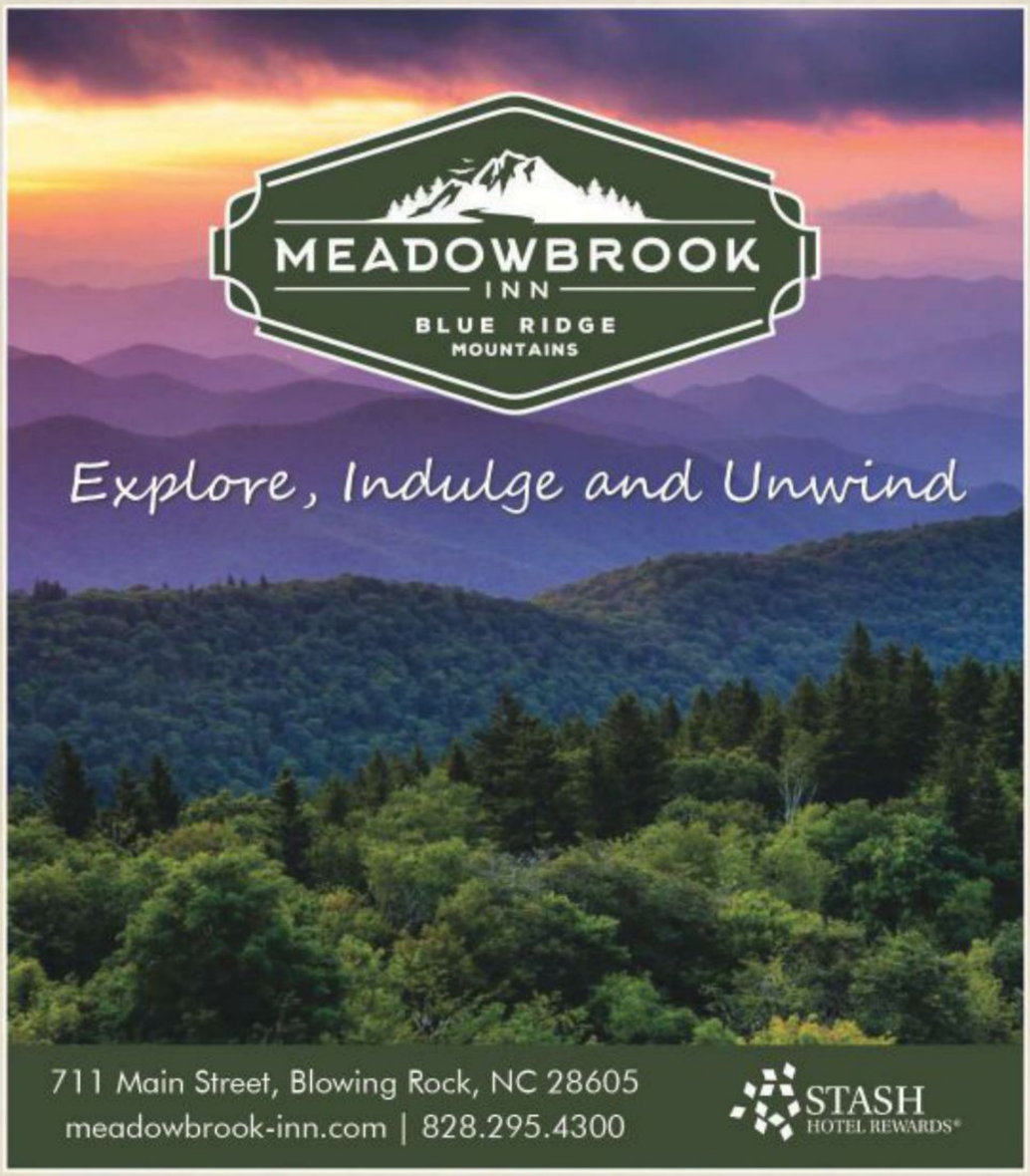

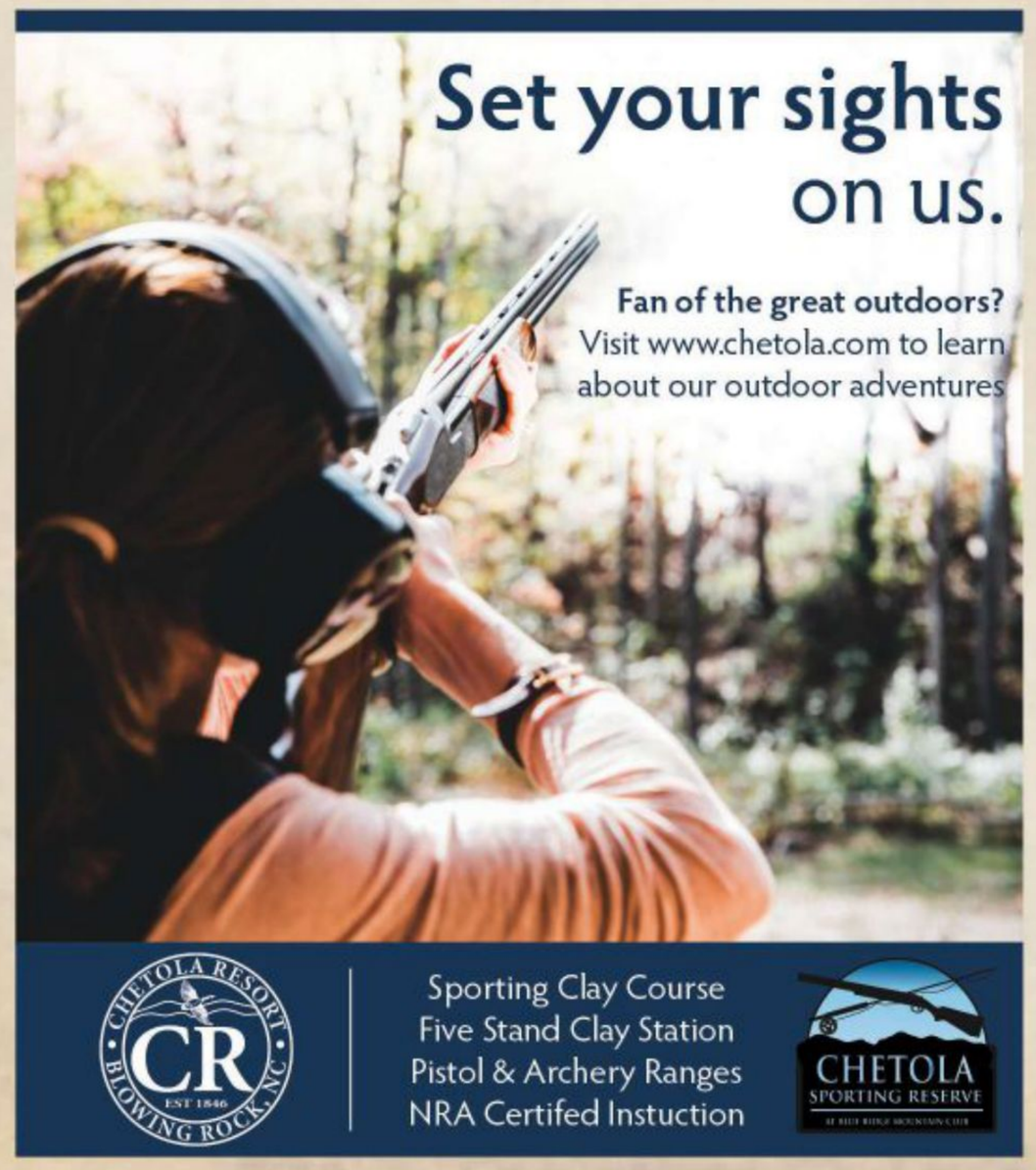

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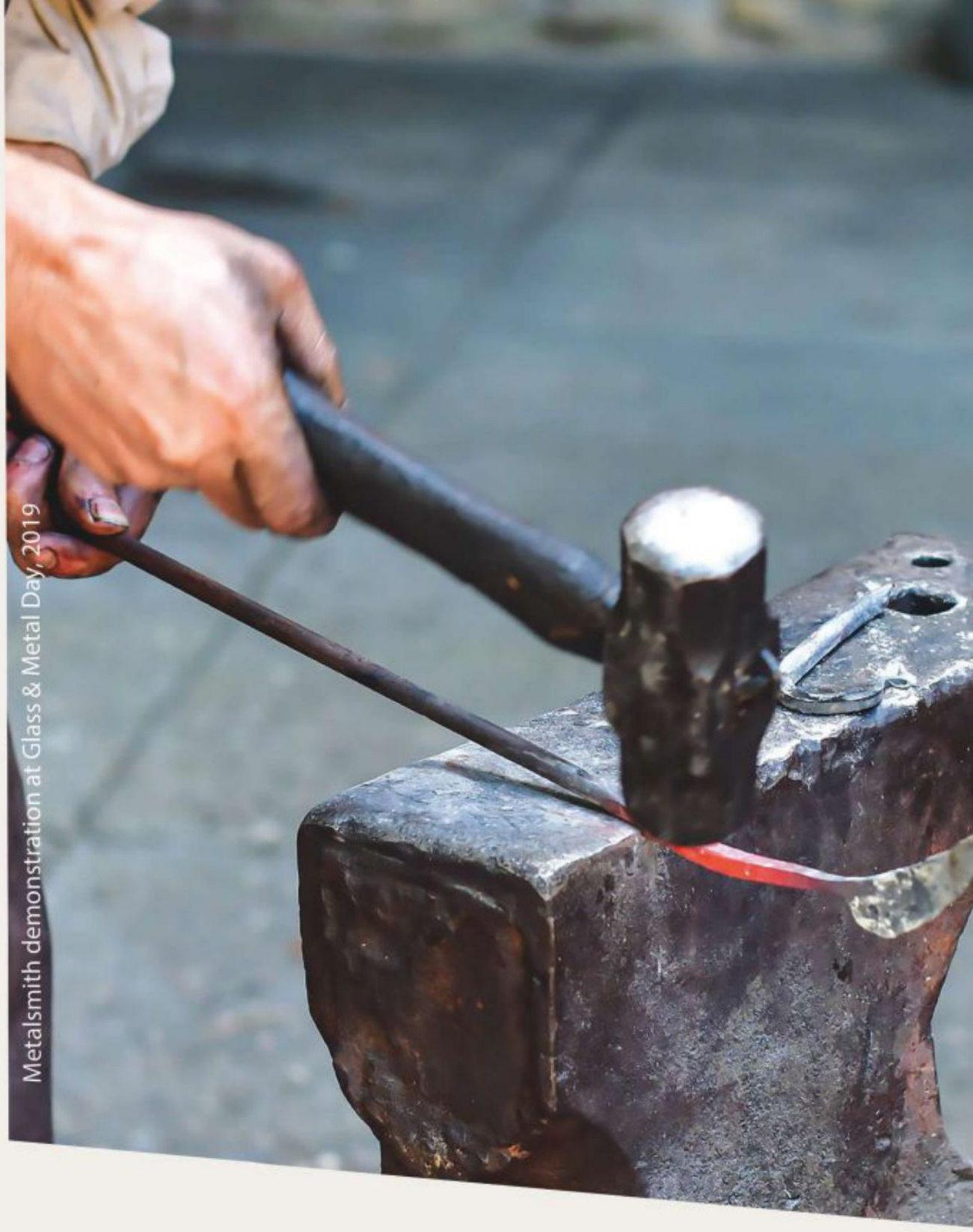

Metalsmith demonstration at Glass & Metal Day, 2019

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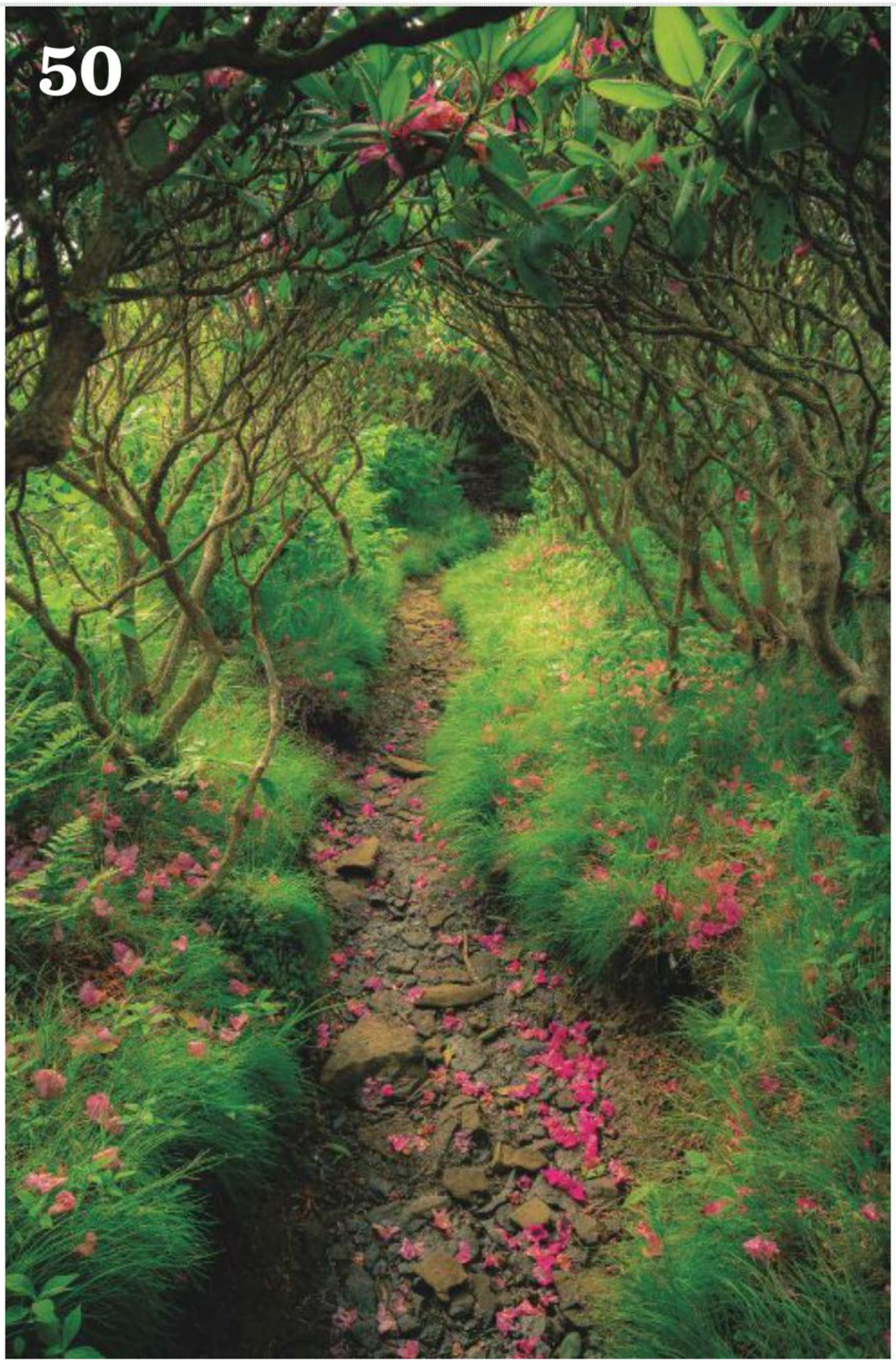

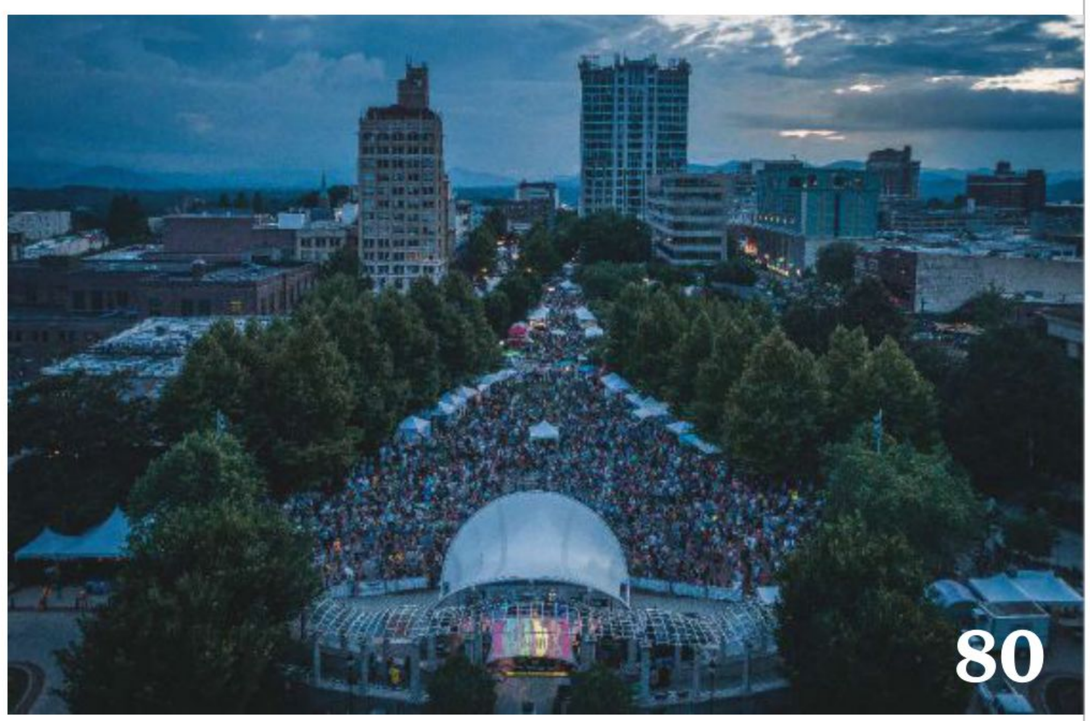

PHOTOGRAPHS BY (TRAIL) NATHAN FARBER; (FESTIVAL) GABE SWINNEY

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50 Images of WNC Photo Contest

The results of our annual photo contest, presented by Asheville Regional Airport, show how Western North Carolina scenes continue to stun and inspire.

72 Bear Necessities

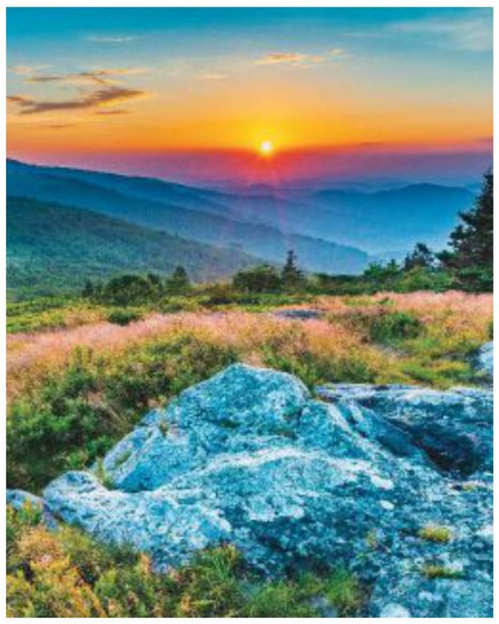
Whether you love them or loathe them, black bears, and close encounters with them, are increasingly a fact of life for many WNC residents. Here's everything you need to know about living in peace with our wild neighbors.

» WRITTEN BY **JON ELLISTON**

80 Get Festive

This year brings a veritable explosion of festivals to the mountain area. Here's your guide to 50 of the most fun and finest.

» WRITTEN BY **MELISSA REARDON**



ON THE COVER
Jane Bald in the Roan Highlands
PHOTOGRAPH BY CAMERON LANE

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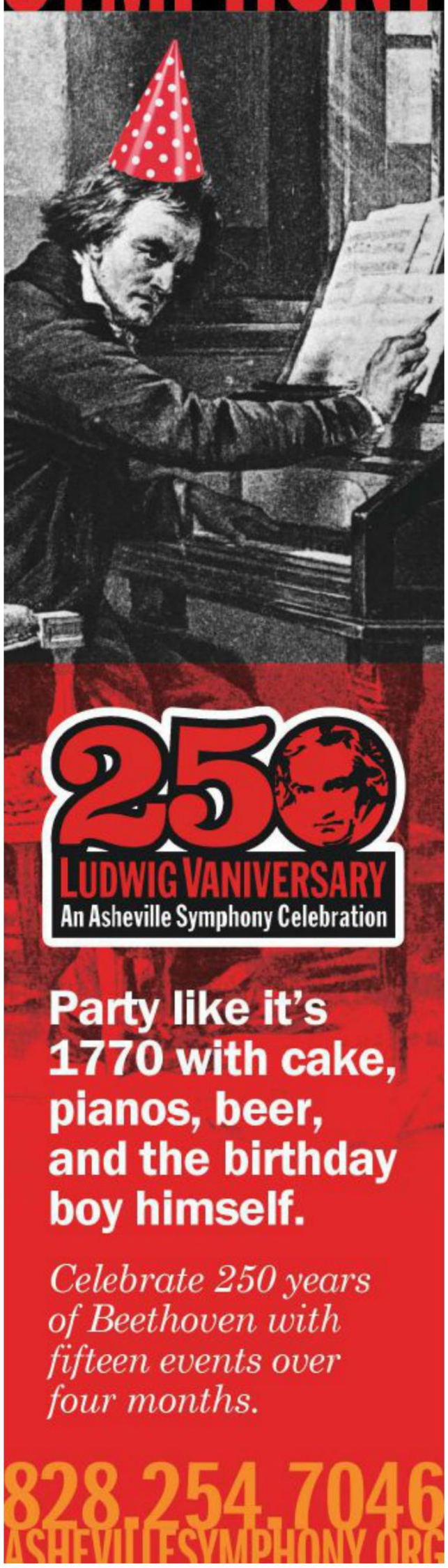

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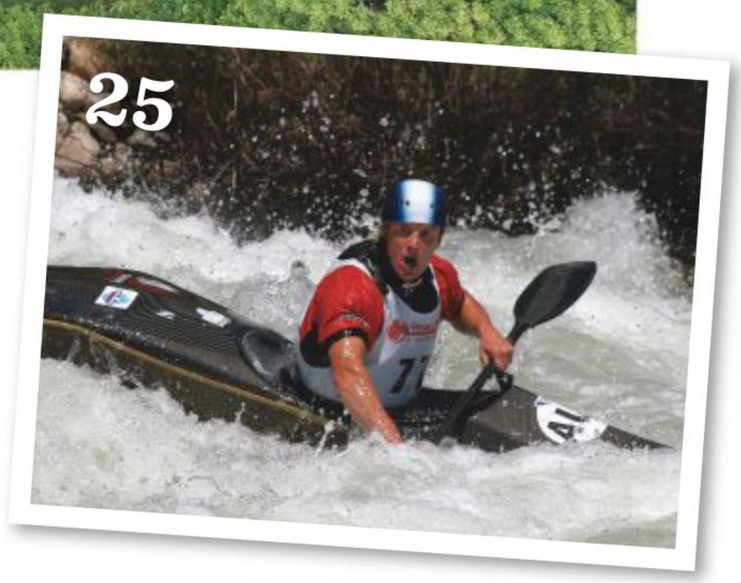

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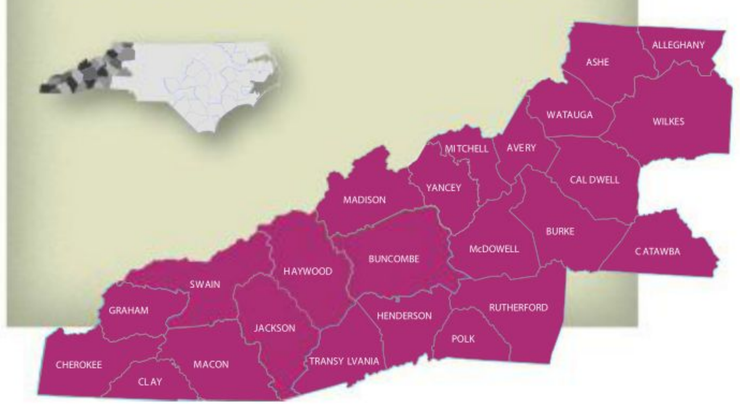

PHOTOGRAPHS, FROM TOP TO BOTTOM, COURTESY OF SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS RESERVE, COURTESY OF NANTAHALA OUTDOOR CENTER, BY TIM BARNWELL, COURTESY OF SPRIGGLY'S BEESCAPING

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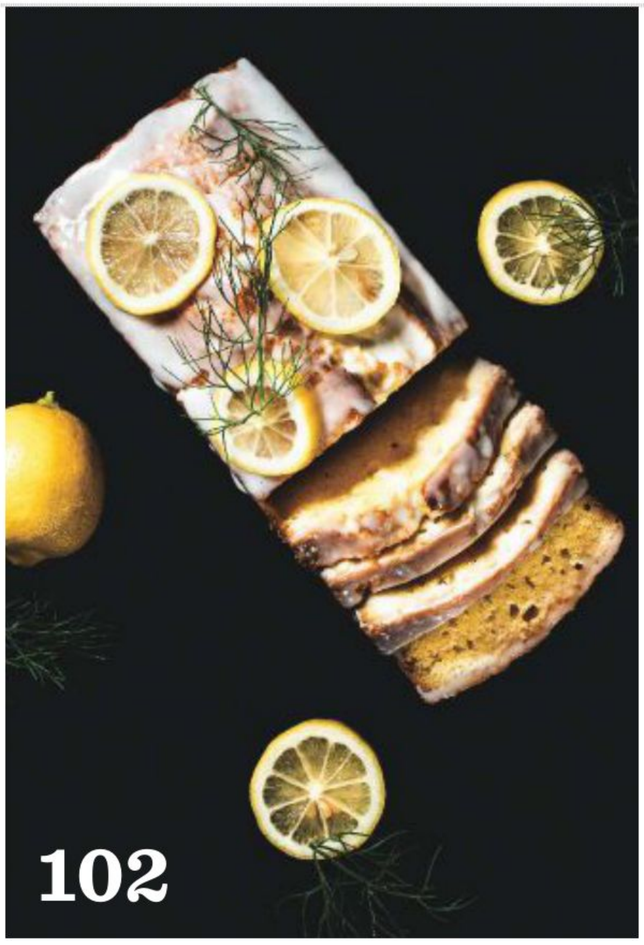

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PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS

Visit wncmagazine.com/photocontest to see even more of this year's Images of WNC Photo Contest submissions, along with winning shots from prior contests.

wncmagazine.com/photocontest

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PHOTOGRAPHS, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, BY LUKE VAN HINE, COURTESY OF NO EVIL FOODS, BY SALLIE WOODRING, BY DEREK DILUZIO

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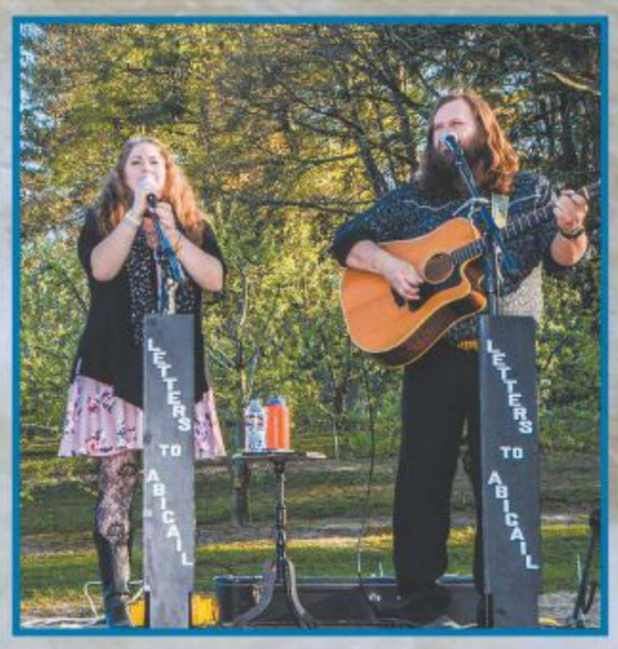

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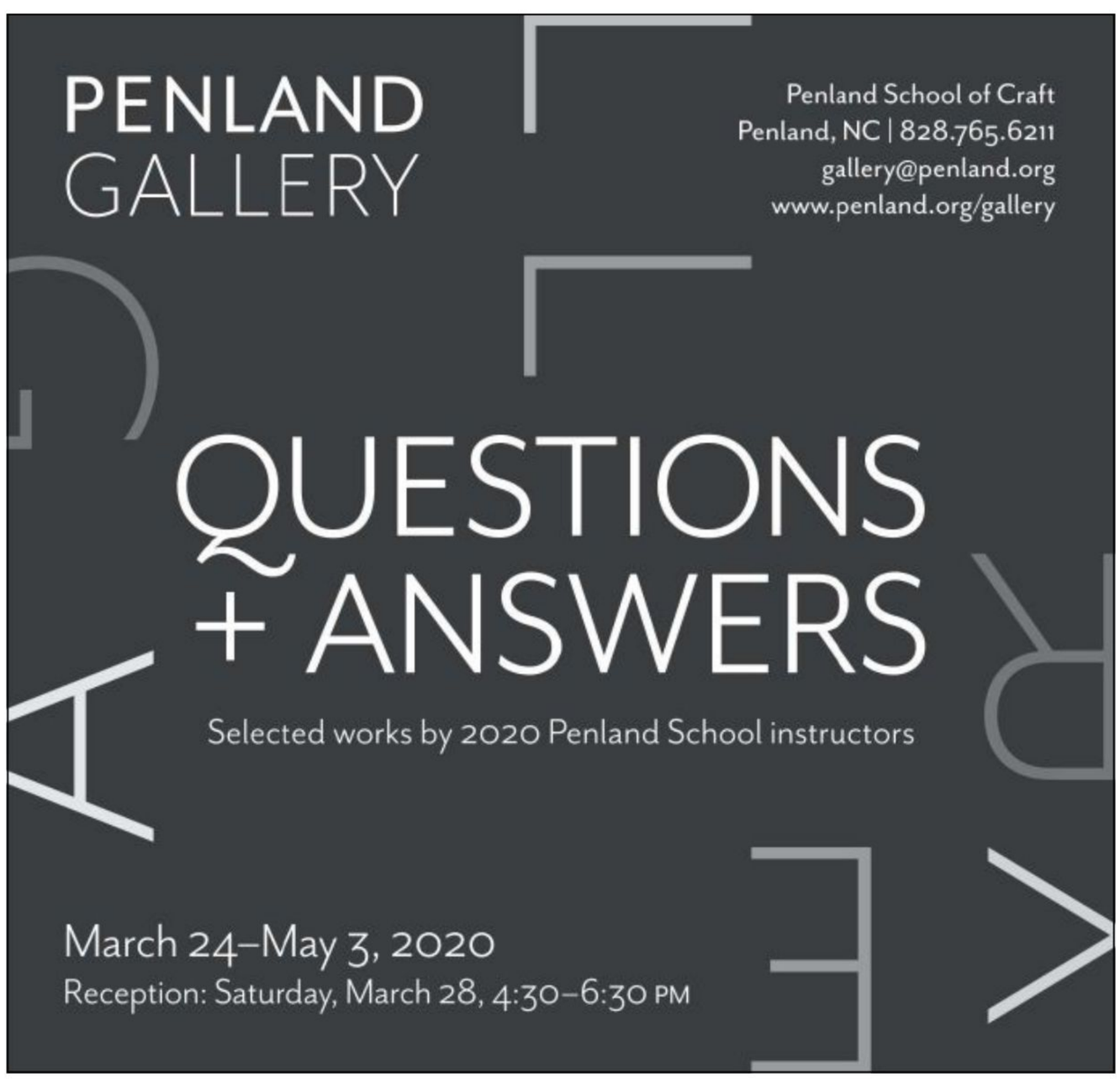

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Grin and bear it

PHOTOGRAPH BY JASON SANDFORD; BEAR STATUE COURTESY OF CHARLIE AND DON REED

Spring has sprung, and along with the warmer temps and the budding trees and flowers, the bears are stirring from their winter hibernation. Many Western North Carolina residents know from experience that while our bruins may be adorable, we're increasingly finding our proximity to them a bit problematic. It's a lesson I first learned in 2017, when a medium-sized black bear made off with a bag of dog food from the garage as I watched, curious but helpless. A year later, one of the creature's kin opened my wife's car door in search of snacks and proceeded to shred the front seats beyond repair.

Still, you gotta love 'em, and most of us really do. So we were heartened to find that a serious, science-based push is underway to help people and bears stay out of each others' way and share our mountain habitat, an effort we explore in our feature "Bear Necessities" (page 72). There, you'll find the combined wisdom of biologists, animal control specialists, and your neighbors on what it takes to live in peace with our furry and perpetually hungry friends.

Also in this issue—the first of four quarterly editions we'll publish this year under our new schedule—we're proud to feature many of the finest photographs submitted to our annual Images of WNC Photo Contest, which drew more than 1,000 entries from professionals and amateurs alike. See the cream of the crop starting on page 50, and find even more online at wncmagazine.com/photocontest. Together, they offer vivid testaments to the scenic wonders that can make life here so breathtakingly beautiful.

A third feature, "Best of the Fests" (page 80), might be the most useful guide to fun and fulfillment in the mountains that you'll read all year. It's bursting with details about 50 local festivals that truly offer something for everyone, whether you favor food, wine, or beer, live music or dance, new experiences or time-honored traditions, or some combination thereof. And that's just a sampling of what this issue has to offer.

As always, we're grateful to have you along for the ride and the read.

Jon Elliston

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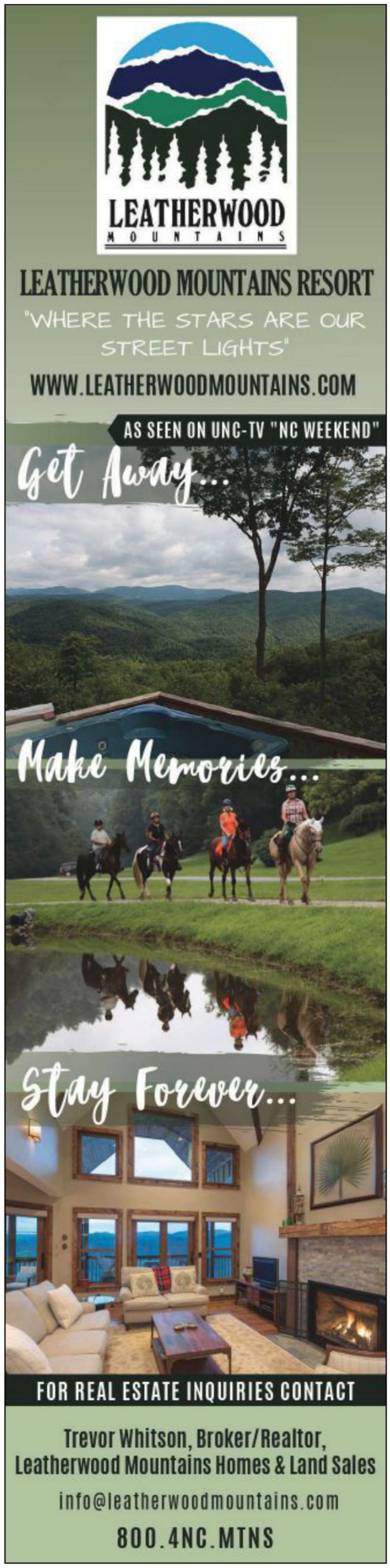

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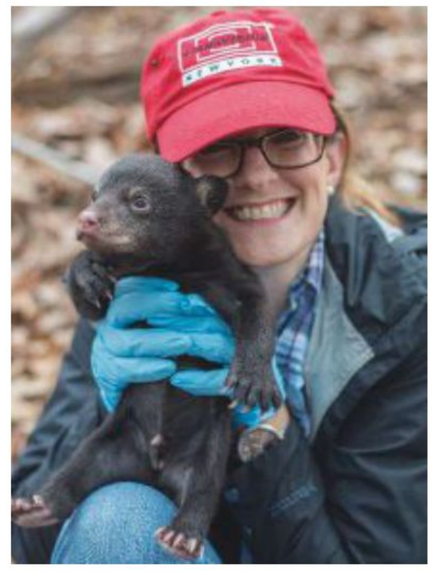
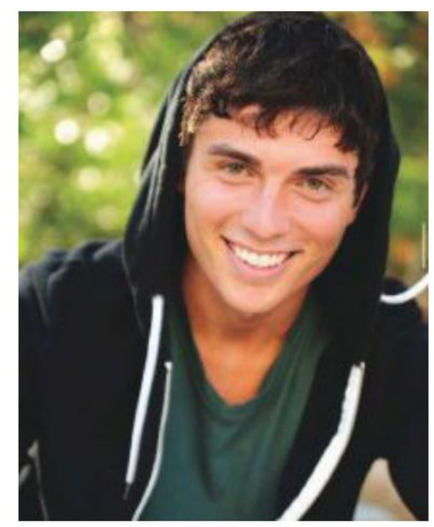
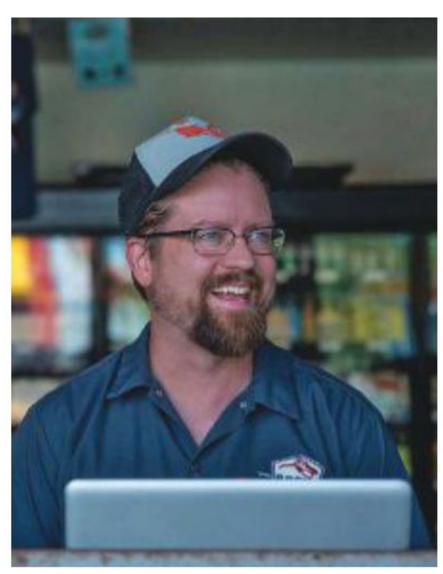


It's fair to say that ***Amy Cherrix*** is becoming a major producer of page-turners. The Asheville author is also a children's book buyer for Malaprop's, the city's haven of independent bookselling, and she's written two table books that make important science topics accessible to all. Her most recent is *Backyard Bears: Habitat Changes, and the rise of Urban Wildlife*, which we excerpt in this issue's feature "Bear Necessities" (page 72). Cherrix's next book, slated for release this fall, will be *In the Shadow of the Moon: America, Russia, and the Hidden History of the Space Race*. Keep tabs on her ever-insightful work at amycherrix.com.

An amateur photographer who works as a certified registered nurse anesthetist in Asheville, ***Cameron Lane*** captured the image that graces this issue's cover. He submitted the shot, taken in July 2019 near Jane Bald on Roan Mountain, to our Images of WNC Photo Contest (page 50). "It was the most magnificent sunset I've seen—and even more memorable because my wife was with me on this shoot," he says. "It was an amazing experience and one of the reasons why we are thrilled to call WNC home." Find more of his photographs on Instagram @cambrolane.





Asheville's pioneering local news blog, *Ashvegas*, celebrates its 15th anniversary in 2020. For years now, we've collaborated with its founder and editor, ***Jason Sandford***. In this issue, the magazine launches "Asheville in Focus" (page 28), a digest of *Ashvegas* highlights that will appear here regularly. "I'll mostly be focused on trends, whether it be growth and development, food, or pop culture," Sandford summarizes. He also wrote our update on Asheville's plant-based meat juggernaut, No Evil Foods (page 101), and contributed to our roundup of new and notable eateries (page 113). See his daily offerings at ashvegas.com.

Longtime regional writer and frequent *WNC* magazine contributor ***Nan Chase*** returns to our pages this issue. In our View from Here essay (page 34), she walks us through a moving personal experience at a beloved local garden supplier. Chase has gardened in these parts for some 40 years, which is clear from her compelling writing, including her blog posts for the Asheville-based company Sow True Seed. On page 30, we review her remarkable contribution to the history of bygone local eateries as told in her new book *Lost Restaurants of Asheville*.

PHOTOGRAPH (NAN CHASE) BY JENNY TENNEY

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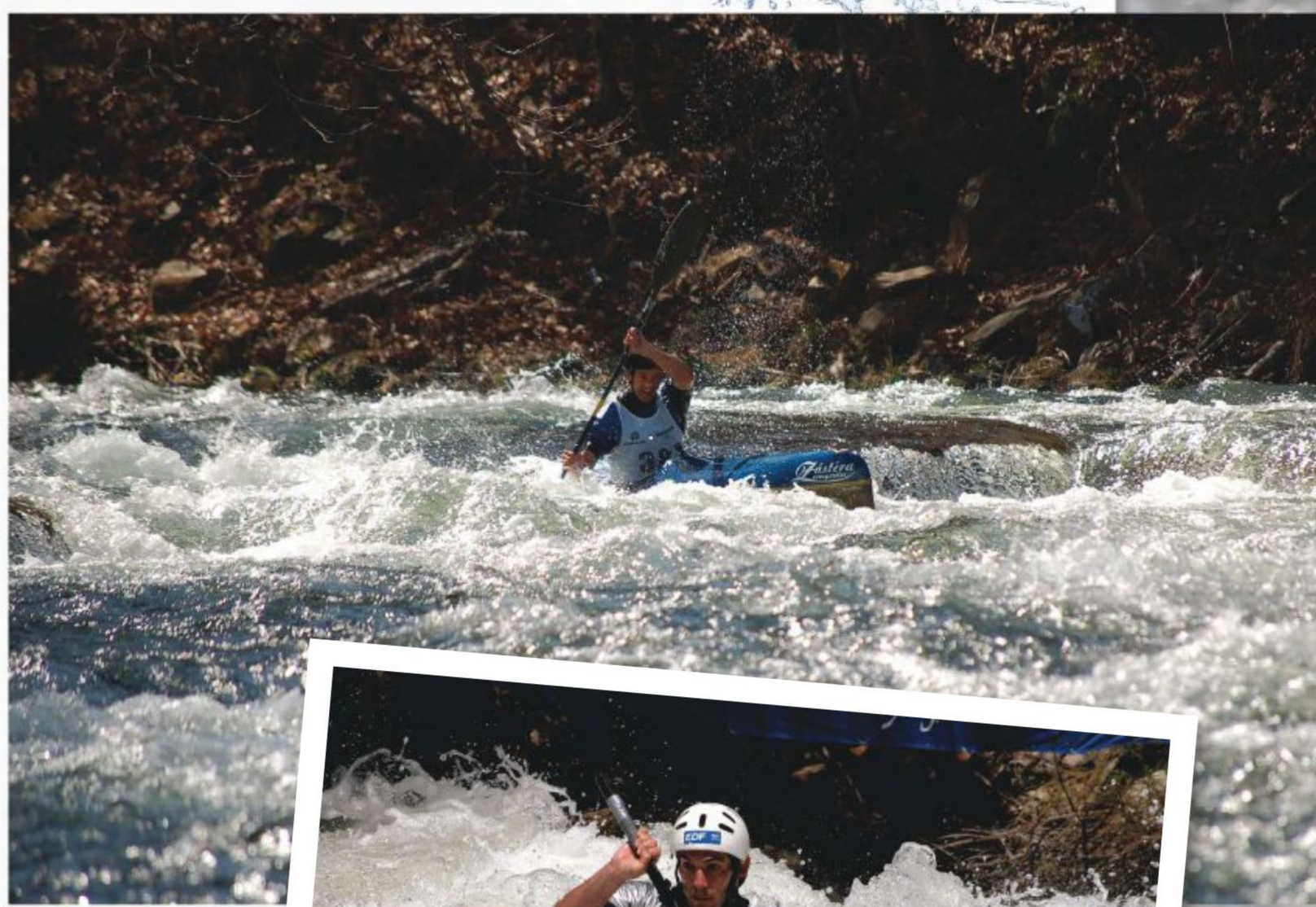
Paddle Up!

Nantahala Outdoor Center set to showcase international wildwater championships

Over 150 of the world's best paddlers will converge this April as the Nantahala Racing Club and the Nantahala Outdoor Center the 2020 International ICF Wildwater World Championships. Wildwater paddling, a canoe and kayak race format that allows contestants free reign to pick any line while sprinting down river, is an Olympic sport that features both middle distances, also known as classic racing, and sprinting. With the 2020 summer games fast approaching, the world championships in Western North Carolina will take on special significance. "This event will include Olympic-level athletes who will go on to Japan," notes Jan Wojtasinski, NOC's vice president of marketing.

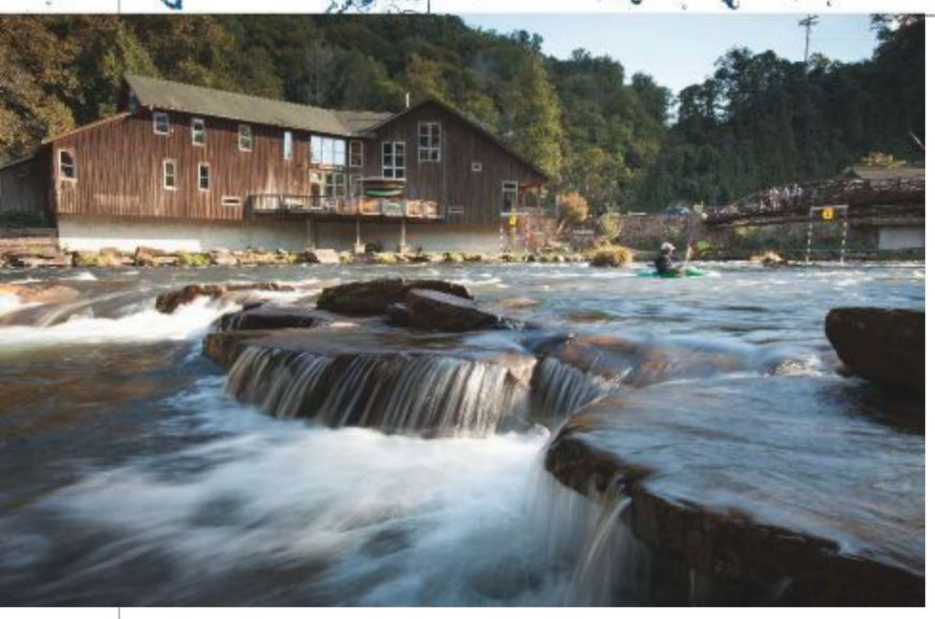
Event organizer and competitor Chris Hipgrave says the paddlers' velocity and grace, combined with the crash-and-burn drops on the river, will create a compelling atmosphere for racers and spectators alike. "These are the best guys in the world going through Nantahala Falls at breakneck speed," he says. "It's mind-blowing how fast they dance through the water."

