

# ***THE MOUNTAIN GEM***

**Gem & Mineral Society of Franklin, North Carolina**

ESTABLISHED 1972

**September 2023 Newsletter**



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Cover Photograph: Malawi Agate Nodule  
By Stacy Walbridge



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## From the President



Congratulations to the new officers; President Varshana Dholakia and Vice President Susan Ray and to the new Board members, Earl McGaughey and Carl Seaman. And a special thank you to Chandra Fox, Kathi Walbridge, and Charlotte Ellert for remaining in your positions.

As a volunteer organization, finding volunteers to help with all our activities can sometimes be frustrating, but one of the pleasant surprises occurs when out of the blue, a member says, "I'll help". Without you, the members, we wouldn't be able to have all the educational and fun activities that we do. Thank You.

Over the past year, I've enjoyed meeting our new members and continuing a relationship with our not so new members. It's all about rocks, minerals, fossils, but more importantly it's about relationships with people sharing a common interest.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you over the past year.

Stay safe and Best Wishes,

Stacy Walbridge

## General Meeting Minutes

**Chandra Fox, Secretary**

August 31, 2023  
Thursday 6:30pm  
First Christian Church  
Franklin, NC

The meeting was called to order at 6:01pm by Stacy Walbridge.

Minutes: Chandra Fox ( [fgmshows@gmail.com](mailto:fgmshows@gmail.com) ). Motion made, and minutes accepted as written.

Tonight, we will vary from our traditional meeting platform to allow time for candidates for President and Vice President to address members. The Candidate Forum that will speak tonight consists of:

Varshana Dholakia	
Kim Price	President
Pam Martin	
Susan Ray	Vice President





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Stacy Walbridge reminded everyone of the duties and requirements of the President; that they must be familiar with the by-laws and constitution, preside at all meetings, appoint committee chairman(s), oversee a financial audit, and taking over various miscellaneous details.

The duties and requirements of the Vice President are nominal, where a Vice President really becomes critical if something happens to the President. The President may also ask the Vice President to perform additional administrative duties. In December, all volunteer hours are tallied by the Vice President for a raffle to William Holland. Voting will be at the end of the general meeting. The September General Meeting will be the Installation Dinner for new officers.

**Treasury:** Kathi Walbridge. ([FGMM.Treasurer@mail.com](mailto:FGMM.Treasurer@mail.com)) / Charlotte Ellert. Rpt. Income exceeded expenses. Museum giftshop sales are going strong, especially credit card sales. Thank you to all the hosts and giftshop volunteers! There were a couple of days where the museum was closed due to not enough hosts. One of these days was August 26, the same day as the Cowee Folk Festival (which was successful.) We received a letter from the North Carolina that three tax periods were overlooked in 2019. I have been keeping records since 2020 as Treasurer. I will investigate what happened in 2019.

**Gem Show:** Chandra Fox. ([FGMShows@gmail.com](mailto:FGMShows@gmail.com)) Rpt. The July Gem Show went well. The house was nearly packed once again. Several comments were received from vendors and customers on the variety. The show offered rough specimen to fine jewelry. Thank you to all who helped with the Gem Show setup, teardown, club table hosting and demonstrations. We have one more Gem Show this year coming up October 20-22<sup>nd</sup>. Signup sheets for October show volunteers will be available at our September meeting and at the museum. They will be in the meeting room.

**Vice President:** Larry Ellert. ([clellert@yahoo.com](mailto:clellert@yahoo.com)). No report.

**Museum Manager:** Larry Ellert. ([clellert@yahoo.com](mailto:clellert@yahoo.com)). Donavon McDonald (). Air Conditioning Unit is having trouble. Contacted Heat and Air Service for maintenance on units. Larry provided an interview about the museum to "Our State" Magazine. They were most interested in our 2 ½ pound ruby on display. We are continuing to answer questions as they develop their story about the Franklin Gem and Mineral Museum and the local and unique specimens we have. The story may come out in the November issue. Downstairs bathroom floor will probably need to be removed when the museum is not open to the public, expect \$3,000 to \$4,000 to fix. A member, Tommy Van Hook, owner of Van Hook Flooring offered free labor. Pam Martin, another member offered free flooring materials. Great movement from club members!!

