

COMMUNITY FOCUS

by Bill Sherrod, Editor

HOLLAND RURITAN CELEBRATES 80

The Ruritan club in Holland, Va., will observe a landmark anniversary May 17, when it celebrates its 80th year during its annual Founder's Day celebration.

The club was begun May 21, 1928, and was the first Ruritan club in the United States. Today, there are more than 1,200 Ruritan clubs and more than 32,000 Ruritan club members.

The name "Ruritan" was proposed by Miss Daisy Nurney, a reporter for the Norfolk *Virginian Pilot* newspaper who attended one of the Holland club's first meetings. It was derived from a combination of Latin words to show the joining of rural and urban communities into one organization. Ironically, it would be over half a century before women were allowed to join the organization. Today the Holland club not only has female members, but a large number of youth members as well. Ruritan's motto is "Fellowship, Goodwill, and Community Service."

The Founder's Day celebration is scheduled to begin at 10 a.m. and continue throughout the day. A parade will start at 11 a.m. and wind its way through the village, and a barbecue cook-off competition among area Ruritan clubs is scheduled to be settled at noon. Tickets are available to sample the barbecue of each club and vote for the "People's Choice Award" for the best Ruritan cooks.

There will also be entertainment, food, arts and crafts, and other festival fare throughout the day. The celebration will culminate with a fireworks show after nightfall. All events are free and open to the public.

Ruritan National President Wayne Outlaw and Vice President Donald Worrell are slated to attend this year's Founders Day celebration, along with local, state, and national political figures.

A RICH HISTORY OF SERVICE

The Holland Ruritan Club has six individuals who have been members for over 50 years, with James E. Worrell actively serving a record 61 years. Besides Holland Ruritan Club's claim to fame as America's first Ruritan club, it is also the organization that started Community Electric Cooperative, one of Virginia's 13 consumer-owned electric co-ops.

Headquartered in Windsor, Community Electric Cooperative serves more than 10,000 accounts in four counties and the city of Suffolk. The Holland Ruritan Club started the co-op as a community service project, according to the co-op's president, Jim Reynolds.

The first beneficiary of Community Electric Cooperative's service was Holy Neck Christian Church, with the lines completed just in time for the church's annual revival services.

James E. Worrell and Marvin Reid, both members of the Holland club, worked for 30 cents per hour to clear the trees from the right of way for the first electric lines into the community.

Many Ruritan members have served on the board of Community Electric Cooperative through the years.

Holland is located in Southeastern Virginia, along Route 58, in the rural area of the city of Suffolk. For further information on the Founder's Day Celebration, visit www.hollandruritanclub.org. ■

Ruritan information provided by Holland club spokesman Joe Simmons.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOE SIMMONS