The championships include both individual and tandem races. The classic race, a four-kilometer contest through Class II and Class III whitewater, runs numerous



RACE IS ON The Wildwater World Championships join a growing list of international competitions hosted by the NOC.

PHOTOGRAPHS (2) COURTSEY OF NANTAHALA OUTDOOR CENTER



TOP DROPS More than 20 Olympic competitors have worked at the NOC through the years.

rapids before finishing at the NOC. The fastest athletes will complete the course in 12 to 13 minutes. The sprint, a lung-bursting 450 meters, starts just upriver of Nantahala Falls. The best paddlers can be expected to shred the course in a mere 100 seconds.

Hipgrave recommends that spectators arrive early and find a spot on either riverbank at the base of the falls. "Make noise," he emphasizes. "We want it to be as loud as possible when we come through—we are going to be hurting."

International powerhouses including the Czech, Slovakian, German, and French teams will all be competing, as well as Australian, Japanese, South African, and American athletes including Coloradan Cully Brown and Asheville sensation Alesia Sezario.

2020 ICF WILDWATER CANOEING WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS
April 26-30; free
Visit wildwaterworlds.com for schedules, parking, and other info

For the NOC family, the championships will continue the company's rich history in competitive paddling. "Healthy competition in paddlesports is instrumental to who we are as an organization," says Wojtasinski. "We are introducing wildwater racing to lots of audiences with this event."

—PHIL MORGAN

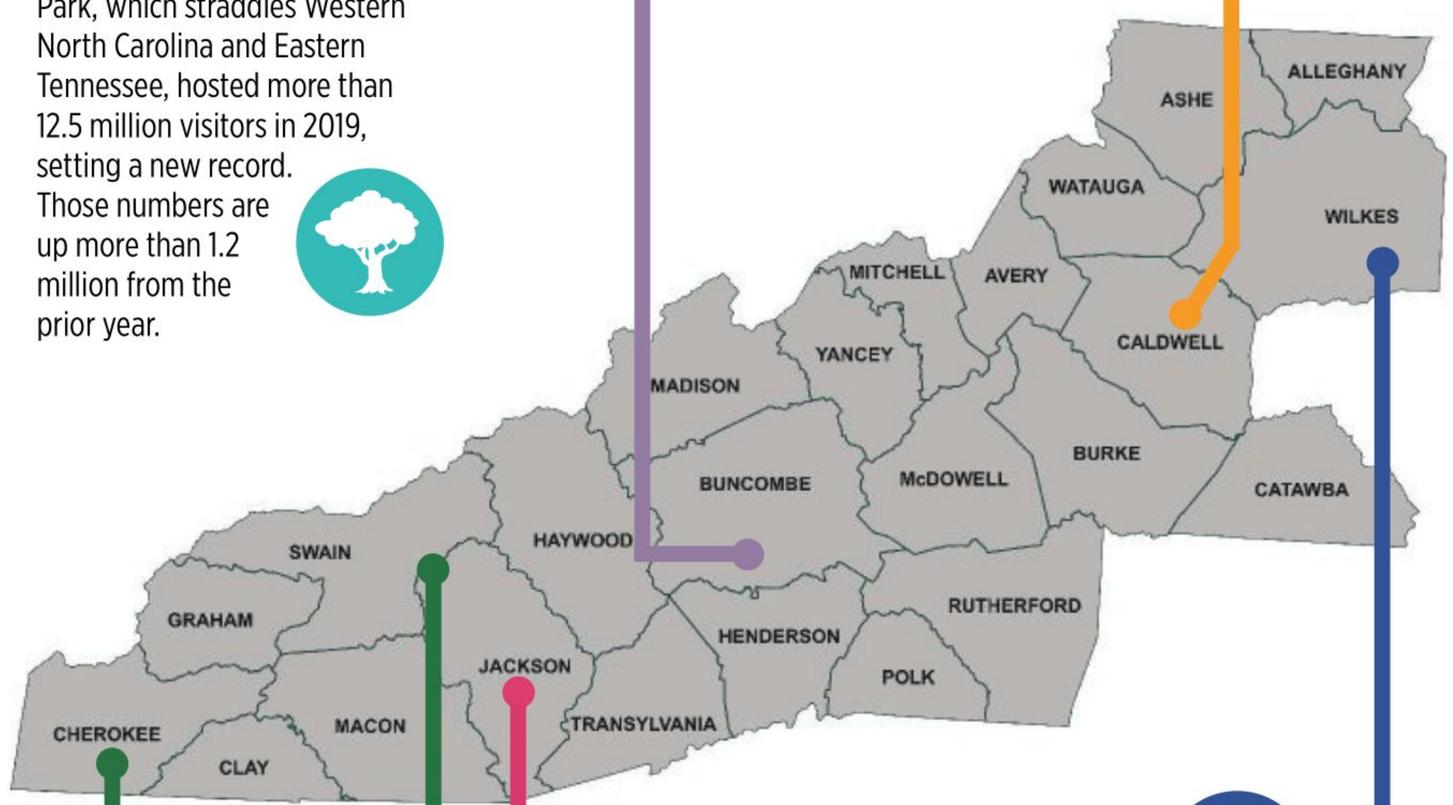
{News Flash}

The latest from throughout Western North Carolina

Duke Energy retires Asheville coal plant
In late January, Duke Energy shut down its coal-burning power plant south of Asheville, which had supplied electricity throughout the Carolinas since it was built in 1964. Taking its place is a new natural gas plant touted for providing cleaner, more efficient energy.

10th annual Gravity Games in Lenoir
The Gravity Games, a unique educational competition sponsored by Google, Appalachian State University and other partners, will celebrate its 10th anniversary on April 25. For details on the free event, which features students' STEM-based vehicle constructions and the launch of "space balloons," visit ncgravitygames.com.

GSM National Park charts record visitor numbers
Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which straddles Western North Carolina and Eastern Tennessee, hosted more than 12.5 million visitors in 2019, setting a new record. Those numbers are up more than 1.2 million from the prior year.



Sports betting at Harrah's casinos still in the works
The two casinos jointly operated by Harrah's and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in Cherokee and Murphy are still navigating the process of getting sports betting up and running.

WNC marks passing of racing great "Junior" Johnson
Wilkes County native Robert Glenn "Junior" Johnson, the former moonshine runner turned NASCAR hero, died in late December 2019 at age 88. He won 50 races as a driver and more than 100 as an owner, becoming a legendary figure in stock car racing and promotion.

WCU board moves on beer & wine sales at athletic events
In December, the Western Carolina University Board of Trustees voted unanimously to approve a resolution greenlighting beer and wine sales at campus athletic events, citing the move as a potential "enhancement to the fan experience." Now, the university is tasked with preparing a plan to make that happen and return it to the board in March 2020.

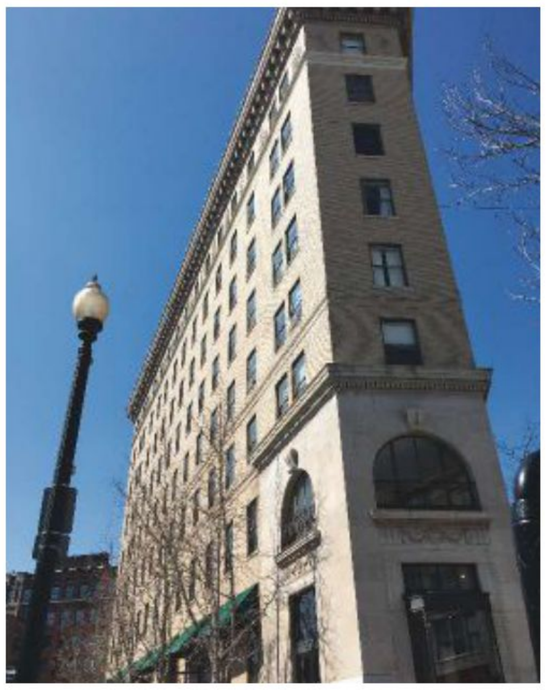
—JON ELLISTON

PHOTOGRAPHS (2) COURTSEY OF NANTAHALA OUTDOOR CENTER

SAMSEL ARCHITECTS

Asheville *in* Focus

***Ashvegas** presents the news from Buncombe's boom town*

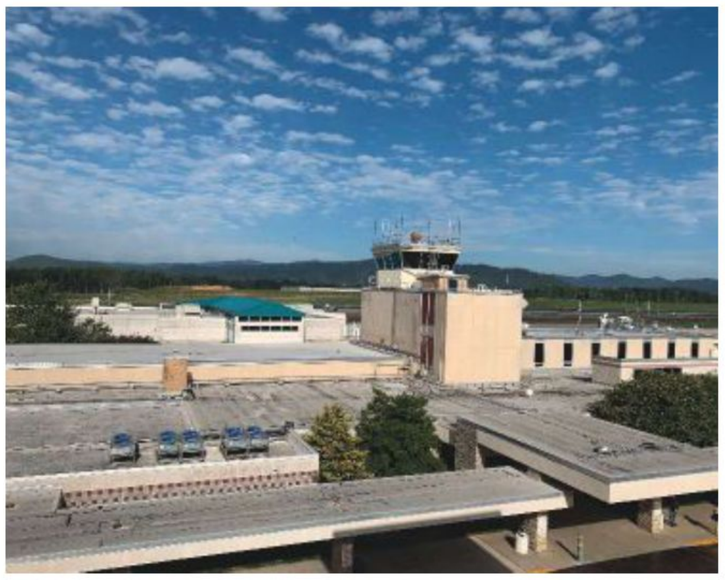


DEBATE OVER TOURISM IMPACTS

The community-wide discussion regarding the impacts of a booming tourism trade on Asheville and Buncombe County reached a boiling point last year on two fronts. First, the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority put a hold on how it spends a portion of the hotel room tax it collects and launched a process to consider changes. Look for action on possible changes later this spring. Second, Asheville City Council last fall adopted a one-year moratorium on new hotel construction projects. That didn't affect hotel projects that previously received approval, including the one everyone's watching—the remodeling of the iconic Flatiron Building into a boutique hotel.

AIRPORT EXPANSION TAKES OFF

The Asheville Regional Airport has seen remarkable growth—serving 1.6 million passengers in 2019, a 43 percent leap over the prior year—making it one of the fastest-expanding small airports in the country. Allegiant Air has powered much of that expansion by steadily increasing its Asheville presence. The low-cost carrier already features direct routes from here to Baltimore, Denver, New York City, and several destinations in Florida, and this spring it will add Boston, Chicago, Houston, and Austin, Texas. Check flyavl.com for the latest news.



NEW NAME FOR ENTERTAINMENT HUB

The Asheville Civic Center, which draws tens of thousands of visitors each year with an array of events, from flashy concerts to big sporting events, has a new name that took effect January 1. Previously the US Cellular Center, it is now Harrah's Cherokee Center-Asheville. (The change doesn't bring any gambling action to the center, but the casino company, in concert with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, is moving into a huge new business venture this year—sports betting at its Cherokee and Murphy casino locations.) A major new focus for the city-owned center is to build community support for multimillion-dollar renovations to the building's 2,200-seat Thomas Wolfe Auditorium, which celebrates its 80th anniversary this year.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION ON I-26

Construction on Interstate 26 through Asheville and south to Hendersonville will command our attention this year and likely for the decade to come. The work started late last year on a $534 million plan to widen the interstate from Brevard Road to US 25, and from US 25 to its interchange with US 64. One of the most complicated pieces of the widening will include replacement of the Blue Ridge Parkway bridge over the interstate near the Long Shoals Road exit. To help keep motorists moving, cameras installed along the interstate's length will feed into a brand new NC Department of Transportation traffic management center, where staff will monitor real-time traffic conditions.

—JASON SANDFORD

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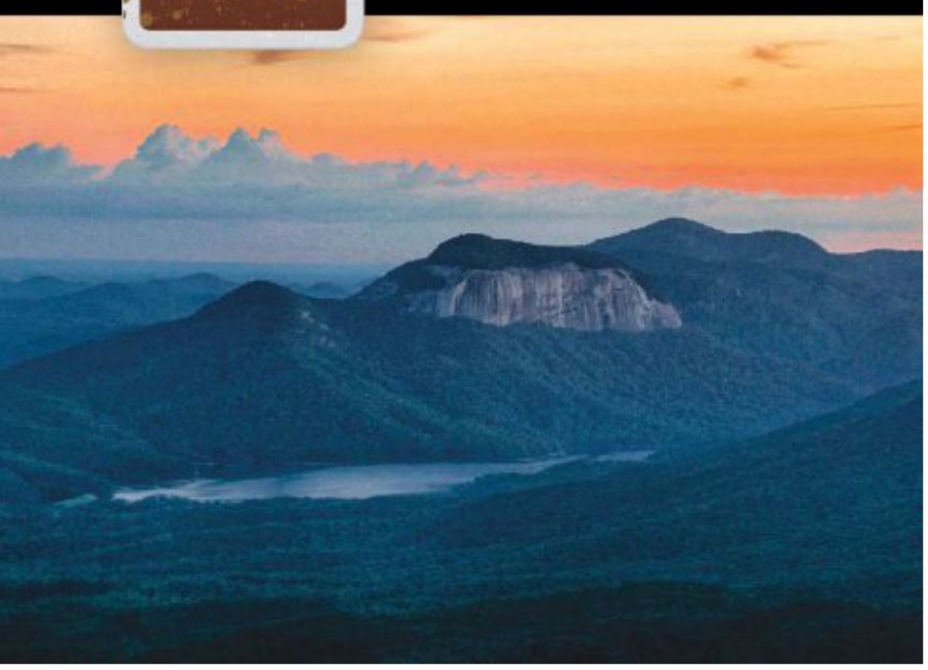
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JASON SANDFORD



FOOTHILLS TRAIL TO BURSTED ROCK

DISTANCE: 5.2 MILES ROUND-TRIP
DIFFICULTY: MODERATE/DIFFICULT

The demarcation between the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Foothills is abrupt, with sheer faces of granite, sharp ridgelines, and deep gorges. This route follows a spur of the 100-plus mile Foothills Trail system and leads to a sensational view along the eastern escarpment of the Blue Ridge in Headwaters State Forest in Transylvania County. In September 2018, the 6,730-acre working forest opened for foot travel and as a public game land.

The path begins at Gum Gap along the Carolina state line. Just beyond the kiosk in Gum Gap, slip past a red gate and follow the trail's blue blazes along a timber access road. Waters flowing from the ridge into North Carolina form the East Fork of the French Broad River, and to the south the streams supply the Saluda River.

A network of old road grades creates a slightly confusing route, but it's well marked by blue blazes. While the path itself is unexceptional, the trail's terminus is worth the walk. At mile 2.4 stay alert for a green, unmarked trail sign. Go left at the sign and wind up a steep but short path through a grove of chestnut oaks atop Bursted Rock. Marred trees from a recent fire do not impact the glorious views from a rock slab of the towering north face of Table Rock Mountain and the South Carolina Piedmont beyond. Retrace your steps to Gum Gap.

—JACK IGELMAN

NAVIGATE: From the Transylvania County Courthouse in Brevard, follow US 276 south for roughly 7.1 miles and turn right on East Fork Road. In roughly 1.3 miles go left on Happy Acres Road. Follow the gravel road, and in just over 1.5 miles bear right at the fork following Gum Gap Access Road. The remaining 1.5 miles along the narrow gravel road to the trailhead at Gum Gap may not be suitable for all vehicles. Park in the lot at Gum Gap marked with a Headwaters State Forest kiosk.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY (MOUNTAINS) BLAINE OWENS
PHOTOGRAPHY: (HIKER) JEFF CLARK

Delicious Memories

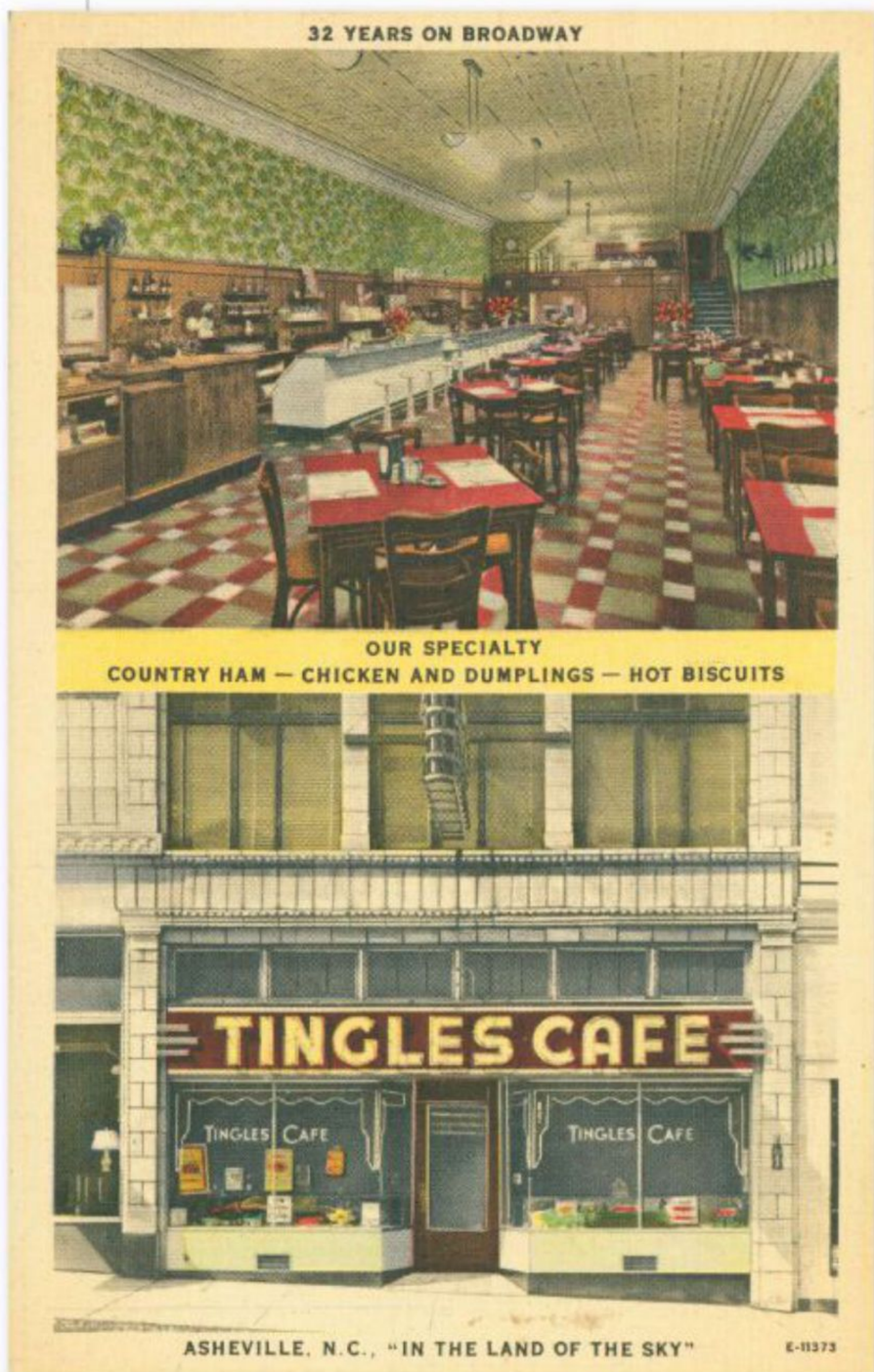
A new history shares the deep roots of Asheville's food scenes

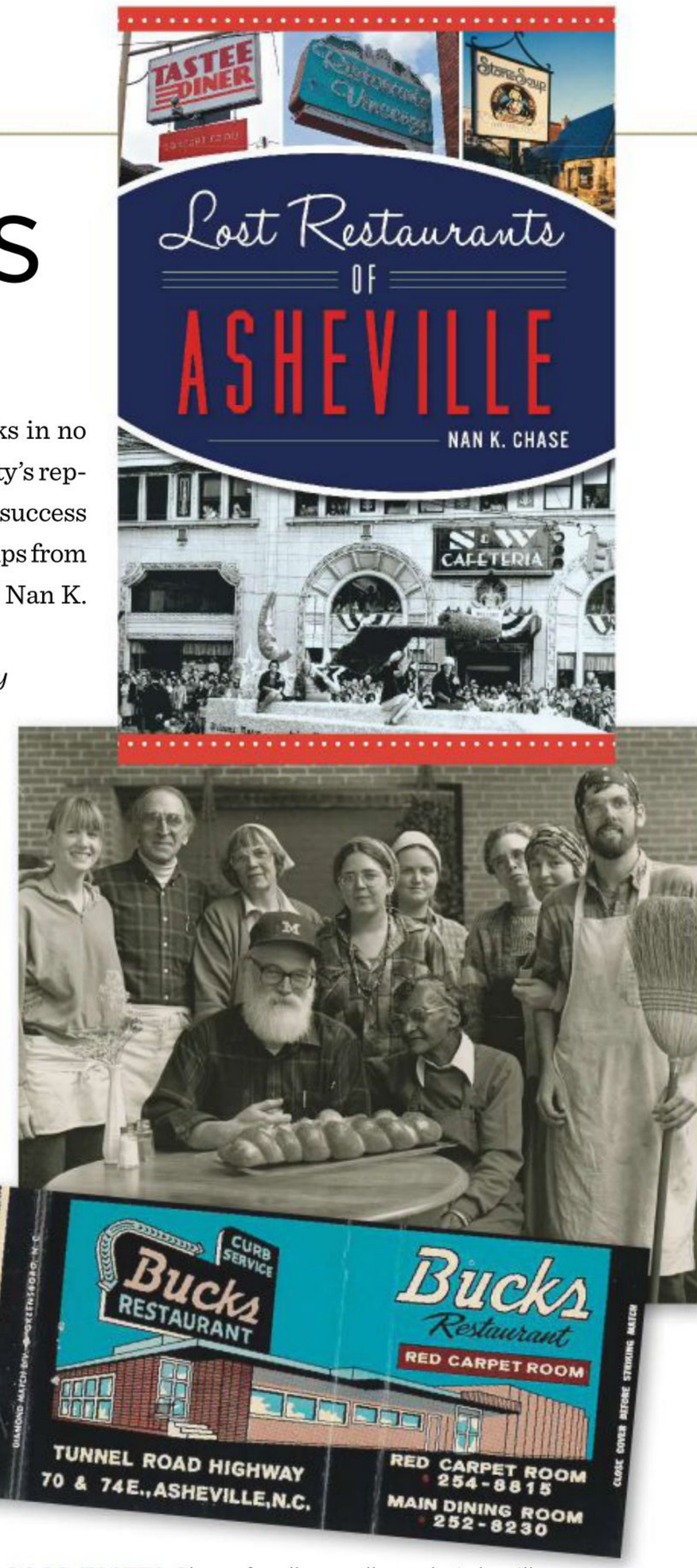
Today Asheville is known and marketed the country over as a bona fide Foodtopia, thanks in no small part to the wave of top chefs, brewers, growers, and others who have catapulted the city's reputation for good eats and drinks in the past 15 or so years. But Asheville's recipe for culinary success was born much further back, a revelation that jumps from the pages of the new book by regional historian Nan K. Chase, a frequent *WNC* magazine contributor.

Lost Restaurants of Asheville *(The History Press, 2019)* travels "from diners to fine dining" and covers an amazing range of eateries along the way, with many of them illustrated with archival photos, menus, and advertisements. Longtime Asheville residents and visitors will marvel at the level of detail and care Chase brought to this work, which will surely recast the city's food history to be both more expansive and inclusive.

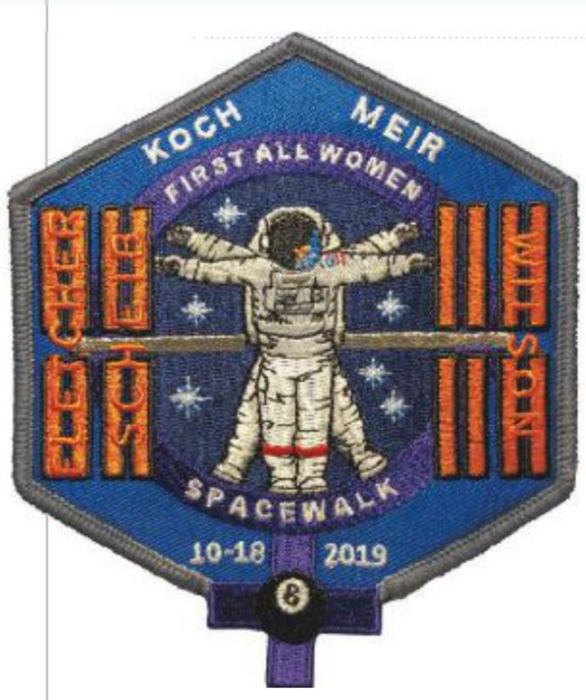
There are the standout establishments—from the worker-owned, farm-to-table eatery Stone Soup to the venerable Biltmore Village greasy spoon Hot Shot Cafe to early elegant restaurants like Chez Paul—and lots of lesser known ones that were vibrant destinations for both sustenance and community, including mainstays for both blue collar white folks and oft-marginalized black ones. In all, Chase catalogues the rise and fall of 32 restaurants, each one of them adding something special to a veritable smorgasbord of local memories.

—JON ELLISTON





GOOD TASTES Chase fondly recalls such Asheville mainstays as the worker-owned Stone Soup (above middle), Buck's drive-in and Red Carpet Room (above), and Tingle's Cafe (left).



MADE FOR SPACE WALKIN' When NASA conducted its first all-woman spacewalk last October, A-B Emblem jumped at the chance to make a commemorative patch. The Weaverville-based company makes all of NASA's patches, along with an astounding array of similar products for US military and law enforcement agencies and other clients. Visit space.abemblem.com to purchase the patch and others that A-B Emblem produced for decades of epic explorations.

IMAGES COURTESY OF (BOOK & RESTAURANTS) NC ROOM, PACK MEMORIAL LIBRARY; (PATCH) A-B EMBLEM

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Plant It and They Will Come

The dirt on attracting pollinators to your garden

Food security and pollinators go hand and hand. It's estimated that one out of every three bites we eat (and drink) depends on pollination, and 75 percent of the flowering plants on earth rely on bees, beetles, butterflies and moths, birds, bats, and other beneficial insects. Because of habitat degradation and loss as well as pesticides, pollinator conservation is crucial for not only protecting our food security but also for preserving biodiversity. But we can all do our part in our own yards through pollinator gardening or keeping bees. Here are a few local guiding resources that can help do your part this spring.

—MELISSA REARDON

YOU CAN DIG IT

Pollinator educators Brannen Basham and Jill Jacobs of **Spriggly's Beescaping** in Waynesville are all about the birds and the bees and all the other valuable bugs. "One of the largest dangers facing insects and wildlife is habitat loss," says Basham, who started down this path as a beekeeper. "By creating a pollinator garden, you're creating habitat for these species that is increasingly hard to find." The couple offers a variety of educational services on pollinators, including presentations and exhibits, consultations, and workshops on pollinator gardening. They also sell rustic native bee cabins through their website, and offer a custom DIY pollinator gardening guide that includes a design plan specific to your yard and all the need-to-know info, including what to plant where, the insects they attract, and a list of native plant dealers in your area. » *sprigglys.com*

BEE KIND

Want to gain a greater appreciation for pollinators of the buzzing nature? You can find intensive beekeeping classes through the NC State Extension and other beekeepers and suppliers, like Honey & the Hive in Asheville, but **Killer Bees Honey** in Lake Toxaway offers a one-of-a-kind experience that's accessible to all. Beekeeper Sean Collinsworth and his wife, Denise Altay, offer four-hour apiary tours that include a hive inspection (protective suits and gloves provided), a visit to the processing facility, where you can pour your own bottle of the sweet stuff, as well as a honey tasting and food pairing, all while learning about the important role bees play in the sustainability of our ecosystem.

» *killerbeeshoney.com*

IT'S GROW TIME

OK, so you can learn just about anything on the world wide web, but by taking an online pollinator gardening course from Hendersonville-based **Gardens that Matter**, you're supporting a local small business with the ease of learning on your own time. Amy Landers and her husband, Colby, offer garden planning and design consultations locally in person and worldwide via Skype, and their web-based course on growing your garden to attract winged insects provides an hour's worth of video lessons, a downloadable workbook, and support as needed.

» *gardensthatmatter.com*

RULES OF GREEN THUMB

1. **Stick to native plants.** They've evolved alongside native species and will cater to the widest variety of pollinators in your area.

2. **Select flowering plants** that bloom in succession throughout the growing season and offer a variety of colors, shapes, heights, and scents.

3. **Provide a source of clean water** such as a shallow birdbath with partially submerged stones.

4. **Forego pesticides,** which kill insects. For every pest, there is a natural predator that works better than a pesticide.

5. **Let it lie.** Fallen branches, leaf debris, bare patches of soil all provide nesting and overwintering grounds for myriad pollinators that will return in the spring.

PHOTOGRAPHS (BEE CABIN AND 4 FLOWERS) COURTESY OF SPRIGGLY'S BEESCAPING; (BEEKEEPERS) BY SEAN COLLINSWORTH

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Ghosts of Gardeners Past

From an abandoned nursery, an elegy for plants and people

WRITTEN BY **NAN K. CHASE**

Can a garden really die, or do benevolent ghosts watch over it until it lives again?

I asked myself this question recently while wandering all alone in an abandoned garden. I knew the place well—not just the greenhouses and the plants, but the late owners and their life story—and as I suspected, it was deserted. I happened to be passing by on a drive from Asheville to Boone and decided to turn up the driveway. The old man had died in the past year, I had only just learned, and his wife two years before that.

Bob and Virgie's commercial nursery near Marion, in the years they were in their prime and before big box garden centers cored out their business, touched a lot of people, including me. Bob was a plant propagator extraordinaire, growing from seeds or cuttings such wonders as dawn redwoods, native persimmons, paw paws, Japanese maples, and hydrangeas. His small pick-your-own muscadine vineyard was amazing, and a high point of my year was always a visit in early fall. I would usually pick six gallons—mixing the iridescent bronze and the deep purple varieties while dodging bees—and the ripe grapes hung so thick that it never took much more than half an hour. Those muscadines yielded a sweet, complex juice that I would can or ferment to enjoy in the coming year.

Virgie ruled the greenhouses, raising row after row of poinsettias, pansies, Easter lilies, ferns, and summer bedding plants, depending on the season. They brought color and texture into my own garden and my home, keeping memories of the couple fresh and close by.

For an hour, I was all alone there, but not truly alone. From time to time, I raised my eyes up to the clear autumn sky, trying to catch a glimpse of Virgie and Bob. They were up there—I knew it—keeping an eye on me in their garden.

But even while Bob and Virgie were still living, the place had begun to show a lot of wear and the decay that creeps in as maintenance slackens. Both of them had been in frail health the last few years they were alive, then barely mobile, but they were rooted to the place and clung fiercely to their choice to stay by themselves in the yellow farmhouse under the huge oak tree. The tendrils of habit and love they wove around the nursery were like the wisteria vines that were now strangling the last of the potted plants lying around and poking through the greenhouses' broken panes.

On that last visit to the place, I parked in my usual spot by their kitchen door, half expecting Virgie to come out and say in her matter-of-fact voice, "Well, look who's

here." And Bob would wander in from chores out in the yard.

No one was there, of course, but I felt drawn to my accustomed pattern: up a walkway to look in the greenhouses, then between an open shed and a work building to the long rows where shrubs and trees were raised, then back through the greenhouses to make a selection.

Now the greenhouses had begun to break apart, and the lack of heating, cooling, and water had left hundreds of plants dead in their pots, scattered willy-nilly on the growing benches or hanging from baskets overhead. All were brown and brittle. Seeds were scattered around, along with hand tools, sieves, catalogues, and thousands of leftover black plastic pots.

Outside, countless young potted plants stood where they were last tended, now fastened to the earth by roots that had burst their bounds. Plants that were alive but would never be moved, never be planted to bring shade to new generations.

It was the silence and utter stillness that baffled me as I gingerly stepped through the weeds: the total lack of movement or sound in the overgrown beds, where I had expected animals—birds, snakes, insects, anything—to skitter from the tangle of vegetation. How did they know that the garden was dying, the gardeners gone?

For an hour, I was all alone there, but not truly alone. From time to time, I raised my eyes up to the clear autumn sky, trying to catch a glimpse of Virgie and Bob. They were up there—I knew it—keeping an eye on me in their garden.

Getting ready to leave, I caught sight of a small Japanese maple in a pot that wasn't lashed to the ground by weeds and vines, just sitting there atop the mess. I took it home as a living memory. Bob and Virgie told me it was all right.

Nan K. Chase is the author of Lost Restaurants of Asheville *and* Asheville: A History, *among other books.*

BIG MOMENTS AND
LASTING MEMORIES
OFF THE BEATEN PATH
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SPOTLIGHTING LOCAL GOODS

Mountain made

Fireman's Swallowtail Chair; like most of his works, it's available in a number of hardwood and finish options

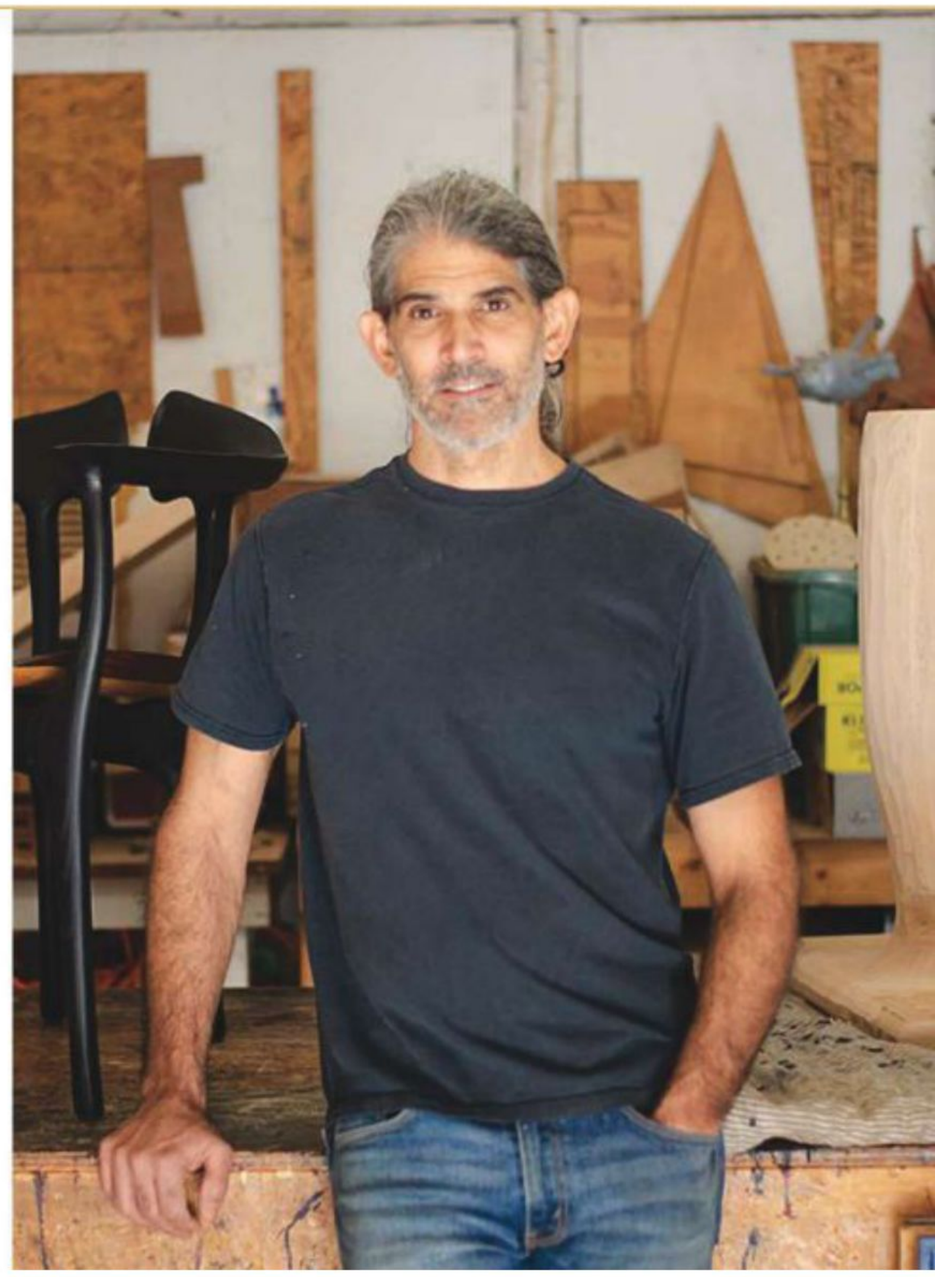
Simple Sophistication

Furniture maker Brian Fireman's designs reflect both his training as an architect and love of nature

WRITTEN BY **JOANNE O'SULLIVAN**

PHOTOGRAPH BY TIM BARNWELL

The Cumberland Credenza, shown here with walnut and ambrosia maple with ornamental splines in wenge



Frank Lloyd Wright did it. Mies van der Rohe did, too. For architects accustomed to envisioning a structure in a landscape, creating a signature piece of furniture can be an equally satisfying challenge. That's been the case for Hendersonville's Brian Fireman, whose background in architecture led to a successful career in studio furniture design.

"Brian Fireman is among our area's most talented furniture makers," says Jordan Ahlers, owner and director of Momentum, the Asheville gallery that represents his work. "His designs follow in the tradition of studio furniture giants: Sam Maloof, Wendell Castle, and Wharton Esherick." The works reflect a similar grace, and yet, the style is all Fireman's own.

Above, a detail from the top of the Pogonia table, with burled and curly maple

It's hard to pin down the aesthetic. A little Art Nouveau. A little Noguchi. A little Danish modern. Take the Swallowtail, one of his most recognized chair styles, which received a Best of the Year merit award from Interior Design magazine in 2010. "It's a low-back armchair. It's been done 100 times before, by designers I admire: Hans Wegner, Finn Juhl. I wasn't trying to be original," Fireman says. "I was trying to put my own spin on it."

Fireman's ability to take a recognizable source of inspiration (people often tell him his shapes remind them of organic forms) and reimagine it might be what makes his work so fresh and yet familiar. Drawing from multiple sources—furniture history, nature, indigenous architecture from places he's visited around the world—he creates a singular vision.

Given his multifaceted background, it's not surprising Fireman's inspiration comes from a broad spectrum of sources. A Winston-Salem native, he started out studying geology as an undergraduate because it seemed the ideal field for someone who loved spending time outdoors. Later, he spent several years working in the white-water kayaking world, making

The Gentian chair, shown here with a cherry frame and walnut seat.

PHOTOGRAPHS (FURNITURE) BY TIM BARNWELL; (FIREMAN) BY EMILY-ANN TRAUTMAN; FACING PAGE (MONARCH) BY TIM BARNWELL; (WISTERIA TABLE) BY MICHAEL TRAISTER

The Wisteria table, with ebonized walnut base

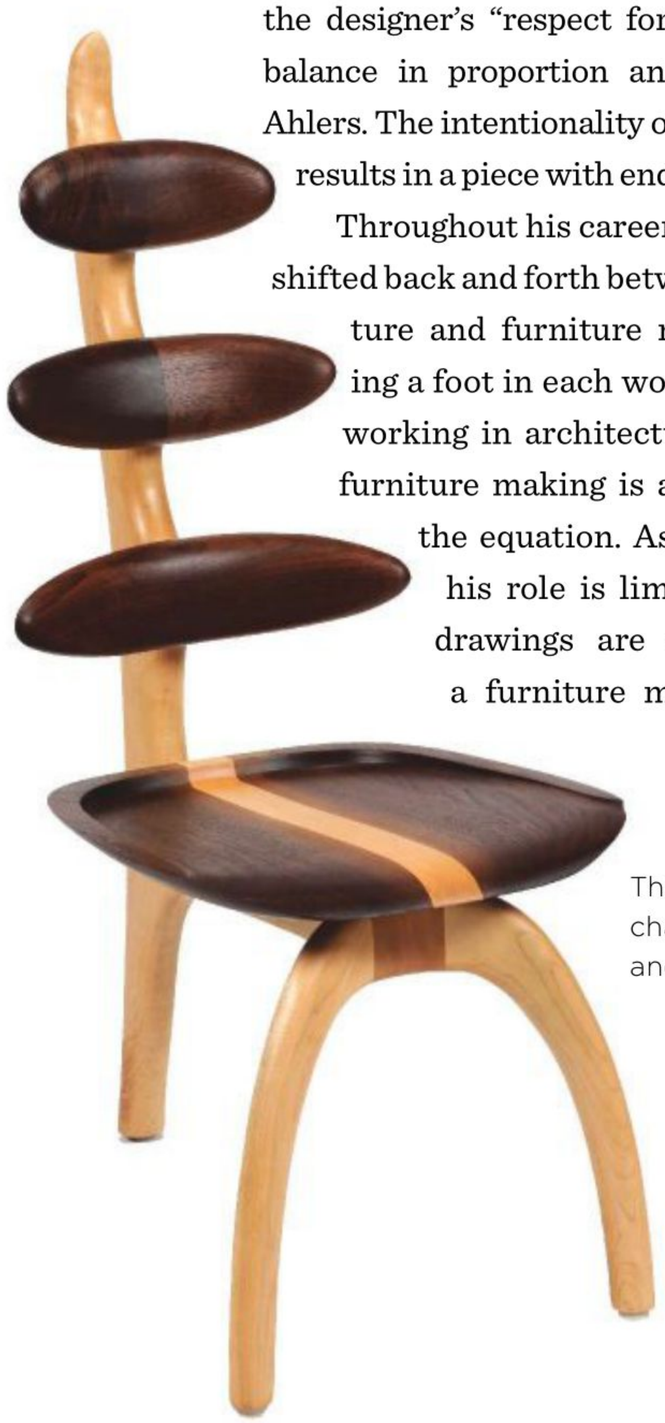
films on the New River in the summers and traveling to places such as Nepal or Chile in the winter.

Architecture school at Virginia Tech was the next adventure. It was there that he had his first experience working with wood. "I didn't want to be an architect who'd never picked up a hammer," he says, so he worked construction in the summer. While working with a timber framing company, he had his first experience creating wooden structures and fell in love with both the mechanics of joinery and the material.

"There are a lot of design parallels between architecture and furniture making," Fireman says. "There are a lot more practical considerations in home design and it's on a different scale, but it's the same kind of thought process." He delights in sculpting wood, devising the often complex but hidden joinery that keeps a strong but graceful piece together. It's a process that demonstrates the designer's "respect for material and balance in proportion and form," says Ahlers. The intentionality of the approach results in a piece with enduring quality.

Throughout his career, Fireman has shifted back and forth between architecture and furniture making, keeping a foot in each world. He is now working in architecture again, but furniture making is always part of the equation. As an architect, his role is limited once the drawings are complete. As a furniture maker, though, he gets to see the whole process through from selecting the wood to the finished product. "I like taking the intangible and making it real," he says.

BRIAN FIREMAN DESIGN
To learn more about Fireman's work and how to view and purchase his furniture, visit brianfiremandesign.com.



The Monarch chair, in maple and walnut

A Place Apart

Near Lake Toxaway, a one-of-a-kind native plant sanctuary preserves and restores

WRITTEN BY **JOANNE O'SULLIVAN**
PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF **SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS RESERVE**

You don't get to the Southern Highlands Reserve by accident.

At the end of a sometimes nearly vertical climb up a twisty-turny Toxaway Mountain road, the land levels off a bit. A set of understated stone pillars indicates something special lies just down the pebble drive. There, you are delivered into a botanical paradise.

HIGH HOPES Robert and Betty Balentine, of Atlanta, have poured their pashion for nature and philanthropic spirit into the reserve.

WALKS IN THE WOODS The Azalea Walk features dozens of native flower species, including azaleas in striking shades of red, orange, yellow, and pink.

PHOTOGRAPH (PORTRAIT) BY CAPTURING WNC PHOTOGRAPHY

The sense of anticipation, the surprise and delight that awaits, also doesn't happen by accident. Some of the country's best landscape architects were involved in the design of this native plant arboretum and research center, the Southern Highlands Reserve.

The vision of Atlanta philanthropists Betty and Robert Balentine, this woodland garden was prepared very intentionally, but in a way, it was started through kismet.

After a stay at the Greystone Inn on Lake Toxaway in the late 1990s, the Balentines—dedicated lovers of the outdoors—decided to build a second home in the area, where their children could be in greater contact with nature. When they found their lot—sky-high with breathtaking views over the lake and into South Carolina—they were intrigued by what lay beyond it. There, various tracts of land back up to Panthertown Valley—10,000 acres of richly biodiverse wilderness that's home to bears, bobcats,

FLOWER POWER On its 120 acres, Southern Highlands Reserve is home to several distinct gardens, trails, and major research initiatives.

WALKS IN THE WOODS A trail and pond (top) are dedicated to the rare Rhododendron vaseyi—aka pinkshell azalea. Other native flower species including Angelicas (left).

timber rattlers, and numerous rare plant species.

