

# 2013

# ga-du-gi

INVESTING IN YOUTH



PHOTO CREDIT: HEATHER JAMES

**C**herokee Preservation Foundation works to preserve our native culture, enhance our natural environment and create appropriate and diverse economic opportunities – in order to improve the quality of life for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) and strengthen Western North Carolina.

Through the investment in the Foundation made possible by the Tribal Gaming Compact, tribal members, EBCI organizations and partners have been a vital part of the Cherokee Preservation Foundation's impact on cultural preservation, economic development and environmental preservation efforts.

Since 2002, the Foundation has made 783 grants valued at more than \$61 million. This sum, combined with matching grants and resources provided by other organizations, has created a benefit to our communities worth over \$150 million.

In the 2013 ga-du-gi report to our community, we focus on some of the investments the Foundation has made in youth on the Qualla Boundary and in the surrounding region. In total, our youth investments are valued at more than \$9.25 million. We hope you will enjoy these stories:

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**CHEROKEE**  
PRESERVATION FOUNDATION

# GROWING into Leaders



Cherokee Youth Council members learn about traditional gardening methods at Kituwah Mound.

SKY KANOTT

When **Hannah Ledford** first joined the Cherokee Youth Council two years ago at age 13, she never said a word in a Youth Council meeting. But the minute the meeting was over, she would approach **Sky Kanott**, the Cherokee Youth Council Coordinator, and all sorts of wonderful ideas poured out of her. Two years and dozens of experiences later, Hannah has opened up. She freely shares her ideas with the other 40 members of the Youth Council – and she works hard to build support for those concepts because everyone in the group has to want to do something before the Youth Council will take it up. Her experience is one of many remarkable stories of Cherokee Youth Council members growing up both quickly and well.

The Cherokee Youth Council was established in 2007 to bring back the valued voice of youth that was the tradition in the days of the Cherokee Grand Council and enable youth to serve their community and develop leadership skills. In 2011, Youth Council members established the Seven Clans Grant Council (SCGS), which accepts youth-written grant applications for youth-led projects on the Qualla Boundary. Sky Kanott, just three years removed from college herself, says the maturation of the Youth Council members “is just crazy to see.”

“Twelve to eighteen-year olds are learning how to make grants, which requires understanding budgets and a lot of other things,” she said. “And all their Youth Council activities require being able to develop consensus for their ideas and public speaking, both at Tribal Council and at national conferences such as United National Indian Tribal Youth (UNITY). Each young man and woman has changed tremendously through their involvement in the Youth Council and their leadership skills have become awesome. They are growing in every way possible.”

Before the Cherokee Youth Council was created, young people on the Qualla Boundary longed for the means to come together with other youth who wanted to have fun and opportunities to be part of their community. Cherokee Preservation Foundation developed the concept for the Cherokee Youth Council, in part to address the needs of Cherokee youth, but also to help the EBCI develop the leadership skills of its future leaders. The Foundation provided initial funding and has given financial and other support ever since, and the EBCI Cooperative Extension Program has provided supervisory support and space for the Youth Council.

