



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

THE BLUE RIDGE VOICE

WINTER 2022

GREETINGS FROM THE MOUNTAIN!



We are back in print! This is just so exciting. Virtual, online and electronic is amazing technology to be utilized, but there is also something quite special about the tactile feeling of print. These last two years have been filled with so many emotions – worry, fear, anxiety, tears but also joy, gratitude, peace, laughter – and many of these happen all within the same day! What a journey it has been. **Throughout this entire journey, YOU have been a bright spot of support for us, and we are most grateful!**

As an organization we've learned so much about ourselves – our grit, perseverance and doggedness to serve. Like most hospitality organizations, the COVID-19 pandemic obliterated our business. In 2020 we lost over 90% of traditional business (operating revenue) and were only able to partner with 189 groups and serve 5,915 individuals. The Emergency Relief Fund was established and essential for us. We needed every bit of philanthropic support! By year-end we only realized a 78% operational loss because of new opportunities for partnerships and service. Three notable bright spots include:

1. We entered an eight-month partnership with Buncombe County Health and Human Services and converted one of our buildings into an Isolation & Quarantine Facility; YMCA Blue Ridge staff served as the front-line workers serving these guests for daily check-ins, meals and transportation.
2. Pre-pandemic we worked with the local non-profit, Food Connection, to repurpose our leftover food from the kitchen; during the pandemic we prepared individually-packaged meals twice a week for them and assisted in the distribution of the meals to those facing food insecurity. We did this for approximately six months.
3. In partnership with the YMCA of Western North Carolina and funding from the CARES Act, we converted another building into classrooms for students. Our staff served as mentors and guides for students ranging from kindergarten to 5th grade. The best part of the week was Wednesday when the day was filled with experiential learning opportunities. The kids participated in environmental education (nature hikes, creek exploration, animal ecology), learned about heritage arts (clay and candle making) and engaged in STEM activities.

**“Change:
A bend in the
road is not the end
of the road...unless
you fail to make
the turn.”**
- Helen Keller

While our daily activities were much different during most of 2020, the heart of our work was the same – serving people. We looked beyond surviving to positioning ourselves to thrive; we believed YMCA Blue Ridge was going to be an essential part of the healing and reconnection needed.

As we prepared for 2021, we knew it was going to be a bridge year, and we needed to continue to be flexible. In March 2021, the YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly Board of Directors asked staff to create an operational rebound plan. We call it our RISE plan. As a staff, we identified our strategy screens (filters) for making decisions about the future and we established our priorities. RISE is the acronym for our strategy screens - return on investment, impact, sustainability and execute with excellence. Our priorities create SEE – stewardship, engaged & empowered employees and efficient operations.

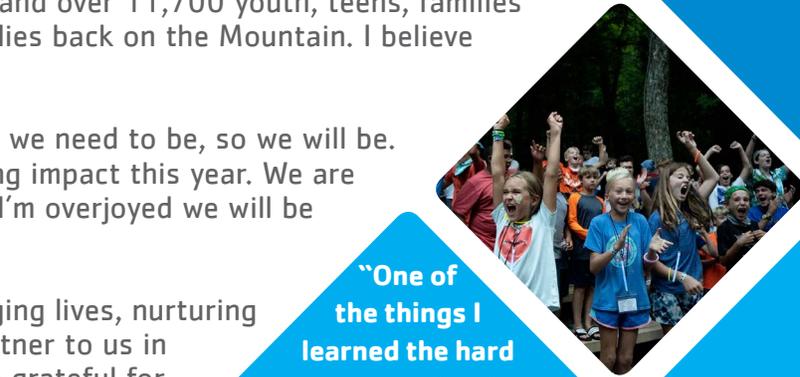
In welcoming more groups and people back, YMCA Blue Ridge was a place for healing, for growth and especially for fellowship and connection. We experienced a 45% return of service and partnered with more than 300 organizations/families and over 11,700 youth, teens, families and adults. It was tremendous to have youth and families back on the Mountain. I believe they missed us as much as we missed them.

As we embark into 2022, **RESILIENT** is who and what we need to be, so we will be. We are focused on having an even greater life-changing impact this year. We are hopeful for the future and eager to serve. Personally, I'm overjoyed we will be able to welcome even more **HOME** to the Mountain.

