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BMTA Headquarters



Benton MacKaye Trail Association

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President's Column July 2017 by Tom Keene

TN/NC Maintenance All Hands on Deck

Last month, in an item titled "Backwoods vs. Back Office" we discussed the challenge faced by the BMTA Nominations Committee (NomComm) for 2018 officers: Lots of people want to get out in the woods to hike or work on the trail and we appreciate both! But it's often difficult to locate folks to do the necessary organizational work behind the scenes. I am pleased to report that the 2018 NomComm, ably chaired by **Joy Forehand**, is closing in on a fine slate of nominees to present at our **Annual Meeting November 3rd** (see details below in this newsletter!).

There is however, one position on the board that has stubbornly resisted the NomComm's efforts: Maintenance Director for Tennessee/North Carolina. Unfortunately our difficulties locating a new director appear to be only the tip of an iceberg. It is not just leadership we lack for TN/NC maintenance, it is also a workforce for the leaders to lead. The BMT north of the Whitewater Center on U.S. 64 in Tennessee is appealing to hikers for its long, very remote sections. It's a great place to get away. Unfortunately when you pair those same miles of remote forest with the small and apparently dwindling population base living within reasonable driving distance, locating both section maintainers and a workforce for monthly trips becomes a "systemic" problem. Increasingly we believe we may need to rethink in a very fundamental way how we approach and organize BMT maintenance north of Highway 64.

Between now and our annual meeting the members of the NomComm and the current Board of Directors will be brainstorming ways to address these issues. Your thoughts and suggestions would be appreciated, whether to identify a potential maintenance director for TN/NC or to enhance the workforce in that area. This is the first stage of a process. Let us hear your ideas. Just use the Contact link on our webpage to pass along your suggestions.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Reminder: BMTA Annual Meeting Nov. 3-5 at Georgia's Vogel State Park

More details on the annual meeting and nearby accommodations are in Darcy Douglas' article (page 4). (Make your reservations NOW!) Meanwhile, to whet your appetite here's a bit of history on this year's meeting site:

Vogel State Park is Georgia's second oldest state park (after Indian Springs State Park near Jackson). Land for the park was donated in 1927 by August and Fred Vogel from Wisconsin. During the late 19th century the Vogel family purchased a swath of North Georgia mountain land to provide a steady supply of oak and hemlock bark for their large tanning and shoemaking business. When the First World War brought cheaper chemical substitutes for the forest tannins the Vogels' North Georgia land became superfluous - and they donated it to the state. Many of the older structures in the park, including the dam that creates the park's centerpiece lake, were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Great Depression.



Lake Loop Trail – Vogel State Park

Blaze (tree) of the Month

What's the best tree for a BMT blaze? Certainly not a short-leaf pine; its amazingly coarse bark regularly falls off in slabs bigger than one of our blazes. Your blaze can disappear overnight! And maybe not the beech. Ideal as the tree's bark may be for lovers' initials, it's a nightmare for blaze-painters -- at least those who worry about the blaze-tree's well-being. It's impossible to scrape the moss off to prepare for painting without inflicting a wound that draws sap.



It turns out though, that the bark of the Eastern Hemlock is good for more than for tanning leather. Need evidence: Check out the example shown at left. The dark color of the hemlock bark shows off our white blaze better, to my mind, than any other tree. It's just about perfect for the job. Which is of course another reason to lament the wooly adelgid's assault on these beautiful trees. Happily the tree shown has been treated by the Save Georgia's Hemlocks folks. (Come to think of it, that was close to five years ago. The tree is probably due for another treatment. I need to check. A maintainer's work is never done!)

Total Solar Eclipse Coming to the BMT August 21



Please join us for the 2017 Annual Meeting– Make it a Get-Away Weekend during Fall Colors!!!

by Darcy Douglas

This year's hiking and social gathering, the awarding of the Maintainer of the Year award and our "formal" dinner will take place the weekend of November 3-5!!!! The meeting, awards and dinner will be held on Friday, November 3, at Vogel State Park. You will be able to sign up shortly via the website for the meal with PayPal or you can send a check to the P.O. Box. The meal will be lasagna.... meat or vegetarian.... salad, bread, fruit and cobbler for dessert! Sounds yummy, doesn't it? Remember to bring cash or checks to purchase some of our merchandise.... maps, shirts, etc.-without the shipping charges!!! We'll be in the indoor meeting area at the park which is located in North Georgia near Blairsville. One key thing you should know is a Georgia State Park Pass or \$5 fee is required for each vehicle each day. There should be plenty of parking.