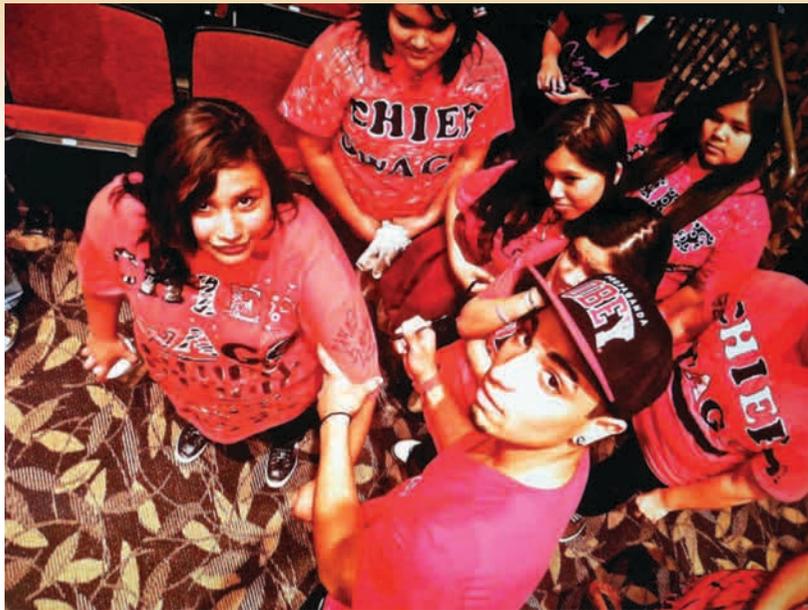
The Youth Council’s activities are wide-ranging and extensive. Recently, for example, EBCI members **Dakota Brown**, **Kevin Jackson** and **Tim Swayney**, have been teaching the youth traditional dances and stomps, and lessons are followed by conversations about Cherokee culture.

Many of the youth’s efforts focus on the promotion of healthy lifestyles. One major initiative is the Seven Clans Grant Council, which makes grants up to \$2,000 dollars, with priority given to youth-led projects on the Qualla Boundary that address drug

*Hannah Ledford and Simon Montelongo are among the 40 Cherokee Youth Council members whose communication and leadership skills have grown by leaps and bounds, according to Sky Kanott (center), the Youth Council Coordinator.*



BRENDA OOCUMMA



*Chief Swag (a.k.a. Jeffrey Duarte), a hip-hop artist and advocate for a drug- and alcohol-free lifestyle, presented a free local concert after the Cherokee Youth Council raised funds to bring him to Cherokee.*

*Right: The Cherokee Youth Council created a uniquely Cherokee spin on recycling by putting the traditional Cherokee symbol that means “endless” on recycling bins and reusable shopping bags.*

and alcohol addiction, suicide, disease and illness, abuse, poverty and homelessness. Before the SCGC could begin making grants, the youth had to create a grant application process that includes funding guidelines, grant selection methods, grant monitoring policies and grant evaluation measurements.

The Cherokee Youth Council has also facilitated a community conversation about teen pregnancy by creating a video on the topic, recruiting members, friends and family members to give their testimonies about the impact of teen pregnancy on their lives. Youth Council members learned how to work behind and in front of a camera, and then they learned how to excel in front of a big crowd, presenting their film to approximately 1,000 native youth at the UNITY conference.

**Simon Montelongo** was elected to represent the Southeast Area Caucus at the 2012 UNITY conference, making him the first EBCI member to serve on UNITY’s national board. Kanott says

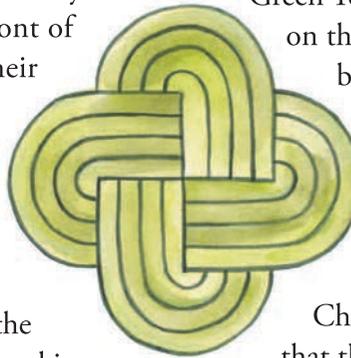
what makes the accomplishment even more noteworthy is that Simon is 15 and most of the national board members are 18.

After Youth Council members connected at UNITY with Chief Swag (a.k.a. Jeffrey Duarte) a hip-hop artist and advocate for a drug- and alcohol-free lifestyle, they invited him to Cherokee in the past year to present a free concert to local youth, and 300 attended. The concert could be free because Youth Council members had conducted silent auctions and other fundraising activities to pay for him to come.

Now the Youth Council members have come up with their biggest healthy lifestyle idea so far. They want to start a local grocery store that will provide locally grown meat and produce to tribal members who have diabetes. The concept is so important to them that they have gone through an Indianpreneurship class at the Sequoyah Fund to prepare them to develop a business plan.

Hannah Ledford is excited to be learning about how to run a business. “The grocery store idea is helping a lot of members see how we could start businesses after college,” she said. “It gives us a really good career option.”