The mountaintop lots were scheduled to be developed, but the Balentines bought 120 acres and put them in a conservation easement with the North American Land Trust, with the chief aim of protecting and preserving them. Only after having the area surveyed did they find how truly special this land was, says SHR director Kelly Holdbrooks. They discovered the property included three spray waterfalls, numerous endemic species, and abundant wildlife dependent on this rare habitat.

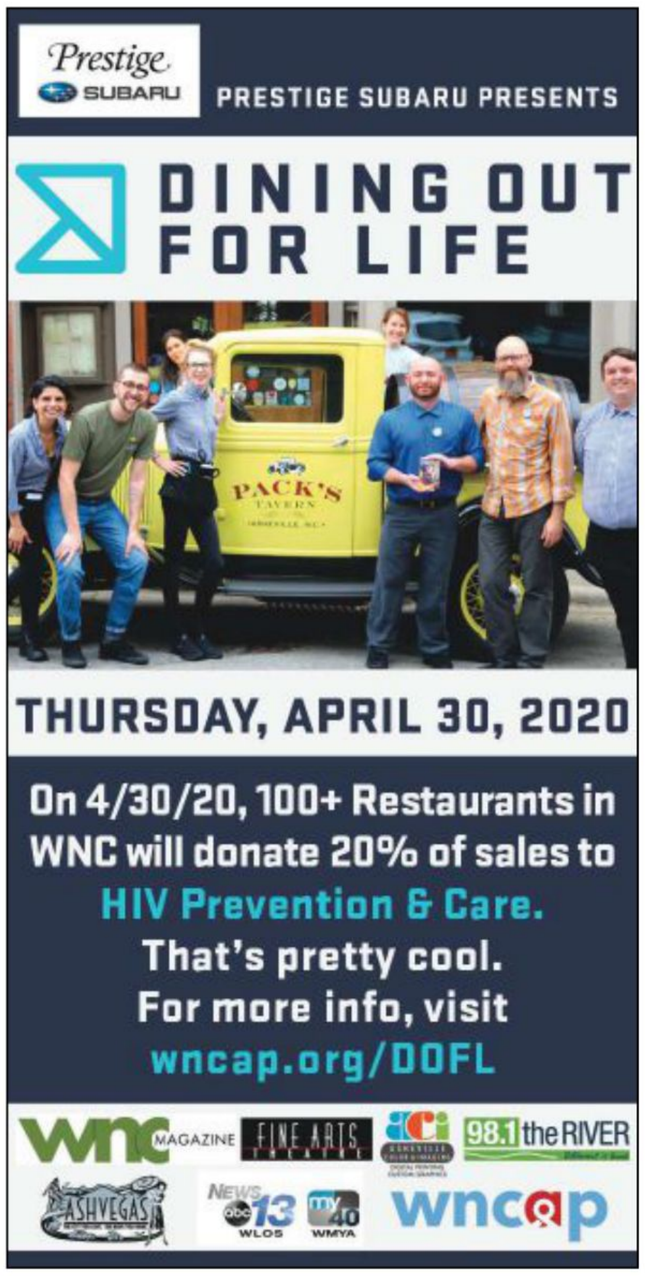
At the end of the last ice age, glacial melt followed the spine of the Appalachians down to the tip of the Blue Ridge Escarpment, which ends here at this 4,500-foot elevation before the drop to the flatlands of upstate South Carolina. Carried in the melt were seeds of all sorts of plants from northern climates, some of which continued to thrive here for thousands of years. Plants such as the vaseyi or pinkshell azalea grow in few places outside this area.

In fact, says Lauren Garcia Chance, the

PROPAGATION STATION The reserve's headquarters, The Chestnut Lodge, doubles as a workshop that SHR staff use to cultivate new seedlings during colder months.

reserve's director of research and conservation, in terms of soil and weather, the SHR has more in common with botanical gardens in New England than it does with others in North Carolina. It's one of only two high-elevation such gardens on the eastern seaboard, set in a chestnut-oak boreal forest.

Considering the high conservation value of the land, the Balentines decided they needed to share it and created the reserve as a nonprofit. Through the years, they worked with renowned landscape architects including Gary Smith, who developed the master plan, which includes



STEP BY STEP The Wildflower Labyrinth, designed by landscape architect Gary Smith, is intended to emulate life's journey, incorporating both easy and harder-going passages.

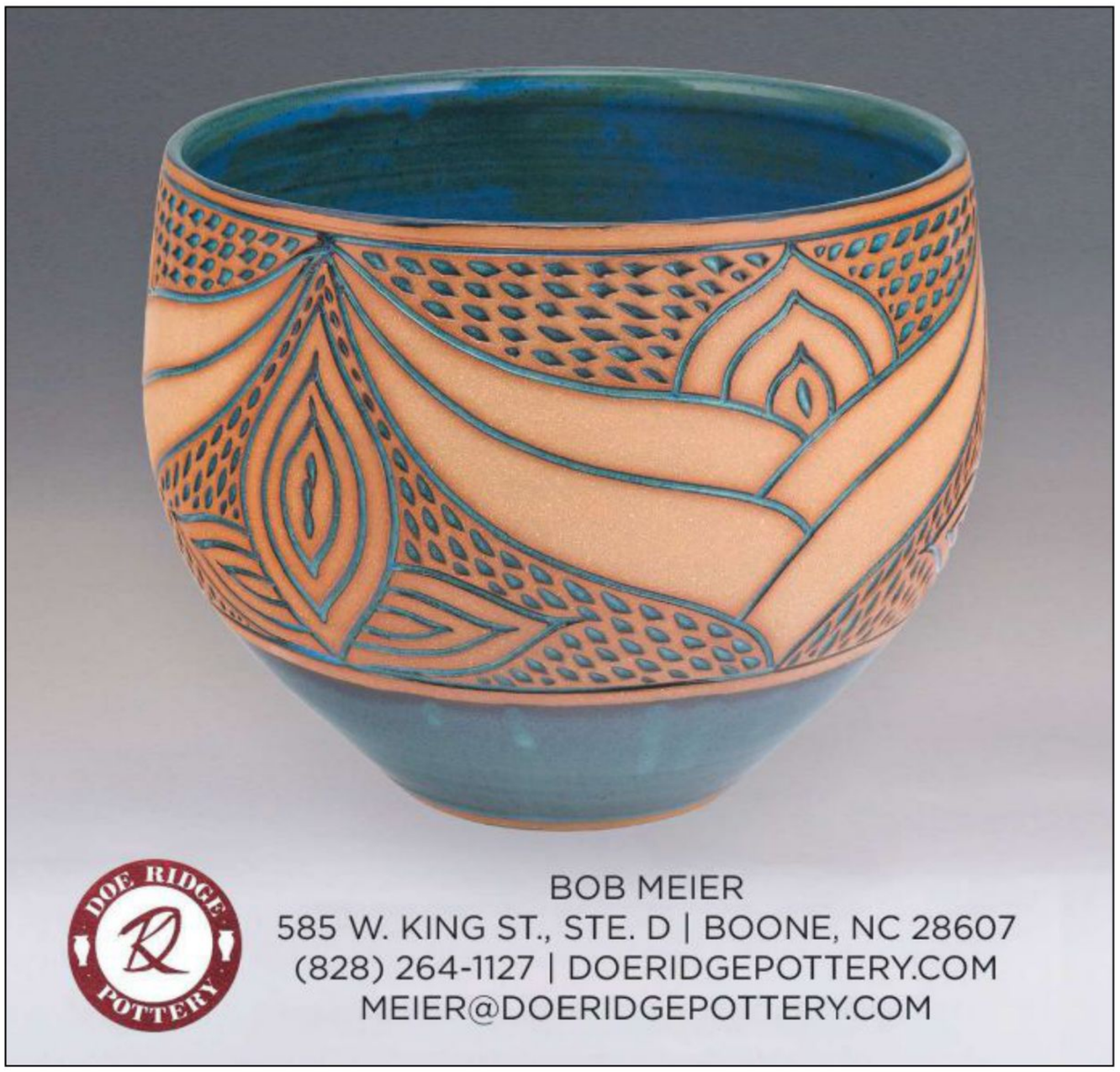
the "core park" of the reserve with its woodland botanical garden featuring a labyrinth, as well as acres of trails. The pond area (with a spring that feeds the Tukaseegee River) offers stunning views that stretch from the peaks of Transylvania County all the way to Mount Mitchell. The garden now holds the largest single collection of Southern Appalachian native plants and their

In terms of soil and weather, the SHR has more in common with botanical gardens in New England than it does with others in North Carolina.

cultivars, says Holdbrooks.

It took six years to complete Chestnut Lodge, a refined homebase for the non-profit, which now has several full-time staff, including director of horticulture Eric Kimbrel and gardener Kyle Meece. Here Holdbrooks and Chance keep records and share them with other public botanical gardens through a newly acquired grant-funded database. The SHR participates in national research and has created several conservation partnerships.

One of the initiatives Holdbrooks is most proud of is the reserve's work to restore the red spruce, decimated in the South over the last century due to deforestation, acid rain, pests, and, more recently, climate change. High-elevation spruce fir forests in the Southern Appalachians are the second-most endangered ecosystems in the country,



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GROWTH SPURT The reserve's ambitious red spruce restoration program has helped maintain the biodiversity of endangered mountain ecosystems.

she says (this includes several types of firs, including those affected by the wooly adelgid blight). Red spruce are pivotal in this type of forest because of the habitat they provide for the Carolina northern flying squirrel, an endangered species that relies on this species for food and parasite protection.

While efforts to restore the red spruce have met with mixed success elsewhere, the reserve turned out to be the ideal place to grow them. Working in coordination with the Southern Appalachian Spruce Restoration Initiative, SHR is now growing over 4,000 red spruce seedlings each year in its nursery. Over 1,700 red spruce have been planted through SARSI, and the effort has a 90 percent success rate, far above average for restoration efforts of its kind.

"We could go out and plant firs now, but in 10 years, only about 10 percent would be left," says Chance. Focusing on the red spruce has proved to be a winning

PHOTOGRAPH (PLANTERS) BY GARY PEEPLES, US FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE

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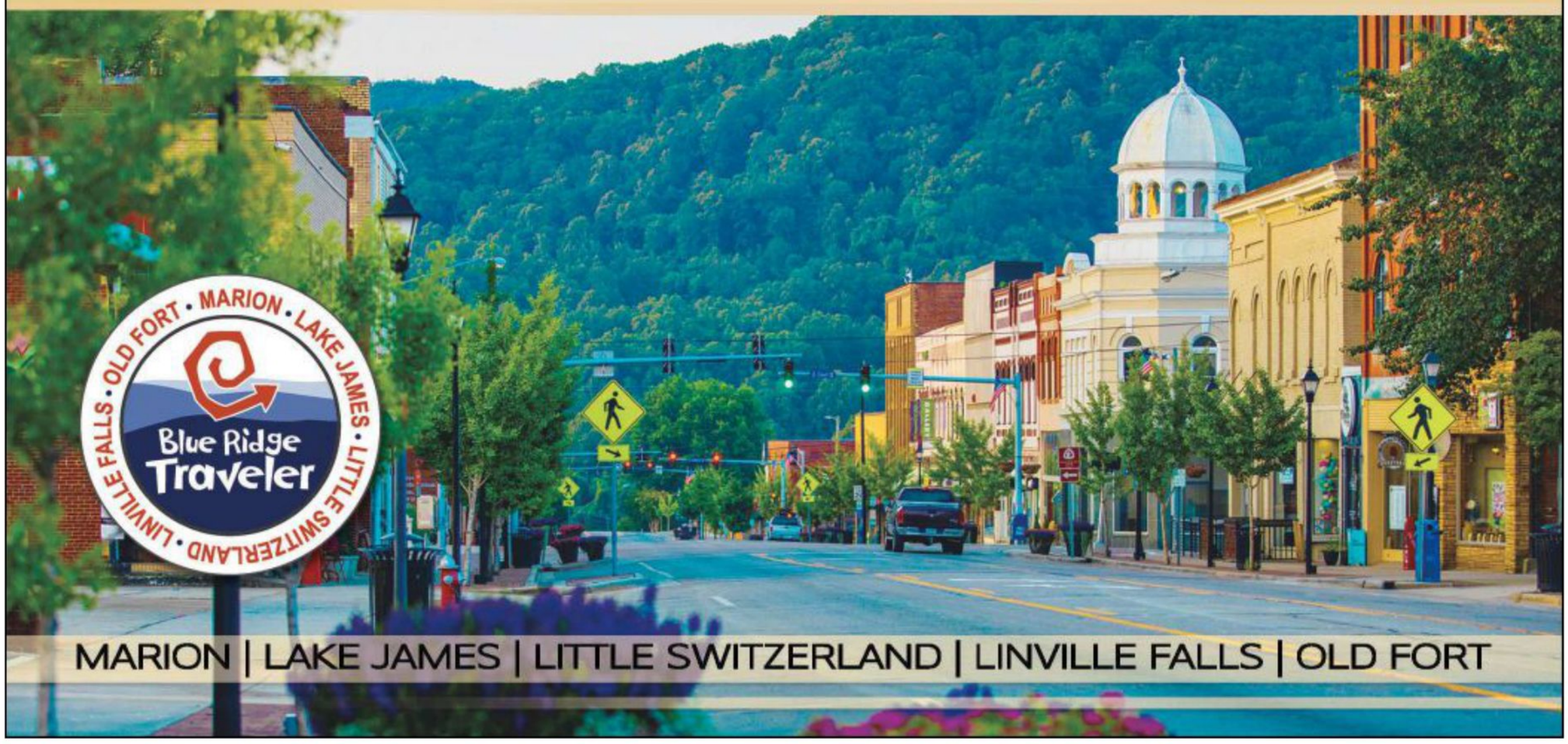

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COME ON IN The main foot entrance to the SHR, which holds periodic visitors' days for a nominal fee that support the nonprofit's ever-expanding work

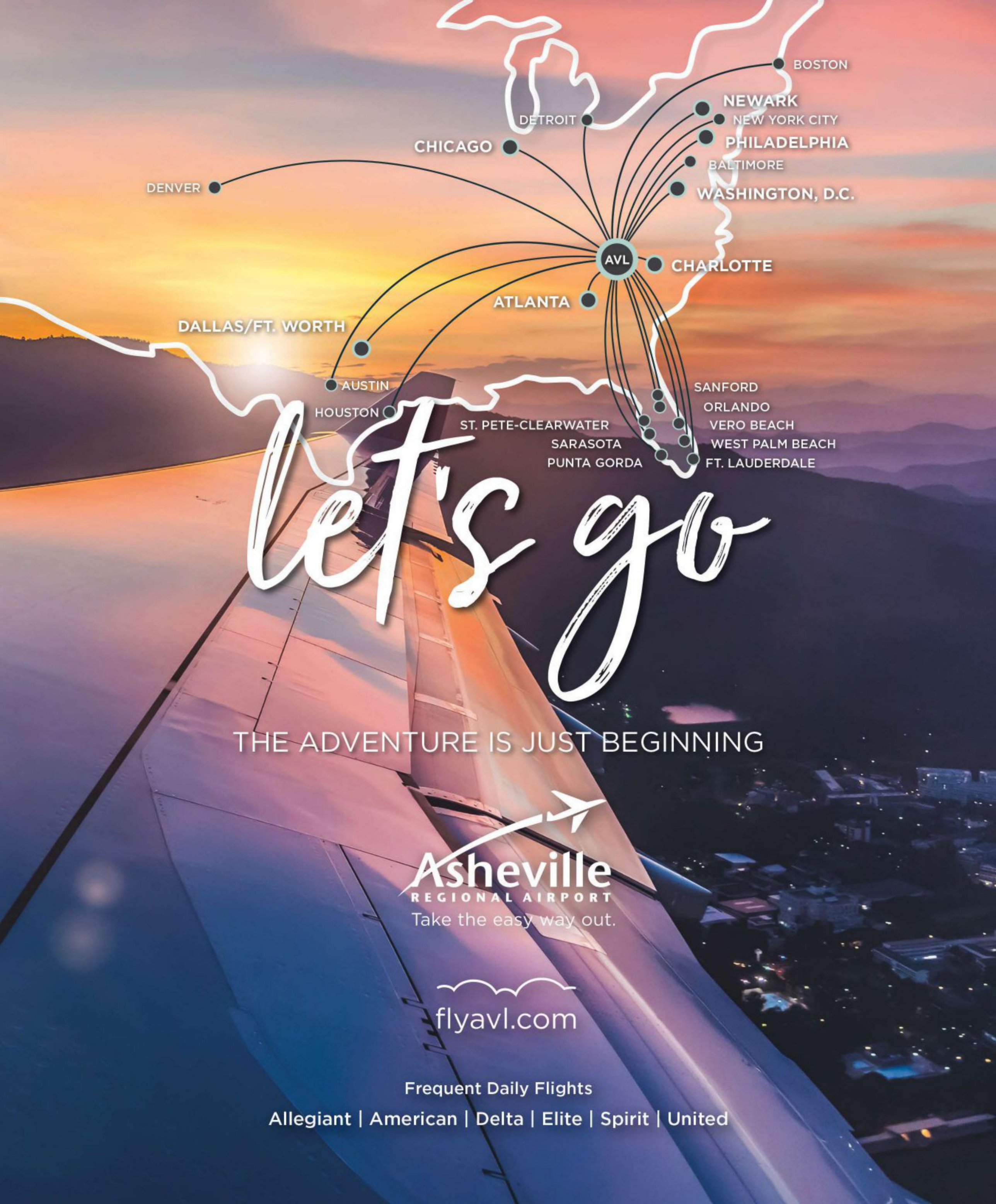
strategy. Since the project started, the red spruce is now the "least in decline" of the endangered Southern Appalachian evergreens, says Holdbrooks.

In addition to the flying squirrel, the reserve sees monarch butterflies on their annual migration and contributes data on them to a national organization. The pollinator garden tracks the presence of these endangered insects.

SHR is open to the public on visitor days during the spring and early fall, but groups such as garden clubs can reserve private tours, all of which are around two to two-and-a-half hours in length. There's an annual public plant sale and a spring symposium featuring some of the biggest names in landscape design, including (last year) Thomas Wolz, widely recognized for incorporating the human as well as biological history of an area into his designs. The reserve's staff works with local schools, making outreach education visits every month, and groups of students visit regularly as well.

Although the Balentines live in Atlanta, they come up frequently on the weekends and always have their hands in the soil when they visit. This place is the couple's legacy, says Holdbrooks, one they'll continue to nurture until the next stewards of the land come along. Even as resort developments continue to expand in this area, this patch of garden and forest at the top of the world is a place where Western North Carolina's native plants and animals will always find sanctuary.

Southern Highlands Reserve
For more information, including details on upcoming events volunteer/donor opportunities, visit southernhighlandsreserve.org or call (828) 885-2050.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LOST IN SPACE
Benjamin Wu
An instructor with Fox Mountain Guides, Wu snapped this cliff-hanger of a photo of his friend Carter navigating a difficult route while climbing in the Linville Gorge.
Amateur category

1ST PLACE
AMATEUR CATEGORY
WNC MAGAZINE 2020

Images *of* WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

*For this year's **Images of Western North Carolina Photo Contest**, we reviewed more than 1,200 entries. What's even more impressive: nearly 10,000 votes were cast for the Readers' Choice winner. Turn the pages for our 2020 finalists and winners and find more honorable mentions at wncmagazine.com.*

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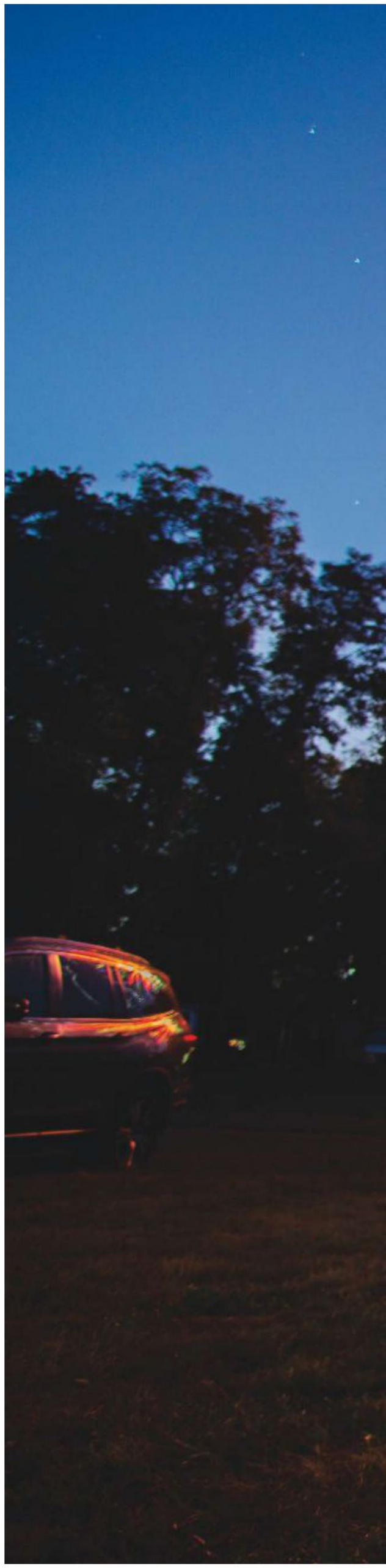
THE POTTER'S WHEEL
Chris Ellenbogen
Chris took this portrait of his father, Jon Ellenbogen of Barking Spider Pottery in Penland, using a 4x5 film view camera.
Professional category



VAN LIFE
Logan Shropshier
Shropshier used a Sony a6000 hybrid camera to snap this shot of his 1976 Toyota Chinook camper during the Asheville Van Life Rally.
Amateur category

DOUBLE RAINBOW
Kathy Kmonicek
When the sky cleared after a morning rain shower over Lake James, a double rainbow emerged, backed by the iconic Shortoff, Table Rock, and Hawksbill mountains in Linville Gorge.
Professional category

WISHING FLOWER

Valerie Eidson

Taken at a golden hour at her family's home in Fairview, Eidson snapped this pic of her daughter blowing on a dandelion, whose fuzz is perfectly illuminated in the soft light.

Professional category

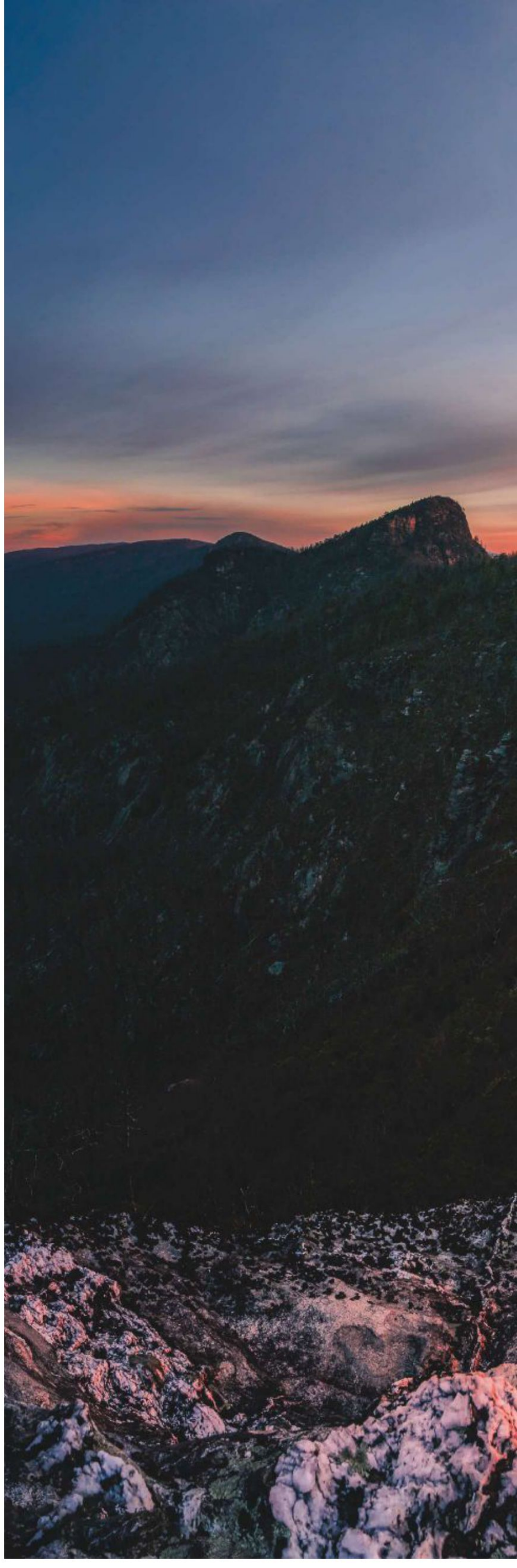
HIGHWAY IN THE SKY
Sallie Woodring
Bathed in a warm morning light, Woodring's shot of the Linn Cove Viaduct on the Blue Ridge Parkway is postcard-perfect.
Amateur category

RHODODENDRON TUNNEL

Nathan Farber

Lush green punctuated by bright pink rhododendron petals make for an alluring path leading to Jane Bald in the Roan Highlands.

Amateur category

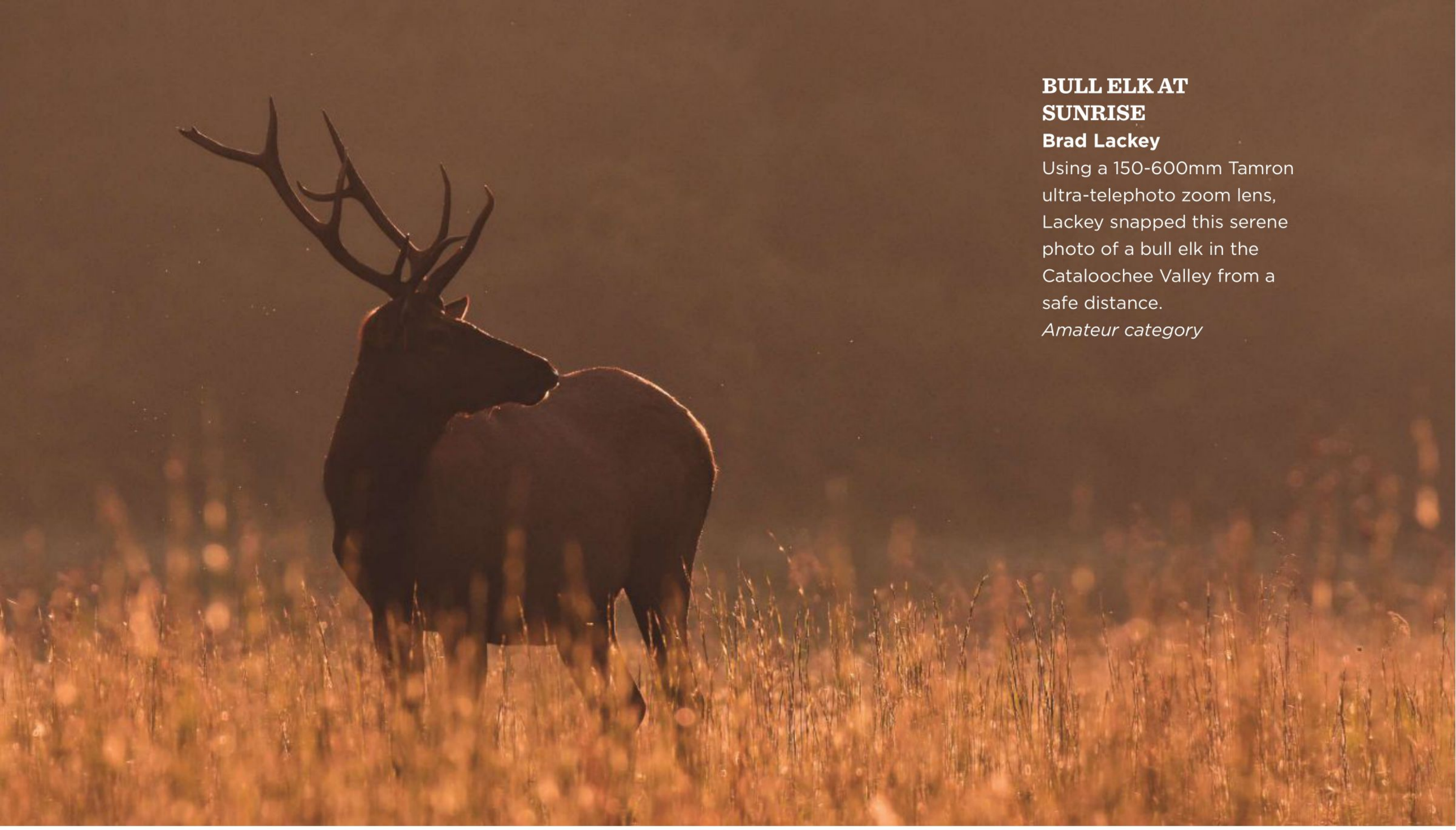


SUNRISE FROM THE CHIMNEYS

Tom Moors

To get this shot of the Chimneys overlooking Linville Gorge, Moors made the hike twice—first to plan out the composition and again the following morning before dawn, with time to sit and wait for the sun to peek over the horizon.

Professional category



BULL ELK AT SUNRISE
Brad Lackey
Using a 150-600mm Tamron ultra-telephoto zoom lens, Lackey snapped this serene photo of a bull elk in the Cataloochee Valley from a safe distance.
Amateur category

BIRD'S-EYE VIEW
James Mahan
Mahan used a DJI Drone to capture this fall aerial shot overlooking NC highway 215 that snakes from Transylvania to Haywood County.
Professional category

ANTIQUE DEALER, RIVER ARTS DISTRICT

Jon Shaner

An antiques dealer in Asheville's River Arts District whiles away the day amid his treasures.

Professional category

LOVELY PAIR
Justin Potter
Found on the Blue Ridge Parkway just north of Blowing Rock, the composition of these trees and brilliant morning hues stopped Potter in his tracks.
Professional category

FOGGY TRAIL
Valerie Seals
A morning hike with her child and foggy conditions set the scene for Seals' dreamy photo, taken near Mount Mitchell.
Amateur category

FALL MEETS WINTER
Kassidy Shelton
While driving along Newfound Road in Leicester, the contrast in color in this frame prompted Shelton to reach for her Canon D6 camera.
Professional category

GREAT EGRET
Daniel Black
Black turned his Nikon D3400 camera on this great egret on Lake Osceola in Henderson County.
Amateur category

MAKE A WISH
Ryan Karcher
Only his second time shooting astrophotography, Karcher managed to capture a shooting star in this photo of the Milky Way over Yellow Mountain firetower.
Amateur category

GRASSY RIDGE
Jeff Huntley
At over 6,000 feet, a sunrise view from Grassy Ridge Bald in the Roan Highlands on the North Carolina/Tennessee border is hard to beat.
Amateur category

SUMMER SUNRISE
Bonita Loggins
At Doughton Park, along the Blue Ridge Parkway near Sparta, a field of wildflowers come to light in the wee hours of the morning.
Amateur category

BILTMORE SUNSET
Chesley Lanford
Overlooking the Biltmore, the marble *Diana* statue is punctuated with just a starburst of light from the setting sun.
Amateur category

FOUNTAIN REFLECTION

Michael Boulos

In Asheville, the historic Jackson Building and its gargoyles are reflected in a fountain in Pack Square Park.

Amateur category

PHOTOGRAPH BY CAMERON LANE

SEE MORE

Visit wncmagazine.com/photocontest to see even more of this year's Images of WNC Photo Contest submissions, along with winning shots from prior contests.

PHOTOGRAPH BY BRUCE ELLISTON

by **JON ELLISTON**

with contributions from
BEARWISE AND AMY CHERRIX

BEAR NECESSITIES

Learning to live with WNC's most beloved and misunderstood mammal

COEXISTING

It's not your imagination: bears and people are getting closer all the time—and there's a mounting movement to help them get along

Sonny Pumphrey was 78 years old and working in the yard of his Maggie Valley home one afternoon in November 2018 when he turned around to find a sizable mama bear coming at him, her two cubs scampering behind her. "All of a sudden she run at me at full charge," Pumphrey said in a remarkable account for *Asheville Citizen-Times* reporter Karen Chávez. "She reared up with her claws and started to bite me.

"Maybe it was instinct, I have no idea where that came from, but I hit that bear as hard as I could. I was lucky. I caught her right in the nose." The bear regrouped and kept attacking, but Pumphrey opened up his own can of whoop ass. "I just kept hitting that bear," he said. "I fought that bear like I would fight a man. I kept slugging her on top of her head, fighting for my life."

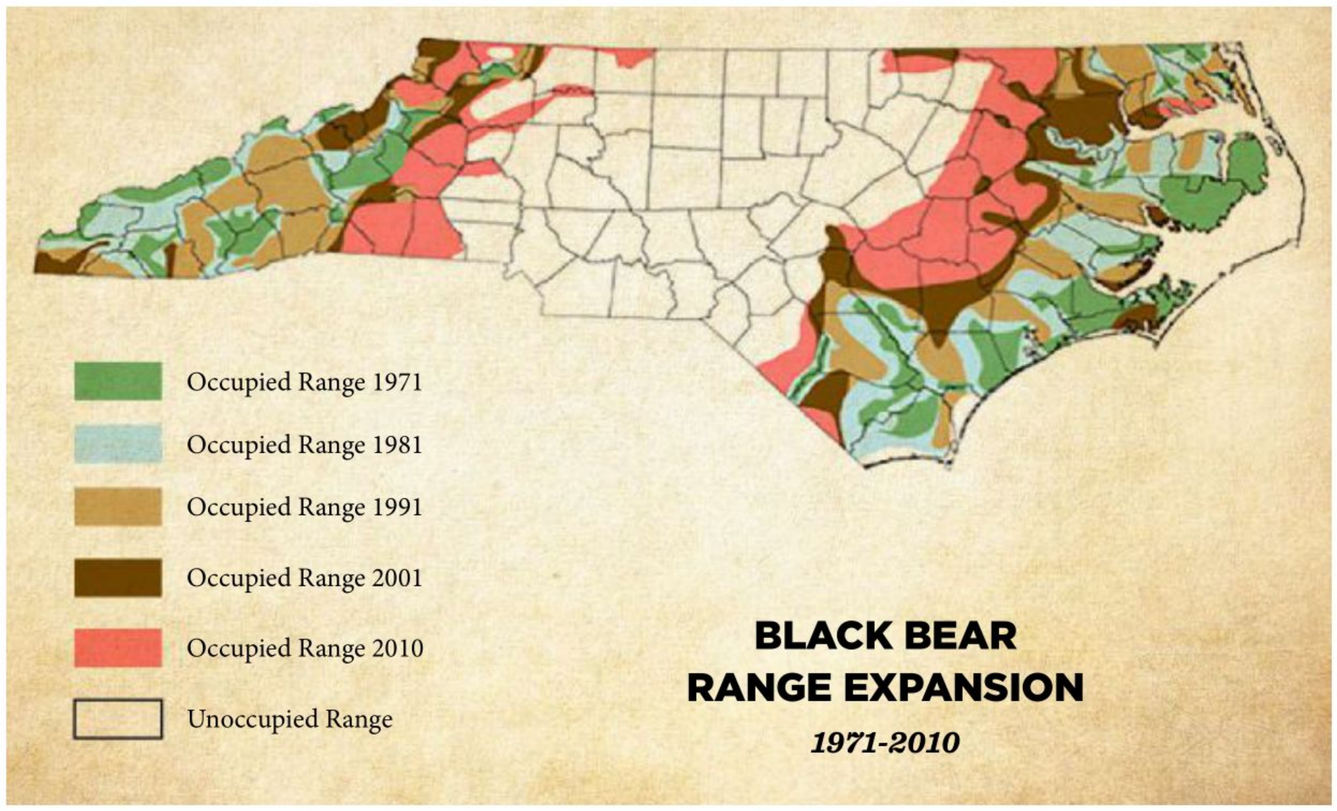
Still, the bear parried, knocking Pumphrey to the ground, grabbing him and shaking him "like a rag doll," he said. As he crawled to seek shelter in his car, mama loomed over him again—but she was scared off when Pumphrey's wife, Betty, and the couple's tiny Yorkie, Bella, came out of the house and raised a ruckus.

The American black bear lives in many parts of North America, with an estimated 300,000 of them in the US alone. They prefer forests but aren't too shy about heading into urban areas when need be.

After a brief hospitalization and several rabies shots, Pumphrey lived to tell the tale with aplomb. And for all the drama surrounding close bear encounters like this one, in truth, it's very rare that such incidents come to blows, or to any kind of physical contact between humans and bruins. Yet, there's no denying that the people and bears of Western North Carolina are going to have to learn to share some space and get along. Fortunately, a multiagency team of researchers is helping the region's furry and furless inhabitants find ways to do just that.

POPULATION GROWTHS

"Of the hundred counties in North Carolina, approximately 41 percent of all phone calls



NC's bear population has expanded in both the mountains and eastern regions for the last 50 years, according to state agencies. Often when they encounter people, they're searching for food. Researchers use radio tracking devises to chart a sample that has been fitted with radio collars.

MAP COURTESY NC WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMISSION; RESEARCHER PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY NICHOLAS GOULD, URBAN/SUBURBAN BEAR STUDY

about bears come from Buncombe County," author Amy Cherrix reports in her 2018 book about the phenomenon, *Backyard Bears: Conservation, Habitat Changes, and the Rise of Urban Wildlife*. "For now, residents of Asheville seem tolerant of their neighborhood black bears," she notes before posing the looming question: "Will they be able to coexist with these animals long-term?"

It's hard to get a precise grip on the number of black bears in North Carolina, but researchers estimate that there are somewhere between 15,000 and 20,000, with a third to one half of them living in WNC. It's a population that has steadily grown in recent decades, of its own volition, while simultaneously finding some of its native habitats increasingly populated by people.

The situation poses a dilemma: local black bears have a fervent fan base among mountain denizens (and, increasingly, city folks as well). They're a marvel to encounter and watch most of the time, especially when a mama is guiding her cubs into the rigors of life. At the same time, the bears come with a high nuisance factor. They pilfer garbage and pet food, destroy birdfeeders, and even make their way into empty cars in search of snacks—sometimes leaving shredded seats and dashboards behind. They cause the occasional panic and emergency calls, whether or not such a reaction is warranted.

Meanwhile, many mountain-area residents simply want to live in peace with their bear neighbors and are searching for the best advice on doing so. Coming to their aid is a groundbreaking research project, the Urban/Suburban Bear Study, based in Asheville and launched in 2014 by biologists from North Carolina State University and the state's Wildlife Resources Commission. The project's first phase lasted four years and studied spacial ecology and population, with an eye toward determining black bears' survival and mortality rates, movements, and den characteristics. Under the initiative, bears near downtown Asheville were briefly captured, affixed with radio collars, and released to track their movements.

BEAR-PROOFING

Armed with that information, the investigators have begun phase two, which is slated to last through 2022 and focuses on human/bear interactions. Here, the project will share best practices developed by BearWise, a research consortium dedicated to "helping people live responsibly with black bears" (find their main tips later in this article).

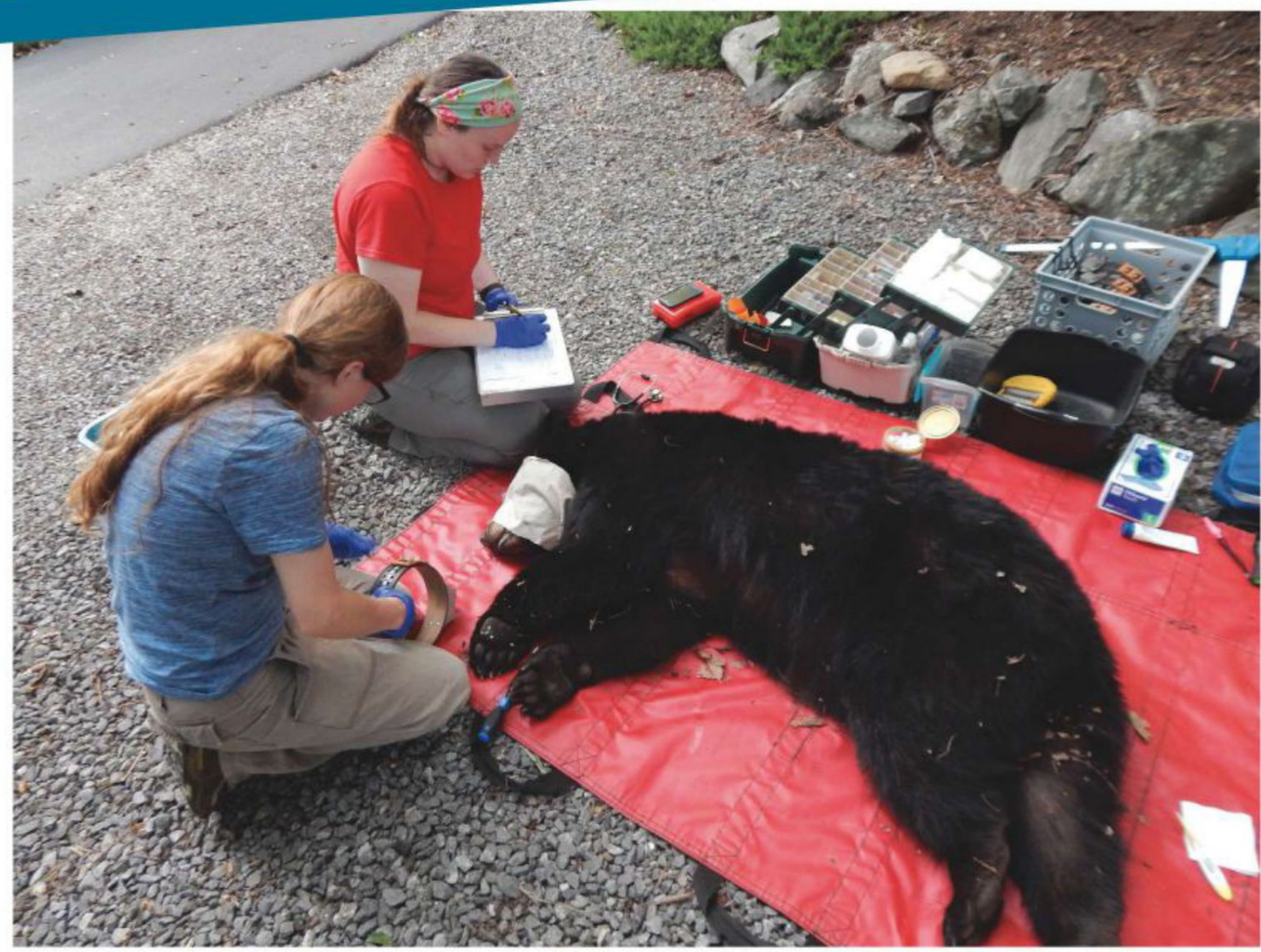
Jennifer Strules, an NC State PhD student, is managing the new phase. She'll work to help two bear-heavy Asheville neighborhoods—Haw Creek and Town Mountain—develop bear-proofing strategies, she says, such as "securing all potential food sources and knowing when and how to report bear activity."

One of the biggest challenges, Strules says, is grappling with people's natural affection for this particular wild animal. "There is something about bears that calls to a really deep spiritual sense in people," she notes. "I think that's actually a really good thing for bears, in many ways, but in some instances it works against us because we don't understand that bears are living a life that is mostly separate from humans."

Bear-proofing, she adds, will necessarily involve some changes in what people do. "If we can work to control human behavior a little bit better and cut down on inadvertent actions that people conduct around their home every day—with trash, pets, birdfeeders, and such—then we go a long way toward living proactively with bears, keeping them wild, and keeping them out of trouble."

WHAT A BEAR!

Asheville author Amy Cherrix spends a day in the field with the Urban/Suburban Bear Study



Researchers with the study take down vital stats from each bear they deal with, hoping to document key details about both its past and its future.

On a Wednesday in early May [2018], I get the call I've been waiting for. "Jennifer has captured a small bear in one of our traps in East Asheville," Nick Gould [an NC State University PhD student then managing Phase 1 of the study] says. "You and Steve should get there ASAP. She won't delay processing that bear any longer than she has to."

The photographer, Steve Atkins, is on a school field trip with his kids, and he brings the class along to see the bear for themselves.

Jennifer [Strules, a fellow NC State researcher] discovered this new bear on her daily inspection of the culvert traps deployed throughout Asheville. The safe enclosures secure the animal until the biologists arrive during their twice-daily inspections or if the property owner notifies the team of a capture. Each trap is baited with day-old doughnuts and other pastries from a local grocery store. Bears are opportunistic, drawn to any food source they detect. As long as it's edible, they may eat it, especially sweet foods. Each trap has a trigger with an attached "bait canister" that holds the pastries. To reach the bait, the bear must step all the way inside the trap and pull the trigger with the bait attached to it, causing the door to shut.

Bears in the study were lured by bait into traps like this without harm then sedated, affixed with radio collars, recorded, and sent on their way to see where they go.

It's spring now, and when the bear study concludes in late August, the traps will be removed to protect any curious animals from accidental capture. While trapping, the team checks every 12 hours for bears, or any other occupants that might wander in, such as raccoons, opossum, and foxes. The trap is empty when we arrive, and there's a small anesthetized male bear resting comfortably on a red tarp. We watch quietly as the team prepares to examine him. "We were surprised to learn this bear is male," Strules says, "because he's the size of a young female, only 109 pounds." Both wrists of his front paws appear to be disfigured, perhaps due to an injury at some point in his life, but there is no way to identify the cause. For this reason, the bear will not be fitted with a radio collar.

