

A Publication of the Granite Falls Historical Association, Inc.

HAPPY RETIREMENT *Jerry Church*

The Town of Granite Falls hosted a retirement party for Town Manager Jerry Church on Sunday, March 24 between 3 and 5 p.m. in the Family Life Center at the First Baptist Church, Granite Falls. Mayor Caryl Burns and Council Members Martin Townsend, Tracy Townsend, and Jim Mackie recognized his 14+ years of service and presented him with special gifts - caps/ t-shirts with the logo of his alma mater, Appalachian State University; running shoes; and a golf club. Jerry joked that he would use the shoes Thursday afternoon, his last workday in office.



Left to right: Town Manager Jerry Church, Mayor Caryl Burns, and Council Members Martin D. Townsend, Tracy Townsend, and Jim Mackie

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WELCOME TO GRANITE FALLS *Sheetz Holds Grand Opening*

Sheetz #814, located at 4769 Hickory Boulevard, Granite Falls, held a grand opening between 9 and 11 a.m. on Thursday, March 28 with free slushies and fountain drinks all day plus an opportunity to win Sheetz gift cards - two for \$250 and one for \$2,500. A lucky customer also won two tickets to Carowinds. The ribbon cutting ceremony began at 10:45 a.m. Bryan Moore, President and CEO of The Caldwell Chamber of Commerce welcomed Sheetz to the county, and Larry Knight, Granite Falls Town Council Member welcomed the store to Granite Falls. Jim Mackie



Above Photo: Ribbon Cutting at Sheetz (Granite Falls Town Council Members Larry Knight and Jim Mackie are the first two persons on the left)

(SHEETZ continued on page 2)

PUBLIC MEETING *Plans to Improve Neighborhood Park*

The Town of Granite Falls Parks and Recreation Department held the second of two public meetings on Tuesday, March 5 in the Council Chambers at 5:30 p.m. in order to meet requirements for applying for a grant through the North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF). The second meeting featured three exhibits - a PowerPoint slide show describing planned upgrades to Neighborhood Park (located on the corner of Sterling Street and Chestnut Street), the proposed site plan (photo on the left), and an aerial photo of the current park. The proposed upgrades (playground, parking lot,



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He has served as town manager since December 2009. Jerry succeeded Linda Story who retired in November 2009. Assistant Manager and Finance Director Ashley Presnell will serve as the interim manager until Daniel Cobb starts on April 15.

Before he retired, Jerry answered some questions posed by Linda Crowder for the new history book. She summarized the answers to two (2) of the questions for this article.

Greatest challenges, especially the last four years: COVID and its aftereffects have been particularly challenging. The town manager has to consider the overall health and safety of everyone in Granite Falls while ensuring the delivery of town services amidst everchanging directives and regulations. He also has to work with the Town Council to keep the town competitive in the labor market (police, fire, water treatment/distribution, maintenance, electrical, etc.) At the same time, he has to keep his eye on the future and plan accordingly.

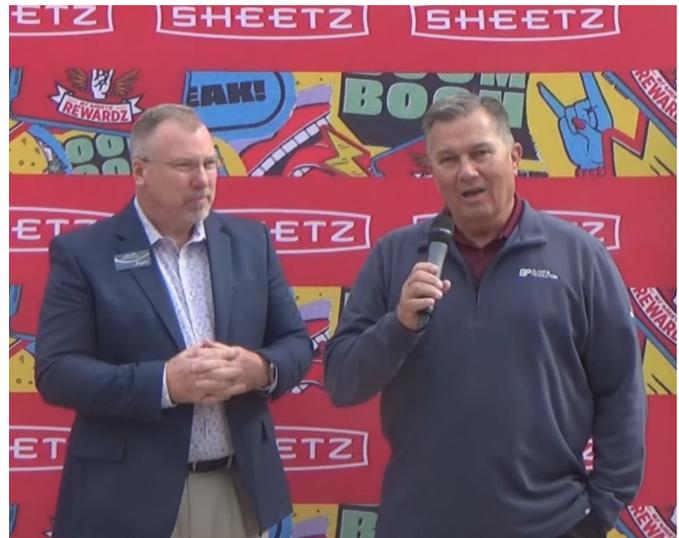
Biggest accomplishments: Giving credit to the Town Council, employees, and volunteers, Jerry noted the following achievements during his tenure: earning Gold Safety Awards from OSHA, improvements and additions to parks and recreation, upgrades to town facilities (including purchasing land for a new fire department), improvements to the infrastructure, financial stability (taxes/fees supplemented by grants), and new software to meet future needs.



Above: Mayor Caryl Burns (right) teases Jerry Church during his retirement party.

