

'Guardians of Our Troubled Waters' premieres



Mike Schoeffel

PREMIERE — "Guardians of Our Troubled Waters," a documentary by David Weintraub, made its world premiere at Blue Ridge Community College Thursday night. The film celebrates the visionaries, as well as the everyday people, who have helped protect waterways in Western North Carolina, Tennessee and Florida.

PBS-style documentary shines spotlight on conservation visionaries in WNC and beyond

BY MIKE SCHOEFFEL
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FLAT ROCK — During his upbringing in the urban sprawl of Brooklyn, David Weintraub developed a love of Jacques Cousteau's underwater photography. One of Weintraub's favorite quotes from Cousteau is "we only protect what we love."

With that in mind, the seasoned documentarian — who now lives in Western North Carolina — set out to make "Guardians of Our Troubled Waters," a deep-dive into the historic and contemporary problems encountered by waterways in Florida, Tennessee and North Carolina — including the nearby French Broad and Pigeon rivers.

Far from being a doom-and-gloom environmental film, however, Weintraub fashioned "Guardians" to focus on the positive strides made in conservation throughout the decades. He spotlights specific visionaries who were instrumental in spreading the gospel of environmentalism in the face of industrialism, not the least of whom are larger-than-life figures Wilma Dykeman and Marjory Stoneman Douglas.

The film made its world premiere at Blue Ridge Community College Thursday night in front of a near-sellout crowd at Thomas Auditorium. There were also showings on Saturday and Sunday nights, at the North Carolina Arboretum (Asheville) and White Horse (Black Mountain), respectively.

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it such a sad story that there wasn't any room for hope," said Weintraub, who spent approximately two years making the film. "There are a lot of examples of people working toward positive solutions — so many, in fact, that the film was seven hours long to begin with."

"But I had to cut it down to a reasonable length, so

people could go back home and have a life," he added.

The main thrust of "Guardians," which features cameo appearances by Haywood Waterways Executive Director Eric Romaniszyn and founding member Bill Eaker, is that the fate of the environment ultimately rests in the hands of everyday people. At the conclusion of the film, Weintraub emphasized that point with a clear metaphor:

"Through the years, the pendulum has swung toward stewardship, then away, then back again," he said. "And what I began to understand as I made this film is that you and I are the pendulum, not an outside force we have no control over. We can write letters to the editor. We can nudge our politicians...we can stand up for better environmental standards."

"We can be the pendulum that nature needs us to be," he added. "We can be the eyes and ears of our rivers and streams."

One of the most captivating scenes from the film features Canton's paper mill. During the 20th century — particularly in the 1980s — Champion, which owned the mill at the time, blatantly disregarded environmental standards (i.e. by releasing toxins, en masse, directly into the Pigeon River), causing the water to turn brown and reek of sewage.

The problem transcended aesthetics, however.

Within the mill's discharge was carcinogenic dioxin — an ingredient in Agent Orange — which killed fish, cows and even people. In Hartford, Tennessee (a river town located five miles across the North

Guardians continues on 3B

Hey, citizen: safely dispose of unwanted medications

Citizens can do their part to safely dispose of unused, unwanted or expired medications.

Instead of dumping them down the drain, take them to one of three Operation Medicine Drop box locations in Haywood County:

- **Canton Police Department** — 58 Park St.
- **Clyde Police Department** — 8437 Carolina Blvd.
- **Waynesville Police Department** — 9 S. Main St. (behind the station on Church Street)

The drop boxes are outside and look like a post office mailbox.

They can be accessed anonymously 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Those who can't drop off medications should mix — but not crush — medicines with an inedible substance like dirt, kitty litter or used coffee grounds. Then place the mixture in a sealed plastic bag and throw it in the household trash.

Prescription drug abuse has quickly evolved from a personal tragedy to a national epidemic, and lakes, streams and rivers aren't immune.

These are known as

pharmaceuticals and personal care products, or PPCPs. PPCPs have been linked to harmful effects in frogs and fish, including slow growth and being unable to reproduce. While their effects on humans are still being studied, they potentially can cause tumors, birth defects and other developmental disorders.

The danger of PPCPs, in particular prescription drugs, has become so great that North Carolina launched "Operation Medicine Drop"

Disposal continues on 3B



Donated

LUNCH ROCK — Blue Ridge Parkway's Hike of the Week is a three-mile trek to the Haw Creek "Lunch Rock" June 28.

Blue Ridge Parkway Hike of the Week: 'Simply Un-Bear-Able'

ASHEVILLE — Join Parkway rangers at 10 a.m. Friday, June 28, for a moderate, three-mile roundtrip hike to the Haw Creek "Lunch Rock."

One of the most asked about animals on the Blue Ridge Parkway is

the North American black bear. Do we have them? How have they adapted to people? Will they steal the candy bar out of my tent? Those who hike will find out the answers to these questions and more.

Meet one mile north

of the Folk Art Center at Milepost 381. Park on the dirt pull-offs on either side of the road (all four tires should be off of the pavement). Bring water, wear good walking shoes and be prepared for changeable weather.

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