Where to stay, you ask?

A nearby facility (less than a three- mile drive) has cabins for rent. George Owen checked them out and found them quite nice! They are the Blood Mountain Cabins at Neels Gap, three miles south of Vogel State Park. All 13 cabins have two bedrooms with a queen-size bed in each, with either a sleeper bed or futon in the living room. Cabins have nice, fully-equipped kitchens as well as decks with grills. Prices are quite reasonable!!! **Contact for information/reservations: (preferred) 706-745-9454-also by email at bloodmountaincabins AT gmail.com.** There are camping and RV areas still available at Vogel (<http://gastateparks.org/Vogel>) as well as numerous motels in nearby Blairsville, Georgia. Some suggestions include Best Western Milton Inn, Comfort Inn, Brasstown Valley Resort and Lakeside Inn. Please make your lodging arrangements soon as this area becomes quite popular in the fall!!!

What to eat, you ask?

Trail lunches are on your own as well as breakfasts. However, Friday evening's meal at Vogel State Park will be catered by Amazing Grace Catering. In a few days you will be able to order this meal on the BMTA website or by clicking on a link in future newsletters. PayPal is accepted. You will also have the option of sending a check along with a form to let us know your choices of vegetarian or meat lasagna. Other items include salad, bread and dessert. You **MUST** order this meal prior to the meeting. We need to let the caterer know how many will be attending and there won't be place settings or enough food for walk-ins. Saturday evening we will plan to assemble at a local Blairsville restaurant or perhaps at a cabin at Blood Mountain Cabins after the hikes for some social time. Details will be in the next newsletter.....!!!!

Where will we hike, you ask?

Please come prepared to hike both Saturday and Sunday and perhaps for half the day Friday. Our hiking crew (George and Ken) have come up with a number of options including several trails in the state park, several hikes on the Appalachian Trail, the Benton MacKaye Trail to the swinging bridge on the Toccoa River, the Blood Mountain Loop, Brasstown Bald trails, several waterfall hikes and Springer Mountain area loop hikes. Some of these will be longer, some shorter and easier, to accommodate everyone! All you need to do is to show up at the meeting spot with your hiking equipment. Driving directions will be available from the leaders. Hope to see you there!!

Contact bmtadarcyATyahoo.com for any questions

TN/NC Monthly Work Trip - 06/24/17

by Ken Jones

Well, our luck finally ran out on having good weather for our work trips. The weather prognosticators predicted rain for the work day and they got it right this time. Our work period saw light to heavy rain-fall with some brief periods of sunshine after lunch. As we walked back to the truck at the end of the day, one last downpour made sure that we were all soaked for the ride back home. Our crew of four tackled bushing out and logging out Section 17c, working from Mud Gap on the Cherohala Skyway to Whigg Meadow. We certainly appreciated a new trail worker, Ben Yaun, coming out on a very rainy day to work with us. We hope that he will not be discouraged, since this was about the worst trip we have had in the last year. Our crew was still able to accomplish a lot of work by logging out 14 trees and brushing out about 40% of the section.

We thank the following volunteers for making this a safe and productive work trip: Phyllis Jones, Keith Mertz, Ben Yaun and Ken Jones.



A wet work crew finishes lunch. From left to right - Keith Mertz, Ben Yaun and Ken Jones with Phyllis Jones behind the camera.

Old Copper Road Hike

by Larry Dumas

A hot summer day in July and the Old Copper Road along the Ocoee River was a great place for a cooling hike. Fairly smooth and flat, the trail was built by Cherokee laborers in 1851 to haul copper from the Copper basin to Cleveland Tenn.



Not long into the hike we stopped to watch the rafters and kayakers passing us on their way down the river. Several times during the three and half mile hike we stopped to watch the rafters experience big water and the river's most challenging rapids.

