LOVE LIGHT TREE

The "Love Light Tree" fundraising is a yearly event sponsored by the Ladies Auxiliary of Mountain View Regional Hospital. Established in 1993, the "Love Light Tree" fundraising begins with a dedication ceremony in early December of each year. The tree is decorated with white and blue lights representing donations either in memory of or in honor of family members and friends.

The Mountain View Regional Medical Center Ladies Auxiliary presented MEOC Home Delivered Meals Program this year with a $3,000. MEOC greatly appreciates this very generous and urgently needed gift for the Home Delivered Meals Program, a program that operates at capacity and always has long waiting lists of persons needing the service.

Pictured receiving the check is Debbie Sanders, Director of MEOC Nutrition Program Services from Joyce Luckey of Norton, VA, Secretary of the Mountain View Ladies Auxiliary and the Chair of the "Love Light Tree" fundraiser.

Detach and send for a donation, change of address or to add someone to the mailing list.

MOUNTAIN EMPIRE OLDER CITIZENS, INC.
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PO Box 888, Big Stone Gap, VA 24219
(276) 523-4202 or 1-800-252-6362

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MEOC Walkathon Nears $165,000 Goal: Donations Still Needed and Accepted

Participants in the 40th Annual Mountain Empire Old-
er Citizens (MEOC) Walkathon enjoyed abundant sunshine despite morning rain showers and forecasted thunderstorms during this year’s 10-kilometer (6.2-mile) walk. Donations to the Sunday, May 1, total to date $134,425 with anoth-
er $30,000 scheduled to be donated. The annual event is the largest fundraiser for MEOC’s Emergency Fuel Fund which each year assists close to 1,200 elderly households facing weather-related crises and insufficient means to purchase needed heating fuel.

"Over 300 walked from the community; at Union, High School to help MEOC raise money for the Emergen-
cy Fuel Fund," said MEOC Executive Director Michael Wampler in expressing how pleased he was with the turnout. "The Emergency Fuel Fund is truly the commu-
nity’s fund and we are so thankful for each individual and for every business and faith organization represented," Wampler concluded.

Wampler attributed the yearly success of this major fundraiser to the community’s true concern for its older friends, neighbors, and relatives and to the community’s

Above: A crowd of over 350 walked, cycled, ambled and volunteered to make Walkathon 2016 a fun place to be on May 1st. Pictured here are Whitney Serr, MEOC RN Personal Care Supervisor and her daughter McKinley riding her bicycle. Bicycles and strollers are welcome at this family event. Also pic-
tured are long-time supporters, Jacee and Jace of Wise organized by Barbara May and Millmont Walkers organized by Debbie Jenkins. Thank you, Debbie, Whit-
ney, McKinley, Barbara and Friends for supporting MEOC and the Emergency Fuel Fund.

Left: AARP Virginia and MEOC have forged a strong partnership over many years working together on many productive efforts. For the past ten years, AARP Virginia has been represented at the MEOC Walkathon joining members of the AARP Big Stone Gap Chapter in addressing the fuel assistance needs of older citizens in our area. This year Brian Jacks, AARP Associate State Director, and his son Silas joined us for the day’s activities. Silas, pictured with MEOC Executive Director Michael Wampler, was in charge of drawing the winning names for the winners of the donated Tempur-Pedic mattress and the beautiful quilt handmade and donated by Kathy Rogers and Shirley Fisher. Thank you Silas for lending a helping hand!

Continued on page 2.
Celebration of Children Luncheon

Community partners representing agencies providing services to children and families come together at MEoC for an annual event, the Celebration of Children luncheon. The event is sponsored by Lone- some Pine Office on Youth (LPOY) and MEoC Children’s Services. The luncheon is an opportunity to thank all of our partners for the work they do all year providing services to our area’s children.

Wise County Commissioners’ Attorney, Chuck Stemp served as guest speaker for the event. He provided the group with information regarding changes made to the General Assembly this year that will help to protect children. He also spoke about his work with the Commission on Youth and Focus areas for the coming year. Michele Brooks was chosen as the winner of this year’s LPOY Youth and Family Services Award for outstanding dedication and commitment to youth and families.

This year’s luncheon was attended by the staff of the Southwest Virginia Children’s Advocacy Center since its inception and has served as co-chair for the CAC Advisory Board for over twelve years. She works tirelessly with many of the local agencies, children and families to keep kids safe both as an attorney and as General Counsel of the Advocacy Center.

Over 65 people representing 40 different agencies attending for children attended the luncheon. They represented the counties of Lee, Wise, Scott, Dickenson and the City of Norton.

Several MEoC Board members participated in the 40th Annual Walkathon. Pictured from left to right in this picture are Luke Collie, MEoC Board Member Pam Collie and Joline Collie, Luke (age 10) and Lance Collie (age 14) son’s Pam’s sons and enjoy sports and outdoor activities. Two other Board Members are regul- ar participants and volunteers in the Walkathon, Edith Daniel of Norton and Steve Garrett of Jonesville. MEoC sincerely thanks Pam, Edith and Steve for their service on the MEoC Board.

Suburban Propane, a significant partner with the Emergency Services program, joined the 2016 walkathon this year, an annual event held always on the first Sunday in May. Participants from left to right are Denise Williams, Stacie Paul; Kathy Adkins, Coeburn; Victoria Addison, Big Stone Gap; Sherry Hubbard, Castlewood; and Lindsey Selvy, Coeburn. Thank you to Suburban Propane and all the walkers who made Walkathon 2016 a very successful one!

The City of Norton and Norton Department of Social Services participated in this year’s walk as “Team Norton.” The City of Norton and Norton DSS are long time supporters of and partners with MEoC in programs, services and initiatives for people of all ages. Pictured from left to right are Virginia Miller, Wise; Rhonda Masack, Big Stone Gap; Rosebud Robbins, Kingsport; Sarah Ring, Pound; and Christine Claire, Big Stone Gap. If you are interested in joining the “Team Norton” team next year, contact Christine Claire Norton Department of Social Services!

Wanda Blevins, OAL, Jennifer Whitman, Big Stone Gap and Emily Whitman, Big Stone Gap are pictured together before the walk. Lisa Whitman is an MEoC Personal Care Nurse Supervisor. These nurses have supported the Walkathon for the past ten years. Make plans to bring your group next year and walk with them and many others!

Amber Bentley, Wise; Jessica Whitman, Big Stone Gap, Lisa Whitman, Big Stone Gap and Emily Whitman, Big Stone Gap are pictured together before the walk. Lisa Whitman is an MEoC Personal Care Nurse Supervisor. These nurses have supported the Walkathon for the past ten years. Make plans to bring your group next year and walk with them and many others!

Amber Bentley, Wise; Jessica Whitman, Big Stone Gap, Lisa Whitman, Big Stone Gap and Emily Whitman, Big Stone Gap are pictured together before the walk. Lisa Whitman is an MEoC Personal Care Nurse Supervisor. These nurses have supported the Walkathon for the past ten years. Make plans to bring your group next year and walk with them and many others!
Child Abuse Prevention Month Events

In honor of Child Abuse Prevention Month, MEOC Children’s Services con-
ducted and participated in several events during April. The original campaign that
brought a spotlight to child abuse prevention was called the blue ribbon campaign.
The symbol is still used to remind us that many children are victims of abuse and ne-
glect. In Virginia, every 80 minutes a child is abused or neglected and every eight
days a child dies from abuse or neglect. Every day eleven children receive services from
a Child Advocacy Center in Virginia.
MEOC continued to see an increase in the number of children served through the
Southeast Virginia Children’s Advocacy Center (CAC) during 2015. This could be
disheartening to those working with chil-
dren, but we hope the number of referrals
only reflects an increase in knowledge
amongst our community members and also
more awareness of CAC services that are
available.
Children’s Services staff participated
in two local events to recognize preven-
tion month, a Wise County Department
of Social Services event and a balloon release with Norton Department of Social Services.
Community partners joined in the events
to remember children who are affected by
abuse and neglect.
The Southeast Virginia Children’s
Advocacy Center (CAC) hosted an open
ehouse event for visitors to tour the CAC
meet CAC staff and discuss the services of the center. We enjoyed getting together
with colleagues and sharing information
and thoughts about challenges and good
news for the coming year. Copies of the
reviewed Multidisciplinary Team Child
Abuse and Neglect protocol were distrib-
uted to those in attendance. There have been
many positive changes to the CAC located
at MEOC over the fourteen years the center
has been open, including additional therapy
and waiting spaces, new forensic interview
equipment and new Children’s Services
staff members. The CAC will be expanding
its service area to include Dickenson Coun-
ty, another positive change for children in
the region.

Wear Blue Day Observed Across the Commonwealth

On April 4th, MEOC staff members
dressed in blue to show their commit-
ment to keeping kids safe. On Wear Blue
Day, individuals and organizations across
Virginia join together to make a visible
commitment to preventing child abuse and
supporting strong families and healthy children throughout the Commonwealth.
This event is an annual event coordinated
through Prevent Child Abuse Virginia.

Some of the MEOC staff participating in
Wear Blue Day are pictured here. From
left are Patty Roberts, Jamie Buckner,
Jennifer Davis and Latasha Mall. Sec-
ond Row are Stephanie Sprinkle, Jaclyn
Gilliam, Judy Miller, Debbie Collins, Wal-
ter Aguirre and Sandy Salser.

Long time MEOC partner, Wise County Department of Social Services (DSS), was
very well represented in this year’s walk. Wise County DSS and MEOC collaborat-
ated on so many efforts positively improving the lives of so many in southwest Virgina.
Pictures from left to right are Rachel Loffl, Wise, Daisy Sanders, Wise, Jerr-
sa Turner, Big Stone Gap, Darlene Lawson, Big Stone Gap, Amanda Manners,
Pound; Vanessa Sloan, Pound; and Rachel Sloan, Pound. If any of you are interested in
joining the “WISE ISS” team next year, contact Jessica Turner!