The team's first order of business is identification. Each new bear must be cataloged, so he is assigned a study number, N157. He is the 157th bear captured by the team. "We are giving him the same numeric identifiers that all bears in the study receive," Strules explains. "A set of ear tags, a small tattoo on the inside of his upper lip that matches his ear tag number, and a PIT tag." Due to his small size for a male, he won't be fitted with a radio collar, so the biologists won't be able to track N157 remotely. But if they recapture him in the future, they will be able to identify him.

We watch as Jennifer gently examines the bear's teeth. "He may be a bit older than a yearling, based on how worn the teeth are," she says.

"Does the bear feel what you're doing to

PHOTOGRAPH (ABOVE) COURTESY URBAN/SUBURBAN BEAR STUDY; (LEFT) COURTSEY OF NCSU

As the study is virtually unprecedented, hopes are high for what it could reveal about how bears interact with humans and vice versa, and what that could tell us about how to share some of the same spaces.

him?" Atkins' eight-year-old daughter, Lyla, asks as an ear tag is attached.

"Not at all," says Strules. "They don't feel anything, because we put them to sleep first. They wouldn't allow us to examine them if they were awake."

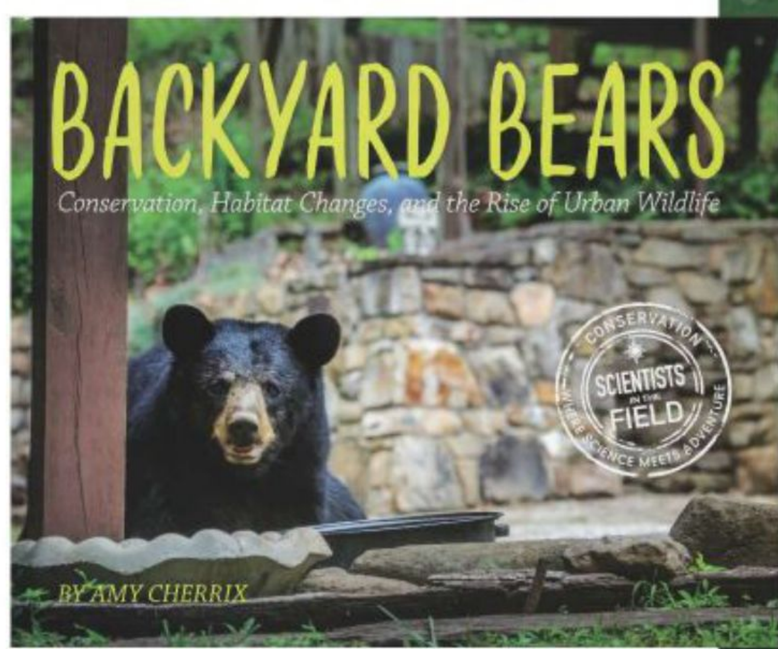
Hair and blood samples are taken next. "Hair samples are for genetic testing," Strules says. "We might learn which family the bear belongs to and who his parents are." N157's genetic test might also offer clues about where he came from, or whether he's related to other bears already cataloged in the study. "The blood samples tell us if the bear carries any diseases. Since these animals live in urban areas, we would like to know if they are carriers of diseases that could harm people, or if these bears are contracting human diseases."

Strules injects N157 with an antibiotic to help protect him from infection and gives him pain medication to reduce any discomfort caused by these procedures. She rechecks the bear's heart rate and temperature before measuring his body, paws, and head. His front paws are bent at an awkward angle due to his suspected injuries. They have healed, but improperly, so it makes them difficult to measure. When a person breaks a limb, the doctor sets the broken bone so that it heals in the correct position. N157 had to do the best he could on his own. I wondered if his small size was related to his misshapen paws. But Strules cautions me against jumping to conclusions. We don't know this bear's history. We can't be sure whether his injuries affected his ability to gain weight or find food. It's easy to make connections that seem logical but aren't necessarily true. Scientists don't have the luxury of assumptions. They report only what they can prove.

We say goodbye to N157 as Strules administers the reversal drug, and the team returns him to the trap to safeguard his recovery for the next few hours. When the bear is awake and able to move on his own, Strules will climb on top of the trap and open the door to release him.

For safety reasons, and to reduce N157's stress level, we won't be able to observe when he is released, so the students take turns touching his thick fur a final time before we leave. It's one thing to spot a bear in your neighborhood, but being this close is a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

We are all concerned about the bear, given his injuries, and we are eager to hear how the release concluded. The next day, I receive an email update from Strules. "When I opened the door, N157 tore out of the trap and ran up the hillside. There was absolutely no indication of his handicap. He was able to move at great speed with a completely normal gait and vacated the area in a few short minutes. What a bear!"



The above is an excerpt, reprinted with permission, from Amy Cherrix's Backyard Bears: Conservation, Habitat Changes, and the Rise of Urban Wildlife *(Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018).*

PHOTOGRAPHS (4) COURTESY OF NCSU

WISE UP

BearWise, a network of researchers and wildlife officials from around the Southeast, offers these tips for building better relationships with the critters in our midst. Find out more at bearwise.org.

WHO YOU GONNA' CALL?

Contacts for bearing with encounters

If you and your neighbors follow BearWise's principles, the experts say, you'll have significantly fewer of the kind of bear encounters that might call for official help.

Beyond that, you can always contact the likes of your county's animal control office, located within your sheriff's department. In Buncombe, the county with the most bear calls statewide, Sgt. Jim Robinson oversees responses to many of those calls. And while he and his officers can help chase off a bear (if they can arrive in time), there's not much more they can do other than offer good advice from the likes of BearWise.

"If people use their noggins and don't put themselves in any danger, that's the big thing," Robinson says. Don't be like the local guy who got bit while offering a backyard bear a piece of pizza, for example. If you can't seek shelter inside your home or vehicle and you feel threatened, he recommends a good noisemaker or, as a last resort, bear spray.

Most often, it won't come to that. But for bear problems big and small, Jennifer Strules of the Urban/Suburban Bear Study has a key recommendation: call the **NC Wildlife Resources Commission Wildlife Helpline at (866) 318-2401.** Experts are available there Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., and they can assist with concerns regarding not only bears but a range of other pesky animals. What's more, they can route your information to the researchers who are trying to foster a shared environment for humans and bears alike, helping to forge long-term strategies and better results for all.

BEARWISE AT HOME

Never feed or approach bears
Intentionally feeding bears or allowing them to find anything that smells or tastes like food teaches bears to approach homes and people looking for more. Bears will defend themselves if a person gets too close, so don't risk your safety and theirs!

Secure food, garbage, and recycling
Food and food odors attract bears, so don't reward them with easily available food, liquids, or garbage.

Remove bird feeders when bears are active
Birdseed and grains have lots of calories, so they're very attractive to bears. Removing feeders is the best way to avoid creating conflicts with bears.

Never leave pet food outdoors
Feed pets indoors when possible. If you must feed pets outside, feed in single portions and remove food and bowls after feeding. Store pet food where bears can't see or smell it.

Clean and store grills
Clean grills after each use and make sure that all grease, fat, and food particles are removed. Store clean grills and smokers in a secure area that keeps bears out.

Alert neighbors to bear activity
See bears in the area or evidence of bear activity? Tell your neighbors and share information on how to avoid bear conflicts. Bears have adapted to living near people; now it's up to us to adapt to living near bears.

PHOTOGRAPH BY BUDDY MORRISON

BEARWISE OUTDOORS

Stay alert and stay together
Pay attention to your surroundings and stay together. Avoid walking, hiking, jogging, or cycling alone. Keep kids within sight and close by. Leave earbuds at home and make noise periodically so bears can avoid you.

Leave no trash or food scraps
Double bag your food when hiking and pack out all food and trash. Leaving scraps, wrappers, or even "harmless" items like apple cores teaches bears to associate trails and campsites with food. Don't burn food scraps or trash in your fire ring or grill.

Keep dogs leashed
Letting dogs chase or bark at bears is asking for trouble; don't force a bear to defend itself. Keep your dogs leashed at all times or leave them at home.

Camp safely
Set up camp away from dense cover and natural food sources. Cook at least 100 yards from your tent. Do not store food, trash, cooking, clothes, or toiletries in your tent. Store these items in approved bear-resistant containers or suspended in a tree at least 10 feet up and 10 feet away from the tree trunk or out of sight in a locked vehicle.

Know what to do if you see a bear
Black bears are seldom aggressive, and attacks are rare. If you see a bear before it notices you, stand still, don't approach, and enjoy the moment; then move away quietly in the opposite direction. If you encounter a bear that's aware of you, don't run; running may trigger a chase response. Back away slowly. Visit BearWise.org to learn what to do if a black bear approaches, charges or follows you.

Carry bear spray and know how to use it
Bear spray is proven to be the easiest and most effective way to deter a bear that threatens you. It doesn't work like bug repellant, so never spray your tent, campsite or belongings.

KNOW THY NEIGHBOR
WNC Nature Center's Brews & Bears

At this fundraising series for Asheville's WNC Nature Center, local beer and bears are celebrated together. It's a chance to watch the center's two resident black bears, Uno and Ursa, take part in an enrichment activity while chatting with bear caretakers and enjoying some of the best of the area's brews, food, and music. Held once a month in summer, the next event takes place May 8 from 5-8:30 p.m. Visit wildwnc.org for details and tickets, which usually sell out fast.

PHOTOGRAPHS (BREWS & BEARS) COURTESY WNC NATURE CENTER

BY MELISSA REARDON

BEST of the FESTS 2020

MARK YOUR CALENDAR! FROM FOOD AND DRINK FÊTES TO CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS AND MUSICAL BLOWOUTS, HERE ARE 50 OF OUR FAVORITE FESTIVALS THAT WILL KEEP YOU, YOUR FAMILY, AND FRIENDS ENTERTAINED AND FULFILLED THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

PHOTOGRAPH BY GABE SWINNEY

CULTURE

LEAF FESTIVAL

May 14-17 & October 22-25 » BLACK MOUNTAIN

Every spring and fall as the leaves change, the beautiful grounds of Lake Eden draw festivalgoers young and old for a cultural arts celebration that benefits LEAF Community Arts, an Asheville-based nonprofit that provides arts education in Western North Carolina and in 10 countries around the globe. While healing arts, culinary offerings, and plenty of children's and outdoor activities abound, it's the musical artists bringing that international edge that sets this festival apart. Expect to hear everything from West African afrobeat to Colombian hip hop to Haitian roots music to Brazilian samba, as well as old-time mountain jams. Each festival brings an eclectic mix to multiple stages, including some noteworthy headliners. The spring 2020 lineup includes French electronic musician CloZee, Grammy award-winning bluegrass act The Del McCoury Band, and Preservation Hall Jazz Band

Can't make it? While a weekend of camping and cultural arts immersion is part of the fun of the biannual festival, LEAF Downtown is a free weekend of music that takes place August 7 and 8, bringing arts and music to Pack Square Park in downtown Asheville. ***theleaf.org***

MAY 14-17 & OCT. 22-25

LEAF Downtown brings the spirit of the Lake Eden festival to downtown Asheville in August.

BEST of the FESTS 2020

CULTURE

GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN HIGHLAND GAMES

July 9-12 » LINVILLE

What began in eleventh century Scotland as contests of strength for identifying the most able soldiers is still carried out today around the world in celebrations of Scottish heritage. Since Western North Carolina saw an influx of Scots-Irish immigrants shortly after the Civil War, it's no surprise one such gathering occurs here annually at Grandfather Mountain. For these festivities, bagpipes, kilts, and maybe a pinch of whiskey go along with traditional games like the caber toss and tug of war, Scottish folk dancing and music, sheep herding and border collie demos, children's activities (including a Highland wrestling clinic), and a parade of tartans. ***gmhg.org***

TASTE OF SCOTLAND

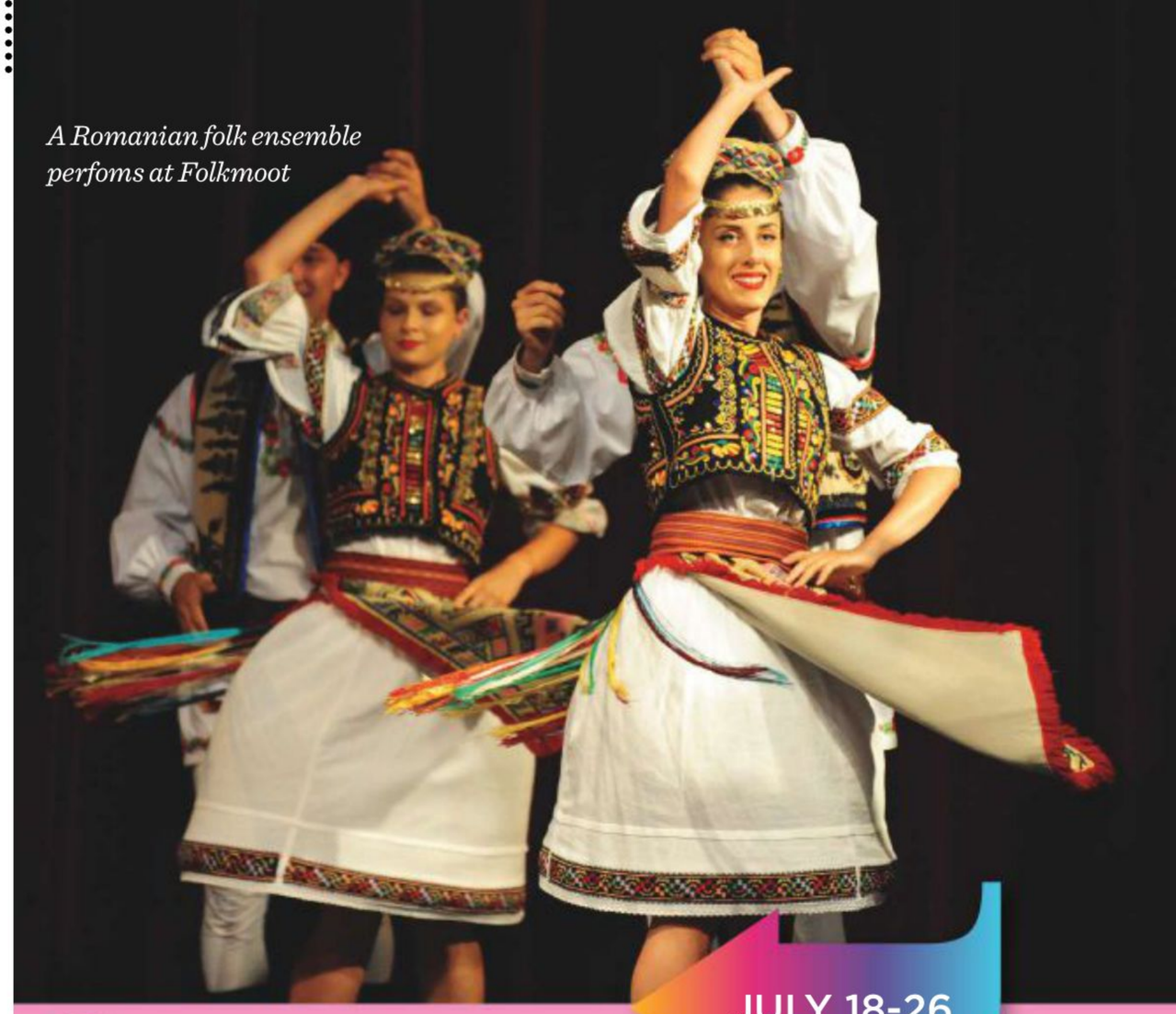
June 19-21 » FRANKLIN

Paying homage to the largest ethnic group of pioneers to settle in the region around the turn of the nineteenth century, this festival offers a sampling of everything Scots-Irish. Authentic Scottish and Celtic food, music and dance, traditional dress, crafters, border collie demonstrations, a children's Highland games (which typically involve feats of strength), and a parade of clans and tartans round out the weekend. While in town, don't miss a look around the Scottish Tartans Museum. The only one of its kind in the country, the museum presents exhibits about the history of Scottish plaids and dress and the Scots-Irish story of settling here amid the Cherokee. ***tasteofscotlandfestival.org***

MERMAIDS IN MARSHALL PARADE & FESTIVAL

June 6 » MARSHALL

As Asheville has swelled and housing prices soared, the slogan about keeping Asheville weird feels further from reality. But this eccentric spirit still shines bright in nearby places, including Marshall, which holds this quirky annual celebration that's all about the mystical aquatic creatures that have captivated imaginations for thousands of years. The day includes a "splash island" for the kids, arts and crafts vendors, a treasure hunt through town (replete with doubloons), a public-judged seafood cook-off, live music throughout the day, and, the highlight, the Mermaid Parade. This year's procession will see plenty of water guns, so expect to get wet. Anyone can join in the parade, but regardless of your level of participation, mermaid costumes are just shy of required for this day of ridiculous fun. ***downtownmarshallnc.com***



A Romanian folk ensemble perfoms at Folkmoot

JULY 18-26

Folkmoot

July 18-26 » HAYWOOD COUNTY

Along with showcasing Cherokee and Appalachian folkways, this annual two-week festival brings the traditional music, dance, and colorful fanfare of nations from around the globe to multiple venues across Haywood County. Each year, some 200 delegates from various countries travel to WNC to perform and share in an exchange of cultures. Perhaps nowhere else would you be able to witness a Bahamian Junkanoo, an elaborate costumed street parade of African origin, followed by showcases of authentic folk songs, dances, and dress from far-flung countries like Romania, Hungary, Colombia, and Egypt—all were on the bill last year, with 2020 performers still in the works as of press time. ***folkmoot.org***

PHOTOGRAPHS COURESTY GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN STEWARDSHIP FOUNDATION; DOWNTOWN MARSHALL ASSOCIATION; (FOLKMOOT) BY PATRICK PARTON

CHRISTMAS IN JULY

July 4 » WEST JEFFERSON

North Carolina is one of the top Christmas tree producing states in the country, with one of the highest concentrations of tree farms dotting the scenic rural hills throughout Ashe County. So in the off-season, when farmers aren't packaging and shipping their product far and wide or hosting visitors for the choose-and-cut experience, they come together every summer for a spirited street festival—with a patriotic flair—in the adorable town of West Jefferson. Attendees can vote for the best specimen in the Christmas tree contest, snap pics with Santa and the missus, shop the wares of dozens of crafters, and dance to the sounds of performing bands throughout the day.

christmasinjuly.info

NC APPLE FESTIVAL

September 4-7 » HENDERSONVILLE

A plethora of apple treats and an array of fresh-picked heirloom fruits take front and center at this annual Labor Day Weekend affair, which rightfully takes place in North Carolina's largest apple-producing county. The street fair also includes arts and crafts, food, and live entertainment at the Historic Courthouse.

ncapplefestival.org

WALDENSIAN FESTIVAL

August 7 & 8 » VALDESE

In order to understand this festival, you need to know a bit about the history of Valdese. The town was founded in 1893 by a group of 29 Waldensians, the people and descendants of an ascetic movement within Christianity that dates back to the twelfth century in modern-day France and Italy. Story goes, the people were persecuted and exiled to Switzerland, and were not allowed to return home until 500 years later. To mark the anniversary of what is called the "Glorious Return" from exile, Waldensians around the world commemorate the occasion. In our corner of the woods, Valdese celebrates with a street festival, complete with amusement rides, a cruise-in of classic and antique cars, beer, wine, and food, arts, and crafts, live entertainment, bocce tournaments, a footrace, and more. Though if you want to get to the heart of this little-known ethnic minority, make a point to check out the Waldensian Heritage Museum and the Trail of Faith outdoor museum, or attend the historic outdoor drama *From this Day Forward*, all of which tell the story of the Waldensians' history and culture.

townofvaldese.com

BASCOM LAMAR LUNSFORD FESTIVAL

October 3 » MARS HILL

The music and dance traditions of Southern Appalachia—reflecting centuries of Scottish, Irish, English, Cherokee, and African heritage—are front and center at Western North Carolina's second oldest folk festival, devoted to Bascom Lamar Lunsford, a musician and folklorist who spent his life collecting and promoting the music of the region. The day, which is presented by Mars Hill University's Ramsey Center for Appalachian Studies and coincides with the Madison Heritage Arts Festival, showcases some of the area's best musicians on fiddle, banjo, bass, guitar, and dulcimer as well as clogging demonstrations and square and circle dances. A ballad swap is a chance to hear generations-old narratives relayed in song by esteemed and award-winning ballad singers. And a shape-note singing workshop is an opportunity to witness a 120-year-old, seldom practiced form of musical

Dirty Dancing Festival

September 11 & 12 » LAKE LURE

The 1987 hit movie *Dirty Dancing* may have been set in New York's Catskills, but it was filmed in southwest Virginia and right here in WNC. Every year, the town of Lake Lure commemorates its limelight moment with a celebration that will have you swaying, shimmying, and sashaying to the movie soundtrack. The weekend includes plenty of dance performances and lessons, a lakeside film screening, watermelon races, and a lake lift competition, among other thematic festivities.

dirtydancingfestival.com

PHOTOGRAPHS (LUNSFORD FESTIVAL) BY NATURAL CRAFT PHOTOGRAPHY; (DIRTY DANCING) BY BUDDY MORRISON PHOTOGRAPHY

CULTURE

notation singing that has persisted in the rural South. ***mhu.edu***

Can't make it? The Mountain Dance & Folk Festival, held in Asheville August 6-8, is a similar musical showcase Lunsford helped start in 1928, which still serves to highlight the cultural significance of Southern Appalachian music and traditions. ***folkheritage.org***

PUMPKINFEST

October 17 » FRANKLIN

In its 24th year, this festival celebrating fall and all things pumpkin is widely noted for the Pumpkin Roll, in which participants of all ages go for distance, propelling nearly 700 gourds down Frog Town Hill. There are two kids' zones with inflatables and activities, a pie eating contest, a costume contest and parade, and more than 80 arts and crafts vendors. ***townoffranklinnc.com***

Historic Morganton Festival

September 11 & 12 » MORGANTON

A mile and a half of 250-plus arts and crafts vendors is one of the draws for this festival that takes place in Morganton's historic downtown and Town Square. Free concerts, including a nationally renowned country music headliner on Saturday night, games and rides for kids and teens, a greenway sunrise run, a beer garden, and plenty of food vendors, heighten the celebration. And the annual M.A.D.E. (Morganton, Arts, Design, and Engineering) Competition challenges middle and high school students to complete engineering projects on-site that demonstrate innovative technology skills. ***morgantonfest.org***

PUNKIN CHUNKIN FESTIVAL

October 17 & 18 »
BRASSTOWN & HAYESVILLE

Believe it or not, the sport of hurling pumpkins by mechanical means is a big draw for this event in Clay and Cherokee counties. It's one of only two dozen such events in the country and pulls around 20,000 spectators each year. So what's the attraction? The opportunity to witness multiple teams with giant hand-built catapults, trebuchets, and air cannons blast gourds hundreds or even thousands of feet (up to a mile or more) for a win. Arts, crafts, food vendors, beer and wine, kids activities, and a pumpkin cook-off and pie eating contest keep the revelry going. ***claychambernc.com***

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF CITY OF MORGANTON; (PUNKIN CHUNKIN) BY BOB WALTERS

MUSIC

APRIL 23-26

Merlefest

April 23-26 » Wilkesboro

Founded in 1988 in memory of the late Doc Watson's son as a fund-raiser for Wilkes Community College, Merlefest has grown into one of the nation's preeminent bluegrass, Americana, and old-time music festivals, presenting more than a few heavyweight names. Ricky Skaggs, Gillian Welch, Sam Bush, Dolly Parton, Loretta Lynn, The Avett Brothers, and many more have performed over the years. Among the some 65 acclaimed and rising stars performing this year are Willie Nelson, Alison Krauss, and John Prine, to name a few. ***merlefest.org***

MOUNTAIN SONG FESTIVAL

September 11-13 »

BREVARD

Tucked into a wooded cove in Pisgah National Forest, Brevard Music Center's open-air Whittington-Pfohl Auditorium and yawning star-lit lawn set an idyllic stage for the fast-paced picking, strumming, and crooning that keep crowds returning year after year to this bluegrass and Americana music experience. Festival hosts and hometown luminaries the Steep Canyon Rangers are a main-stay of the weekend, which is packed out with other notable acts. Last year's roster included Acoustic Syndicate, Preservation Hall Jazz Band, Chatham County Line, and bluegrass godfathers Del McCoury and David Grisman. While plans for the 2020 festival are still in the works, country-blues man Charley Crockett and soul singer Mavis Staples are among talents set to appear.

mountainsongfestival.com

Steep Canyon Rangers

BREVARD MUSIC FESTIVAL

June 26-August 9 »

BREVARD

Brevard Music Center's Summer Institute and Festival serves as a prestigious training program for elite young musicians from across the globe, who spend 12 weeks studying and performing alongside distinguished teaching artists from notable symphonies, conservatories, and major universities. For the festival—a six-week run of around 80 showcases—the students perform alongside faculty and many other celebrated names in classical music and beyond. Highlights of the 2020 season include a celebration of Beethoven, marking the composer's 250th birthday with masterworks in symphony, chamber, piano, and opera, three fully staged operas, a family-friendly movie with a live symphony, and a finale showcase with Grammy-winning artists guitarist Bryan Sutton and banjoist Béla Fleck.

brevardmusic.org

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF MOUNTAIN SONG FESTIVAL; (MERLEFEST) BY JIM GAVENUS; (BMF) BY DENMAN BENNETT

BEST of the FESTS 2020

FLORA AND FAUNA

AZALEA FESTIVAL

June 12 & 13 »
ROBBINSVILLE

A designated Azalea City, Robbinsville and the surrounding mountains are home to the native flame azalea, which blooms in late May through June in a spectacular display of colors, from bright yellow to blazing orange to a brilliant scarlet. To honor the blooming beauties, Graham County's annual celebration (now in its third year) includes guided hikes to Hooper Bald on Friday followed by a street festival Saturday, with music, vendors, and the chance to purchase azaleas to take home. ***grahamcountytravel.com***

GARDEN JUBILEE

May 23 & 24 »
HENDERSONVILLE

Always held over Memorial Day weekend and featuring more than 250 vendors lining Hendersonville's historic Main Street, this is one of the largest garden festivals in Western North Carolina. It's a chance to browse thousands of perennials, annuals, vegetables, herbs, and hard-to-find plants from many regional nurseries, as well as garden tools, handmade lawn furniture and yard art, wind chimes, birdhouses, and other lovely things that help your garden grow. ***visithendersonvillenc.org***

WHITE SQUIRREL FESTIVAL

May 22-24 » BREVARD

Take a slow amble through Brevard and you're likely to encounter one of the town's resident white squirrels. Albino squirrels do exist, but these particular creatures are instead a rare white variety that is believed to be descended from an escaped carnival squirrel, and it's become the town's mascot and the impetus for this festival. The weekend includes a parade, a squirrel-costumed 5K and fun run, a white squirrel photo contest, street vendors, and ample music. Past performers have included bluesy, rock 'n' roll group the Travers Brothership and soul rockers Sister Sparrow and the Dirty Birds. ***whitesquirrelfestival.com***

COON DOG DAY

July 11 » SALUDA

The American hunting hound is the focus of this dog-friendly homegrown street festival that includes a parade of handmade floats, classic cars, live music, and an American Kennel Club dog show. And as you might expect, leashed dogs are welcome to attend the festivities. ***Facebook: City of Saluda NC***

NC Rhododendron Festival

June 19 & 20 » BAKERSVILLE

By early summer, the pretty pink and purple blossoms of the Catawba rhododendron punctuate ridgelines and alpine woodlands of the Appalachian Mountains. While one of the best places to view the blooming beauties is atop Roan Mountain—which holds the world's largest natural rhododendron garden—a choice locale to commemorate the native plant is at the mountain's base in the town of Bakersville. The 74th annual festival includes a craft fair, live music, street dancing, a classic car show, 10K run, and the NC Rhododendron Pageant. ***ncrhododendronfestival.com***

PHOTOGRAPHS (AZALEA) BY KIM HAINGE OF GOD'S GARDEN; (WHITE QUIRREL FESTIVAL) BY SEYL PARK OF SPARK MEDIA

Flock to the Rock

September 26 » CHIMNEY ROCK

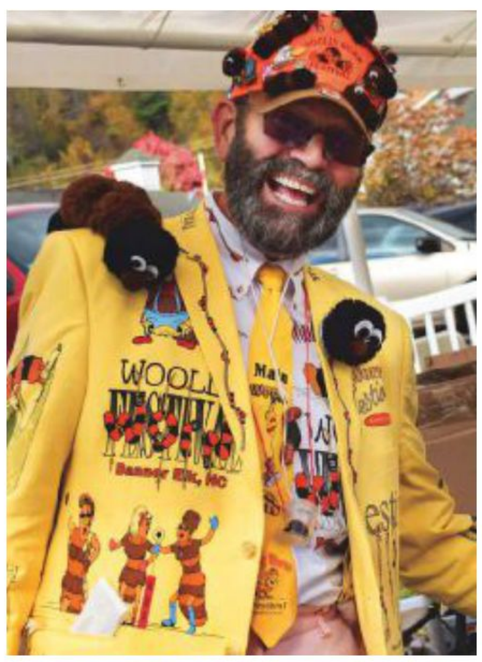
Each fall, the spectacular Hickory Nut Gorge serves as a thoroughfare for many migrating birds species, and the towering heights at Chimney Rock State Park are the optimal vantage point from which to view the annual passage. The park offers naturalist-led birding hikes, education stations, raptor flight shows, and live bird demos that all ages can enjoy. ***chimneyrockpark.com***

WOOLLY WORM FESTIVAL

October 17 & 18 »

BANNER ELK

Whereas Punxsutawney has its famous groundhog, Banner Elk turns to a rather unlikely mascot for its weather forecast: the woolly bear caterpillar. Held the third weekend in October, the annual Woolly Worm Festival draws nearly 20,000 for two days of absurdly fun worm races, as well as juried artists, inflatable rides, and musical entertainment—but mainly for the ridiculous glee that comes from cheering on caterpillars racing up a three-foot stretch of string. The winner's stripes are used to predict the severity of the coming winter. Its 13 stripes represent the 13 weeks of winter—the darker black the segments, the colder and snowier the weather; the lighter brown the coloring, the milder the weather. The main race is held on Saturday, and the winner receives $1,000 and the honor of predicting the winter forecast, while Sunday's corporate race is for bragging rights. What's more, anyone who brings a worm can register for the races. ***woollyworm.com***



PHOTOGRAPHS (CHIMNEY ROCK) COURTESY OF CHIMNEY ROCK STATE PARK; (WOOLY WORM) BY TODD BUSH

BEST of the FESTS 2020

ARTS AND CRAFTS

FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN BLACKSMITHING FESTIVAL

April 25 » SPRUCE PINE

Presented in partnership with Downtown Spruce Pine, Penland School of Crafts, and the Toe River Arts Council, and always held the last Saturday in April, this annual craft showcase brings together nationally renowned blacksmiths for exhibits and demonstrations as well as tool vendors. A hands-on tent lets attendees in on the action. This year's featured Master Blacksmith is noted iron maiden and Penland instructor Elizabeth Brim.

Facebook: Fire on the Mountain Festival

Patti LaBelle at 2019's Appalachian Summer Festival

JUNE 28-AUGUST 1

An Appalachian Summer Festival

June 28-August 1 » ***Boone***

When Appalachian State University's campus slows for summer break, the arts take center stage. Each year between late June and early August, some 37,000 attendees turn out to catch one of the 40 or so music, dance, theater, visual arts, and film events that take place daily at venues across town. Past highlights have included pianist and singer-songwriter Ben Folds performing with the Winston-Salem Symphony, Grammy-winning singer and actress Patti LaBelle, and an evening of laughter with actress Lily Tomlin. ***appsummer.org***

PHOTOGRAPHS (BLACKSMITH) BY WUNDERFY; (LABELLE) BY CHASE REYNOLDS

Catawba Valley Pottery and Antiques Festival

March 27 & 28 » HICKORY

Catawba Valley Pottery signals more than just an origin; it also refers to the distinct alkaline-glazed stoneware tradition that began in the namesake river valley some 150 years ago. Today, it remains highly collectable. Antique and contemporary fanciful face jugs and other pieces made in this tradition can be found at this annual festival, along with antique furniture, textiles, and folk art. The main event on Saturday includes demos and a special guest lecture. ***catawbavalleypotteryfestival.com***

MOUNTAIN GLORY FESTIVAL

October 10 » MARION

The second Saturday each October, three blocks of Marion's quaint downtown brim with arts and crafts vendors, food, and live old-time mountain music. Kids activities, 5K and 10K races, and a best-dressed pet contest round out this small-town celebration. ***mtngloryfestival.com***

CONNECT BEYOND FESTIVAL

April 3-5 » ASHEVILLE

"Connect Beyond is sort of like a Ted Talk meets *This American Life* meets *MTV Unplugged*." That's how founder and event organizer Jessica Tomasin likes to quickly explain this multifaceted event. But a deeper dive would describe how this new festival (only in its second year after being well-received in 2019) is more of a movement that explores the power of words through storytelling (incorporated through music,

PHOTOGRAPHS (POTTERY) BY CHAD ALLEY; (MARION) COURTESY OF MOUNTAIN GLORY FESTIVAL

ARTS AND CRAFTS

film, and literature) to create social impact. Readings, panel discussions, screenings, performances, and a mix of filmmakers, musicians, journalists, activists, and academics come together to present an innovative, thought-provoking, and entertaining experience. Last year's roster of some 70 presenters and entertainers included NPR's Bob Boilen, singer-songwriter Fantastic Negrito, and multi-instrumentalist Kishi Bashi, among many other pioneers in their fields. This year brings noted personalities including *New York Times* journalists Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey, who won the Pulitzer Prize for their book on breaking the Harvey Weinstein story, and also Beyonce's publicist, Yvette Noel-Shure. ***connectbeyondfestival.com***

Rissi Palmer at 2019's Connect Beyond Festival

WNC Pottery Festival

November 7 » SYLVA

Mix, mingle, and browse functional and sculptural wares from more than 40 master potters hailing from these mountains and across the country. The Clay Olympics take place the day before, when potters put their skills to the test in four competitions: building the tallest cylinder, widest bowl, blindfolded throwing, and a mystery event. Considering that most potters work privately, bringing cheering spectators into the fold really stirs the pot (so to speak), making this a fun and unique competition. ***wncpotteryfestival.com***

Pottery by Jill Tortorella

Sculpture by David Shelton

Sculpture Celebration

September 12 » Lenoir

The Caldwell Arts Council's collection of over 80 public sculptures warrants a visit any time of year, but the annual Sculpture Celebration more than doubles the fun. It's the longest running sculpture competition in the Southeast and attracts artists from multiple states. Works range from small cast pieces to massive artworks in metal, clay, glass, or recycled materials. An opportunity to meet the artists and enjoy live music, food trucks, and sculptures surrounding the lovely lakeside Broyhill Walking Park makes this a fine cultural affair. ***caldwellarts.com***

MOUNT MITCHELL CRAFTS FAIR

August 7 & 8 »
BURNSVILLE

Named for the East's loftiest peak that looms just to the south, this craft fair (now in its 64th year) draws around 200 juried crafters and over 20,000 people to Burnsville's adorable, old-timey town square. Attendees can shop for everything from handmade quilts to traditional mountain instruments to artwork of all mediums. Barbecue and sweet tea served up with live mountain music and dance make this craft fair all the more culturally enriching. ***yanceychamber.com***

BLUE RIDGE FIBER FEST

June 5 & 6 » SPARTA

Textiles have long been part of life's fabric in Southern Appalachia, and this annual event serves to help preserve that history, from farm to garment, through education and networking. Attendees can meet the animals and artisans, choose from more than 40 classes throughout the weekend, and shop for fleece and fiber equipment from more than 50 vendors. ***blueridgefiberfest.com***

CRAFT FAIR OF THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

July 16-19 & October 15-18
» ASHEVILLE

Marking its 90th year, the Southern Highland Craft Guild is the nation's second oldest craft organization, representing over 800 juried members across nine Southeastern states. And this biannual craft fair is an opportunity to find nearly 200 of the esteemed members in one place. Artisans working in clay, wood, metal, glass, fiber, jewelry, and more fill two floors of the Harrah's Cherokee Center Asheville. Live demos and music add to the shopping experience. ***southernhighlandguild.org/craftfair***

Carlson Tuttle

PHOTOGRAPHS (FACING PAGE: PALMER BY TOM FARR, POTTERY COURTESY OF WNC POTTERY FESTIVAL); (THIS PAGE: SCULPTURES BY BETHANY BAUMGARDNER-KIRBY; TUTTLE COURTESY OF SOUTHERN HIGHLAND CRAFT GUILD)

BEST of the FESTS 2020

SPORTS

AUG. 7-9

GET IN GEAR FEST

March 21 » ASHEVILLE

A signature event of the Outdoor Gear Builders, a collective of manufacturers devoted to enhancing the state's $28 billion outdoor recreation industry, Get in Gear Fest is an opportunity for hikers, bikers, anglers, kayakers, climbers, and the like to sample and purchase the latest gear directly from the makers. Taking place along the French Broad River at Salvage Station, live music, food trucks, beer, and demos set the pace for the day. New this year, brands will be selling seconds and demo gear at reduced costs, as well as offering a customer appreciation sale. It's a festive opportunity to get outfitted for the warmer months ahead.

outdoorgearbuilders.com

Lake Lure Olympiad

August 7-9 » LAKE LURE

Three challenging days of heart-pumping competitions are all for a good cause at this annual sporting event. All proceeds from entry fees go to area charities and service organizations. The weekend includes a 10K race, triathlon, golf tournament, a junior Olympiad that includes a basketball shoot, baseball throw, and other kid-friendly contests, and the Race to the Rock, a 5K run or 25-mile bike ride up to Chimney Rock. Capable participants who really want to test their endurance can take on the 3 Races in 3 Days challenge, which includes the 10K, a triathlon sprint, and the Race to the Rock. Included in this event, though held on June 6, is the Lure of the Lake Swim, a 1.5- or 3-mile race on the water.

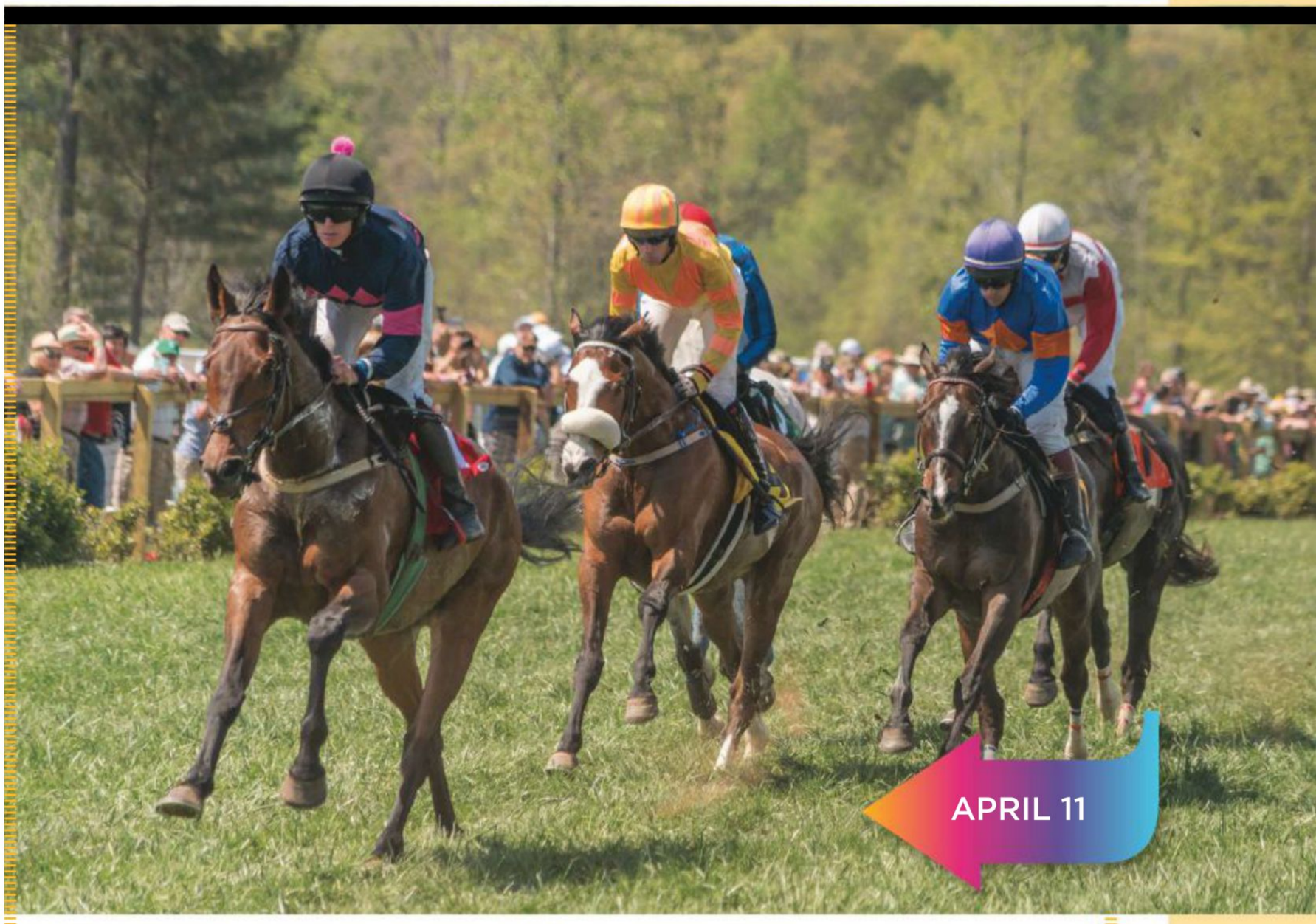
lakelureolympiad.com

PHOTOGRAPHS (GET IN GEAR) COURTESY OF OUTDOOR GEAR BUILDERS; (LAKE LURE-2) BY BUDDY MORRISON; FACING PAGE: (SUGARFEST) SUGAR MOUNTAIN RESORT/WWW.BUSHPHOTO.COM; (RACES-2) BY ERIK OLSEN

SUGARFEST

December 11-13 »
SUGAR MOUNTAIN

Winter sports fans can get in on the action at Sugar Mountain Ski Resort's seasonal kickoff. Two-time Olympic Super G medalist Andrew Weibrecht will lead ski clinics each day. There's also fun to be had at the terrain park, as well as tubing, ice skating, and ski and snowboard gear demos. SugarFeast includes barbecue and a Soup Safari serving scratch-made soups, as well as a hot chocolate and whipped cream bar. An after party and fireworks take place Saturday night. And, of course, you can spend as much time on the slopes as you want honing your powder prowess.
skisugar.com



Tryon Block House Races

April 11 » TRYON

Hosted at Green Creek Race Course, this 73rd annual steeplechase truly appeals to anyone, horse enthusiasts and newcomers alike. If you're among the later and wondering if the term refers to a church tower, it does not; it's a day of horse racing that involves obstacles, and you don't have to be an expert to enjoy the fun, part of which consists of tailgating and the ridiculous contests that coincide. Attendees dress their best to compete for a variety of awards, including best hat, tackiest pants, and most elaborate. Live music, kids activities, VIP dining, and a pre-race calcutta (an auction and party benefitting Tryon Riding & Hunt Club) are also on the docket.
tryon.com/page/blockhouseraces

BEST of the FESTS 2020

FOOD AND DRINK

BLACKBERRY FESTIVAL

July 9-11 » LENOIR

This hometown street festival is as sweet as its namesake. A blackberry-infused dinner with music kicks off the festivities on Thursday, followed by a footrace on Friday. Saturday presents the main events—a pageant, blackberry-eating contest and the Cobbler Brigade, a colorful procession of wagon-pulled cobblers that, one by one, are added to create the world's largest cobbler patchwork, which is then doled out to attendees. It's indeed a "berry" good time.

