



# THE BLUE RIDGE VOICE

SPRING 2024

## GREETINGS FROM THE MOUNTAIN!



It's summertime on the Mountain – my absolute favorite season! So many of my Blue Ridge anniversaries happen in the first half of the year. This will be my 31st summer; January 6 marked the start of year 28 full-time; and April 1 began my 8th year serving as CEO. Can you believe it?!? I'm just as shocked as you are!

To this day, I remember (like it was yesterday) the first time I ever drove up the Up Road. I was going to spend my summer serving on the collegiate staff. I remember the nervousness I felt as the car weaved its way up the winding rhododendron-lined road. Then my surprise once on main campus when I looked up beyond Eureka Hall to see the mountain ridgeline. It was the porch, the green rocker and that spectacular view that opened my world. This Mississippi girl was in awe of the mountains and fell in love with the place and the people.

Now, as a mother to a teen and one almost-teen, I try to be intentional about giving them these types of world-changing experiences. I want them to find adventures, learn how to love new places and invest in building a home away from home. Summer camp has been a natural safe place for them to practice that: a place where they can make friends from all over the country, create memories, enjoy the great outdoors and escape technology. The experience is an investment in who they are, who they will become and in their future.

YMCA Blue Ridge offers positive transformational experiences to youth, teens and families every day. We do not waste the opportunity to make a home away from home for them. Summer is filled with impactful camps and retreats for all who drive up the Up Road for the first time or the 31st time. Days are filled with laughter, fun, growth and discovery. Each day, week, month, even year is an investment in who they are, in who they will become and in their future.

Investing in the lives of young people and families is not as simple as showing them the view from Eureka or putting them in a room with a group of people; we must be intentional about our goals and objectives. Our intentional investment in youth and families is displayed in YMCA Blue Ridge's recently adopted strategic objectives:

- **Develop Tomorrow's Leaders:** Nurture the spiritual, mental, emotional and physical health of youth and young adults.
- **Strengthen Family Bonds:** Be a premier resource which promotes spiritual growth, creates memories and strengthens family bonds across generations.
- **Provide Transformational Hospitality:** Exceed the expectations of every guest by providing unparalleled hospitality and service.
- **Mission-Aligned Partnerships:** Establish and maintain partnerships to develop and deliver resources and programs that maximize our collective impact.
- **Exceptional Stewardship:** Forge a dynamic culture of philanthropy to sustain our work and support our future.



As we are well into 2024, here are three business highlights: We are fully operational, executing long-term strategies, and on track for the 2024 budget. For this we rejoice! In addition, we have much to celebrate; this issue is full of beautiful examples of investments in the place, legacies of amazing people, and opportunities to engage in programs. Thank you for partnering with us on this important work!

My hope is that every person who comes up the Mountain this summer leaves with a little less anxiety, a little more appreciation for the outdoors, a few dreams of possibilities and a lot of friends.

With much gratitude,

Melissa Bailey Logan  
Chief Executive Officer



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# SUMMER IS FOR TEENS!

Thank you to all of our donors who gave to our **\$10,000 for 20% More** appeal this May to bring more teens to YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly!

Teens today face unprecedented challenges associated with post pandemic changes, electronic media and social turmoil. **At Blue Ridge, we help teens overcome those challenges** by teaching them essential leadership and character development skills. We encourage them to **spend time in nature** and give them the opportunity to **create lifelong friendships.**

You can still help us bring teens to the Mountain by donating today. Visit [blueridgeassembly.org/donate](https://blueridgeassembly.org/donate) or scan this QR code to make your contribution.





# COME TO FAMILY CAMP!

**YMCA Blue Ridge is about to kick off its fifth summer of Family Camp!** Family Camp represents our belief that if you strengthen the family, you strengthen the child. We give families the opportunity to relax, recharge and reconnect with one another. Children and teens depend on strong, healthy families to become values-driven leaders.