Heritage Hall Healthcare and Rehabilitation of Wise walkers are sure having a great
time at the Walkathon! Both Heritage Hall of Wise and Heritage Hall of Big Stone
Gap are corporate sponsors of the 2016 Walkathon. The Big Stone Gap
Hall annually sponsors a dunk race to support the Emergency Fund. That will
be covered in the next issue of The Mountain Empire News. Pictures here are staff
members from Heritage Hall of Wise and family members. Pictured from left to right are
Kitty Moore, Clintwood; Ayle Barton, Heysi; Jason Barton, Heysi; Joye Foy,
Wise; and Stacey Foy, Wise.

Jazzercise of Wise participated once again in this year’s walk. The whole Jazz-
ercise group supports the Emergency Fund not just by collecting pledges and
walking, but also by hosting Jazzercise fundraisers open to all of the community for
a donation to the Emergency Fund. Barbara Muir and Vanessa Cypers lead the
effort. We are very thankful for their past and continued support. Jazzercise
members pictured left to right are Susanann Carter, Wise; Debbie Sauder, Wise;
Barbara Muir, Norton; Stephanie Carter, Wise; and Debbie Collins, Wise.

Ruth Powell Valley Primary School and Union High School generously let
MEOC use their facilities, including restrooms, cafeteria and outside space to
accommodate walkers year after year. MEOC is thankful for the availability
of the two facilities. Pictures here are many MEOC staff persons from the
Children’s Services department. This is one of two rest stops at the Walkathon,
Each rest stop serves water, bananas, crackers and cookies. Pictured from left to right are
Jayden Edward Maddux, Big Stone Gap; Jacklyn Gilliam, Mount
Carmel, TN; Latasha Mall, Big Stone Gap; Patty Roberts, Coeburn; Latentie
Stuart, Big Stone Gap; and Jennifer Davis, Big Stone Gap

Pharmacy Connect of Southwest Virginia

Need Help Paying For Your Prescriptions?

Mountain Empire Older Citizens (MEOC) may be able to help you. Pharmacy Connect of Southwest Virginia is a program designed to assist qualifying patients in accessing free or low-cost prescription drugs through participating pharmaceutical companies.

Is there a fee?
No, this is a FREE service for people of all ages in Wise, Lee and Scott Counties and the City of Norton.

What age do I have to be to be eligible?
Free medications are available for people of ALL AGES who cannot afford to pay for them.

How do I get help through Pharmacy Connect of Southwest Virginia?
Please call Mountain Empire Older Citizens at (276) 523-4202 or 1-800-252-6662.

What documents will I need to provide? You will need to provide income verification for everyone in your household.

Will my doctor need to be involved?
Yes, your doctor must agree to participate in the program.

How will I get my medications?
Once the medication is ordered, it will be shipped to your doctor’s office or to your home.

If you are in doubt about whether or not you can get help, please call us. The application process is easy and we will help you.
Call (276) 523-4202 for more information.
MEOC Transit Wins Record 5th Straight State Title

Reprinted courtesy of The Post.
Glenn Gunaway, Editor

The Mountain Empire Older Citizens Transit team demonstrated its excellence at the state competition again this year, winning the event for a record five years in a row.

The Virginia Para-travel Roadshow, put on by the Community Transportation Association of Virginia, was held April 9 at the Chesterfield County Fairgrounds. MEOC’s long-traveled squad won 12 of the 20 trophies, with Mike Cook earning a state championship in the van competition and a total of six individual trophies.

Harry Crider finished second in the bus competition, while Doug Ashley finished third with an individual trophy. Jerome Wright, last year’s state champ, finished third as well.

The MEOC team scored 2,733 points on its way to the state championship – the most a team has ever scored, said MEOC Transit Director Mitch Elliott. The state competition included more than 70 competitors from 22 agencies.

Cook’s state championship clinched him a berth in the national competition in Portland, Ore., but he fell and broke a wrist and wasn’t able to go.

“IT is a remarkable accomplishment for these guys,” Elliott said.

MEOC has taken a different team to the state competition each year, although there are some veterans who’ve gone more than once. Elliott said the only constant is Danny Stallard. Stallard’s expertise makes him a coach on the field. Stallard won a national competition several years back and has been state champion about three times.

“He kind of takes these guys under his wing and shows them how to prepare when they go to competition,” Elliott said.

MEOC Transit had three competitions in each of the two divisions, van and bus.

“These guys are proud of this accomplishment, but we’re even prouder we can serve our clients here and know they’re safe and well taken care of,” he said.

MEOC Transit drivers made 149,000 trips last year— an increase of 13.5 percent over the previous year — driving about 970,000 miles.
**ADWARDS**

**Dr. Joe Frank Smiddy Receives Unsung Hero in Care Award from the Virginia Health Care Foundation**

MEOC named Dr. Joe Frank Smiddy, Medical Director for the HealthWays, for his selection as an Unsung Hero at this year’s HealthWays Healthcare awards ceremony, which recognizes outstanding individuals. The Virginia Health Care Foundation holds the awards ceremony each year to honor those individuals and organizations who have made significant contributions to the health care industry.

Dr. Smiddy has been a close friend and collaborator with MEOC for many decades. He has played an instrumental role in projects throughout southeast Virginia assisting medically indigent patients of all ages. No one could possibly deny this award as more than Dr. Smiddy said, “MEOC Executive Director Michael Wampler.

**Dr. Roma Ramey Named 2015 Grace P. Davis Award Recipient**

In late 2013, Roma Ramey, of Gate City, was presented the Grace P. Davis Outstanding Family Support Services Employer Award. She has been employed as a personal care aide since October 1st, 2013, and works in the Scott County area. Roma is passionate about MEOC and her dedication to the work she does for the community.

**Balanced Living with Diabetes**

By Eleanor Schlesker
Registered Dietitian and PhD

Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in Virginia. Over 350,000 Virginians have diabetes and it is estimated that 2 million Virginians have prediabetes, which means they are at higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. Prevalence of diabe tes is highest among African Americans, the elderly and those lacking regular health care. Managing diabetes can be costly and can impact an individual’s quality of life.

Virginia Cooperative Extension has diabetes education classes for people with diabetes since 2006. In fact, one of our first classes was offered in Big Stone Gap from the Virginia Department of Health. We were able to start with the help of the West Virginia Extension who gave us permission to use their lessons. Dr. Kathy Hovey, the Director of Health in Social and Human Services at Virginia Cooperative Extension, worked closely with the Virginia Cooperative Extension to offer our program to Virginians and we named our program Balanced Living with Diabetes (BLD).

BLD helps people with diabetes and their families learn about more safe, food related activities that will help control carbohydrate intake and increase physical activity that will help slow prediabetic complications. BLD consists of four classes and a session three classes last month that is provided as a resource for the community. People interested in attending can contact a local Extension office to discuss their program.

The class sponsored by Mountain State Children’s Advocacy Center and Virginia Cooperative Extension was held in April 2015. The class featured Dr. Roma Ramey, a family nurse practitioner, who worked in a community health setting for many years. Roma’s class was held in the public library and provided an opportunity for families to learn about diabetes and how to manage it.

In May 2015, the class was held at the Mountain State Children’s Advocacy Center in Gate City. The class focused on a healthy meal plan for the family and included recommendations that half of one’s plate be filled with fresh vegetables, one fourth of one’s plate be filled with fruits and one fourth of the plate be filled with lean, whole grains, and healthy fats.

The class also provided a healthy meal plan for everyone in the family and recommends that half of one’s plate be filled with fresh vegetables, one fourth of your plate should be fruits and one fourth of the plate should be lean, whole grains, and healthy fats.

There is a discussion on the types of breakfast foods that are available to you. Each person in the class receives a step counter and all are encouraged to gradually add steps and build it up to 30 minutes of activity a day as they are able. Our goal is that our participants will also encourage their friends and family members of the need to adopt these eating and activity patterns to increase their risk of developing diabetes.

Hemoglobin A1C is a indicator of average blood sugar levels over the previous three months and is used to evaluate appropriate diabetes management. MEOS® Virginia was able to provide hemoglobin A1C tests at the first class and the results class and helped participants understand the goal for this test. The American Diabetes Association recommends an A1C of less than 7.0% for people with type 2 diabetes. Many of the class members lowered their A1C between the first class and the 3-month reminder and several who were above 7.0% at the first class moved closer to the goal. For every 1% decrease in A1C, there is a 40% decrease in the risk of diabetes complications such as blindness, amputations, or kidney failure. Preventing one kidney failure saves Virginians at least $57,000 a year in dialysis costs.

Read more about Balanced Living with Diabetes programs in Innovation:
http://news.cab.vt.edu/innova tion/2015/02/10/taking-charge-of-diabetes
Cancer: Thriving and Surviving

Cancer Adaptation of the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program Curriculum

Mountain Empire Older Citizens and the Mountain Laurel Cancer Support and Resource Center will offer self-management workshops for cancer survivors. The workshops are free and will focus on people who have completed at least their initial treatment. Participants are welcome to bring a family member to the sessions with them. Workshops are given two and a half hours, once a week, for six weeks, in community settings such as senior centers, nutrition sites, churches, libraries, and hospitals. Content areas include topics such as managing difficult emotions, relaxation techniques, healthy diet, decreasing pain and fatigue, correct use of medications, and exercise.

The next series of classes begins Wednesday, July 10th and will be held in the conference room at Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Inc. from 10 a.m.—12:30 p.m.

Interested in taking a workshop? Contact us!

Participants are encouraged to pre-register as soon as possible so educational materials can be obtained in advance. If you, or a family member, is interested in attending a workshop in your area, please contact Maggie Christian Gilbert or Rachel Helton at (276) 523-4202.

