It was a beautiful and successful summer in Mills River Park this year, and a delightful and colorful fall in spite of all the rain.

We opened a great fishing pier on the bank of the river. With a gift from our good friend and benefactor Vaughan Fitzpatrick, we opened a new canoe and kayak launch. In periods of heavy rain this fall, you’ve seen the warning signs go up cautioning folks that the water was too high to be safe for fishing or kayaking.

This fall, the Fitzpatrick Foundation awarded their first three full scholarships to Blue Ridge Community College. We congratulate recipients Ann Green, Paulette Laberge, and Trisha Meadows. The Foundation will award three scholarships annually in hopes of keeping promising and productive scholars in the Mills River area.

As we go into the winter, you’ll see work beginning on our new parking lot. Growing by leaps and bounds, we’ve outgrown our parking. This new lot will add dozens of new spaces to make it more convenient for walkers, for those using the library, playground and town hall. It will also enhance safety in our parking area. The new lot is being paid for almost entirely out of the Town’s fund balance. Your tax dollars are being put to excellent use.

Our two longest serving Council members, Roger Snyder and Wayne Carland, were re-elected to the Council this year. Both were sworn in for another four year term in December. Both have
I still remember a rather unusual episode from my years at Mills River High School in the 1940s. It involved Mr. J.M. Alden, who joined the teaching staff when I was in the 10th grade. I am uncertain about his background before he came, but found him to be an inspiring teacher. He taught a class in biology and sometimes conducted a class outdoors that helped us learn to identify birds and trees. I soon purchased a copy of the classic book, *Birds of North Carolina*. In later years, I acquired other reference books on birds as well as trees, flowers, and insects.

Mr. Alden assigned us to write a short story on a topic related to biology. He expressed approval of my story and suggested that it might be suitable for publication. I didn’t pursue that but did compose a short article on my observations on birds and bird nests. It was published in an outdoor magazine and became my first publication.

In one session of our class, Mr. Alden showed us a poster chart depicting the evolution of species from aquatic creatures to primates including humans. This soon led to a protest by some parents and others in the community and a well-known radio announcer at an Asheville station took up their cause. The Mills River school principal, A.M. Foster, convened an assembly in the school auditorium to address the issue. He also interviewed some members of the biology class, including me, about the content of the lecture. By then, I had done enough outside reading to think that it was appropriate to discuss Darwinism in a biology class.

A few years later, I took graduate work in the history of science and taught courses in that field. This enabled me to put the high school episode into a broader context. One unfortunate result of the controversy as that Mr. Alden did not return to Mills River the following year.
MILLS RIVER LIBRARY

Changes Coming……..

Henderson County is joining NC Cardinal in late January. NC Cardinal is a consortium of public libraries in North Carolina dedicated to sharing resources and expanding opportunities through the use of a single online catalog. Patrons of member libraries are welcome at any NC Cardinal library.

Use it to:
- Discover materials not owned by your library
- Borrow materials from any NC Cardinal library
- Renew materials
- Check your account
- Place holds online for items from any NC Cardinal library; materials are sent to YOUR pickup library

117 locations, 35 counties, 3 municipalities, 5 million+ library items

Regular Programs

**Monday's:** 10:00 am - Storytime
**Tuesday's:** 9:00 am - Yoga *
1:30 pm - Knitting Club
LEGO Club (1st Tuesday of the month)
Board Games (2nd Tuesday of the month)

**Thursday's:** 10:00 am - Book Club

Specials

- **January 19:** 11:00 am - Wild Encounters
- **February 3:** 1:00 pm - NC Cardinal Class
  4:00 pm - Robot Technology *
- **March 2:** 4:00 pm - Let’s Go Fly *
- **March 16:** 4:00 pm - Asheville Engineering for Kids *
- **April 6:** 4:00 pm - Engineer It! Sink or Float *

* Registration Required
PARK UPDATE WINTER 2015

Winter is officially here although the thermometer doesn't currently seem to know that. We have had a good year here at the park and look forward to a busy year in 2016.

Wi-Fi is now available in the Park! Look on your devices for Mills River WIFI to get connected.