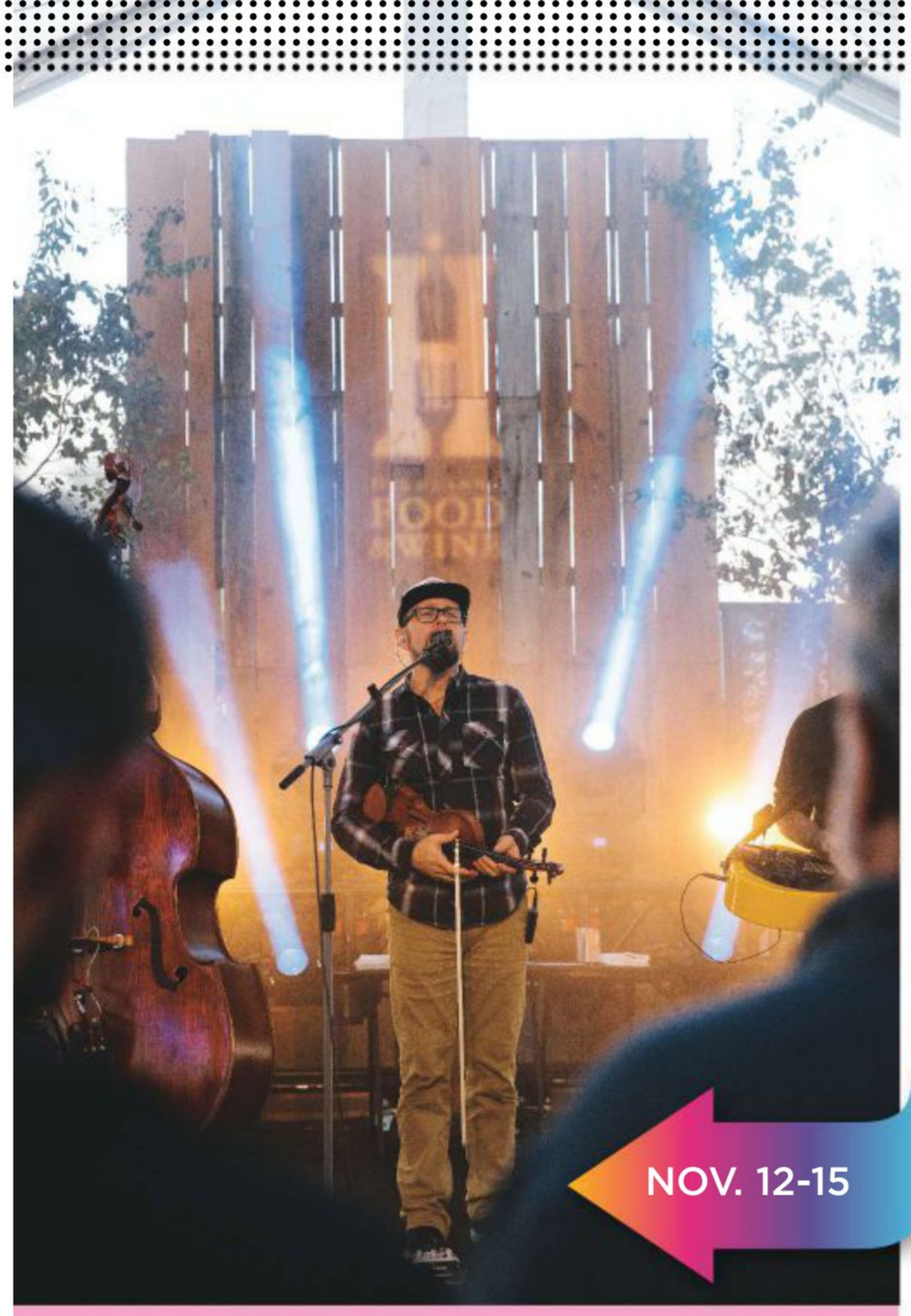
ncblackberryfestival.com

CAROLINA MOUNTAIN CHEESE FEST

April 26 » ASHEVILLE

Benefitting the WNC Cheese Trail cooperative and held at Highland Brewing, this festival is a chance to sample fromage and complimentary bites from several dozen vendors, including around 20 local and regional cheese makers. Demos and workshops cover topics from cooking with ricotta to making goat milk soap to charcuterie.

mountaincheesefest.com



Highlands Food and Wine

November 12-15 » HIGHLANDS

For a town of less than 1,000 full-time residents, Highlands is blessed with a bounty of fine dining restaurants—many with *Wine Spectator* award-winning wine lists—not to mention an adorable, walkable downtown surrounded by immense natural beauty. It's a perfect staging ground for this festival, which upped the ante a few years ago by adding impressive musical lineups. The likes of Southern soul-rock band JJ Grey & Mofro, Preservation Hall Jazz Band, The Wood Brothers folk-roots trio, and bluegrass stars The Infamous Stringdusters have performed in years past. The four-day event consists of a Grand Tasting, Truckin' food truck showcase, The Main Event (another big food and bev tasting opportunity), a Sunday Shindig brunch, a Sip & Shop, and plenty of wine dinners. Tickets go on sale in late May/early June and they do sell out fast. Tip: newsletter subscribers have an early buying opportunity.

highlandsfoodandwine.com

PHOTOGRAPHS (BLACKBERRY FEST) BY RANDY KNAUF; (HIHGLANDS-2) BY MAGGIE BRAUCHER; FACING PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: BY TIM ROBISON, LUKE VAN HINE, TIM ROBISON-2, REESE MOORE-4, LUKE VAN HINE, REESE MOORE

SEPT. 10-13

Chow Chow

September 10-13 » ASHEVILLE

If you know anything of Appalachian cookery, then you've at least heard of chowchow, that crunchy pickled relish of fermented goodness from the summer's final harvests. The condiment was once such a mainstay in Southern Appalachia that it served as the namesake for Asheville's premier culinary event.

Guided by a board of the city's leading chefs, including James Beard nominees Katie Button, John Fleer, and Meherwan Irani, and many other successful food and beverage personalities, the inaugural festival last year presented the most elevated and immersive culinary experiences the city has ever seen. The weekend featured informative panel discussions, hands-on demos and workshops on everything from bread-baking to home-brewing, and plenty of opportunities to sip and sample from more than 50 local and participating restaurants via specialty dinners and a three-day grand tasting. It also brought together some of the country's more notable food and bev professionals, including more than two dozen James Beard nominees, finalists, semifinalists, and winners like Craig Deihl, Sean Brock, Ronni Lundy, Vivian Howard, and José Andrés. With hundreds of makers, chefs, farmers, brewers, and mixologists poised to participate again this year, there's no doubt attendance is only set to increase, so don't wait to get tickets, as individual events will sell out.

exploreasheville.com/chow-chow-culinary-festival

FOOD AND DRINK

NC RAMP FEST

May 2 & 3 »
WAYNESVILLE

Come springtime, and only for a brief period, WNC's native wild onion crops up at area farmers markets and on chefs' seasonal menus. The pungent, garlicky allium is considered a delicacy in these parts, and the 88th annual Ramp Festival is a good place to sample and celebrate them. Held at the American Legion, attendees can savor ramp-infused meatloaf, greens, cornbread, and more, purchase ramps to take home, and enjoy live music, karaoke, and art and craft vendors.

visitncsmokies.com

HOOK, LINE & DRINKER FESTIVAL

May 16 » SYLVA

Held in North Carolina's Trout Capital of Jackson County, also home to the WNC Fly Fishing Trail, the Hook, Line & Drinker Fest delivers on its name. Attendees can feast on trout and other food truck bites, sip local craft brews, enjoy live music throughout the day, and interact with fly-fishing guides, industry vendors, and clean water and wildlife advocates.

mountainlovers.com

PROHIBITION HOT ROD & MOONSHINE FESTIVAL

September 25 & 26 »
WILKESBORO

Considering that the birth of NASCAR occurred in Wilkes County, when moonshiner Junior Johnson took to running shine in the 1950s in souped-up cars to escape revenuers, this is a fitting event to celebrate that historical marriage. A car show features all types of classic and vintage pre-1990 trucks and hot rods. Bands perform throughout the day, while attendees can sample whiskey and cocktails from North Carolina's top distillers. There's also a spirits competition and a pinup contest, and car owners vie for the award for coolest hot rod.

prohibitionfestival.net

Asheville Bread Festival

May 2 » ASHEVILLE

Bread enthusiasts take note: whether you're an expert baker or just love the loaf, this annual event dives as deep as you want to go. Professional bakers can register for a master class, while anyone can sign up for one of the workshops or panel discussions on topics ranging from sourdough basics to heirloom grains. A bread fair will take place at New Belgium Brewery, offering an opportunity to sample and purchase artisan loaves, pastries, and locally milled flours.

ashevillebreadfestival.com

PHOTOGRAPHS (HOOK, LINE & DRINKER) BY KELLY DONALDSON; (PROHIBITION) BY DAVID BROWN PHOTOGRAPHY; (BREAD-2) BY MIRANDA WILES

CIDER, WINE & DINE WEEKEND

April 16-19 »
HENDERSON COUNTY

Apples are big business in Henderson County, which produces 85 percent of all apples grown in the state, and the area also has a history of grape production. This weekend is a chance to sample ciders, mead, and wine at your leisure. Local cideries and wineries host special festivities, including plenty of food, as well as outdoor screenings and fire pits, live entertainment, and production facility tours. The timing for the weekend also coincides with the apple trees in bloom, which might also prompt a scenic drive along the Apple Country Trail.
visithendersonvillenc.org

PHOTOGRPAHS (CIDER, WINE & DINE) COUTESY OF PHOTOSHELTER; (HOG ROAST) BY BERNIE KNEPKA; (SMOKING IN THE FOOTHILLS) BY JOSHUA HARRIS WITH CITY OF LENOIR

Pig Out

Pile on the pork at smokin' hot barbecue fests

BEECH MOUNTAIN HOG ROAST

July 4 » BEECH MOUNTAIN

Pounds of pork butt smoked and served up by the Beech Mountain Fire Department, Southern sides, Moon Pies, live music, views from atop the East's highest town, and a fireworks display make this event a plum perfect July Fourth celebration. (Note: an inaugural barbecue cook-off between fire departments is slated for August 8, also on Beech Mountain.)
beechmtnchamber.com

SPRUCE PINE BBQ & BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL

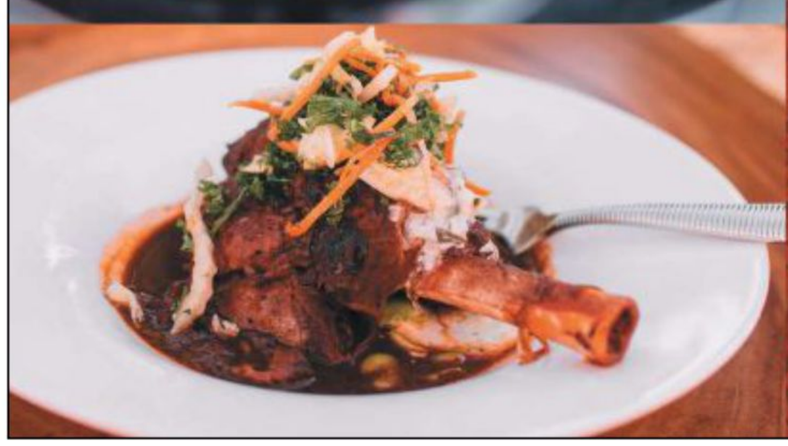
July 18 » SPRUCE PINE

This sizzling event features barbecue, clogging teams, arts and crafts, and bluegrass, country, folk, and Americana music throughout the day.
sprucepinebbqbluegrass.org

SMOKING IN THE FOOTHILLS

October 16 & 17 » LENOIR

Fill up on chicken, pork ribs, and pork and beef brisket at this sanctioned state championship. There's even a people's choice category, so you get to join in the judging. ***smokinginthefoothills.com***



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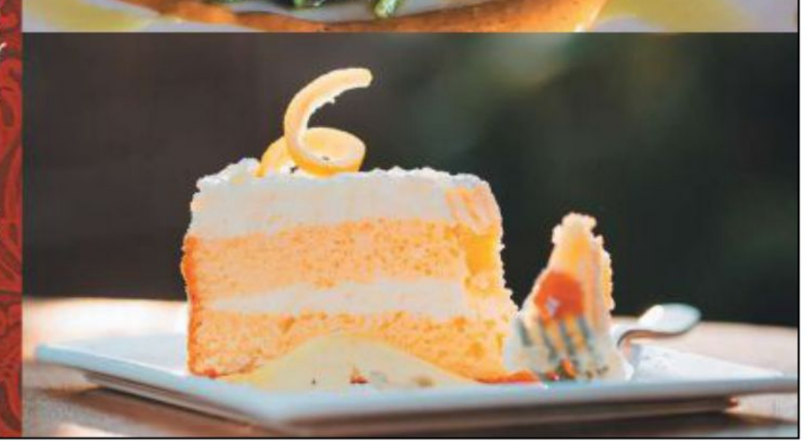
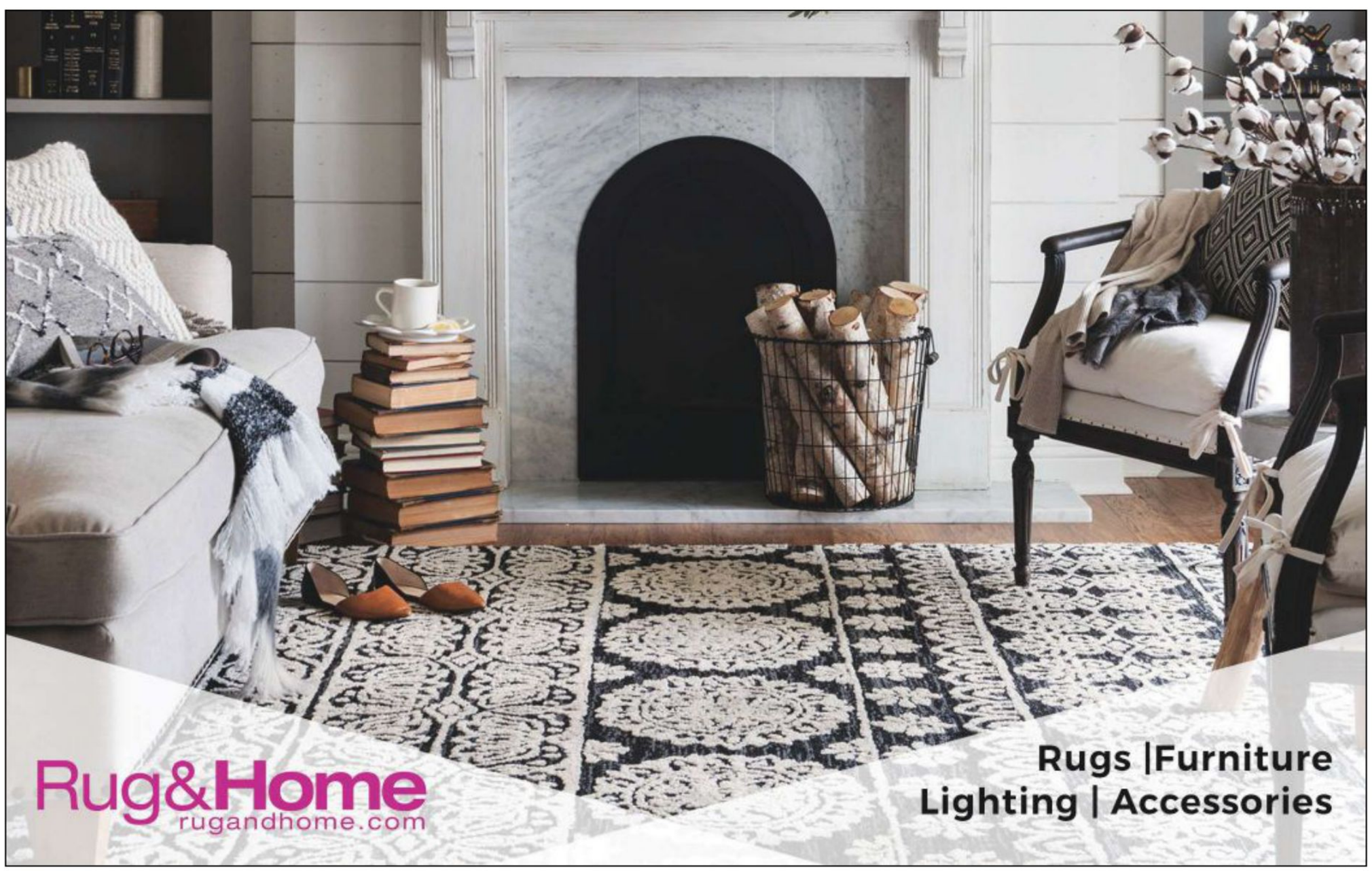
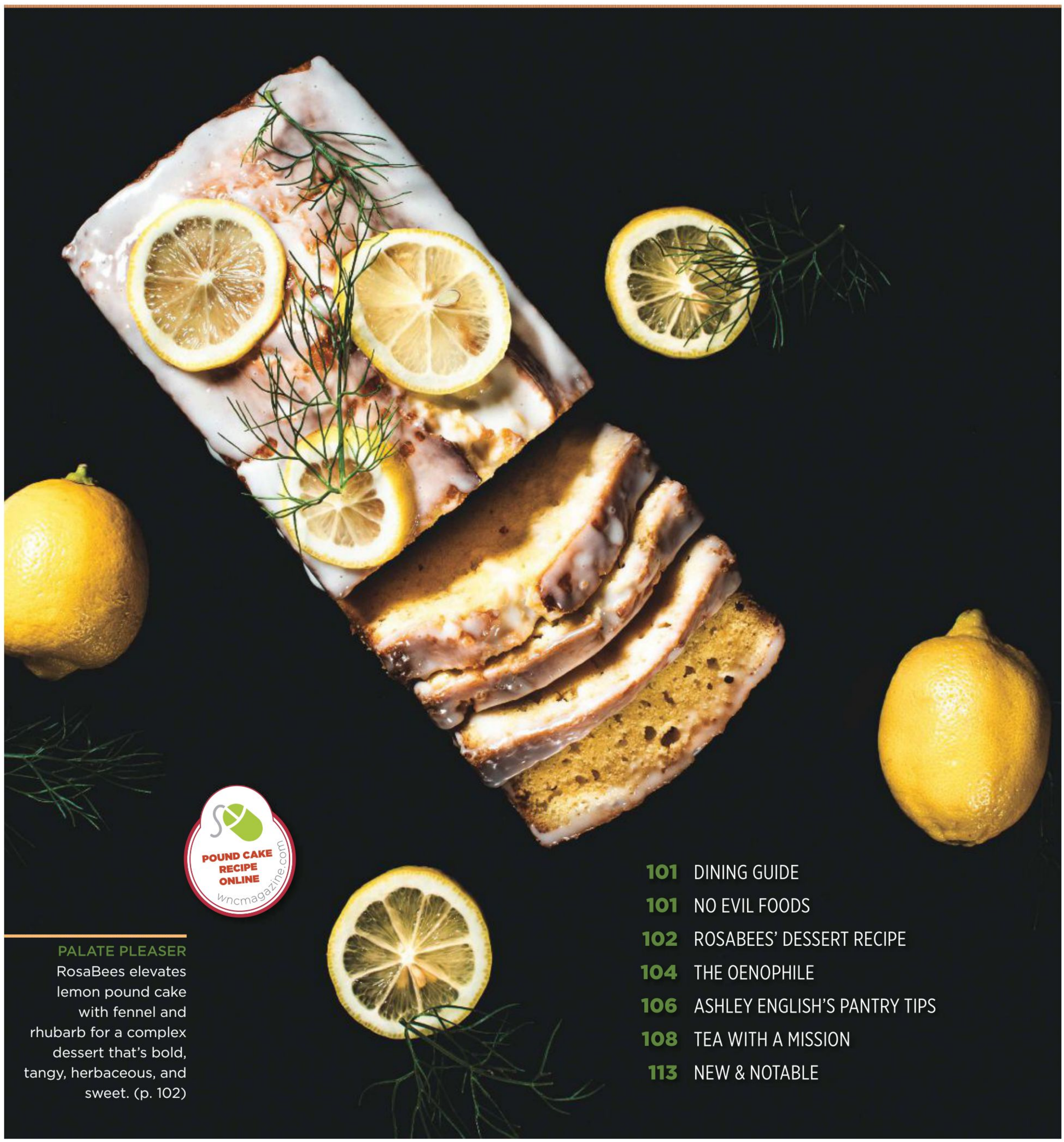




food & drink

DINING OUT ❖ RECIPES ❖ ENTERTAINING ❖ CUISINE



PALATE PLEASER
RosaBees elevates lemon pound cake with fennel and rhubarb for a complex dessert that's bold, tangy, herbaceous, and sweet. (p. 102)

PHOTOGRAPH BY LUKE VAN HINE

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dining guide

A SELECTIVE GUIDE FOR DINING IN WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

Buncombe County

5 WALNUT WINE BAR *Asheville*

Host to eclectic live music most nights, this intimate cornerstone of Asheville's nightlife calls its food "bar snacks," but these dishes are far more than bar snacks. The menu provides a cross section of the local food scene, with Sunburst Trout dip, Hickory Nut Gap salami, Three Graces Dairy chèvre, and meat and cheese boards from the adjoining cheese shop. There's also craft beer and a vast selection of wines by the glass and bottle. **D $**

5 Walnut St.; (828) 253-2593; www.5walnut.com

67 BILTMORE *Asheville*

This bright, spacious counter-service café offers breakfast, lunch, and catering. A menu board of sandwiches and wraps, grab-and-go ready-made meals, and a display case of fresh, seasonal sides and salads allows for customization; the only hard part is deciding what to order. Closed Sunday. **B L D $$**

67 Biltmore Ave.; (828) 252-1500; www.67biltmore.com

ADDISSAE *Asheville*

For years, the Asheville dining crowd has longed for a place to eat thick spicy stews of lentils and lamb and spongy flatbread called injera. Now, those Ethiopian staples finally have a WNC home. Addissae offers individual and traditional group platings, plus Ethiopian-style coffee service. Closed Tuesday. **L D $$$**

48 Commerce St.; (828) 707-6563; www.addissae.com

ASHEVILLE SANDWICH COMPANY *Asheville*

Don't take these sandwiches to a tea party, unless your guests really love big subs overflowing with slow-cooked meat and French fries. While the over-the-top, French fry-stuffed sandwich is this shop's specialty, the eatery also serves breakfast, vegetarian, and gluten-free options. **B L D $**

794 Haywood Rd., (828) 252-0110; www.avlsandwichco.business.site.com

» The Key

PRICES:

Average cost of an entrée:

- **$** Under $10
- **$$** $10-$15
- **$$$** $16-$25
- **$$$$** $25+

- **B** Breakfast
- **L** Lunch
- **D** Dinner
- **SBR** Sunday Brunch

PASTA SALAD WITH "SAUSAGE" RECIPE ONLINE wncmagazine.com

PHOTOGRAPHS (3) COURTESY OF NO EVIL FOODS

Feasting on a Trend

No Evil Foods rides the plant-based meat wave

There's a lot happening at The Axis these days. That's the nickname the No Evil Foods folks have given to their large new production facility in Weaverville. About 90 people work for the company, which makes plant-based substitutes that mimic chicken, chorizo, turkey, and other meats in flavor and texture. And they're doing so just as plant-based meats are breaking out in popularity like never before.

The company created 70 of those jobs after starting production at the new location last April. Today, No Evil's products, which include smartly packaged plant-based versions of Italian sausage and pulled-pork barbecue, can be found in more than 5,500 stores in every state in the US.

NOT EVIL AT ALL
Visit noevilfoods.com for vendor locations and more.

The growth spurt has ranked the company among the top five fastest-growing start-ups in Asheville the past two years. Keeping up with the momentum "feels like trying to change a tire on a moving vehicle," says cofounder Sadrah Schadel. She and cofounder Mike Woliansky moved to Asheville in 2011 and started experimenting with combinations of wheat gluten seitan, vegetables, spices, and other ingredients in their home kitchen. "I'm a super passionate home cook, and when it comes to things that are considered processed foods like plant-based meats, I have very high standards for what ingredients I will or won't use and high expectations for how I expect them to perform," Schadel says.

The Axis was so named as a reminder of the impact of their work as a central point affecting aspects such as health and the environment, Schadel says. It reinforces "how we use food as a tool that has the potential to have real and lasting effects on other systems to which we're connected," she says. "And it reminds us that we're all in this together." —**JASON SANDFORD**

The Dining Guide is a service to our readers organized by county. Different counties and restaurants will be featured in each issue and selection may be based on space available. WNC *accepts no advertising or other considerations for the content of individual listings. Many restaurants in Western North Carolina maintain seasonal hours and may or may not accept reservations and major credit cards, so call before visiting. Send your suggestions for restaurant reviews to* ***dining@wncmagazine.com****.*

Sweet Tart

Celebrate spring with a tantalizing dessert from Asheville's RosaBees

Melissa Gray, a classically trained pastry chef and owner of Cakes By Gray and RosaBees, a Polynesian eatery and cocktail bar in Asheville's River Arts District, knows a thing or two about desserts—especially those with uncommon flavor pairings. For a sweet treat that captures the essence of spring, the Asheville native suggests topping a classic lemon pound cake with a flavorful rosé-poached fennel and rhubarb compote and honey whipped cream.

While you might think of fennel, a member of the carrot family that's in season winter through spring, as most often enjoyed raw in salads or braised for a savory side, its aromatic, anise-like flavor also makes it an incredible companion to sweets.

"Fennel's bold licorice flavor creates a beautiful dessert with an amazing taste," Gray says, noting she particularly likes the way rhubarb complements its unique tartness. Try it yourself at home (and note that the recipe requires two days of soaking in the fridge), or stop into RosaBees, where you'll find it on the spring/summer dessert menu. —**BROOK BOLEN**

ROSÉ-POACHED FENNEL AND RHUBARB WITH HONEY WHIPPED CREAM

(SERVES 12)

2 cups rosé
1/2 cup sugar
1 Tbsp. honey
1 small cinnamon stick
1 star anise
2 cloves
1 bulb fennel, trimmed & rinsed
1 lb. rhubarb, trimmed & rinsed

Combine all ingredients, except fennel and rhubarb, in a wide saucepan. Cut the rhubarb into pieces and fennel bulb on a bias while the liquid heats. When the liquid is nearly boiling, add half of the rhubarb and fennel. When just tender, remove the rhubarb and fennel with a slotted spoon and transfer to a separate bowl. Add the remaining rhubarb and fennel and poach. Each batch will take one to three minutes. Transfer to the bowl.

Over moderate heat, reduce the poaching liquid to about three-quarters cup. Remove from heat and pour over the rhubarb and fennel pieces. Allow to cool to room temperature before placing in an airtight container. Refrigerate for two days to allow the color to develop. Serve over Lemon Pound Cake (recipe online). Store any unused portion in refrigerator for up to one week.

ROSABEES
27 Foundy St. #20,
Asheville
(828) 417-7212
rosabees.com

Honey Whipped Cream

2 cups heavy whipping cream
2-3 Tbsp. honey
Vanilla, to taste

Place a stainless steel bowl in the freezer for 10 minutes. Remove bowl and pour in cream. Whip with a hand mixer until stiff peaks form, about three to five minutes. Mix in honey and vanilla. Serve immediately.

PHOTOGRAPH (POUND CAKE) BY LUKE VAN HINE

AUX BAR *Asheville*

The newest spot from the folks behind Asheville's popular Blind Pig Supper Club and the erstwhile King James Public House brings modern-American cuisine with Southern flair to Lexington Avenue. The menu features some of the cochefs' most beloved dishes (like duck wings and fried chicken and crumpets), as well as new offerings. The cocktails, featuring house-made shrubs, bitters, and sodas, are not to be missed. **L D $$$**
68 N. Lexington Ave.; (828) 575-2723; www.auxbar.com

BARLEY'S TAPROOM & PIZZERIA *Asheville*

Spend an evening at this two-story beer and pizza mecca; it hosts plenty of amusing activities, including trivia, pool, darts, and live music. The pizzas are a weeknight favorite among locals, and are sized for sharing with friends. The menu includes plenty of salads and wraps, plus a Beefalo burger, a low-fat hybrid of beef and bison. Two bars boast 43 taps, so Barley's is a great place to try beers from near and far. This taproom and pizzeria can also be found in Spindale, in Polk County. **L D $$**
42 Biltmore Ave.; (828) 255-0504; www.barleystaproom.com

BENNE ON EAGLE *Asheville*

The latest from James Beard-nominated Chef John Fleer of Rhubarb and The Rhu, Benne on Eagle brings Appalachian soul food to the Foundry Hotel. Located on The Block, Asheville's historic African-American business district, the eatery honors the wide-ranging and largely unrecognized contributions African Americans have made to Southern and Appalachian cuisine. Flavor-rich dishes include crispy quail with corn bread and crowder pea salad and potlikker-braised chicken wings with chowchow. **B D $$**
51 Market St.; (828) 552-8545; www.foundryasheville.com

BOMBA *Asheville*

This tiny urban café is a great place to watch the action in downtown Asheville. It's located right on Pack Square, and the floor-to-ceiling windows mean you'll see every passerby. The food ranges from takeaway Cuban coffees and pastries to larger sandwiches with Latin flare. Salsa's and Modesto are sister restaurants to Bomba, so expect inventive cookery at all spots. **B L $**
1 SW Pack Sq.; (828) 254-0209; www.bombanc.com

BOUCHON *Asheville*

When a fine restaurant doesn't take reservations, you know it's worth the wait. Bouchon is a place to spend an evening, whether you're enjoying all-you-can-eat mussels (Monday through Wednesday) or savoring the classic French comfort food with friends and family. **D $$$**
62 N. Lexington Ave.; (828) 350-1140; www.ashevillebouchon.com

BRASILIA CHURRASCO STEAKHOUSE *Asheville*

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WNC QUICK BITE

THE OENOPHILE

Wines for Uncertain Times

Sidestep potential tariffs on European offerings with satisfying substitutes

For wine lovers, these are potentially perilous times, given the trade wars afoot. "With the tariffs targeting France and Spain's wine markets, those wines will be skyrocketing in price over the next year," predicts Joshua Purdy, sommelier at the Blue Ridge Mountain Club in Boone. In January, the United States announced a 100 percent tariff on all European wine, but if and when the price penalty would go into effect was uncertain as this issue went to press.

If the costs of your favorite European wines suddenly soar, Purdy suggests trying these American options, which are grown and produced in regions where the soil and climate are akin to that of their European counterparts. —**JONATHAN AMMONS**

2017 Poet's Leap Riesling
Columbia Valley, WA
» $20
Crafted by world-renowned German winemaker Armin Diel in Washington's Columbia Valley, this off-dry white has notes of fresh white peach, ginger, Kaffir lime, stone fruit, and a touch of wet slate.

2016 Moffett Vineyards Pinot Noir
Willamette Valley, OR
» $35
Elegant but powerful, the layers of ripe red fruits, hints of forest floor and mushroom, and subtle touch of dried Italian herbs make this world-class pinot noir a good bet for lovers of high-end Burgundian wines.

2017 Ceritas "Heintz Vineyard" Chardonnay
Sonoma Coast, CA
» $45
This Chardonnay is grown on one of the oldest vineyards in the US. The sandy loam, clay soil, and cool climate of the Sonoma Coast help create a wine similar to those of Chablis or Côte de Beaune in France.

2017 Andrew Murray "Esperance" GSM
Santa Ynez, CA
» $25
Aged in new French oak, this rich blend of grenache, syrah, and mourvedre offers hints of black cherry, black raspberry, plum, and dried basil—a proper alternative for Châteauneuf-du-Pape.

2017 Cadence "Coda Red"
Red Mountain, WA
» $28
Grown in the loam and gravel soils like those of Bordeaux, this full-bodied blend of merlot, cabernet franc, cabernet sauvignon, and petit verdot has notes of licorice, Thai basil, and dark red fruits.

and Asheville has one. If you're unfamiliar with Brazilian steak houses, the abundance of roasted meat is the main attraction. This restaurant has 16 different varieties. It's all you can eat, and prices are fixed. **L D $$$**
26 E. Walnut St.; (828) 785-1599; www.brasiliasteakhouse.com/asheville

THE BUCHI BAR *Asheville*
Like its upstairs neighbor, Rosetta's Kitchen, The Buchi Bar is filled with artfully reclaimed elements, but it's quite chic. The menu features cocktails, fresh juices, local beer, Noble Cider, Blue Blaze soda and, of course, Buchi Kombucha. Try the Spirit Chaser—made of Buchi Air, mint simple syrup, and premium gin. And if you're hungry, The Buchi Bar serves eats from upstairs via a dumbwaiter. **L D $**
118 Broadway; (828) 232-0738; Facebook: Buchi Bar

BUTTON & CO. BAGELS *Asheville*
James Beard Award-nominated Chef Katie Button's newest venture is housed in the space previously occupied by Nightbell's foyer, bringing an Appalachian approach to bagels. Made with local ingredients like Carolina Ground flour, flavors include classics like rye alongside seasonal offerings such as fig and rosemary. Toppings include sumac-cured mountain trout and house-made butter and cream cheese. **B L $$**
32 S. Lexington Ave.; (828) 630-0330; www.katiebuttonrestaurants.com

BUXTON HALL BBQ *Asheville*
Set in a former 1920s ice skating rink on Asheville's South Slope is the much-anticipated Buxton Hall BBQ. Chef Elliott Moss, formerly of The Admiral in West Asheville, and Meherwan Irani, of Chai Pani in downtown, teamed up to create a 12-hour smoked whole hog barbecue basted in a simple vinegar and chili sauce. The setting allows diners to nosh on fall-apart barbecue and locally sourced sides while watching the chefs at work in the kitchen pit. **L D $$**
32 Banks Ave.; (828) 282-7216; www.buxtonhall.com

CHAI PANI *Asheville*
This colorful eatery transports diners to India with a menu of exotic street food. Samosas and pakoras served with tamarind and green chutneys are great snacks. Sandwiches and wraps include the Sloppy Jai (spicy lamb hash cooked with tomatoes and potatoes). Pav Bhaji, a Mumbai treat of spicy vegetables and potato hash on a bun, is served with cilantro-flecked shoestring fries or a cup of dal. Wash down your meal with a sweet chai or mango lassi, a chilled yogurt drink with mango and cardamom. **L D $**
22 Battery Park Ave.; (828) 254-4003; www.chaipani.net

CHESTNUT *Asheville*
From the owners of the popular Corner Kitchen, Chestnut creates a polished atmosphere in which to celebrate important moments. The menu features classic American cuisine with culinary touches and an emphasis on local ingredients. "Medium plates" provide satisfying fare for light eaters—there's even a three-ounce steak.
L D BR (Saturday & Sunday) **$$$**
48 Biltmore Ave.; (828) 575-2667; www.chestnutasheville.com

CINNAMON KITCHEN *Asheville*
Although the menu seems to focus on northern Indian cookery, Cinnamon Kitchen serves flavors from across the subcontinent. The menu includes abundant tandoori-cooked dishes, several styles of flatbread, and plenty of vegetarian and seafood dishes. **L D $$**
1838 Hendersonville Rd., Ste. 103; (828) 575- 2100; www.ckcuisine.com

CÚRATE *Asheville*
A former apprentice under acclaimed Chef Ferran Adrià of elBulli in Spain, Chef Katie Button brings her expertise to Cúrate, an authentic Spanish tapas bar that creatively blends local and exotic ingredients. Sample and share items like Jamón ibérico (cured ham of the black-footed pigs of Spain), squid ink paella, suckling pig, and so much more. Start dinner with the sangria, which is made tableside, followed by wine, and finish with a Spanish vermouth or sherry with dessert. A jamoneria offers to-go charcuterie and bar service.
L D BR (Saturday & Sunday) **$$**
11 Biltmore Ave.; (828) 239-2946; www.curatetapasbar.com

DOBRÁ TEA *Asheville*
Choose from dozens of fine teas to enjoy in a fresh, serene atmosphere with decorative far Eastern touches. The space invites visitors to remove their shoes and relax. Light fare includes Middle Eastern pita bread with various spreads and desserts ranging from low-sugar to decadent. And it's all gluten-free. **B L D $**
78 N. Lexington Ave., (828) 575-2424; 707 Haywood Rd., (828) 505-4307; www.dobrateanc.com

EN LA CALLE *Asheville*
Limones now has a refined sister eatery next door. Decked with café lights, En la Calle serves an affordably priced small-plate menu of elevated Mexican street food, including a brisket barbacoa taco, plus an array of creative, original cocktails. **D $$**
15 Eagle St., (828) 232-7249; www.enlacalleasheville.com

FRENCH BROAD CHOCOLATE LOUNGE *Asheville*
This whimsical hangout is more than the sum of its parts. Serving all manner of chocolaty goodness—truffles, cake, mousse, brownies, and more—along with wine, beer, and coffee, the Chocolate Lounge is among the few bean-to-bar operations in the country; owners Dan and Jael Rattigan own a cacao farm in Costa Rica and make most of their chocolate at a small factory down the street. The atmosphere invites guests to relax and savor the experience. The overall effect is something magical. **L D $**
10 S. Pack Sq.; (828) 252-4181; www.frenchbroadchocolates.com

Stock Up

Pro tips to get your pantry provisions in order

A well-stocked pantry is the foundation of being able to cook at home. It reduces stress and costs, and helps solve the question, "What's for supper?" For guidance on upping your pantry proficiency, Candler-based cookbook and homesteading author Ashley English shares her list of favorite ingredients and how to personalize and stock your shelves for mealtime success.

The main goals? "You want to walk into your pantry and have options to make a meal," says English. "Secondarily, it should spark your imagination." Smoked paprika and flavored salt sprinkled on chicken could be a catalyst for an entire meal. Or cocoa powder might embolden mole tacos or a savory beef stew. You also need to know how to use and maximize less obvious elements, and for this English recommends *The Flavor Bible*, which offers an alphabetical listing of ingredients and the flavors they pair well with. It's a resource she says can inspire new cooks and skilled chefs alike. Her book *Southern From Scratch* also presents 50 Southern food staples and various creative iterations for their use.

Admittedly, English's pantry inventory is focused on things her family turns to the most. So knowing your crowd's flavor profile is key to personalizing your list of must-haves. "If you like Asian food, make sure you have fish sauce and miso paste, soba noodles and nori," she says. "If Southern food is your thing, make sure you have pork sauce and chowchow on hand. Or if you're curious, there's no harm in having a United Nations pantry. Pay attention to how you like to eat at home and build your pantry around that." —**MELISSA REARDON**

LEARN MORE

Learn more about Ashley English and her books—including her latest, Home Apothecary*—as well as her new class offerings on everything from canning and keeping chickens to social media for food photography, at smallmeasure.com.*

English's Pantry Staples

Duke's mayo
all-purpose flour
kosher salt AND fine sea salt
smoked paprika
canned diced tomatoes
dill pickles
whole-grain mustard
bacon drippings
whole-fat yogurt
applesauce
cardamom (pods and ground)
good quality butter (homemade or store-bought)
grassy, fresh olive oil AND extra virgin olive oil
apple cider vinegar
pecans
golden raisins
chutney (homemade or store-bought)
peanut butter
jams and fruit butters
olives

PHOTOGRAPH (PORTRAIT) BY TIM ROBISON

GOLDEN FLEECE SLOW EARTH KITCHEN ***Asheville***

Upscale Mediterranean delicacies find a home in the mountains at this new addition to Grovewood Gallery near The Omni Grove Park Inn. Slow-cooked lamb and wood-grilled whole red snapper highlight the dinner menu, alongside garden specialties like crispy Brussels sprouts and braised gigante beans. The glamorous bar and dining room feature leather chairs and dramatic lighting that reflects the vision of renowned North Carolina restaurateur Giorgios Bakatsias. **L D SBR $$$**
111 Grovewood Rd.; (828) 424-7655; www.goldenfleeceasheville.com

GREEN TEA ***Asheville***

Tucked inconspicuously into Asheville's west side, this sushi restaurant is a hot spot for locals. An extensive menu offers sushi rolls and sashimi, as well as entrées such as teriyaki steak and grilled red snapper. Try the signature Green Tea roll with lobster, king crab, spicy tuna, and salmon, wrapped in soy paper and topped with avocado and caviar. **L D $$**
2 Regent Park; (828) 252-8300; www.greenteasushi.com

HAYWOOD COMMON ***Asheville***

From the owners of Belly Up Food Truck, Haywood Common features globally inspired dishes comprised of many local and foraged ingredients. Lunch and dinner menu items change seasonally, and differ in flavor profile enough to appeal to an array of diners. But you'll have to decide between a variety of small plates, like calamari bành mì sandwiches or pork belly bites, or larger entrées such as pan-seared rib eye over romesco, sautéed radishes, and potatoes or a tea-brined pork chop. Closed Monday. **L D SBR $$**
507 Haywood Rd.; (828) 575-2542 www.haywoodcommon.com

HEIWA SHOKUDO ***Asheville***

Heiwa isn't the sort of place where you ask for a fork. This authentic Japanese restaurant offers an intimate setting and an innovative sushi selection. Try chef creations like the caterpillar roll (eel topped with avocado and tobiko), or sample sushi that combines unconventional ingredients like sweet potatoes and almond butter. **L D $$**
87 N. Lexington Ave.; (828) 254-7761; www.heiwashokudo.com

HOMEGROWN ***Asheville***

This unassuming eatery just feels right: Maybe it's the comfort food; maybe it's the house-turned-restaurant space. Whatever the reason, it feels good to dine on fried chicken sandwiches, blackened Sunburst trout, and banana pudding at HomeGrown. And it is right, ethically speaking, because the menu features lots of locally grown food. **B L D $$**
371 Merrimon Ave., (828) 232-4340; 219 Amboy Rd., (828) 793-0031; www.slowfoodrightquick.com

ISIS MUSIC HALL & KITCHEN 743 ***Asheville***

Make an evening of a visit to Isis; have dinner and drinks,

Tea with a Mission

Sara Delaney's Asheville-based company builds self-reliance from tragic legacies

After watching a documentary on the 1994 Rwandan genocide, Sara Delaney felt drawn to the region. "It was this deep calling," she says. "I thought, I've got to go to this place that has experienced the worst imaginable thing and has moved through it somehow." In fact, Delaney was recovering from her own trauma: previously, while studying business in France, she was attacked and raped while walking home one night, and the long road to recovery would take her even farther from home.

"I think we owe it to humanity to do our own healing, because there is a ripple effect that we have on everyone around us," Delaney says. She found herself moving to Rwanda to help open a restaurant, where, she was tasked with developing a technical skills training program for young adults who had survived the genocide. "Most of them had witnessed their parents die. There was a lot of trauma, but they wanted something more," she says. "I could feel their pain. I felt so sad for what they had gone through, but as I started processing it, I realized it was also sadness for what I had experienced that I had never allowed myself to feel."

After returning to the US and moving to Asheville, Delaney continued to visit Rwanda and deepen her connections there. She founded the nonprofit Africa Healing Exchange, which works to cultivate mental health across the country. From there she networked to develop 3 Mountains, a fair-trade tea company backed by a worker-owned cooperative that supports more than 8,000 Rwandan farmers. "I don't believe in charity," Delaney says. "I think it's helpful for natural disasters and moments of crisis, but in the long run, people really want to take care of themselves; they want to earn their own money."

What began three years ago as a loose-leaf tea company, selling tins of black, green, white, and silver Tima-branded teas, has expanded to include draft teas on tap at local breweries, as well as a line of carbonated canned teas mixed with juices. Proceeds from sales support Sustain, a program designed to teach entrepreneurship skills to Rwandan women, help fund their ideas, and reduce food insecurity in the region.

"I'm really excited," Delaney says, "about creating this commercially successful brand that can show, in this mainstream marketplace, that it pays to do good." —**JONATHAN AMMONS**

3 MOUNTAINS
Find the company's products and keep up with its mission at 3mountains.org.

Sara Delaney (above) founded 3 Mountains to create jobs for orphans who survived the Rwandan genocide. The company produces the Tîma line of loose leaf teas, as well as nonalcoholic, sparkling draft-style teas.