Content Areas:
- Managing Difficult Emotions
- Relaxation Techniques
- Maintaining a Healthy Diet
- Decreasing Fatigue
- Managing Medication
- Creating an Exercise Plan

Mountain Laurel Cancer Support and Resource Center
1501 Third Avenue East
P.O. Box 888
276-523-4202
www.mecoc.org

"Most importantly, the curriculum is based on goal setting, problem solving, and action planning; the learning of these process-oriented skills in an environment of social feedback and support has been demonstrated to increase self-efficacy and improve outcomes."

- Dr. Richard Siegel

2016 Mae French Outstanding Older Worker Award Nominations Solicited

On September 22, 2015, Roy T. Roberts of Duffield, VA was presented the Mae French Outstanding Older Worker Award. Roy began as a trainee and participant in the Older Worker Program through MEOC and is now a part-time employee of MEOC’s Training Department. Roy’s co-workers had the following wonderful things to say about him: “He is one of the hardest workers I’ve known, never complains, friendly to everyone, all around good person and a pleasure to work with, always has a smile with a sweet chuckle, kind, loves his community, church and family, is a role model for them, personality makes everyone around him feel good, and treats friends and co-workers like family.” Congratulations, Roy Roberts, as the winner of the 2015 Mae French Outstanding Older Worker Award! Pictured left to right: Debbie Sanders, Director of MEOC’s Older Worker Employment Program, Anna Belle Roberts (Roy’s wife, an MEOC PACE employee), Roy Roberts, and Michael Wampler, MEOC Executive Director

MEOC Chief Financial Officer Stephanie Sprinkle (center) accepts the Commonwealth Council on Aging (CCOA) Best Practices Award for MEOC’s Faith Works program presented by CCOA Chair Beth Barber (right) and Best Practices Committee Chair Dr. Richard Lindsey. The presentation took place at the Governor’s Conference on Aging in Richmond May 2nd, but a future presentation, which will include faith partners, will be made in Big Stone Gap. Faith Works is a partnership between the faith-based community and MEOC which promotes aging in place for hundreds of older people by addressing the need for home repairs and modifications for low-income older adults.

MEOC Receives Funding for Fans and Air Conditioners

Many older persons without a fan find themselves in emergency situations during hot summer days and nights. If you find yourself in heat distress, MEOC may be able to help you or a loved one through its Fan Care program which operates from July 1st through September 30th. MEOC receives funds to distribute a limited number of fans and air conditioners to eligible older persons trapped in heat related emergencies.

To qualify, a person must be sixty (60) years of age or older, have a situation at home that threatens health and have an adjusted gross income of $17,060 or below. 150% of the federal poverty level (1 person, $1,485; 2 persons, $2,100). All incomes of persons in the household must be counted.

This program is sponsored by Dominion Virginia Power and administered by the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitation Services.

If you have an emergency cooling need and are interested in applying for a fan or air conditioner, please call MEOC at 276-523-4202 or 1-800-252-0362.
Health Wagon

Health Expedition

FREE DENTAL SERVICES
Caresty Cleanings
Extractions
Denture Repairs
Denture Realignment

FREE MEDICAL SERVICES FOR ADULTS & CHILDREN
July 22-24, 2016 • Registration 6:00 a.m. Daily
Wise Fairgrounds • Wise, Virginia

Services provided for the uninsured, underinsured, and those who cannot afford to pay and provided by volunteer nurse practitioners, physicians, dentists, optometrists, and other trained health professionals.

First Come, First Served Basis • No Pets Allowed (Service Animals Only) • Tobacco Free Event

If you plan to work hard, please do not eat or drink after midnight.

For transportation call MEOC 1-888-877-6748 or 276-523-7433.
Four County Transit 1-888-696-2272 or 276-983-1486. 2 weeks notice is appreciated.
Fast Track to Eye Glasses: Bring your current eyeglass prescription (within 1 year) to avoid the wait for an eye exam and have your eye glasses made while you wait (We may not be able to make glasses for everybody due to volume of patients).

MORE INFORMATION 276-328-8850

To volunteer time, medical services or food, register online at http://www.ramusia.org/volunteer

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Eye Exam
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FREE MEDICAL Specialist Exams
EGs
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Manipulations
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Anthem BlueCross/BlueShield
Foundation & Healthkeepers

The Health Wagon
RAM Virginia
Lion’s Club of Virginia
Virginia Dental Association
Norton Community Hospital
Mountain States Health Alliance
Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity - VA

In addition, many other civic organizations, churches, businesses and individuals make the event possible.

appetite, nausea and other conditions that cause them not to eat. Good nutrition is important all the time, but especially when one is taking treatments related to cancer diagnosis. Eating the right kinds of foods before, during and after cancer treatment can help the patient feel better and stay stronger. Liquid nutritional supplements can help cancer patients get the nutrients they need to keep up their body weight and strength, keep body tissue healthy and fight infection. Patients who are well nourished may have a better prognosis and quality of life.

Many times the doctor or oncologist will recommend their patients drink a liquid nutritional supplement (2-4 cans a day in some cases) while they are taking their treatments. It is quite expensive for the average person to go to the store and purchase this product. If a person needs to drink 65-620 cans per month, the cost is astronomical. The Robin Lovell Fund can provide two cases of Ensure in May or June by the request of patients who have a prescription from their doctor.

The Robin Lovell Fund has also built into its design some flexibility to respond to emergencies. For instance, from time to time unanswered questions for patients as they begin their journey (into treatment). Many of these questions center on financial issues.

The Mountain Laurel Cancer Support and Resource Center (MLCC), a critical program of MEOC, provides direct assistance to cancer patients of all ages. The direct services of MLCC are supported entirely by local fund-raising and every penny raised goes directly to assisting a person with cancer.

How are we going to pay for medications I will have to leave my job, who will take care of my family?” said MLCC Coor-
The Mountain Laurel Cancer Support and Resource Center (MLCC), a critical program of MEOC, provides direct assistance to cancer patients of all ages. The direct services of MLCC are supported entirely by local fund-raising and every penny raised goes directly to assisting a person with cancer.

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The Robin Lovell Fund has also built into its design some flexibility to respond to emergencies. For instance, from time to time unanswered questions for patients as they begin their journey (into treatment). Many of these questions center on financial issues.
Cuttin’ the Cause Raises Over $24,000 for MEOC’s Mountain Laurel Cancer Center

Genesee and Todd’s Hair Studies of Wise recently announced that their annual Cuttin’ the Cause cut-a-thon, in support of the Mountain Laurel Cancer Support and Resource Center, specifically for its Ruben Lowell Fund, which provides cancer patients liquid nutritional supplements and financial assistance with travel for diagnosis, surgery, and treatment. Cuttin’ the Cause, held this year on March 26, is spearheaded by Genesee and Todd’s Hair Studios owners and operators, and is a strong community partnership involving many local businesses and individuals. The event includes all the operators at Genesee and Todd’s donating their time and labor to cut hair for donations, a raffle, and silent auction made possible by donations from local businesses and individuals, plus a lemonade/lemon-rind stand.

“We are thankful to Todd, Ted, Crystal, and Karen, all the operators at Genesee and Todd’s, all the businesses and individuals who donated goods and services for the raffle and silent auction, and to everyone who got a haircut, bought raffle tickets, bid on silent auction items, or donated in any way,” said MEOC Executive Director Michael Wampler. “It was a wonderful day. The large amount of money raised due to the generosity and community spirit of Genesee and Todd’s will allow the Ruben Lowell Fund to serve many more individuals with cancer. There is such a need and it is always a struggle to keep up with that need.”

The Mountain Laurel Cancer Support and Resource Center (MLCRC), a critical program of MEOC, provides direct assistance to cancer patients of all ages. The direct services of the MLCC are supported entirely by local fundraising and every penny raised goes directly to assisting a person with cancer. The youngest person ever assisted is a three-year-old child in treatment at St. Jude’s and the oldest is a 98-year-old widow in hospice care.

The existence of the Ruben Lowell Fund is able to ensure that financial burden by helping with expensive nutritional supplements and with the cost of travel.

The Black Lowell Fund was established by the Lowell and Begley families in 2006 to honor the memory of their son and brother, Ruben James Lowell, a young man who passed away from Big Stone Gap who died of metastatic melanoma at much too early an age. All the services offered through the Ruben Lowell Fund are free to cancer patients and their families and all money raised for the Ruben Lowell Fund is used to directly assist anyone with cancer. More is needed to pay any administrative costs whatsoever.

During a typical year, the program assists several hundred local cancer patients with travel cards for travel and with nutritional services. Persons who have received Vis cards have traveled to and from the finest cancer centers in the United States.

The Ruben Lowell Fund also assists cancer patients to maintain good nutrition by providing liquid nutritional supplements (Ensure, Enfamil, Glucerna) prescribed by their doctor or, for those who can eat solid food, home delivered meals. Cancer patients in treatment often suffer loss of appetite, nausea, and malnutrition. This can directly result in increasing treatment-related side effects, altered drug metabolism, compromised chemotherapy, and overall decline in quality of life.

Owners and operators of Genesee and Todd’s Hair Study Salons in Wise recently presented a check in the amount of $24,486, representing the proceeds of the salon’s 2016 Cuttin’ the Cause cut-a-thon, to the Mountain Laurel Cancer Support and Resource Center’s Ruben Lowell Fund which pays for travel for cancer diagnosis, treatment and surgery and for liquid nutritional supplements for cancer patients. The Mountain Laurel Cancer Center is a program of Mountain Empire Olfice Cancer (MEOC). Picture left to right are, back row: Genesee and Todd’s operators Brandi Austin, Eden Sturgill, Jason Scott, Morgan Sturgill and Annie Ashby, MEOC Executive Director Michael Wampler, front row, Mountain Laurel Center Coordinator Maggie Christian Gilbert, Mountain Laurel Center Chair Marilyn Pace Maxwell, salon owners Ted, Karen, Crystal and Todd Begley, MEOC Care Coordination Director Judy Miller and Ruben Lowell Fund Founder Linda Lowell Begley.