Before the hike ended, we crossed a replica of the 1841 Howell thru Truss Bridge on the historic trail that was constructed on the original rock pilings by the Cherokees nearly 200 years ago.



After the hike we returned to the Ocoee Whitewater Center to pick up maps and guides for to the Tanasi trail system in the Cherokee National Forest.

Hikers participating:

Nancy Sauls, Vic Fredlaund, Paula Fredlaund, Lydia Kieft, Darrell McKinney, Larry Shively, Laurie Schatz, Bob Brown, Alan Schulman, Dianna and Alan Rauchwarger, Jo Hubbard, Paul McCord, Gay Reed and Lula Williams.

After the Fire-Return to Rough Ridge

By Bob Ruby

On Saturday, July 15, six months after the first BMTA hike to inspect the damage done by last fall's major Rough Ridge wildfire, five hikers returned to inspect the recovery. We met in Ellijay and carpooled in one vehicle to the Thee Forks Trailhead on the south side of the Cohutta Wilderness. When we arrived at the trailhead we met a group of friends from GATC who were starting a somewhat longer loop hike.

Our hike was a slightly rolling five-mile out-and-back on the Cowpen and Rough Ridge Trails. On the way back we heard lots of thunder but fortunately the rains held off until the drive home. Off the road just before the trailhead we stopped for pictures on a spectacular south overlook.



As on last January's hike most of the fire impact was on the northwest side of the trails. It consisted mainly of blackened understory and the only burned trees were those that were already down or dead. This time there was substantial regrowth of the understory and most trees had a full growth of leaves on their crowns. The leaves somewhat limited the spectacular ridgetop views that we had in January but we still had occasional good views of the Cohutta Mountains.

Hikers were BMTA members June Quinn, Bob Ruby, Nancy Sauls and guests Bill and Diane Murphy.

July Work Trip Report

by Barry Allen

Something great happened in July: several members proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that hard work and outreach really does pay off. ELEVEN new participants joined us for the July work trip. Out of a total of 22 participants fully half of the group was attending their first work event!

So rather than spend a lot of time talking about the work trip on Section 8, let me first tell you about some special people who helped get 22 people out to work the trail.

First, thanks to Marcia Lehman who served as the chief organizer for our participation in two Blue Ridge events: Trout Fest and Arts in the Park. And a further thanks to Marcia and all the others who manned the booth and encouraged people to consider helping on the trail AND then got names and numbers! I'd love to list all the folks who helped with set up and take down and then spent hours in the booths. But you know who you are. **Well Done.**

Second, thanks to Ralph Heller who spent hours of time on follow-up, encouraging people to come out and help. This follow-up was perhaps the most critical step in the process. Experience tells us that without follow-up most people just don't make the final commitment to volunteer.



Left to right, eleven guests or first time maintainers:

Ben Yaun, Shane Morrison, Karleen and Robert Ferguson, David Hankison, Holly Hankison, Patrick Ward, David and Janice Lankford, Gary Lukoski, and Joy Boulenger.

Since the work trip Ben Yaun, David and Janice Lankford, Joy Boulenger and Gary Lukoski have become new members!

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The actual work day was a lot of fun. With 22 people we divided into teams with one team working the trail from Flat Top Mountain to Double Hog Pen Gap and the other team working from Double Hog Pen to Holloway Gap. Brush removal and blaze refreshing was the order of the day and by the end of the work trip the trail was in great shape.

A special thanks to George Owen and Mike Pilvinsky who took two newbies -- Shane Morrison and Patrick Ward -- all the way to Holloway, working to clear trail with sling blades. This group was all former military; no telling what kind of stories were passed around. But they sure did work.

I think the most memorable part of the trip for some (those riding with me anyway) was the ride to the top of Flat Top and then back down. I must say, I enjoy a little adventure. So driving on a Forest Service Road where there is some doubt about survival is always exhilarating. I think Bob Ruby has now officially driven with me for the last time. New member Ben Yaun was too young and naïve to complain and everyone else was speechless about my driving skill in navigating this road at better than 20 MPH. (I know they were speechless because Hank and Lina were unable to talk for half an hour after reaching Dyer Gap).



Hank Baudet and Lina Prince "Blaze Away"



Anyway, thanks to all. Hope to see you next month as we work Section 10 from Dally Gap to Double Spring Gap and the Tennessee state line.