PHOTOGRAPHS (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) 2, DANIEL TURBERT; 4, SARA STENDER

and stay for a show. Local and touring acts perform most nights either on the main stage or upstairs lounge. The food here, like the entertainment, is high quality. Snack bites, sandwiches, and entrées will satisfy a range of appetites. Standout dishes include the PEI mussels in a butternut squash-infused coconut curry broth, the bacon-blue cheese burger, and the barbecue pan-seared tuna over a pile of fresh veggies. On Wednesdays during the summer, the Music on the Lawn concert series is a great excuse to grab a table on the expansive patio or spread a blanket on the grass to enjoy music, drinks, and food. Closed Monday. **D BR** (Saturday & Sunday) **$$**
743 Haywood Rd.; (828) 575-2737; www.isisasheville.com

JARGON *Asheville*
This small, eclectic West Asheville restaurant is a reason to deck to the nines and splurge on some the town's most unique craft cocktails and equally creative dinner creations. The seasonal, continental cuisine includes items like elk meatballs, a braised Spanish octopus in a yummy bath of chorizo, fava beans, and sherry lobster butter, a seafood-packed gumbo, and beef tartar and bone marrow. You can catch live jazz music some nights and on Sundays during "Sunday Blunch." A late night menu is served until midnight. **D SBR $$$**
715 Haywood Rd.; (828) 785-1761; www.jargonrestaurant.com

JERUSALEM GARDEN *Asheville*
Belly dancing performances and live Middle Eastern music aren't the only reasons Jerusalem Garden has been in business since 1999. In a setting as exotic as the food, you'll find flavors from Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Turkey, and Israel. The lamb shank marinated in red wine, garlic, rosemary, and Syrian spices, and vegetarian platter with hummus, baba ghanoush, tabbouleh, stuffed grape leaves, olives, and pita, are popular choices. The Garden serves a weekend brunch that includes omelets and eggs with lamb or crab cakes. **L D BR** (Saturday & Sunday) **$$**
78 Patton Ave.; (828) 254-0255; www.jerusalemgardencafe.com

KOREAN HOUSE *Asheville*
This restaurant offers a comprehensive Korean dining experience, including the tabletop cookery. The stone bowl dishes and grilled meat and seafood entrées incorporate fresh vegetables and familiar flavors, but the more adventurous will order grilled whole squid or eel bibimbap (a Korean mixed rice dish). Closed Monday. **L D $$**
122 College St.; (828) 785-1500; www.koreanhousenc.com

LAUGHING SEED CAFÉ *Asheville*
It began as a lunch counter in 1991; today, Laughing Seed is one of the restaurants that truly define Asheville. Its menu of creative vegetarian cuisine captures the flavors of the globe and intrigues even the most stalwart meat eaters. Closed Tuesday. **L D SBR $$**
40 Wall St.; (828) 252-3445; www.laughingseed.jackofthewood.com

THE LOBSTER TRAP *Asheville*
The Lobster Trap pulls in a steady dinner crowd of locals and tourists looking for fresh seafood at a high elevation. One could easily enjoy a casual evening with a glass of wine or house-brewed beer, fresh oysters, and the delicious lobster roll on a brioche bun, or go all in and indulge with Alaskan king crab legs or the triple seafood tower. There's live entertainment most nights. **D $$$**
35 Patton Ave.; (828) 350-0505; www.thelobstertrap.biz

LORETTA'S CAFÉ *Asheville*
If you like lemon bars, this small café serves the best in town at the best price. The soups and sandwiches make a comforting midday meal, and the space is sunny and open. Closed Sunday **L $**
114 N. Lexington Ave.; (828) 253-3747; www.lorettascafe.com

MAYFEL'S ASHEVILLE
The patio of this New Orleans-inspired restaurant opens onto Pritchard Park where the drum circle takes place on Friday nights. If you prefer to be further from the hubbub, a hidden back courtyard provides tranquility. The kitchen serves Southern food all day, from Brasstown flank steak and eggs in the morning to cornmeal-battered catfish or shrimp po'boy at night. Closed Tuesday and Wednesday. **B L D $$**
22 College St.; (828) 252-8840; www.mayfels.org

MAMACITAS *Asheville*
Inspired by the flavors of true Mexican and West Coast taquerías, this eatery often has folks lined up out the door for Baja fish and sautéed veggie tacos, as well as pulled pork burritos. But quick service ensures a short wait. Mamacitas is open until 10 p.m. for concertgoers who want to grab a bite before a show at The Orange Peel next door. **L D $**
77A Biltmore Ave.; (828) 255-8080; www.mamacitasgrill.com

THE MARKET PLACE *Asheville*
With owner and Chef William Dissen at the helm, this upscale eatery is committed to cuisine made from local ingredients sourced primarily within a 100-mile radius. Bathed in candlelight, diners savor small plates, including house-cured pickles and charcuterie and cheese boards, or entrées such as Sunburst trout with beluga lentils, bacon, and a confit-tomato vinaigrette. **D $$$**
20 Wall St.; (828) 252-4162; www.marketplace-restaurant.com

THE MONTFORD *Asheville*
This rooftop bar sits high atop the Hyatt Place hotel and offers panoramic westward views. The Montford Mule, a local take on the classic cocktail, features North Carolina sweet potato vodka and is served in a mug handcrafted by East Fork Pottery. Small bites include house-made tater tots with beet ketchup and boiled peanut hummus, while larger plates like cheese and meat boards, flatbreads, and elevated sandwiches are great for sharing. **L** (Friday-Sunday) **D $$**

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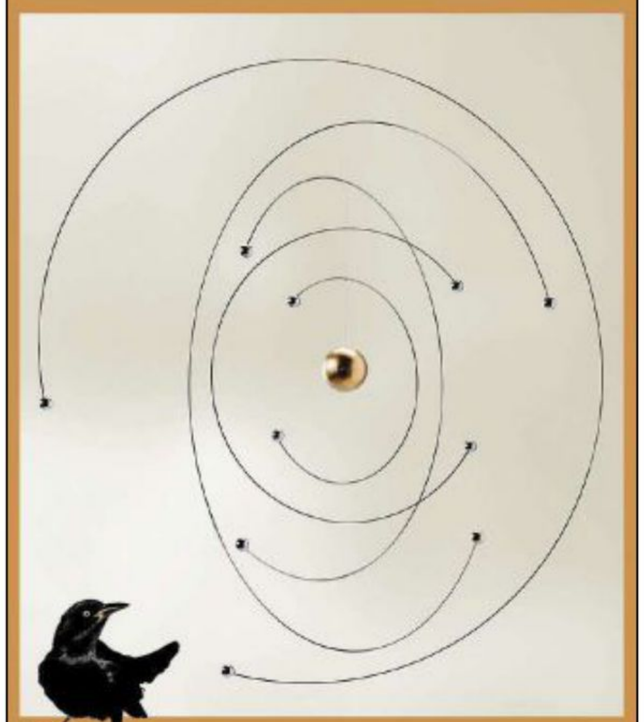

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FRAME & ART
365 Merrimon Ave. • Asheville
828.225.3117 • blackbirdframe.com

199 Haywood St.; (828) 505-8750; www.themontford.com

NEO BURRITO *Asheville*
This eco-friendly modern burrito eatery has big aspirations to "save the world one burrito at a time." Sleek and streamlined with plenty of meat and vegetarian options, its popularity could spread far and wide. But for now, enjoy the pineapple salsa and by-weight pricing in Asheville. **B L D $**
1341 Parkwood Rd., (828) 772-9602; 2 Town Square Blvd., (828) 772-9568; 4 S. Tunnel Rd., #750, (828) 772-9619; www.neoburrito.com

NINE MILE *Asheville*
At Nine Mile, reggae and a comfortable, contemporary ambience set the stage for a menu of Jamaican-inspired pastas. Dishes such as the Soon Come (sautéed bananas, apples, raisins, and pineapple tossed with cheese tortellini) or the Ark of the Covenant (wild Alaskan salmon with veggies in a basil-butter sauce) offer flavor combinations you won't find elsewhere. The lunch and dinner menus are similar, though you can expect smaller portions at about half the price for lunch. **L** (Montford location only) **D $$**
233 Montford Ave., (828) 505-3121; 751 Haywood Rd., (828) 575-9903; www.ninemileasheville.com

OWL BAKERY *Asheville*
Stepping into Old World Levain Bakery is like being transported to a European café, complete with marble countertops and an alluring pastry case. Autumn brings warm flavors like clove and anise, as well as pumpkin custard tarts to be savored under the maple trees in the secret garden out back. OWL started as a "speakeasy" café for neighbors and friends. **B L $**
295 Haywood Rd.; (828) 785-1770; www.owlbakery.com

OVER EASY CAFE *Asheville*
Locals frequently argue about Asheville's best breakfast; someone always pulls for Over Easy. Dining here makes each day feel fresh, and the food and house-squeezed juice feel nourishing. Try the hash bowl with potatoes, eggs, seasonal vegetables, and your choice of protein and cheese, or go big with the huevos rancheros. **B L $**
32 Broadway St.; (828) 236-3533; www.overeasyasheville.com

OYSTER HOUSE BREWING *Asheville*
A stout brewed with oysters? Yes, this microbrewery does just that and has accrued a following because of it. The flavor is briny and malty at once, and it pairs well with Oyster House's menu of burgers, sandwiches, fish and, of course, oysters on the half shell. **D $$**
625 Haywood Rd.; (828) 575-9370; www.oysterhousebeers.com

PLANT *Asheville*
If you're looking for a dining experience full of discovery, Plant is the place to eat. Savor vegetables in a fascinating new way at this polished vegan restaurant. The range of produce on the menu is astounding, and the cookery is top-notch. **D $$$**
165 Merrimon Ave.; (828) 258-7500; www.plantisfood.com

POMODOROS GREEK & ITALIAN CAFÉ *Asheville*
Start your meal with bruschetta caprese, spanakopita, calamari fritta, or choose from one of the many Greek or Italian salads. Classic pastas include pesto primavera, eggplant Parmesan with linguine, and four-cheese lasagna. Pizzas and entrées, such as chicken marsala or mousaka, a dish that layers lamb, potatoes, eggplant, and zucchini, round out the menu. **L D SBR $$**
1070 Tunnel Rd., (828) 299-3032; 75 Long Shoals Rd., (828) 687-3884; www.pomodoroscafe.com

POSANA CAFÉ *Asheville*
The beautifully executed brunch, lunch, and dinner options at this contemporary American restaurant, bar, and lounge will make you reconsider gluten-free dining; everything on the menu is made sans gluten and with local, organic ingredients, and it's all delicious. From appetizers like the lobster mac 'n' cheese to entrées such as a seared duck breast with peach-maple jus, you can't go wrong. Closed Monday. **D BR** (Saturday & Sunday) **$$$**
1 Biltmore Ave.; (828) 505-3969; www.posanacafe.com

RANKIN VAULT COCKTAIL LOUNGE *Asheville*
In a former bank off College Street, Rankin Vault offers an ambience that hearkens to the 1920s, when the speakeasy was the place to be. A selection of beers, wines, and cocktails complement the menu, which includes tacos made with your choice of Ashley Farms roasted chicken, Hickory Nut Gap pork belly, or black beans, and cheeseburger and pork sliders. The bacon-cheddar burger, winner of the 2014 WNC Battle of the Burger, is not to be missed. Food is served until late. **D $**
7 Rankin Ave.; (828) 254-4993; www.rankinvault.com

RED ROCKER INN *Black Mountain*
You don't have to be a guest to dine for dinner at this 1896 Victorian mansion. The dinner menu offers seasonal, local fare in dishes such as smoked trout croquets and scallops with Goodnight Brothers country ham. Entrées include a premium pork chop with beer-cheddar mac and cheese, certified Angus beef pot roast, and a market-fresh catch, among other elevated dishes. An array of decadent homemade desserts, like hummingbird cake and blackberry cobbler, crown the meal. Closed Sunday. **D $$**
136 N. Doughtery St.; (828) 669-5991; redrockerinn.com

REZAZ RESTAURANT & WINE BAR *Asheville*
This elegant, comfortable restaurant in Biltmore Village offers Mediterranean cuisine with California style. Enjoy flavors from North Africa, Italy, Spain, Morocco, and the Middle East, as well as local fare with entrées such as the roasted North Carolina trout served with dill-saffron basmati. Delectable desserts include Persian baklava with cinnamon gelato. The staff is happy to suggest wine to complement your meal. Reservations recommended. **L D $$$**
28 Hendersonville Rd.; (828) 277-5537; www.rezaz.com

RHUBARB *Asheville*
James Beard nominated chef John Fleer's clever culinary skills entice diners to try something new while offering familiar tastes. The menu brings global flavors to Appalachian food traditions, as exemplified in dishes such as the mountain trout paired with celeriac and fennel or nettles accenting local goat cheese gnudi. **L D BR** (Saturday & Sunday) **$$$-$$$$**
7 SW Pack Sq.; (828) 785-1503; www.rhubarbasheville.com

ROMAN'S DELI *Asheville*
The menu at Roman's is proof that all sandwiches (and burgers, salads, soups, and sides) are not created equal. The delicious and creative paninis include pomegranate and goat cheese and turkey with cranberry pesto, both on French bread, or a savory chicken salad prepared with sun-dried tomatoes. The tropical coleslaw is a sought-after side, as is the spicy white bean chili. Downtown delivery makes this place a favorite among workaholics, but the friendly staff and spotless dining room will make you want to step away from your desk for a meal. Closed Sunday. **L $**
75 Haywood St.; (828) 505-1552; www.romanstakeout.com

ROSETTA'S KITCHEN *Asheville*
Since 2002, this bohemian eatery has served fresh vegan and vegetarian fare. Diners enjoy healthful comfort foods such as iron-skillet corn bread or Tempelo Wings—fried beer-battered tempeh strips swimming in hot sauce and served with house-made vegan ranch dressing. A rotation of eclectic local art hangs on exposed brick walls. One dining area overlooks Lexington Avenue and the other, Broadway Street, which makes it a great place for people-watching with a local draft beer in hand. **L D SBR $**
111 Broadway St.; (828) 232-0738; www.rosettaskitchen.com

SALSA'S *Asheville*
A creative fusion of Mexican and Caribbean flavors makes up Salsa's menu. This colorful downtown eatery offers heaping plates of fajitas, enchiladas, quesadillas, and empanadas, made with your choice of chicken, salmon, steak, pork, or vegetables. **L D $$**
6 Patton Ave.; (828) 252-9805; www.salsasnc.com

SALVAGE STATION *Asheville*
Salvage Station's expansive riverside location is a great spot to catch live music or sip beverages on the lawn. The counter service-style eatery dishes up satisfying

appetizers, soups, salads, and sandwiches, and meat-and-three platters of pulled pork, baby back ribs, smoked turkey and more. Closed Monday. **L D $$**
468 Riverside Dr.; www.salvagestation.com

SOCIAL LOUNGE ***Asheville***
This chic bar lounge provides one of the best vantage points in downtown Asheville—a rooftop patio—and the menu lives up to its motto of "Eat. Drink. And Be Social." Dine here for dinner and you'll be ordering from Strada's menu of authentic Italian cuisine, but come late night, Social Lounge serves up small bites plus pizzas and hefty burgers. Beer, wine, and craft cocktails make the vibe all the merrier. **BR** (Saturday & Sunday) **D $$**
29 Broadway St.; (828) 575-9005; www.socialloungeasheville.com

SOVEREIGN REMEDIES ***Asheville***
The wholesome, beautiful bites, cocktails, and arched picture windows all vie for attention where both food and drink options are driven by local farmers and foragers. The post-noshing digestifs are exotic and numerous, and the coffee is excellent. Watch for special reservation-only Indian meals. **D BR $$$**
29 N. Market St.; (828) 919-9518; www.sovereignremedies.com

STONEBOWL KOREAN ***Asheville***
Asheville's first Korean restaurant serves a large menu of soups, rice and noodle dishes, plus stone bowls, servings of rice, vegetables, protein, and eggs sizzling in a pumice vessel. The menu also emphasizes Korean barbecue (although there are no table-top cookers) and stir-fry. Closed Tuesday. **L D $$$**
1987 Hendersonville Rd.; (828) 676-2172; www.stonebowlkoreannc.com

STORM RHUM BAR & BISTRO ***Asheville***
If Hemingway moved to Asheville and opened a bar, this would be his place. The décor and ambience are akin to the cozy den of a world traveler. The dinner offerings are equally eclectic. A broad selection of charcuterie and cheese platters, and a host of decadent entrées, including pork shoulder in a boiled peanut vinaigrette, pan roasted duck breast, and lamb burger, complement an extensive list of fine rums and tequilas. The cocktails, created using fresh-squeezed juices and house-made mixes, are all original. Stop in on Monday for the $10 burger and pint special. **D $$**
125 S. Lexington Ave.; (828) 505-8560; www.stormasheville.com

STRADA ITALIANO ***Asheville***
This cheerful Italian café also includes a bakery, so diners can take home a loaf of fresh-baked bread. Comforting yet nuanced dishes are served with fresh vegetables. The menu includes pizzas, pastas, and grilled and sautéed dishes with vegetarian and gluten-free options. Don't miss the eggplant "meatballs." **L D BR** (Saturday & Sunday) **$$$**
27 Broadway St.; (828) 348-8448; www.stradaasheville.com

STRAIGHT AWAY CAFÉ & PUB BLACK MOUNTAIN
This laid-back family owned establishment models itself after an Alaskan roadhouse. The menu includes healthy options, such as salmon burgers, vegetable stir-fry, and grilled portobello sandwiches, as well as burgers and chili dogs. On weekends, the pub usually hosts live music. Closed Monday and Tuesday. **L D $**
1722 N.C. 9; (828) 669-8856; www.thestraightaway.com

SUNNY POINT CAFÉ ***Asheville***
The line of patrons waiting to eat brunch every weekend lets you know this is a favorite spot among locals. Sunny Point Café serves dishes made from organic and locally grown foods in a cheerful dining room or on the veranda. Try the huevos rancheros for breakfast, or the dinner favorite, hemp seed-encrusted Sunburst trout served with creamy jalapeño-corn pudding. Salads, sandwiches, and burgers made with free-range beef fill the lunch menu. **B L D $$**
626 Haywood Rd.; (828) 252-0055; www.sunnypointcafe.com

TABLE ***Asheville***
Table's College Street location gives it the feeling of a side-street café awaiting discovery. The atmosphere is distinctly upscale but not fussy, and co-owner and Chef Jacob Sessoms regularly updates European-inspired menu selections to showcase seasonal ingredients. Indulgences include items like the lamb merguez sandwich for lunch or the local rabbit with coffee-roasted carrots for dinner. **L** (Wednesday-Friday) **D SBR $$$**
48 College St.; (828) 254-8980; www.tableasheville.com

TAMARIND ***Arden***
While you can't go wrong with any of the curry, noodle, or rice plates, the traditional dishes keep fans of Thai cuisine coming back. Vegetarian options, plus seafood, duck, and fish specials are served with three sauces: flavorful tamarind, roasted chili, and peanut curry. There's also an assortment of sushi rolls on order as well. Closed Monday. **L D $$**
330 Rockwood Rd., Ste. 112; (828) 654-0988; www.eattamarindthai.com

VERANDA CAFE ***Black Mountain***
The Veranda's menu includes grilled sandwiches and wraps, large salads, and a rotation of specials, including she crab soup on Fridays. Among the rotating selection of house-made soups, the Hungarian mushroom is a standout. Choose from more than 15 desserts, such as the decadent chocolate-raspberry cake. Dogs are welcome on the patio with a treat and bowl of water. Closed Sunday. **L $**
119 Cherry St.; (828) 669-8864; www.verandacafeandgifts.com

VILLAGE WAYSIDE BAR & GRILLE ***Asheville***
This cute spot located in the historic train depot feels welcoming like a neighborhood diner or pub. The menu boasts an eclectic assortment of dishes, including hot pastrami sandwiches, crab cakes, fettuccine alfredo, Hungarian-style cabbage rolls, curried chicken salad, ahi tuna tacos, and barbecue duck wings. The bar remains open until 1 a.m. **L D $$**
30 Lodge St.; (828) 277-4121; www.villagewayside.com

VORTEX DOUGHNUTS ***Asheville***
With a rotating menu inspired by the culture of Asheville, Vortex serves confections such as the French Broad Dark Chocolate doughnut all day. Each pastry is scratch-made every morning with local ingredients. Be sure to try the delectable Rotating Tap doughnut, which blends Asheville beer with local malt. **B $**
32 Banks Ave., Ste. 106; (828) 552-3010; www.vortexdoughnuts.com

VUE 1913 ***Asheville***
This restaurant calls itself an American brasserie, and the food and ambiance reflect this combination of stateside and French elements. Large mains feature lobster, duck, trout, and steak. The Grove Park Inn setting provides unparalleled mountain views. **D $$$$**
290 Macon Ave.; (828) 252-2711; www.groveparkinn.com/vue1913

WALK ***Asheville***
This cleverly renovated auto shop is a popular hangout for soccer fans, but it's far more than a sports bar. The menu features accessible fare for family time or futbol—think sweet potato tots, po'boys, and tempeh melts. Every Tuesday, tacos sell for just $1.50. **L D SBR $**
401 Haywood Rd.; (828) 505-7929; www.walkavl.com

WASABI ***Asheville***
With an atmosphere to match the traditional Japanese cuisine, this restaurant features an extensive menu. For dinner, begin with an appetizer like Tako Su, sliced octopus with a sweet vinegar sauce, and move on to the shrimp tempura entrée. Shrimp dumplings are a popular item from the sushi bar, and patrons can round out their meal with green tea or ginger ice cream. **L D $$$**
19 Broadway St.; (828) 225-2551; www.ichibanwasabi.com

WELL-BRED BAKERY & CAFÉ
Asheville & Weaverville
Choose from breakfast sandwiches, fresh-baked pastries, and cakes to go with gourmet coffees. Lunch standouts include the curried chicken salad served on a croissant, which can be paired with an array of healthy, fresh sides. End on a sweet note with delicate truffles, tiramisu, or a signature eclair, among many other tempting options. **B L D $$**
6 Boston Way, Asheville, (828) 774-5307; 26 N. Main St., Weaverville, (828) 645-9300; www.wellbredbakery.com

WELL PLAYED ***Asheville***
This board game bar pairs classics like Monopoly with comfort food and libations. Guests pay a $5 fee for all-day

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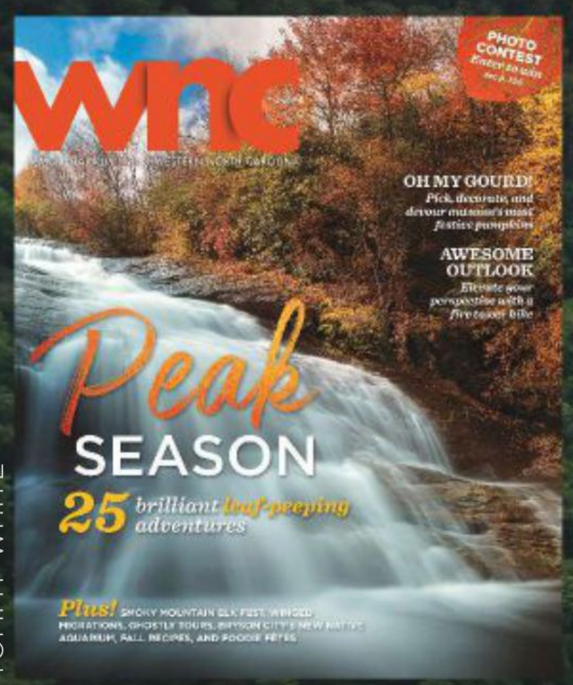

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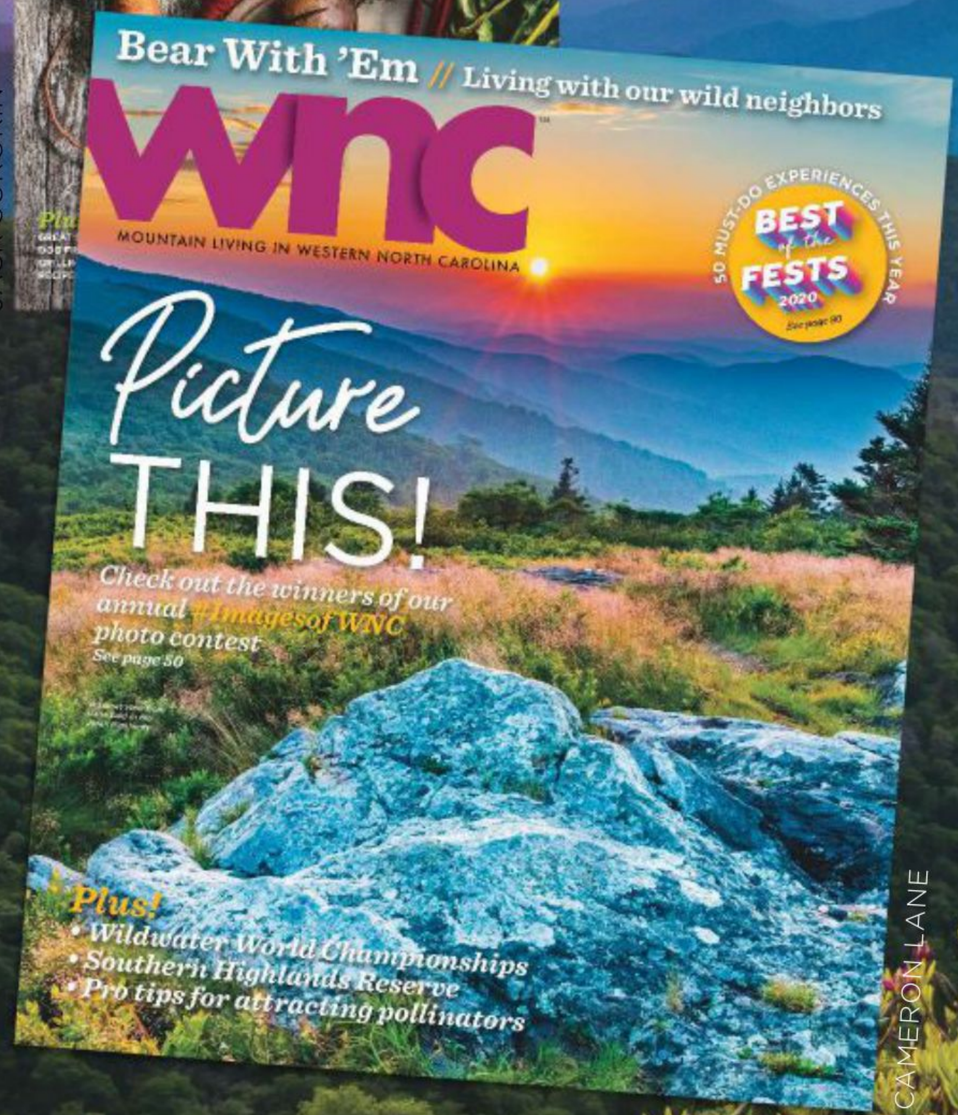

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new & Notable

The scoop on WNC's latest dining destinations

JETTIE RAE'S OYSTER HOUSE ***Asheville***
This new concept by longtime local restauranteur Eric Scheffer of Vinnie's Neighborhood Italian restaurant and Asheville developer Jim Diaz is scheduled to open in April in the Gan Shan Station space on Charlotte Street. There, Will Cisa, Gan Shan chef de cuisine, will stay on as Jettie Rae's executive chef, overseeing the menu of classic seafood dishes, such as oysters, lobster rolls, and po' boys, as well as burgers and fried chicken. (Note: Gan Shan's West Asheville location remains open.) *143 Charlotte St.; jettieraes.com*

HOMEPLACE BEER COMPANY & HOG HOLLOW WOOD FIRED PIZZA ***Burnsville***
Earlier this year, Homeplace Beer Company—a craft brewery founded in 2017 by Yancey County native John Silver—reopened across town in the old Banco Lumber. The move allows the brewery to double its brewing capacity and expand its role as a community gathering spot for all kinds of events. *321 W. Main St.; (828) 536-9068; homeplacebeer.com*

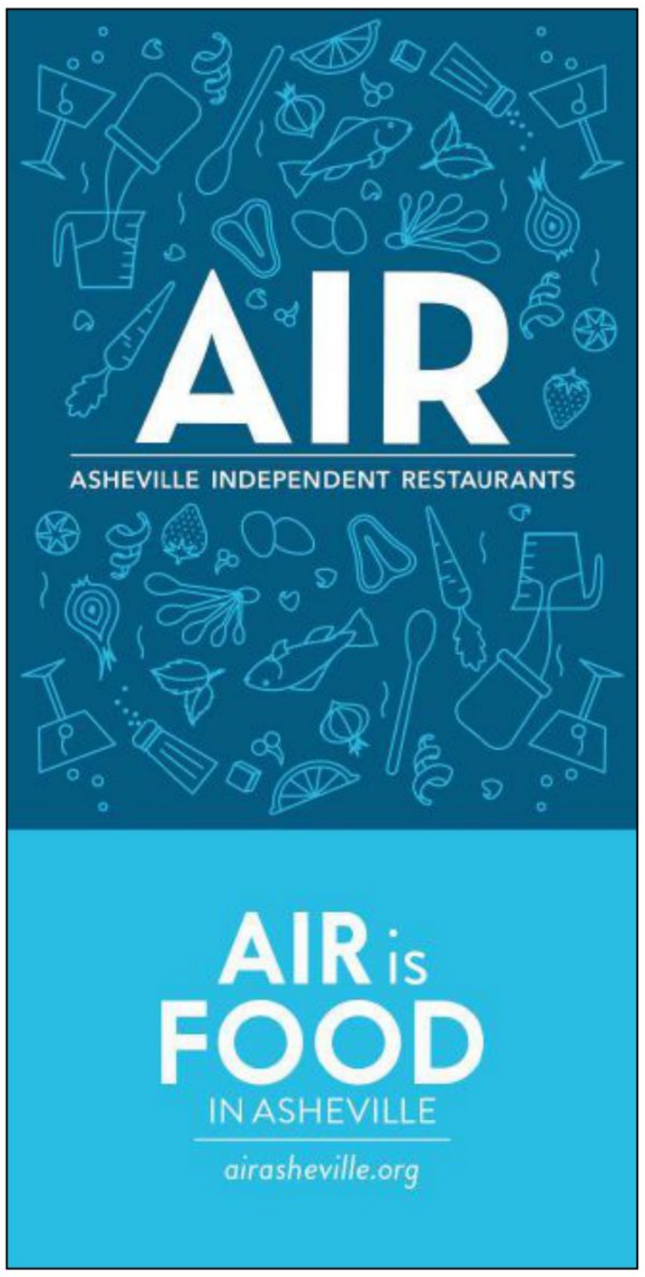
Christine English's Hog Hollow Wood Fired Pizza has joined Homeplace in the space, allowing the popular food truck to expand its menu to include sandwiches, salads, and small plates. *(828) 536-5147; Facebook: Hog Hollow Wood Fired Pizza*

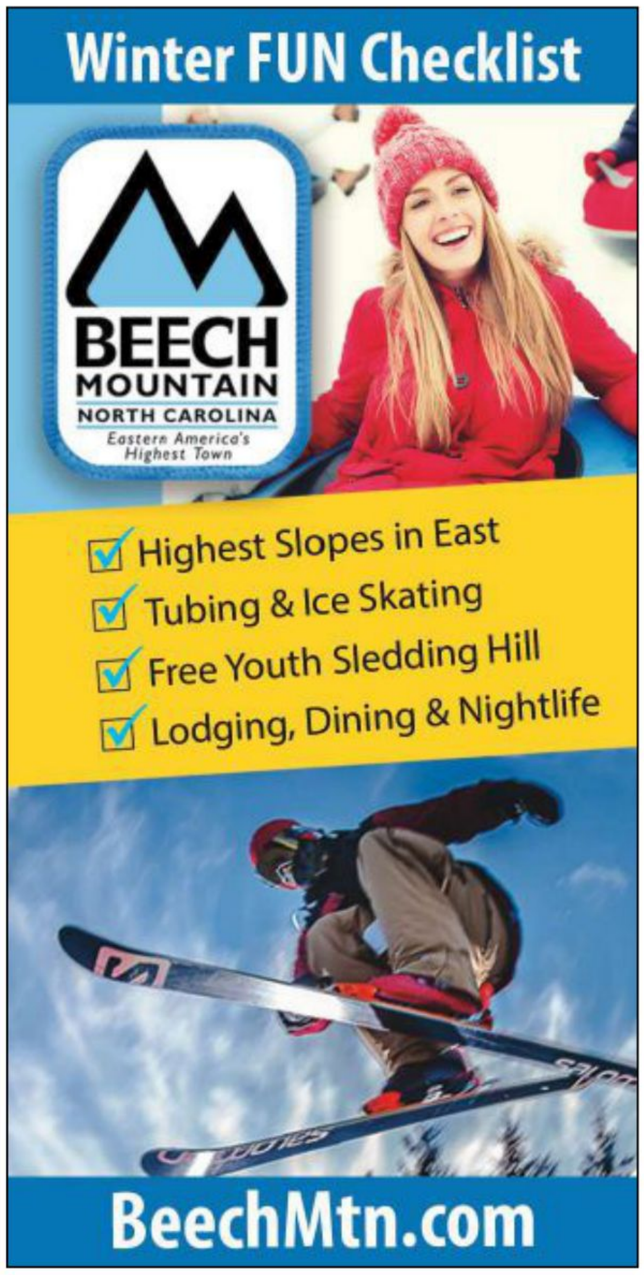
BODEGA CUBANA ***Asheville***
Although Sam Fabian has only been cooking in Asheville since last fall, her Cuban cuisine, offered up at various pop-up dinners, is already attracting notice. The former seamstress and bartender has a commercial kitchen space downtown, where she makes her flavorful empanadas, roasted pork known as *lechon asada*, classic beans and rice, and more. For now, catch the rising culinary dynamo at her weekly events at newish entertainment venue Asheville Beauty Academy (at 28 Broadway), complete with Latin music and dancing. *Facebook: bodegacubanaAVL*

OPEN OVEN BRUNCH & BAKERY ***Black Mountain***
Last fall, Open Oven Brunch & Bakery set up shop in the former Black Mountain Bakery in the historic downtown district. Co-owners Stephanie and Steven Paulson are familiar faces to fans of their long-running Asheville food truck operation, Melt Your Heart, which helped many a diner redefine their grilled cheese aspirations. At Open Oven, find some of those signature sandwiches as well as a smorgasbord of homemade waffles, shrimp and grits, chicken and salmon dishes, a fully stocked bakery counter (scratch-made "pop tarts," anyone?), and much more. *102 Church St.; (828) 357-8553; Facebook: Open Oven Brunch & Bakery*

—**JASON SANDFORD & JON ELLISTON**

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE RESTAURANTS





access to the game library. Food options favor nostalgic eats, including "snack flights" of candy and crackers or an adult grilled cheese made with pimento or bacon. **L D $**
58 Wall St.; (828) 367-7121; www.wellplayedasheville.com

WEST END BAKERY *Asheville*
Enjoy breakfast all day at this sunny, kid-friendly spot in West Asheville. Baked goods, including arguably the best cinnamon rolls in town, are made from scratch and use local ingredients. For lunch, choose from a selection of hot and cold sandwiches, hearty soups, and organic salads. On the weekend, stop by for a leisurely brunch of challah French toast with seasonal fruit and maple syrup. Vegan, spelt, and gluten-free options are available. **B L SBR $**
757 Haywood Rd.; (828) 252-9378; www.westendbakery.com

WOOLWORTH WALK SODA FOUNTAIN *Asheville*
This lunch counter is tucked away in the Woolworth Walk art gallery, a nod to the building's former life as a department store. The current owners reconstructed the luncheonette with chrome accents and red vinyl stools to resemble the 1938 original. The menu includes sandwiches, salads, and hot dogs, plus hand-dipped ice cream and old-fashioned milk shakes. **L $**
25 Haywood St.; (828) 254-9210; www.woolworthwalk.com

ZAMBRA *Asheville*
Zambra transports diners to exotic locales with a romantic ambience and cuisine from around the world, namely Spain and Northern Africa. A robust selection of wines and exciting small plates are meant to be shared. The menu changes regularly, but dishes such as pistachio-crusted veal sweetbread, pomegranate-braised pork spring rolls, and sesame-crusted scallops are a sampling of the offerings. **D $$**
85 Walnut St.; (828) 232-1060; www.zambratapas.com

Catawba County

AMOS HOWARDS BREW PUB *Hickory*
Sample Olde Hickory's beers in the building where they were born, before the operation moved to a larger space. Ruby Lager, Hickory Stick Stout, and Irish Walker are sure to intrigue and satisfy. You'll want to eat some food with the latter—its 10 percent alcohol. Amos Howards serves a full menu of burgers, sandwiches, and steaks, plus several vegetarian items. Try a blackened tuna steak sandwich with a Table Rock Pale Ale. **L D $**
2828 U.S. 70 SW; (828) 323-8753; www.amoshowards.com

BOCA *Hickory*
Upscale Spanish, Mediterranean and Moroccan cuisines shine here, where shareable small plates like Moroccan beef sliders, grilled caesar salad, falafel, and fried lobster tail satisfy. Braised lamb shank, seared Icelandic cod, and paella highlight the large plates. An ample wine list and creative cocktails are also available. Closed Sunday. **L D $$**
74 8th St., Suite 108; (828) 855-9944; www.bocahickory.com

CRESCENT MOON CAFÉ *Hickory*
You've probably heard of industrial-chic, but what about astrological-chic? This polished eatery is painted the color of the night sky and recessed lights illuminate the ceiling like stars. The flatbreads and sandwiches are named for planets and moons; the Titan sandwich comes topped with a roasted portobello mushroom, spinach, feta, and pesto. Twenty-seven microbrews help diners experience weightlessness. Closed Sunday. **L D $**
256 1st Ave.; NW; (877) 517-3635; www.thecrescentmooncafe.com

HATCH SANDWICH *Hickory*
Marvel at a massive chalkboard wall covered with the names of impressive options. Here, the sandwiches are bold: a Pork Banh Mi with cilantro, pickled carrots, and Sriracha; a Brie melt with apples and capers; and the veggie Rueben with Brussels sprouts, Russian dressing, fontina, kraut, and peanuts. Sides include mac and cheese and broccoli with miso. **L D $**
268 1st Ave. NW; (828) 322-1196; www.hatchsandwich.com

HIGHLAND AVENUE *Hickory*
This elegant former industrial space showcases some of the region's finest dishes. Local ingredients shine in stylings you won't see elsewhere. Mountain trout pairs with eggplant, squash velouté, and grilled lemon. A perfectly smoked pork chop is served with oyster mushroom hash and padrón peppers. The cocktail and dessert menus include similarly thoughtful gems. **D $$$**
883 Highland Ave. SE; (828) 267-9800; www.highlandavenuerestaurant.com

MIDWAY BOATHOUSE GRILL *Terrell*
Relax on Lake Norman with casual fare at every meal. The vast breakfast menu includes pancakes, waffles, eggs, corned beef hash, and livermush. At lunch and dinner, choose from mahi-topped salads, barbecue, and hamburgers. **B L D $$**
8693 U.S. 150 E.; (828) 478-3078; www.midwayboathousegrill.com

OLDE HICKORY STATION *Hickory*
This restaurant, bar, and market channels Hickory's railway vibe to its benefit. The massive beer selection includes two cask ales, and rotating taps mean there's always something special at hand. Selections from the large menu are seasonal, creative, and beautifully plated. Start with cauliflower fritters and move on to vegetable pasta primavera with spaghetti squash or a rib eye steak. **B L D $$$**
232 Government Ave. SW; (828) 322-2356; www.oldehickorystation.com

UMI JAPANESE RESTAURANT *Hickory*
This surprising strip mall spot shines with authentic dishes such as tonkatsu (breaded pork cutlet), yakiniku (grilled meat) and ramen. The sushi selection includes both American favorites and Japanese staples. Plan to spend an evening in this tiny eatery learning about Japanese culture and trying new dishes. Closed Sunday. **D $$**
40 Cloninger Mill Rd.; (828) 322-5511; www.umihickory.com

VINTAGE HOUSE *Hickory*
On a leafy thoroughfare in Hickory's Oakwood neighborhood, Vintage House offers a formal dining experience and French-leaning American cuisine. Classic dishes include Muscovy duck breast, beef tenderloin medallions, and Cobb salad. Pasta dishes compose a significant portion of the menu. **D $$$**
271 3rd Ave. NW; (828) 324-1210; www.vintagehouserestaurant.com

Henderson County

2 GUYS PIZZA & RIBS *Hendersonville*
As for what's important at this restaurant, the name says it. Pizzas come with a range of toppings from light to meaty. The spectrum runs from the light pesto and broccoli to the hearty cheeseburger pizza, which comes with a mustard base, bacon, pickles, onion, cheddar, and ground beef. Decisions are easier with the ribs; just choose a half or full rack. After dinner, stay for arcade games and dancing. Closed Monday. **L D $$**
121 W. Barnwell St.; (828) 693-6755; www.2guyspizza.net

ALYKAT DELI *Hendersonville*
This unassuming sandwich shop has been open since 1974, long enough to develop its Secret Spice and Special Sauce. Try The Daredevil, packed with corned beef, or a panini. The Alykat Salad is a sandwich in a bowl, topped with mild peppers and relish. **L $**
635 Spartanburg Hwy.; (828) 697-0311; Facebook: Alykat Subs & Sandwiches

BAABAL'S ICE CREAM & COFFEE SHOPPE *Fletcher*
This family eatery in a historic house is great for kids. Nathan's hot dogs anchor lunch, served Tuesday through Friday, and sandwiches stuffed with pimento cheese, avocado, and barbecue are also available. Hershey's ice cream comes in cones or sundae dishes covered in toppings. Closed Monday. **L $**
188 Saint John Rd.; (828) 676-6449; www.baabals.com

BLACK ROSE PUBLIC HOUSE *Hendersonville*
This centrally located pub proudly pours from 24 taps. The food includes burgers, sandwiches, and Irish dishes such as bangers and mash and corned beef and cabbage. The patio is a great place to observe downtown Hendersonville. **L D $**
222 N. Main St.; (828) 698-2622; Facebook: Black Rose Public House

BLUE SKY CAFÉ ***Fletcher***

Whether you take a seat on Blue Sky's patio or in the lively dining room, vibrant colors and eclectic decorations bring to life the restaurant's theme of creative family dining. The abundant selection of salads, sandwiches, wraps, and vegetarian options makes for an adventurous lunch. If you're really hungry, try a burger and pint. There's even kid-size entrées for the little ones. Closed Sunday. **L D $**

3987 Hendersonville Rd.; (828) 684-1247; www.ilove blueskycafe.com

BLUE RIDGE PIZZA COMPANY ***Etowah***

With scratch-made dough and sauce, this pizza shop offers some of the freshest pies around. The owners, a retired couple, have fun with the place, and their levity shows in items like the Double Pig with Fruit pizza made with candied bacon and pineapple. The restaurant also serves grinders, pasta, wings, burgers, salads, and calzones. **L D $**

6336 Brevard Rd.; (828) 891-5648; Facebook: Blue Ridge Pizza Company

BOLD ROCK CIDERY & TASTING ROOM
Mills River

What was once a produce warehouse in Mills River now holds Bold Rock Hard Cider production facility and tasting room. It's the second cidery to be opened by Bold Rock, which is headquartered in Virginia. A minimum of six ciders are on tap, including the flagship Carolina Apple, a crisp and refreshing Granny Smith-style cider. Check out the bottling action by taking a free tour of the facility or by peeking through the observation window while sipping a cider at the bar. The Bold Bites Mobile Kitchen food truck offers barbecue and southern fixings on-site. **L** (Thursday-Sunday) **D $**

72 School House Rd.; (828) 595-9941, www.boldrock.com

BOONCHOO THAI EXPRESS ***Flat Rock***

Meaning "good karma" in Thai, this express eatery serves fresh and authentic northeastern and central Thai cuisine in a comfortable atmosphere. The noodles, stir-fry, and curry dishes come in two portion sizes: hungry and really hungry. Closed Sunday and Monday. **L D $**

576 #1 Upward Rd., (828) 435-9077, www.boonchoothai.com

DANDELION ***Hendersonville***

This little eatery has two missions: feed Hendersonville with healthy, local food and provide job training for victims of domestic violence. Its work is heavy, but its interior is cheerful. Try a slice of quiche or a grilled pimento cheese sandwich with a side of kale and apple salad. **B L $**

127 Fifth Ave. W.; (828) 595-9365; www.facebook.com/dandelioneatery

FIRESIDE RESTAURANT & PANCAKE INN
Hendersonville

Expect a brief wait at the Fireside. Locals line up to eat at this diner that specializes in homemade breads, light and fluffy pancakes made from a secret recipe, and American breakfast entrées. For lunch, enjoy the pot roast dinner or fireside club sandwich. **B L $**

295 Sugarloaf Rd.; (828) 697-1004; www.firesidepancakeinn.com

FLAT ROCK VILLAGE BAKERY ***Flat Rock***

This small bakery and pizza shop is committed to high quality ingredients, natural leaveners, and handmade shaping. Start the day with a Danish and an espresso. About 9 a.m., the bread emerges fresh from the oven. Come back later for pizza and sandwiches. **B L $**

2710 Greenville Hwy.; (828) 693-1313; www.flatrockwoodfired.com

FLAT ROCK WOOD ROOM ***Hendersonville***

If your family can't decide between burgers, barbecue, and pizza, that's OK. The Wood Room has them all. Then again, if you're all in agreement, try one of the restaurant's family style spreads, which include several meats and sides. Closed Monday and Tuesday. **L D $$**

1501 Greenville Hwy.; (828) 435-1391; www.flatrockwoodroom.com

HANNAH FLANAGAN'S ***Hendersonville***

This popular gathering spot invites diners to a hefty bowl of Irish stew and glass of Guinness. But if you're not feeling the Irish spirit, the large menu provides wraps, tacos, and salmon. The beer list features local and global bottles. **L D $$**

300 N. Main St.; (828) 696-1665; www.theoriginalhannahflanagans.com

HARRY'S GRILL & PIGGY'S ICE CREAM
Hendersonville

This classic diner offers heaping helpings of burgers, ice cream, and nostalgia. Vintage signage adorns the parking lot, along with statues of Yogi Bear and Boo Boo. Inside, fill up on a barbecue sandwich or hot dog with a milk shake, and take in the large collection of tin signs and bric-a-brac. Closed on Sunday. Hours vary seasonally. **L D $**

102 Duncan Hill Rd.; (828) 692-1995; www.harrysandpiggys.com

HARVEY'S AT THE HENDERSON ***Hendersonville***

Located in The Henderson, a historic bed and breakfast with impressive architecture reminiscent of the 1920s. Harvey's specializes in small, shareable plates made with seasonal ingredients- menu standouts include Carolina shrimp ceviche, fried mac 'n' cheese bites, and quail scotch eggs with curried mayonnaise. The restaurant also offers a hefty Sunday brunch with mimosa and Bloody Mary bars. Closed Monday to Wednesday. **D SBR $$**

201 3rd Ave. W.; (828) 696-2001; www.thehendersonnc.com/harveys

HENDOUGH ***Hendersonville***

Two favorite fried fares—chicken and doughnuts—are a harmonious pairing at this eatery. For breakfast, choose between traditional biscuit options like egg and cheese, country ham, and even pimento cheese, or branch out and try an original creation. The doughnut sandwich comes with American cheese, bacon, and sausage served between a glazed doughnut. The lunch menu is built around fried chicken with salads, sandwiches, and chicken by the piece. Or, you can pick up a whole dozen doughnuts any time. **B L $**

532 Kanuga Rd.; (828) 598-2885; www.hendough.com

HONEY AND SALT ***Flat Rock***

This quaint café, nestled in the colorful collection of shops known as Little Rainbow Row, serves up organic and locally sourced breakfast standards and heavenly baked goods. For a hardy, protein-rich start to the day, try a breakfast skillet like the smokehouse, which comes with brisket, pimento cheese, pulled pork, hash cake, all topped off with an egg. Or try a sweet or savory option from the toast bar, served on a thick-cut multigrain slice. **B L $**

2730 Greenville Hwy., (828) 676-8322, www.honeyandsaltnc.com

HUBBA HUBBA SMOKEHOUSE ***Flat Rock***

This popular takeout restaurant is devoted to the tradition of Southern cooking. With an 800-square-foot smoke room, Hubba Hubba specializes in pulled pork, brisket, baby back ribs, and chicken, which are cooked for 24 hours to reach the perfect tenderness. Customers can dress their meats with vinegar, mustard, sweet barbecue, chipotle, or tomato-based sauces, and complement the meal with baked beans, slaw, corn bread, or stewed okra and tomatoes over rice. On Fridays and Saturdays, treat yourself to the smoked fish tacos. Hours vary seasonally. **L D** (Thursday-Sunday) **$**

