

The BEAR FACTS

A publication of Mountain C.A.R.E. (<http://www.mtncares.net>)

Spring 2024 Volume 18 Issue 1

Thoughts from the Editor

by Marianne Bellettini



A Happy New Year 2024 to all! May this be the year of posterity, family, love, and faith in whatever pulls you forward.

As this new year is started and by the time you read this, we will be starting the 3rd month of 2024 and

hopefully the signs of Spring will begin to show! What a beautiful place we all live in within our mountains! I am looking forward to Spring and the renewal of life it brings to all!

It will be 1 year this Spring, since joining the Bear Facts team as their new editor. I have to say this past year has been a very big learning experience. I know more learning will come in this new year!

I am ready and willing!



In addition, you will get the feeling from my articles/writings, that my heart and will are guided by Faith, Hope and Love! You may have realized that with my article on Faith and my love for the song by George Michael! LOL!

In this new year I want to highlight those who you may know but maybe do not know

how much behind the scenes they have played in our communities, (villages). They have been the silent background resident, assisting wherever the need arose.

Introducing, Bernadette Griffith:

Bernie had her first life changing moment in Forest Falls as a teen. While visiting a friend's sister, she experienced a snowstorm and saw a bear. For a Southern California girl born in San Diego and raised in Upland those were firsts for her that left the lasting impression. Fast forward to the late 90's when having finished school in

Pasadena, she transferred to UCR and traded jobs in Old Town and Village in Claremont to work on Hospitality in San Bernardino. Living in Yucaipa at the time, she was invited to a tie dye party in Forest Falls at a house that had a tree growing through the middle and she knew she had found a place to call home.



"Bernie" Griffith

It took 2 years of juggling but in 2001 she moved into her first home in the canyon with 2 dogs and big dreams. A people person by nature, she has seized every opportunity to contribute to the things that make our mountain communities great. She started by working at local businesses, supervising the 2010 census, and then volunteering at countless affairs in the community. Eventually she moved her family to Forest Falls and started her own business. She has served on the boards of the Frozen Green Thumb Garden Club, Mountain Care and Valley of the Falls Community Center and helped coordinate many of the events that happen locally. There have been fundraisers, information expos, holiday parties and artisan fairs, weddings, memorials, town meetings and classes. In 20+ years she has set up & cleaned up, collected, and distributed, planted, shoveled, supported, and petitioned, celebrated, and commemorated with and for people from all walks of life. Helping people come together in this small community has been rewarding and inspiring.

I hope you enjoyed reading about our first highlighted "behind the scenes" resident. Next quarter a new resident will be highlighted! Thank You.

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Mountain C.A.R.E. President's Message

by Debi Welch



22nd Annual Chili Cook Off is just around the Corner! Please join us **Sunday May 26th** for the Forest Falls Chili Cook Off!

This fun Event opens to the public at 11am with Chili tasting bags on sale so you can sample all the chilis. Cook Off ends at 3pm with the town photo, don't leave early you want to be in this photo! If you're not familiar with these photos go to the El Mexicano and

look at their walls!

An event of this stature requires a lot of work, the saying Many hands make light work totally applies here. New to town and want to meet your neighbors? We'd love to have your help! Call or text me for additional info 909.260.0215.

The more helpers we have the more things that can be done at the event. If we have enough help there can be a kid's game section, we are also considering an old thyme photo booth. Please don't hesitate to share your time and energy with us, you won't regret it and will want to be a helper every year!



There will be a featured T-shirt for sale on the day of the event, possibly even for sale in advance at the Elkhorn. If you are a collector, you will want one of these shirts, they are always fun! Some proudly claim to own one from every event.

Throughout the day there are so many things going on. If you've always dreamed of beating the Fire Department and cooking at this event, now is your chance. The current holder of the coveted honor goes to Matt Baker of Finazzo's Pizza Wagon, don't know if the Finazzos are going to try and keep their title, but we will have applications up and running in person or on the Facebook page relatively soon. Spaces are limited so act quickly!

Please look for the new Facebook Page, "Forest Falls Chili Cook Off" for updates, application and fun info as we get closer to the event.

Parking will be at the Momyer Trailhead, for easy walking into town. The Beer garden will be set up under tents/easy ups to provide some shade, with chairs set up outside of the Beer garden, for seating as well. The raffle, which is always a big hit, year after year. There is everything in the raffle from a Misha Bench to a piece of Lindsey Foggett art, and all the good stuff that we drum up in between!

The pet and kid parade will be accepting all walkers who want to participate. Anything goes in this parade. From ponies to chickens, and 2 months old to 100 years old, all are welcome. This is a proud down-home event. Please sport red, white and blue showing your pride and Patriotism to be an American as well as Forest Fallsian, whether it's as a current resident, past resident, guest or soon to be neighbor. Please come and celebrate this special place we call home!



AO FSC and CERT program merge with Greyback Preparedness (GDPG)

GDPG formed in 1996 to become the first disaster preparedness group in Angelus Oaks, formed through the efforts of the Volunteer Fire Dept. 15, Sheriffs Dept., Forestry and concerned citizens. A few years ago, CERT was established in our community and thoughts of merging the two groups became a topic of both groups. The board members voted to start the merger to be finalized on March 15, 2024, when a new board will be voted on.