YMCA Blue Ridge continues to be a platform for changing lives, nurturing leaders and strengthening families. You are a vital partner to us in delivering our mission, purpose and vision, and we are grateful for you. **THANK YOU** for your steadfast commitment to supporting us, and thank you for journeying with us into 2022!

With gratitude, hope and joy,

Melissa Bailey Logan
Chief Executive Officer
YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly



**“One of
the things I
learned the hard
way was that it
doesn't pay to get
discouraged.”**
- Lucille Ball



MOUNTAINTOP OPPORTUNITIES & EVENTS



YMCAs of the Southeast Hall of Fame

* Class of 2021 - March 9, 2022
Class of 2022 - September 21, 2022

YMCA Blue Ridge Leaders' School

June 18-25, 2022
July 23-30, 2022

Blue Ridge Leaders' School Centennial Celebration

* June 23-25, 2022
* July 22-24, 2022

Fellowship of Christian Athletes Camps

FCA Girls & Coaches - June 27-July 1, 2022
FCA Leadership - July 11-15, 2022
FCA Boys - July 15-17, 2022

YMCA Youth Conference on National Affairs

July 2-8, 2022

Staff Alumni Reunion

* July 8-10, 2022

Christian Values Conference

July 17-22, 2022

Family Camp

* July 31-August 5, 2022
* November 23-26, 2022

Global Leadership Summit

* August 4-5, 2022

Achievers Summit

* August 6-10, 2022

Youth Development Summit

October 10-12, 2022

*** REGISTER TODAY at blueridgeassembly.org/now-registering.
We can't wait to see you back on the Mountain!**



LIVING OUT OUR PURPOSE

Renewing Bonds at Family Camp

YMCA Blue Ridge aspires to exponentially grow our impact in youth development, and to do so we determined we needed to start with families – if we strengthen the family, we strengthen the child. **Children and teens depend on strong, healthy families to become values-driven leaders.**



Summer 2020 provided a silver lining – an opportunity to launch the pilot session of Family Camp. Family Camp serves as a space for families to come to the Mountain for outdoor recreation, adventure, fun, rest and guided learning – **all designed to strengthen family bonds and cultivate joy and togetherness.** Families had the opportunity to relax, recharge and reconnect on the Mountain at a time when they needed a getaway. Months later, we launched Thanksgiving Family Camp and received just as great of a response from families.



As one Family Camp participant put it: **“At Family Camp you’ll feel loved. You’ll be able to explore, discover, have fun, meet people and learn about yourself and your family. You’ll appreciate the time away from the technology, just enjoying each other’s company – and you’ll leave even more grateful for your family.”**

“It’s truly a magical experience. The staff is amazing, the food is delicious, activities are well-planned and well-executed, and there is so much kindness in the air. I could feel the love!”



The program continues to grow with each session in the number of families AND in size. Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, grandchildren and more have come to the Mountain to experience togetherness away from the busyness of life. Laughter is abundant. Memories are made. Bonds are strengthened, and swagger is gained.

“The fellowship my family experienced with the other families is unparalleled,” said another Family Camp participant. **“My son is very reserved and shy, but the dynamic group of families assisted and supported him enough that he conquered his fears and climbed the indoor climbing wall. I could not hold back the tears. After Family Camp, we felt just blessed and blown away.”**

Registration is now open for the next two sessions of Family Camp, and we hope your family will join us this year! For more information and to register, visit blueridgeassembly.org/family-camp.

Summer Family Camp
July 31 – August 5, 2022
\$350/adult \$110/child

Thanksgiving Family Camp
November 23 – 26, 2022
\$220/adult \$65/child

A Growing Community Partnership

Food Connection is an Asheville-based nonprofit that eases hunger, reduces waste and supports our local food industry by redistributing surplus prepared food and purchasing meals from chefs to serve neighbors in need. Food Connection relies on community partners to achieve this mission.

YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly has been a proud partner of Food Connection for nearly five years, donating food leftover by our groups and conferences for redistribution throughout the community. When the pandemic severely impacted our ability to serve as a convener and gathering platform, Food Connection stepped in to help. Our valued partner **commissioned our kitchen staff to prepare 8,750+ meals for our neighbors in need.**

Several of our staff showed their support for the cause by volunteering to help distribute meals at a complimentary curbside drive-thru in Swannanoa. Now that Blue Ridge is thankfully teeming with activity, we once again have tasty leftover food donations for Food Connection to redistribute. Since June of 2021, we have provided 2,786 meals for redistribution in the community.



As YMCA Blue Ridge and Food Connection weathered the storm of the pandemic side by side, **our symbiotic relationship has evolved in a way neither of us could have imagined.** We value this partnership and our ongoing commitment to feeding our community. Food Connection co-founder Flori Pate attributes the organization’s success to their generous donors and community partners: **“Together, we have helped keep an estimated 150 metric tons of fresh food out of the Buncombe County landfill, which in turn has provided over 300,000 fresh meals to our neighbors in need in Western North Carolina!”**



CELEBRATING THE CLASS OF 2021

YMCAs of the Southeast Hall of Fame

The YMCAs of the Southeast Hall of Fame is hosted annually at YMCA Blue Ridge and provides a forum to recognize YMCA professionals and volunteers who have devoted their lives to strengthening their local community through their devotion and dedication to serving others - **making a positive impact on individuals, on their community and on the YMCA movement throughout the Southeast.**

The fourth annual Hall of Fame induction and recognition ceremony will take place this March on the Mountain, honoring the Class of 2021. Banners commemorating their achievements will be presented and placed on display in Eureka Hall, where all who pass through will feel empowered to make their own impact - **inspiring the next generation of Y professionals.**



BETTY CARR
YMCA of Calhoun County

Served as Program Director for 18 years, where she provided key leadership over youth programs including Youth in Government, the Conference on National Affairs and the Christian Values Conference - acting as an inspirational, caring mentor for thousands of youth across the Southeast. Remembered as a loving leader who embodied the spirit, selflessness and good cheer of the YMCA movement, saw potential in everyone, gave guidance without trying to dictate, made all feel valued and inspired others to make the world a better place.



WILLIE PROCTOR
YMCA of the USA

Pioneered the YMCA movement toward diversity and inclusion through his leadership of the Diversity Conference in Atlanta and the launch of the YMCA National Diversity Plan. Known for his skills in human resources, management and leadership development that enabled him to recruit key staff in CEO positions for local YMCAs, develop a self-analysis process which allowed the National Board of Directors to make major strategic changes, negotiate a medical benefits strategy and develop the YMCA's National Compensation and Benefits Guidelines.



GEORGE SHINHOSTER
YMCA of Calhoun County

Known as a devoted Y professional and inspiring mentor who was very talented in developing staff and volunteer teams, as well as an organizer, voter registration leader and advisor for Civil Rights leaders. Served for 43 years as a connector and powerful communicator of the YMCA story - working as Program Director, Branch Executive, District Vice President and CEO for multiple Ys across the Southeast, as well as a speaker on leadership, management and relationship building for leaders and supporters of the YMCA.



LILLIAN & WYATT TAYLOR
YMCA of the Triangle

Grew the vision for resident camping in the Southeast through the development of Camp Sea Gull and Camp Seafarer - dedicating their lives to shaping the next generation and molding thousands of lives by fostering self-confidence, independence, consideration of others, respect for God's great outdoors and a spirit of cooperation. Known for their emphasis in youth development, small group work and building relationships, which paved the way for expanded YMCA services and helped set the stage for tremendous growth of the YMCA of the Triangle for over 40 years.



PAT & TOM THRAILKILL
Blue Ridge Leaders' School

Impacted thousands of young lives across the Southeast during their time as Blue Ridge Leaders' School registrar and director, respectively, for 25 years - creating a youth leadership development brand that became so popular that the Leaders' School more than doubled in size during their time in leadership. Known as an inspiring and passionate team who gave every ounce of their energy to molding YMCA youth - instilling discipline, hard work, confidence and integrity, and truly living the YMCA mission in spirit, mind and body.