In its early years, the Cherokee Youth Council put most of its energy into its Go Green Team, which expanded recycling on the Qualla Boundary and made a big difference through community education, getting 1,000 recycling bins into EBCI government buildings and 2,000 reusable shopping bags out into the community. The traditional Cherokee symbol meaning “endless” that the Go Green Team put on the recycling bins and the reusable bags put a uniquely Cherokee spin on the effort.



Youth in Haywood, Jackson, Swain, Clay, Macon, Graham, Clay and Cherokee counties have paid close attention to the Cherokee Youth Council, and today, each of these counties has its own youth council, with support from Cherokee Preservation Foundation and county-based organizations such as 4-H. All of them focus at least partially on environmental sustainability projects.

In November, members of the Cherokee Youth Council and the seven county Youth Councils came together at the fourth annual Regional Youth Council Summit at Fontana Village Resort. The sixty youth dedicated the Summit to the fight against bullying, honoring the late Damien Heater of Macon County. In the coming months,

the councils plan to undertake a joint project that addresses an important regional issue.

“The youth came together to network at the Summit, and each council wore a different color of t-shirt,” Kanott said. “At first, the kids clustered with kids from their own council, but before long, colors were mixed throughout the room and you could tell everyone was making new friends. Youth from the newer councils told the Cherokee kids they admire how we’ve built our program around our culture. They asked us how we’ve been able to get to where we are today, and as we told them, the members of the Cherokee Youth Council are a family.”

A really cool family.

*Eight youth councils came together at a recent Regional Youth Council Summit, with participants wearing t-shirts in different colors to demonstrate where they live.*



SKY KANOTT

# PASSING the Torch

Brett Jones aspires to succeed Shirley Oswald as a teacher of the Cherokee language when he graduates from college, which pleases her greatly.



BRENDA OOCUMMA

On his Facebook page, Western Carolina University freshman **Brett Jones** writes that he is a teaching assistant at the Cherokee Language Summer Camp in Snowbird and that “my future job, when I get out of college, will be to be the big teacher (:”

If that ambition comes to pass, the *big* teacher, **Shirley Oswald**, will be thrilled. Oswald is a native Cherokee speaker born and raised in Snowbird, and her life’s work is to motivate EBCI members to be speakers of their native language and give them the tools to succeed. She has spent many years teaching the Cherokee language at Robbinsville High School and at evening classes and summer camps in Snowbird.

Restoring fluency in the Cherokee language is crucially important. Doing so will reverse the impact of actions imposed on Native Americans decades ago, when Native American children were sent to boarding schools and



MIKE LAVOIE

forbidden to speak their native language. This policy has led to the situation faced today by the Cherokee and many other tribes: native speakers are few and the language is at risk of fading away.

Revitalizing the Cherokee language is a critical component of the mission of the Cherokee Preservation Foundation. It has invested significant resources in multiple activities, including the immersion program offered by the Kituwah Academy that enables children to learn Cherokee as their first language, as well as efforts in EBCI communities to teach Cherokee as a second language. The summer language and cultural camps offered in the Snowbird and Big Cove communities – and this year in Robbinsville at a new camp



TEDI McMANUS

*Bird monitoring at Cowee Mound has become a highlight of the Snowbird and Big Cove culture and language camps.*



MIKE BELLEME

language further,” said Oswalt. “I want the kids to be proud of what they know. When you know something that gives you pride, you usually want to know more.”

So starting in June, approximately 25 children and teens will be arriving at Robbinsville High School every weekday for six weeks to learn and have fun at the Snowbird camp. They will absorb fundamental concepts in the Cherokee language, including vocabulary, colors, numbers, animals, family members’ names and basic conversation, and they will acquire enough knowledge to be able to write short stories using the Cherokee syllabary.

Much of their language discovery will come from learning first-hand about their cultural traditions during some unique field trips. By participating in an annual bird survey at the Cowee Mound, for example, campers become familiar with native bird species, the Cherokee names for these birds and the Cowee Mound.

