



61ST ROAN MOUNTAIN SPRING NATURALISTS RALLY

GETTING INTO NATURE

'Mindful Walking': ETSU professor tapped as speaker for 3-day event next weekend

BY BRYAN STEVENS | SPECIAL TO THE BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

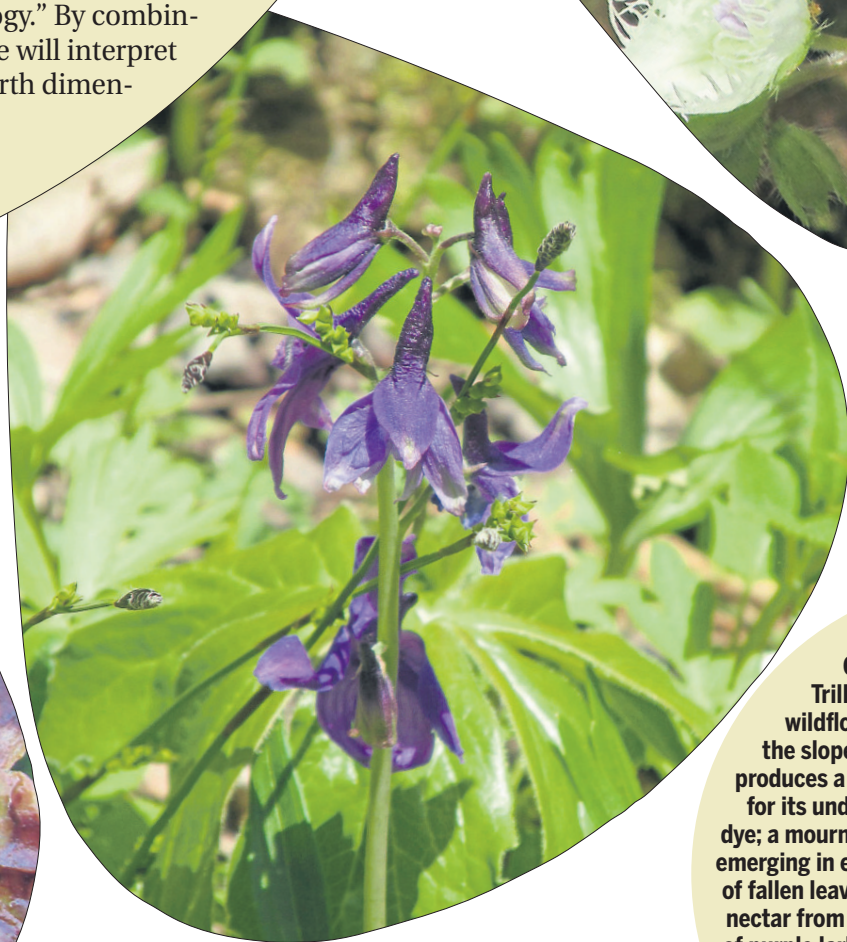
Travel will be the overall theme for the two presentations at the 61st annual Roan Mountain Spring Naturalists Rally. While one of the presentations will offer a trip through time to gain a clearer perspective on the Roan's natural wonders, the other by a professor of literature will focus more on the actual physical and mental activity of traveling a natural landscape.

The last weekend of April traditionally draws naturalists from throughout the region to Roan Mountain for three days of hikes, programs and presentations celebrating the beauty of the Roan. The Nature Center manager of a popular Bristol park and a professor of literature at East Tennessee State University will be the featured speakers for evening programs on Friday and Saturday, April 26 and April 27.

Jeremy Stout, who is the manager of the Nature Center at Steele Creek Park in Bristol and also an adjunct professor of biology at Northeast State Community College, will speak on Friday evening. Stout holds bachelor's in biology and geology and a master's in vertebrate paleontology from East Tennessee State University. Stout's talk is titled "Dynamic Roan, a Prehistoric Perspective on Today's Ecology." By combining his passion for the Earth and life sciences, he will interpret the Roan's unique natural history across the fourth dimension of time.

Scott Honeycutt, 45, will focus his program on the Appalachian Trail.

See **NATURE**, Page D8



Jeremy Stout



Scott Honeycutt

INSIDE

» For more on events at Roan Mountain Spring Naturalists Rally, go to D8.