2724 Greenville Hwy.; (828) 694-3551; www.hubbahubbasmokehouse.com

INDEPENDENT BEAN ***Hendersonville***

Henderson County's first large-batch coffee roaster lives by a "farm to mug" philosophy. Enjoy espresso drinks and pour overs made with beans including a Rwandan peaberry and an Ethiopian Yirgacheffe, plus loose-leaf teas and baked goods. Closed Saturday to Monday. **B L $**

346 7th Ave. E.; (828) 674-7494; www.independentroasters.com

MEAN MR. MUSTARD CAFÉ ***Hendersonville***

Two things to do if you've never done them: Listen to the Beatles song that inspires this restaurant and eat its Eggs Diana: seared salmon, sautéed spinach, chopped tomatoes, and fresh lemon-dill sauce with a poached egg, grit cake, and sourdough. Even Mean Mr. Mustard, who always shouts out something obscene, would approve. Closed Monday and Tuesday. **B L $**

605 Kanuga Rd.; (828) 698-8584; www.meanmrmustards.com

MEZZALUNA BRICK OVEN & TAP HOUSE
Hendersonville

Tired of Italian restaurants with a sprawling menu and minuscule beer list? You're in luck. Mezzaluna has a tight menu of nuanced Italian entrées and pizzas as

well as 50 taps. Try a wood-fired pizza topped with white truffle oil and house-cured bacon or the house-made fettuccine. **L D $$$**
226 N. Main St.; (828) 697-6575; www.mezzaluna-hendersonville.com

MONTE'S SUB SHOP *Hendersonville*
Since 2008, this deli has served straightforward sandwiches and salads. Order a classic club, tuna salad sandwich, or satiate yourself with the Mega Monte: ham, turkey, salami, roast beef, capicola, and cheese. Closed Sunday. **L D $**
2024 Asheville Hwy.; (828) 693-3112; www.montessubshop.com

MOUNTAIN DELI *Hendersonville*
As Hendersonville's source for hot, carved sandwich meat, Mountain Deli proudly serves up fresh roast beef, chicken, and pork. It also offers thoughtful veggie options and soups and salads. Sides, including smashed potato salad, are also popular. **B L $**
343 N. Main St.; (828) 693-0093; www.mtndeli.com

NEVER BLUE *Hendersonville*
For a light lunch, try Never Blue's creative salads, like the combination of organic spinach, dried cranberries, blue cheese crumbles, applewood-smoked bacon, and candied pecans. More filling options include Gulf shrimp and smoked Gouda grits with a spicy tasso cream and an array of creative tacos, burgers, and sandwiches. Pair any dish with a signature martini or mojito. Closed Sunday and Monday. **L D $$**
119 S. Main St.; (828) 693-4646; www.theneverblue.com

PI-SQUARED PIZZA *Hendersonville*
Take a trip to the Motor City without leaving WNC at Pi-Squared Pizza. The Detroit-style pizza joint opened in February, featuring square slices with a signature thick crust, caramelized cheese, and sauce on top. Grab a coveted corner slice in the restaurant's red brick dining room decorated with Detroit-themed memorabilia. **L D $$$**
1972 Haywood Rd.; (828) 693-0799; www.pi-squaredpizza.com

POSTERO *Hendersonville*
This blending of French technique and American ingredients adds culinary heft to Hendersonville's Main Street. Following a pragmatic American sensibility, Postero's menu presents three sections—snacks, medium plates, and big plates—making for an easily customized dining experience in a space that's modern and airy. Closed Sunday and Monday. **L** (Wednesday to Saturday) **D $$$**
401 N. Main St.; (828) 595-9676; www.postero-hvl.com

RENZO'S RISTORANTE *Hendersonville*
Owner and chef Renzo Maietto serves authentic Italian cuisine from his homeland in a stylish, upscale setting on historic Main Street. Appetizers include rustic dishes like minestrone soup, caprese salad, and an antipasto meat and cheese board that's great for sharing. Entrées range from classic fish and seafood dishes to pastas to meat options like pork tenderloin or veal saltimbocca. An ample wine list (with many Italian options), plus creative cocktails, and beer are available. **D $$$$**
502 N. Main St.; (828) 551-7766; www.renzos.us

SEASON'S AT HIGHLAND LAKE *Flat Rock*
Season's is a great place for family gatherings or romantic dining and offers a menu that changes seasonally to highlight locally sourced meats and produce from the on-site organic garden. Dinner entrées include beef tenderloin, duck breast, sea scallops, and more. Guests can choose from more than 100 wines, a selection that has earned Season's a Wine Spectator Award of Excellence every year since 2000. **B L D SBR $$$**
86 Lily Pad Ln.; (828) 696-9094; www.HLIresort.com/seasons

SHINE *Hendersonville*
Located in a historic 1928 building in downtown, Shine offers a first for Hendersonville's culinary scene: a rooftop for open-air dining and three floors with multiple lounges for eating, banquets, and other events. Specializing in New American cuisine, the menu features appetizers like frog leg frites and fried boudin, soups, salads, and sandwiches, and entrées including pork tenderloin, duck, and shrimp tortellini. In addition to 24 beer taps, Shine also serves ciders, craft cocktails, and beverages made with house-made syrups. **L D $$$**
202 N. Main St.; (828) 692-0018; www.shinehvl.com

THAI SPICE *Hendersonville*
This tastefully decorated Thai eatery serves all the staple curries and noodle dishes, plus extravagant specials of crispy, roasted duck and whole red snapper in chili sauce. There's also a wide selection of soups and salads. Closed Monday. **L D $$$**
220 S. King St.; (828) 693-7323; www.thaispicehendersonville.com

THE FRENCH BROAD *Hendersonville*
Spread over two levels overlooking Main Street, The French Broad offers a menu of French-influenced staples, a lengthy wine list, and original cocktails in an airy, brasserie-inspired space. Starters like shrimp croquettes and liver pâté with brioche toast and entrées such as steak frites and red wine-braised pork cheek over corn crème can be enjoyed at the communal table or privately in the eatery's cozy balcony booths. **SBR L D $$$**
342 N. Main St.; (828) 595-9797; www.thefrenchbroad.net

UMI JAPANESE FINE DINING *Hendersonville*
No, WNC is not near the ocean, but location has no bearing on Umi's ability to offer fine sushi in a sophisticated atmosphere. Some special convergence of clever sourcing, happy staff, excellent presentation and authenticity make for a highly successful sushi experience. Also try Umi's sister restaurant, Sora, near Pisgah Forest. **L D $$$**
633 N. Main St.; (828) 698-8048; www.umisushinc.com

WEST FIRST WOOD-FIRED PIZZA *Hendersonville*
At West First, each stone-ground, wheat-crust pizza is baked just so—oozing mozzarella with the slightest shadow of char on the edges of a thin, crisp crust. In addition to the specialty pies, including the prosciutto pizza topped with aged Parma ham, marinara, mozzarella, and a sprinkling of nutty arugula, there are house-made pastas, calzones, and tortes. Finish with the decadent chocolate-hazelnut tiramisu. Closed Sunday. **L D $$**
101 First Ave. W.; (828) 693-1080; www.flatrockwoodfired.com

Jackson County

BALSAM MOUNTAIN INN *Balsam*
Stunning views complement the cuisine at this historic mountain inn, founded in 1908. The chef prepares trout amandine and chicken marsala with European method, but dishes such as shrimp and grits and pecan-encrusted catfish taste like home. By reservation only. **B L D $$$**
68 Seven Springs Dr.; (800) 224-9498; www.balsammountaininn.net/dining

CANYON KITCHEN AT LONESOME VALLEY *Sapphire*
A partnership between Sunburst Trout and Chef Adam Hayes yields this elegant, open-air dining experience. The expertly constructed prix-fixe menu allows diners to relax and enjoy the pristine valley that surrounds them. Open seasonally, Wednesday through Sunday. **D $$$$**
150 Lonesome Valley Rd.; (828) 743-7967; www.lonesomevalley.com/project/canyon-kitchen

CITY LIGHTS CAFÉ *Sylva*
Reminiscent of a European café, this cozy eatery serves sweet and savory crêpes, paninis, specialty coffees, bakery treats, and wine. Kids love the Fluffer-Nutter—melted peanut butter and marshmallow cream on a crispy panini. Grown-up fare includes blackened chicken penne pasta with Cajun cream sauce. The menu features vegetarian and dairy- and gluten-free dishes. **B L D SBR $$**
3 E. Jackson St.; (828) 587-2233; www.citylightscafe.com

THE COFFEE SHOP *Sylva*
The significance of a 25-cent price difference between a meat-and-three plate and the same meal with just two sides might be lost on younger generations, but it isn't on the die-hards who frequent The Coffee Shop. This diner opened in 1926, when a quarter went a lot further. It still does here. We're talking hearty Southern dishes like country-fried steak with gravy or meatloaf with mashed potatoes for lunch. And with a sugar-sweet

selection of fruit and cream pies, it's no wonder this place is still cookin'. Closed Sunday. **B L D $**
385 W. Main St.; (828) 586-2013;
Facebook: The Coffee Shop

CORNUCOPIA RESTAURANT ***Cashiers***
This aptly named restaurant boasts an abundance of traditional and inventive recipes, from the crowd-pleasing crab cakes served with a side of slaw, to crispy green bean fries served with a creamy cucumber-wasabi ranch dip. Entrées such as filet mignon will satisfy hungry patrons. Be sure to visit the adjoining cheese and specialty shop. **L D SBR $$$**
16 Cashiers School Rd.; (828) 743-3750;
www.cornucopianc.com

CULLOWHEE CAFÉ ***Cullowhee***
With 60 years of combined experience, three generations of the café's founding family have served delicious homemade fare since 1948. Sample the hamburger steak, dig into the popular chicken club sandwich, or try a favorite: the BLT with a side of onion rings. **B L D $**
2968 Old Cullowhee Rd.; (828) 293-3334

GUADALUPE CAFE ***Sylva***
When Guadalupe Cafe brought a Caribbean influence to Sylva's culinary scene, it also helped ignite a nightlife in downtown with musical performances. This restaurant offers traditional Caribbean favorites like fried plantains and tacos prepared with sofrito beans and Ashe County cheese in a blue-corn tortilla. The café also serves made-to-order burritos and quesadillas, as well as mango-pork tacos, coconut rice, fried okra, and jerk chicken. **D $$**
606 W. Main St.; (828) 586-9877;
www.guadalupecafe.com

JARRETT HOUSE ***Dillsboro***
This historic bed-and-breakfast opened in 1884 and still serves the Southern staples on which it was founded. It prides itself on chicken and dumplings, fried chicken, and battered catfish. For dessert, try vinegar pie, a custard-filled, apple cider vinegar-enlivened concoction. **L D $$$**
100 Haywood Rd.; (828) 586-0265;
www.jarretthouse.com

JJ'S CANTEEN & EATERY ***Glenville***
Longtime residents of the Cashiers and Glenville area hang out at this gas station haunt to hear live music from local artists such as Zorki. The menu includes bar favorites, and Thursday nights feature 75-cent wings and beer specials. **D $**
6188 S. N.C. 107; (828) 743-7778;
Facebook: JJ's Canteen & Eatery

LULU'S ON MAIN ***Sylva***
Long before vegetarians and vegans were so plentiful in the mountains, Lulu's was serving hummus and biryani wraps. But don't be mistaken, meat eaters are just as welcome, with choices including the tropical pork tenderloin dusted with Jamaican jerk spices and caramelized with orange glaze. For a light lunch, try the Italian pasta salad; it's simple and fresh with chopped peppers, onions, and a lemon-oil drizzle. Closed Sunday. **L D $$**
612 W. Main St.; (828) 586-8989;
www.lulusonmain.com

MAD BATTER FOOD & FILM ***Cullowhee***
This hot spot is popular with the collegiate crowd at Western Carolina University. Pizzas, wraps, homemade soups and chili, fresh-baked bread, bagels, and pastries fill the menu. Mad Batter also offers beer and wine, which can be enjoyed on the cozy back deck or while watching a classic film on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Look for the restaurant's food truck about town. **B L D SBR $**
568 Centennial Dr.; (828) 293-3096;
www.madbatterfoodandfilm.com

THE ORCHARD ***Cashiers***
In a 100-year-old farmhouse, The Orchard serves fresh, thoughtful fare—the sort that farmers would have grown, raised, and caught on the surrounding land a century ago. The menu includes four trout dishes, vegetarian entrées, steaks, lamb chops, duck, and more. The preparation highlights Southern flavors. A nice wine selection complements the cuisine. **D $$$$**
905 N.C. 107 S.; (828) 743-7614;
www.theorchardcashiers.com

RANDEVU RESTAURANT ***Cashiers***
Locals jostle for a table at this popular spot. Lunches of well-executed burgers and wraps draw a crowd. At dinner, the food is more elegant, although the atmosphere remains relaxed. Try seared halibut with lobster risotto or tequila-lime duck breast with cilantro-lime onion relish. **L D SBR $$**
18 Chestnut Sq.; (828) 743-0190;
Facebook: Randevu Restaurant

SAPPHIRE MOUNTAIN BREWING COMPANY
Sapphire
Recycled century-old bricks, whiskey barrels, and flooring give this restaurant its rustic ambience. SMBC specializes in award-winning wood-fired pizzas and calzones, including the jerk shrimp and Hawaiian barbecue chicken. Appetizers, sandwiches, and a broad selection of entrées offer many choices. With each dish, the menu offers recommendations for wine or beer. **L D $$**
50 Slicers Ave.; (828) 743-0220;
www.sapphiremountainbrewingcompany.com

SLAB TOWN PIZZA ***Cashiers***
Slabtown Pizza serves New York-style pizzas from fresh-made dough. Build your own, or choose one of the truly interesting house specialties. The Duke harnesses the flavors of Italian sausage, meatballs, pancetta, ricotta cheese, oregano, mozzarella, chilies, and Sunday gravy (instead of tomato sauce). Closed Monday. **L D $$**
45 Slab Town Rd.; (828) 743-0020;
www.slabtownpizza.com

SOUL INFUSION TEA HOUSE & BISTRO ***Sylva***
This place offers more than 60 teas, vegan fare, custom cakes, beer and wine, plus free Wi-Fi and live music on weekends. Wraps, pizzas, and salads for vegetarians abound. Meaty fare includes burgers, hot sandwiches, and nachos. Take your food to one of the picnic tables behind the restaurant and stay awhile. **L D $**
628 E. Main St.; (828) 586-1717;
www.soulinfusion.com

TABLE 64 ***Sapphire***
This wine bar offers two dozen vintages by the glass and twice as many by the bottle. The selection of beautifully presented tapas complements the wine by incorporating flavors from around the world. Panko-encrusted cauliflower bites pair well with chardonnay; try the unwrapped tuna roll with a big red. **D $$$**
3093 U.S. 64 E.; (828) 743-4135;
www.tablesixtyfour.com

Macon County

BISTRO ON MAIN ***Highlands***
Located inside the Main Street Inn, the bistro serves traditional American cuisine. Guests fill up for breakfast on pumpkin pancakes or scrambled eggs with Southern fixin's. Appetizers, soups, salads, and sandwiches, including the shrimp po'boy and turkey apple Brie, are served for lunch and dinner, while entrées include a chicken-mushroom potpie, pot roast, and grilled salmon. Finish the meal with a puff pastry stuffed with white chocolate mousse and berries. Dinner is served seasonally. **L D BR** (Saturday & Sunday) **$$**
270 Main St.; (828) 526-2590;
www.mainstreet-inn.com

BOONE THAI ***Franklin***
This locals' favorite brings big Eastern flavor to Franklin's dining scene. It's a good place to get a solid curry dish or satisfy your pad thai craving. Service is always friendly and attentive. Closed Wednesday. **L D $$**
553 Highlands Rd.; (828) 524-1111

BRICK OVEN PIZZA ***Highlands***
Baked with fresh, Sicilian-style focaccia dough, The Brick Oven's hand-tossed pizzas and calzones let you put your own twist on two Italian favorites. Choose from more than 30 toppings, including conventional meats, cheeses, and fresh veggies. An impressive selection of sauces is also at your disposal for a custom creation. **L D $**
423 N. 4th St.; (828) 526-4121

CAFFÉ REL ***Franklin***
This French-inspired restaurant stands in stark contrast to the Hot Spot gas station that occupies the same building. Highbrow appetizers like brandied chicken livers share the menu with sandwiches like The John Gotti, with capicola, pepperoncini, salami, provolone, and balsamic vinegar on French bread. A bowl of the blue crab bisque is a meal in itself. Credit cards not accepted. **L D $$**
459 E. Main St.; (828) 369-9446;
Facebook: Caffé Rel

FRESSERS EATERY *Highlands*
Decadent baked goods and hearty burgers and sandwiches are standards at this spot, which is tucked away in a historic barn in the center of Highlands. Cute details accent the meals; the Turkish Turkey Burger is topped with apricot spread. Whatever you order, get a side of Fresser fries, which are more like thick-cut chips. Dinner often ends early, so call ahead. **L D BR** (Saturday & Sunday) **$$**
470 Oak St.; (828) 526-8847; www.fresserseateryhighlands.com

FROG TOWN MARKET & DELI *Franklin*
Far more than a market or a deli, this humble shop serves dinners of fried frog legs, broiled flounder, and fried clams along with sandwiches, po'boys, and salads. The atmosphere is simple, but the food is prepared enthusiastically. Take home shucked oysters and crab cakes from the meat case. **L D $$**
61 S. Patton Ave.; (828) 369-0001; www.frogtownmarket.com

LAKESIDE RESTAURANT *Highlands*
Indulge in a three-course meal accompanied by fresh vegetables and baked bread. The plates come artfully garnished with touches of iris blossoms from the garden. Seafood, including local rainbow trout, grilled Carolina grouper, and Maryland-style crab cakes, dominates the menu. Try the seared sea scallops, Asian-glazed buffalo short ribs, or Colorado lamb chops. The extensive, award-winning wine list is sure to feature a bottle that intrigues you. **D $$$$**
531 Smallwood Ave.; (828) 526-9419; www.lakesiderestaurant.info

THE LOG CABIN *Highlands*
This historic yet elegant setting—an actual log cabin from the early 1900s—makes an enlivening backdrop for The Log Cabin's sleek Italian cuisine. Expect nuanced sauces and vegetable accents. Entrées include New Zealand venison chop, filet mignon, wild Alaskan halibut, and more. Closed Sunday and Monday. **D $$$$**
130 Log Cabin Ln.; (828) 526-5777; www.logcabinhighlands.com

MADISON'S RESTAURANT & WINE GARDEN *Highlands*
Madison's offers refined New American cuisine, such as low-rendered duck breast with rutabaga purée and a parsley crêpe with wilted mustard greens, served in the elegant dining room of the Old Edwards Inn. Outstanding meals and an exceptional wine list have earned Madison's numerous *Wine Spectator* awards and a AAA Four-Diamond award. **B L D $$$$**
445 Main St.; (828) 787-2525; www.oldedwardsinn.com/dining/madisons

MERITAGE BISTRO *Highlands*
This indoor/outdoor café focuses on European cuisine, wine, and ambience. The menu showcases Mediterranean flavors—plenty of eggplant, white beans, pasta, and herbs de Provence—fresh fish from the mountains and seas, and bistro classics, such as steak frites. Closed Tuesday. **D $$$**
490 Carolina Way; (828) 526-1019; www.meritagehighlands.com

MOUNTAIN FRESH GROCERY & WINE MARKET *Highlands*
For a quick, casual gourmet meal in the heart of Highlands, Mountain Fresh is the place. Once a grocery store, the business is transitioning into an upscale deli and specialty shop. Dine on pressed sandwiches, burgers, and two styles of pizza with a glass of wine, or take home a meal of prime rib or a Lowcountry boil. **B L D $$**
521 E. Main St.; (828) 526-2400; www.mfgro.com

ON THE VERANDAH *Highlands*
One unique attribute of this establishment is an expansive view of Lake Sequoyah. Pair one of the 200 wines, ports, or aperitifs with delicious tapas such as the fried Brie with tomato jam, caramelized onions, and garlic oil, or a dinner entrée. Choices include spicy Thai coconut-ginger shrimp with purple sticky rice, veal Porterhouse, and the char-grilled Kurobota pork chop with chipotle chili-onion relish. **D SBR $$**
1536 Franklin Rd.; (828) 526-2338; www.ontheverandah.com

RATHSKELLER COFFEE HAUS & PUB *Franklin*
This spot serves macchiatos and Cuban espressos as well as house-made cheesecake and biscotti. But the ambience is more akin to the German meaning of its name, a tavern below street level—in this case, under Main Street. You're likely to catch a few locals gathered at the bar starting the weekend with a stout and Landjaeger jerky stick. By the end of the night, a crowd will be listening to a band while noshing on calzone-style wraps and raising toasts with hard ciders. Closed Sunday and Monday. **L D $**
58 Stewart St.; (828) 349-0598; Facebook: Rathskeller Coffee Haus & Pub

RISTORANTE PAOLETTI *Highlands*
Enjoy northern Italian dining in an elegant old-world atmosphere. Pastas, fish, duck, veal, beef, and chicken comprise the extensive menu, but the seafood is a crowd favorite here. Jumbo lump crab cakes, baked clams, crispy Gulf oysters, fried calamari, and Maine mussels are among the dishes. The restaurant offers a selection of 1,300 wines, and has earned *Wine Spectator's* Best of Award of Excellence since 1987. **D $$$**
440 Main St.; (828) 526-4906; www.paolettis.com

STAMEY'S CAFE *Franklin*
This diner combines home-style recipes and from-scratch cooking with a bohemian attitude: The motto is, "Peace, love and biscuits." Flavored pancakes, omelets, and biscuits and gravy make up the breakfast menu, and burgers, chicken and dumplings, and meat-and-threes emerge at lunchtime. **B L $**
111 E. Main St.; (828) 524-8198; www.stameyscafe.com

THE UGLY DOG PUB *Highlands*
This happening spot is Highland's best place to have dinner and hear live music. A section of the menu is devoted entirely to hot dogs. The restaurant uses Alpha Dogs, which are locally made from premium beef. Try one topped with pimento cheese, or choose a burger, sandwich, or flat bread pizza. **L D SBR $**
294 S. Fourth St.; (828) 526-8364; www.theuglydogpub.com

WILD THYME GOURMET *Highlands*
This perfect perch on Main Street is tucked into a quaint courtyard filled with fashion and food boutiques. An American bistro with international flair, the restaurant serves salmon with Vidalia onion crust as well as Thai-inspired beef stir-fry with ginger, cilantro and lime juice on basmati rice. **L D $$$$**
343-D Main St.; (828) 526-4035; www.wildthymegourmet.com

WOLFGANG'S RESTAURANT & WINE BISTRO *Highlands*
The garden pavilion, outdoor deck, and fireside tables all provide an excellent atmosphere to enjoy the nationally recognized creations of Chef Wolfgang. With Creole and Bavarian flavors, fresh seafood and steaks, the meals won't disappoint. For an appetizer, try the portobello stuffed with goat cheese and spinach and topped with applewood-smoked bacon and provolone cheese. Visit the bistro for small plates paired with one of the 1,200 bottles of wine. **D $$$$**
474 Main St.; (828) 526-3807; www.wolfgangs.net

Transylvania County

BLUE RIDGE BAKERY *Brevard*
Brevard's source for decadent Southern cakes also cooks prize-winning spanakopita, a Greek dish of layered filo dough, spinach, and cheese. The $4.95 portion is large enough for lunch, but if you're still hungry, try a fresh salad, gyro, slice of quiche, or chicken salad wrap. Lunch is served Monday through Friday; closed Sunday. **B L $**
400 S. Broad St.; (828) 883-8444; www.blueridgebakery.com

CEDAR MOUNTAIN CAFE *Cedar Mountain*
Don't whiz by this café on your way from Brevard to Greenville. If you did, you'd miss out on maple-bacon pancakes, huevos rancheros, burgers bedecked with pickled onions, jalapeños, and goat cheese, and prime rib dinners on Friday nights. Breakfast and lunch are served daily; dinner happens Thursday through Saturday. **B L D $$**
10667 Greenville Hwy.; (828) 884-5272; www.cedarmountaincafe.com

DUGAN'S PUB ***Brevard***

There are Irish pubs, and then there's Dugan's, which really plays up its Irishness with tons of Notre Dame memorabilia, Appalachian barn wood paneling, and a daily countdown to St. Patrick's Day. On the menu, plenty of Irish staples are present: bangers and mash, shepherd's pie, corned beef and cabbage, and Guinness meatloaf. There's a large vegetarian menu too. **L D $**

29 W. French Broad St.; (828) 862-6527; www.duganspub.com

FALLS LANDING ***Brevard***

Here you'll find fresh fish prepared classically and paired with a glass of wine or sweet tea. Steaks and pastas round out the dinner menu, while lunch offers simple salads, sandwiches, and delectable chowders. Outdoor seating is available. Closed Sunday. **L D $$$**

18 E. Main St.; (828) 884-2835; www.thefallslanding.com

JORDAN STREET CAFE ***Brevard***

This popular gathering spot provides lots of seating areas; the patio is particularly nice, offering a stunning view of the mountains. Order one of the many creative burgers—the Hawaiian Volcano comes with grilled pineapple and a sweet chili glaze—or try a more complex dish, such as bacon-wrapped trout. A big slice of coconut cake makes for an excellent Southern dessert. **D $$**

48 W. Jordan St.; (828) 883-2558; www.thejordanstreetcafe.com

MARCO TRATTORIA ***Brevard***

If it weren't for the artistic metal sign in the front yard, Marco Trattoria, set inside a former private home, could be pegged as the scene of a great house party. Inspired continental specials and Italian and Mediterranean dishes include pasta with scallops and shrimp, veal saltimbocca, house-made meatballs, and eggplant Parmigiano. Wood-oven pizzas, including the Gorgonzola with sautéed mushrooms, prosciutto, and pesto, are ample enough for sharing. **L D SBR $$$**

204 W. Main St.; (828) 883-4841; www.marcotrattoria.com

OSTERIA DEL MONTE ***Sapphire***

Savor a taste of Italy in the mountains at this family run restaurant that offers quaint tavern seating. Hearty classics like veal scallopini and flounder francese never fail to please. On the lighter side, fresh fish with white wine-lemon sauce, artichoke hearts, and cherry tomatoes is available. Closed Mondays. **D $$$**

19131 Rosman Hwy.; (828) 883-2551

SORA ***Pisgah Forest***

The intimate atmosphere, friendly service, and modern décor make Sora a great place to enjoy fresh sushi and sashimi. The list of special rolls includes a variety of flavor combinations, while entrées, such as the spicy Kani crab salad, continue to inspire the palate with each visit. Look for Sora's sister restaurant, Umi, in Hendersonville. **L D $$**

91 Forest Gate Dr.; (828) 883-9808; www.sorasushinc.com

THE SQUARE ROOT ***Brevard***

Stroll the charming Times Arcade Alley to find this Art Deco-style eatery and gallery. From favorites such as mountain trout encrusted with almonds and topped with a pumpkin beurre blanc to Eastern-inspired dishes like five-spice seared ahi tuna, the eclectic mix of Southern delicacies and Asian-American fusion draws a steady crowd. **L D $$$**

33 Times Arcade Alley; (828) 884-6171; www.squarerootrestaurant.com

THE BLIND MULE AT TOXAWAY STATION
Lake Toxaway

When the great flood of 1916 caused Lake Toxaway's dam to break, reportedly, the only casualty was a blind mule, the namesake of this family-run restaurant. Locals and visitors alike come for Chef James Hargis' rotating menu of locally sourced, seasonal small plates, including fried green tomatoes with house chowchow and golden beet salad, and entrées such as pepita-encrusted trout and bacon-wrapped meatloaf. A nice wine selection, cocktails, and craft beer make this a convivial gathering place. Open for breakfast and lunch seasonally. Closed Sunday and Monday. **B L D $$$**

502 Blue Ridge Rd.; (828) 553-8978; www.blindmulerestaurant.com

THE SUNRISE CAFÉ ***Brevard***

The Sunrise Café is always hopping with college students, professionals, families, and friends seeking healthy fare at a reasonable price. Breakfast, smoothies, and coffee are served all day, while quiches, soups, salads, hot and cold sandwiches, and wrap specials make up the lunch menu. **B L $**

273 N. Broad St.; (828) 884-3331; www.the-sunrise-cafe.com

HOT SHEET

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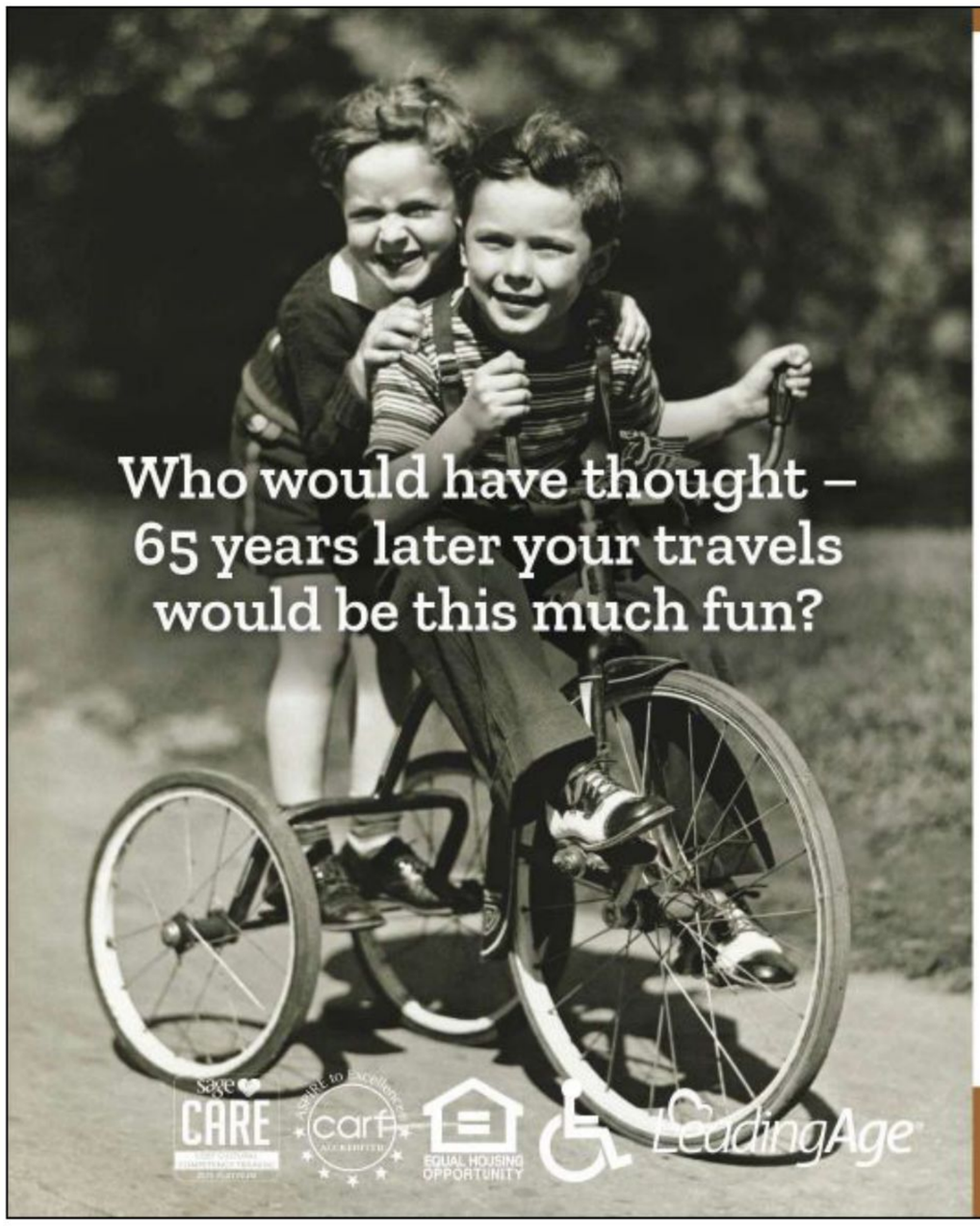

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GOOD TIMES FOR GOOD CAUSES

Russell Shuler, Tia Foster, and Fran Shuler

Jose Antonio Vargas spoke on his childhood experience of being brought to the US illegally.

Tanya Stiers and Angelica Wind

Robert Deutsch and Jerry Sternberg

Justice Forum

OCTOBER 3, 2019

Pisgah Legal Services welcomed more than 1,000 attendees to the ninth annual Justice Forum, held at Thomas Wolfe Auditorium in Asheville. The keynote speaker was Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, filmmaker, and CEO of Define America Jose Antonio Vargas, also known as America's most famous undocumented immigrant. The event raised $40,000 to support Pisgah Legal's work with immigrants in WNC.

Copies of Vargas' memoir, *Dear America: Notes of an Undocumented Citizen*, were on hand.

Jackie Simms and Charles Hardy

Pisgah Legal immigration attorney Shoshana Fried and Vargas discussed immigrants in WNC.

Elizabeth Button and Katie Button

Sharon Barrett, Leslie Sladky-Hillman, and Lucy Hillman

Asheville Mayor Esther Manheimer and Mark Fields

PLS Board Chair Bill Wolcott and board member Leslie Heywood

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JESSE KITT PHOTOGRAPHY

Glenn Wilcox, UNC Asheville Chancellor Nancy Cable, and John McKibbon

A two-ton glass orb installation by Henry Richardson welcomes visitors to the museum.

Ray Smead and Museum Trustee Judy Swan

Buster Brown, Karen Keil Brown, JoAnn Powers, Larry Turner, and Jim Samsel

Grand Opening Celebration

NOVEMBER 9, 2019

Following a $24 million overhaul, the Asheville Art Museum reopened in November to great fanfare. Prior to the public opening, a sold-out crowd attended a creative/black-tie fête that included dinner and drinks by local chefs, a poem read by artist and poet Glenis Redmond, and an exclusive preview of the building and its inaugural exhibitions.

Karen and Robert Milnes, Marita and Hank Strauss, and Jill and Joe Lawrence

Isa and Tony Fraga and Chuck and Karen Tessier

Attendees enjoyed dinner in the museum's spacious, newly renovated atrium.

Susan Swiger and Roger Munch

Valerie Patenotte, Joan Richards, and Kathy Patrick

Nathan Bryant, Chuck Krekelberg, Heather Hatmaker, and Duncan McPherson

Artist Benjamin Walls and Aubrey McGuffey

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROSE PHOTO + VIDEO

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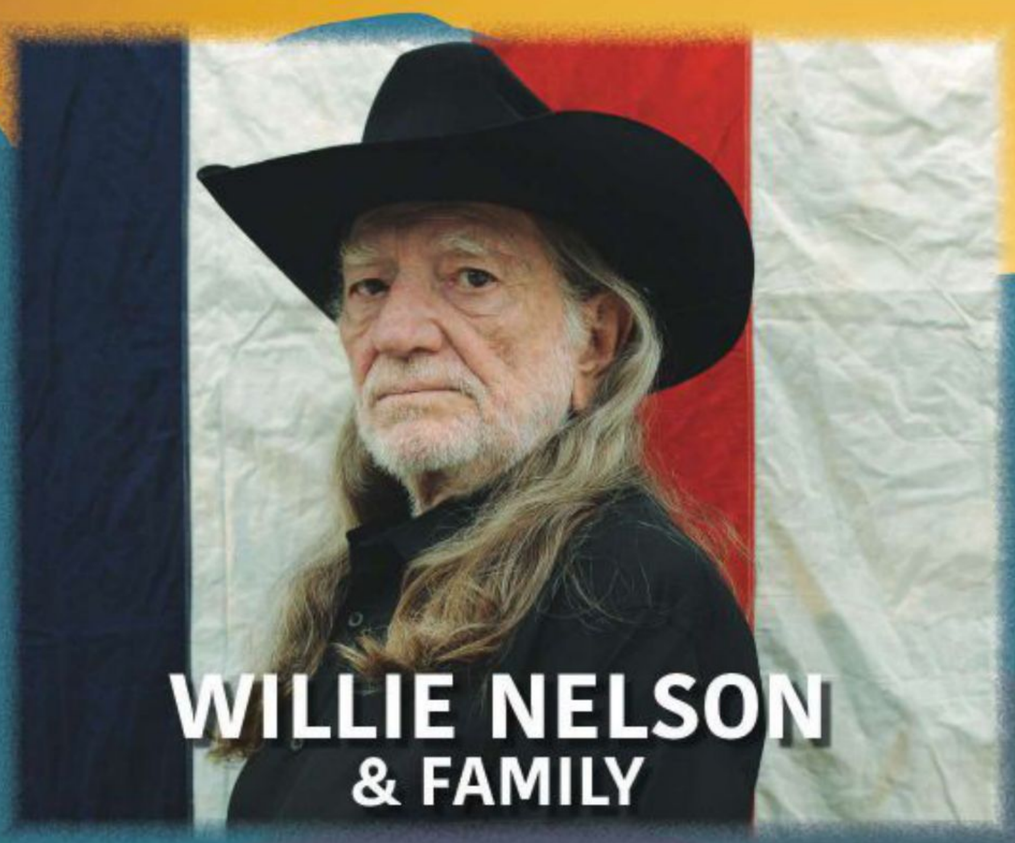

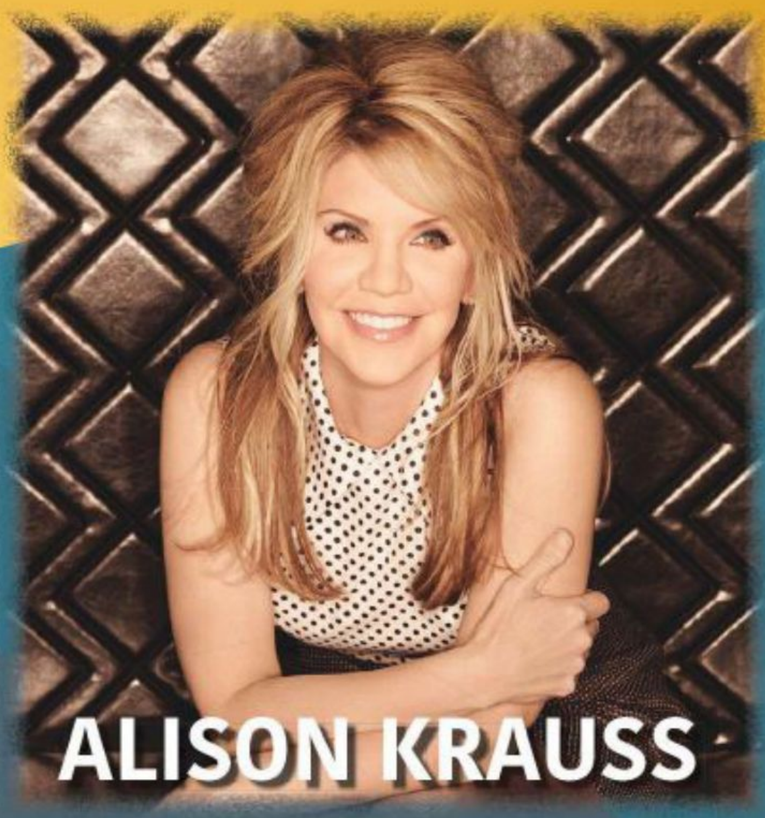

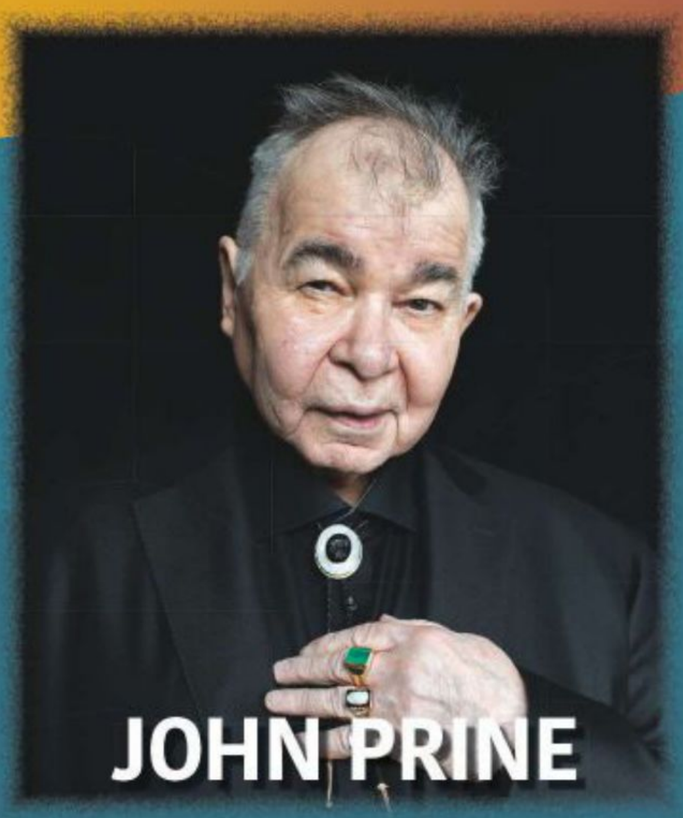

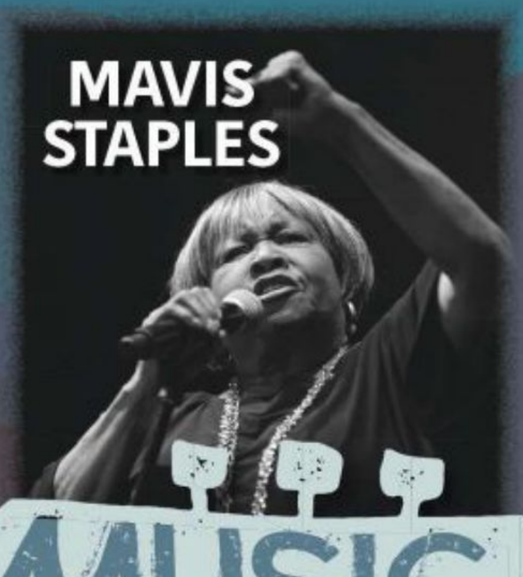

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Just Married

Wedding announcements from across the mountains

PHOTOGRAPH BY SHEILA NOLT PHOTOGRAPHY

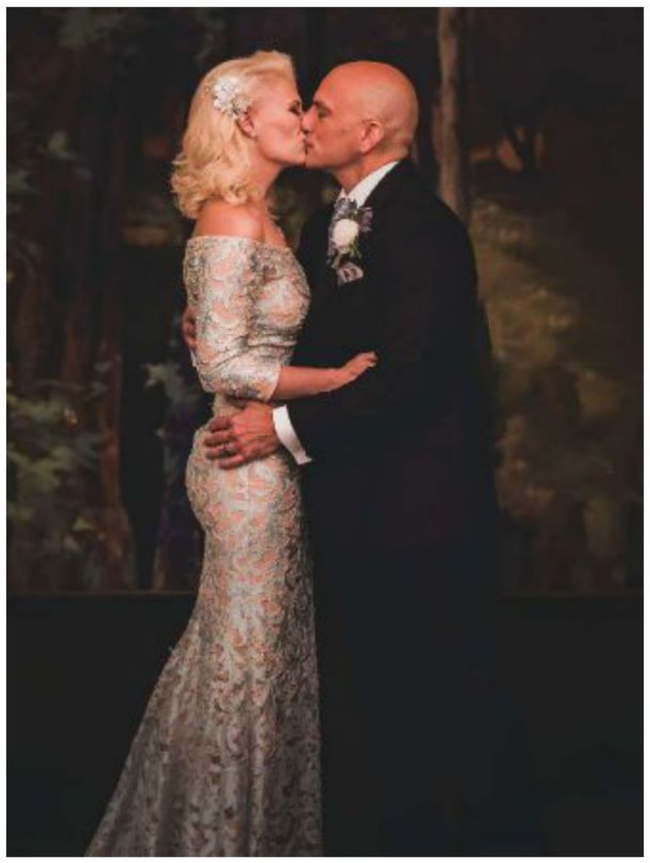
Madison Dietrich & Madison Malone
DECEMBER 22, 2019

For Dietrich (the bride) and Malone, it was literally chemistry that brought them together—that is a chemistry class at App State in Boone. After a surprise proposal that included both families, the couple married at Chestnut Ridge in Candler, celebrating with a wintery blue and silver-tinged Sunday brunch wedding. They reside in Chapel Hill, where the bride attends dental school.

Just Married

Ian MacBryde & Megan Balot
OCTOBER 19, 2019
Following a romantic sunset proposal on Lake Como in Italy, Megan and Ian wed 365 days later at the Country Club in Asheville, where the bride's parents reside. The couple lives in Charleston.

Anna Clair McCrory & Nicholas Owens
OCTOBER 25, 2019
High school sweethearts and Waynesville residents Anna and Nicholas tied the knot at the Barn at Honeysuckle Hill in Asheville. A highlight was having their daughter walk down the aisle with them.