On another field trip, the children learn about fish and the way they were once caught. The Cherokee used fish weirs, v-shaped man-made constructions of rocks that directed the fish into a central location, where the larger fish were collected and the smaller fish were allowed to pass through the rocks.

The grand finale of the Snowbird camp experience is a dramatic play. Each year, **Mary Brown**, who helps Oswalt teach Cherokee and run the camp, writes a new play based on a tribal legend. Last year, elders took on some of the larger speaking roles for the first time, allowing the audience to enjoy more complex conversations. Brown serves as narrator and provides enough English translations that everyone understands what is going on.

“It’s good for the community to see elders speaking the language,” said Oswalt.



WATERSHED ASSOCIATION OF THE TUCKASEGEE RIVER

organized by the Graham County Indian Education program – are important parts of the Cherokee language revitalization effort. Their many supporters, in addition to the Foundation, include the Kituwah Preservation and Education Program, EBCI

Parks & Recreation, Western Carolina University’s Cherokee Studies program, the Museum of the Cherokee Indian, the Junaluska Museum, the Snowbird Library, the Graham County Indian Education Program, the Knights of the Round Table Youth Council in Graham County and Graham County Schools.

One hat that Shirley Oswalt wears is head teacher and organizer of Snowbird Language and Culture Camp, which she helped establish in 2007. “My goal for the camp “is to teach what I can in six week and then have the kids want to pursue the

*Learning the Cherokee language is the central purpose of the summer camps. Sometimes language discovery comes from learning about cultural traditions such as fish weirs.*

**CWY**

“They learn what we can accomplish if we keep building on our Cherokee language program.”

Children are not only learning the language, but their improved proficiency is

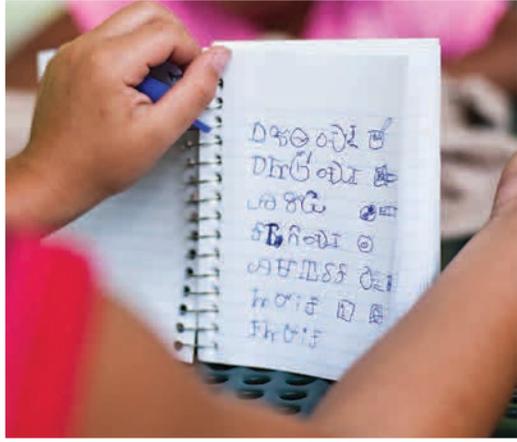
being measured, too. The Snowbird camp was the first program to use a fluency assessment tool developed in 2010 by partners of the Cherokee Language Revitalization initiative. Understanding the progress being made is important.

Three years from now, Oswald would like to be able to transition from teaching to translating more books into Cherokee to help teachers develop their lessons, so she is keeping an eye on the progress Brett Jones is making in college and his career goals. How would she respond if the young man’s goals remain unchanged and he’s ready to take her place in three years, she is asked.

“Praise the lord,” Oswald said.

*Restoring tribal members’ fluency in the Cherokee language is why native Cherokee speakers such as Myrtle Driver (below) and Shirley Oswald have dedicated so much of their time and effort to summer language and cultural camps in the Big Cove and Snowbird communities, respectively.*

MIKE BELLEME



# TRAVELLING through Time

EBCI Tribal Historical Preservation Officer Russ Townsend (left) and Lamar Marshall of Wild South have worked together to identify ancient Cherokee trails that are the basis of Cherokee cultural geography.



BRENDA OOCUMMA

A project begun several years ago to map ancient Cherokee trails has led to priceless benefits for members of the EBCI, and for people everywhere who want to understand the rich history of the Cherokee people in the southern Appalachian mountains. For example, thanks to the magic of Google Earth, virtual tours of Cherokee trails and towns in the 17th and 18th centuries are now available, and soon the tours are expected to have added features such as realistic 3-D renditions of Cherokee homes and gardens.