PHOTOS BY BRYAN STEVENS/SPECIAL TO THE HERALD COURIER

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

Trillium is one of the many blooming wildflowers that blooms in early spring on the slopes of Roan Mountain; bloodroot, which produces a showy white and yellow bloom, is named for its underground root, which can produce a red dye; a mourning cloak, a species of butterfly known for emerging in early spring, basks in the sun atop a carpet of fallen leaves; a spring azure, a small butterfly, seeks nectar from blooming fringed phacelia; a flower spike of purple larkspur greets walkers along a trail on Roan Mountain; and a red salamander explores terrain after a rain. Roan Mountain is home to both common and rare species of salamanders, which will be the focus of some of the walks at this year's Spring Naturalists Rally.

Wishing you Easter filled with family, chocolate, miracles



Sharon Randall
My Opinion

This is an Easter story. I've told parts of it before. But sometimes, to tell a new story, you need to repeat an old one. A few days before Easter, when I was 4, God sent me a miracle that would break my heart, fill it with joy and teach me things I needed to know. His name was Joe.

My parents divorced when I was 2, and my mother took up with a man she hoped to marry. But when she became pregnant with his child, he left her, and we moved in with her parents. Born premature, Joe spent almost two months in an incubator. After he was released from the hospital, my

mother was told he had cerebral palsy and might never walk. "Don't worry," I told her, "I'll teach him to walk." "Can you teach him to walk?" she said. "He's totally blind." "He can't be blind," I said. "He smiles at my face." "He smiles at your voice," she said. "He'll never see your face."

I began praying for a miracle, asking God to give my brother eyes that could see. I prayed for years. It never happened. I also tried to teach him to walk, but he was too stubborn to let me. He took his first steps when he was 5.

See **EASTER**, Page D6

2 generations of old friends

I'm watching them across the table, two beautiful young women, deep in conversation.

I wish you could see them. Michelle and Joanna have been friends since they were born. They live miles apart now, but keep in touch with emails and texts and phone calls and occasional posts on Facebook.



Sharon Randall
My Opinion

When Michelle comes "home" to visit her family, she and Joanna try to meet for lunch, just the two of them. They always have a lot of "catching up" to do, and it's easier to do alone, with no interruptions.

But this time they invited their mothers to join them. And not just because they're hoping we'll pick up the check.

Myra and I were friends before the girls were born. We met in church. She was a veteran mom with two young children, soon to have her third. I was a rookie, pregnant with my first.

I had a lot to learn. And Myra was born to teach. One day, I mentioned that a house on our block was for sale. Imagine my surprise when she and her husband bought that house and moved in across the street.

For the next 30 years, we were not just friends, but neighbors. The kind of neighbor who lets you borrow a cup of sugar knowing you won't pay it back. Who brings you snickerdoodles at Christmas and a casserole when you're sick. Who lets your kids run wild with her kids, or piles them in her station wagon and takes them to the park. Who can talk with you for hours in a circus of toddlers about hopes and dreams and faith and fears and how to stretch a pound of hamburger to feed a family of five plus four unexpected guests.

Michelle is Myra's fourth child. Joanna is my second. They were born less than a year apart and grew up together more like sisters than friends.

In some ways, Myra and I grew up together, too, sharing recipes and children and life.

Over the years, our lives took different directions. I worked for a newspaper. Myra taught school. The kids all grew up and moved on with their lives. When I lost my husband to cancer, Myra wrapped me in her arms and made me promise to call her if I needed anything, or just wanted to talk.

In the long months that followed, it helped somehow just to look out my window and see the light in her kitchen.

Years later, when I remarried and moved to Nevada, Myra and I relied on our daughters to keep us posted on each other's news.

Last year, after my husband retired, we left Nevada and moved back to the old house. And the next day, Myra and her husband welcomed us home with a plate of snickerdoodles.

Have you ever noticed how quickly a year can pass? Myra and I had been meaning to get together to "catch up." But a year went by, and it didn't happen. So our daughters invited us out to lunch.

Now here we sit, talking and laughing and eating, the four of us, sharing news of our families and remembering old times.

