

Cooperative Camp



Beth Pugh Farrell will be recognized later this year by the National FFA Organization with a Honorary American Degree for commitment to agriculture.

Happy to be back to visit her grandmother Mildred Moxley on the family farm in Piney Creek, Beth still holds dear her Alleghany roots and love for this community.

Cooperative Camp, Then and Now

INSPIRES LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE

Since 1992, a select group of area high school students have made the mid-summer trek east to White Lake, North Carolina, to attend the Cooperative Leadership Camp. This weeklong adventure brings youth from across the state to learn the cooperative way of doing business while they develop leadership skills and qualities needed in future community leaders. Two program alumni recently recalled their experiences.

Beth Pugh Farrell

Beth, an Alleghany County native, attended camp in 1994. Having participated in 4-H and coming from two farming families, she said, “My heart is in agriculture—I like getting my hands dirty.”

Beth was both excited and nervous to attend Co-op Camp, but she learned fast that it’s okay to be somewhere different, make new friends and try new things. “In fact, I met one of my dearest friends at Co-op Camp.”

“Through the T-shirt cooperative, I learned firsthand that no role is more important than another when it comes to serving,” Beth said. Whether on the board or newsletter team, remembering that everyone has something valuable to contribute towards a common goal has helped me both in my career and volunteer experiences.” After high school, Beth earned a degree in animal science

with a minor in poultry science at N.C. State and began her career as director of development with the N.C. Agricultural Foundation, which supports the activities of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at the university. For eight years, she raised funds to support the N.C. 4-H Awards and Incentives Program and 4-H Camps.

Today, Beth is an agriculture program specialist for the N.C. Department of Agriculture, working closely with tobacco growers, the ag industry and ag policy. She lives with her husband, and fellow N.C. State grad, Kevin in Cary near his family’s farm at Jordan Lake. “Agriculture employs 17 percent of the state’s workforce in a \$91.8 billion industry—the state’s largest,” she said. “I want to help continue growing our state’s number-one industry, ensure a successful future for family farms, and share my passion for agriculture.”



Left: Beth and fellow campers with then-Secretary of State Rufus Edmisten.



Right: Beth and Marshall Cherry, a former camper and now head of operations at Roanoke Electric Cooperative, shared the positive impact this experience had in their lives and careers, during the Cooperative Council of North Carolina Annual Meeting in March.

“Co-ops like SkyLine are so much more than service providers; they are an integral part of the communities they serve. Investments made by members through youth activities return dividends that can’t be quantified.”

- Beth Farrell

Cooperative Camp



In addition to running her own business as a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) and making time for family, church and community, Christi Hayes Wagoner is the current president of the Ashe County Community Foundation, which provides grant funding to numerous local charitable and educational programs.

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Christi Hayes Wagoner

An Ashe County native, Christi attended camp in 1994. When she arrived, Christi only knew three people, but she learned a valuable lesson, “Don’t be afraid—to speak up, to make new friends, to ask questions. Everyone has to start somewhere,” she said.

Christi credits the T-shirt cooperative for bringing students a hands-on approach to forming, governing and running their own co-op. “It educated me on how a cooperative worked and gave me a new appreciation for all the hard work and determination that went behind forming and maintaining the electric and telephone co-ops that we have in Ashe County.”

Christi was recognized as the outstanding camper that year, receiving the Thad Eure Award, which afforded her the opportunity to attend the National Institute on Cooperative Education (NICE) Conference later that summer and to return to camp the following year as a junior counselor. “Personally, these experiences opened me up to a

world of exploration—new friends and new places.” Seeing new places sparked Christi’s desire to travel even more. “Visiting all 50 states is on my bucket list, and I’m fortunate enough to say that I’ve currently visited 26.”

After high school, Christi worked part-time at SkyLine during summers and attended Appalachian State University, where she earned both bachelor’s and master’s degrees in accounting. She established her own firm, Christina Hayes Wagoner, CPA, in Jefferson and has been a practicing CPA for 17 years. She and her husband Nathan live in West Jefferson with their three children, Caleb, Phoebe and Adam.

Christi credits SkyLine’s history of demonstrating the power of community and hard work that continues to make rural communities thrive and grow. “SkyLine made that investment in my future long ago, and it is a blessing to return to the community, not only to give back but also to find my opportunity to pay it forward.”



Left: As a Thad Eure Award winner at camp, Christi attended a national co-op meeting in Minneapolis in 1995. Right: The Ashe County Community Foundation awarded more than \$5,000 in local grants this spring.



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