RIDLEY WILLS II
YMCA of Middle Tennessee

Devoted nearly five decades of service as a staunch volunteer, whose wise counsel, steadfast support and tireless advocacy brought other countless supporters into the Y family and helped shape YMCA of Middle TN into the organization it is today. Served on several integral CEO search committees, aided in establishing the Tennessee Cluster of Ys and edited its newsletter, has served or chaired every board or committee at the YMCA of Middle Tennessee, authored two books that chronicle the Y's history and played an instrumental role in creating the YMCAs of the Southeast Hall of Fame.

Nominations for the Class of 2022 open on March 10th. If you know someone who has exemplified a lifetime of commitment to the mission and cause of the YMCA, **we encourage you to nominate them.** The Committee will select three inductees and three legacy inductees, and the fifth annual celebration and induction ceremony will be held in Eureka Hall on September 21, 2022.

Nomination forms can be found at blueridgeassembly.org/hall-of-fame and are due by **July 21, 2022.**

FURTHERING OUR MISSION

Emergency Relief During the Pandemic

Philanthropy at Blue Ridge is one of the most important ways we ensure the success of our organization - and your support over the past two years has been more crucial than ever. When the pandemic hit in March 2020 and Blue Ridge had to suspend operations, **our donors stepped up in a big way**. We established the Emergency Relief Fund - a non-restricted fund that **enabled us to remain operational, keep 30% of our staff employed, stay active in our local community work and maintain our beautiful 1,200-acre campus**.

Support from donors like you helped us raise \$456,000 in 2020 - allowing us to not only support operations, staff and groundskeeping during a year of lost business, but also allot \$156,000 in financial aid for 2021 as we anticipated the need for scholarships as children, teens and families returned to the Mountain in need of reconnection. **We are so grateful for our donors for keeping us strong through the pandemic and beyond.**

As we welcomed more groups back in 2021 and returned to our traditional work of service, philanthropic support continued - totaling over \$300,000 - and has been a central factor in our success moving into 2022. **YMCA Blue Ridge is as committed as ever to providing Mountaintop experiences for all.**



Green Rocker Society

Green rockers, especially the ones on Eureka Hall porch, have long been iconic for YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly. Across campus, each rocking chair represents a unique Mountaintop experience, a story of impact. We believe everyone should be able to have a Mountaintop experience - and **members of the Green Rocker Society ensure that Blue Ridge continues making this mission a reality for years to come.**

The Green Rocker Society is a multi-year annual giving society that has tremendously grown our philanthropic efforts since its inception in 2017. Over the last five years, Green Rocker donors have enabled us to **more than triple our impact** - providing Mountaintop opportunities for **EVEN MORE** youth and families to experience connection, rejuvenation and self-discovery regardless of financial standing.

"YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly has held a special place in my heart since I was a teen in 1986," said Darla Talley, a Green Rocker member. **"I've solved many problems rocking in those green rockers and have created lifelong bonds on the porches of Blue Ridge. Being a member of the Green Rocker Society is a small way I show my appreciation for all the ways Blue Ridge has blessed my life - and now I can pass the blessings on to other teens."**

As the need for financial assistance continues to grow, the Green Rocker Society will grow with it. We've now established levels within the Society, increasing the capacity of multi-year gifts at Blue Ridge. The Green Rocker Society now has the potential to **surpass \$1 million** over the next five years! Just imagine - how many more children can explore in a mountain stream for the first time, how many more teens can feel a sense of belonging, how many more young adults can realize their self-worth, how many more families can strengthen their relationships with each other. What is most energizing is that **all have the opportunity to leave YMCA Blue Ridge with a renewed sense of connectedness, appreciation, confidence and rejuvenation.** We are excited for the potential these new levels bring, furthering the reach of our financial assistance dollars across the Southeast.



Rhododendron

a three-year commitment
of \$1,000 a year

Lookout

a four-year commitment
of \$1,500 a year

Mountain View

a five-year commitment
of \$2,000 a year

Members at each level receive unique recognition and renewal benefits, as well as a limited-edition green rocker watercolor painting and a customized plaque on the back of a rocker. More importantly, donors receive the knowledge that Green Rocker Society donations will be used efficiently and responsibly for the sole purpose of transforming lives and building community. For more detailed information on levels and benefits, visit blueridgeassembly.org/GRS.