I told them my favorite Myra story. It goes like this:

We were camping, Myra and I and our seven kids. We had put the kids to bed in a tent and stayed up late talking, when a raccoon big enough to play in the NFL climbed on the picnic table and started eating our snacks. Myra gave me a look as if to say, "Watch this." Then she banged on the table with a stick.

The raccoon gave her a look, as if to say, "Seriously?" Then he bared his teeth and hissed in her face. And she dove into the tent.

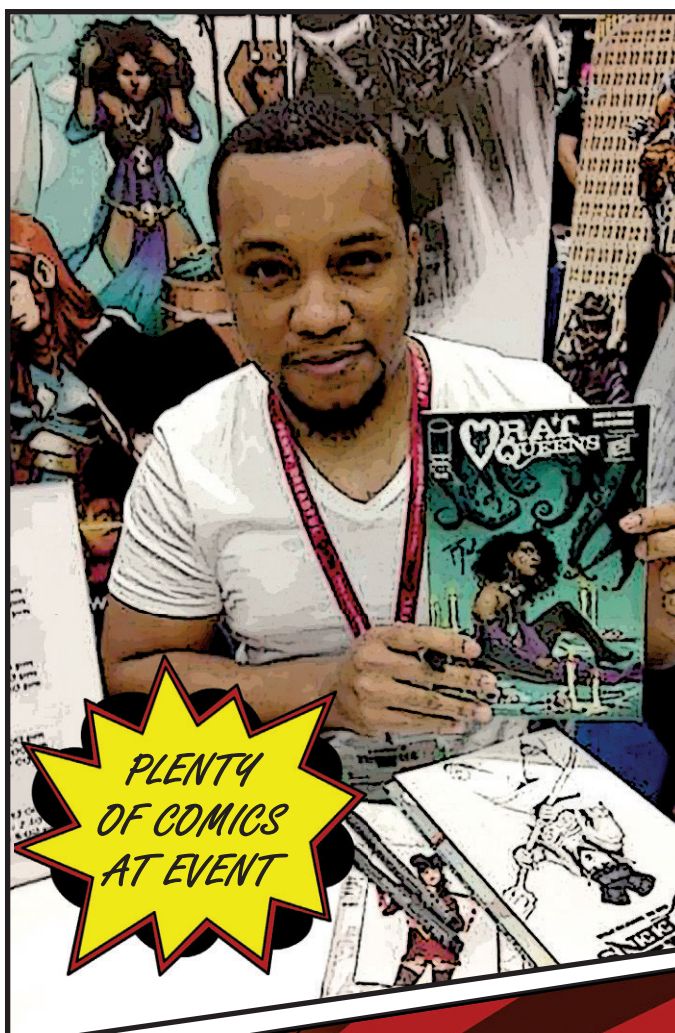
We all laughed at that story, as we often have before. Then the girls went back to talking, just the two of them. And Myra and I picked up where we'd left off.

Our daughters can talk the chicken off the bone. I wonder where they learned to do that?



MEANWHILE, IN KINGSPORT ...

FEATURING COSPLAY EVENTS



PLENTY OF COMICS AT EVENT

ROBICON 2019

EVENT WILL FEATURE CELEBRITY GUESTS, COSPLAY, COMICS AND MORE

BY BRYAN STEVENS
SPECIAL TO THE HERALD COURIER

RobCon 2019 will offer attendees a packed schedule of celebrity appearances, cosplay events and attractions related to the fields of science fiction, fantasy and much more over the course of two days in Kingsport, Tennessee.

The long-running annual convention will be held Saturday and Sunday, June 29-30, at Kingsport's Meadowview Convention Center. The event will be held from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Saturday and 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Sunday.

Organizers are particularly proud of the slate of celebrities, including Butch Patrick, the actor known for his role in the vintage television series, "The Munsters," as well as Jackson Bostwick, the first actor to bring comic book superhero Capt. Marvel to television screens.

See **ROBICON**, Page D8



ARTISTS, CELEBRITIES TO ATTEND

IF YOU GO

- » **What:** RobCon 2019
- » **Where:** MeadowView Convention Center, 1901 Meadowview Parkway, Kingsport, Tennessee
- » **When:** Saturday and Sunday, June 29-30
- » **Admission:** \$15 Saturday, \$10 Sunday, or \$20 for two-day pass
- » **For more information:** 423-929-8245 or www.robcon.org

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ROBICON 2019



THE MOUNTAIN EMPIRE COMICS AND GAMES FAMILY IS SET TO WELCOME THE PUBLIC TO ANOTHER ROBICON.



