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Residents of Macon County and surrounding areas woke up Sunday morning to a winter wonderland. Some areas of the county saw more snow than others with the northern end receiving about three inches with amounts dwindling toward the southern side. The snow didn't last long and main roads were mostly clear by the afternoon. For more photos, see page 13. Photo by Betsey Gooder

Tax revenues higher than expected; budget items restored due to a \$1.7 million surplus

Brittney Lofthouse – Contributing Writer

When planning for budget shortfalls due to the COVID19 pandemic, Macon County Manager Derek Roland took a conservative approach in predicting anticipated revenues. Roland cut county planned projects to accommodate for an anticipated loss in sales tax and property revenues.

During a mid-year budget review last Thursday, Roland reported that not only did the county not experience a revenue shortfall compared to the same time period the prior year, but instead Macon County – and North Carolina as a whole – has actually experienced revenue increases.

Sales tax was budgeted at a level 5.2% below the amount originally budgeted for FY '20 that would have resulted in an original budget revenue loss of \$1 million for Macon County. Through the first four months of FY '21 however, sales tax collections are up 16% over 2020 actuals in Macon County and 11% statewide. As a result of this trend, Macon County increased the sales tax revenue projections for the remainder of the year to the 2020 actual level.

“The collection rate for property tax and motor vehicles was reduced by 1% to 97.3% in the original budget based upon an anticipated reduction in property owners’ ‘ability to pay’ due to what everyone was certain would be a forth-

coming recession,” explained Roland. “This was based upon guidance from NCACC [North Carolina Association of County Commissioners] and historical Macon County data following the recession in 2009. As of Dec. 31, 2020, however, we are collecting taxes at the same percentage we did in the previous year, thus revenue projections for the remainder of FY '21 have been increased to the prior year levels.”

Due to an increase in revenues at the mid-year review, Roland proposed county commissioners approve budget amendments for capital expenditures totaling just under \$2 million.

“Although much uncertainty remains for FY '22, the \$1.7 million in additional revenue gained from a ‘booming yet fragile’ economy enables us to restore capital funding to the priority areas of public safety and education,” said Roland. “It will enable us to begin working to identify and make recommendations for addressing inadequacies within our pay-scale in the coming fiscal year.”

Not only are other county revenue sources collecting at the same levels as the previous year — they are exceeding prior year’s levels.

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BUDGET SURPLUS

Continued from page 1

To begin FY '21 a 10% decrease from FY '19 actuals was budgeted for fees collected in Register of Deeds (ROD), building inspections and on-site wastewater and wells (OSWW) were based upon a projected declining economy. Fortunately however, Macon County experienced the exact opposite:

July 1, 2020 – Dec. 31, 2020

- ROD 70% higher than 2019 actuals
- Building inspections 3% higher than 2019 actuals
- OSWW and well fees- 64% higher than 2019 actuals

Roland offered recommendations for the surplus.

“The operational funding necessary to offset cost overruns within certain line items of the operating budget that are beyond our control and restore funding to nonprofit agencies who have also played a critical role in helping Macon County combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The \$1.7M in additional revenue will leave us agile and in position to again take drastic measures, without adversely impacting the county employees, in the event that we are looking at another ‘worst case scenario’ for FY '22,” said Roland.

The majority of the revenue increase will go towards capital expenditures and is not tied to the operating budget. An additional \$911,259 in capital funding for Macon County will bring the county to \$1,780,104 in FY '21, which is in line with capital funding levels from prior years.

“We will ‘make hay while the sun’s out’ if you will. ... With respect to these capital expenditures, accomplishing as many as we can while the revenue is here to support it, but at the same time we will remain prepared to reduce the budget again in FY '22 should economic uncertainty related to COVID-19 prevail, without adversely impacting the operating budget,” said Roland.

Roland proposed restoring capital funding to the school system to prior year levels, which will allow Macon County Schools to complete needed capital projects to improve the schools. The community funding pool was originally reduced by 50 percent in the budget, however, with the budget surplus, Roland proposed restoring the line item to original levels.

The additional revenues will be allocated to the Sheriff’s Department to purchase the originally requested six new vehicles, as well as funding to complete the installation of in-car camera systems for all vehicles and body-cameras for Sheriff’s Office staff.

Macon County Emergency Management will now be able to purchase a new stretcher and lift as well as an ambulance remounting and EMS coordinator SUV.