Kocher Recognized as a Virginia Rural Health Champion

Linda Kocher, R.N., is recognized as a Virginia Rural Health Champion at the PACE Center on November 19th, National Rural Health Day. Pictured with Ms. Kocher are, left to right: Michael Wampler, Executive Director of MEOC, Tony Lawson, Program Director of PACE, Heather Anderson, the Virginia Department of Health’s Director of the Division of Primary and Rural Health, Beth O’Connor, Executive Director of the Virginia Rural Health Association and Mike Mallon, the Virginia Department of Health’s Community Health Specialist and State Office of Rural Health’s Program Manager.

Personal Emergency Response Services

MEOC installs and supports a personal emergency response monitoring system that provides secure, instant notification of emergency contacts in times of need. MEOC uses the Phillips Lifeline system.

Fees: Monthly charge and one-time installation fee.

Eligibility: Unrestricted.

Intake Procedure: Walk-ins and telephone referrals accepted.

Service Area: Lee, Scott and Wise Counties, and The City of Norton.

For more information: Phone(s): (276) 522-4022, 1-800-252-6362

Virginia’s State Office of Rural Health, in partnership with the Virginia Rural Health Association, recently recognized Linda Kocher, R.N., of Big Stone Gap as a Rural Health Champion for the Commonwealth of Virginia. Ms. Kocher currently serves as the Quality Assurance Coordinator for the Mountain Empire PACE program. She was one of the original visionaries for a PACE program through MEOC where the service at MEOC, Board Chair for many years, Heather Anderson, Director of the Division of Primary and Rural Health (right) presents this award to Linda Kocher, R.N. (left) in recognition of many years of service in the healthcare industry. Congratulations Linda, we all are very proud of you for this very well deserved honor.
A Day In The Life Of PACE: Come Join Us

Personal Care Services and PACE Participant Samuel Audia

Samuel Audia has been a participant of Mountain Empire Older Citizens Program (PACE) since 2005. He is a resident of Lee County, VA, where he has lived for most of his life. He received an academic scholarship to Virginia Tech, but chose to move and begin his life raising a family with his wife Marian Melba Audia. The Audias were married for 50 years before his beloved wife passed away. Together they had children and were very proud they were able to send all of their children to further their education and graduate from college. The Audias have 10 grandchildren and many great-grandchildren.

Samuel served his country in World War II as a staff sergeant in the Army Air Force for 3 months in Okinawa, Japan. Upon his return to the U.S., he worked as a salesman and business owner, operating the Cold Spring Market at Stone Church, Va for 15 years. Even in retirement, he continued to work as a stock clerk for Pegg Waggy for many years in order to remain active.

Mr. Audia continues to live in his home with the support of his devoted wife, Lena, Audia and has been married for 50 years. Recently, he received services to help him remain in his home as he found it to be the best care, care transportation, and from the PACE Center in Big Stone Gap provided by MECO Trans. (Transport, physical therapy, occupational therapy, recreation, socialization, and medical services provided by the physical staff of Mountain Empire Older Citizens Program. His family stated that “PACE has been a serving place for our dad and our family.” His daughter, Jodie Audia Prince, credits PACE for keeping her father able to live in the community and out of the stress of nursing home living.

Mr. Audia’s personal care aide, Dori Cunningham, moved to the area from Michigan. She was working guidance on how to care for her sister when she read about the first personal care aide training Mountain Empire Older Citizens offers. She signed up for the class and was hired as a personal care aide for MECO. In her care of Sam, she learned about the PACE program and was able to work for her sister, Wills Stagner, as well. Within is also a PACE Participant and has seen tremendous improvement in her health and happiness since joining PACE.

Mr. Audia’s family is appreciative that Dori is a conscientious, responsible person who genuinely cares about Sam’s well being. The family receives comfort in knowing they are able to treat Dori as a caregiver and have been very pleased with all of the aides who have provided care to Sam. Sam enjoys his time at PACE and keeps his mind sharp by working daily crossword and jigsaw puzzles, reading the daily newspapers, and watching the New York Times Sundance Crossword every week.

The Foster Grandparent Program currently partners with 22 schools and local foster facilities in Lee, Scott, and Wise Counties and the City of Norton and serves more than 85 children. Foster Grandparents volunteer, if they meet the requirements and are enrolled, will receive a stipend which can be used for any income they currently receive to help pay for expenses.

They also provide free transportation if needed, and from their assigned school or center to their vehicle. In their case, the students who reside in their homes as well to see more children and the services they can receive.

Above: PACE Participant Sam Audia.

Social Work Services and PACE Participant Ann Taylor

Ann Taylor and the love of her life, Buster Taylor, were married for 50 years when Buster passed away in 2013. Ms. Taylor says about Buster, “He was the rock and foundation for me. He was full of love and life.” For the loss of her husband, Ms. Taylor had to make many adjustments to a life she wants to have to make. She was able to do so with the help of PACE and, in particular, the Social Work Program.

Ms. Taylor has been a PACE participant for 4 years now and, oh, how her life has changed! She has found strength when and where she didn’t think she could and has been able to pick up the pieces of her life and start anew. Ms. Taylor attends PACE three days a week and socializes with friends that she has made in the program. She never gets out of the house which is a wonderful change in her life.

Multiple professionals from PACE have been there to provide transportation services for Ms. Taylor during her difficult time, though there is one in particular with whom a wonderful relationship has grown. Ms. Taylor has worked closely with Kathy Lee, MSW, who has empowered her to take control of her life and manage stress that were new and often frightening to her. With the help of Kathy, Ms. Taylor is now thriving and doing wonderful.

Social workers provide a multitude of services in the area of human services. The primary focus is to guide and empower individuals to be their best. Ms. Taylor is a key example of the goals that can be reached when the right assistance is available.

The staff of Mountain Empire Older Citizens is so proud of Ms. Taylor and the life she has come to find for herself through dedication on her part and the help and guidance provided by Kathy Lee.

Above: PACE Participant Ann Taylor.

Fit Farmer 5K Run/Walk

Are you 55 or older? Could you use a little exercise that will not affect your mind or body? Join the Mountain Empire Older Citizens Program’s 5K Run/Walk held May 14th. A Kid’s Obstacle Course was also held at the Norton and Farmers Market Building downtown Norton, All proceeds benefit the Norton and Farmers Market “Senior Supplement Program.” A huge thanks to all those supporting our seniors and our Farmers Markets.

Volunteers also receive an annual physical check-up at no charge and will have access to free Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security or benefits such as food stamps, medical assistance, and federal fuel assistance! Do you enjoy working with children?

If you answered yes to those questions, MECO may have an opportunity for you through in Foster Grandparent Program. This program pairs those with typically and experienced with children having either exceptional or special needs. The programs, which began in 1977, operate in Lee, Scott, and Wise Counties and the City of Norton. Under the direction of the classroom teacher and the program director, Foster Grandparents provide supportive, one-on-one service to children in classrooms.

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Above: PACE Participant Sam Audia.

Fit Farmer 5K Run/Walk volunteers, left to right, Betty Sawant, Pennington Gap; Brenda Tate, St. Paul; Sharon C. Mullins, Norton; and Sheila Miller, St. Paul, with Foster Grandparent Director Chip Beatty, Norton, at a recent event at MECO’s offices.

To MECO Grandparent Program at 50500 S. US HWY 601 at St. Paul, 27465. New applications are now being accepted.
Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program Partners With Wise County and Mountain Farmers Markets

All participants are encouraged to completely spend all of the checks.

The following markets have vendors accepting SNAP checks:
- Norton: Located in the indoor facility behind the Shinnock on 10th and Park Avenue in downtown Norton every Tuesday from 4-6 p.m. This market also accepts EBT cards.
- Wise: Located at Big Bluffs Community Square and Amethyste Club each Thursday from 4-6:30 p.m. Big Bluffs Community Square is located across from Sommers in Wise.
- Big Stone Gap: Located downtown Big Stone Gap on Shaver Avenue across from the fire station every Saturday from 8-12 noon. This market also accepts EBT cards.
- Spout Spring: Located at Market Square on 2nd Street between Bassett and Broad each Saturday from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. and Wednesdays from 2-5 p.m. This market also accepts EBT cards.

Free Medicare Counseling Available at MEOC

Virginia Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program, more commonly known as VICAPE, is part of a national network of Program that offers FREE, unbiased, confidential counseling and assistance for people with Medicare. VICAPE counselors can help all Medicare beneficiaries, including those with disabilities and younger than 65, explore options that best meet their needs. They can help you compare the quality of care and services given by health and prescription drug plans available in your area. VICAPE counselors are trained and certified to help you understand and compare Medicare benefits. Working collaboratively with the Senior Medicare Patrons (SMP), VICAPE counselors can help educate and empower beneficiaries to take an active role in detecting and preventing health care fraud and abuse. For more information call MEOC VICAPE Coordinator Jennifer Spangler at (276) 523-4202 or 1-800-252-6302 or email jspangl@meoc.org.

Meet Occupational Therapist Beth Bell and the Neelys

Occupational Therapist, Beth Bell, is the senior member of the therapy team having joined the PACE Program in March of 2009. Beth is a graduate of the University of North Carolina’s Master’s degree program in occupational therapy. She has a background of working with children as the Early Intervention Program of South Carolina, as a medical missionary to Kenya, East Africa, and as an occupational therapist with a regional nursing home population.

The goal of the occupational therapy program at PACE is to help PACE members achieve their personal goals of achievement and functional independence.

As a member of the Interdisciplinary Team, Beth believes an assessment of each participant to determine his or her physical and mental strengths and weaknesses and compares those results with personal goals they have set for themselves. Then, together, a plan is developed to work toward the participant’s goals.

Once long-term goals are determined, the occupational therapist establishes short-term goals which enable the individual to work toward each long-term goal. Sometimes the short-term or long-term goals can be achieved by learning a different way to do familiar self-care tasks, using a different strategy or an adaptive aid.