FEB 1, 2024 Angelus Oaks Firesafe Council announcement The first step in becoming a nationally recognized FIREWISE Community required a drive around with CALFIRE and our Fire Department to conduct a risk assessment of Angelus Oaks. In January A.O. Firesafe Council sent out surveys to the homeowners in Angelus Oaks in order to establish a solid baseline condition of our homes and property. The survey consisted of questions regarding home hardening, and defensible space. If any home owner in Angelus Oaks did not receive a survey, please contact us at 909-725-1622 and we will provide you with a survey. This survey is required in order for Angelus Oaks to maintain its standing as a FIREWISE COMMUNITY. Survey can be completed anonymously.



Firesafe Council has had a community meeting on February 22nd, at the A.O. Fire Station with special guest speaker, San Bernardino County Fire Chief Dan Munsey, speaking on Measure W, which will be on the upcoming ballot in March. More info about this ballot measure is in the article on the next page. Also discussed were the results of the FIREWISE survey to date, educational material on how to check your home hardening efforts, the CALFIRE grant application that was recently submitted and how those funds would be utilized. Updates on Home Insurance programs were also discussed.

GREYBACK/CERT MONTHLY MEETINGS

3rd Thursday of each month at 6:30 PM

FIRESAFE Council BOARD MEETING

4th Thursday of the month at 6:00p.m., at the A.O. FireStation.

FIREWISE COMMUNITY MEETINGS will be every other Thursday of the month (Feb, Apr, June, Aug, Oct, Dec). These meetings will also be held at the A.O. Fire Station at 6:00 p.m.

A Letter Concerning Measure W

by Tom McIntosh

How will you vote on upcoming Ballot Measure W?

This March you can cast your vote on Measure W which would eliminate the Fire Fee currently in effect for our community. I think we can all agree that we are being taxed to death with the latest insult being the huge cost of living increases affecting every aspect of our lives. Yet, I still believe we have to openly consider the benefits afforded by a strong community-based fire company responding with reliable equipment out of a local fire station... Who should bear the cost?

Please take a few minutes to read the financial breakdown from fiscal year 2019-2020 below and see if you do not agree that when supporting FP-5 (A NO Vote on upcoming Measure W) we are simply paying our fair share for the existing and continued Fire/Rescue/Emergency Medical Services provided by your Fire Station 99 and the support we all receive from the San Bernardino County Fire District in general.

You will see that when including existing Property Tax (only about 25% which goes to County Fire) PLUS the FP-5 fees, we barely cover the annual operating expenses of the Forest Falls fire station, plus a building and apparatus replacement fund which is essential for the future. {In Mountain Home Village and Angelus Oaks, I am told only 10% of property tax goes to County Fire}

The only major change since the 2020 writing is that the Fire Engine replacement estimated at \$600,000 then is now closer to \$900,000, as is everything else on the list about 50% more now than in 2020, with FP5 being limited to a 3% annual increase, currently about \$175/year per parcel.

There is a time to stand and be counted... to decline many existing and new tax programs but please think twice before defunding FP5 as it would be the proverbial "cut off your nose to spite your face".

Consider a NO Vote on Measure W.



(re-print from Fall of 2020)

SHOULD WE SUPPORT THE FP-5 FIRE FEE?

In representative government the people choose the level of service they want and then bear the cost of receiving that service. Due to citizen actions the issue is on the ballot this November 3rd (2020) to decide if it will continue or be eliminated. When you vote, look for Measure U. (measure W in 2024)

For several years we paid \$150 per household to the State as a CalFire fee which went straight to Sacramento and provided no additional fire protection to our community. Shortly after the CalFire fee was stopped we were faced with a local fire fee that would benefit us directly. However, this local fee of \$160 year per parcel, FP-5, was pretty much forced upon us without an

opportunity to vote.

I contend we should pay our fair share and supporting FP5 does just that. Hear are the facts.

Prior to FP-5 the Forest Falls fire station (FS99) operated at a loss every year. Here is fiscal year 2019 - 2020 breakdown.

| | |
|--|-------------|
| Revenue, all sources except FP-5: | \$326,714 |
| Expenses: | -\$268,655 |
| Apparatus replacement fund, see below* | -\$126,500. |
| Capital Improvement Fund (replace building, etc.) ** | -\$100,000. |
| Leaving us short annually, without FP-5 funds: | -\$168,441 |
| FP-5 Revenue, assuming 100% of all parcels*** | \$171,544 |

Annual surplus carryover provided no unforeseen expenses to the station or major apparatus repair or replacement. \$3,103

* For everyone's safety we must maintain a fleet of operational apparatus able to respond to all risk situations that occur in our primary response area. When looking at our fleet here is the estimated amount per year that needs to be set aside for apparatus replacement.

Engine, 10-12-year life, \$600,000 or \$50k per year

Water Tender, 20-year life, \$250,000 or \$12.5K per year.

Patrol, 15-year life, \$250,000 or \$17k/year,

Rescue, 15-year life, \$200,000 or \$13k/year.