As you know, the construction of the fishing pier and canoe/kayak launch area at the north end of the park also included a gravel parking area. We have just recently installed solar lighting for security purposes at the launch lot.

In October, a bench picnic table and trashcan holder were constructed and installed near the "beach" area in the northwest corner of the park. These were designed and built as an Eagle Scout project, and we thank Sam Ledford for these amenities. We have been fortunate this year to have several Eagle Scout projects that have benefited the park. A large shelter structure is under construction over the picnic table by the playground and will be enjoyed by everyone looking to get out of the elements next year.

The park recently hosted its “Paws for a Cause” event which is a fundraiser for the America Cancer Society as well as the 2nd “Let's Move Day” and the annual Lion's Club “Trunk or Treat” on Halloween.

The water fountains at the restroom building have been shut down for the winter. Fountains are available in the Town Hall building during business hours.

As the Mayor mentioned in his article, the Town is going ahead with the construction of an additional parking lot just north of, and an extension of, the existing lot at Town Hall. The bid will be awarded in January and construction is slated to begin as early as February, weather permitting. When completed, this additional parking area will virtually double the amount of available parking.

Lastly, the Town just received official notice that its Parks and Recreation Trust Fund grant application was not selected for funding this year.

As always, don't forget that the Picnic Shelter is available for rent up to six months in advance and the online calendar may be viewed to confirm availability. Please go to www.millsriver.org and click on the Park button or call Town Hall at 828-890-2901 for information.
FROM THE OFFICE OF THE TAX COLLECTOR

Besides being the month in which 2015 property taxes are due (the 5th being the last day to pay without penalty), the month of January also marks the listing period for property improvements and personal property. All owners of personal property and business personal property as well as those owning real property on which improvements have been made during the 2015 calendar year must list those improvements and property. This includes mobile or manufactured homes not on a permanent foundation. Listing forms are generally mailed by Henderson County or may be obtained from them.

North Carolina has several programs to assist the elderly, disabled property owners, and disabled veterans with property taxes, including the following:

Elderly/Homestead Exclusion
North Carolina General Statute 105-277.1 excludes from property taxes a portion of the appraised value of a permanent residence owned and occupied by North Carolina residents aged 65 or older, or totally and permanently disabled, whose income does not exceed $29,000. The amount of the appraised value of the residence that may be excluded from taxation is the greater of twenty-five thousand dollars ($25,000) or fifty percent (50%) of the appraised value of the residence. Income is defined as all moneys received from every source other than gifts or inheritances received from a spouse, lineal ancestor or lineal descendant.

If you received this exclusion in 2015, you do not need to apply again unless you have changed your permanent residence. If you received the exclusion in 2015, and your income in 2015 was above $29,000, you must notify the assessor. If the person receiving the exclusion in 2015 has died, the person required by law to list the property must notify the assessor. Failure to make any of the notices required by this paragraph before June 1 may result in penalties and interest.

If you did not receive the exclusion in 2015, but are now eligible, you may obtain a copy of an application from the assessor. It must be filed with the Assessor's Office by June 1.

Disabled Veterans Homestead Exclusion
North Carolina General Statute 105-277.1C excludes the first forty-five thousand dollars ($45,000) of the appraised value of the permanent residence owned and occupied by a North Carolina resident, who is a qualified Honorably Discharged Veteran or surviving spouse.

These statutory requirements must be met:

- Permanent resident of Henderson County
- Character of separation was honorable or under honorable conditions
- Either 100% permanent and total disability that is service-connected or received benefits for specially adapted housing because of a service-connected disability (38 USC 2101)
- Surviving spouse who has not remarried of either (1) a disabled Veteran, (2) a Veteran who died as a result of a service-connected disability whose character of service at separation was honorable or under honorable conditions, or (3) a service member who died from a service-connected condition in the line of duty and not as a result of willful misconduct.

Disabled Veterans and surviving spouses must submit NCDVA-9 Certification Form when making application. Disabled Veterans making application under 38 USC 2101, must show acceptable proof from the Veterans Administration.