Joey Neely and his wife, Evelyn, have both benefited greatly from the occupational therapy program at PACE and are able to perform tasks that were once difficult or impossible to perform.
PACE Picnic in the Park

PACE participant Ralph Cheek of Woodway enjoys the sunshine as he waits for his picnic lunch. PACE special outings are favorite ways to spend the day. Most recently, PACE participants enjoyed a tour of Big Stone Gap as the town celebrated its 150th anniversary and the Autumn Leaves tour and the Christmas Shopping and Lunch Out Day are huge favorites of PACE participants.

PACE participant Ricky Robbins of Koonoo and PACE Activity Director Donna Mahan of Big Stone Gap show us their best moves as they work up an appetite for the picnic in the park! Exercising, while moving to music, is enjoyed by so many at PACE and is particularly energizing in the fresh air at Bullitt Park.

PACE Participant Kenneth "Bass" Collins of Appalachias is all smiles after a day of good food and fun in Big Stone Gap's Bullitt Park. He said one of his favorite things from the day was watching Donna Mahan lead everyone in dancing!

Mountain Empire PACE Activity Director, Donna Mahan of Big Stone Gap, stands by as Lyvone "Jewey" Shaw of Koonoo plays a game of horseshoes at the picnic, a favorite activity of PACE participants both at the PACE Center and on their special outings.

Personal Care Aide, Georgia Fannin of Coeburn watches the crowd's reaction to the story told by PACE participant, Carlos Hamilton of Wise. Story telling is always fun and seems even more so outdoors at a picnic with your friends waiting for lunch to be served!

Personal Care Aide, Tobi Fields of Pennington Gap, accompanies PACE participants on their way to Bullitt Park in Big Stone Gap for the annual PACE Picnic in the Park. Elise Roberts of Jonesville, James Collins of Rose Hill and Nicole Johnson make their way from the MEOC Transit bus to the park for a day of fun and food. This is just one of several outings during the year enjoyed by PACE participants.
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The mission of the occupational therapy program at PACE is to help PACE members achieve their prior personal goals of achievement and functional independence. As a member of the Interdisciplinary Team, Beth combines an evaluation of each participant to determine his or her physical and mental strengths and weaknesses and compares those results with personal goals they have set for themselves. Then, together, a plan is developed to work toward the participant’s goals.

Once long term goals are determined, the occupational therapist establishes short term goals which enable the individual to work toward each long term goal. Sometimes the short term or long term goals can be achieved by learning a different way to do familiar self care tasks, using a different strategy or an adaptive aid. Use of learned strategies and adaptive aids can help participants manage the tasks which may include independence in self care, the ability to stand and wash dishes or reaching over sinks and toilets without assistance.

Beth and the Neeleys have enjoyed the friendship at PACE that goes beyond a therapist/ patient relationship. Beth states, “It is good to see them when they visit the PACE Center often working hand in hand to help reduce her pain and assist her in her daily activities.”

Pace Occupational Therapist, Beth Bell, is pictured with PACE participants, James and Evelyn Neeley of Big Stone Gap. Mr. and Mrs. Neeley have both benefited greatly from the occupational therapy program at PACE and are able to perform tasks that were once difficult or impossible to perform.

Since the start of May, over 300 eligible older persons in Wise County and Norton City have applied for the Senior Farmers Markets Nutrition Program (SNAP), a program designed to improve nutrition of older persons while also helping local farmers to sell locally grown fruits, vegetables and family cuts of meat. In July, check books worth $280 will be distributed to eligible applicants to be used at area farmers markets running from July 1st through November 30th. Please note that markets at the jurisdictions of Wise and Norton typically close around the first of October, so spend your checks in those locales before then!

The check books consist of eight $5 checks that seniors can spend like cash in all of our fresh fruit and vegetable vendors, ask farmers, local farmers markets, who have been approved the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Each eligible person within a household receives a complete book of checks.
A Day In The Life Of PACE: Come Join Us

Personal Care Services and PACE Participant Samuel Audia

Samuel Audia has been a participant of Mountain Empire Older Citizens Program (PACE) since 2005. He has been a resident of Lee County, VA, since he was a young boy. He was validated for his program from St. Charles High School, St. Louis, MO. He received an academic scholarship to Virginia Tech, but chose to move and begin his life raising a family with his wife Marjorie Miller Audia. The Audias were married for 50 years before his beloved wife passed away. Together they had children and were very proud they were able to send all of their children to further their education and graduate from college. The Audia has 10 grandchildren and many great grandchildren.

Samuel served his country in World War II as a staff sergeant in the Army Air Force for 3 months in Okinawa, Japan. Upon his return to the U.S, he worked as a salesman and business owner, operating the Cecil Spring Market at Stone Council, VA for 10 years. Even after retirement, he continued to work as a stock clerk for Piggly Wiggly for many years in order to remain active.

Mr. Audia continues to live in his home with the support of his devoted daughter, Lois Audia and her husband, Bruce. He receives services to help him remain in his home with the help of his children, such as personal care, transportation, and food from the PACE Center. Mr. Audia is a local PACE participant provided by MEOC.

Above: PACE Participant Ann Taylor of Big Stone Gap sits down to speak with her dear friend and PACE social worker, Kerri Lee of Lee County. Since she enrolled in PACE, Ms. Taylor has overcome obstacles she never thought possible and continues to thrive today.

Ann Taylor and the love of her life, Buster Taylor, were married for 50 years when Buster passed away in 2015. Ms. Taylor says about Buster, “He was the rock and foundation for me.” Following the loss of her husband, Ms. Taylor had to make many adjustments to come to terms with how to make. “She was able to do so with the help of PACE, and in particular, the Social Work Program. Ms. Taylor has been a PACE participant for a year and, oh, how her life has changed!” She has found strength where she didn’t think she could and has been able to pick up the pieces of her life and start anew. Ms. Taylor attends PACE three days a week and socializes with friends that she made in the program. She now enjoys getting out of the house which is a wonderful change in her life.

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The staff of Mountain Empire PACE is so proud of Ms. Taylor and the life she has come to find for herself through dedication on her part and the help and guidance provided by Kay Lee.

Social Work Services and PACE Participant Ann Taylor

Fit Farmer 5K Run/Walk

Are you 55 or older? Could you use a little exercise that will not affect your health, time, holiday pay and monthly support than a trip to the grocery store? The Volunteer and Elderly Services Foundation is launching the Volunteer and Elderly Services Foundation, an organization dedicated to helping older adults with meal delivery, transportation, and social services. The foundation’s goal is to help seniors live independently and maintain their independence for as long as possible. Their mission is to provide services that promote the well-being and quality of life for older adults. They believe that every older adult has the right to live with dignity and respect and that they should be able to live independently in their own homes. The Volunteer and Elderly Services Foundation is a non-profit organization that relies on donations and volunteer support to provide its services. They are always in need of volunteers, so if you or someone you know is interested in volunteering, please contact the Volunteer and Elderly Services Foundation at (540) 347-4455 or visit their website at www.elderlyservicesfoundation.org.

Volunteers also receive an annual physical examination and are offered health insurance, a monthly stipend, and discounts for transportation and other services. The foundation is looking for volunteers to help with meal delivery, transportation, and other activities that will help seniors maintain their independence. If you or someone you know is interested in volunteering, please contact the Volunteer and Elderly Services Foundation at (540) 347-4455 or visit their website at www.elderlyservicesfoundation.org.

MEOC’s Foster Grandparent Program Is Looking for Volunteers

MEOC’s Foster Grandparent Program is looking for volunteers to help with non-traditional family members such as foster parents, grandparents, and other relatives. Volunteers will assist with activities such as providing companionship and support to children in need, helping with homework, and participating in community events. Volunteers will be matched with a child who is between the ages of 6 and 18. Volunteers will receive a monthly stipend of $250 and are required to commit to at least 100 hours of service per year. MEOC’s Foster Grandparent Program program is open to anyone who is at least 55 years old and has a strong connection to the community. If you or someone you know is interested in volunteering, please contact MEOC’s Foster Grandparent Program at (540) 347-4455 or visit www.moeo.org.

MEOC’s Foster Grandparent Program volunteers are invited to visit left to right, Reta Sauraw, Pennington Gap, Brenda Tate, TX; Shawn C. Mullen, Norton; and Sheila Miller, St. Paul, with Foster Grandparent Director Chip Bryan, Norton, at a recent site visit at MEOC’s offices. The Volunteer and Elderly Services Foundation is a non-profit organization that relies on donations and volunteer support to provide its services. They are always in need of volunteers, so if you or someone you know is interested in volunteering, please contact the Volunteer and Elderly Services Foundation at (540) 347-4455 or visit their website at www.elderlyservicesfoundation.org.
Cuttin’ the Cause Raises Over $24,000 for MEOC’s Mountain Laurel Cancer Center

Genesee and Todd’s Hair Studies of Wise recently announced that their annual Cutt’n the Cause could raise $24,000 for the Mountain Laurel Cancer Support and Resource Center, specifically for its Rubin Lowell Fund which provides cancer patients liquid nutritional supplements and financial assistance for travel for diagnosis, surgery, and treatment. The event includes all the operators of Genesee and Todd’s, all the businesses and individuals who donated goods and services for the raffle and silent auction, and to everyone who got a haircut, bought raffle tickets, bid on silent auction items, or donated in any way,” said MEOC Executive Director Michael Wampler. “It was a wonderful day. The large amount of money raised due to the generosity and community spirit of Genesee and Todd’s will allow the Rubin Lowell Fund to serve many more individuals with cancer. There is such a need and it is always a struggle to keep up with that need.”

The Mountain Laurel Cancer Support and Resource Center (MLCRC), a critical program of MEOC, provides direct assistance to cancer patients of all ages. The direct services of the MLCCR are supported entirely by local fundraising and every penny raised goes directly to assisting a person with cancer. The youngest person ever assisted is a three-year-old child in treatment at St. Jude’s and the oldest is a 90-year-old widow in hospice care.

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Eligibility: Unrestricted.

Intake Procedure: Walk-ins and telephone referrals accepted.