**Show & Tell:** John Hayes announced he will be starting a "Freebie Table" to get rid of stuff no longer wanted. We also have a "Show -n- Tell" Table for a recently finished faceting class. John Hayes presented recent graduates, Larry Ellert and Chandra Fox with a "Certificate of Completion". Tonight's main door prize is a 16ct. faceted dichroic cube with setting and chain faceted by Larry and Chandra. Melody Wicht was the lucky winner tonight. She is a new member and was very happy.

**Workshop:** We have been really working hard in the workshop. John Hayes and Chandra Fox have continued with multiple Cabbing and Corundum classes.



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**Gift Shop:** Anamay Rossomando. ([anamay@verizon.net](mailto:anamay@verizon.net)). Rpt. Thanks to the volunteers who helped at the Cowee Festival, Saturday August 19. Karl Williams provided spear points, Larry Ellert cut geodes and Barbara Rizzo hosted our tables. Next Saturday we have the Phillips Street Market from 4-8pm and would like to have the museum open. If you are available to host, please contact Anamay. Reminder: Ron Rossomando is offering training for new hosts starting in October. Our goal is to have the museum open 6 days a week, Mon-Sat. Signup for training at the museum and get started hosting!! Starting in October we will reduce our hours back for the winter to Saturday only. (Editor's correction: November is when we will transition to winter hours.)

**Newsletter Editor:** Deadline for submissions to the newsletter: September 19, 2023 Send pictures to be included in future editions of the newsletter to: [fgmseditor@gmail.com](mailto:fgmseditor@gmail.com)

**Museum Host Scheduling:** Charlene Galbraith. Filling the positions of museum hosting for Wednesday through Saturday in September. If we can fill all positions, we would like to expand the hours open to Monday and Tuesday as well. In November, the museum will be returning to winter hours. Saturday only.

**Publicity:** Kim Price ( [kprice@safetworksinc.com](mailto:kprice@safetworksinc.com) ) Rt. Gordon Mercer from "Citizens Making a Difference" would like to schedule an interview at the museum again the fall. I've left him a message to discuss what he is interested in talking about this time. Thanks to Larry Ellert for handling the representative from "Our State Magazine".

**Scholarships:** Al Pribble. ([alton36@gmail.com](mailto:alton36@gmail.com)) Two local teachers have expressed interest in our education scholarship. More as information will be provided as it becomes available.

**Future Vision:** Ron Rossomando. Kim Price. ([kprice@safetworksinc.com](mailto:kprice@safetworksinc.com)). Rt. Our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration will be coming up in 2024. We received the \$2500 grant earmarked to promote, educate, and celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Franklin Gem and Mineral Museum as well as the gem history of Franklin NC. A signup sheet is available for volunteers for the Pre-50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary committee. Still working with Commissioners to find a larger, suitable future location.

**50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Committee.** Reported by Kim Price. The committee met on Friday, August 5<sup>th</sup> at the museum. Leonard and Roberta Pipitone, Ilah Williams, and Kim Price were in attendance. Several ideas were discussed in preparation for the Museum's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration on May 25, 2024. The committee is developing ideas for a Halloween event this year with miner costumes, jailhouse costumes and 1970's period costumes. A Scavenger Hunt, adult, and child. Banners for the Museum. The next meeting will be Friday, September 1<sup>st</sup> at 5pm at the museum.

**Membership:** Roberta Pipitone, Leonard Pipitone. ([RLPipitone@earthlink.net](mailto:RLPipitone@earthlink.net) ). NRt.

**Education:** Marsha Harmon. ([monaleaf28734@gmail.com](mailto:monaleaf28734@gmail.com)). Rt. The Macon County Fair is coming up the third week of September. Theme: "We Have a Good Thing Growing". Our static display will be an illustrated tree with branches showing what our club does. In November, Cowee Heritage Days will be coming up.