The NCDVA-9 Certification Form must be obtained from the Henderson County Assessor's Office. For assistance in completing the NCDVA-9 Certification Form and submitting to the regional VA office, please contact:

    Henderson County Veterans Service Officer
    Mike Murdock, MSgt USMC (Ret)
    1200 Spartanburg Hwy, Suite 200,
    Hendersonville North Carolina 28791
    Telephone: 828 697-4817 or email mmurdock@hendersoncountync.org

NCDVA-9 Certification Form is the only proof of character of separation and proof of disability that the County will accept.

Applications for the Disabled Veteran’s Exclusion should be filed with the Assessor’s Office during the regular listing period, January 1 through January 31, but may be timely-filed through June 1. Applications received after June 1 are considered untimely.

Wildlife Conservation Deferment
North Carolina General Statute 105-277.15(b) Classification - Wildlife conservation land is designated a special class of property under Article V, Section 2(2) of the North Carolina Constitution. Wildlife conservation land classified under this section must be appraised and assessed as if it were classified under G.S. 105-277.3 as agricultural land.

Continued on Next Page
COMMITTEE and BOARD VACANCIES

The Town of Mills River hereby announces vacancies on the following Committees and Boards, and is soliciting applications from interested citizens who wish to serve their community.

OPPORTUNITIES are available for volunteer positions on the following committees or boards:

- Planning Board 1 seat, two-year Term
- Finance Committee 2 seats, two-year Term

APPLICATIONS are kept on file for two years, and are available at Town Hall, on our website at www.millsriver.org or you may request an application by contacting Town Clerk Sue Powell at 828-890-2901 or susan.powell@millsriver.org.

Land qualifies as wildlife conservation land if it meets the following size, ownership, and use requirements:

- **Size:** The land must consist of at least 20 contiguous acres
- **Ownership:** The land must be owned by an individual, a family business entity, or family trust and must have been owned by the same owner for the previous five years.
- **Use:** The land must be managed under a written wildlife habitat conservation agreement with the NC Wildlife Resources Commission that is in effect as of January 1 of the year of which the benefit is claimed.

The Wildlife Habitat Conservation agreement requires the owner do one or more of the following:

- Protect an animal species that lives on the land; conserve priority animal wildlife habitats which are longleaf pine forest, early successional habitat, small wetland communities, stream and riparian zone, rock outcrop or bat cave.
- The land has been classified under G.S. 105-277.3 when the Wildlife Habitat Conservation agreement was signed or the owner must demonstrate to both the Wildlife Resources Commission and the assessor that the owner used the land for a purpose specified in the Wildlife Habitat Conservation agreement for three years preceding January 1st of the year for which the benefit is claimed.

For assistance with a Wildlife Habitat Conservation agreement property owners must contact the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. [www.ncwildlife.org/wildlife_species_con/](http://www.ncwildlife.org/wildlife_species_con/)

Agreements are only issued through the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. The Neither the Town of Mills River nor Henderson County issues agreements. Obtaining a Wildlife Habitat Conservation Agreement does not defer personal property ad valorem taxes.

There are other restrictions that apply to this program; please contact the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission.

While property that is classified as Wildlife Conservation is appraised and assessed as if it were classified under NCGC 105-277.3 as agricultural land, the Wildlife Conservation Program is not a part of the Present-Use Value Program. However, applications for the Wildlife Conservation Program must be timely-filed with the Henderson County Assessor’s Office during the regular listing period, January 1 through January 31, in order to be considered eligible. An owner making application must attach a copy of the owner’s written Wildlife Habitat Agreement in effect as of January 1 of the year for which the application is submitted. An owner, who fails to notify the Assessor when the property loses its eligibility, is subject to a penalty in the amount of 10% per listing period as set out in N.C.G.S. 105-277.5.