Service Area: Lee, Scott, and Wise Counties, and The City of Norton.

Linda Kocher, R.N., is recognized as a Virginia Rural Health Champion at the PACE Center on November 19th, National Rural Health Day. Pictured with Ms. Kocher are, from left to right: Michael Wampler, Executive Director of MEOC, Tony Lawson, Program Director of PACE, Heather Anderson, the Virginia Department of Health’s Director of the Division of Primary Care and Rural Health, Beth O’Connor, Executive Director of the Virginia Rural Health Association and Mike Malloy, the Virginia Department of Health’s Community Health Specialist and State Office of Rural Health’s Program Manager.

Virginia’s State Office of Rural Health, in partnership with the Virginia Rural Health Association, recently recognized MEOC’s Linda Kocher, R.N. as Big Stone Gap as a Rural Health Champion for the Commonwealth of Virginia. Ms. Kocher currently serves as the Quality Assurance Coordinator for the Mountain Empire PACE program. She was one of the original visionaries for a PACE program through MEOC where the service as PACE Board Chair for many years, Heather Anderson, Director of the Division of Primary Care and Rural Health (right) presents this award to Linda Kocher, R.N. (left) in recognition of many years of service in the healthcare industry. Congratulations Linda, we all are so very proud of you for this very well deserved honor.
FREE DENTAL Cleaning, Exams, Fluorides, Flossing, Extractions, Denture Repairs, Denture Realignment

FREE EYE CARE
Eye Exam, Glaucoma Testing, Diabetes Retinopathy Screenings, Prescription Glasses

FREE MEDICAL SERVICES FOR ADULTS & CHILDREN
July 22-24, 2016 • Registration 6:00 a.m. Daily
Wide Fairgrounds • Wide, Virginia

Services provided for the uninsured, underinsured, and those who cannot afford to pay and provided by volunteer nurse practitioners, physicians, dentists, optometrists, and other trained health professionals.

First Come, First Served Basis • No Pets Allowed (Service Animals Only) • Tobacco Free Event
If you plan to work later in the day, please do not eat or drink after midnight.
For transportation call MEOC 1-888-877-6748 or 276-523-7433.
Four County Transit 1-888-666-2277 or 276-983-1486, 2 weeks notice is appreciated.
Fast Track to Eye Glasses: Bring your eyeglass prescription (within 1 year) to avoid the wait for an eye exam and have your eyeglasses made while you wait (We may not be able to make glasses for everybody due to volume of patients).

MORE INFORMATION 276-328-8850
To volunteer, time, medical services or food, register online at http://www.ramusnews.com/volunteer

The Health Wagon
RAM Virginia
Lion’s Club of Virginia
Virginia Dental Association
Norton Community Hospital
Mountain States Health Alliance
Volunteer Optometric Services to Humility - VA
University of Appalachia College of Pharmacy

MAJOR SPONSORS

- VDH - Lenowisco Health District
- University of Virginia Health System
- Mountain View Rehabilition Medical Center
- UVa College at Wise
- Wise Fair Clinic
- MECD’s Transport
- Wise Health Net

- Dominion Electric
- Kiwanis
- Town of Wise
- Wise County Board of Supervisors
- Pepsico & Food City
- Appalachian HealthCare Foundation
- BlueCross BlueShield
- Foundation & Healthkeepers
- INTotal Health - MCO

In addition, many other civic organizations, churches, businesses and individuals make the event possible.

Cancer Thriving and Supporting local leader training

A Cancer Thriving and Surviving local leader training was recently held at MEOC in Big Stone Gap. Pictures taken left to right are: front row, Shauna Fiske, MP3 Radio; Nick Harvey, motor train drivers Dr. Rick Seidel and Joyce Nunnham, Linda Robbuck, Dee Hughes, Marilyn Pace Maxwell, back row, Rachel Helm, Anna Harris, Barry Grooms, Deborah Gardner, Ann Daniels, Bill Dobson, Cindy Medford, Maggie Christian Gilber, Judy Millic, Sandy泗泽, Mary Barker.

These local leaders were trained to offer self-management workshops for cancer survivors and family and friends of persons affected by cancer. The workshops are free and will focus on people who have completed at least their initial treatment. Sessions are being planned for the coming weeks. If you or a family member is interested in attending a workshop in your area, please contact Maggie Gilber at (276) 532-4103.
Cancer: Thriving and Surviving

Cancer Adaptation of the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program Curriculum

Mountain Empire Older Citizens Offers Workshops for Cancer Survivors

Mountain Empire Older Citizens and the Mountain Laurel Cancer Support and Resource Center will offer self-management workshops for cancer survivors. The workshops are free and will focus on people who have completed at least their initial treatment. Participants are welcome to bring a family member to the sessions with them. Workshops are given two and a half hours, once a week, for six weeks, in community settings such as senior centers, nutrition sites, churches, libraries, and hospitals. Content areas include topics such as managing difficult emotions, relaxation techniques, healthy diet, decreasing pain and fatigue, correct use of medications, and exercise.

The next series of classes begins Wednesday, July 10th and will be held in the conference room at Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Inc. from 10 a.m.—12:30 p.m.

Interested in taking a workshop? Contact us!

Participants are encouraged to pre-register as soon as possible so educational materials can be obtained in advance. If you, or a family member, is interested in attending a workshop in your area, please contact Maggie Christian Gilbert or Rachel Helton at (276) 523-4202.

Content Areas:
- Managing Difficult Emotions
- Relaxation Techniques
- Maintaining a Healthy Diet
- Decreasing Fatigue
- Managing Medication
- Creating an Exercise Plan

Mountain Laurel Cancer Support and Resource Center
1501 Third Avenue East
P.O. Box 888
Big Stone Gap, VA 24219
276-523-4202
www.meoc.org

“Most importantly, the curriculum is based on goal setting, problem solving, and action planning; the learning of these process-oriented skills in an environment of social feedback and support has been demonstrated to increase self-efficacy and improve outcomes.” — Dr. Richard Seidel

As Annual Older Worker Luncheon sponsored by the Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP) of MEOC will be held each September. At this event, MEOC presents the Mae French Outstanding Older Worker Award established by the MEOC Board of Directors in 1994, as a tribute to Mrs. Mae French of Norton, at the age of 81, Mrs. French began working at MEOC’s Norton Nutrition Site as assistant to the Site Manager. She worked there for 17 years retiring at the age of 98. Mrs. French is one of the special qualities that are the very soul and spirit of MEOC. She exemplified the important and outstanding contributions made daily by older people to improve the health and well-being of our communities. She believed strongly in church, community, and work. She stood as an inspiration to people of all ages.

As a member of the workforce, an individual must be an employee of MEOC or a trainee in the Older Worker Program. The fifty-five-year-old and older and demonstrate the qualities exemplified daily by Mrs. French.

The 2016 Annual Older Worker Luncheon is planned for the last week in September, nationally recognized as Employ an Older Worker Week. Nominations are now being accepted for the 2016 Mae French Outstanding Older Worker Award. Please contact Debbie Baker at MEOC at 276-679-0338 if you need more information.

2016 Mae French Outstanding Older Worker Award Nominations Solicited

On September 22, 2015, Ray T. Roberts of Damascus, VA was presented the Mae French Outstanding Older Worker Award. Ray began as a trainer and participant in the Older Worker Program through MEOC and is now a part-time employee of MEOC’s Financial Department. Ray’s coworkers had the following wonderful things to say about him: “Is one of the hardest workers I’ve known, never complains, friendly to everyone, all around good person and a pleasure to work with, always has a smile with a sweet chuckle, kind, loves his community, church and family, is a role model for others, personality makes everyone around him feel good, and treats friends and co-workers like family” Congratulations, Ray Roberts, as the winner of the 2015 Mae French Outstanding Older Worker Award Picture left to right: Debbie Sanders, Director of MEOC’s Older Worker Employment Program, Donna Belle Roberts (Ray’s wife), an MEOC PAICE employee, Ray Roberts, and Michael Wampler, MEOC Executive Director

Cocoa Award

MEOC Chief Financial Officer Stephanie Sprinkle (center) accepts the Commonwealth Council on Aging (CCOA) Best Practices Award for MEOC’s Faith Works program presented by CCOA Chair Beth Barber (right) and Best Practices Committee Chair Dr. Richard Lindsay. The presentation took place at the Governor’s Conference on Aging in Richmond May 2nd, but a future presentation, which will include faith partners, will be made in Big Stone Gap. Faith Works is a partnership between the faith-based community and MEOC which promotes aging in place for hundreds of older people by addressing the need for home repairs and modifications for low-income older adults.

MEOC Receives Funding for Fans and Air Conditioners

Many older persons without a phone search themselves in emergency situations between hot summer days and nights. If you find yourself in heat danger, MEOC may be able to help you or a loved one through its Fan Care program which opens from July 1st through September 30th. MEOC received funds to distribute a limited number of fans and air conditioners to eligible older persons trapped in heat-related emergencies.

To qualify, a person must be sixty (60) years of age or older, have a situation at home that threatens health and have an adjusted gross income of $20,000 or below 150% of the federal poverty level (1 person, $1,485; 2 persons, $2,000). All incomes of persons in the household must be counted.

This program is sponsored by Dominion Virginia Power and administered by the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitation Services.

If you have an emergency cooling need and are interested in applying for a fan or air conditioner, please call MEOC at 276-523-4202 or 1-800-252-6362.
Balanced Living with Diabetes

By Eleanor Schlesker
Registered Dietitian and PhD

Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in Virginia. Over 350,000 Virginians live with diabetes and it is estimated that 2 million Virginians have prediabetes, which means they are at higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. Prevalence of di- abetes is higher among African Americans, the elderly and those lacking regular health care. With these costs, many cannot afford to pay for healthcare, which are the primary cause of death for diabetics, and can impact an individual’s quality of life.