(PARKS AND RECREATION continued from page 1)

multi-purpose court (4-square, basketball, and pickleball), outdoor exercise equipment, and a picnic shelter would all be ADA compliant. If you have questions about the proposals, call Chad Raby, Parks and Recreation Director, at (828) 396-1221.



Above Left to Right: Bryan Moore, Chamber CEO/ President, and Larry Knight, Granite Falls Town Councilman, spoke prior to the ribbon cutting at Sheetz

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also represented the town.

Daniel Setzer, a Special Olympics athlete from Caldwell County, and Susan Doggett, Senior Vice President of Development for Special Olympics of North Carolina, spoke about the opportunities offered to their participants, and they accepted a \$2,500 donation from Sheetz.

Emily Saine, Store Rescue Manager for Second Harvest Food Bank, told about their work to feed the hungry and accepted a \$2,500 donation from Sheetz.

According to their website, the convenience store offers "Award-winning Made-To-Order® Foods, Espresso Bar with Made-To-Order® Specialty Coffeez®, Quality Gasoline at Low Prices, and Lowest Priced Cigarettes/ Tobacco Allowed by Law."

According to Codie, the PR representative who emceed the ribbon cutting, the new store is the first Sheetz in Caldwell County, the 120th in North Carolina, and their 723rd store overall. Sheetz plans to open 50 stores in 2024.

HELP WANTED: Volunteers to open/close the Granite Falls History and Transportation Museum and assist visitors on Sundays from 2 until 4 p.m. The Granite Falls History Committee will provide on the job training and a resource manual. We can also accept volunteers who can only work on Saturdays. For more information, call the Town Office at 396-3131.

HISTORY IN THE MAKING ***A Virus that Changed our Lives***

Editor's note: It has been four years since COVID changed our way of life and one year since I wrote a "farewell to COVID" article. Here is an update.

On March 1, 2024, COVID made news again when the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) announced its updated recommendations based upon fewer deaths/hospitalizations and more available ways to treat/prevent the disease. In general, COVID patients no longer have to follow the 5 and 10 day rules for isolation and quarantine. Persons testing positive for COVID only have to wait until symptoms improve and they are fever free for at least 24 hours without medication. However, they are encouraged to wear masks, use good hygiene, seek fresh or filtered air, cover coughs, and avoid being around vulnerable people.

On March 5, the White House stopped administering COVID tests to persons who were around President Biden, Vice President Harris, and their spouses.

On March 8, the United States Postal Service once again stopped sending out free at-home COVID test kits. The program has operated intermittently since January 2022.

UPLIFT ***Boosting Tourism in Caldwell County***

M. D. Townsend, Doug Main, and Linda Crowder represented the Town of Granite Falls at a meeting held for community leaders to learn about UPLIFT, a plan to build tourism in Caldwell County. They met at the Caldwell County Chamber of Commerce in Lenoir on March 7 prior to a meeting held for the general public. UPLIFT receives funding from the American Rescue Plan Act to assist rural areas. Caldwell County has been selected to be a part of the Western Region along with Wilkes, Surrey, and Yadkin Counties.

Phase 1 involves gathering information and developing a plan. Under Phase 2, the UPLIFT Team will provide technical assistance and give professional guidance through workshops and webinars. During Phase 3, participants will develop programs that tell their stories and implement their plans. Grants are available to provide funding. The UPLIFT Team will host a Western Regional Meeting on Thursday, May 2, 2024 from 9:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Team members will discuss an action plan, the 2024 program, and help community leaders develop itineraries and make connections with other tourism businesses. By working together, they can boost their income, and the whole area will benefit economically.



GRANITE FALLS HIGH SCHOOL REUNION ***Dining with the Demons***

Calling all Blue Demons. If you attended Granite Falls High School (even for a short time) and/or if you taught there, this reunion is for you and your guests. It will take place

on Saturday, May 4, 2024 beginning at noon with a potluck lunch at Granite Falls Middle School, which housed the high school until 1977. The doors will open at 11:30 a.m. Before the meal, Jeanne Whisnant (class of 1966) will welcome attendees, Linda Crowder (class of 1967) will dedicate the school's history wall (which features photos and historical facts from 1792 through 2022), and Principal Chris Ackerman will make remarks and bless the meal.

While the 1935 historic high school building still faces North Main Street, the entrance is located at 4 West Highland Avenue (1st road to the left after you pass the music building). The school has a large parking lot, but extra parking may be found near the gym, along North Main Street Parallel, and to the left of the 1935 building. However, be sure to use the new main entrance at what appears to be the rear of the building.

The GFHS Reunion Committee wants to memorialize our classmates who are no longer with us. If you have compiled a list of your classmates who are deceased, please send it to Angie Settlemeyre Reid. Her email address is tiatia@charter.net.

