



INSIDER 2025

What to bring, what to expect,
and what to do while at BRI.



2025 Conference:
July 20-24
Unicoi State Park
Helen, Georgia

What to Bring

Whether you're an over-packer or an under-packer, a few essentials for a comfortable week at BRI include:

- Sunscreen
- Bathing suit
- Bug spray
- Cash for activity fees, silent auction, cash bar, and BRI merchandise.
- The food you can't live without (i.e. specialty coffee, alcohol, chocolate, kale, artisanal cheese, bubbly water, etc.).
- Comfortable clothes (we're a casual group)
- Comfortable shoes - there is a fair amount of walking between sessions, activities, and lodging.
- A jacket or sweater for cold conference rooms.
- Your own bath and hair products. Water bottle and travel coffee mug (Mother Earth thanks you)
- An iron - If you must, bring one with you.
- Themed attire for the President's Ball (NOT required, but highly encouraged.)

If you still have room, consider bringing a folding chair, pillows, towels (the Lodge provides but if you prefer substantial ...), and rain gear. Summer weather is unpredictable.



What to Expect

As a nearly 100 year-old organization, BRI has some unique traditions that carry us through our time together.

The Red Shawl

That Red Shawl meant something to the women of the 1920s: it meant the sweet taste of full American citizenship. When the Blue Ridge Institute for Southern Community Service Executives held its first conference in the summer of 1927, they knew exactly what the Red Shawl meant and they soon adopted this powerful symbol of equality as the symbol of BRI. That should never be lost on us and we have a Little Old Red Shawl to remind us why we do it.

The Red Shawl Song

BRI has a tradition of singing a song at the conclusion of each gathering. This tradition still continues today.

*Oh, that little ole red shawl.
That little ole red shawl.
That little ole red shawl my mother wore.
It was tattered, it was torn.
It showed signs of being worn.
That little ole red shawl my mother wore.*



BRI Salutation

BRI has an official call and response used by members. We use this during official gatherings to greet each other individually or as a crowd attention getter. This is a way to identify “Ridgers” to each other when in any setting.

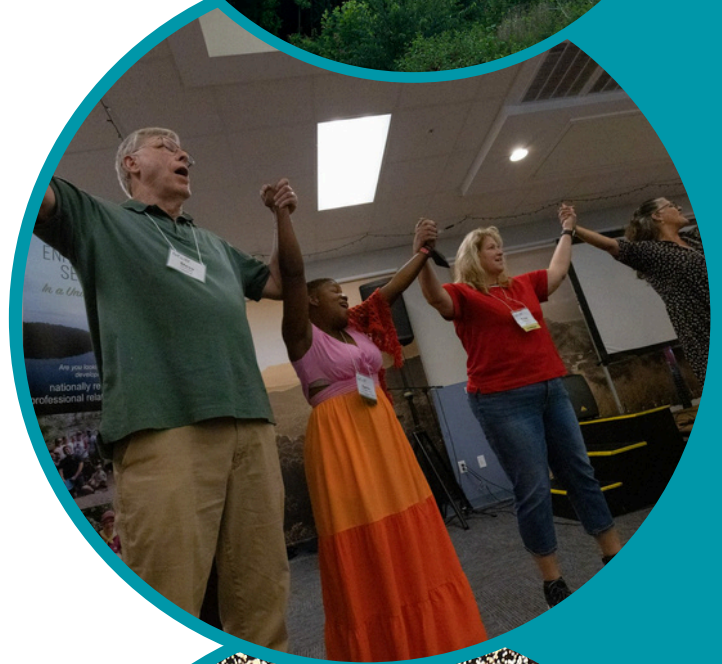
Greeting: Hi-De-Hi!

Response: Ho-De-Ho!

Freshperson Cohorts

At the annual conference, attending new members are gathered into a cohort called Freshpersons.

These folks are Freshpersons for the length of the conference. Freshpersons complete service tasks throughout the conference week as a way to get to know other members. The cohort completes a skit for the annual talent show as a bonding ritual. At the conclusion of the conference, Freshpersons graduate to become full members of the BRI.





What To Do

There are many optional renewal activities offering a refreshing change from our usual everyday routines. Almost all of the activities are open to everyone including BRIGs (BRI families and guests). Activities are a great way for Ridgers to connect with one another outside of the more formal sessions - laughing, playing, competing, and celebrating together.

BRI coordinated activities are noted in the program booklet along with times, contacts, and any additional fees required for participation.

There are some things you can bring to participate in BRI coordinated activities.

- Props, musical instruments, etc. for your Talent Show performance or just sitting around strumming.
- Hiking shoes
- CASH, checkbook, or credit card to pay for participation in activities.

If you still have questions, contact Allison Gant, Executive Director, by phone at 336-269-9577 or email at info@blueridgeleaders.org.