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**Field Trips:** Helen Rogers ([helen.rogers.clay@gmail.com](mailto:helen.rogers.clay@gmail.com)). No Rpt. The Dixie Mineral Counsel trip hosted by our club to Chunky Gal Mountain, Franklin, N.C. was a success. Our club set up four manned, tabled locations at the site the morning of August 26. Drinks, snacks, maps and smiling faces were offered to visiting

rockhounds from clubs across Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, and South Carolina. One hundred and two people digitally signed up for the fieldtrip. Forty-two people registered on site the morning of the dig. We received several "Thanks" from other clubs for hosting. Overall, lots of great specimens were discovered and a good time was had. A BIG THANKS to all our GREAT CLUB VOLUNTEERS!!!! YOU ROCK !!!!!

**Programs:** Kim Price ([kprice@safeteworksinc.com](mailto:kprice@safeteworksinc.com)). No Program.

**Constitution / By-Laws Committee:** Al Pribble ( [alton36@gmail.com](mailto:alton36@gmail.com)), Larry Ellert ( [clellert@yahoo.com](mailto:clellert@yahoo.com)). Rpt. Awaiting the return of Larry McClary to continue review, revamp and renovation of by-laws.

**Old Business:** No Report.

## New Business:

Election Results: President: Varshana Dholakia  
Vice President: Susan Ray  
Secretary: Chandra Fox  
Treasurer: Kathi Walbridge  
Assistant Treasurer: Charlotte Ellert  
Board of Directors: Earl McCaughey  
Board of Directors: Carl Seaman

Meeting adjourned at 8:10p.m.

## Museum News: Update From the Museum Host Telephone Callers

By Charlene Galbrecht



I guess by now you know that online Host Signup registration is no longer active. Now, you can either go into the museum to sign on the Hosting sheet or you can call the Museum phone (828-369-7831) during the hours from 12:30 to 3:30 and ask the person on call to sign up for the day/days of your choice. There are at least forty healthy-able bodied people -local persons in our club and there are only 20-25 days left that need hosting. Agreed, we need two hosts each day, but there are some dedicated persons who volunteer four or five times a month. May God reward them.

I have now been able to recruit two more persons who are willing to make calls on those days that do not have two volunteers. I, Charlene Galbrecht, will make calls for September, October, November and December; Tamara Zwinak will call persons for the months of January, February, March, and April; Doreen Freeman will call for the months of May, June, July, and August. If there is anyone else that



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would like to make calls, we can have four callers making calls for three months or five callers making calls for 21/2 months etc. Just call me and I will be glad to add you to our list (954-263-8157).

There are some items I think we need to attend to:

I would like create a list of days that each healthy-able bodied -local person would like to Host and then we, the callers would only call you on your chosen days i.e., some persons work and are only available on the weekend. Some persons come from out of town and can only work certain months. I would also think it would be beneficial to know if you prefer to work the cash register or meet and greet the visitors or both, do you have a key to enter the museum, or do you need the door opened and closed for you, can you lift the welcome sign and carry it to Main Street, and can you climb the stairs.

For instance, I am healthy-able-bodied-local (most of the time), but I am not strong, and I have a bum knee, so I have to work with someone to carry the sign and climb the stairs. Thankfully, my husband Gary is willing to work with me. I also need to know that you have been trained. Ron Rossomando is available to train persons every Monday during the months he is local, but you have to register for the training, so he knows if he has any students. Sign up on the hosting sheet on a Monday. I think the caller position should be time limited to a two-year term, just as the other working positions are, but a caller can choose to extend the time if desired. I also think that the beginning dates should be staggered so that there are some neophyte callers and some experienced ones. Lastly, as a courtesy, if we do call you and you can or cannot come at the time we need you, please call or text us back with a response. Thank you for your time and your help.

## Lapidary Arts Instruction

Photograph by Susan Ray



**Class instructor John Hayes goes over the finer of points of "cabbing" corundum with Class**





## New Committee Chair

By Marsha Harmon

I would like to welcome Susan Ray as our new Education/Tours Coordinator. She was hand-picked by me several months ago as my replacement. Her background in Education and her "All In" attitude was an amazing thing to witness and I am sure she will enhance this program to an even higher standard.