To help defray expenses, the planning committee will accept contributions and have a 50/50 raffle at the reunion. These donations are not tax deductible, but we need them to pay reunion expenses. Members of the committee are also asking alumni and guests to show their appreciation to Caldwell County Schools for using the facilities by making tax deductible donations to the Education Foundation, Inc. of Caldwell County. The funds will be used to keep the school's technology up-to-date. Please designate Granite Falls Middle School when you make your donation. Mr. Ackerman will give more information when he welcomes attendees.

The next DWTD planning meeting will be Wednesday, April 10 at 10 a.m. at Granite Falls Middle School. Volunteers are welcome and encouraged to attend. Just call or text Jeanne Whisnant at (828) 320-3725 so she can let you know about any last minute changes to these plans.

The late George Keller (class of 1967) envisioned the first Dining with the Demons, which was held ten (10) years ago on Saturday, May 3, 2014. Alas, he passed away just before the big day, and he did not live to see his dream become his legacy. Let's honor the memory of all Blue Demons, and attend DWTD 2024.

Dateline: Granite Falls, North Carolina

PRESERVING FACTS AND TREASURED MEMORIES Update on New History Book

The Granite Falls Historical Association is still on target to publish the town's new history book, *Dateline: Granite Falls, North Carolina*, in late summer 2024. *Dateline* will consist of two (2) parts - a chronological history of the town and an oral history featuring the treasured memories of local residents. Since *Etched in Granite: the History of Granite Falls, North Carolina* covers the history of our town from its early beginnings through mid-1999, the new book will only carry a summary of that time period. Unlike *Etched in Granite*, *Dateline* will not have special sections for education, civic groups, genealogies, businesses, etc. Facts with dates will be put in chronological order, and other information will be recorded as oral history. While the Association will accept genealogies along with printed memorabilia such as news clippings, invitations, programs, etc., these will be sorted and placed in a special filing cabinet at the museum and kept for research purposes.

Much of the chronological section has been published in the two history newsletters edited by Linda Crowder - *Tablet II* and *The Granite Tablet*. She has also published some memories for the oral history section along the way. Linda wants the new history book to be inclusive and accurate. She invites individuals, businesses, civic clubs, churches, school organizations, and other groups to submit their stories to her so she can incorporate them into *Dateline*. You may contact her by phone [(828) 496-2835] or by email (lrdrcrowder@gmail.com). The deadline is May 1, 2024 so she will have time to edit and format the stories before sending to the publisher.

Linda has announced that she will delay publishing the May 2024 edition of *Tablet II* until the first week in June so she can include an article about the June 3 meeting of the Granite Falls Town Council. Unless a major news story develops at the last minute, a report about that meeting will be the final entry in the chronological section of the new history book. Although there has to be a cut off date for publication of *Dateline*, the Association will continue to document and preserve the history of our town. The group welcomes new members who would like to help with this project. Contact Linda for information on how to join.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY, Town of Granite Falls

Please put these dates on your calendar:

Wednesday, May 1, 2024 - The Granite Falls History Committee will host a party to celebrate the 125th anniversary of incorporation. Members will announce details in the next newsletter.

Saturday, May 4, 2024 from 11:30 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. - Dining with the Demons at Granite Falls Middle School

Monday, May 20, 2024 from 6:00 until 9:00 p.m. - Art in the Park at the rec center

Monday, June 3, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. - The Granite Falls Town Council will meet on the anniversary of the first town board meeting in 1899.

Saturday, July 6, 2024 from 4 until 6 p.m. - Fourth of July Open House at the Granite Falls History and Transportation Museum.

Saturday, September 21, 2024 from 2:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. - The 14th Annual Merchants Association Festival on Main

Friday, November 8, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. - Veterans Day Ceremony

Monday, December 25, 2024 at 6:15 p.m. - Festival on the Square and Light Up Granite Falls Christmas Tree Lighting

Saturday, December 7, 2024 at noon - The annual Christmas Parade



Tablet II is a publication of the Granite Falls Historical Association, Inc. The purpose of the publication is to provide members with news and information about the Association along with articles and photos of historical interest. The purpose of the Association is to preserve and interpret the history/heritage of Granite Falls and Southern Caldwell County by historical preservation, publications, active museum and historical site programs, public meetings, and various activities related to these programs.

Contact the Editor: Linda Richards Crowder by phone at (828) 396-1066, by text (828) 496-2835, or by email lrdrcrowder@gmail.com.

For more information about the Granite Falls Historical Association, Inc and the Granite Falls History and Transportation Museum, go to the website - www.granitefallshistorymuseum.org or the Facebook page under "Granite Falls (N. C.) History and Transportation Museum."