National Park Service to Increase Senior Pass Fee

The Senior lifetime pass gets anyone over 62 years of age into all of the **National Park Service** sites for just \$10.00 but effective August 28, 2017, this pass fee will jump to \$80.00. **NOW** is the time to get your Senior Lifetime Pass before the price increase. You are eligible at age 62 for the Senior Lifetime Pass. Four annual **Senior Passes** purchased in prior years can be traded in for a lifetime pass..

This is a really great deal and includes an additional three persons along with the pass holder. This increase was mandated by Congress. You can apply online for the pass (there is an additional \$10.00 charge for online purchases) or purchase at any National Park Service site.

For more information and to apply click on the link below:

https://store.usgs.gov/pass/senior_pass_application.pdf

Hike Inn Nominated for Best Eco-Friendly Hotel

Photo courtesy of David Ross

Georgia's Hike Inn is one of 20 hotels in the US nominated for best eco-friendly hotel and voting for *the* best is now going on. We're currently at #7 and you can help us make #1. Go to <http://www.10best.com/awards/travel/best-eco-friendly-hotel-2017> and vote. You can vote once a day until Wednesday, Aug. 2, at noon. Thanks in advance for helping the Hike Inn achieve national recognition.

Tom Ottinger



The Hike is the only way "inn."

“Sound of Music” or TN/NC Monthly Work Trip

by Ken Jones

How was the July work trip like the movie "The Sound of Music"? The hills were alive with the sound of ...weed eaters. That's what you get with seven of them trimming out our trail from Mud Gap to Beech Gap, Section 17d. We had a great turnout of 18 volunteers to work on this section. Workers came from all three states (Tennessee, North Carolina and Georgia), to help in clearing the trail. One couple even drove up from Lawrenceville, GA to help, so they received the "Longest Drive Award". Since this section of trail closely parallels the Cherohala Skyway, all of these brush cutters even gave the motorcycles some noise competition. We were noisy but what a difference we made in the trail condition by brushing out this entire three mile section. In some spots the trail had disappeared into the tall weeds and briars over your head. We were also able to log out the trail portion from the North River Road to the Unicoi Crest Parking Area. While the temperature in the valley reached the mid-90s, our temperature at the work site only made it to the upper-70s.



Dick Evans works the brush cutter while others clear the way.

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Here is the portion of the work crew that we could get to stand still for a picture.

At the end of a hard day workers were treated to cold lemonade and watermelon. Some of the workers drove out to Whigg Meadow for a first time viewing.

I especially want to thank the workers who drove long distances to help us in our maintenance efforts and Dick Evans for organizing a work crew from the North Carolina side of the state line.

The following volunteers made our trail a better experience for others: Ben Yaun, Keith Mertz, Steve Cartwright, Boe Rudder, David Lankford, Janice Lankford, Barry Allen, Philip Guhl, Debra Guhl, Joe Solsbee, Phyllis Jones, Ken Jones, Dick Evans, Kim Hainge, Tina Wesson, Marshall McClung, Mike Carton, and Cal Wiederholt.



Thru the Woods-A Thru Hike

by David Ross

The 2017 Hiking Season is officially here! I had mulled all Spring on what to do this summer when my job ends the last week of June. How can I top last year's London to Rome Pilgrimage...plus stay close to home to catch the Great American Eclipse in August? If I was going to be in the South...the Mountains to the Sea Trail is just the ticket. A 1125 mile trail that starts on top of Clingman's Dome in the Smokies, traversing Eastward across North Carolina to finish spectacularly at Kill Devil Dunes (Kitty Hawk) on the Atlantic Ocean. Why not add another trail...the Benton MacKaye Trail from North Georgia Mountains to Davenport Gap at the far northern end of the Smokies? Then I could hike south three days to reach Clingman's Dome with a thru-hike under my belt before I join the MST. Then, just for giggles...when I reach the Atlantic, I can take a bus up to Norfolk, VA and over to Marion, VA to pick up the Appalachian Trail. I can then hike southbound back to the starting point at Amicalola Falls. Another 1900 mile+ journey. Thank you one and all for the support, well wishes, and general good feelings. I am glad that you are along for the ride. Ultra! (Gallican for – Onward, Upward!).

