

# *The Mountain Gem*

**January 2024**



**Franklin Gem and Mineral Society, inc.**  
**Franklin, North Carolina**



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*Photo of Reynisfjara beach basalt columns in Iceland, courtesy Mary Beth Stager*



## From the President



Greetings members,

As we bid farewell to the old and embrace the new year, I want to extend my warmest wishes for a Happy New Year filled with joy, prosperity, and many moments of shared happiness.

May this new year bring you success in all your endeavors! Let's look forward to another year of collaboration, growth, and creating new programs in our gem and mineral society.

The January meeting will focus on field trip planning. If you have a favorite place you would like to share with the club or a new place where you would like to go collecting, January's meeting will be the time to get it on our calendar. The Dixie Mineral Council (DMC) will also have monthly field trips that we can attend and in August we will serve as hosts for the DMC monthly field trip.

Our May Gemboree Gem Show is scheduled for the 17<sup>th</sup> — 19<sup>th</sup> of May 2024. Planning has been ongoing since December and looks to be an exciting show. We reserved the entire Carpenter Center and have numerous activities planned throughout the weekend. We will be running the show without the Chamber so, we will need the full support of the membership. Signup sheets will be available at the meetings, in the Museum, and online. The link to register online is below. There is a place for all to volunteer and will need your help. We will be celebrating our "50 anniversary" during the May Gem Show and we will also have a celebration during the May general club meeting at the church for club members.

May will be a busy month as we will also begin summer hours at the Museum. The past couple of years have seen a reduction in the number of days open each week so I would like to see us expand our days of operation from Saturday to at least Tuesday or Wednesday through Saturday. To do this we need more members to volunteer. Don't be surprised if you receive a call asking for a time when you could volunteer as a museum host.

In no time, Summer and Fall will be upon us with more gem shows, Streets of Franklin events, Museum events, and more. So, 2024 is looking to be an active and memorable year for everyone.

I want to thank you for being an integral part of the FGMS and I especially want to thank all the volunteers for all their time and hard work that benefit our club. Here's to a year ahead filled with positivity, good health, and endless possibilities!

Let's have a Spectacular 2024!

Warm regards,  
Varshana Dholakia - FGMS, President

Link for Gemboree signup  
<https://signup.com/client/invitation2/secure/51728164083/false#/invitation>



## General Meeting Minutes

Franklin Gem and Mineral Society

[www.fgms.org](http://www.fgms.org)

December 16, 2023

- 1. Call to Order** – President Varshana Dholakia called the meeting to order at 11:16 a.m. 44 people in attendance.
- 2. Motion to Accept Nov. Minutes** – Charlotte Ellert made motion; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Al Pribble. Motion passed.
- 3. Budget Presentation** – Stacy Walbridge presented and explained 2024 budget and all items/categories. Motion to accept presented budget by Al Pribble, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Earl McGaughey. Motion passed. Income significantly reduced due to reduced hours of open museum and gift shop. Now more expenses than monthly income
- 4. Treasurer Report** – Kathi Walbridge presented- expenses now greater than income b/c of fewer hours open museum and gift shop. \$1745 check from Chamber of Commerce for Oct. Gem Show presented to FGMS, Kathi to deposit.
- 5. Museum Manager** – Larry Ellert reported guys coming to repair toilet and floor of downstairs bathroom.
- 6. Newsletter** – Mary Beth Stager absent.
- 7. Secretary report** – Susan Ray reported all reports and minutes up to date after changes mid-year of secretary.
- 8. Publicity** – 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration will be combined into the May Gem Show. Presentation in Smaller room of Carpenter Center, rental of Center paid for from Grant written by Kim Price.
- 9. Gift Shop**- Vicki Knisley will take over Gift Shop responsibilities while Anamay is in Florida for the winter months.
- 10. Scholarships**- Al Pribble noted that three \$1000 scholarships are available to college level students. One was applied for and board will grant it. Remaining 2 will be advertised at local colleges.
- 11. Old Business**- None reported
- 12. New Business** – An appeal for more museum/gift shop volunteers with accompanying explanatory numbers by Susan Ray. Gem Show info and needed volunteers announced by Varshana.
- 13. Adjournment**- Meeting was adjourned at 11:48 a.m. by President Varshana Dholakia after motion to adjourn by Jennie Mooney, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Earl McGaughey.