Wild South is a Western North Carolina-based conservation organization that has 20 years of experience in protecting cultural resources on public lands in the South, with a focus on land conservation and cultural heritage. Through its

work with the Southeastern Anthological Institute on a Trail of Tears project in 2006, Wild South's Cultural Heritage Director, **Lamar Marshall**, noticed a lack of research on ancient Cherokee trails.

He reached out to the EBCI Tribal Historical Preservation Office (THPO), the National Park Service and others so that the Cherokee could realize the cultural and economic value of identifying these ancient trails, which became the basis for modern-day transportation in the Southeast. The EBCI and Wild South have worked together to develop a comprehensive map of Cherokee cultural geography, beginning with the European contact at about 1700 up until the mid-1800s. Support from Cherokee Preservation Foundation made it possible to collect rare archives, early land records and surveys, and to conduct extensive field surveys, photograph geographical sites and film oral histories.

The completed project became the property of the EBCI, and THPO Officer **Russ Townsend** said it has created for the EBCI one of the premier research capabilities concerning the traditional aboriginal territory of the Cherokee people. "For far too long, much of these indispensably important archival materials have been scattered through the United States at various federal, state and university archives, and accessible only to those few who have the time, knowledge and funds to travel from facility to facility," Townsend said.

Marshall has logged many miles on the trails with tribal members, including Cherokee youth participating in the Cherokee Choices Healthy Roots program, who helped inventory potential recreational trails that can be accessible to tribal members. The young people mapped trails on the Raven Fork and Oconaluftee River, one of which the Cherokee High School track

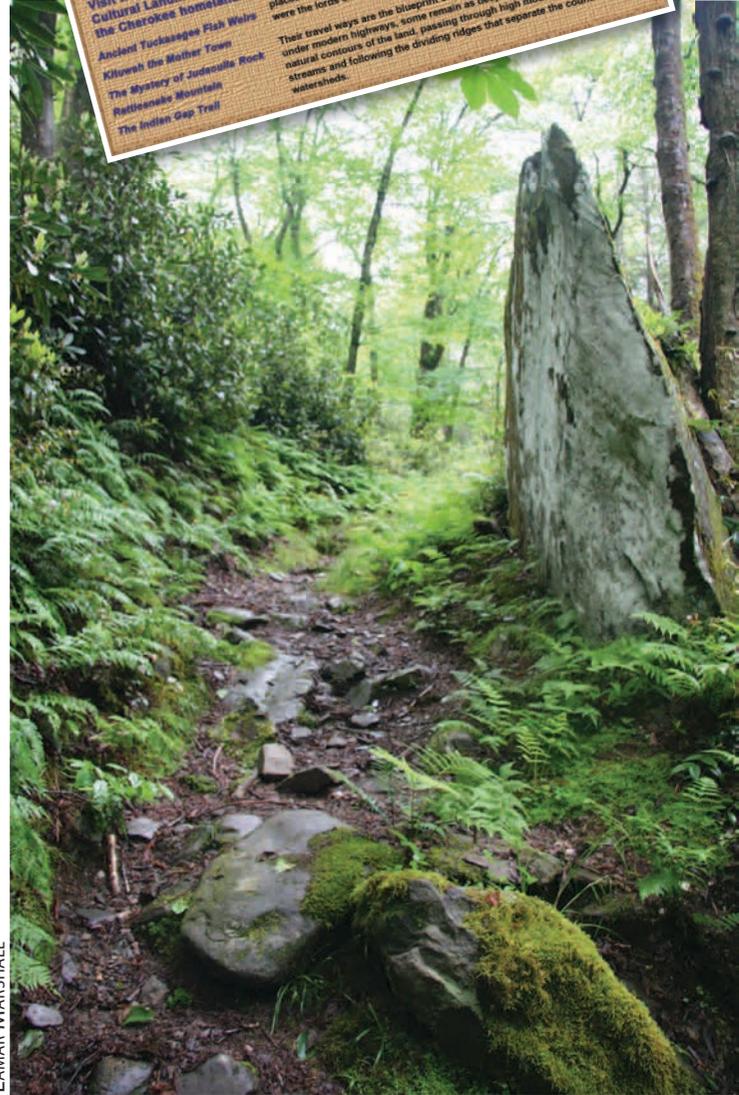
team plans to run on regularly after the trail is improved.

