Chamber’s 61st Annual Gala & Silent Auction Held
Saturday, April 11th

Approximately 200 people attended the Wise County & City of Norton Chamber of Commerce’s 61st Annual Gala & Silent Auction on Saturday, April 11, 2015, at the David J. Prior Convocation Center at UVa-Wise. This year’s theme was “Denim & Diamonds.”

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 2014 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 a drone fly over by Grant Bloomer of NASA Develop. Music was provided by disc jockey Freddie Bradley.

Appalachian Community Federal Credit Union, CSE Insurance & Financial Services, Old Dominion Power, Pepsi Cola Bottling Company, South West Insurance Agency, and Sykes, Inc. served as corporate sponsors. The decoration and reception sponsors were Bob’s Market, Bolwell Financial Consultants, LTD., First Choice Home Health, and HairVolution.

The table sponsors were BB&T; Town of Big Stone Gap; County of Wise(2); Crutchfield; First Bank & Trust; Food City; Jack Kennedy, Jr. Clerk of the Courts; Miners Exchange Bank; New Peoples Bank; Norton Community Hospital; Powell Valley National Bank; Town of St. Paul; Town of Wise; UVa-Wise; and Wellmont Health System.

The members of the 2015 Annual Gala & Silent Auction Committee were Reisa Sloce and Kim Clisso, Co-Chairs; Melissa Coffey, Rick Colley, Pamela J. Collie, Michelle Cowden, Henrietta Dotson, Rita Lee, Dana McMurray, Shelia Setias and Dr. Elizabeth Shuler. 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 Chartwells 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.

Board Meeting & Forward Wise County Graduation
Set for May 28

The regular monthly meeting of the Wise County & City of Norton Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors will be held Thursday, May 28, 2015, 11:30 am, at Lonesome Pine Country Club, Big Stone Gap.

This meeting will be held in conjunction with the commencement exercise for the 2015 class of the FWC Leadership Development Program. The keynote speaker will be Chris Mullins, 2014 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 25.
Chamber Presents 2014 Outstanding Citizen of the Year Award, Distinguished Service Award & President’s Award

The recipient of the 2014 Outstanding Citizen of the Year Award was Jeff Rolen. Jeff and his wife Susan have lived in Wise for the past 38 years. They have 4 children - Jefferry, Heidi, Holly, and Jonathan. Jeff joins a very diverse and talented group of individuals who have received this award which includes his father-in-law, John Henry, Jr in 1957.

Jeff has been employed at Camp Bethel Ministries as the Executive Director since 1977, after serving 6 years in the Marine Corp. and was honorably discharged with a rank of Sergent. He has been providing an outdoor camp and adventure experience for kids not only from the Wise County area but also from surrounding states. Through this ministry he has touched the lives of countless children during his tenure at Camp Bethel creating a safe place for kids to come and grow as individuals through the Camp Bethel Childhood Development Center as well as numerous summer camp programs.

Over the years Jeff has served on numerous committees for many organizations as well as the Chamber of Commerce, Town of Wise, and Wise County. He is a member of the Christian Camping & Conference Association and is very involved in Disaster Relief through his volunteer efforts in SBC Disaster Relief and Wise County Disaster Relief. Jeff has been a key person in helping Wise County residents during storm clean ups and assisting them in any way possible to get back on their feet. Many volunteers for his projects have been inspired by his leadership and teachings of “love thy neighbor and help those in need”.

Here are a couple of quotes from his nominations:
Jeff helps people in their time of need “not just by cleaning up and covering roofs, but by bringing hope and unity to a community in need, focusing on the kids, the elderly, the disabled and the stranded.” “Jeff has that natural ability to rally local groups, but also has put countless hours in coordinating and working with outside groups coming to our area to help”. During the recent disaster relief efforts, Jeff not only has seen a need for assisting people in a physical way, but also financial assistance. Jeff has been instrumental in establishing a disaster relief fund that will be used solely to assist Wise County residents bring their lives back to normal living conditions.