Virginia Cooperative Extension has developed diabetes education classes for people over 21 since 2006. In fact, one of our first classes was offered in Big Spring as stand-alone classes from the Virginia Department of Health. We were able to get started with the help of the West Virginia Extension who gave us permission to use their lessons. Dr. Kathy Hovig, the Director of the Special Events Center at West Virginia University Health Research and Practice later reviewed the lessons to better meet the needs of Virginians and we named the new program Balanced Living with Diabetes (BLD).

BLD helps people with diabetes and their families learn more about self-care, food choices, and the importance of regular exercise to control blood glucose and its risks, and lipid and lifestyle patterns relating to diet and physical activity that will help to prevent or slow diabetic complications. BLD consists of four classes and a reunion class three months later that provides an opportunity for follow-up. Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) agents partner with local registered dietitians to present the program.

The class sponsored by Mountain Empire FCS Agents began in April and the reunion class took place in early August. The class is taught by BLD’s Registered Dietitian, Natalie Kennedy. Our lessons build on the use of a meal planning method, the MyPlate Model, that emphasizes regular meals and snacks and adds fruits and vegetables to the day, whole grains, and healthy fats.

BLD is based on a healthy meal plan for everyone in the family and recommends that half of your plate be filled with fruits and vegetables, one-fourth of your plate a starch food, and one-fourth your plate lean protein.

Roma Ramey Named 2015 Grace P. Davis Award Recipient

In late 2015, Roma Ramey, a City of Gates Resident, was named the 2015 Grace P. Davis Outstanding Family Support Services Employ- ee Award. She has been a personal care aide since October 5, 2013 and works in the Scott County area. Roma is nominated for the MECD Board in 1999 and at age 56 for health reasons, the Board named her Chair Emeritus in recognition of her extraordinary service and leadership. On November 19, 2003, the MECD Board of Directors voted to establish the Grace P. Davis Outstanding Family Support Services Employee Award to honor annually an MECD employee who is an extraordinary direct care provider to older persons and who displays the qualities of compassion, concern, respect, and service to frail, older clients.

This annual award was established because Ms. Davis, for her decades of service, her ongoing efforts to promote community-based care services for the elderly and to continue her legacy at MECD by recognizing those employees who most demonstrate the fulfillment of her dream to serve older persons by the daily display of loyalty, commitment and kindness to MECD and those we serve.

Grace P. Davis passed away in Sep- tember, 2002. Congratulations, Roma!

Photo Above: 2015 Grace P. Davis Award Winner, Roma Ramey, left, of City of Gates is congratulated by Mecklenburg FCS Extension Agent Donna Beres, right, during the presentation of the award.

Roma Ramey Named 2015 Grace P. Davis Award Recipient

Dr. Joe Frank Smiddy Receives Unsung Hero in Care Award from the Virginia Health Care Foundation

MECD asked Dr. Joe Frank Smiddy, Medical Director for the Health Wagon, for his selection as an Unsung Hero this year’s Honor Awards ceremony. His organization was selected to receive the award. Dr. Smiddy has been involved in the Virginia Health Care Foundation for almost 20 years. He is married and has two children.

Dr. Smiddy has been a friend and colleague with MECD for decades on projects throughout southwest Virginia assisting medically indigent persons of all ages.

No one could possibly deserve this award more than Dr. Smiddy,” said MECD Executive Director Michael Wampler.

Photo Above: Pictured left to right taking a break in setting up the table for the Remote Area Medical event at Jefferson County’s University Station JMI. University Station JMI is a Remote Area Medical Celebration, secure, and protecting the rights of others. As we move forward, we must continue to work towards a solution for the problem.

WRIS student Union Director Jim Collee, left, of Wise County and MECD Board Member Emmett Joseph C. Smiddy, Unsung Hero award winner Dr. Joe Frank Smiddy and University of Virginia Pi Kappa Delta volunteer student member Ashley Montague.

The Remote Area Medical event at Jefferson County’s University Station JMI is a Remote Area Medical Celebration, secure, and protecting the rights of others. As we move forward, we must continue to work towards a solution for the problem.
MEOC Transit Wins Record 5th Straight State Title

Reprinted courtesy of The Post
Glenn Gannaway, Editor

The Mountain Empire Older Citizens Transit team demonstrated its excellence at the state competition again this year, winning the event for a record five years in a row.

The Virginia Para-transit Roadshow, put on by the Community Transportation Association of Virginia, was held April 9 at the Chesterfield County Fairgrounds. MEOC’s long-served squad won 12 of the 20 trophies, with Mike Cook earning a state championship in the van competition and a total of six individual trophies. Harry Crider finished second in the bus competition, while Doug Ashley finished third with an individual trophy.

The MEOC team scored 2,733 points on its way to the state championship — the most a team has ever scored, said MEOC Transit Director Mitch Elliott. The state competition included more than 70 competitors from 22 agencies.

Cook’s state championship earned him a berth in the national competition in Portland, Ore., but he fell and broke a wrist and wasn’t able to go.

“It is a remarkable accomplishment for these guys,” Elliott said.

MEOC has taken a different team to the state competition each year, although there are some veterans who’ve gone more than once. Elliott said the only constant is Danny Stallard. Stallard’s expertise makes him a coach on the field.

Stallard won a national competition several years back and has been state champion about three times.

“He kind of takes these guys under his wing and shows them how to prepare when they go to competition,” Elliott said.

MEOC Transit had three competitions in each of the two divisions, van and bus.

“These guys are proud of this accomplishment, but we’re even prouder we can serve our clients here and know they’re safe and well taken care of,” he said.

MEOC Transit drivers made 149,000 trips last year — an increase of 13.5 percent over the previous year — driving about 970,000 miles.
Pharmacy Connect of Southwest Virginia

Need Help Paying For Your Prescriptions?

Mountain Empire Older Citizens (MEOC) may be able to help you. Pharmacy Connect of Southwest Virginia is a program designed to assist qualifying patients in accessing free or low-cost prescription drugs through participating pharmaceutical companies.

Is there a fee?
No. This is a FREE service for people of all ages in Wise, Lee and Scott Counties and the City of Norton.

What age do I have to be to be eligible?
Free medications are available for people of ALL AGES who cannot afford to pay for them.

How do I get help through Pharmacy Connect of Southwest Virginia?
Please call Mountain Empire Older Citizens at (276) 523-4202 or 1-800-252-6362.

What documents will I need to provide? You will need to provide income verifications for everyone in your household.

Will my doctor need to be involved?
Yes, your doctor must agree to participate in the program.

How will I get my medicines?
Once the medication is ordered, it will be shipped to your doctor’s office or to your home.

If you are in doubt about whether or not you can get help, please call us. The application process is easy and we will help you.

Call (276) 523-4202 for more information.
Child Abuse Prevention Month Events

In honor of Child Abuse Prevention Month, MEOC Children’s Services conducted and participated in several events during April. The original campaign that brought a spotlight to child abuse prevention was called the blue ribbon campaign. The symbol is still used to remind us that many children are victims of abuse and neglect. In Virginia, every 90 minutes a child is abused or neglected and every eight days a child dies from abuse or neglect. Every day eleven children receive services from a Child Advocacy Center in Virginia.

MEOC continued its efforts to raise awareness about child abuse in the region. This could be disheartening to those working with children, but we hope the number of referrals only reflects an increase in knowledge amongst our community members and also more awareness of CAC services that are available.

Children’s Services staff participated in two local events to raise awareness and promote prevention month, a Wise County Department of Social Services event and a balloon release with Norton Department of Social Services. Community partners joined in the events to remember children who are affected by abuse and neglect.

The Southwest Virginia Children’s Advocacy Center (CAC) hosted an open house event for visitors to tour the CAC and meet CAC staff and discuss the services of the center. We enjoyed getting together with colleagues and sharing information and thoughts about challenges and good news for the coming year. Copies of the revised Multidisciplinary Team Child Abuse and Neglect protocol were distributed to those in attendance. There have been many positive changes to the CAC located at MEOC over the fourteen years the center has been open, including additional therapy and waiting spaces, new forensic interview equipment and new Children’s Services staff members. The CAC will be expanding its service area to include Dickenson County, another positive change for children in the region.

Patty Roberts, MEOC CAC Family Advocate/Multidisciplinary Team Coordinator, Wise County Commonwealth Attorney and victim advocate discuss the strong collaborative partnerships in support of the CAC. They are pictured at the CAC open house during Child Abuse Prevention month.

Wear Blue Day Observed Across the Commonwealth

On April 4th, MEOC staff members dressed in blue to show their commitment to keeping kids safe. On Wear Blue Day, individuals and organizations across Virginia join together to make a visible commitment to preventing child abuse and supporting strong families and healthy children throughout the Commonwealth.

This event is an annual event coordinated through Prevent Child Abuse Virginia.

Some of the MEOC staff participating in Wear Blue Day are pictured here. From left to right are Patty Roberts, Janie Rockey, Jennifer Davis and LaDonna Hall. Second row are Stephanie Sprinkle, Jackie Gilliam, Judy Miller, Debbie Collins, Wanda Asquith and Sandy Salser.

Jazzercize of Wise participated once again in this year’s walk. The whole Jazzercize group supports the Emergency Food Fund not just by collecting pledges and walking, but also to honor jazzercize founders open to all of the community for a donation to the Emergency Food Fund. Barbara Moore and Vanessa Cypers lead the effort. We are very thankful for their past and continued support. Jazzercize members pictured left to right are Sandra Carter, Wren; Debbie Saulard, Wise; Barbara Moore, Norton; Stephanie Carter, Wise; and Debbie Collins, Wise.

Long time MEOC partner, Wise County Department of Social Services (DSS), was very well represented in this year’s walk. Wise County DSS and MEOC collaborated on so many efforts positively improving the lives of so many in southwest Virginia. Picture from left to right are Rachel Luall, Wise; Daisy Sanders, Wise; Jessica Turner, Big Stone Gap; Darlene Lawton, Big Stone Gap; Amanda Manns, Pound; Vanessa Sluss, Pound; and Rachel Sluss, Pound. If you are interested in joining the “Wise DSS” team next year, contact Jessica Turner.