Varshana Dholakia

Dec 18, 2023

Varshana Dholakia, FGMS President

Date

Susan Ray

Dec 18, 2023

Susan Ray, FGMS Secretary

Date

*Please Note: Franklin Gem and Mineral Society December General Meeting Minutes were in the December issue of the Gem. They are being reprinted for your approval.*



## Education

### Mineral and Gem Program for Kids to Start in February

*Susan Ray*



The Franklin Gem and Mineral Society will kick-off the Education Outreach Program for junior geologists (Rockhounds) in February. Dr. Susan Ray, the Society's vice president and Education Chair, and Society president and certified gemologist Varshana Dholakia will host the first meeting for kids, ages 7-15, at 3:30 on Wednesday, February 21st in the Macon County Library. The program will be conducted once monthly, including Monday, March 18<sup>th</sup>, Monday, April 15<sup>th</sup>, followed by a field trip in May.

Each session will run 1.0 to 1.5 hours and include hands-on activities to help kids and their parents learn about gems and minerals in this area- "the gem capital of the world". The program will also inform participants about best locations for gemming, what equipment to use and how, safety practices, and starting a rock collection. The Society will alert families of the upcoming ROCKHOUND sessions through our social media sites, the local library, and the local elementary and middle schools. Inquiries about the Rockhounds should be directed to Susan at [drsusanray@gmail.com](mailto:drsusanray@gmail.com).

This is the first phase of the FGMS plan to increase educational opportunities in this gem capital. Longer range plans include more FGMS involvement with schools and universities.



### Classes Cancelled

All of John Hayes' classes have been cancelled due to a family illness. Let's keep the family in our thoughts and prayers.



## Museum News / Gift Shop News

Winter Museum Hours of Operation - November - April Saturdays 12-4 and by appointment.

Until May 1st the gift shop will be run by Vicki Knisley if you have any questions or concerns, please let her know. Vicki Knisley 828-371-4954 or [dinkymanor@yahoo.com](mailto:dinkymanor@yahoo.com)

Mark your calendar to host at the Gem Museum and gift shop. It is a great time to learn more about our collections and fellowship with other members.

### ***Museum Inventory on Schedule to be Completed by Mid-February***



*Tamara Zwinak, Susan Ray, & Karl Williams doing inventory at museum. Great job guys!!*

Karl Williams, Tamara Zwinak and Susan Ray are taking advantage of the museum's winter hours (open Saturdays only) to complete the 2024 inventory of all 5,000+ items in the museum. The threesome meet once weekly to closely check all the displayed items and stored items against the 2022 inventory. Tamara summed up the work so far: "the database created by Bushy and Mike Hartman is proving to be 99.9% correct. The few items marked missing are now being found in a different cabinet or display."

The museum has eight rooms of gems, minerals, and artifacts in addition to 2 vaults that house stored items. "We have inventoried all the rooms and the 2 vaults. Now, we're double-checking any mis-labeled items, of which there are very few." Karl Williams explained.

The Society inventories the museum every 1-2 years, updating as necessary. Each item is labeled by inventory control number, name, description, museum room, case and shelf number location, when donated or ascended and by whom, and when last inventoried. The threesome has devoted a combined total of 50 hours to complete this task.



## Demolition Work for Downstairs Toilet



A huge Thanks to Larry Ellert, Rodney Gray , Bill Schultze, & Earl McGaughey, with the bathroom demolition. We appreciate all their help on the demolition of the Museum's bathroom. They did a great job.

## William Holland School of Lapidary Arts

### William Holland Still Accepting Applications



The William Holland School of Lapidary Arts is continuing enrollment in spring, summer and fall classes. The school is located south of Hayesville, and accommodates campers, tents, has dormitories, or allows day students who commute back and forth to the week-long classes.

This unique school offers a huge variety of classes, some of which are cabochons, faceting, intarsia, silversmithing, jewelry making, and many more. Each class is explained and the dates of offerings at the Wm. Holland website: SFMS Workshops-William Holland Classes. Each class does have a fee and registration requires a deposit.

If you are interested in any of the lapidary arts, this school is one-of-a-kind with nationally recognized instructors. Their website allows you to research classes, fees, lodging, and more without committing to a class. Many of our Society members have attended classes at William Holland. Ask around at a meeting and someone will be able to tell you firsthand about their experiences at William Holland.

William Holland is located at 230 E Lapidary Lane, Young Harris, GA 30582

<https://lapidaryschoolregistration.org/> Phone: (706) 379 – 2126 Email: [info@lapidaryschool.org](mailto:info@lapidaryschool.org)

### Southeast Federation of Mineralogical Societies William Holland Workshop

We have had quite a few people who have already registered for our classes at the SFMS William Holland Workshop Week of 6/2/24 through 6/8/24. Attached as a separate file is a summary of the classes with costs and descriptions. Use it to pick out your class and share it with everyone in your club. Go to <https://www.sfmsworkshops.org> to register. Let's pack the place for a week of learning, sharing and having fun!