Benton MacKaye Trail – Week 0 (6/23-27/17 – 10.5 Miles) – A busy final couple of days up in Ohio. I finished work for the season, said my farewells and hit the road back down to Atlanta. I-71 was so backed up outside Columbus, I just pulled off and did laundry until 7pm. I pulled into the KY/TN rest center at 11pm and called it quits for the night. Up and out at 7am, and back into Atlanta by 11am. Not even time to unpack – just hit the ground running to get my chores done. Over to Lowes to get a new Bounce Bucket, to the Post Office to pick up seven packages on hold, to REI for final camping supplies, up to storage area to grab my gear, to Walmart for the last of my 30 days' worth of food for my mail drops. Then check in at my hotel, and unpack the car, gear, food and supplies. My room looks like a mall threw up!



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I spent the rest of Saturday night just organizing all the drop boxes. Sunday was more of the same – but packing the seven boxes and moving them out of the room and into the car. I finished for the night around 8pm...just in time to go catch the 9pm showing of Transformers – The Last Knight at Phipps Plaza. It felt great to just relax and catch my breath (and use up my free movie and popcorn coupon!). Monday arrived with more tasks to complete before I hit the road. Shower (the last for a few days), and pack up the remaining gear to take it to my storage unit. Then to the Post Office to send out six of my mail drops. Next to the UPS store to send the only box via UPS to the Ocoee Adventure Center / Thunder Rock Campground. With all the chores completed, I relaxed with a celebratory meal at Fogo de Chao Brazilian Steak house. I did a meat overload and hit the road up to Amicalola Falls, Georgia's Tallest Waterfall, at 3pm. I just made it to check in at the Visitors Center and picked up my Annual Pass/Parking instructions to their long-term parking area. No need for dinner...I'm still totaled from lunch. But there is a bar up at the lodge and a great deck to watch the sunset. It was a perfect end to a day where everything went according to plan. Sipping a cold Guinness, gathering with the guests to watch a spectacular sunset over the North Georgia Mountains, download podcasts and answer my emails. Even the local deer are out in the back playing. After the bar closed at 10, I drove back down to the Visitors Center and hoofed it back to the Max Epson Shelter (built for hikers on the AT). I was the only one in residence tonight. Spent a very restful night solo, using some new equipment. I love my new air mattress...but it's like trying to lay on top of a dolphin! Very soft, but it tended to scoot out from under during the night. I might have to get some non-skid mats to place underneath. The Neo-Air lite is worth every penny. A cool night gave way to a bright Tuesday morning. I had breakfast in the shelter, and packed up my gear before my hike to stash it in my car. Hiked the East Ridge trail from behind the Visitors Center to the Top of the Falls. It followed the old AT approach trail (that I fondly remember treading up for both of my AT thru-hikes in 1989 and 93). I took a lot of pictures on the trail and up at the Lodge – there were people using the zip lines across the parking lot of the Lodge. I hiked the West Ridge Trail back down to the Visitors Center, returning by 5pm. I did some packing & consolidating before the dinner rush. I drove back up to the Lodge for dinner and sunset drinks. Another perfect sunset without a cloud in the sky. It's time to get ready for the Big Hike tomorrow. Another night down at the Shelter. The night air feels great. Just going to lay on my dolphin and listen to some podcasts before bed.



Watson Gap to Jack's River

by Darcy Douglas

On Friday, July 14, Bob Brown joined me for the scheduled hike from Watson Gap to Jack's River Trail and back-the Section maintained since we built it by Larry Rice. We were having such a good time we continued on up Mike Christison's Section until we reached the blueberries which made a pretty nice dessert for our lunches! We kept looking for the "problem" bear reported in the area but didn't see it. The tree cover and many creek crossings made the day seem much cooler than what folks were experiencing in the city! Both these sections are quite lovely and we had a great hike!!!

Turtletown Creek Falls

June 9, 2017

by Evelyn Yarns

Ten members and three guests enjoyed the lovely day and the lovely hike to the two Turtletown Creek falls. As always, the waterfalls were gorgeous. Hikers included members Evelyn Yarns (hike leader), Doug Yarns, Paul McCord, Jan Hitt, Larry Jarkovsky, Ruth Horn, Polly Warren, Darcy Douglas, Tim Holby and Allen Peebles.