**Welcome aboard Susan!**

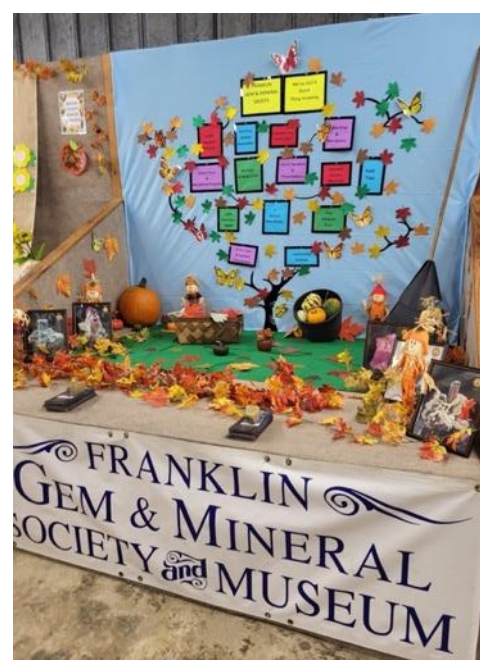
## Education/Tours

By Susan Ray

The FGMS Education Program has been very active in the community. We have our first school group tour of the museum scheduled for October 10<sup>th</sup>. An ESL class from Mountain View School will be hosted by society members and museum guides Karl Williams, Ron Rossomando, Marsha Harmon, and Susan Ray. Several school groups will tour the museum throughout the school year.

Meanwhile, the Society Education Program entered a booth in the Macon County Fair which runs from Wednesday, Sept 20<sup>th</sup> through Saturday, Sept 23<sup>rd</sup>. The booth follows the theme of the fair: "We've Got A Good Thing Growing. Our display is a tree with branches filled with our various services and activities. The booth is located in the Education Building of the Fair Grounds.

It is with sincere gratitude that FGMS thanks Marsha Harmon for her years of service as the Education Chair and Tour Chair, among her various roles in the Society. She has opted to step back from leadership positions while volunteering in other ways for the Society. Susan Ray is the new Education Chair and Tour Chair and looks forward to working with volunteers anxious to help with tours, and all aspects of Society education.