Family Camp is a space for families to come to the Mountain for outdoor recreation – **pool games, archery, hiking trails, climbing walls and more** – adventure, fun, rest and guided learning. All of the activities offered are designed to strengthen family bonds while cultivating joy and togetherness.

In addition to our summer sessions, we also host Thanksgiving Family Camp. While Thanksgiving includes many of the same activities as our summer events, our November camp centers on celebrating the season of gratitude and appreciating this special time for families. We offer a Thanksgiving Day meal and seasonally appropriate indoor activities.



**“The fellowship my family experienced with the other families is unparalleled.”**



**You can register your family for July or Thanksgiving Family Camp today!**

**Visit [blueridgeassembly.org/family-camp](https://blueridgeassembly.org/family-camp) or scan these QR codes to register.**



JULY



THANKSGIVING

**We hope to see you there!**

# YOU MAKE BLUE RIDGE BEAUTIFUL



**A wave of positive updates has swept through Blue Ridge!** These investments will better serve the **people** and **programs** which utilize our facilities year-round.

The **Blue Ridge Center** has been transformed with a freshly repainted exterior that highlights its beautiful stonework and architecture, and Asheville Hall and the Gymnasium have benefited from a new coat of paint as well. **Ware Pavilion**, one of our most-utilized recreational spaces, has been refreshed with bright blue corrugated metal siding.



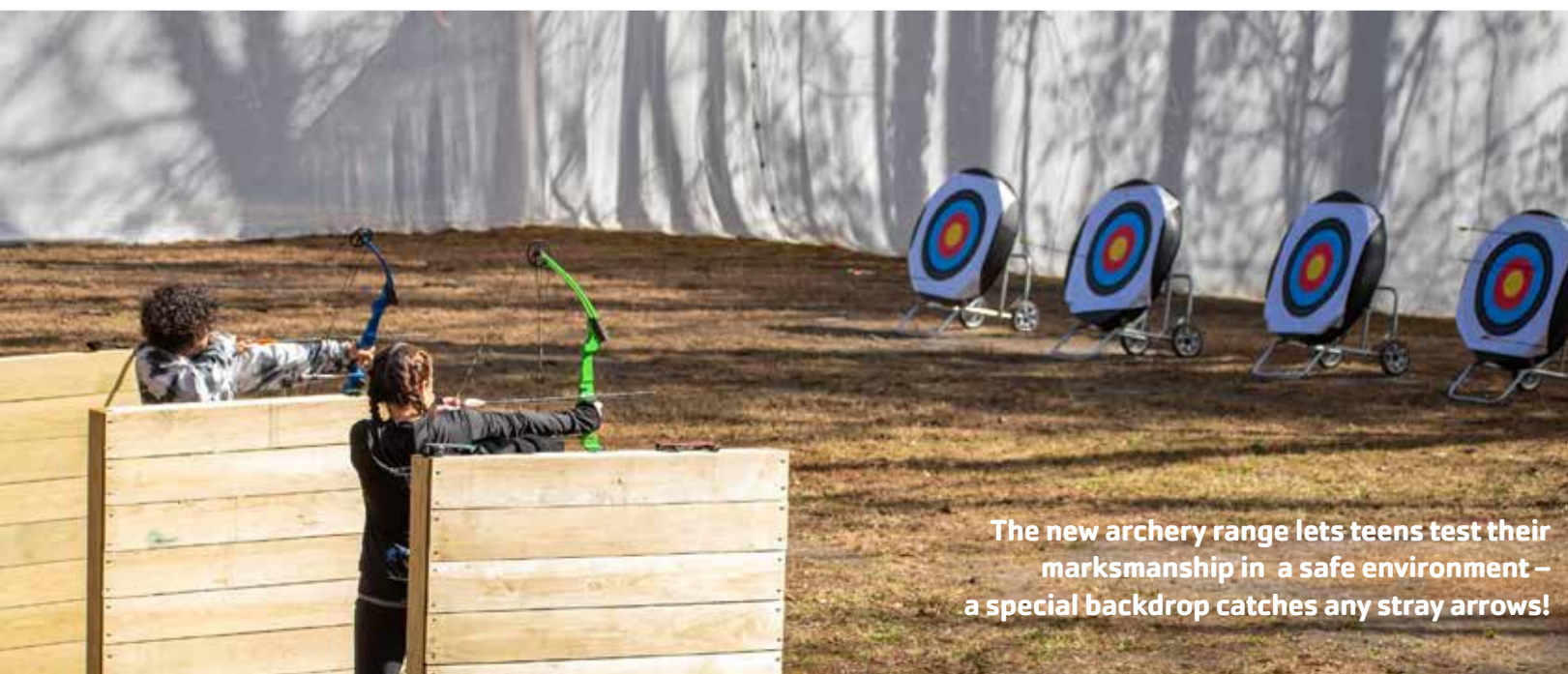
**New furniture in Asheville Hall makes it an even better spot to gather.**