Rick Marshall  
SFMS William Holland Director  
407-949-1416



## Upcoming DMC Field Trips 2024



### DMC Field Trip Sharing Program

The Southeast Federation of Mineralogical Societies, Inc



The Friendly Federation - Founded in 1976 to serve

[www.southeastfed.org](http://www.southeastfed.org)

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An Official Field Trip of the Athens Rock and Gem Club (Athens, GA)

An Official Field Trip of Franklin Gem and Mineral Society

**Saturday, February 24, 2024**

**9:00 a.m. Eastern Time**

**Girard, GA**

**No Limit**

**Registration Required (link is below)**

**COLLECTING:** Savannah River Agate.

**BRING:** Colorful, agatized material can be found on the surface at the site, but many people usually bring light digging tools and small pry bars to free larger boulders from the sandy soil. Leather gloves are recommended.

**Bring** plenty of water and dress for the weather.

**TERRAIN:** Large flat area with parking close by. Material is readily available.

**RESTRICTIONS:** Collecting is allowed only in the right of way areas of the road. **NO** collecting in the woods or adjoining private property. **NO** digging allowed in the road. **DO NOT BLOCK THE ROAD.**

**FEE:** There is no fee.

**CHILDREN:** This field trip is suitable for most children but collecting is on a road so **children are required to have adult supervision at all times.**

**PETS:** Dogs are allowed but must be kept on a leash at all times.

**FACILITIES:** There are no facilities at this site and the nearest facilities are several miles away.

**REGISTRATION:** Click [here](#) to fill out a registration form. If you register and are unable to attend the trip, **please be considerate** to your fellow rockhounds and let us know as soon as possible so someone on a potential waiting list can take your slot(s).

**DIRECTIONS AND WHERE TO MEET:** Registered participants will be sent a confirmation email with directions and meeting place details.

**CARPOOLING:** The registration form has a place for you to indicate if you **need** a ride; if you can **offer** a ride; or if you would like to **drive or share** a carpool ride. If you choose any of these options, your **name**, **email address**, and **club name** will be shared with other members who also choose one of the options. Then, you can communicate with one another to arrange carpools.

**CONTACT:** Trip chairman: Jim Maudsley 706-353-1792 or [48maudsley@gmail.com](mailto:48maudsley@gmail.com)

February - Athens Rock and Gem Club (Athens, GA)

March - Georgia Mineral Society (Norcross, GA)

April - Catawba Valley Gem and Mineral Club (Hickory, NC)

May - Northeast Georgia Mineral Society (Clarkesville, GA)

June - Huntsville Gem and Mineral Society (Huntsville, AL)



## 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

February is the Anniversary month for the society 52 years.

Kit Terry

50th Anniversary Celebration and Grant: We will be forming a new committee to organize the 50th Anniversary Celebration. We will be following the parameters set forth through the Grant. If you are interested in finding out more information and how you can help, please see me for an application.

### **Gem & Mineral Society 52 Years Remembered 1972-2024**

Ron Rossomando

In the early 70's, Franklin, in Macon County was considered "The Gem Capital of the World" but there was no physical organization that reflected that honor. On November 10, 1971, a group of Rockhounds got together and decided to organize a gem and mineral club in Franklin. They met in the basement meeting room of the old Macon Savings and Loan Building on West Main Street. Mr. Dick Chmelick was the driving force with the help from Chamber of Commerce Director, Mr. M.R. Doster.

The club met on a regular basis as an unincorporated organization. On January 31, 1972, an organization meeting was held, and a second meeting was held on February 3, 1972, with 21 charter members present. The group met again on February 23, 1972, at the East Franklin Elementary School and elected Dick Chmelick their first president.

On February 28, 1972, a Charter of Incorporation was issued. The official name of the club became THE GEM AND MINERAL SOCIETY OF FRANKLIN, NC INC. By the end of December 1972 there were 102 adult members and 15 minors. The financial report gave a cash balance of \$231.59.

Over the last 52 years, the problems facing the Society in the early years are the same we face today: The need for volunteers to fill the various positions. We should pride ourselves as members for sustaining this organization for 52 years. The dues of this Society give us the privilege of using the library and using the equipment in the workshops; of being a host for four hours per week at our museum or receiving one of the best Newsletters in the Federation; or sharing field trips and special events besides attending well planned monthly meetings for fellowship and information.

Much has been accomplished in the past 52 years; the establishment of the Gem & Mineral Museum, and its continuous operation where we are able to introduce our visitors to the joy of our hobby; the granting of contributions to charitable organizations; offering scholarships to students majoring in the earth sciences, and educational grants to qualified educators. We need to build on the legacy that the founders have given us with everyone working together, as we have done in the past, think of the wonderful things we can accomplish in the future.

