Chamber’s 59th Annual Gala & Silent Auction Held  
Saturday, April 13th

Approximately 210 people attended the Wise County & City of Norton Chamber of Commerce’s 59th Annual Gala & Silent Auction on Saturday, April 13, 2013, at Holiday Inn, Norton. This year’s theme was “A Star Studded Night.”

The festivities began at 5:30 p.m. with a reception and silent auction. Dinner followed at 7:00 p.m. The highlight of the event was the presentations of the 2012 Outstanding Citizen of the Year Award, Distinguished Service Award, and President’s Award. (See related articles on pages 2, 3, and 4 of this newsletter.) This year, the event also featured fun games. Music was provided by disc jockey Freddie Bradley.

Alpha Natural Resources, LLC, Cavalier Pharmacy, Food City Stores, Old Dominion Power, and Pepsi Cola Bottling Company served as corporate sponsors. The decoration and reception sponsors were CSE Insurance & Financial Services, First Choice Home Health Care, Freedom Ford, Friendly Floral, and Holiday Inn.

The table sponsors were Alpha Natural Resources, LLC; BB&T; County of Wise (2); Crutchfield Corporation; Dominion; First Bank & Trust Company; Miners Exchange Bank; Mountain Empire Community College; New Peoples Bank; Norton Community Hospital; Powell Valley National Bank; Town of Big Stone Gap; Town of Wise; The University of Virginia’s College at Wise; and Wellmont Health System - Mountain Region.

The members of the 2013 Annual Gala & Silent Auction Committee were Reisa Sloce and Kim Clisso, Co-Chairs; Duane Akriddle, Rick Colley, Pamela J. Collie, Cory Dotson, Amanda Hughes, Mitzi Lucero, Rita Lee, Shelly Logan, Michael McGregor, Dan Minahan, Joyce Payne, Sheila Setias, and Misty Yates. Thank you to Buz Akridge, Dick Houchins, Pam Houchins, Heather Lee, and Brandon Lee, for their assistance during the Gala & Silent auction. The Chamber would like to express its gratitude to all the sponsors and volunteers who made this event such a tremendous success. We especially thank the staff of Holiday Inn for the great food, service, and warm hospitality. We also wish to thank the individual ticket purchasers as well as the many businesses and individuals who contributed items to the silent auction. Finally, the Chamber’s staff and Board of Directors would like to express their heartfelt appreciation to those of you who attended this important event. We appreciate your continued support!

The Annual Gala & Silent Auction is the Chamber’s largest fundraising event. The proceeds earned from this event help further the valuable work of the Wise County/ City of Norton Chamber of Commerce.
Chamber Presents 2013 Outstanding Citizen of the Year Award, Distinguished Service Award & President’s Award

The recipient of the 2012 Outstanding Citizen of the Year Award was Bonnie Elosser. Bonnie and her husband Doug moved to Wise County over 40 years ago when Doug came to teach math at Clinch Valley College. The question was what would Bonnie do upon her move to Wise County? It was said well in her nomination: “Over time the question would become for many of her friends and colleagues, what would she do next?”

Bonnie and Doug became very instrumental in the transition of Clinch Valley College from a two-year to a four-year school. She became the first Director of Financial Aid at the newly formed Mountain Empire Community College in Big Stone Gap, and her career at Mountain Empire continued when she became the Director of Student Services. Bonnie was the co-author of the book; Consumerism comes to the Community College. In 1977, Bonnie joined the staff of Clinch Valley College as Dean of Students. Dr. Joe Smiddy, her boss, friend and mentor, called her “the sanctified detective” for her ability to get to the bottom of any mystery involving her students. Bonnie’s next endeavor was to head Wise County’s Office of Economic Development. During this role, she led a successful effort to have the county accorded the “Certified Business Community” status. She was very involved with Chamber serving on the board of directors for many years as well as president on two occasions. She played a key role in getting our past Executive Vice President, Joyce Payne, to lead the chamber for the past 29 years. She is an active member of the Norton Kiwanis where she has served as a past president. In 2007, Bonnie would take on one of her most prized endeavors. She was asked to take on the leadership of Pro Art. With her many connections made with the local colleges, county and town governments, school systems and the Virginia Foundation for the Arts, Bonnie has succeeded to secure funding to schedule the very best talent to include some of Virginia’s own native talent. With her leadership, Pro Art today is very strong in Wise and the surrounding counties.

There are so many things Bonnie has done behind the scenes that we could never list them all. However, one thing that shines as a hallmark of Bonnie’s leadership style is her loud and contagious laugh that makes you want to join in the fun.