For many years Jeff has been involved in numerous team building events and seminars for the business community and academic areas. He has been an integral part of the Wise County Chamber of Commerce Forward Wise County Leadership Program, leading our Saturday Session on Team Building to start the program off each year. Numerous graduates from the leadership class have complimented Jeff on his style and effectiveness of the activities. A recent forward wise county graduate offered a quote about Jeff: “When I came to the Saturday Seminar I was really worried that I would not enjoy it and would not do well with the other participants. Jeff has that ability to not only make you feel comfortable in those situations but also feel confident in your abilities. That you can contribute to your team no matter what your abilities are. Everyone is important in accomplishing your goal”.

In addition to his duties as Executive Director at Camp Bethel, Jeff is also the Maturity Pastor of the Highlands Fellowship Church established in 2014 on the campus of Camp Bethel.

Pictured above: Jeff Rolen with his Wife Susan and children Jonathan and Holly

Distinguished Service Award Presented to Bonnie Aker

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, the award was presented to Bonnie Aker.

Bonnie lives in Wise and has two sons, Thomas and Travis, and three grandchildren, Graham, Grey and Greer. Bonnie attended Clinch Valley College where she earned a degree in education and later attained her Masters from the University of Virginia. Bonnie is a retired teacher from the Wise County School System where she taught at J.J. Kelly High School. In 1979 Bonnie opened and operated The Clapboard House in the town of Wise bringing quality furniture and beautiful accessories to the area. Bonnie’s son Travis now operates The Clapboard House and Bonnie oversees The Appalachian Showcase.

Bonnie’s passions in life have not been restricted to teaching and her business, but has been centered around giving back to the community in which she lives and takes such pride in. If there is a meeting
Ms. Aker has instilled her sense of professionalism and dedication into community leader and citizenship. Whether she is working behind the scenes at the Wise Fall Fling or creating events to help market and promote local music talent and the craftsmanship of our local artisans. Bonnie has been actively involved with and directed the Fall Fling since its beginning in 1979; showcasing local music talent and the craftsmanship of our local artisans. Bonnie puts in tireless hours of planning and setup during the two day festival. Another quote from her nomination letters: “I believe that Ms. Aker’s history of dedication to Wise County makes her a perfect candidate for “Outstanding Citizen of the Year”. Whether she is working behind the scenes at the Wise Fall Fling or creating events to help market and promote local small business, Ms. Aker always exemplifies the notion of a community leader and citizenship”.

“Ms. Aker has instilled her sense of professionalism and dedication into her two children who are now prominent business owners in Wise County”.

Here are just a few of other contributions and accomplishments:

- She served on the Upper Tennessee River Roundtable from its beginning in 1999 thru 2012.
- She has served on the Wise County Tourism Committee since 2012
- She is a 2006 graduate of the Forward Wise County Leadership Program. Serves on the Family Crisis Center Board 2009 – present.
- Received an “Excellence in Education” Award in 1996
- In 2013 she received the Hometown Hero Award for 35 years outstanding leadership for the Wise County Famous Fall Fling. Bonnie’s belief in the mission of the Wise County Famous Fall Fling has made it one of the premier festivals in our area. She has been actively involved with and directed the Fall Fling since its beginning in 1979; showcasing local music talent and the craftsmanship of our local artisans. Bonnie puts in tireless hours of planning and setup during the two day festival.

Cory Dotson Presents President’s Award to Geneses and Todd’s Hair Salon

In 1996, the President’s Award was added to the Wise County/ City of Norton Chamber of Commerce awards program. This award is given solely at the discretion of the current Chamber President.

The 2014 President’s Award went to Geneses Hair Salon and Todd’s Hair Studio in Wise. This year’s recipients have displayed great generosity and in the process have made this area a better place to live. Chamber President Cory Dotson said, “I am proud to call myself friends with these individuals and have seen many acts of unselfishness over the years and I can attest that these acts come straight from the heart.” For 5 years, Ted Barnette and his wife Karen, and Todd Barnette and his wife Crystal have organized fundraisers which they have named “Cuttin’ 4 the Cause.” Each year the two Barnette families as well as many other employees and volunteers give their time and effort to raise money for important causes in the community. Each year a different charity is selected and in the past 5 years great organizations such as the Hospice and Palliative Care, the Food Bank of Wise County, the Southwest Virginia Cancer Center, and Family Crisis Support Services have benefited from the hard work and generosity of the volunteers. All proceeds from the haircuts are distributed to the charity and additional funds are raised through concessions and a silent auction.