Squad, 15-year life, (hand me down), \$4k/year

Snow Cat, 20-year life, \$300,000 or \$15k/year

Loader, 20-year life, \$300,000 or \$15k/year

Total annual apparatus replacement costs: \$126,500

** Nothing lasts forever and our beautiful firehouse, the original portion having been built in the 1950's, is showing its age. It can no longer fit "modern fire apparatus" and more importantly lies within a flood zone that has become more active over the past 10 years, almost taking out the station on 3 occasions when flash floods from Slide Creek diverted north easterly and came within 15' of the building. Fire stations are only designed to last 50 years, we are overdue. The cost of a new firehouse, based on the recent replacement of the Angelus Oaks station, is 5-6 million dollars. With an annual Capitol Improvement Fund of \$100,000 the building (and land) costs for station replacement works out to cover a new fire house with a 50-year life.

*** Per the tax collector, 1090 is the total parcels in Forest Falls, from these numerous parcels were combined for Tax Assessment, reducing the actual number of parcels that are charged the FP-5 fee, reducing the amount collected annually.

Lastly, consider that we have received free chipper service twice a year for a couple of decades. While there is no guarantee chipper service will continue, it seems obvious it may be on the chopping block if FP-5 is eliminated. I don't know what a commercial tree companies' costs would be to chip a pile twice a year but I to believe it could easily eat up most, if not all the FP-5 annual fee.

Your questions or comments are expected and appreciated, please try to keep them specific to the FIRE, RESCUE and EMS services provided to the communities primarily served by San Bernardino County Fire District, Station 99... Forest Falls and Mountain Home Village.

History, Ranger - Old School

article by Mike Guerin submitted by Dave Druck

Les Salm was born in 1908 in Michigan and soon after his birth his family moved to California. Les attended Whittier High School in the 1920s and was active in drama where he was a leading actor in many of the school plays. By 1927 Les had become a forest ranger and was initially assigned to the Mill Creek area. Les used the motorcycle to patrol much of the mountains, which still had many rough roads even with the completion in 1915 of the 101-mile Rim of the World Highway. During his patrols he would often educate the public campground campers and visitors about the forest and even the steam caves at Arrowhead Springs. I have no photo of Les, but here is his "ranger station" in early Mill Creek



Les Salm's Ranger Station & motorcycle

Canyon. He toured the summer camps at the Barton Flats, Seven Oaks, and Big Bear districts, giving lectures about fire prevention." Before most of the fire lookouts were constructed (but after the horseback days) most often the patrol rangers would travel their areas on motorcycles. Later in his career he worked in several of our lookout towers.

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO JOIN THE
FOREST FALLS
SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH
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Saturday Services
 40551 Valley of the Falls Dr.
 (Next door to the Post Office)

Bible Study 10:00 a.m.

Musical Praise Service 11:00 a.m.
 (Musicians are encouraged to bring their instruments)

Worship Service 11:30 a.m.

Weekly Potluck Fellowship Dinner 12:45 p.m.



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Garden Club - Herbs in Winter

by Jan Horton, Frozen Green Thumb Garden Club President

What an absolute joy to be a member of the Frozen Green Thumb Garden Club. This group has a heart for the mountain communities and seeks ways to support the activities and people that make living here so special. The stated purpose of the organization is "The beautification of our canyon and the education of our residents to the pleasures and rewards of gardening". We do this through community service, having fun while learning, and getting to know our neighbors. Julie Saunders, last year's VP of Programs, compiled a list of our activities in 2023 and I would like to share just a few of them with you.



Members learned how to create Terrariums and Miniature Gardens, took a day trip to the UCR Botanical Gardens, learned plant propagation from Master Gardener Maggie O'Neill and went to Crafton Iris Farms in Redlands.

Our Plant Sale in June brought in funds to support our activities and other mountain community organizations.

In July, several of us enjoyed going to Big Bear for their annual Xeriscape Home Tour. In August, Shannon Wray gave a fascinating historical presentation about our mountain home. The refurbishing of the Forest Falls sign was planned and completed by our Garden Club members.

Karen Zacharias, Master Gardener from AO, gave instructions on proper rose pruning and indoor plant care. We made Holiday Cards and delivered See's candy and cards to the residents and staff of Pacific Pines in AO. Robyn Clark, the club President, and Julie Saunders were instrumental in guiding and planning this exceptional calendar for our members.

Enjoying luncheons, cleaning up the Lodge grounds, supporting Lodge activities with Bake Sales, decorating the Lodge, FF sign,

and Post Office for the Holidays were also accomplished. You may note that our Post Office Bear is adorned with festive gear each month, thanks to Sue Bottenberg, who provides the fun accessories and decorates him. She also keeps the communities informed about Garden Club activities through her creative Facebook posts.



This coming year, we are looking forward to continuing to learn about mountain gardening, taking more field trips, spending time getting to know our neighbors, and discovering new ways to support our mountain towns. Of course, we will continue to be an active presence in our town festivities and look forward to being, in the midst, of all the fun!

If you would like to join our Garden club, please do so! It is a great way to meet neighbors and work together to beautify our mountain home. Membership is \$25 per year and participation is required in our activities, be it donating baked goods, helping set up, clean up, donating plants or money for the Plant Sale, or being present for the event. Working together for a common goal brings people together and strengthens our community. We would love for you to join us! If this sounds good to you, please email us at frozengreenthumbgardenclub@yahoo.com and we will send you a membership form.