Distinguished Service Award Presented to Dr. Ray Jones, Jr.

In 1988, the Wise County/City of Norton Chamber of Commerce expanded the awards program to include persons who have made outstanding contributions to the betterment of the county in their own right and also for persons or groups who have portrayed excellence in their vocation. Unlike the Outstanding Citizen of the Year Award, which is given via public nomination, the Distinguished Service Award is given solely at the discretion of the Wise County/City of Norton Chamber of Commerce. This year Chamber presented the 2012 Distinguished Service Award to Dr. Ray Jones, Jr.

Dr. Jones served as the pastor of Wise Baptist Church or as he refers to it as “the little brick church in the county seat of Wise”, from 1982 to 2009 and as pastor emeritus from 2009 to present. He is a graduate of Carson Newman, and Southern Seminary in Louisville, where he received his Masters of Divinity. He also completed his doctoral work and dissertation at Lexington Theological Seminar while ministering at Wise Baptist.

Dr. Jones has been actively involved in the community for many years. He served on the board of Wise Kiwanis Club, VA Baptist Mission, Habitat for Humanity, Baptist Student Union and the Wise Bap-
tist Association. Dr. Jones participated in nine mission trips not only as a teacher but as a leader and builder. He also served as a host parent for UVa-Wise students and a voluntary foster parent.

Quotes from the nomination letters:

“Ray has a gift of being an eloquent speaker, a compassionate pastor, and an honorable and spiritual man. He has performed a myriad of weddings, funerals and baptisms....”

“For funeral services, he would find out details about each person to try to bring out the special life and character of that person. It has been said that it’s almost worth dying to have Ray Jones do your funeral!”

“Ray has involved himself in community and civic activities, with his gentle and friendly manner serving as a good example of Wise County citizenry.”

“In summary, Dr. Ray Jones has promoted the betterment of Wise County not only through his profession, but also through his involvement in community activities.”

Ray and his wife, Carolyn, have made Wise their home for the past 30 years. They have two children, Amy and Dwight.

**Dan Minahan Presents President’s Award to Buford Sturgill**

In 1996, the President’s Award was added to the Wise County and City of Norton Chamber of Commerce awards program. This award is given solely at the discretion of the current Chamber president. This year, Dan Minahan presented the award to Buford G. Sturgill.

Buford G. Sturgill is a man who has touched the lives of a great majority of the citizens of Wise County and the City of Norton. With what could only be described as a true servant’s heart, his life’s work has been a two-fold commitment to our community. As a professional funeral director for close to 50 years, he has helped families mourn and celebrate the lives of loved ones that are no longer with us. As a caring citizen, he has graciously volunteered countless hours, serving on various boards that have improved healthcare, banking and even our “fair-going” experience.

Buford has dedicated 40 years of his life as a volunteer board member of Norton Community Hospital using his leadership and passion to see healthcare services grow in our area, with 37 of those years as Chairman of the Board. Bob Leonard, a fellow long-time Norton Community Hospital board member stated, “He drove us to make well thought through decisions which sometimes called for lively discussions, but we always left the board room as friends.... that is a hard thing to do and he made it look easy.”

In addition to his professional career in the funeral home business and his passion for healthcare service, Buford has been involved in many endeavors geared toward improving our communities:

* Founding Director and Secretary of the Board of Directors for First Commonwealth Bank in Wise for 20 years

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* Board member of the Freewill Baptist Family Ministries
* Long time member of the Kiwanis Club of Wise
* Long time member of the VA/KY District Fair

The contributions that he has made to Wise County far exceed what we can list. Buford lives in Wise, with his wife Mary Ann. He has three children - Mark, Richard, and Dennis.

Joyce Payne Honored at 59th Annual Awards Gala

During this year’s Awards Gala the Wise County/City of Norton Chamber of Commerce took the opportunity to honor Joyce Payne in appreciation for her 29 years of dedication to the chamber, Wise County and the City of Norton. Joyce retired from the chamber on March 1st, but is still an active volunteer with the chamber. Joyce was presented with a Deacon’s Bench to go on the back porch of her new home with a plaque that reads;

“In Appreciation for 29 Years of Dedication to the Wise County/City of Norton Chamber of Commerce. Through Your Unwavering Commitment to the Advancement of Businesses and Tourism in our Communities, You Have Made Wise County and the City of Norton a Great Place to Have a Business and a Wonderful Place to Visit and Live.”

Also in honor of Joyce, Shannon Scott, Wise County Administrator, made a presentation of a resolution adopted by the Wise County Board of Supervisors honoring her 29 years of service to the chamber and Wise County.