Heritage Hall Healthcare and Rehabilitation of Wise walkers are sure having a great time at the Walkathon! Both Heritage Hall of Wise and Heritage Hall of Big Stone Gap were corporate sponsors of the 2016 Walkathon. The Big Stone Hall annually sponsors a dog race to support the Emergency Food Fund. That will be covered in the next issue of the Mountain Empire News. Pictured here are staff members from Heritage Hall of Wise and family members. Pictured from left to right are Kity Moore, Clintwood; Aylee Barton, Heyer; Jason Barton, Heyer; Joey Fry, Wise; and Stacey Fry, Wise.
Wallahs continued.

endorsement of the Emergency Fund’s practice and commitment to the sacred promise that all money raised stays in this area to directly assist older persons who are in danger of being without heat during cold winter months. He remarked that none of the money raised is ever used for any type of administrative cost or any other expense. Every cent is used to purchase oil, gas, wood, or wood to pay an electric bill for a person over age sixty in MEOC’s service area. MEOC serves Lee, Wise, Scott counties, and the City of Norton.

Participants included longtime walkers, first-time walkers and those in between as well as many volunteers who manned rest stops and walked at the after-walk picnic, including Robbie Beegs of Mid-Mountain Heating & Cooling who grilled over 400 burgers.

Fifteen organizations and businesses that donated or otherwise raised $5,000 or more were designated as community spon- sors. 2016 community sponsors were Heritage Hall – Big Stone Gap, Dominion Founda- tion, United Way of Southwest Virginia, Old Dominion Power, Staff of Mountain Empire Ophthalmic Clinic, Gaunt, University of Virginia’s College at Wise, Lee Health & Rehab Center, Wise County Board of Super- visors, Wells Fargo, Humphreys/Wood River Coal, Norton City Schools, Oliver Coal Sales, Lee County Board of Supervisors and Heritage Hall – Wise.

“The Wallah is the largest fund-raiser for the Emergency Fund and the commitment from individuals, churches, schools, businesses and organizations really jumpsstarts our fundraising for this much needed program,” said Wampe. “We believe we will meet our goal of $185,000 for this Wallah. As people continue to collect and turn in pledges in the coming weeks we expect to not only meet, but to exceed our goal. We, of course, continue to accept donations for this program through- out the year.”

Wampe also expressed appreciation to Union High School and Powell Valley Primary School for allowing MEOC to use their facilities and to the Union High School Marching Band. The band, as a tradition, kicked off the walk adding greatly to the celebratory atmosphere always demonstrated by the many walkers. He also noted the importance of the Wise County Sheriff’s Department and Sheriff Ronnie Chiles in making the route a safe one for the walkers.

The Emergency Fund assists older persons with home heating emergencies. This program provides one on-time assistance up to $500 and begins each year on October 1st and ends on the following March 31. The Emergency Fund is supported solely by donations, contributions and fundraising events. Donations are accepted year-round. Call Michael Wampe at 276-343-4020 for information or making donations to MEOC programs and services.

Suburban Propane, a significant partner with the Emergency Services program, joined the 2016 Wallahs this year, an annual event held always on the first Sunday in May. Pictures from left to right are Dennis Williams, Saint Paul; Kathy Adkins, Coeburn; Victoria Addison, Big Stone Gap; Sherry Hubbard, Cashville; and Lindsey Selvay, Coeburn. Thank you to Suburban Propane and all the walkers who made Wallah 2016 a very successful one!

Several MEOC Board members participated in the 4th Annual Wallah. Pictured from left to right in this picture are Luke Collie, MEOC Board Member Pam Collie and Lancel Collie. Luke and Lancel Collie age 14 lost their Pum’s sons and enjoy sports and outdoor activities. Two other Board Members are regular participants and volunteers in the Wallahs, Edith Daniels of Norton and Steve Garrett of Jonesville. MEOC sincerely thanks Pam, Edith and Steve for their service on the MEOC Board.

Celebration of Children Luncheon

Community partners representing agencies providing services to children and families come together at MEOC for an annual event, the Celebration of Children luncheon. The event is sponsored by Lone- some Pine Office on Youth (LPOY) and MEOC Children’s Services. The luncheon is an opportunity to thank all of our par- tners for the work they do all year providing services to our area’s children.

Wise County Commonwealth’s Attorney, Chuck Stemp served as guest speaker for the event. He provided the group with information regarding changes made to the General Assembly this year that will help to protect children. He also spoke about his work with the Commission on Youth and Focus area for the coming year. Michele Brooks who was chosen as the winner of this year’s LPOY Youth and Family Services Award for outstanding dedication and commitment to youth and families, MEOC’s year-round approach to the non-profit Southeast Virginia Children’s Advocacy Center since its inception and has served as co-chair for the CAC Advisory Board for over twelve years. She works tirelessly with many of the local agencies, children and families to keep kids safe both as an attorney and as General Counsel for the highest levels of service to children.”

Over 65 people representing over 40 different agencies attending for children attended the luncheon. They represented the counties of Lee, Wise, Scott, Dickenson and the City of Norton.

Glenda Collins, Executive Director of Lonesome Pine Office on Youth, is pictured with award winner Michele Brooks and MEOC Director of Children’s Services, Janie Dockery. Congratulations to Michele for receiving the Lonesome Pine Office on Youth “Community Family Service Award”. The CAC is so thankful for Michelle’s active participation and leadership in the work of the CAC.

MEOC Children’s Services staff, multidisciplinary team members and other MEOC staff helped to plant blue phlox in MEOC’s front garden for April. The phlox serves as the national symbol for child abuse prevention. The campaign uses community activities and public poli- cies to prioritize prevention right from the start, making sure child abuse and neglect never occur. It is a reflec- tion of hope, health and safety — what we are joining with Prevent Child Abuse America and many others, desire for children throughout Virginia and everywhere. The picture reflects the number of adults who have been abused, but is a positive reminder that children should be happy and safe for all children.

When children don’t have equal opportunities for growth and development, we put the future of our society at risk. An focus on innovative programming that builds the foundation for children’s safety, growth and development reduces the possibility of more serious problems occurring. The Children’s Advocacy Center’s mission is to remind our community that keeping children safe is a responsibility of each of us.

The City of Norton and Norton Department of Social Services participated in this year’s walk as “Team Norton”. The City of Norton and Norton DDS are long time supporters of and partners with MEOC, in programs, services and initiatives for people of all ages. Pictured from left to right are Virginia Miller, Wise; Rhonda Blevins, Hospice, Keowee; Sara Rigg, Pound; and Christine Blake, Big Stone Gap. If you are interested in joining the “Team Norton” team next year, contact Christine Blake Norton Department of Social Services!
The “Love Light Tree” fundraiser is a yearly event sponsored by the Ladies Auxiliary of Mountain View Regional Hospital. Established in 1993, the “Love Light Tree” fundraiser begins with a dedication ceremony early in December of each year. The tree is decorated with white and blue lights representing donations either in memory of or in honor of family members and friends.

Pictured receiving the check is Debbie Sanders, Director of MEOC Nutrition Program Services from Joyce Luckey of Norton, VA, Secretary of the Mountain View Ladies Auxiliary and the Chair of the “Love Light Tree” fundraiser.

The Mountain View Regional Medical Center Ladies Auxiliary presented MEOC Home Delivered Meals Program this year with a $3,000. MEOC greatly appreciates this very generous and greatly needed gift for the Home Delivered Meals Program, a program that operates at capacity and always has long waiting lists of persons needing the service.

Detach and send for a donation, change of address or to add someone to the mailing list.

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Serving Southwest Virginia Since 1974
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MEOC Walkathon Nears $165,000 Goal: Donations Still Needed and Accepted

Participants in the 40th Annual Mountains Empire Older Citizens (MEOC) Walkathon enjoyed abundant sunshine despite morning rain showers and forecasted thunderstorms during this year’s 10-kilometer (6.2 mile) walk. Donations to the Sunday, May 1, total to date $134,425 with another $30,000 scheduled to be donated. The annual event is the largest fundraiser for MEOC’s Emergency Fuel Fund which each year assists close to 1,200 elderly households facing weather-related crises and insufficient means to purchase needed heating fuel.

“Over 400 walkers from the community met at Union High School to help MEOC raise money for the Emergency Fuel Fund,” said MEOC Executive Director Michael Wampler in expressing how pleased he was with the turnout. “The Emergency Fuel Fund is truly the community’s fund and we are thankful for each individual and for every business and faith organization represented,” Wampler continued.

Wampler attributed the yearly success of this major fundraiser to the community’s true concern for its older friends, neighbors, and relatives and to the community’s

Above: A crowd of over 350 walked, cycled, ambled and volunteered to make Walkathon 2016 a fun place to be on May 1. Pictured here are Whitney Nor- riss, MEOC RN Personal Care Supervisor and her daughter McKinsey riding her bicycle. Bicycles and strollers are welcome at this family affair. Also pic- tured are long-time supporters, Jactroz of Wise organized by Barbara Maier and Wellmont Walkers organized by Debbie Jenkins. Thank you, Debbie, Whit- ney, McKinsey, Barbara and Friends for supporting MEOC and the Emergency Fuel Fund.

Left: AARP Virginia and MEOC have forged a strong partnership over many years working together on many productive efforts. For the past ten years, AARP Virginia has been represented at the MEOC “Walkathon” joining members of the AARP Big Stone Gap Chapter in addressing the fuel assistance needs of older citizens in our area. This year Brian Jacks, AARP Associate State Director, and his son Silas joined us for the day’s activities. Silas, pictured with MEOC Executive Director Michael Wampler, was in charge of drawing the winning numbers for the winners of the donated Tempur-Pedic mattress and the beautiful quilt handmade and donated by Kathy Rogers and Shirley Fisher. Thank you Silas for lending a helping hand!

Continued on page 2.