**New mattresses awaiting installation in the Blue Ridge Center!**

As you navigate the rest of our campus, you will notice little touches that make a big difference – among these are the **new furniture** in Asheville Hall's lobby, **new mattresses** in rooms throughout several of our buildings, **seasonal flowers** blooming around the Mountain, **podiums** and **water stations** to serve our guests' needs as well as a **brand new archery range** that has already challenged young people to try something new.

These changes are only possible because of you, so as you enjoy these improvements, remember: **you make Blue Ridge beautiful!**



**The new archery range lets teens test their marksmanship in a safe environment – a special backdrop catches any stray arrows!**

# A FAMILY LEGACY

## Breazeale Family Lodge



Paul and Voncile Breazeale with daughter, Emily Chapman, and her husband Jeff.

What makes YMCA Blue Ridge special – the **place, people** and **programs** that transform lives each year – are the combined legacy of countless individuals who contributed to its mission over the past 118 years. Recently we had the opportunity to recognize one such individual for his lasting impact and the legacy he has created.

This April, the **Breazeale Family Lodge** was dedicated in honor of **Paul Breazeale and his family**. For over 25 years, Paul has generously given outstanding leadership and support to YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly. His daughter, **Emily Chapman**, now continues to do the same as a member of the Blue Ridge Board of Directors.

We spoke with Paul and Emily about their connection to the Mountain and the ways it has influenced their lives.

**“I took Emily up there to start with,”** Paul said. “She said, ‘Daddy, are you just gonna leave me here?’ I said ‘Yes. You don’t know anybody, you don’t have a car, you don’t have anything – you’ve got to figure out a way to make it work.’ I was trying to be a tough old dad. I went down the hill the whole way crying like a baby.”

Emily explained, “He encouraged me to work there the summer after my freshman year of college. **He felt I needed to expand my horizons and get out of my comfort zone.** He knew I’d enjoy spending the summer meeting new people and hopefully learning valuable and essential life skills. Dads truly do know best!”

**“If you change the life of one person, it may be why God put you here.”**



Paul Breazeale and Gretchen Purser present Roger and Rosalyn Hibbard with gifts at Hibbard’s retirement.

Emily’s experience that summer ended up bringing both of them back to Blue Ridge. According to Paul, “Emily said ‘Daddy, this place needs computers. What they’ve got is old and obsolete. I know that you’ll do it if you get on the Board.’ That was sufficient encouragement for Paul to get involved, though his impact would go far beyond new computers. He described what he did as institutionalizing. His aim was to create standards for Blue Ridge so that **“it doesn’t matter who’s there, you’ve always got the system in place for doing the right thing.”**

Former Blue Ridge CEO Roger Hibbard shared this regarding Paul’s work: “As treasurer of the Assembly, Paul aligned service expansion with financial success. As Board president, he found ways to foster engagement and informal feedback on the part of fellow Board members. His morning walks were great examples of creative governance. **Paul’s most generous financial contribution is the culmination of his personal and caring relationship with Blue Ridge.”**

**“Over the last 25 years, Paul has been an incredible friend and mentor to staff and board members alike,”** said Kurt Eckel, who followed Hibbard as Blue Ridge CEO. “Paul and Voncile have had a steadfast commitment to Blue Ridge, upholding its principles and supporting the Assembly in a kind, generous and loving way.”