"Healthy Roots and the Cherokee Trails program have been a natural fit," said **Tinker Jenks**, Healthy Roots Coordinator.

"One of the goals of the Healthy Roots project is to increase awareness and use of traditional ways of being active, so for the young people to help identify trails the Cherokee historically have walked and run along has been important."

By early 2012, the results of the Cherokee Trails project were already impressive, with 15 major trails mapped that include 153 miles in National Forests. The U.S. Forest Service has committed to applying special protective designations to trails on land under its care, which could potentially extend to 64,000 acres. But then the project elevated to a whole new level.

Each year, Google Earth awards a small number of grants to nonprofit organizations that have compelling ideas for cutting-edge maps for the public good. In December 2012, Google Earth announced that Wild South had been awarded one of these grants to create an interactive, web-based Google Earth Map, virtual tours and a mobile application that will provide



LAMAR MARSHALL

*Support from Cherokee Preservation Foundation made it possible to collect rare archives, early land records and surveys, and to conduct extensive field surveys and photograph geographical sites. Fifteen major Cherokee trails have been mapped.*



a geographical and cultural history of the Cherokee people of Western North Carolina.

The project is a first-of-its-kind, interactive atlas of Cherokee historical geography, including photography, oral history video clips and historical data such as the ancient trail system and towns of the Cherokee homeland. It features a progressive account of the migration of the Cherokee Indians as they were pushed off their traditional lands, first by British colonists and later by the United States government during the Removal Period. The web-based map provides a new way to appreciate a landscape and its people.

The Google Earth/Cherokee Trails site was launched in April. Interested explorers can

connect to it at [www.wildsouth.org](http://www.wildsouth.org) and can also download the free Cherokee Trails Android app (additional apps will be available later).

With momentum from the Google Earth grant project, well over 1000 miles of Cherokee trails have now been identified. In Western North Carolina, these include 29 trails crossing National Forests in North Carolina and 13 additional trails along the Blue Ridge Escarpment just south of Highlands and Cashiers.

One tour on the Cherokee Trails website covers the Cherokee territorial claims, trails and towns from 1700 to 1776. It begins at Charleston, the British trading capital of that time, and follows the Cherokee Trading Path through lower

South Carolina and the Lower Towns to the mountains of Western North Carolina. It flies over the Middle Towns of the Little Tennessee River, the Overhill Towns of the Tuckasegee and Oconaluftee Rivers, the Valley Towns and the Out Towns. Future tours in the pipeline are William Bartram's travel to Cowee Town in 1775 and the Cherokee Wars of 1759-61 and 1776.

Marshall is excited about how the web tools will enable not only Cherokee Central Schools and

*The second phase of the Google Earth project, which Wild South hopes to make available to the public in 2014, will be the development of truly virtual 3D graphics that will allow viewers to move through life-like settings from different eras of Cherokee history. The technology developed by the Center for Advanced Spatial Technologies at the University of Arkansas to depict these Nodena villages in Arkansas will be used to create historically accurate Mississippian Era (1000 – 1450 A.D.) Cherokee villages of the Appalachian Summit.*





TINKER JENKS

regional school systems to incorporate the resources into their geography and history curricula, but will be accessible to schools and individuals everywhere.

