
CENTER FOR PIONEER LIFE

Preserving the legacy of Southern Appalachian pioneers and experiencing how they lived

History is alive at the Center for Pioneer Life — help us double our growth.

This year tiny seeds turned into abundant crops. Trees turned into cabin logs and roof shingles. Corn shucks transformed into dolls and became precious fodder for the horses. Hot metal was reshaped into nails and latches. Single blades of hay turned into gigantic stacks of winter food for the animals.



We built bathrooms near the cabin, fenced in the horse pasture, and plowed and planted our first demonstration farm plot. We spent the past few months prioritizing necessary facility upgrades, writing grants, and increasing our visibility through the press, social media, and community outreach. Our educational videos are getting rave reviews as we explore more virtual learning (see back page to learn more). We're now offering tours by appointment to small groups.

Dedicated board members, staff, and volunteers reorganized and rearranged how we do everything. Major supporters, including **The Foundation for International Education**, **Participate Learning**, and **the Small Business Administration**, kept us going through some rough patches. Now we're calling on YOU!

**Thanks to a generous offer by Ray and Gwen Young Stetzler
For every \$100 donated through December 31, your gift will be doubled.**

That is right — your \$100 will grow to \$200

Here are three ways to help us meet this challenge.

Send a check to SMY Foundation
134 Joe Young Road
Burnsville, North Carolina 28714

Call us at 828.536.0337

Donate on line by going to www.pioneerlife.org/donate

We are grateful for gifts of any size.

Note from the President/CEO

Geraldine Plato

2020 — we couldn't have imagined it, let alone planned for the challenges it would bring.

At the beginning of the pandemic, I wondered how we would navigate such uncertain times. Everything turned upside down as we were thrust into canceling events, making sure our families were safe, and doing our part to flatten the curve. These are challenges we have never faced as an organization. Our dedicated staff and volunteers have been extraordinary as we tackle new issues each day. I am in awe of their ability to pivot, problem solve, and refocus at a moment's notice. I'm proud of everyone's work to make sure the Center continues to stay strong well into the future.

Beyond the pandemic, we have faced other issues. Our Board is working on solutions for our financial well-being. When one of our longest-term supporters and impassioned leader, Fred Young stepped down as chair of our board, we felt fortunate Jim McQueen stepped up to assume the role of interim Board chair. With Fred's guidance, Jim is identifying ways to fundraise, keep staff, plan programs for 2021, get our financial house in order, and retain a vital community presence.

Fred leaves to assume the day-to-day management of The Foundation of International Education. He writes this: *"As you know, I have great financial, physical, emotional, and intellectual commitment to this project and the programs envisioned. That interest will continue. For the Center, I have the utmost optimism for many years of progress and look forward to its continued success. For now it's time to begin a transition to a new generation"*.

These are trying times for everyone. Please take care of yourself — your mind and your heart. Do what feels right to you and brings you joy and, like us, take these changes one day at a time.



Above: Fred Young hands his knowledge and support to Jim McQueen, acting chair of the board of trustees. Right: Fred teaching students about essential farm tools.



The Settlement Cabin — our newest addition

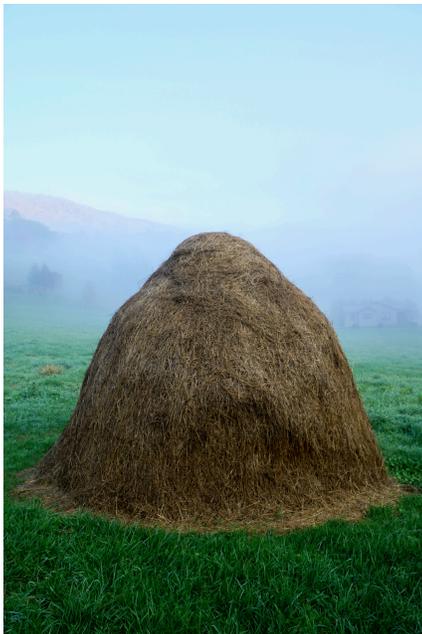


When settler families arrived on their deeded plots in the Toe River Valley in the years between 1790 and 1830, they found an unbroken forest. We have a few clues as to what that forest was like from the Cherokee people who had lived in and cultivated the forest for hundreds of years before the settlers.

For the first season or two in their cove, a settler family might camp under a rock shelter while setting to work hewing the forest into something that resembled a homestead. Lacking the knowledge for living with the forest as the native peoples had, the settlers cleared it as quickly as they could, girdling, felling, and burning trees to bring in light for crop and to make pasture for livestock.

Read the full article, by Tal Galton and see more construction pictures on our website and **go to our YouTube channel** to see the video.

Thanks to a generous donation from Fred and Phyllis Young through the Foundation for International Education we recently built a settlement cabin. Rocks for the Foundation and chimney were generously donated by Charles Dulaney. They were hand dug and transported to the Center from his farm on Shoal Creek. Photos courtesy of Jim P. Young.



From the Field

At the Center every structure built and daily task is carried out with tools and methods used in 19th century North Carolina. These three photos demonstrate a stacking technique that was used to keep materials dry. While the exterior will take on moisture during a rain shower, this stacking method ensures that the interior is kept dry until the material is needed. Pictured here is a haystack, a fodder stack, and a wood pile. Enjoy more posts like this by following us on Instagram @centerforpioneerlife.

Student Storytellers Working with Words

A collaboration with Mt. Heritage High School English and Theater Arts departments.

We're proud to announce our partnership with Mt. Heritage High School to secure a \$1,500 Bright Ideas in Education Grant from the French Broad Electric Co-op.

With this grant, we're launching a new program called **Students Storytellers Working with Words**. We began this fall by working with sixty-five high school English and Drama students to explore the traditions of their ancestors by collecting family stories. Under the direction of high school teacher **Angie Holtzclaw**, English students will learn how to research family history and traditions by conducting interviews. Drama students will study the "characters" within their families to create monologues that help them define their own identity and heritage.



Students will deliver their works in first-person narrative — hopefully live in our cabin; if not, we certainly will video their performances. This funding will allow us to extend this program into the spring semester to connect students with seasoned storytellers and authors to serve as mentors.

Our educators at the Center are excited to work in the schools providing an opportunity to study through the lenses of language, music, storytelling, and story collecting. We aim to offer a more in-depth and richer understanding of the early Appalachian experience and how these experiences shaped our present community. **We're grateful to the French Broad Electric Coop** for sharing this value.

Grab Your Popcorn

We've launched a new educational video series called, "On the Farm". Descendant and local videographer, **Nick Rash**, has teamed up with farm manager, **Dylan Wilson**, to create short stories about various things you'll see when visiting.

You'll especially enjoy the music of Yancey County resident, **Bruce Greene**, a world-renowned player and preserver of traditional southern Appalachian music. Learn more about him at www.BruceGreene.net

You can subscribe to our YouTube channel by going to **YouTube.com** and searching for Center for Pioneer Life. We'll continue to upload new clips. For now, you'll find informative stories about the Settlement Cabin, our spring house, the blacksmith forge, corn crib, and a concise introduction to the work we are doing.



Stay tuned. Nick and Dylan have other program surprises in mind.