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FEATURED

## HCCF distributes numerous community grants

By Luke Barber [luke.barber@averyjournal.com](mailto:luke.barber@averyjournal.com)

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The High Country Charitable Foundation presented a donation, courtesy of Gary Butler, to Yellow Mountain Enterprises. Pic Tasha Buchanan, Laken Benfield, Betsy Godbold, Gary Butler and Tommy Stewart.

Photo by Luke Barber

NEWLAND — The High Country Charitable Foundation is making its presence felt across the community once again. On Thursday, Oct. 10, Jim Swinkola of the HCCF and Gary Butler of the Elk River Club visited various community organizations to disperse donations and hear updates on how these organizations are faring during the pandemic.

“In 2020, the High Country Charitable Foundation granted \$550,000 to support the work of 25 nonprofits benefiting needy people and/or animals of Avery County,” Swinkola said.

## Linville Volunteer Fire Department

Linville VFD Captain Roy Dellinger reported that fundraising is limited for the fire department, but it continues to respond to emergency calls as usual, with Emergency Medical Services (EMS) taking the lead in responding to calls as a precaution due to possible encounters with COVID-19.



“Fundraising is down because we can’t get out publicly. Other than that, the fire department is doing great. We’re responding as normal. Luckily, we have not have had any serious Covid encounters. EMS goes in before we do now, and if they need our help we go on in,” Dellinger said.

The HCCF presented a donation to the department, courtesy of Butler, the former President and CEO of Automatic Data Processing (ADP), a human resources services software provider. Dellinger said the donation will go toward supporting the department’s scuba diving team.

“We do rescue and recovery for the whole county,” Dellinger said. “We’ve been going about two years now. We had the first diver in the water at the incident on Beech Mountain. We actually recovered that diver, and he’s healthy diving today. That is a once-in-a-lifetime save. He had got sucked into a drain pipe up at Buckeye Lake, and we had to pump hot water into his wetsuit to prevent hypothermia from setting in.”

## Avery County Agricultural Extension

As part of a joint effort between the Avery County Agricultural Extension, 4H and Riverside Elementary, a new horticulture program is in the works at the elementary school, which is seeking to teach kids the skills required to grow and cultivate their own food.

“At Riverside we’re trying to do something a little bit different and expand. Especially with the Covid virus, we’re trying to be outside more,” Riverside Elementary Principal Dr. Jamie Johnson said. “We wanted to have our kids learn a little about sustaining their food supply. Food scarcity and food security are big issues, and we’re trying to do a partnership to develop a program for our community.”



The program will be similar to the Agricultural Extension’s community garden program, which hosts several dozen raised garden beds that residents use to grow various fruits and vegetables. Avery County 4H Director Bobbie Willard said she hopes the program will provide a way to connect youth with a caring adult.

“I’m hoping to have a homesteader program where kids learn how to preserve their own food. I’ve done this before during the summer and they’ll have a session on jams and jellies, green beans, tomatoes, low acid and acid foods and how to dehydrate (these foods). Also wrapped up in that, kids will learn presentation skills, socialization and all that good stuff,” Willard said.

Agricultural Extension Director Jerry Moody said the office will be involved in the program to offer support, as well as provide its extensive agricultural resources.

“We’ll be helping out on the agricultural side of things, providing the expertise and the backbone to help build these (garden boxes). We’ll also be helping them grow things and doing classes to teach the kids how to grow and the different steps from germination to transplanting to harvesting. It will be an overall team effort,” Moody said.

Johnson said he hopes to grow the program to include a greenhouse in order to keep the classes going year round. To help the school advance toward its goal, the HCCF provided a donation of its own to help fund the program. Additional contributions are being provided by the Avery County School System and the Agricultural Extension.

### OASIS

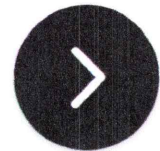
Next, the HCCF presented a donation to Opposing Abuse with Service, Information and Shelter (OASIS). OASIS has been retooling during the pandemic in order to continue to provide help and safety for women and children who are fleeing trauma and abuse.



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“We did have to slightly reduce capacity (in our shelter) in order to do social distancing, but we’ve been creative and have been able to do some scattered sites for our shelters. Our capacity is actually the same, just different locations,” Outreach Coordinator Sarah Crouch said.

OASIS serves Watauga and Avery counties and provides temporary, confidential housing to women, child and men who are seeking to distance themselves from situations involving intimate partner violence, sexual violence, human traffic and other forms of trauma.

Additionally, OASIS provides short-term crisis support services, case management, support groups, prevention services, judicial advocacy referrals and other services.

“We serve survivors in both counties to the same capacity that we’re able to. The only thing that’s a little bit different is that we don’t have an actual shelter (in Avery County). All of the services transfer to both counties,” Avery Services Coordinator Sydney Harrison said. “We’re really trying to keep those services equitable in both counties, because we know that the need is very apparent in both counties.”

### **Yellow Mountain Enterprises**

Yellow Mountain Enterprises has been continuing to offer its vocational program to adults as part of the Avery Association for Exceptional Citizens. YME provides services related to education, independent living skills, work opportunities and a group home setting. The HCCF provided a donation to YME to help the organization continue its work providing care and training.

“All I can say is my heart has been at Yellow Mountain for years. It still is, and we appreciate everything the High Country (Charitable Foundation) does,” volunteer Betsy Godbold said.

Yellow Mountain resident Tommy Stewart shared similar sentiments.

“I love being here. They are nice people,” Stewart said.

### **Avery County Humane Society**

The last location Swinkola and Butler visited was the Avery County Humane Society. The ACHS’s facility was built in 2012, with an amount of contributions being provided courtesy of the HCCF. Last week, the HCCF sent the humane society a donation through the mail, which ACHS Executive Director Gwynne Dyer said will help stray animals.

“The grant will help us with what we do with stray animals in Avery County. There’s two ways an animal will come to us, either through an owner who wants to re-home them or citizens will bring in stray animals. There’s no animal control in Avery County, so we can’t go out and

get them. We rely on citizens to bring them to us. Once they're brought to us, they require extra medical attention, a lot of attention from our staff," Dyer said.

The shelter and its staff help control the stray animal population in the county, of which there are about 300 per year.

"If we didn't do it, there would be no one in Avery County taking care of (that problem)," Dyer said. "(The HCCF's) help has been very important to us over the years and continues to be. Their help is irreplaceable. We don't know what we would do without an organization such as them."

[https://www.averyjournal.com/news/high-country-charitable-foundation-donations/article\\_67ccf8df-e91b-594c-a145-fb46e7617367.html](https://www.averyjournal.com/news/high-country-charitable-foundation-donations/article_67ccf8df-e91b-594c-a145-fb46e7617367.html)

## High Country Charitable Foundation donations

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Linville Volunteer Fire Department will use its recently received check from the High Country Charitable Foundation to go diving water rescue program. Pictured from left are Roy Dellinger and Gary Butler.

Photo by Luke Barber

**BANNER ELK** — The High Country Charitable Foundation was busy this past week distributing grants and donations to local charitable and community organizations, such as Holston Presbyterian Camp, the Hill Learning Center, Western Youth Network, Spirit Ride Therapeutic Riding Center, the Hunger and Health Coalition, Hospitality House of Northwest North Carolina, OASIS, Linville Volunteer Fire Department, the Banner Elk Book Exchange, the Avery