► Jean and Brookie Potter stand in front of the Pemaquid Point Lighthouse in Bristol, Maine.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JEAN POTTER

SHINING BEACONS

Lighthouses beckon area woman to visit nautical landmarks

BY BRYAN STEVENS | SPECIAL TO THE HERALD COURIER

A shining light — literally — has pulled Jean Potter on a quest that's taken her up and down the Atlantic coast.

For 35 years, Jean, usually accompanied by her husband, Brookie, has taken to the road — and boats, when needed — to see 128 lighthouses from Maine to Florida and beyond. And Jean isn't finished yet.

"Whenever I see a lighthouse," she said, "I feel compelled to climb it and look out to sea."

Most recently, the Potters spent 10 days in early June touring dozens of lighthouses in Maine. Jean admits that, had she been born in a different era, she would have been content living in an isolated lighthouse as a light keeper or, perhaps the wife of a keeper.

"I have had an interest in lighthouses for many years," Jean said. "They were important aids to the navigation of our nation's shores since before the Revolutionary War."

See **BEACONS**, Page D6



◀ Jean Potter holds a piece of a shattered lighthouse lens that she collected on the ground at the base of a dilapidated lighthouse off the South Carolina coast.

PHOTO BY BRYAN STEVENS

Check out these author events

I detest announcing "summer's end" as kids go back to school in August or even just after Labor Day on the first Monday in September.

To me, summer begins sometime around the 10th of May — that fabled date when my oldest and wisest brother-in-law, James, always says you can safely plant your garden with no fear of frost.

And summer ends, well, likely when it says it's supposed to end — on Sept. 23, the first day of autumn, just as all the great events like Grayson Highlands Fall Festival arrive on the calendar for the last weekend of September.

So, please, don't take summer away too soon: We've got at least two more months to go.

And that, of course, means two more months of summer reads.

Authors in Marion

Today, you can find a few authors at the Hungry Mother Festival, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., at Hungry Mother State Park in Marion, Virginia, including Kim Headlee, Tom Perry and James Campbell.

Also on the list: Linda Hoagland, a resident of Tazewell, Virginia, and the author of a new, 137-page love story and mystery, "Dangerous Shadow" (Hoot Books Publishing, 2019, \$10).

Hoagland is tireless. Beyond Marion, you'll also find this 70-year-old author at the next two events:

Writers' Day

Writers' Day at the Virginia Highlands Festival focuses this Friday on writing about Appalachia.

Registration (8-9 a.m.) at the Keyser-Aday Auditorium on the campus of Virginia Highlands Community College in Abingdon is followed by writers presenting their perspectives on writing about Appalachian culture, starting at 9 a.m.

This year's headline writer is Mary Knight, an award-winning young adult novelist, whose "Saving Wonder" is about a young boy who has to decide between saving a mountain from mountaintop removal or being faithful to his best friend.

Fantasy writer Bekah Harris is slated to discuss how she mines Appalachian lore and history while Emory & Henry College's Felicia Mitchell explores in one of her workshops how to utilize family stories in poetic form.

Tennessee journalist Mark Stevens is slated to discuss how to utilize historical research in works.

The day wraps with a publishing panel of local authors — including Hoagland — joining the presenters to discuss the different pathways to publishing.

Cost for Writers' Day is \$40; students are admitted free. To register, visit vahighlandsfestival.org.

Cooks & Books

Cooks & Books comes to Clinch River Farmers Market Pavilion, 3028 Fourth Ave., in St. Paul, Virginia, with 13 authors and 10 cooks on Saturday, 6-8 p.m.

For a \$20 ticket, you can meet local scribes as well as sample culinary creations, teas and a few adult beverages.

The event benefits the Lyric Theatre and the J. Fred Matthews Memorial Library in St. Paul.

For tickets, call 276-395-0685 or visit www.stpaulmainstreet.org

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Joe Tennis

Tennis

Anyone?



SUBMITTED