Jack's River Falls

By Ginny Smith

A strong group of hikers enjoyed a rain free hike along Jack's River Trail in the Cohuttas on July 1st. The rhododendrons were spectacular. Fire damage from last fall was visible and we encountered a great many blowdowns. Unfortunately the river was high and we weren't able to make as many river crossings as we'd hoped forcing us to cut the hike somewhat short. Still, an enjoyable hike for all!



BARRY NEEDS YOU!!

AUGUST WORK TRIP ANNOUNCEMENT

Section 10

by Barry Allen

- ◆ **Where:** Sections 10c and 10d
- ◆ **When:** Saturday, August 12, 2017
- ◆ **Meet:** 8:00 at Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge or 9:00 at Dally Gap
- ◆ **Plan for the Day:** Lopping, trimming and sling blade work
- ◆ **What to bring:** Minimum two liters of water, long pants, boots, gloves and snack or lunch for the day.
- ◆ **Contact:** Barry Allen at [bmtabarry ATgmail.com](mailto:bmtabarry@gmail.com) or 770-294-7384

Please join us on Saturday, August 12 as we work Section 10 in the Cohutta Wilderness with Team Conasauga, Back Country Horsemen and the United States Forest Service. We need a great showing from the Benton MacKay Trail Association, so please put this on your calendar.

This is a long stretch of trail – 5.2 miles one way. With good turnout, my goal is to take several adventurous folks all the way to Double Spring Gap at the Tennessee state line to work with the horsemen on the stretch of trail from Double Spring back to Hemp Top. A second group will work the two mile stretch from Dally to Penitentiary and the final and most overgrown stretch from Penitentiary to Hemp Top will take the third and largest group.

At the end of the day, we'll all gather back at Dally for refreshments and a little socializing, so join us if you are able.



Upcoming Hikes

by Ken Cissna, Hiking Director

BMTA normally schedules a minimum of two hikes per month, one of five to eight miles and moderate difficulty, and one that is shorter and easier. In addition, we have occasional backpacking hikes and more difficult ones that might be called “hardy hikes.” Occasionally we co-sponsor hikes with other organizations. Although more hikes are in Georgia than the other states, you will find hikes in all three BMT states: Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee.

If you are interested in leading a hike or have a hike you’d like to see us offer with someone else leading, please contact me at [kcissna AT usf.edu](mailto:kcissna@usf.edu) or 706-636-1741.

The hikes for the next two months are listed below. More will be forthcoming, so check the Activities Calendar of the website and next month’s newsletter for updates.

August

August 16th (Wednesday) Cartecay Loop Trail
4 miles, easy to moderate – a loop mostly along the banks of the Cartecay River
Contact hike leader Sara Bland at [jsbland AT windstream.net](mailto:jsbland@windstream.net)

August 24th (Thursday) Emery Creek Trail
5 miles, moderate. Twenty-two stream crossings, one knee high. Two waterfalls. Poles strongly recommended.
Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at [kcissna AT usf.edu](mailto:kcissna@usf.edu)

September

September 6th (Wednesday) Amadahy Trail
4 miles, easy-moderate. A nice loop along Carter’s Lake with an optional half mile side trip to the boating campground for lunch.
Contact hike leader Sara Bland at [jsbland AT windstream.net](mailto:jsbland@windstream.net)

September 8th (Friday) River Loop at Chestnut Mountain by the Whitewater Center
7.5 miles, moderate
Contact hike leader Evelin Yarns at [eyarns AT sprynet.com](mailto:eyarns@sprynet.com)

September 23rd (Saturday) Upper BMT-AT Loop at Springer Mt
Several miles, easy to moderate. Day after autumn comes in.
Contact hike leader George Owen at [gowen2 AT tds.net](mailto:gowen2@tds.net)

September 29th (Friday) Flat Creek Loop followed by lunch in Blue Ridge.
5.6 miles, moderate
Contact hike leaders Tom and Jane Keene at [tkbmta AT gmail.com](mailto:tkbmta@gmail.com)

August Newsletter deadline is August 23, 2017. Thank you!