This year’s Cut-A-Thon featured a very special beneficiary as funds were raised to support the Lunchbox Project. For those unfamiliar the Lunchbox Project is intended to provide extra food to students in an attempt to fill the gap between what free lunch provides and their level of nutritional need. Students have the ability to get any food they need above and beyond what their free lunch provides.

Each year’s cut-a-thon brings more success and the accomplishments and since 2011 they have more than doubled the money raised for their chosen charity.

We are proud to announce at this time that over $23,000 was raised to support the Lunchbox Project through the hard work and thoughtfulness of Geneses Hair Salon and Todd’s Hair Studio and the many other volunteers who made this year’s event a success. It brings great joy as we think of all the hungry bellies that are being filled due to the money raised by these individuals.

In addition to the Cutin’4 The Cause”, the Barnette’s have always been willing to help any person or organization that they can, especially when it comes to kids.
**Visionary Award**  
**Presented to Jack Kennedy, Jr.**

In 2012 the chamber’s Blue Ribbon Awards Committee established a special award to recognize someone whose vision had made an impact on our area. They called it the Visionary Award. It was presented to a man who, through his talent, dedication, and vision, kept Wise County thriving and added such value to our community. That man was David J. Prior. The committee decided that this award would not be an annual award but only given when the committee felt that there was someone whose vision for the future of the county had made an impact. They also decided that this special recognition would be called the David J. Prior Visionary Award. The committee decided this year to make a presentation of this award to a man who has made an impact on our county and region by thinking out of the box and looking to the future in many ways that we have not imagined. The recipient of this award is Jack Kennedy, Jr.

Jack lives in Wise with his wife Janette. He has two children Jack and Jillian. Jack has a long list of accomplishments throughout the years, but his list of recent endeavors demonstrates his vision for the future of Wise County:

- International Space Station Downlink at the convocation center
- Establishment of Digital Court Records in Wise County
- NASA DEVELOP Program
- Sky-Tech Rocketry Initiatives
- Aerospace Days at Lonesome Pine Airport

Jack’s most recent vision for the future is the inclusion of Unmanned Ariel Systems – Drones into our county and region. He has worked tirelessly in making connections to legislators, colleges, schools, companies, researchers and many more people all over the world to bring this technology to our area.

In February he hosted a Drone Flight Competition at the David J. Prior Convocation Center bringing kids into the world of drones. The competitions brought out both local and regional boy scouts troop looking to earn a variety of badges during the day.

Jack is currently working on Drone Competitions at the VA/KY District Fair in June of this year called Game of Drones as well as events in July that will be centered on Drone Laws and the use of drones at the RAM Project.

During the 2015 RAM Project he has brought together a number of companies, media and others to integrate the use Unmanned Aerial Systems into the three day event. They will be flying medications from the pharmacy school in Grundy to Lonesome Pine Airport via fixed wing aircraft and then to the RAM Project at the VA/KY District fairgrounds using the quad copter drones. The vision of the UAS participation in this event is to highlight the great capabilities of our area to support UAS research and development as an economic driver through our excellent support system of programs at our higher educational facilities.

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**2015 BFF Scheduled for June 16-20th**

The 29th Annual Best Friend Festival will take place on June 16-20th in downtown Norton, VA. This year’s theme is: “Friends in the Mountain” This year’s festival will be jam-packed with activities appealing to all age groups including: Tuesday’s Farmers Market, Paint-a-Trash-Can, First Bank & Trust Picnic in the Park, Senior Citizen’s Day, Karaoke Contests, Kid’s Night, Kiddie Train, Crankin’ with Crutchfield, Friday Night Block Party with the Dave Eggar, A Kid’s Place, Kiwanis Pancake Breakfast, Citywide Yard Sale, Flea Market Vendors, the Regional Rehab 5K Run, and more.

In addition to this year’s activities a kid’s fishing day will take place, June 13, 2015 at Norton Reservoir, Sponsored by Norton Parks and Recreation.