Deferred taxes are the difference between the taxes that are due on wildlife conservation land that has been designated a special class of property and that would be due if the land were taxed on the basis of its true value market value. These deferred taxes also become a lien on the property. The deferred taxes for the current and the three preceding years become due and payable with interest when the property loses its eligibility as a result of a disqualifying event. A disqualifying event occurs when the property no longer qualifies as wildlife conservation land.
**RECIPE CORNER**

**MINESTRONE**

- 1 tablespoon olive or vegetable oil
- 1 large onion, coarsely chopped (1 cup)
- 1 medium green (or red) bell pepper, coarsely chopped (1 cup)
- 2 cans (14 ½ ounces each) ready-to-serve vegetable broth (or Knorr vegetable bouillon cubes dissolved in water)
- 2 cans (14 ½ ounces each) Italian-style diced tomatoes with garlic, oregano, basil, undrained*
- 1 can (15 to 16 ounces) great northern beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 medium yellow summer squash or zucchini, cut lengthwise in half, then cut crosswise into slices (1 ½ cups)
- 1 cup uncooked small pasta shells (4 ounces)
- ¼ cup pesto or shredded Parmesan Cheese

*FRESH INGREDIENTS MAY BE SUBSTITUTED FOR CANNED

1. Heat oil in 3-quart saucepan over medium-high heat. Cook onion and bell pepper in oil 3 to 5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until crisp-tender.
3. Stir in squash and pasta.** Heat to boiling. Boil 8 to 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until pasta is tender. Top each serving with pesto or shredded parmesan cheese.

**Uncooked pasta makes a thicker soup. For thinner soup, cook pasta thoroughly before adding.**

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**MEETING & OTHER DATES**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 5</td>
<td>Planning Board</td>
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<td>Jan 14</td>
<td>Town Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 15</td>
<td>Agricultural Advisory Committee</td>
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<td>Jan 18</td>
<td>Martin Luther King Birthday</td>
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<td>Jan 26</td>
<td>Parks and Recreation Advisory</td>
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<td>Feb 11</td>
<td>Town Council</td>
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<td>Finance Committee</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Planning Board</td>
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<td>Mar 10</td>
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**ALL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

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**LOCAL SMALL BUSINESS ADS**

The Mills River Town Newsletter is printed quarterly: at the end of March, June, September, and December. In order to defray the cost of publishing, the newsletter accepts small business ads. These ads should be business card size (preferably the card itself) and black and white. There is no guarantee of ad or print quality. The company must do business within the town limits, but not necessarily have its location in the town. There is a $50 fee for each quarterly advertisement and since there is a limited amount of space, ads will be taken on a first come, first served basis. The payment must accompany the ad and be labeled for the newsletter. The fee collected goes directly for newsletter costs. Site selection within the newsletter is to be determined by the newsletter editors. The editors reserve the right to refuse an ad. Both ad and payment will be returned if this occurs. All ads must be emailed in JPEG format and MUST be business card size.

Thank you for your support.

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**NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS**

The Town of Mills River newsletter is published and distributed quarterly by US mail and e-mail link. A copy can also be found at www.millsriver.org. Articles submitted may be edited for brevity, content, and appropriateness. Inclusion of an article is at the editor’s discretion. Deadline for submission of articles is the 20th of each of the following months: March, June, September and December. Submit articles in writing to:

Patty Brown
Town of Mills River
124 Town Center Drive
Mills River, NC 28759

or by email to patty.brown@millsriver.org. Articles can also be dropped off at the Mills River Town Hall. If you need assistance, have questions or need more information, feel free to call Patty at (828) 890-2901 or e-mail her at the above address.
Winter weather can cause many problems ranging from power outages to being stranded along the road in your vehicle. You can prevent some problems by being prepared for emergency situations. With wet winter predicted, there are some precautions that can be taken to ensure safety during a winter storm:

**For the Home:**
- Stock up on non-perishable foods and water, on any medicines, and other essential items:
  - Flash lights, battery operated radios, and a first aid kit.
  - Ways to stay warm: keep plenty of fuel, firewood, auxiliary heating sources and blankets, coats, etc.
  - Also check smoke and/or carbon monoxide detectors.

**For the Vehicle:**
- Make sure you have plenty of fuel in your vehicle in case you become stranded.
- Keep cell phone charger, blankets/coats/gloves, snacks/water, first aid kit, jumper cables, emergency warning devices—road flares/reflective warning signs and flashlight in your vehicle in case of emergencies.

I hope everyone has a safe and happy winter.

**For Emergencies:** 911  Non-emergencies: 828-697-4911  NC Highway Patrol: 828-693-4141