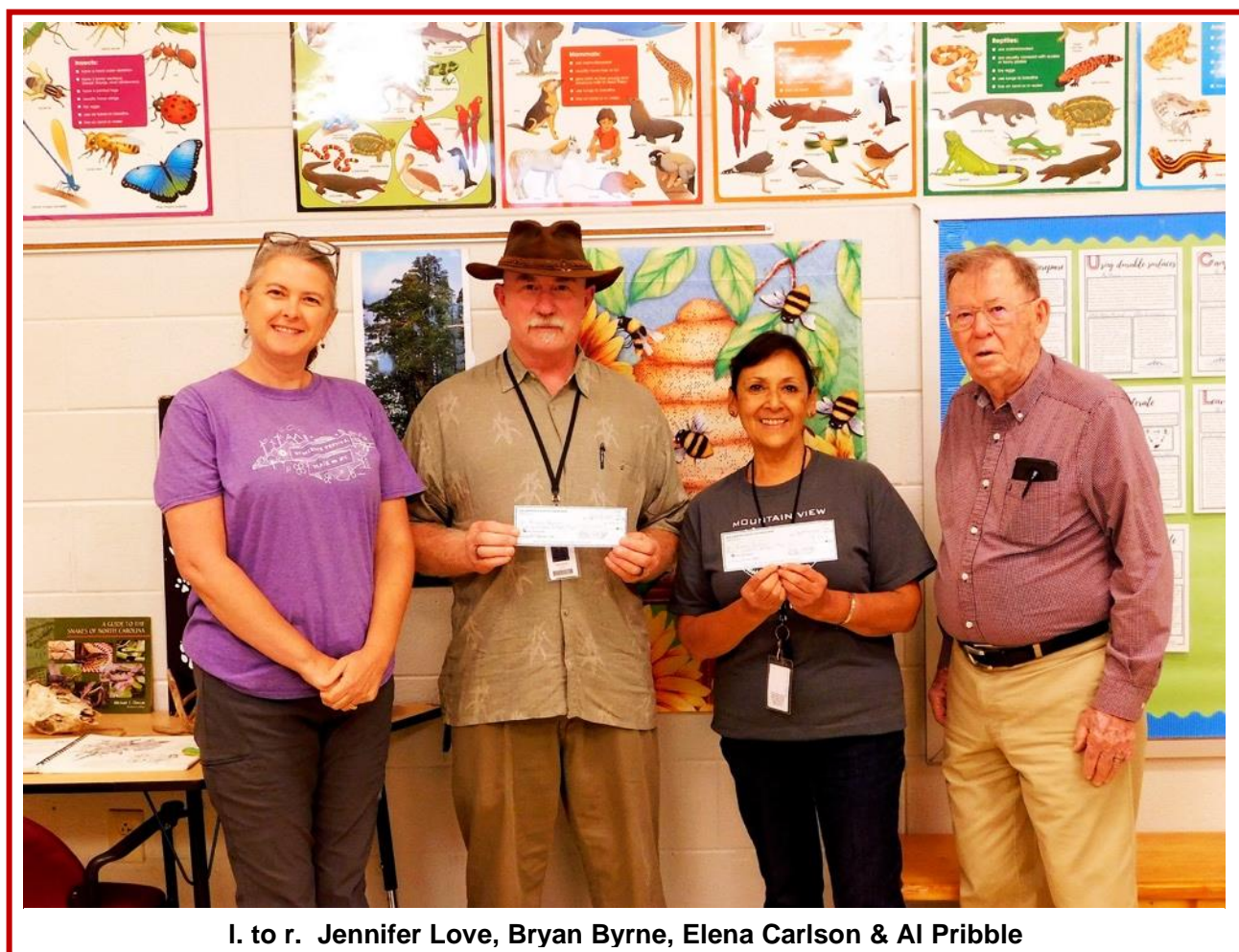
**Our Booth at the Fairgrounds**



## Mini-Grants Awarded

By Al Pribble

On Friday, September 15<sup>th</sup>, Al Pribble and Stacy Walbridge visited the Mountain View intermediate School to award two \$300 mini-grants to teachers Bryan Byrne and Elena Carlson. Through STEM coordinator, Jennifer Love, Ms. Carlson requested \$300 to cover transportation and supplemental Earth Sciences materials for their visit to our Museum on October 10<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Byrne requested \$300 to purchase mineral identification kits for use in his classroom.



l. to r. Jennifer Love, Bryan Byrne, Elena Carlson & Al Pribble





## A Fantastic Mineral Collection in Vienna, Austria

By Stephanie Brundage



Emperor Franz Stephan (1708-1765) of the Holy Roman Empire was a patron of the sciences. In his short life he acquired an extensive gem and mineral collection and established a botanical garden, a zoological park and a medical school. He sent explorers across the world, and especially to the Americas, to acquire specimens of minerals as well as plants and animals. After his death his wife, Empress Maria Theresa (1717-1780), made his collection the property of the State, opened it to the public, and hired a famous mineralogist, Ignaz von Born, to organize and expand the collection. Subsequent rulers continued to expand the collection throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The current Vienna Museum of Natural History was built in 1871-1889 of a size to display over 100,000 specimens. On the first floor, four exhibit rooms are reserved for gems and minerals and a fifth room for meteorites. The rest of the first floor houses an extensive fossil collection, prehistoric sculptures and artifacts, and exhibits documenting human evolution. The second floor contains a large collection of preserved animal specimens, from microscopic creatures through molluscs