Paul also spoke to a more spiritual connection he feels to his work with Blue Ridge. “Sometimes, when you get to be my age, you think ‘God created me for one reason, and I need to figure out what that is and do a good job of it.’ And to me, doing a good job is changing the life of one person. When you’re talking to a child, you never know who you’re talking to – you may be talking to a future president. **So if you change the life of one person, it may be why God put you here.”**



Paul Breazeale with current and former Blue Ridge CEOs Melissa Bailey Logan and Kurt Eckel.

Emily had a similar takeaway from her time on the Mountain. **“I believe that serving others embodies a profound commitment to empathy, compassion and selflessness.** The work at Blue Ridge isn’t always easy. You are literally and figuratively going up and down a mountain several times a day. I learned that serving others gave me great joy while simultaneously humbling me. **We all serve with the understanding that we are fostering connections and building future leaders.”**

“Working at Blue Ridge instilled in me invaluable lessons that continue to shape my work ethic and perspectives today,” she continued. “With each task, no matter how small, I knew I was working as part of a team towards a bigger goal.

**I learned to be reliable and responsible, two characteristics I now admire most in others.”**



Paul and Emily both spoke to the future of the Assembly. **“I know that I am building on a legacy that honors the past and offers hope for our future,”** Emily said. “In the trying times we live in, I see the need for families and youth to focus on core values and gain leadership skills through programs offered at Blue Ridge.”

“It’s kind of a spiritual experience to me to be there,” Paul said. **“You just feel a little bit closer to God being there.** I thought when COVID came along we were going to be out of business. In one day, we lost every customer we had. In one day. But somehow or another we made it, and we came out better.”

**“Working at Blue Ridge instilled in me invaluable lessons that continue to shape my work ethic and perspectives today.”**

“William Faulkner was a writer from my home state, and he said that ‘humans will prevail. Not only will they make it, they’ll prevail,’ which is really true. Blue Ridge will change. I don’t know how, but it will change, and that’s just life. But we’ll figure it out. We’ll prevail somehow.”

Emily concluded with a similar sentiment. “Blue Ridge has transformed in so many positive ways since I first stepped foot on the Mountain – there’s always room for growth and improvement. **I am excited to contribute to the continued growth, success and positive impact of Blue Ridge, ensuring that its legacy endures forever.”**



**Paul takes a walk with his grandson, also Paul.**



**Paul and Emily compete in a sack race at the 2006 Blue Ridge centennial celebration.**



**Paul laughs with fellow Board member Cal Johnson at the Breazeale Lodge dedication.**

# COMING UP IN 2024

## Summer Family Camp

Session 1: June 8–13, 2024

\* Session 2: July 28–August 2, 2024

## Camp China

July 5–8, 2024

## YMCAs of the Southeast Hall of Fame Celebration

September 18, 2024

## Blue Ridge Leaders' School

Session 1: June 15–22, 2024

Session 2: July 20–27, 2024

## Christian Values Conference

July 14–19, 2024

## Global Leadership Summit

\* August 8–9, 2024

## Youth Conference on National Affairs

June 29–July 5, 2024

## Forest Hill Camp Rock

July 16–20, 2024

## Teen Staff Academy

\* November 11–13, 2024

## Fellowship of Christian Athletes Camps

June and July, 2024

## Y Achievers Summit

\* July 28–August 1, 2024

## Thanksgiving Family Camp

\* November 27–30, 2024

\* Register for these events as they become available at [blueridgeassembly.org/now-registering](https://blueridgeassembly.org/now-registering).



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