



Photos by David Broyles | The Carroll News

Galax Mayor C.M. Mitchell (left) Rooftop Chairperson David Hutchins Carroll County Supervisor Dr. Tom Littrell and Grayson County Supervisor Brenda Sutherland stand with a proclamation recognizing the work done by the group. The organization's 50th anniversary was celebrated on May 14 at the Crossroads Institute.



Rooftop Executive Director Chris Thompson (left) presents staffer Bobbie Poe with an award marking her 39 years of continuous service with the organization. Deputy Director Celene Shumate was honored for 47 years and Brenda Amburn was honored for 36 years.

Rooftop of Virginia CAP group celebrates 50th anniversary

By David Broyles
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GALAX —Rooftop of Virginia CAP's 50th anniversary celebration Thursday at The Crossroads Institute was focused on the journey, not a milestone as participants looked to 50 more years of local service.

The mission of the group, which began as the Carroll, Grayson, Galax Economic Development Corporation, was to "ameliorate poverty in the midst of plenty by offering to everyone the opportunity for education and training, the opportunity to work and the opportunity to live in decency and dignity." The agency was formed as a result of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.

In 2014, the mission was changed to "educate and encourage individuals and families

by providing resources and opportunities in a supportive environment with the ultimate goal of empowering them to be self sufficient."

"It's a significant date for the organization," said Rooftop Chairperson David Hutchins. "This is in recognition of how all of you played a significant part in Rooftop and its service down through 50 years."

Carroll County Supervisor Dr. Tom Littrell, Galax Mayor C.M. Mitchell and Grayson County Supervisor Brenda Sutherland were on hand to be recognized for proclamations of support in recognition of Rooftop.

Director, Division of Community and Volunteer Services, Virginia Department of Social Services (DSS) Fran Inge spoke of the importance of Rooftop Virginia's work and the partnership with the

department.

"I want to say thank you so much to everyone here today and for the work you've done over the past 50 years. It's good work you're doing," said Inge to the packed room. "Our heart is with the work being done in local communities. It brings hope and a voice for people in poverty."

Virginia Housing Development Authority spokesperson Melissa Johnson told the group the authority was especially excited about the "long sustained and viable" work by the local group. She noted many changes the authority had gone through during the partnership with Rooftop and praised their flexibility and ability to "weather the changes."

"I appreciate your commitment and keep up the excellent work," said Johnson.

Rooftop Executive

Director Chris Johnson told participants the "War on Poverty" championed by President John F. Kennedy and furthered by Lyndon Johnson was still alive. She said it was an unconditional war underpinned by programs organized to foster maximum participation by target groups. Johnson participants actively help design and implement programs that define Rooftop's community action programs.

"We know we can't do this alone," said Johnson. "We have to have partnerships."

Rooftop Deputy Director Celene Shumate presented a history of Rooftop of Virginia. She was later honored for 47 years of service to the group. Veteran Rooftop staffers Bobbie Poe was honored for 39 years of continuous service and Brenda Amburn was honored for

36 years of service. Rooftop representative Jonathan Sweet presented Hutchins with a gavel honoring him for his leadership.

Rooftop client Becky Rogers talked about the importance of the group's weatherization program to her home.

"It really saved me. I could see my breath at night in my bedroom," said Rogers.

Family Service specialist Alice Robinson told about how she began as a mother participating in the Head Start program. The connections she formed with the group led to a volunteer post through Americorps and then part-time employee status in a variety of positions.

Robinson was eventually able to use work experience and earn a two-year and four-year degree into a position with the Carroll County Department of Social Services.

"I'm still continuing to help people," said Robinson. "I still enjoy serving people and anyone who says they need help with something."

Rooftop client Lisa Goins' story was played to participants. Goins, who began as a child in the local Head Start program, credited her teachers with bringing her out of her shell by making her feel welcome and safe. She later majored in theatre and went to New York City, where she works in a firm representing news anchors such as Jane Pauley and other famous persons.

"Head Start was the beginning of a very happy journey for me," said Goins. "I now have a career as a spokesperson for others. My best friend to this day is still a little girl I met at the center."

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