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Fabulous and Freaky February

by Marianne Belletini

February 2024 showered us with numerous inches of rain then at a minimum, a foot of new snow instead of feet of snow. Not sure which is the worst for those of us living in the mountain communities. With snow a lot of hard work shoveling and digging out! With rain the unsettling of flash floods and mud flows. This past week, rain and snow created some interesting hazards. Just an example: on the street where I reside, branches fell on electrical wires, branches fell on vehicles, small trees toppled over from the weight of the heavy snow. I also heard of much larger trees toppling over and causing power outages, not to mention the slipping and sliding of vehicles, with all this new snow!



notice the brach hanging on the wire

Sadly, there was a loss prior to this weather event. Sarina, The Tree Fairy, as she is called by those who know her, lost her home to a devastating fire. As we love living in the mountains, fire is one threat that can destroy anything in its path. I know I lived through my home burning down and losing our pet dog when I was 11 years old. Thankfully, I as well as Sarina survived.

Remember to be patient with our local snowplow operator. We all must do our best not to let our frustration take over! This is a reminder for myself as well, I hate berms!!!

In closing, the CA Office of Emergency Services, (mutual-aid system), provided extra staffing to assist those living in the mountain communities. The County Fire Department also increased staffing county wide for this storm event. This included two hand crews and swift water rescue teams, along with heavy equipment being made available for this event. Thank you to all those who coordinated this assistance!

Community Events



Supper on the Hill is a great opportunity for our communities to come together to share a meal and conversation!

We would like to thank all who joined us for our Thanksgiving Day Dinner! It was a huge success with 84 people in attendance! Hopefully, you were able to join in the festivities and converse with others who attended or saw the postings on Facebook.

We started last February 2023 with monthly potlucks and finished with the Thanksgiving Dinner. Unfortunately, there was a decline in attendance and potluck food as summer progressed. Due to this decline, the committee decided to pull back and regroup, changing the monthly event to a quarterly event.

This leads us to our 2024 plans for Supper on the Hill. Our potlucks will be quarterly starting March 7th the first Thursday of the month. The committee will be providing 2 soups, vegetarian and meat based. Along with the famous Baked Potato Bar and a variety of beverages.

Potluck participation could be a contribution of Dessert, Bread, Salad, or a Soup/Main Dish. We always welcome people if they are unable to provide food but wish to make a monetary donation. The money goes to procuring the soup ingredients, the potatoes and goodies, and the beverages (i.e. coffee, tea, lemonade).

Like any event- a helping hand, is always appreciated! We put notices up the week before at the Bulletin Board in Mountain Home Village, the Post Office in both Angelus Oaks, and Forest Falls. We prepare for Supper on the Hill, on the Wednesday and Thursday mornings prior to the event at 10:0 a.m. Assistance is greatly appreciated with the preparation as well as clean up after the quarterly evening event!

Supper on the Hill -- Bring your own place settings, (plate, bowl, fork, knife, and spoon)! This greatly reduces the need for washing and drying at the end of the evening. Taking your trash with you in a small bag reduces trash cleanup as well!

Our future quarterly events for 2024 will be on Thursday Evenings, from 5 to 7 p.m. on:

March 7, June 6, September 5, & Thanksgiving Day

The Supper on the Hill Committee is:

Robyn, Dale, Bill, Yohlddy, Michelle, Andrea, Dee, Jan, Renata, and Carol

We hope to see you there! What a great time to share a meal and socialize with old and new neighbors!

Community Events & Activities Calendar

Angelus Oaks - Forest Falls - Mountain Home Village

Spring 2024 Special Events

| When | What | Where | What else? |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Mar 3 Apr 28 May 12 | LifeStream Blood Drive | Big Falls Lodge | from noon until 4 pm, for appointments call 800-879-4484 |
| Mar 7 | Supper on the Hill | Big Falls Lodge | Community "Potluck Dinner". Bring a side or dessert and your own dinnerware. It's more than just a meal. Supper night is all about good food, great conversation and community spirit. |
| May 11 | Canyon Clean-up | several locations in Forest fgalls | Old cinder pile lot aka Bighorn Flats and Lot across from BFL, and Fallsvale school for E-Waste |
| May 12 | Mother's Day Brunch | Big Falls Lodge | Last year's event turned out great! We hope to make this an annual event. Currently, we are still working out the details to spoil moms on the mountain. |
| May 18 | Safety Fair | Big Falls Lodge | Hosted by CERT, this event will cover many you need to know to keep yourself, family and home safe during any emergency. |
| May 26 | Chili Cook-off | Downtown Forest Falls | 11 am - 3 pm, town photo at 3 pm. for info, updates, and applications check new Facebook Page, "Forest Falls Chili Cook Off" |