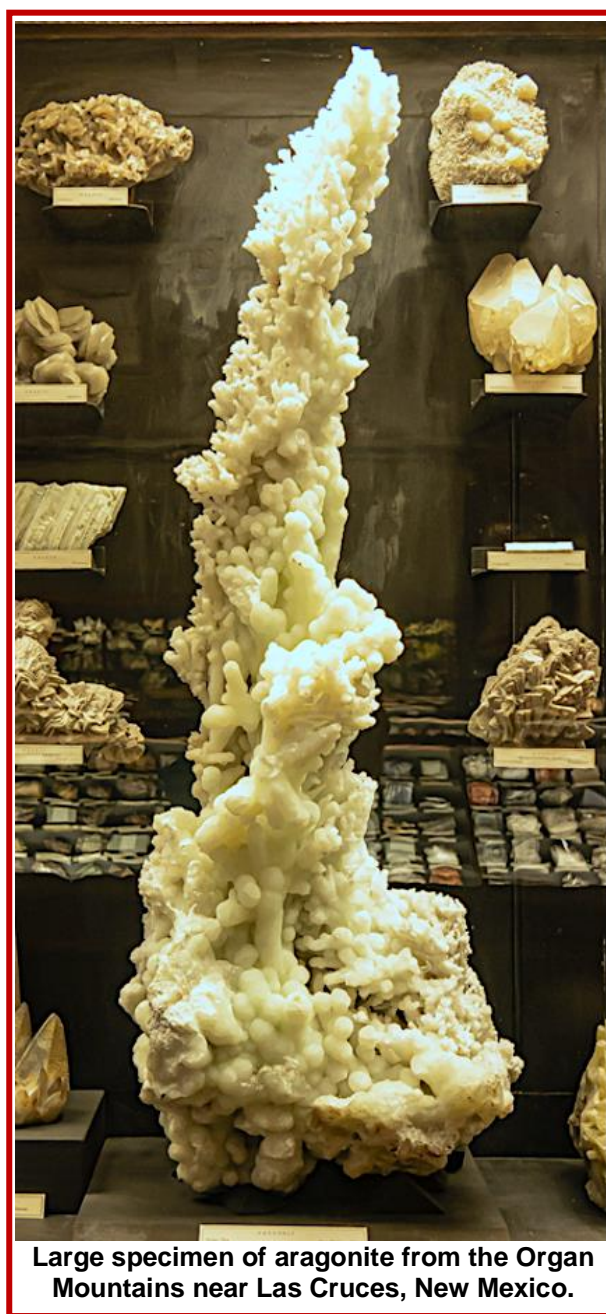
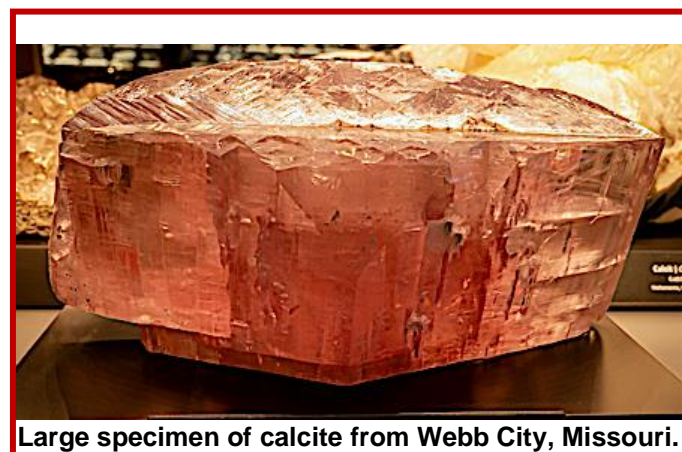
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(mollusks), insects, fish, amphibians, birds, and mammals. Less than 1% of the total museum collection is on display; the balance is available to scientists and guest researchers

The fifth exhibit room is devoted to meteorites, with about 1000 on display, most very small specimens







## In Memoriam

### James “Jerry” Mason (1935 – 2023)

Long time society member and a great lapidary arts instructor, James Jerry Mason, passed away on Friday, September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023. Jerry and his wife, Diane, were very active in the club for several years. Jerry taught cabochons for 17 years at William Holland School of Lapidary Arts and in our workshop at the museum. Jerry and his wife, Diane, operated Jim and Dees Rockshop in Young Harris, GA.

Surviving Jerry are his loving wife and best friend of fifty-two years, Diane Rivers Mason of Young Harris, GA., two sons, Marty Mason of Hayesville, NC., Mikell Mason of Ruby, SC., one brother, Howard Mason of Charleston, SC., three grandchildren, Mary Elizabeth, Logan Mikell and Skylar Elena Mason, many other relatives and friends also survive.



A Celebration of Life service will be held in the Fall and will be announced in the near future. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations may be made to the Jerry Mason Scholarship Fund at the William Holland School of Lapidary Arts or Harvest Fellowship Church of Young Harris in Jerry Mason’s memory.





