

Living Off the Land: Farming in Transylvania County

The French Broad River Valley has beckoned to settlers for centuries, providing rich soil and abundant water for farming. The Cherokee were good farmers. Their villages, located near the streams and rivers, were surrounded by vast fields of corn. The first white settlers in the area were farmers, too, and they quickly claimed the land along the French Broad River. A few of the families were the Owens and Glazeners in the Rosman area, the Orrs and Merrills in Little River, the Davidsons in Pisgah Forest, the Wilsons in Cathey's Creek, and the Whitmires in Cherryfield.

Brittany Whitmire is a fifth generation farmer in Transylvania County on land that has been worked by her family for over a century in the Cherryfield section. She and her husband, Andy VonCanon, operate BusyBee Farm from which they direct-market natural honey, beef and sweet corn. Brittany's parents, Jimmy and Jackie Whitmire, raise dairy replacement heifers and harvest forage crops on the family's Century Family Farm, recognized by the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Farming has never been an easy life, but in today's economy, farmers face many new challenges. Brittany is committed to serving the agriculture industry in North Carolina as well as working to preserve the agricultural heritage of Transylvania County.

Would you be surprised to know that Transylvania County, with all its beautiful woods, mountains and waterfalls, had 256 farms in 2007 with an average size of 71 acres? Would you like to know more about these farms, where they are located and what they produce?

If so, then come on the **Transylvania Farm Tour, Saturday, May 30!** The Transylvania Heritage Museum and Farm Bureau are sponsoring two different tours on that Saturday, so you can choose the one that best suits you and your family.

Tour One is a **Guided Bus Tour** with volunteers from the Farm Bureau pointing out places of interest along the route of the tour, accompanying visitors on the farms, and discussing triumphs and challenges of today's farmers. The bus is air-conditioned and has bathroom facilities. Tour begins at Brevard High School at 7:30 a.m. and returns at approximately 4

p.m. Lunch at Poppies (not included in the ticket price). \$25 per person; seating is limited to 25 persons.

The tour will visit more than 10 farms, tentatively including: Brevard High School farm; Cornercopia, a small farm with bees, goats & chickens; Turf Mountain Sod, the largest agriculture operation in Transylvania County; Queen's Berry Farm, retail fruit and vegetables; Owen's Orchids; Holly View Farm, boarding and training horses and agri-tourism; Ron Searcy farm, rent-a-goat; McCall's Produce, small farm that markets local vegetables; Holly Hill, a certified organic farm; George Lentz Farm, natural beef sales to the public; and the Allison-Deaver House, heritage vegetables by Master Gardeners.

Tour Two is a Self-Guided Tour. A brochure, giving directions, times and facts about each farm, will be available for pick up at the Museum Wednesday thru Friday the week before the tour. Please check the times available for each farm and plan your trip accordingly. \$10 a person, children 12 and under free with an adult. No pets, please.

Currently, farms open for the self-guided tour include: Cornercopia, a small farm with bees, goats & chickens; George Lentz Farm, natural beef sales to the public; Queen's Berry Farm, retail fruit and vegetables; Transylvania Tailgate Market; Our Farm at Richland Creek, a co-operative farm; Allison-Deaver House, heritage vegetables by Master Gardeners; and Headwaters Trout Farm. Other locations may be added before the tour.

Tickets for both tours are on sale now at the Museum. Residents as well as visitors are encouraged to support the Museum by becoming a member of the Transylvania Heritage Coalition, Inc., by visiting the facility, by partaking in the programs it offers and by shopping in the **Heritage Gifts** shop. Admission is free although donations are appreciated.

For membership information, upcoming events or to make donations, please call 884-2347, visit the web site at www.transylvaniaheritage.org, or drop by the Museum at 40 West Jordan Street in Brevard, Wednesday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.