Regularly Scheduled Events

| What | When | Where | more details |
|--|--|--|---|
| Angelus Oaks Fire Department | 2nd & 4th Tuesdays each month at 6pm | Angelus Oaks Fire Station (98) | |
| Forest Falls Fire Department | Tuesdays at 6:30pm | Forest Falls Fire Station (99) | 909-794-4413 |
| Greyback CommunityEmergency Response Team | 3rd Thursday of the month at 6:30pm | Angelus Oaks Fire Station (98) | Location is Fire Station 98 for meetings & training. |
| VFCCi's Morning Cup | First Saturday of the month from 8-10 am | at Big Falls Lodge | Share a cup of coffee, tea, or hot chocolate. Each month we intend to bring new conversations from community groups and guests from the canyon. |
| Frozen Green Thumb Garden Club | 3rd Monday each month 11:30 am - 1:30 pm | at Big Falls Lodge | All are welcome. |
| Music Night in Forest Falls | Mondays 6:30-9:30 pm | at Big Falls Lodge | All Musicians, all styles, all levels are welcome, anyone can come play or just come to listen. |
| The Needlers Knitting Group | Tuesdays 9:30-11:30 am | 7th Day Adventist Church, Forest Falls | All are welcome, Contact Denise Reid 794-5130. |

Valley of the Falls Community Church

Worship Each Sunday at 10:30 a.m.
followed by Fellowship Time

Youth Ministry Thursday Evenings
at 4:30 p.m.
with a Fellowship Meal

Thom Wellman, Pastor
Frank Mihelich, Teaching Pastor

40262 Valley of the Falls Drive, Forest Falls, CA 92339
Follow us on Facebook @forestoffthefallscommunitychurch

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Valley of the Falls Community Center Inc.

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Craft Fairs, CERT Training, Garden Club Meetings, Music and Game Nights, Local Breakfasts, Weddings, Memorials, Birthday Parties ...

Valley of the Falls community Center, Inc., (VFCCI), needs You! Be a part of Big Falls Lodge, the Board of VFCCI welcome you to join our monthly meetings and become a board member or volunteer. VFCCI is a non-profit organization supported by donations, grants, private events and our residents!

DID YOU KNOW?... that our community center (also referred to as Big Falls Lodge) is solely operated by volunteers and funded by donations, fundraisers, grants, and special events. We are not like other City & County Community Centers that are funded by local government agencies. The community center truly does belong to the community. Funds raised, donated, or earned go directly back into the community center to maintain and operate (electricity, propane, trash pickup, internet, insurance, permits, inspections, and maintenance, just to name a few) so that the community center can remain open for the community!! We now have a fully renovated, commercial sized kitchen with all the equipment you'd ever need to host a private event, fundraiser or community gathering. Come check it out, we might be your next venue choice. Visit vfcci.org for more information. Mountain Residents always have FREE use of Big Falls Lodge to honor a loved one that has passed.

If you have a special skill or talent that you would like to share with the community, offer to teach a class or lead a presentation. VFCCI would love to host events that our residents can be a part of.

Big Falls Lodge is also available for your next private event. Do you plan on hosting a baby shower, anniversary dinner, birthday party or holiday event? What about a work retreat, an art or yoga class, maybe even a neighborhood party. Big Falls Lodge is the perfect venue!

Visit vfcci.org and click on the calendar to check availability. The calendar is a great resource to reference upcoming events. If interested in booking a date email: events@vfcci.org

VFCCI would be more than happy to give local contractors, handymen/women the opportunity to work with us at Big Falls Lodge. In-kind, materials and labor work are always accepted and much needed for smaller projects. You could earn yourself (or business) a sponsor summit plaque as a rewarding reminder of the work YOU gave to the community, through helping keep Big Falls Lodge open to all.

VFCCI offer classes, local events, fundraisers, as well as private events (rentals for weddings, birthdays, baby showers, celebrations of life, etc.).

VFCCI is also used as an emergency shelter, in conjunction with the C.E.R.T. Program.

The Green Thumb Garden Club holds their meetings at the center, as well as other local groups.

VFCCI needs the community's support to continue to maintain and operate the community center by attending events, volunteering and donations.

You can find us on Facebook now called META.

Check our website at: www.VFCCI.org

To give a donation, attend a board meeting, schedule an event or be added to the mailing list contact the VFCCI director at: director@vfcci.org.

To Donate: Via PayPal: donate@vfcci.org

By the Postal Service Mail: VFCCI , PO Box 41, Forest Falls Ca 92339.

Valley of the Falls Community Center News

New Year's Eve Party! Success

VFCCi ends 2023 with a bang...The New Years Eve party was a hit! A big THANKS to Paul Tetreault for the great music and count down(s). Yes, there was more than one count down... we toasted New York at 9:00, Chicago at 10:00, Arizona at 11:00, and Forest Falls at 12:00



with free Champagne and Apple Cider. Of course, we could not have done this without the community and boy did the community come through...there was so much food, good music, dancing, and great conversation.



Our bartender, Frank Piantadosi, kept the drinks coming and everyone kept themselves in check. Our lovely volunteer, Andrea Riley greeted everyone with a smile and a welcome as they came through the door. Marc

Kramer assisted with music and lent a helping hand where he was needed.

We also had people behind the scenes to make this happen, including Rocky with all of her beautiful decorations.



Finally, another big thank you to Jose Esparza, President of VFCCi and Frank Sexton, Board Member

for volunteering to be chauffeurs for the event. We have a great mountain community! I wish we could have posted all the fun photos, but there were way too many. If



you are interested in getting a copy of your 2024 photo, please contact Debbie at 951-218-1031. Photos were also posted on VFCCi's Facebook page.