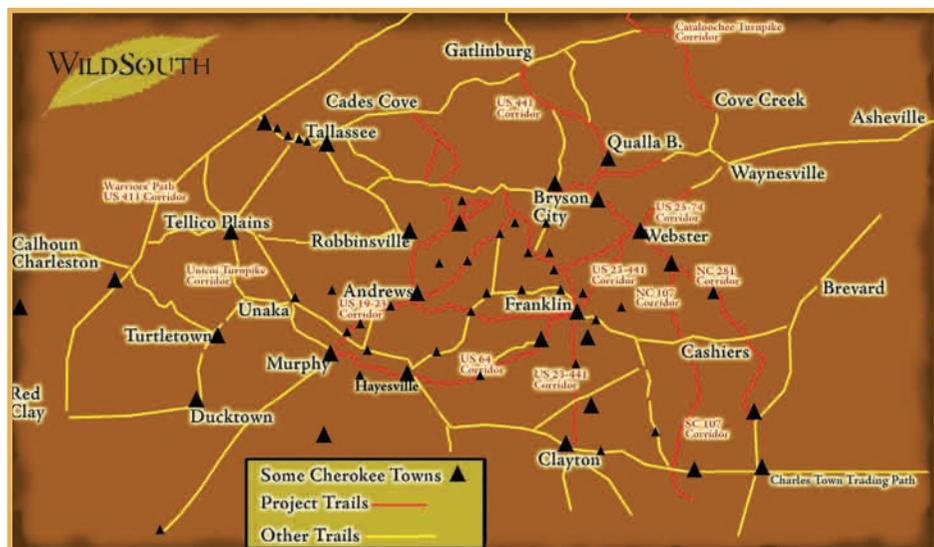
“The American school curriculum has generally neglected the complete and truthful history of native peoples,” Marshall said. “Google Earth recognized the value of presenting far more than the Trail of Tears, and now we have a means to show how Cherokee history, culture and geography span millennia. Tourists are another key audience for the Cherokee Trails website and mobile app.”

The second phase of the Google Earth project, which will be available to the public in 2014 if funding is available, will be the development and incorporation of truly virtual 3D graphics that will allow viewers to move through life-like settings from different eras of

Cherokee history. Marshall says the experience “will be almost like time travel.”

Is anyone up for a flight over William Holland Thomas’ house and store in Quallatown? Or how about Cowee or the Judaculla Rock? Cherokee culture, history and geography have never been more approachable.

*Cherokee youth participating in the Healthy Roots program that promotes healthy living helped inventory potential recreational trails.*



# REVERSING our YOUTH MIGRATION

Dylan Shook (left) and Dustin Bryant plan to establish a radio station to connect and entertain the Nantahala community – they already have the tower. They are sharpening their on-air skills by making school announcements to fellow Nantahala School students.



SCOTT WALLACE

When Nantahala School students **Dylan Shook** and **Dustin Bryant** entered a business plan competition open to high school youth in westernmost North Carolina, their motivation for planning a radio station that will serve the Nantahala community ran deeper than winning scholarship money for college. Creating a radio station that will connect their community better really matters to them. And for Dustin, the radio station could be his ticket to earning a good living in a place he loves after he learns to be an audio engineer in college.

The migration of young people who have left for better career opportunities elsewhere has been hollowing out communities in Western North Carolina and is threatening community vitality. But small towns in the region can play an important role in economic recovery and growth. Teaching young people how to start and grow their own businesses in Cherokee, Nantahala, Andrews and other towns in the region promises to be the key.

The business plan competition sponsored by WNC EdNet is just the beginning of a major entrepreneurial education initiative that will be implemented in all grades at schools on the Qualla Boundary and in the seven westernmost counties this fall as part of a STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) curricula. The planning grant behind it was provided by Cherokee Preservation Foundation out of a desire to help create excellent career opportunities for the region's youth within their communities.

The Swain County Schools system has been spearheading the planning for the effort, with assistance from the Western Region Education Service Alliance (WRESA), a consortium of school districts and community organizations that provides educational services to members, and Haywood County-West Schools. Each school system will choose which elements will be available in its schools.

The goal is to help young people see that instead of complaining about what isn't in their communities – such as an organic grocery store – they should recognize these voids as opportunities they can seize by creating a business. “The flip side of nothing is an opportunity,” said Bob Byrd, School Improvement Coordinator for WRESA.