Joyce was joined at the gala by her husband Norman, daughter Debbie and husband David, granddaughters Sia and Sass. Joyce’s son Mark, wife Shallon and children Grayson and Brookelynn were unable to attend.

We at the Chamber cannot express how grateful we are to have had the opportunities to work, interact and to be friends with Joyce Payne. We all hope your retirement is filled with as many happy memories as you left us holding.
The regular monthly meeting of the Wise County & City of Norton Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors will be held Thursday, May 23, 2013, 11:30 a.m., at Lonesome Pine Country Club, Big Stone Gap.

This meeting will be held in conjunction with the commencement exercise for the 2013 class of the FWC Leadership Development Program. The keynote speaker will be Mike Winters, Pastor of Wise Baptist Church, and a 2012 FWC graduate. All members of the Chamber are welcome to attend.

Reservations must be made since this is a formal meeting. Cost of lunch is $15. For more information or to register, please call the Chamber at 276-679-0961 by Monday, May 20.

Chamber’s Business Appreciation Awards Set for May 29

Governor Bob McDonnell declared June 3-7, 2013 as Business Appreciation Week. In Virginia to recognize these individuals, to study why they’re successful in Virginia, and to inspire others in Virginia and around the world to turn big ideas into reality here in the Commonwealth. This year’s theme is “Advancing Workplace Excellence”.

Business Appreciation Week has been celebrated by the Commonwealth of Virginia since 1997. The Department of Business Assistance coordinates the week. It’s a time when state government and local jurisdictions recognize the many contributions businesses make and say, “Thank you.” During Business Appreciation Week, communities hold events as diverse as golf tournaments and receptions to honor their businesses.

Each year, the Wise County/City of Norton Chamber joins scores of communities across Virginia in recognizing the many benefits business brings to the state and local communities. It’s a time to thank businesses for all they do: provide jobs, contribute to the tax base, and support charitable causes. In 2013, we highlighted the opportunities that Virginia businesses have seized to become successful and the opportunities that they create with their job growth and investment.

This year’s Business Appreciation event will be held on May 29, 2013, 11:30 a.m., at MECC, Goodloe Center. The highlight of this event will be the presentation of awards to businesses that have made a significant economic impact on Wise County and the City of Norton. Special guest speaker, Pete Debusk, chairman Lincoln Memorial University, and owner of DeRoyal Industries.

The Business Appreciation Awards will be sponsored by Norton Industrial Development Authority, Wise County Chamber of Commerce, and Wise County Industrial Development Authority. It will be hosted by Mountain Empire Community College.

This event is for chamber members by invitation only! Pre-registration is required as seating is limited. To pre-register, please call the Wise County Chamber of Commerce at 276-679-0961 by 5:00 p.m. on May 22.
Chamber Welcomes New Members for March & April

The Chamber would like to welcome the following new members for March & April:

Edward Jones Investments - James Lawson
Helping you reach your serious, long-term financial goals is at the center of the Edward Jones investment philosophy. As a full-service brokerage firm and private partnership, they serve nearly 7 million investors with a convenient, personalized approach through more than 12,000 financial advisors in the United States and Canada.
Office Located at 405 E. Main Street, Suite A, Wise, VA
Telephone 276-328-6293

Associate Member: Elisha Salyer, of Lexington, KY.

Thank you for your membership!

Ground Breaking for MECC Access Road

The Wise County/City of Norton Chamber of Commerce was pleased to participate in the Mountain Empire Community College ground breaking, March 6, 2013, for their new access road. A second entrance to the campus of Mountain Empire Community College and the Virginia Division of Mines, Minerals, and Energy will be constructed this spring, alleviating traffic congestion and improving motorist safety at the U.S. Route 23 intersection. Construction began in March, with the road scheduled to be completed by the end of 2013.

Speakers at the groundbreaking ceremony included Ms. Virginia Meador, Mr. J.H. Rivers, and Mr. Darrell Stapleton. Ms. Meador is Vice Chair of the Wise County Board of Supervisors and Board Member from District 3. Mr. Rivers is a Board Member from District 3 and Chairman of the Wise County Coal Severance Committee. Mr. Stapleton is Vice President of Engineering for Thompson & Litton, the firm which designed the project.

Pictured above: Speakers at the ceremony, local County/Town Officials and engineers from Thompson & Litton.
Pictured right: MECC Access Road plans.