A message from the Secretary of VFCCi

VFCCi PRESENTS: A MORNING CUP

at Big Falls Lodge

Join us for a warm cup of coffee, tea or hot chocolate and meet the community! The 1st Saturday each month, beginning in March from 8-10 am @ The Gail D. Cox Community Center in Forest Falls. Each month we intend to bring new conversations from local community groups and guests from the canyon. ** Not meeting in July and August**



VFCCi Giving Back...

In 2023, Valley of the Falls Community Center, Inc. (VFCCi) received a check for \$750 through fund raising efforts on behalf of Ace Hardware in Yucaipa. These funds were dedicated to storm damage and/or an emergency fund. Although Forest Falls did have some weather-related issues in 2023, Big Falls Lodge didn't experience any storm damage, nor do we know of an established emergency fund. Therefore, The VFCCi board voted unanimously to donate this \$750 to the residents of the Seven Oaks. Those who truly had suffered severe storm damage.



Thank you to Nicole Fay who graciously offered to purchase, and hand deliver gift cards to our neighbors in Seven Oaks, on behalf of Valley of the Falls Community Center, Inc. Also, a big shout out to Ace Hardware for supporting our local mountain community through instore donations.

More "Save The Date" notes

Mountain Jamboree Sunday, July 7, 2024 Did you enjoy the Jamboree last year? That's good because we will be back again to host another fun filled day of music, dancing, food and drinks, kid games and more! Mark your calendars and stay tuned for more information on social media, local bulletin boards, and of course, here in Bear Facts.

VFCCi Annual Meeting, Saturday, Aug 3, 2024

VFCCi is dedicated to serving our mountain communities! This meeting is intended to share with the community our achievements throughout the year, goals, financial year end reports, and more! This is the community's opportunity to dig a little deeper to see how Big Falls Lodge is operated and how your donations and local fundraising efforts are used.

Haunted Halloween, Saturday Oct 25, 2024, We had a good turnout last year. VFCCi would like to make this a 2-day event. Party with adults one night and celebrate the season with the kids the next.

Neer Year's Eve Party, Tuesday December 31 2024, Let's do this again!

- Check www.VFCCi.org calendar for events and updates
Have a class or event to put on? Let us know!
Call or email your suggestions to events@vfcci.org

Mother's Clotheslines

Poetry by local artist, Juan Delgado



At the end, her hands spoke,
the way they wavered over the table,
re-arranging a napkin or a fork,
still trying to keep busy, expecting
a chore to link her more to us
and to her house turning dimmer.
Her worn out Italian rugs
mapped out her daily rituals.
At the end, more of her vanished
behind one of her clotheslines
on a day where the bed sheets
swayed, embodying a breeze.
We saw the curve of her shoulder
pressing against a sheet, then her
face on the partly see-through cotton.
We, too, had no language yet,
for her half-sentences, lost looks,
her silence shifting into annoyance
and leading to anger, and at the end,
we, too, were like those sheets,
feeling weightless, fixed, suspended.
Then she would appear in full force:
“I must go to the bank, and No!
I don't have to take a bath—I had one
yesterday, plus who are you
to talk to me like that—Don't forget,
who you are talking to. I'm leaving.
Don't just stand there looking at me—
I need help to find my red purse.”

For more information on poet Juan Delgado:
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/juan-delgado>



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Mountain Communities Food Pantry

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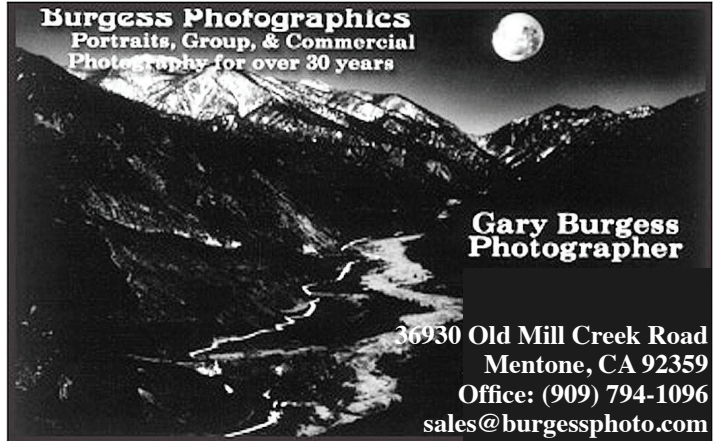


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What's Up with All the Ladybugs?

by Beth Tetreault

It's almost time for our annual swam of lady beetles. Yes, I said, lady beetles. Turns out what we call ladybugs, are lady beetles. As you know these ladies have hardened shells/front wings and they have chewing mouthparts. We know this because a few species 'nip' us. These characteristics make them beetles. But why a "lady" beetle? It is said that early farmers prayed to the Virgin Mary to help protect their fields. Soon, ladybugs appeared in their fields, eating all the aphids, and saving the farmers' crops. So, the farmers named them "beetle of Our Lady," which eventually shortened to the ladybug. *Thanks, Google.* And as we know from *A Bugs Life*, there are both male and female Lady Beetles.



ladybuds aka lady beetles

There are over 100 different species in California. There are species with no spots, with white spots behind the head (these are the native Californians), with 2-spots, 7-spots, 9-spots, blah, blah, blah. Some were imported to control agricultural pests. Unfortunately, the California native lady beetles are now rare. But they are all good bugs/beetles. They eat aphids, mealybugs, and pollen. Maybe that's why they show up following pollen season.

