

Buy-A-Brick

BY CAROLYN R. WILSON | For the Washington County News | Posted: Saturday, November 7, 2015 12:00 pm

GLADE SPRING, Va.— Nancy Williams likes to look ahead. By next spring, the vice mayor of Glade Spring hopes she will be standing on a brick sidewalk in town that eventually will connect to the Virginia Salt Trail, an 8.5 mile trail that’s quickly becoming a favorite among locals.

The multi-use trail, established in 2008 as part of the Rails to Trails program, follows a former rail bed from Old Mill Road in Glade Spring to Allison Gap Road in Saltville.

It may not be the yellow-brick road, but for Williams and other town leaders, the sidewalk represents the beginning of their journey to complete a project that’s been in the works for several years.

To help cover the costs of building the sidewalk, the Town of Glade Spring, along with the Town Square Center for the Arts, has launched a buy-a-brick campaign that will not only help fund the project but also get the word out about their continued efforts to revitalize the town.

“This project will do a good job of alerting the Glade Spring community that progress is being made on the trail,” said Rachel Denham, chair of the board for the Town Square Center for the Arts.

The 300-foot sidewalk is just the beginning. Additional funding will be required to complete the stretch from Hemlock Street to Route 609 where the Salt Trail begins. For now, Williams and other leaders in town are excited the beginning stages have begun.

The sidewalk runs parallel to the railroad and stretches from the Glade Spring Senior Center to Hemlock Street, using about 500 old bricks recently unearthed in town by railroad employees. Another small patch of grass-covered bricks near the center are salvageable and will be used for the project. Williams said that will leave them with 400 to 500 new bricks to purchase to complete the



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This photograph from the 1950s shows the town square in Glade Spring and a brick sidewalk that ran parallel to the railroad tracks. Vice mayor Nancy Williams said they discovered some of the underground brick while recently demolishing a house on the corner of Hemlock Street. They plan to use the aged brick for the sidewalk trail to add character to the design.

distance to Hemlock Street.

Glade Spring maintenance employees, Warren Thomas and Wade Johnson have started building the sidewalk with the remnant bricks on the land, which right-of-way is owned by the town.

The vice mayor said members of the community have an opportunity to advance the project and at the same time make a mark on the town.

Anyone interested in the progress of the town is invited to purchase bricks for \$25 each. Artists at the Town Square Center for the Arts will personalize the bricks by embellishing them with standard designs chosen by the donor. “We’re still working on this process,” said Denham, who explained designs may include animals, mountains, and flowers common to the region. The personalized designs will be fired onto ceramic tile that will be securely attached to the top of each donated brick. Personalized attachments to the bricks will be fired at the Town Square Center for the Arts. The finished bricks will be randomly placed among the aged bricks.

Williams said this will give donors the opportunity to purchase bricks in memory or honor of friends and family. A sign at the head of the trail will list of the names of donors and people being recognized.

Donations will be received at the Glade Spring Town Hall or Town Square Center for the Arts. Checks must be made payable to Town Square Center for the Arts.

Williams explained the money needed to purchase new bricks for the sidewalk in town will come from grant money the town received about four years ago for the downtown revitalization project. “The sidewalk is going to be built no matter what,” she said, “but now the brick campaign will help us raise money to pay for expenses to personalize the bricks purchased by community members.”

Any leftover fundraising money from the project will be donated to the operation of the Town Square Center for the Arts. Sales of the bricks will continue throughout the winter.

Thomas and Johnson came up with the idea to start a buy-a-brick campaign after Williams noticed a pile of bricks railroad employees recently had dug from the ground. Williams staked a claim on the aged bricks which may be as old as 100 years and were probably used as a railroad loading dock.

“They were part of Glade Spring and I’m so glad we found them,” said Williams. “I think the old bricks have such character. When they finish the path into town, you’ll be able to stand here and see history stretched out before you.”

The area where an old house recently was demolished on the corner of Hemlock Street will eventually become a parking lot and behind it will be a small park with picnic tables. “That area will act as the trail head for the Salt Trail in Glade Spring,” explained Williams.

“We hope to use development money to help people establish businesses that are comparable to trail

activity, such as places to rent bicycles or horses to ride on the trail. That's the add-on benefit of getting the Salt Trail into Glade Spring. The mom-and-pop shops will be out-growths of the trails. Those entities are typically out-shoots of developments like the trail," she said.

Although the town received sizable grant money for preliminary work on the Salt Trail project nearly four years ago, much of the money has been used to hire professionals to plan and study the project, according to Williams.

"Our commitment for connecting to the Salt Trail is at \$80,000," said Williams. According to the vice mayor, the town has applied for additional funding to the Virginia Tobacco Commission, the Appalachian Regional Commission, and the Virginia Department of Transportation, which funded the town with start-up money.

According to the vice mayor, the town has hired the Lane Group, an engineering, architecture, and environmental consulting business to manage the Salt Trail project for Glade Spring.