Powell Valley Bank hosts Business After Hours

The Wise County/City of Norton Chamber of Commerce was proud to be a part of Powell Valley National Bank Business After Hours to Celebrate their 125th Anniversary. Leton Harding, Executive Vice-President, thanked everyone for making Powell Valley National Bank such a success. The event was very well attended by bank customers, City, and Town Officials, chamber directors, and many members of the Chamber. Thank you to everyone who attended and enjoyed music by the UVa-Wise Bluegrass Band. The food was provided by Uncle Fred’s Gas-N-Grub.

We look forward to another celebration on May 23, 2013, at the Big Stone Gap branch of Powell Valley National Bank.
**Nominations for Outstanding Alumni Award**

The Wise County/City of Norton Chamber of Commerce Leadership Development Committee is now accepting nominations for the 19th annual Outstanding Alumni Award. Nominee must be a graduate of the Forward Wise County Leadership Development Program and may be recognized for outstanding personal achievement, community service, or professional achievement. To nominate someone, please write a brief letter stating why you think he/she should be recognized. Nominations should be mailed to the Wise County/City of Norton Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 226, Norton, VA 24273. You may also email the nominations to wisecountycoc@verizon.net or fax your nomination to 276-679-2655. Deadline for nominations is May 14, 2013. this award will be presented on May 23, 2013, at the commencement exercise for the 2013 class of Forward Wise County.

**Calendar of Events**

May/June/July (Every Thurs. Night) - Pick'n in the Pound - Town Hall, Pound - 7:00 - 10:30 p.m. - Traditional and Bluegrass Music
May/June/July (Every Friday Night) - Traditional and Bluegrass Music - Lays Hardware Center for the Arts, Coeburn - 7:00 - 10:30 p.m.
May/June/July (Every Sat. Night) - Traditional and Bluegrass Music - Country Cabin II, Norton - 8:00 - 11:00 p.m.

May/June/July (Every Sat.) - Big Stone Gap Farmers Market - Shawnee Avenue, Big Stone Gap - 8:00 a.m. - 12 noon
May/June/July (Every Tues. & Sat.) - Clinch River Farmers Market - 4th Street, St. Paul - 3:00 - 7:00 p.m. on Tuesdays, 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. on Saturdays
May 4 - Big Glades Concert - This Mountain, Bryan Elijah & The Wildhearts
May 5 - MEOC Walk-a-Thon
May 17 - Auto World - MECC Golf Classic - Lonesome Pine Country Club, Big Stone Gap - 8:00 a.m.
May 18 - Commencement at UVa-Wise
May 18 - 27th Annual Alumni Celebration - Lonesome Pine Country Club, Big Stone Gap
May 18—SWVA Wine Festival - Join MountainRose Vineyards at the Heartwood in Abingdon for a expo of local wineries
May 24-26 - Pound Heritage Days
May 25 - Lonesome Pine Raceway, Race Night - Coeburn
May 30 - June 1 - Clinch River Days - Downtown St. Paul
June (Every Thursday Night) - Pick'n in the Pound - Town Hall, Pound - 7:00 - 10:30 p.m. - Traditional and Bluegrass Music - Live music, jam sessions, dancing, etc.
June (Every Friday Night) - Traditional and Bluegrass Music - Lays Hardware Center for the Arts, Coeburn - 7:00 - 10:30 p.m. - Live music, dancing, as well as arts and crafts displays
June (Every Saturday Night) - Traditional and Bluegrass Music - Country Cabin II, Norton
June (Every Saturday) - Big Stone Gap Farmers Market - Shawnee Avenue, Big Stone Gap
June - October - (Every Tues.) - Norton Farmer’s Market - Downtown, Norton, white building behind the Pop-In (Shamrock) - 4:00 p.m.
June (Every Wednesday & Saturday) - Clinch River Farmers Market - 4th Street, St. Paul. on Tuesdays, 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. on Saturdays
June (Every Thursday) - Wise Farmers Market - Town Municipal Parking Lot
June (All Month Long) - Fourth Annual Shrub Rose Festival - Wise, VA - Month-long self guided tours of the vineyard with more than 120 blooming roses
June (Second Friday of Each Month) - Sip-n-Sew - Mountain Rose Vineyards, Wise 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. - Bring your latest sewing project (Quilting, knitting, needlework, etc) and enjoy a glass of wine and chat with other sewing enthusiasts
June 1 - Big Glades Concert - St. Paul & the Broken Bones

For a complete listing of community events, visit wisecountychamber.org
To add your event to our listing please contact the Chamber at 276-679-0961 or email wisecountycoc@verizon.net
To:

Rick Colley, Executive Vice President/CEO
Amanda Hughes, Executive Assistant
Mitzie Lucero, Secretary

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