For more information on joining the Green Rocker Society, contact **Suzette Armatas** at **828.210.8480** or at sarmatas@yblueridge.org.

Columbarium

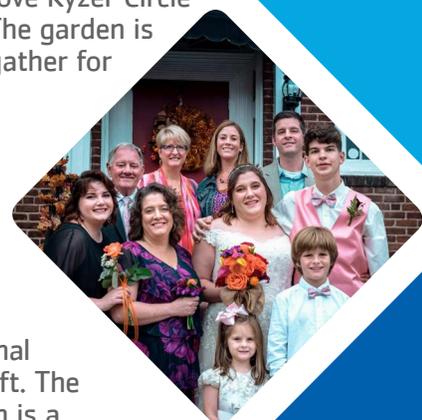


The columbarium is a symbol of the connection that families and friends make during their time at YMCA Blue Ridge, providing those with a special connection to the Mountain a meaningful final resting place to be remembered and honored. It is located on the east side of Eureka Hall, just above Kyzer Circle in the Tracey and Tim Sullivan Memorial and Prayer Garden. The garden is a picturesque environment for family, friends and guests to gather for reflection and prayer.

For Charles and Sherrie Cleveland, their family's long history with Blue Ridge makes the columbarium meaningful for them: **"YMCA Blue Ridge has been an important part of our lives for over 50 years,"** said Charles. **"Our children and grandchildren have all experienced the magic of the Mountain. It is a place of comfort, peace and family memories for us all."**

Purchasing a columbarium niche establishes plans for you and your family. It secures a final resting place that has meaning to you, and it reminds all who visit of the legacy you've left. The cost of one niche, which can accommodate up to two engraved urns, is \$5,000. A portion is a tax-deductible gift that will help provide the perpetual care and eventual expansion of the columbarium.

For more information or to purchase a columbarium niche, contact **Melissa Bailey Logan** at mblogan@yblueridge.org or at **828.210.8459**.



GLOBAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

YMCA Blue Ridge proudly serves as a virtual host site for the **Global Leadership Summit** - a two-day leadership development event that has been growing in popularity on the Mountain since 2016. For churches, organizations, YMCAs and individuals looking for **unique, inspiring, faith-based leadership teaching**, the Global Leadership Summit offers that and more. Summit participants will receive two full days of live broadcasted and engaging presentations from authors, entrepreneurs, leaders and visionaries working across various fields - sure to provide fresh ideas and inspiration for all.

We encourage you to join us this **August 4-5** for the Summit. In addition to lodging and meals, Blue Ridge will also provide meeting spaces for your group's breakout discussions - making GLS the perfect way to build leadership, teamwork and productivity among your group.

Aligning with our goal of developing youth and young people, we have secured a grant specifically to underwrite YMCA young professionals, which will **cover the cost of one YMCA young professional per each senior staff attending**. For questions, contact info@yblueridge.org.



Registration is now open! For more information and to register, visit blueridgeassembly.org/the-global-leadership-summit.

WORK, LIVE AND PLAY ON THE MOUNTAIN

If you know someone looking for a life-changing summer of fun, meaning, hard work and service, invite them to apply to join YMCA Blue Ridge's seasonal staff! We have openings in the spring, summer and fall of 2022. We're seeking bright, service-minded individuals looking for a community to call their own. **Employment includes FREE housing with no bills** - and a Mountaintop experience to remember forever.

We need:

- Lifeguards
- Guest Services Clerks
- Adventure Program Leaders
- Housekeeping Staff
- Retail Clerks & Baristas
- Groundskeepers
- Culinary & Dining Staff
- AV Staff

To apply, visit blueridgeassembly.org/join.



Did you know you can give to the Blue Ridge Annual Giving Program just by shopping on Amazon? Using the same login information as your regular Amazon account, sign into smile.amazon.com and choose **YMCA Young Men's Christian Association Blue Ridge Assembly** as your charity of choice. Every time you shop through Amazon Smile, .5% of your total purchase will be donated to our Annual Giving Program. Just make sure to do all of your Amazon shopping using the smile.amazon.com URL - it's that easy to give!



KEEP IN TOUCH!

If you'd like to receive email communications and newsletters from YMCA Blue Ridge, visit: blueridgeassembly.org/newsletter-sign-up