Submitted February 2, 2024

By: Ron Rossomando, Historian

Reference Sources:

*February 23, 1972, Meeting Minutes*

*February 1989 Anniversary Note*

*February, 1999, Founders Day article by Winnie Dalen Ketcham*

*February 24, 2000, Shirley Baughman, Historian*

*Fred Plesner, 2020, Gem & Mineral Society, A Brief History*



## Gemboree

Our May Gemboree Show is May 17,18, &19, 2024. We will be Celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with some special events during the show. Please mark your calendar and sign up to volunteer. For more information contact Varshana Dholakia, 828-342-3135.

## Programs

We have openings in the upcoming year for programs. If you would like to do a short program or have an idea for one, please let Varshana know.

## Membership

A review of the membership roster identified several members that have not yet paid their dues for 2024. If this is you, please bring your payment to Thursday's meeting or mail a check to the museum 25 Phillips St, Franklin North Carolina 28734.

### HELP WANTED

There are many opportunities to volunteer this year. Look at this as a chance to make new friends and learn new stuff. Check the newsletter for just some of the options to participate in FGMS.

### SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

Throughout the year, club volunteers record their time spent volunteering in a logbook at the Museum. In December, the Vice President transfers those volunteer hours to raffle tickets, which are used to draw scholarships for a class at William Holland school of Lapidary Arts.



## Club Meetings & Events

Date	Event	Time	Program	Snacks
January 23, 2024	Board* Meeting	6:30		
January 25, 2024	General Meeting	6:30		Maggie & Bernd Phoenix
February 27, 2024	Board* Meeting	6:30		
February 29, 2024	General Meeting	6:30		Volunteer needed
March 25, 2024	Board* Meeting	6:30		
March 27 2024	General Meeting	6:30		Volunteer

\* Please Note: Board Meetings are held at the Museum. All members welcome

General Meetings First Christian Church of Franklin 156 Bellevue Park Road Franklin, NC	Board Meetings Franklin Gem & Mineral Museum 25 Phillips St Franklin, NC 28734
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Event	Date	Time	Location	Notes
Gemboree	May 17-19	10-6 Friday & Saturday 10-4 Sunday	Carpenter Center	Setup starts at noon on Thursday. For more information, contact Varshana. <a href="mailto:fgmspresident@gmail.com">fgmspresident@gmail.com</a> or <a href="mailto:Varshana.Dholakia@gmail.com">Varshana.Dholakia@gmail.com</a>
Junior Rockhounds	February 21 <sup>st</sup> March 18 <sup>th</sup> April 15 <sup>th</sup> May	3:30 pm TBD	Macon County Library TBD	For more information, contact Dr Susan Ray <a href="mailto:drsusanray@gmail.com">drsusanray@gmail.com</a> Field Trip

## From the Editor

My sincerest thanks to all contributors. It's so great to see the photos and learn about members. I'd love to have some photos for the cover too. And remember to caption everyone in the photo as well as credit the source.

Please submit all entries, comments and corrections to [fgmseditor@gmail.com](mailto:fgmseditor@gmail.com).

**Newsletter Deadline is February 22<sup>nd</sup>**



# The Mountain Gem

Franklin Gem & Mineral Society, Inc. Est. 1972

January 2024

## Officers, Board of Directors, and Committees

### Club Officers and Board of Directors

President: Varshana Dholakia, (828-342-3135)  
Past President: Stacy Walbridge, (802-598-9548)  
Vice President: Susan Ray, (727-798-7207)  
Secretary: Susan Ray, (727-798-7207)  
Treasurer: Kathi Walbridge, (802-598-7025)  
Assistant Treasurer: Charlotte Ellert, (727-455-1849)  
Museum Manager: Larry Ellert, (727-455-1849)  
Museum Manager Assistant: Donovan MacDonald (828-226-3131)  
Board of Directors  
Earl McCaughey  
Carl Seaman  
Kit Terry 423-367-6070  
Charlotte Ellert

### Committees

Museum Curator: Vacant  
Curator Emeritus: Fred Plesner, (828-349-4224)  
Museum Gift Shop: Anamay Rossomando (828-349-2807)  
Gift Shop Assistant: Vicki Knisley (828-371-4954)  
Museum Workshop: Vacant  
Membership: Charli & Rodney Gray (802-380-8024)  
Carl Williams  
Publicity & Program Coordinator: Kit Terry (423-367-6070)  
Field Trips: Vacant  
Refreshments: Charlene Galbrecht (954-263-8157)  
Constitution and By-Laws: Al Pribble (828-342-3119)  
Future Vision: Ron Rossomando (828-349-2807)  
Museum Calendar: Charlene Galbrecht (954-592-1377)  
Gemboree: Varshana Dholakia, (828-342-3135)  
Scholarships: Al Pribble (828-342-3119)  
Education/Tours: Susan Ray (727-798-7207)  
Asst Education/Historian: Ron Rossomando (828-349-2807)  
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