For a detailed schedule, visit the chamber’s Web site: wisecountychamber.org.
Mark your Calendar Events

Farmers Markets
- Clinch River Farmers Market - Saturdays 8 am. Until 1 p.m. 276-762-5297
- Norton Friends and Farmers Market - Tuesdays 4 until 6:00 p.m. from June until October 276-679-1160
- Big Stone Gap Farmers Market - Saturdays 8 am. until 12 noon May 2nd until October 276-523-7447
- Wise Farmers Market - Held in the Big Glades - Thursday June 18th 4 p.m. until 6:30 p.m. 276-328-6013

16 May - 2nd Annual Fit Farmer 5k - Norton - Registration now available on runtricity.org
16 May - UVa-Wise Cavalier Celebration - Contact 276-328-0128 to buy tickets and for more information.
17 May - Symphony in the Mountains at UVa-Wise - 5 p.m. 276-376-4520
21 May - Wise County Extension Workshop - Growing Sweet Corn— 276-328-6194 or pmeeks@vt.edu to register all workshops are free
23 May - Gathering in the Gap Music Festival - Big Stone Gap VA - Special music by Van Wilson Van and much more
23 May - Women Celebrate - MountainRose Vineyards - (All Day) Celebrate your life with this new event including healthful eating, exercise programs, nutrition's programs, health screenings, massages, health products, and more. 276-328-2013
23-25 May CrossFit Stone Mountain—2nd Annual Memorial Day Murph - Please register to participate and all proceeds go to the Lt. Michael Murphy Foundation Register at runtricity.net
28-30 May - Clinch River Days Festival in St. Paul 276-762-5297
29 May - Pound Heritage Days - Downtown Pound
30 May - Lonesome Pine Raceway is open and ready for racing - Check out their 20015 Schedule online now
1 June - 1st Monday of every month - Bob Ross Painting class at Norton Community Center 10 a.m. Pre registration required 276-679-0754
3 June - Tennis Camp - Norton Parks and Recreation - Grades K-3 9:30 a.m. until 11 a.m. - Grades 4-7 11a.m. until 12:30 p.m. Free for Norton Residents - $35 Non residents - 276-679-0754
8-13th June - VA/KY District Fair - Wise County Fairgrounds
11 June - SWVA Society for Human Resources Meeting - Lunch & Networking 11:30 start time Register by calling 276-523-2400X 375
12 June - Game of Drones - 9 p.m. at the VA/KY District Fair - 276-275-4700 or jack@jackkennedy.net - register before June
16-20 June - 29th Annual Best Friend Festival will be held downtown Norton. - Full schedule coming soon
19 June - Fantastic Fridays Waterslides - 1p.m. until 3 p.m. at Clear Creek Park - Locations vary and this will run through the end of July for the City of Norton
12 June - Western Regional Employer Conference - Hotel Roanoke - See attached flyer for registration information
13 & 20 June - MountainRose Vineyards - Join in for a wonderful lunch, tour the Vineyards and smell the roses. Luncheon is $16 per person. Tours focus on our reclamation and planting experiences and the relationship between wine and rose. Tours are free and last about 20 minutes and repeat on the hour. Call 276-328-2013 or RSVP
13 June—Camp Bethel Leap of Faith Obstacle Course Mud Run 5k and Kids mile Register at https://ultrasignup.com/register.aspx?did=32085 All proceeds benefit Camp Bethel Ministries
18 June - Wise County Extension Workshop - planning for fall garden - 276-328-6194 or pmeeks@vt.edu to register all workshops are free
22-24 June - Engineering Camp at Norton Community Center - Free for Norton Residents, $50 for non residents - 276-679-0754
27 June - 2nd Annual Guest River Gorge Trail Run - for more information click here
Following run will be a picnic and entertainment
16 July - Wise County Extension Workshop - Season Extender workshops - 276-328-6194 or pmeeks@vt.edu to register All workshops are free
17 July - David J. Prior Convocation Center hosts the Greater SWVA Business Expo - Business from all over our area will be set up starting Friday - $2 to enter and more info available at uwase.edu
Always something great going on in our County and City! Please send me info as you can to add to our weekly emails and keep up to date on the happenings of our area.
Membership shows that these businesses & individuals care about the future of Wise County and the City of Norton. We appreciate their support and encourage you to use, whenever possible, the products and services of Wise County Chamber of Commerce members. For a complete listing of Chamber members, please visit our Business Directory on our Web site: wisecountychamber.org

Join Now! Connect & Grow