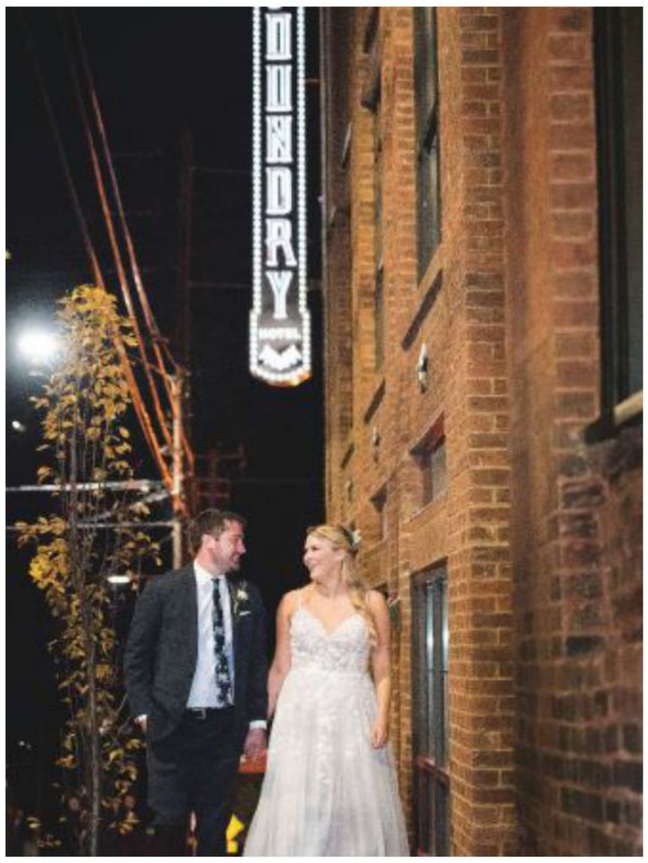


Jennie Nolan & Anthony Cerrato
AUGUST 17, 2019
A mainstay Asheville restaurateur, Anthony popped the question a year after meeting Jennie at a local fund-raiser. The two married amid many friends and family at the Masonic Temple in downtown.

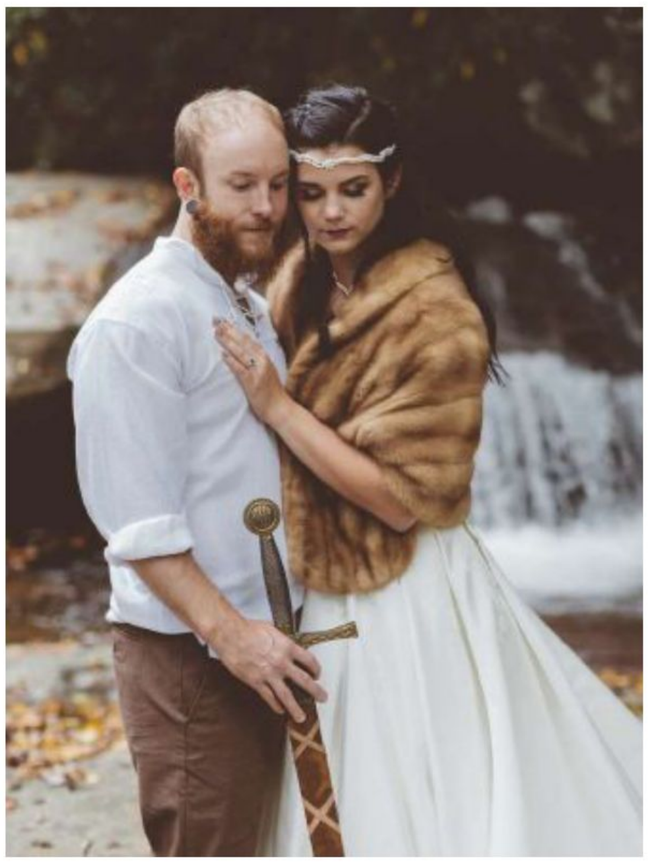
Kelly Donaldson & Julie Hooper Spiro
JUNE 7, 2019
Julie and Kelly serve as the director and assistant director (respectively) for the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce, so the steps of the beautiful historic county courthouse was a perfect setting to say "I do."

Share the Good News! If you currently live or grew up in Western North Carolina, were married in the last six months, and would like to see your announcement in print, visit wncmagazine.com/wedding-announcements for details. Inclusion is not guaranteed.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) ANCHOR & VEIL PHOTOGRAPHY; BROOKLYN JAMISON; MARK HASKETT; ANDY LUKACS ORMOND (PLANNING BY EVENTS BY KIERSA)

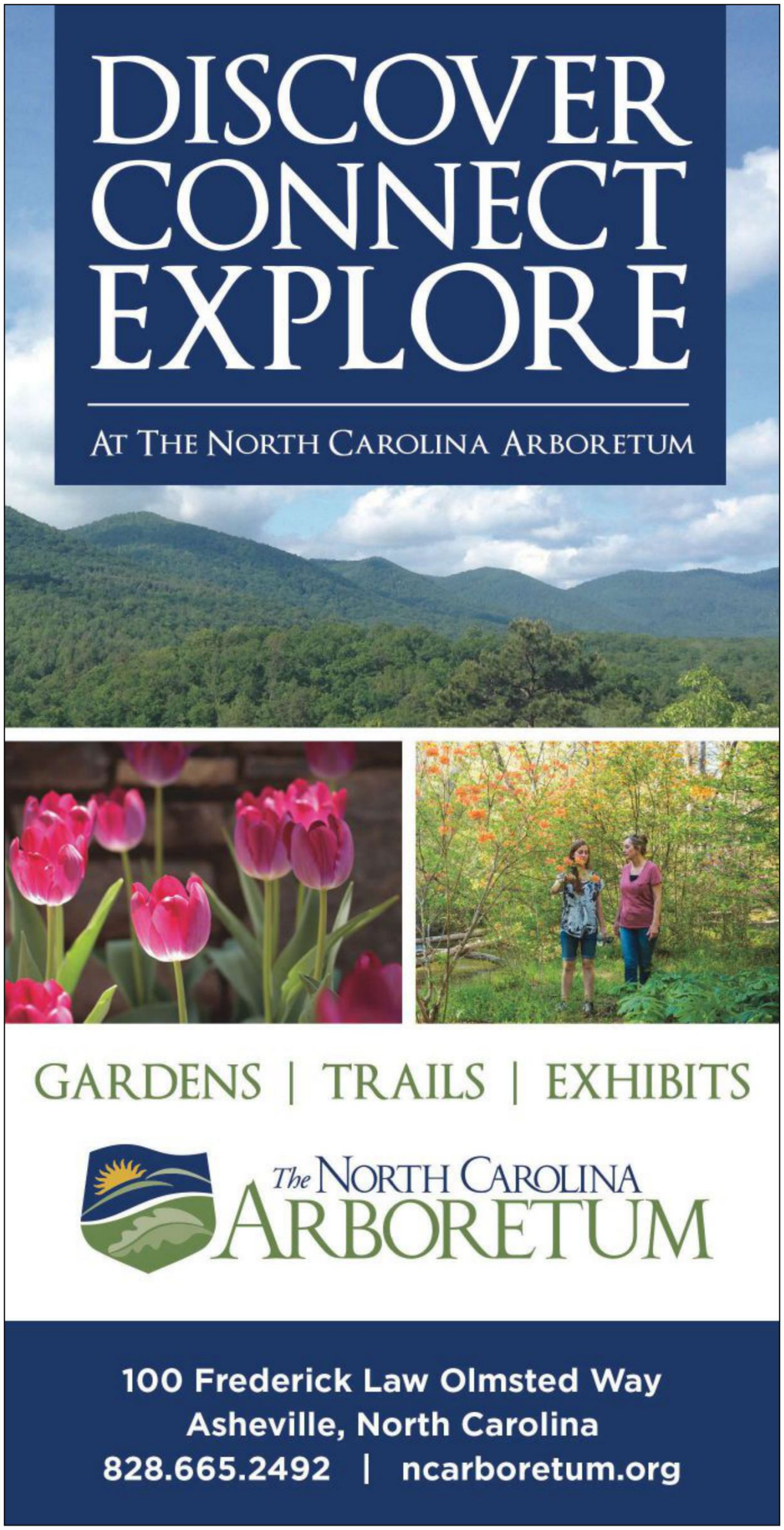


Elliott Wiebler & Chelsea Parker
NOVEMBER 9, 2019
Asheville locals Elliot and Chelsea dated four years before he popped the question on New Year's Eve. They wed at Boyd Chapel at Asheville School, of which Chelsea is an alum, and celebrated with family and friends during a reception at The Foundry Hotel downtown.



Jamie Blankenship & Ayla Hussey
OCTOBER 5, 2019
Jamie, a third-generation Asheville native, proposed to Ayla, who grew up here, on their fourth anniversary at a favorite hidden camp spot. Viking-themed nuptials—complete with furs, swords, cloaked bridesmaids, and costumed guests—took place at Sky Valley Ski Lodge in Georgia, which Ayla's grandfather helped build, and were followed by a reception held at the base of a private waterfall.

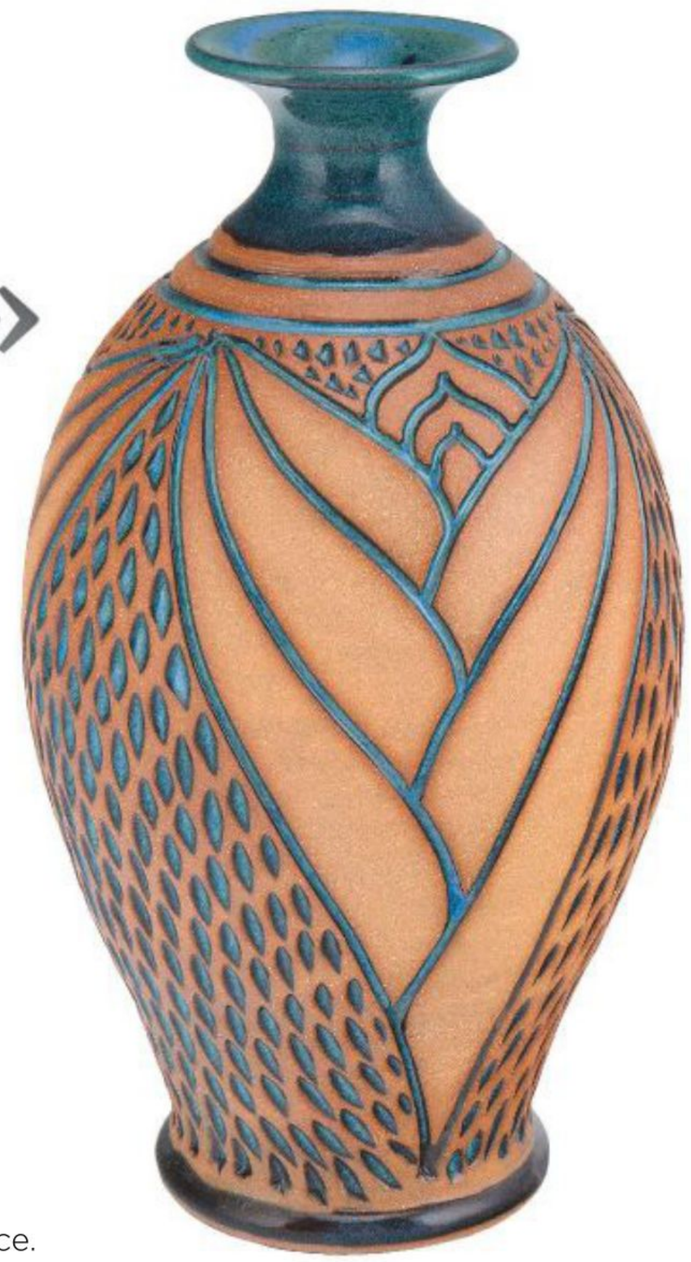
PHOTOGRAPHS BY (FROM TOP) MOZINGO PHOTOGRAPHY; STYLED AND SNAPPED



LOVE IT!

Ceramic Blues

Take any room from bland to beautiful with this handcrafted ceramic bottle from pottery artist Bob Meier. Bold and unique, this artwork is sure to catch guests' eyes no matter where you display it.
$140, Doe Ridge Pottery, Boone.
(828) 264-1127,
doeridgepottery.homestead.com



Crystal Catcher

Harvest the sun with this gorgeous stained glass suncatcher from local artist Cheryl Stippich, which features vibrant colors and a geode centerpiece.
$284, Southern Highland Craft Guild, Asheville.
(828) 298-7909, craftguild.org/shop

Built to Last

Easily load and unload this Yeti Hooper M30 Cooler through its re-engineered wide mouth opening. Don't be nervous to toss it around—with its ultra-strong magnetic closing strip and two quick-release buckles, this soft cooler can withstand any outdoor adventure
$299.99, D.D. Bullwinkel's Outdoors, Brevard.
(828) 862-4700, ddbullwinkels.com

Sculpted Seat

Brian Boggs' stunning Sculpted Fanback Armchair is a comfort to sit in and beautiful to look at.
Call for pricing, Brian Boggs Chairmakers, Asheville.
(828) 398-9701, brianboggschairmakers.com

Stunning Stones

Turn heads with this beautiful hand-forged sterling silver and blue kyanite stone necklace, handcrafted by Asheville artist Erica Stankwytch Bailey.
$275, Southern Highland Craft Guild, Asheville.
(828) 298-7909, craftguild.org/shop

Hand-Fashioned Comfort

Lounge on the sofa of your dreams with this one-of-a kind living room piece from Hickory Furniture, which is hand built in North Carolina, and created with your selection of fabric or leather.
Prices vary, Hickory Furniture, Hickory.
(800) 462-6278, hickoryfurniture.com

LOVE IT!

Avian Art

Hand-carved and -painted by Weaverville artist Tony Dills, this delicate wooden Blue Jay is the perfect way to bring the beauty of nature indoors.
$132, Southern Highland Craft Guild, Asheville.
(828) 277-6222, craftguild.org/biltmorevillage

Darling Diva

Look like living art with these handcrafted, geometric Diva Earrings from Q3 Art Jewelry, made from light-weight anodized aluminum.
$36.50, John C Campbell Folk School, Brasstown.
(828) 837-2775, q3art.com

Interchangeable Decor

This American-made Starburst bench is a home accent you'll never get tired of. With six different buttons that are easy to pop off and snap on, you can change up its look whenever you please.
$820, Grovewood Gallery, Asheville.
(828) 253-7651, grovewood.com

Cut from Clay

Featuring designs made from hand-cut paper stencils, these clay tumblers from Asheville potter Kristin Benyo-Schoonover will transform your kitchenware from utility to art.
$45.50, Folk Art Center, Asheville.
(828) 298-7928,
craftguild.org/folkartcenter

Emerald Dreams

Make your friends green with envy when you pour them tea from this beautiful ceramic beaked pitcher from artist Posey Bacopoulos.
$150, Penland, Bakersville.
(828) 765-2359, penland.org

One-Stop Pot

Say goodbye to a sink full of dishes. This 3-quart Enamel Dutch Oven by Lodge is suitable for stovetop cooking, refrigeration, and freezing, letting you cook and store all your favorite meals without spooning leftovers into stacks of tupperware.
$78.99, Mast General Store, Asheville.
(828) 232-1883, mastgeneralstore.com

Asheville Community Theatre

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Alice in Wonderland, 2019
Photo by Studio Misha Photography

"I have been to several plays/shows at ACT since moving to Asheville 3 years ago and none have disappointed. Having lived in large cities, **I feel so fortunate to have such high quality theater in our small mountain town**." - TRIPADVISOR REVIEW

Downtown Asheville * 35 East Walnut St. * 828-254-1320
www.ashevilletheatre.org

mountainscapes

PERFORMANCES, CULTURAL EVENTS, OUTDOOR GATHERINGS & FUND-RAISERS

Spring 2020

BEST BET

Biltmore Blooms

APRIL 1-MAY 21 » ASHEVILLE

Renowned landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted's designs get the chance to truly shine come spring. Take in the sights of thousands of tulips across the estate, along with blooming forsythia, magnolia, cherry, dogwood, redbud, and more in April, plus azaleas, poppies, snapdragons, and roses in May. To celebrate the colorful show, Biltmore's restaurants offer exclusive menu items, while the Winery offers special tours. » *Biltmore, 1 Lodge St.; daily, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; starting at $40, $20 youth; (800) 411-3812; biltmore.com*

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE BILTMORE COMPANY

BEST BET

Bullington Gardens Spring Plant Sale

APRIL 23-25 » HENDERSONVILLE

This annual sale offers the chance to stock up on all your spring vegetable starts and blooms. That way, you're ready to plant the minute the last frost has thawed. Shop a large selection of perennials, including native and pollinator-friendly plants. Plus, find annuals, trees and shrubs, and veggies from squash to eggplants. Tomato lover? Expect more than 20 varieties to choose from. Proceeds help support Bullington Garden's educational offerings, including horticultural therapy for seniors and special needs youth, jobs skills training for area high schoolers, and science-based programs for local elementary school students. » *Bullington Gardens, 95 Upper Red Oak Tr.; Thursday-Saturday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.; free to attend; (828) 698-6104; bullingtongardens.org*

Charitable Events

The Oskar Blues Four Miler

MARCH 7 » BREVARD

This race supports SMART Boys & Girls, a youth running program of the Cindy Platt Boys & Girls Club of Transylvania County. SMART members participate in races throughout the year as part of the program's focus on healthy lifestyles. Kids can take part in a one-mile fun run, beginning at 11:05 a.m. But the Four Miler itself is for adults only. » *Oskar Blues Brewery, 342 Mountain Industrial Dr.; Saturday, 11 a.m.; $35; (828) 242-1123; pisgahrunning.com*

Richard T. Trundy Memorial Sugar Cup Competition

MARCH 8 » SUGAR MOUNTAIN

Pick your discipline—skiing or snowboarding—then weave your way through the poles for a good cause in this giant slalom charity competition. One hundred percent of entry fees benefit the American Cancer Society in memory of Sugar Mountain's former director of operations; additional donations are also accepted. For those interested, and for an extra charge, the competition can serve as a NASTAR event. » *Sugar Mountain Resort, 1009 Sugar Mountain Dr.; Sunday, 9 a.m.; $15 race fee, $25-$30 lift ticket; (828) 898-4521; skisugar.com*

Assault on BlackRock

MARCH 21 » SYLVA

This trail race challenges runners to ascend 2,770 feet over seven miles through the Plott Balsam Mountains. A final 650-foot climb to the summit ridge means the run is done and it's time to stop and take in the view (and take a breath). All proceeds go to the Humane Society of Jackson County. Since 2011, the race has generated more than $24,000 for local nonprofits » *2110 Fisher Creek Rd.; Saturday, 9 a.m.; $30, $25 advance; (828) 506-2802; ultrasignup.com*

Florence Flapjack Fundraiser & Brunch

MARCH 21 & 22 » WEST JEFFERSON

Saturday, treat yourself to a farm-to-table breakfast plate featuring local grits, sausage, and maple syrup—to pour over some hot cakes, of course. Sunday, enjoy flapjacks with syrup, too, along with local sausage and eggs, plus a sparkling mimosa to wash it all down. Funds raised support the nonprofit Florence Thomas Art School, which promotes experiences in fine arts and heritage crafts in the region. » *Florence Thomas Art School, 10 S. Jefferson Ave.; Saturday, 8:30-11 a.m., Sunday 11 a.m.-1 p.m.; breakfast $10, $4 children, brunch $13+; (336) 846-3827; florenceartschool.org*

Catawba Valley Pottery & Antiques Festival

MARCH 28 » HICKORY

Each year, this festival celebrates the Catawba Valley's history as a pottery-producing region—and the history and use of pottery in the South at large. In addition to the chance to purchase pottery and antiques, the event will feature an exhibit of works by Daniel Johnston and a lecture by Johnston and Henry Glassie on Johnston's massive clay installations. Funds raised benefit the Historical Association of Catawba County and the North Carolina Pottery Center. » *Hickory Metro Convention Center, 1960 13th Ave. Dr. SE; Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; $6, $2 children 12 & under; (828) 324-7294; catawbavalleypotteryfestival.org*

Valley of the Lilies Half Marathon & 5K

APRIL 4 » CULLOWHEE

Proceeds from the race support travel and professional development for Western Carolina University students. The scenic half marathon course travels along the Tuckasegee River; both courses wind their way through campus. All half marathon finishers receive a medal this year. » *Western Carolina University, 379 Memorial Dr.; Saturday, 8 a.m. half marathon, 8:15 5K; $30 5K, $20-$25 advance, $85 half marathon, $45-$65 advance; (828) 227-8802; halfmarathon.wcu.edu*

Gears & Gables

MAY 2 » RUTHERFORDTON

Rutherford Housing Partnership's ride for housing returns in 2020. The event offers cyclists several routes of varying mileage, each through the scenic back roads of Rutherford County and the Blue Ridge Foothills. All proceeds raised help the organization provide urgent home

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF BULLINGTON GARDENS

SPONSORED BY WNC MAGAZINE

repairs to area low-income families. » *First Baptist Church, 246 N. Main St.; Saturday, morning start; starting at $30; (828) 248-3431; rutherfordhousingpartnership.com*

Sound Effects Benefit Concert

MAY 10 » ASHEVILLE

Asheville Beatles Band teams up for the fifth year in a row to perform an iconic Beatles album and raise funds for Asheville Music School. This year's concert features selections from *The White Album*. The showcase is preceeded by performances throughout the day of AMS student bands and instructors. Held at Salvage Station, kid's activities and a raffle and silent auction round out the family-friendly afternoon. A preview dinner concert and live auction takes place May 7 at Isis Music Hall. » *Salvage Station, 468 Riverside Dr.; Sunday, 2-6 p.m.; $10, $5 ages three to 10, free two & under; (828) 252-6244; ashevillemusicschool.org, salvagestation.com*

BEST BET

Families Learning Together

APRIL 18 » BOONE

Held at Turtle Island Preserve, an Appalachian Heritage Farm and off-grid outdoor education center, the event serves to immerse visitors in nature for the day. Learn about and participate in demonstrations on sustainable and natural living, from blacksmithing to woodworking, composting, outdoor cooking, and more. Discover edible and medicinal plants on guided walks. Children can participate in a musical instrument petting zoo. Proceeds benefit the center's summer camp scholarship program. » *Turtle Island Preserve, 2683 Little Laurel Rd.; Saturday, 10 a.m.- 4 p.m.; $25, $14 ages three to 17, free children two & under (828) 406-1190; turtleislandpreserve.org*

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF TURTLE ISLAND PRESERVE

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CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
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LÚNASA
MAR. 18 • 8pm
SUSAN WERNER & DAVID MYLES
MAR. 19 • 8pm
SHANA TUCKER
APR. 4 • 8pm
COMPAGNIA BACCALÀ PRESENTS PSS PSS
APR. 24 • 7pm
DANCE THEATRE OF HARLEM
MAY 5 & 6 • 8pm
(828)257-4530
worthamarts.org

BEST BET

Fire on the Mountain Blacksmith Fest

APRIL 25 » SPRUCE PINE

This annual festival—a collaboration between Spruce Pine Main Street, Penland School of Craft, and the Toe River Arts Council—brings together metalsmith artists and appreciators for live demonstrations, forging competitions, lectures, and more, including the chance for the public to try their hands at blacksmithing. Of course, it also offers opportunities to purchase unique iron and steel wares, along with the tools of the trade. This year's featured Master Blacksmith is Elizabeth Brim, a WNC teacher and artist known for using feminine imagery in her ironwork. In the adult Forge Off, teams will make iron flowers in her honor. » *Downtown; Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.; free; (828) 765-3008; facebook.com/fireonthemountainfestival*

LEAF Festival

MAY 14-17 » BLACK MOUNTAIN

Held on the grounds of scenic Lake Eden, this spring's festival is LEAF's 50th. In honor of the major milestone, and LEAF's 25th year, expect new and novel happenings, along with a diverse lineup of musicians and artists befitting of the celebratory theme "Solid Gold." On-site camping is available. » *Lake Eden, 377 Lake Eden Rd.; Thursday, 4:30 p.m.-Sunday, 6 p.m.; $45-$220, day & weekend passes available; (828) 686-8742; theleaf.org*

Beer City Scramble

MAY 31 » ASHEVILLE

Entry fees from this inaugural golf tournament, a four-person scramble on Grove Park Inn's championship course, benefit Meals on Wheels of Asheville & Buncombe County. In fact, the event is expected to raise more than $20,000—enough to feed 11 homebound seniors for an entire year. As the name implies, players can enjoy craft beers throughout the course; beers will also be served up with barbecue at lunch and dinner. » *The Grove Park Inn, 290 Macon Ave.; Sunday, 1 p.m. tee off; $600 per team, $150 per player; jake@beercityscramble.com; beercityscramble.com*

Cultural Affairs

Appalachian Photography Competition

MARCH 6-JUNE 6 » BOONE

View works by amateur and professional photographers that showcase their interpretation of the unique character, people, places, and pursuits that distinguish the Southern Appalachians. Artists compete for $4,000 in cash and prizes. From March 6-20, vote for the People's Choice Award. The Friday opening night celebration runs 6-10 p.m. » *Appalachian State University, Turchin Center for the Visual Arts, 423 W. King St.; Tuesday-Thursday & Saturday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Friday, noon-8 p.m.; (828) 262-3017; tcva.appstate.edu*

Henderson County Restaurant Week

MARCH 26-APRIL 2

» HENDERSONVILLE

This annual week-long event seeks to celebrate the diverse culinary offerings in Henderson County. Participating locations each offer their own creative prix-fixe specials, from full gourmet meals to snacks. Proceeds benefit Dandelion, a local eatery from the nonprofit Safelight that provides job training for survivors of violence and an educational and supportive environment for those who may be at risk. » *Various locations; Thursday-Thursday, times vary; prices vary; hendersoncountyra.org*

Easter Hat Parade

APRIL 11 » DILLSBORO

Bring your favorite chapeau from home or fashion your own with help from Dogwood Crafters. Ribbons are awarded in categories from prettiest to best-smelling and poofiest. Dress up your pup, too: there's an award for Best Animal in Show. Before the parade, led by antique cars, kids can get their face painted, meet the Easter Bunny, and hunt for Easter eggs. » *Downtown; Saturday, 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m. hat making, noon egg hunt, 2 p.m. parade; free; (828) 506-8331; visitdillsboro.org*

Ramp Festival

MAY 2-3 » WAYNESVILLE

It's a weekend of ramp revelry. The event pays homage to the pungent native wild onion with a full day of crafts, music, and, of course, the chance to sample the festival's hero. It culminates in a meal Sunday where ramps, harvested from nearby mountainsides, are the star. » *American Legion, 171 Legion Dr.; Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Sunday, noon; (828) 456-8691*

Friends & Family Day

MAY 9 » BRASSTOWN

Each spring, the artists at John C. Campbell Folk School open the doors to their studios, offering the opportunity to tour their spaces and even create with them. All ages are welcome to participate in craft, music, and dance activities. » *John C. Campbell Folk School, Keith House, 1 Folk School Rd.; Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.; free; (828) 837-2775; folkschool.org*

Saluda Arts Festival

MAY 16 » SALUDA

Local and regional artists set up outdoor galleries in the streets of downtown for the day, offering their paintings, pottery, and much more. Also enjoy live entertainment, children's activities, and an array of food offerings. The event is held rain or shine. » *Main St.; Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.; free; (800) 440-7848; saluda.com*

PHOTOGRAPH BY NICK KING PHOTOGRAPHY

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Garden Jubilee

MAY 23-24 » HENDERSONVILLE

One of the largest gardening shows in WNC, this two-day event features more than 260 vendors selling thousands of annuals, perennials, vegetables, and herbs. Gardening experts are on hand to share their tips and tricks for growing beautiful blooms and tasty produce. Garden tools, furniture, and crafts will also be for sale. Stop by the main stage for educational sessions on topics like shade growing, butterfly gardens, and more throughout the day. » *Downtown; Saturday and Sunday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; free; (828) 693- 9708; visithendersonvillenc.org*

Music & Theater

Slow Food

MARCH 13-14 & 20-22 » WAYNESVILLE

No, you're not invited to hear the history of the

BEST BET

PHOTOGRAPH COURTSEY OF MADISON COUNTY POTTERS MARKET

Madison County Potters Market

APRIL 18 » MARSHALL

The annual market offers handmade functional and sculptural ceramics from members of the Potters of Madison County, a group honoring the diverse ceramicists working in the area. It also features works from established potters across the Southeast, who are each personally invited by POMC artists. This year's event marks the show's 10th anniversary.

» *Marshall High Studios, 115 Blannahassett Island Rd.; Saturday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.; free; clay@ pottersofmadisoncounty.com; pottersofmadisoncounty.com*

BEST BET

Roseanne Cash

APRIL 4 » BOONE

Cash's 15 albums have earned her four Grammy Awards and 11 nominations, as well as 21 top-40 hits, including more than 10 number-one singles. She's on tour in support of *She Remembers Everything*, an album that marks a return to more personal songwriting after a trio of albums that explored her Southern roots and family heritage (she's the eldest daughter of Johnny Cash and his first wife, Vivian). The songs embrace women's narratives for powerful material that speaks of real life and complex experiences. » *Appalachian State University, Schaefer Center for the Performing Arts, 733 Rivers St.; Saturday, 7 p.m.; $40, $35 faculty/staff, $20 students/children; (800) 841-2787; theschaefercenter.org*

farm-to-table movement. The play by Wendy MacLeod—directed by Steve Lloyd—serves up the story of a couple celebrating their anniversary at a Greek restaurant in Palm Springs. The couple's culinary gratification quite literally gets delayed thanks to a needy waiter, and comedy ensues. Will the marriage survive the service? » *HART Theatre, Feichter Studio, 250 Pigeon St.; Friday & Saturday, 7:30 p.m., Sunday, 2 p.m.; $13, $8 students; (828) 456-6322; harttheatre.org*

An American in Paris

MARCH 20 » MORGANTON

Inspired by the Academy Award-winning film and orchestral compositions of George Gershwin, the production tells the story of World War II veteran Jerry Mulligan, who's trying to make a name for himself as a painter in Paris. Things get complicated when he falls for Lise, a young Parisian shop girl, and realizes he isn't her only suitor. The four-time Tony Award-winning play features the Gershwin classics "I Got Rhythm," "Stairway to Paradise," and others. » *City of Morganton Municipal Auditorium, 401 S. College St.; Friday, 7:30 p.m.; $60-$65, $50 youth; (828) 433-7469; commaonline.org*

Graham Nash

MARCH 29 » ASHEVILLE

Graham Nash is a two-time Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee and Songwriter's Hall of Fame inductee, as well as a Grammy Award winner. The legendary artist—who has made a name for himself with his solo career and as a member first of the Hollies and then Crosby, Stills & Nash—makes a stop in Asheville for an intimate evening of songs and stories. » *Diana Wortham Theatre at the Wortham Center for the Performing Arts, 18 Biltmore Ave.; Sunday, 8 p.m., 7:30 p.m. doors; $69.50-$395, higher prices for VIP packages; (828) 257-4530; dwtheatre.com*

Bring It On: The Musical

APRIL 2-5 » CULLOWHEE

The cult classic cheerleading movie makes its way to the stage with music and lyrics by Tom Kitt, Amanda Green, and Lin-Manuel Miranda. It follows Campbell, the newly named cheer captain of her beloved Truman High School, who is unexpectedly forced to spend—and cheer—her senior year at the neighboring hard-knock Jackson High. The play features choreography by Alexa Hendrickson, a WCU senior musical theater major, and DJ Williams, a 2018 WCU alum and former member of the WCU Cheer Team. » *Bardo Arts Center Performance Hall, 199 Centennial Dr.; Thursday-Saturday, 7:30 p.m., Sunday, 3 p.m.; $20, $10 students, $15 seniors, faculty, and staff; (828) 227-2479; wcu.edu*

MerleFest

APRIL 23-26 » WIKLESBORO

The four-day annual festival returns to celebrate what Doc and Eddy Merle Watson called "traditional plus" music: the rootsy bluegrass and old-time sounds of Appalachia, as well as Americana, country, blues, rock, and more. This year's lineup includes big names from Willie Nelson & Family to John Prine, Billy Strings, Alison Krauss, and Jim Lauderdale. The event's Chris Austin Songwriting Contest offers the chance to hear up-and-comers, too. » *Wilkes Community College, 1328 Collegiate Dr.; Thursday-Sunday, times vary; $60-$90 single day, $170+ multiday, free kids 12 & under; (800) 343-7857; merlefest.org*

Million Dollar Quartet

APRIL 24-MAY 17 » FLAT ROCK

At Sun Records one December night in 1956, Johnny Cash, Carl Perkins, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Elvis Presley came together for an impromptu jam. Inspired by that recording session, this Tony Award-winning Broadway musical features more than 20 of the famed quartet member's hits, including "Folsom Prison Blues," "Down By the Riverside," "Great Balls of Fire," and "Blue Suede Shoes." » *Flat Rock Playhouse, 2661 Greenville Hwy.; Wednesday & Thursday, 2 p.m. & 7:30 p.m., Friday, 8 p.m., Saturday, 2 p.m. &8 p.m., Sunday, 2 p.m.; $25-$63.75; $20-$32 students, $10-$20 kids; (828) 693-0731; flatrockplayhouse.org*

British Invasion Years

APRIL 25 » TRYON

This 1960s-era retrospective is really three shows in one. It opens with classic songs by iconic '60s British groups, from the Rolling Stones to The Who, then features hits by American acts like The Beach Boys and The Doors. It closes with a finale by the four lads who started it all—The Beatles. » *Tryon Fine Arts Center, Veh Stage, 34 Melrose Ave.; Saturday, 7:30 p.m.; $35-$40; (828) 859-8322; tryonarts.org*

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF IMC PARTNERS; (OPPOSITE) BREVARD MUSIC CENTER

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9 Beet Stretch

MAY 1 & 2 » ASHEVILLE

Stop in and hear Beethoven in a brand-new way. Norwegian artist Leif Inge shares his take on the composer's beloved "Symphony No. 9," an immersive audio installation that stretches the piece—without pitch distortions—so that it lasts 24 hours and creates a captivating soundscape. » *LEAF Global Arts Center, 9 Eagle St.; Friday, 6 p.m.-Saturday, 6 p.m.; free; (828) 254-7046; ashevillesymphony.org*

Evita

MAY 8-24 » HICKORY

The Tony Award-winning musical, composed by Andrew Lloyd Webber, charts the rise of the young, poor, and ambitious Eva Duarte out of the slums and up to Buenos Aires, where she eventually becomes the wife of Argentine president Juan Perón. » *Hickory Community Theatre, Jeffers Theatre, 30 Third St. NW; Thursday, 7:30 p.m., Friday & Saturday, 8 p.m.; Sunday, 2:30 p.m.; (828) 327-3855; hickorytheatre.org*

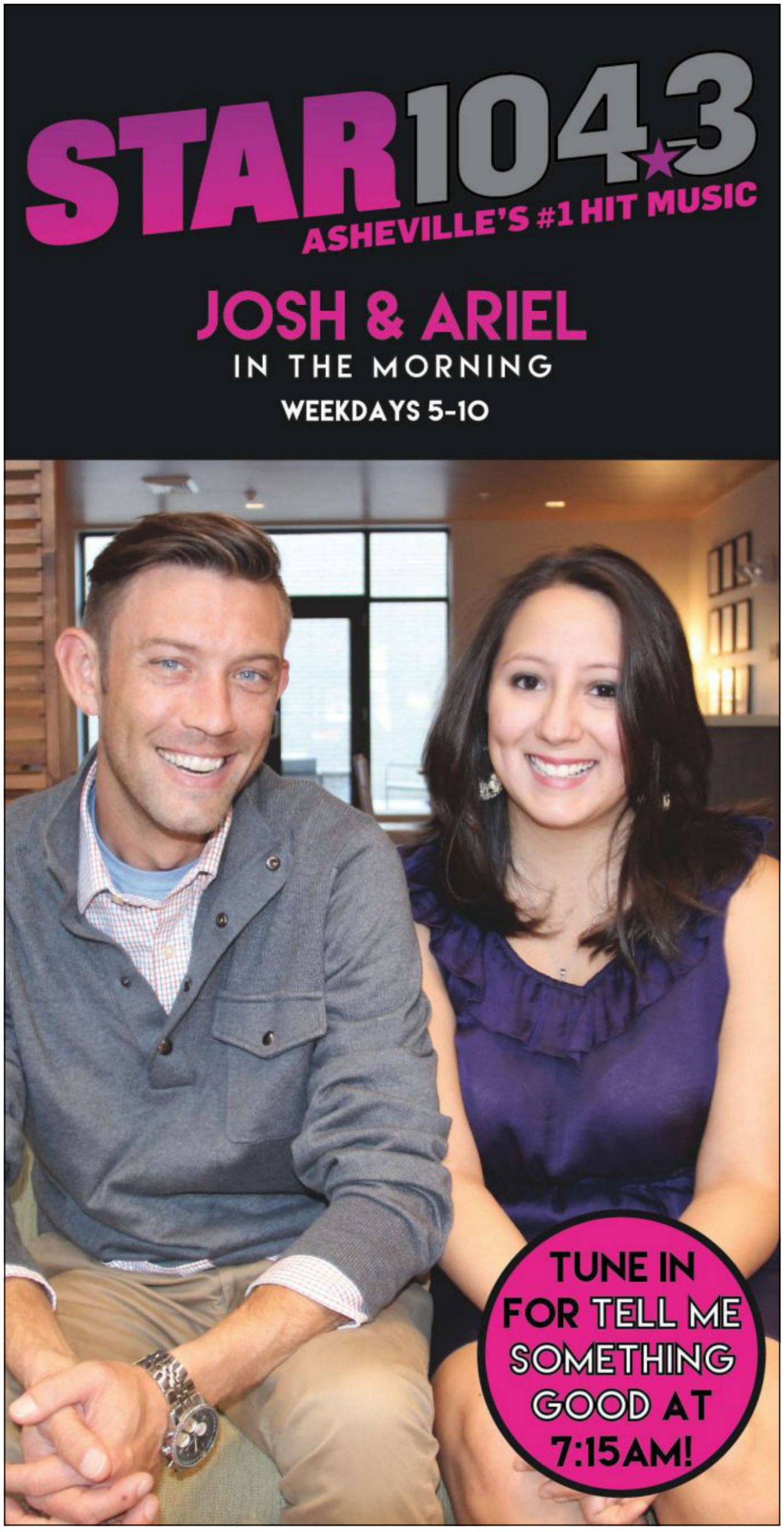
BEST BET

BMC Presents: Bryan Sutton's North Carolina Guitar Celebration

MAY 30 » BREVARD

Lauded as the most accomplished and awarded acoustic guitarist of his generation, WNC native Bryan Sutton hosts this special concert, which also celebrates his first Blue Ridge Guitar Camp at Brevard Music Center. Guests include David Grier, Chris Eldridge, Courtney Hartman, Dudley Connell, and others. » *Brevard Music Center, Whittington-Pfohl Auditorium, 349 Andante Ln.; Saturday, 7:30 p.m.; $20 & up; (828) 862-2100; brevardmusic.org*

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF BREVARD MUSIC CENTER



BEST BET

Pisgah Stage Race

APRIL 13-18 » BREVARD

This five-day endurance cycling event covers 140 miles, with more than 20,000 feet in elevation gain. The mountain bike routes wind through Pisgah National Forest and are said to include some of the best singletrack in the country—think rooty, rocky trails with rhododendron tunnels and creek crossings. Competition categories are expanded this year to include 60+ men and women. » *Pisgah National Forest; Monday-Saturday; $900-$1,800; (828) 606-5107; blueridgeadventures.net*

Into the Woods

MAY 30-JUNE 13 » BURNSVILLE

Come along on a journey with a baker and his wife, who set out to break a witch's curse so that they can have a child. Along the way, they encounter some familiar characters, including Cinderella and Jack of *Jack and the Beanstalk* fame. » *Parkway Playhouse, 202 Green Mountain Dr.; Friday & Saturday, 7:30 p.m., Sunday, 3 p.m.; $24, $22 seniors, $13 children 17 & under; (828) 682-4285; parkwayplayhouse.com*

Outdoors

Organic Growers School Spring Conference

MARCH 6-8 » MARS HILL

Take your pick from a crop of more than 150 workshops on all things organic growing, homesteading, urban farming, and rural living, as well as a trade show, seed exchange, special on-farm events, and more. Class topics will cover everything from kudzu basketry to medicinal fungi, beekeeping, and canning and preserving. Special guests include Leah Penniman of Soul Fire Farm in Grafton, New York, and heritage poultry expert Meagan Coneybeer. » *Mars Hill University, 100 Athletic St.; preconference workshops Friday at various locations, Saturday & Sunday, times vary; $85 Saturday, $75 Sunday, $150 weekend, $80 Saturday, $70 Sunday, $140 weekend advance; (828) 214-7833; organicgrowersschool.org*

Meltdown Games

MARCH 21 & 22 » BLOWING ROCK

Help Appalachian Ski Mountain say goodbye to their season and the snow with a weekend of outdoor activities, some serious, some more silly. Offerings include a big air event, rail contest, trash bag downhill race, cardboard box derby, and pond skim. The latter is just as it sounds: the chance to skim, on skis or a snowboard, across a nearly 90-foot long pond at the base of the slopes. » *Appalachian Ski Mountain, 940 Ski Mountain Rd.; Saturday & Sunday, 9 a.m.-6 p.m.; free with a lift ticket; (828) 295-7828; appskimtn.com*

Early Spring Migrants Hike

MARCH 28 » CHIMNEY ROCK

Chimney Rock State Park kicks off its 2020 monthly guided hiking series, Naturalist Niche, with an early spring migrants hike. Dozens of bird species migrate through the park each spring before they head north; see and hear them as they make their way home. Preregistration is required. >> *Chimney Rock State Park, 431 Main St.; Saturday, 9-11 a.m.; $25, $15 youth, discounts for passholders; (828) 625-9611; chimneyrockpark.com*

Mighty Four Miler

APRIL 4 » WAYNESVILLE

This inaugural race honors the sacrifice and heroism of Riley Howell: funds benefits the Riley Howell Foundation Fund, which supports organizations that help victims of gun violence. The course winds through parts of Waynesville and Hazelwood and is run in conjunction with the Gateway to the Smokies Half Marathon (see below). Runners registered by March 23 are guaranteed a race T-shirt. » *Gateway Arch, Main & Depot streets; Saturday, 8:15 a.m.; $35; greg@gloryhoundevents.com; gloryhoundevents.com*

Gateway to the Smokies Half Marathon

APRIL 4 » WAYNESVILLE

Fans of this race can rejoice: It returns in 2020, with its original course and start/finish lines. The half marathon is run in conjunction with the Mighty Four Miler; its course includes the Plot Creek area of Haywood County, in addition to areas in Waynesville and Hazelwood, with six aid stations located approximately every two miles. All finishers will receive a commemorative finisher medal. » *Gateway Arch, Main & Depot streets; Saturday, 8 a.m.; $70; greg@gloryhoundevents.com; gloryhoundevents.com*

Smoky Mountain Relay

APRIL 24 & 25 » CULLOWHEE, BREVARD & BRYSON CITY

Grab your friends and family for a scenic relay race in the mountains of WNC. Teams can choose from a 200-mile or 135-mile course; the 135-mile course begins at the Jackson County Recreation Complex in Cullowhee, while the 200-mile course starts at the Pink Beds Trail Loop picnic area outside of Brevard. Both finish at the Nantahala Outdoor Center in Bryson City. » *Various locations; Saturday & Sunday, 5 a.m. start; $680-$2,520; (828) 338-8380; smokymountainrelay.com*

Memorial Day Trout Tournament

MAY 23 & 24 » CHEROKEE

Compet for $10,000 in tagged fish within the freestone streams of Cherokee. Waters will be especially stocked with rainbow, brook, golden, and brown trout; once caught, they can be redeemed for cash prizes. The tournament is open to all ages. » *Cherokee Enterprise Waters; Saturday & Sunday, all day, 4-6 p.m. prize redemption; $15 entry fee, $17 two-day fishing permit; (828) 359-6110; visitcherokeenc.com*

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WE ARE MUSIC, encaustic painting, 48" x 36"
BY MARY FARMER, ASHEVILLE

"Natural beauty is very important to me. It helps shed all the stuff that happens to you every day."

A master gardener and fine artist for nearly 30 years, Mary Farmer finds inspiration from the Japanese notion of *shinrin-yoku*, or forest bathing. "You let it come across you and cleanse you internally and externally," she says. "That's what my work is about. If you can't leave your house, office, or hospital room, you get to go forest bathing in one of my paintings." But Farmer wasn't always at peace with the world, nor as an artist. After a tumultuous life, an unfulfilled career as a nurse, and a stint in rehab for alcohol addiction, Farmer rediscovered her childhood love for art as a form of therapeutic healing and decided to pursue it fully in 2004, earning her Bachelor of Fine Arts from Georgia State University. Her encaustic paintings are ethereal, most often depicting abstract landscapes. Her work can be viewed in Asheville at The Haen Gallery downtown or at her Chestnut Street studio by appointment. Learn more at maryfarmer.com.

SEE & BE SEEN IN EVERY ISSUE, WE FEATURE THE WORK OF ONE TALENTED ARTIST LIVING IN WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA. TO VIEW OUR GALLERY OF LAST PAGE ARCHIVES OR SUBMIT WORKS FOR CONSIDERATION, VISIT **WNCMAGAZINE.COM/LASTPAGE.**

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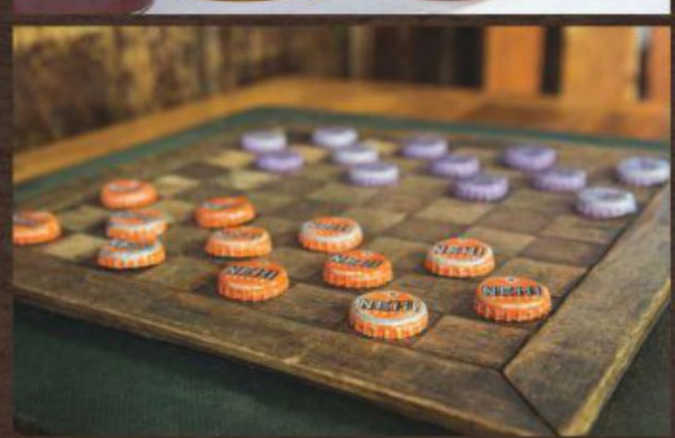

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