

Telling the tales of Southwest Virginia

BY ASHLEY SPINKS
Staff

It's a Saturday evening in August at the June Bug Center for Art and Education, and around 50 people are enthralled by a dark-haired woman sitting in the middle of the room on a big red throne. She's just voiced a fear that many in the audience likely hold tight to their chests: "I've always been afraid I was going to die." Her story's just begun—no one is sure how it will end or sure if they should feel sympathy, anxiety or despair. Then, the woman cuts through the tension with a well-timed quip, "I've heard it's definitely going to happen eventually."

The audience laughs, some shrug or nod knowingly, and the story moves on. The woman currently in the "hot seat" of the monthly Blue Ridge Story Space event is surprisingly candid, sharing with the audience how she had a health scare that led to medical tests and an extended stay in the hospital. At one point, she describes the hospital staff becoming "like her new little family," and that's how this room feels, too. In the span of a few minutes, everyone in the room has spontaneously formed a bond and a sense of trust permeates the space. Trust, and the smell of popcorn being served in the next room.

The Blue Ridge Story Space is the brainchild and personal project of Christal Trivett-Presley and her partner Jane, who moved to Floyd seeking to "slow down their lives." The pair ran a similar program in their previous community in Georgia and was inspired by "The Moth" radio hour program on National Public Radio. The premise is simple: if you like to tell and listen to stories, stop on by. The program is held in the black box theater of the June Bug Center on the first Saturday of each month, and has been for the past 17 months, Christal said.

It is surprising—and heartening—how many people have shown up just to listen to their neighbors and friends share stories. The unabashed willingness of participants to be vulnerable in public is also unexpected and refreshing. Everyone in attendance lives nearby, but the stories told vary widely—attending Story Space helps one appreciate the vast diversity in experience, perspective and beliefs that exists even in this



ASHLEY SPINKS/THE FLOYD PRESS
Storytellers and audience members enjoy the show at Story Space.

small corner of Southwest Virginia.

Another storyteller told the tale of himself, his wife and another couple kayaking in Michigan. Before long the story took a turn—because the kayak took a turn. "What had happened was...I found myself standing in a Michigan river," he said. He elicited a chuckle from the crowd when he shared that his "first impulse was to explain to my wife where her error was...but

wisdom prevailed."

But the lighthearted observations soon gave way to serious life lessons—a trajectory many of the stories followed. Standing in the middle of a river, flipped boat, soaked clothes and all, the man realized: "What we do next is more important than how we got here." He told the crowd how he resisted assigning blame, or getting angry or discouraged. Instead, he turned his attention toward moving




happened was..." and on theme, that is exactly how Garay began his story. "What had happened was... I was dumb," he said. "I decided I was going to do a triathlon." Garay went on to recount myriad obstacles he faced in pursuit of the finish line—including a huge rainstorm hitting the race. "The storm passed over, and I decided I was going to push on," Garay said. Again, the metaphors aren't subtle here.

Garay had travelled from Stewartsville to attend Story Space, and as a former pastor said he has no trouble speaking in front of crowds.

Garay's occupation is apt, because going to Blue Ridge Story Space feels a bit like attending church.

It's 90 minutes where you have the opportunity to relate to your fellow human beings, practice empathy, learn something new about yourself, root yourself in a community and internalize stories akin to parables. As Jane Trivett-Presley said, it's a chance to "just be."

Blue Ridge Story Space takes place on the first Saturday of each month at the June Bug Center. The next meeting will be Sept. 7 at 5:30 p.m., with the theme "Life and Death." Storytellers are encouraged to limit their presentations to approximately seven minutes. You can learn more about the program at <https://blueridgewritingacademy.com/blueridge-story-space/>.



Warren G. Lineberry
Park Use Policy

The Floyd Town Council is discussing changes to the Warren G. Lineberry Park Use Policy at the next Town Council meeting. The Council would like to hear your thoughts on updating the current policy.

We invite you to attend the Town Council meeting on
Thursday, September 5th at 6:30 pm
in the W. Skip Bishop Jr. Town Hall located at
134 Wilson Street.

Anderson Audiology

Hearing Aid Sales & Service, Inc.
Locally Owned and Operated Since 1963

- ♥ Advanced Digital Hearing Aid Fittings
- ♥ Video Otoscopic Exam
- ♥ Complete Hearing Evaluation
- ♥ Custom Hearing Protection
- ♥ On Site Hearing Aid Repairs
- ♥ Assistive Listening Devices

We have four offices to serve your needs:

Wytheville, VA
680 W. Lee Highway • Wytheville, VA 24382
(276) 228-0866

Galax, VA
8052 Carrollton Pike
Galax, VA 24333
(276) 236-0778

Christiansburg, VA
140 Oak Tree Blvd.
Christiansburg, VA 24073
(540) 381-6967

Dublin, VA
85 Cleburne Blvd.
Dublin, VA 24084
(540) 674-4889




Darrell Anderson, BC-HIS
Hearing Instrument Specialist

Office Hours:
Mon. – Fri.
8:30 AM – 5:00 PM

WIDEX®

www.anderson-audiology.com

NEW RIVER

Community College

ENROLL TODAY!

CLASSES BEGIN AUGUST 26

New for
Fall 2019!

7 week
&
10 week
online classes




WWW.NR.EDU