



*Thought you
should know.....*

December 28, 2018

Friends of Advocates for Benzie County

The year is coming to an end, and it has been an exciting year for the accomplishments of Advocates for Benzie County. The first class for our **START (Skilled Trades Apprenticeship Readiness Training)** program was completed in August with seven graduates. You will read of our plans for 2019, which will include the building of a home in Thompsonville. Committees have been active in fund development and community relations. The Platte River Community Center is working with other community centers that are being considered for the county. We have created the web site, together with a Facebook page. Kay Bond, our volunteer Executive Director, has added talented volunteer staff members to the organization, and we will be benefiting from their services. We are grateful for your encouragement and support.

Board Meeting Report

In December two new members were elected to the Board of Directors. Brooke Haase, a well known realtor and native of Benzie County, and Keith Schaub, a resident of Lake Ann and President of the local PTA, are filling current vacancies. The Board has been overseeing the active work of our Task Groups, guided by the counsel of Kay Bond, our capable director. A Fund Development Committee has been established to develop needed strategies to support our many activities. For more details, plan to attend our Annual Meeting, which is being held at Grow Benzie on January 28 at 7:00 p.m. There will be an Annual Report together with discussion of the projects being planned for 2019. Three new board members will also be elected.

Affordable House to be Built by START



In planning for the next skilled training class for young people 18 years and older, there is being planned the building of an affordable house on property we have purchased in Thompsonville. This second class will be an intensive program in the basic building trades for a group of selected students. The program also includes training important for becoming employed: goal-setting, positive attitude, punctuality, teamwork and taking initiative.

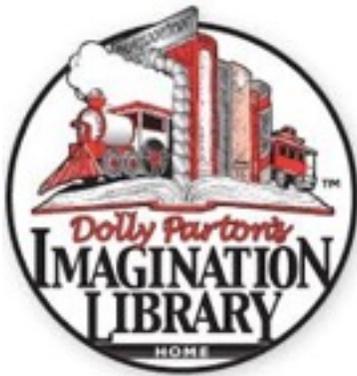
Upon completion of the 480 hour trading program, students can earn a nationally recognized apprenticeship readiness certificate, plus a stipend for successful completion. There will be the possibility of on the job training at a home site under construction in Benzie County. Local contractors also have expressed interest in possible hiring of the graduates. Applications will be accepted in early 2019.

Check out our Website and Facebook Page

Simply google www.advocatesforbenziecounty.org and you will find helpful pages of information about ABC. The members of the Board of Directors are listed with their photos and bios. A monthly calendar lists the variety of meetings that are being held, and some important details of those meetings. There is also a "Donate" page, which gives access to PayPal and credit card use in support of ABC. A link is also provided for our Facebook page, which will keep you up to date on our various projects. Volunteers Jennifer Adkins and Annie Browning are working together on these important communication features.

Community Center Roundtable

This fall, advocates invited representatives of the various "community center" planning teams to gather in a roundtable conversation. The purpose is the sharing of information and possible coordination of the plans which are being discussed. The roundtable includes representatives of the Betsy Valley Community Center, Frankfort Area Resource Center, Grow Benzie, an Aquatic Center, and the repurposing of the Platte River school building. The conversation has included representatives from Benzie Bus, Manistee County, Benzie Central schools, and other entities concerned with improving the quality of life in Benzie County.



Dolly Parton Library

The Education Task Force has been working on initiating the "Imagination Library," originally established by Dolly Parton. The program will provide free books for every child born in Benzie County from age 0-5. The Rotary Clubs and St. Andrews Presbyterian Church have provided the start-up funds.

Board President John E. Harnish says, "it's incredible what this all-volunteer group has accomplished in three short years. We invite all residents of Benzie County to the annual meeting on January 28, 7:00pm at Grow Benzie. Come for more information and to get involved in the work of 'building a better Benzie'."

The Record Patriot honored Kay Bond, our volunteer Executive Director, by choosing her to be one of two honorable mention honorees as Citizen of the Year. Her lifetime work in service to various communities and programs was described in the article. We value her contribution to our Advocate programs, and are grateful for this recognition of all the work she has done.