When the temperature drops, the adult lady beetles go into a state of hibernation and overwinter in mountains and woodlands under leaves, rotting logs, under rocks and, well, you know where to find them.

And in the spring, why do they swarm? Well, that's what lady beetles do. They congregate together as a form of group protection and their bright colors warn predators not to eat them. And as temperatures rise, day light lengthens, and food becomes available they get busy and take flight. As with most bugs, they are attracted to flowers, aka food. So during Lady Beetle season don't wear yellow or white, the most common flower colors. . How long has Mill Creek Canyon experienced this phenomenon? I've only been here for 20 years so I checked in with native Forest Falls resident, Janice Gilmore, who said, "They have always been around Forest Falls. When I was a kid, we were able to move the ivy on our split rail fence and pick up handfuls at a time."

Oh, and, they also have a defense mechanism called reflex bleeding where they produce yellow droplets from their joints to repel birds and other insects that try to eat them. I thought they were just pooping on me.

Canyon Clean-up

by John Ruble and Terry Hamilton, Canyon Clean Up Coordinators

**May 11th 2024
7:30 - Noon**



Canyon Clean Up 2024 is coming May 11th.

The collection site will be open from 7:30 to 12 Noon, or until bins are full. The bins are often filled by 11 AM.

We want your junk, greens, recyclables, metal, and electronics. It's a party for a great cause. Hundreds of people will be there. Don't miss the opportunity to clean out and throw away all those "treasures" you have been saving for too long. **We need your help** at the various dumpster sites. Won't you consider giving us a hand? We also need your help picking up trash, graffiti removal, and generally sprucing up your neck of the woods. You will be paired with seasoned vets of the clean-up. If you are new to Forest Falls, Mountain Home Village or Angelus Oaks, this is a great way to meet your neighbors.

Our beautiful mountains have been so good to us, a half day on Saturday, May 11th is the least we can do to pay back.

Don't miss it and don't be late, once the bins are full, we are done.

Any questions? Contact us on the Forest Falls, California Facebook group or terrywhamilton@gmail.com



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Graffiti Busters Needed

by Deby Anderson

In my mountain journey, over the years, I've noticed a change in the serenity on the mountain. What once used to be a place of beauty I wanted to share with others, had become a place of embarrassment, a place I no longer enjoyed myself, let alone a place I wanted to "show off" to my friends.

I have always participated in the Annual Canyon Cleanup by picking up trash on the Vivian Creek Trail. Then one year Debi Welch asked me to help with graffiti painting. That was all I needed to change my mindset. Instead of no longer hiking to the waterfall because I hated what I saw, I decided to adopt one of the larger rocks below the waterfall. I made sure if it was tagged, I would paint over it. Then I found I was painting over other tags along the way. Today, I've become obsessed with "You tag it, I'll paint over it so don't bother." I now have two backpacks, one for just hiking and one that holds supplies for "graffiti busting".



If you live here and find yourself complaining about the trash and graffiti left behind, then DO SOMETHING. We aren't going to close the canyon to flatlanders. We can't control what they do up here, but you can make a difference. Get involved. Pick up trash. Paint over graffiti. Stop complaining and do something. You can't physically get out and help? Then buy me

some cheap paintbrushes or trash bags. I don't mind buying what I need, it's my way of helping to maintain our beautiful canyon for the residents to enjoy.

What I have learned over the years as things have gotten worse - I can't do this alone. I need help. Several of you ARE helping, but we need more. Get involved during Canyon Clean Up, on May 11th. Come to Momyer Trail parking lot and pick up supplies. I am more than willing to provide what is needed to make an important statement to those trying to destroy the beauty here - TAG SOMEWHERE ELSE. If you can't help during Canyon Clean Up, but want to help, send me an email at avilabrat@gmail.com or text me at 951-306-8425. Don't let Forest Falls become a destination for those who are looking to destroy Mother Nature.

Graffiti Busters Tag Team Unite!

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Have You Seen It?

by Steve & Sharon Cady

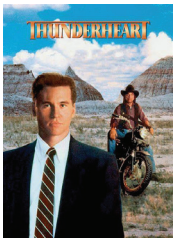
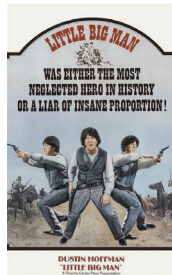
—The Native American Story—

We are fortunate today in that we can investigate our past using the film industry's creations and see evolving changes we have made in our society, and we can look into ourselves and see where we need to go in the future to become a better society. One

of those ways is how we view and tell the story of the indigenous peoples of the North American continent.

During the first almost 70 years of film history, the American "Redman" was relegated to a lower stratum of society. If given a good role, he was always at best number 2 to the Anglo primary characters. The best example would be Radio and TV's The Lone Ranger in which Tonto was the Lone Ranger's faithful companion who worked to enable his "Kemosabe" to succeed in bring the "bad guys" to justice. In Film John Wayne and other box office cowboy greats worked alongside Native American characters portrayed by Italian Americans.