It has happened in westernmost North Carolina before. In 1954, Clyde Drake opened what soon became a successful tax preparation business in Franklin. Clyde's son Phil took the business in a new direction in the 1970s, when he stopped preparing tax returns and shifted his focus to the development of tax software. When the IRS first implemented electronic filing of tax returns, Phil Drake embraced the new technology. In 2004, Drake Software won the IRS's Modernized e-file Pioneer Award and today the company has more than 300 employees.



Entrepreneurial education has been available to some students for many years in the form of vocational training such as shop class. But the effort that will be launched in several months will systematically link the STEM curriculum to entrepreneurial education in Western North Carolina, and the reason is that STEM is where the great jobs are in today's economy. Another aspect of work today is that it doesn't matter where one is located, as long as the person is digitally literate, knows how to market globally, and offers a good product or service. The entrepreneurial curriculum will also be valuable to students who want to make a living as artists, craft persons or writers.

So what will students learn? Let's say they are in a science class learning about robotics. Before, the class may have focused on how robots are made and what they can do, but now teachers will go further and help students understand that robotics is a huge field with business opportunities in electronics, mechanical engineering, software engineering, mathematics, physics, chemistry, psychology and biology.

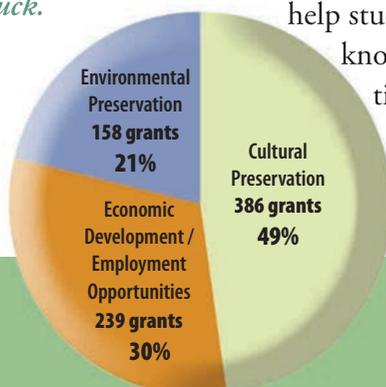
The curriculum will go well beyond textbooks so that students become digitally and financially literate, and know how to create strong business plans. Students will have real-life learning experiences by participating in inventor clubs, technology application competitions, site visits, job

*Regional educators, including Bob Byrd of the Western Region Education Service Alliance, have been collaborating to plan an entrepreneurial education initiative that is linked to the STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) curricula.*





*Students in Nantahala School's entrepreneurship class (left to right) – Jake van Rossum, Brian Gatti, Dustin Bryant and Dylan Shook – prepare for a region-wide business plan competition with their teacher, Eli Mauck.*



Cherokee Preservation Foundation grants have fueled Cherokee language revitalization, perpetuation of Cherokee artistic traditions and leadership development programs for EBCI tribal members. They have supported entrepreneurship to diversify the regional economy, helped teachers use technology-based learning tools so our students can compete with students anywhere, and given rise to renewable energy and energy efficiency programs. For more information, visit [www.cpdfn.org](http://www.cpdfn.org) or contact the Foundation at 828/497-5550.

shadowing and more. They will have access to mentors, too. Educators at Western Carolina University and the region's community colleges will be among those who will serve as mentors and help students create prototypes of their products.

One of the challenges in developing the entrepreneurial curriculum has been to prepare teachers, most of whom have never created a business, so they will be able to help students learn what they need to know. Part of Cherokee Preservation Foundation's planning grant was allocated to teacher training in the spring from the North Carolina Rural

Entrepreneurship through Action Learning (NC REAL) program. Complete development of the entrepreneurial curriculum will require further funding, which is being sought from the Golden Leaf

Foundation, the Community Foundation of WNC, the North Carolina Rural Center and other sources.

Most of the competitors in the WNC Ed-Net business plan competition were from Nantahala School, and not surprisingly, a teacher is the reason. Eli Mauck, a recent graduate of Appalachian State University and first year teacher, wanted to teach an entrepreneurship class in the 2012 school year. "There are a lot of needs in our area that are not yet fulfilled, said Mauck, who grew up in Robbinsville. "If our students learn entrepreneurial skills and some of them become motivated to grow their own businesses here, that's our best way to create high paying jobs."

"The main outcome we are seeking is for students to learn the knowledge and skills to develop an intentional plan for their lives," said Bob Byrd of WRESA. "If a student can learn to visualize ten years out what kind of high quality job and life they want to have in our region, then they can start back-mapping and figure out how to get where they want to be. That's part of the way we can help our youth and our communities have a great future."