## Upcoming Shows

### Huntsville Gem, Jewelry, and Mineral Show

Start Date: 10/13/2023

End Date: 10/15/2023

Hours: Fri/Sat 10:00-6:00 Sun 10:00-5:00

Address:

Jaycee Community Bldg

2180 Airport Road SW

Huntsville, AL

Website: <https://huntsvillegms.org/gem-jewelry-mineral-show/>



### Leaf Lookers Gemboree

Start Date: 10/20/2023

End Date: 10/22/2023

Hours: Fri/Sat 10:00-6:00 Sun 10:00-4:00

Address:

Macon County Community Bldg

128 Georgia Rd.

Franklin, NC 28734

Website: <https://franklin-chamber.com/>



### KGMS Gem, Mineral & Jewelry Show

Start Date: 10/20/2023

End Date: 10/22/2023

Hours: Fri/Sat 10:00-6:00 Sun 10:00-5:00

Address:

Rothchild Conference Center

8807 Kingston Pike.

Knoxville, TN 37923

Website: [https://franklin-chamber.com](https://franklin-chamber.com/)

### G&LW Wholesale Show

Start Date: 10/31/2023

End Date: 11/1/2023

Hours: Tues 10:00-6:00 Weds 10:00-3:00

Address:

765 Boylston Highway

WNC Agricultural Center

Asheville, NC

Website: <https://www.glwshows.com/>



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## Club Meetings

Date	Event	Time	Program	Snacks
September 28, 2023	General Meeting	6:30 PM	Installation of Officers & Dinner	Club Provided
October 24, 2023	Board* Meeting	6:30	All Members are Welcome	
October 26, 2023	General Meeting	6:30	The Ancient Mystery of Jade Karen Warseck	Theresa & Lake Holland
<b>Please Note:</b> Board Meetings are held at the Museum				
General Meetings First Christian Church of Franklin 156 Belleview Park Road Franklin, NC			Board Meetings Franklin Gem & Mineral Museum 25 Phillips St Franklin, NC 28734	

## From the Editor

**Newsletter Deadline is October 16<sup>th</sup>**



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## Officers, Board of Directors and Committees

### Club Officers and Board of Directors

President: Stacy Walbridge, (802-598-9548)  
Past President: Mark Laing, (864-910-1580)  
Vice President: Larry Ellert, (727-455-1849)  
Secretary: Chandra Fox (706-982-0402)  
Treasurer: Kathi Walbridge, (802-598-7025)  
Assistant Treasurer: Charlotte Ellert, (727-455-1849)  
Museum Manager: Larry Ellert, (727-455-1849)  
Asst Museum Manager: Donovan MacDonald (828-226-3131)  
Director (2023): Matt Castor, (828-421-8701)  
Director (2023): Marsha Harmon, (828 369-7262)  
Director (2022): Charlotte Ellert, (828-200-6023)  
Director (2023): Brad Fleszar (828-371-1211)

**The Club is a member of the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies and the Southeast Federation of the Mineralogical Societies.**

### 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: Matt Castor, (828-421-8701)  
Membership: Roberta & Leonard Pipitone (828-332-2837)  
Publicity: Kim Price (336-653-1201)  
Field Trips: Helen Rogers (404-784-2531)  
Program Coordinator: Kim Price (336-653-1201)  
Refreshments: Charlene Galbrecht (954-592-1377)  
Constitution and By-Laws: Al Pribble (828-342-3119)  
Future Vision: Ron Rossomando (828-349-2807)  
Museum Calendar: Charlene Galbrecht (954-592-1377)  
Gemborees: Chandra Fox (706-982-0402)  
Gemborees Assistant: Sean Price (336-964-2061)  
Scholarships: Al Pribble (828-342-3119)  
Education: Susan Ray (727-798-7207)  
Asst Education/Historian: Ron Rossomando (828-349-2807)  
50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Planning: Kim Price (336-653-1201)  
Newsletter Editor: Mary Beth Stager (404-314-2469),  
[\[fgmseditor@gmail.com\]](mailto:fgmseditor@gmail.com)