The next step we took in our films was to portray the Native American as an individual on a more equal plane. The 1970 film **Little Big Man** did that, but still failed to use Native American actors, except for Chief Dan George, a member of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation of Canada. While using exaggeration to illustrate the gap between the two worlds of the Red and White, the Native American is shown in a favorable light.



The next step in better telling the story of the Native American has been to have them play their own parts instead of darker skinned European Americans. **Thunderheart**, starring Val Kilmer (who claims Cherokee blood) plays an FBI agent drafted because he is part Native American in blood (not culture) to dissipate tribal unrest on a South Dakota reservation. Graham Greene and

Sheila Tousey are among members of Native American Nations who act in key roles in the film.

Another important film in this arena was Kevin Costner's **Dances with Wolves**, in which a cavalry officer in the course of his duties, befriends a tribe of Lakota-Sioux peoples, but when his superiors learn of his actions, is disciplined as a traitor. This film features Graham Greene and Wes Studi, stars portraying their own people.



The final step in telling the stories of the Native American, is for them to write scripts, cast, act, produce and direct (yes, and profit from) films—crafting their story. While not 100% Native American produced, one of the first mostly Native American films was Powwow Highway, a 1989 comedy-drama produced by non-native George Harrison. Two young and very different Northern Cheyenne men, Buddy (A. Martinez) and Phillbert (Gary Farmer), come together to venture in a beat-up 1964 Buick on a road trip to get Buddy's estranged sister out of jail in Santa Fe, New Mexico where she had been arrested for drug possession for planted drugs in her trunk. Google a list of Native American produced films. I've begun my checklist!

Considering Books

by Katherine Thomerson-Bird

THE WISDOM OF SALLY RED SHOES BY Ruth Hogan



Hello Mountain Readers! As we 'spring' into a new Daylight Savings Time soon, let's spring into new books, because we will have longer days to read! Although I am a night reader too!

With all the troubles in the world, I would rather escape into the joy of reading a good book rather than watching the news channels that would cause me stress and a heart attack. I would rather laugh, cry, and have my soul touched.

This book does all! Here are a few quotes from readers like us who commented about the book:

"Beautifully written with wisdom, humor and empathy!" (see what I wrote above?)

"A beautiful story about grief, death, and learning to live and love again."

"Had me in tears and laughter from start to finish!" (yes), These comments are from real readers, not critics. And I agree with them all.

Masha, the main character in Hogan's story, was independent, energetic, and carried with a light-hearted spirit. Then tragedy took over all of that. A tragedy that fumbles the heart. She cannot jump this life hurdle.

Then she meets Sally Red Shoes, a bag lady who sings opera in the cemetery and feeds breadcrumbs to the crows every day. Her voice astounding and echoing amongst the ghosts there.

"The old woman fills her lungs with the crisp autumn air, throws up her arms and exhales a flawless top C. The note soars, pure and clear, above the gravestones that are scattered down the hill in front of her." Excerpt from book, a magical scene. Masha also meets Kitty, raised in a convent, was a magician's wife, and then a seventy-year-old roller disco fanatic. These extraordinary friends guide Masha in jumping her tragic life-hurdle. This is where hilarity comes in.

With her new friends bringing her back into the world, and she can live with a new outlook on life, she finds out her dad is dying AND her past comes back blossoming in front of her. Readers will gasp at this part of the story.

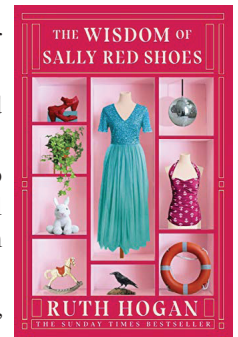
There are painful issues, belly-laugh out loud moments and a beautiful heart-rending ending. Readers, you will put the book down and sigh. The book is full of surprises, exquisite writing and new words from the book that are defined in her parenthesis'.

This will be a heart-gasp. I will say no more.

But I will share the beginning of the author's note at the end:

"When I began writing this book, I wanted it to be a book about hope and living life to the fullest. But I'm with Dolly Parton when she said, 'if you want the rainbow, you got to put up with the rain.' And so I also wanted to tackle some more difficult and painful issues." Ruth Hogan

I am in three book groups, Kentucky Book which read this book first. I have now recommended it to my Redlands Book Group, and my Indiana Book Group. Read it!!!



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| | Submission Deadline | MtnCARE.com post Date | In the Mail Issue Date |
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| Issue 1 Spring | Feb 1st | Feb 20th | Mar 1st |
| Issue 2 Summer | May 1st | May 20th | Jun 1st |
| Issue 3 Autumn | Aug 1st | Aug 20th | Sep 1st |
| Issue 4 Winter | Nov 1st | Nov 20th | Dec 1st |

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Mountain C.A.R.E. is a non-profit community based organization located in Forest Falls
California. We are a group of volunteers that came together in early 1990 to arrange an
Earth Day activity. Our articles state that "We are to educate the general public about
environmental concerns and the need to restore and preserve the environment for
future generations".

Mountain Citizens Acting to Restore the Earth