The Macon County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously to approve the budget amendments proposed by Roland.

No changes in current school schedule

Diane Peltz – Contributing Writer

The Macon County School Board met for a special called meeting, on Thursday, Feb. 4, to discuss Senate Bill 37. This bill speaks to the in-person learning choices for students during the pandemic. During a press conference on Feb. 2, Governor Cooper and other state leaders urged school districts across the state to reopen for in-person instruction. A letter sent to school board members and superintendents said that since August, at least 90 of the state's 115 school districts have safely provided in-person instruction for some or all their students. Even with the thousands of students and teachers attending school in-person across the state, NCDHHS has seen few COVID clusters in the public schools.

John deVille, Franklin High School history teacher, urged the board to take into consideration more recent data. He spoke about the ABC Science Collaborative program that pairs scientists and physicians with school and community leaders to help understand the most current and relevant information about COVID-19. The program helps school leaders make informed decisions about returning to school using data from their own communities.

DeVille pointed out that the data collected by ABC, which was shared with local school boards, was from data collected from Aug. 15 through Oct. 23, 2020. This was before a more virulent strain of COVID-19 was discovered and before the uptick in virus cases. DeVille felt that what the board of education members would cling to was this short paragraph from a pre-publication in Pediatrics, Office Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Jan. 8, 2021, regarding Incidence and Secondary Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 Infections in Schools. It reads: Across the 11 school districts, 773 community-acquired SARS-CoV-2 infections were documented by molecular testing; however, there were only 32 adjudicated cases of secondary transmission across the 11 districts combined in 9 weeks of instruction. Six districts had 0 secondary infections, 2 had 1 case, and 3 had multiple cases. There were 6 cases of secondary transmission in the pre-K setting; 11 in elementary schools, 6 in middle schools, 5 in high schools, and 4 in K-12 schools. There were no cases of child-to-adult within-school transmission.

What DeVille points out is the limitations of this study quoting a paragraph from the study, “Our study has limitations. Participation in the ABCs is voluntary and not every school district in NC participated in the ABCs or this study. Participation in the ABCs and voluntary submission of data may select for school districts that enforce adherence to preventative measures, emphasize transparency, and cooperate with peers; these characteristics are likely associated with greater adherence to masking, reduced secondary transmission, and lower risks to students. Adjudication of secondary transmission was by local health de-

partment staff in each district, with varying resource capabilities. While health department staff requested testing of contacts, testing could not be universally enforced because it is not required to return to school in N.C. Due to confidentiality concerns, we were not able to analyze incidence of child-to-child or adult-to-child transmission, nor could we determine the relative effectiveness of any specific school policies.”

“In other words I'm surprised they were able to find ‘32 adjudicated cases,’” said deVille. “I'm surprised they found any, given the limitations? When ABC says ‘resource capabilities,’ we're obviously talking testing capacity. Here in Macon County we've totally stopped doing all contact tracing except for some half-hearted attempts at school -- like ABC says, neither the local health departments nor school systems can compel testing. During the September/October data collection period for the ABC study, we had significant testing constraints here in Macon. Up to four days to get a testing appointment, and five days or more to get results back. I know other counties faced this also.

“I think to us, the headline should be, ‘We went looking for male cardinals in the woods, but we did so blindfolded most of the time. After a few weeks and hundreds of person hours in the woods, we were occasionally afforded the opportunity to peek underneath the blindfolds and we saw 32...which isn't many...they're probably going extinct.’”

Among other resources, DeVille cited an article in the *North Carolina Health News* by Anne Blythe who quoted the president of the North Carolina Association of Educators, “If Governor Cooper feels so strongly about resuming in-person instruction quickly, then he should support educators and immediately bring the full weight of his office to bear to get all educators vaccinated by the end of this month, just as 25 other states have been able to do,” Tamika Walker Kelly, president of the NCAE, said in a statement released Tuesday. “We encourage local school boards to continue to make decisions that protect students and educators based on local conditions. Particularly in light of the emerging and increasingly virulent strains of COVID, it is more critical than ever to have a flexible approach that can be adapted to whatever situation next emerges.”

The question for the School Board to consider on Thursday morning, was how to get teachers vaccinated? The NCDHHS said teachers will be included in the next round of vaccinations. The group 2 phase currently underway includes any remaining health care workers, front-line employees, adults over 65 and adults with at least one chronic condition.

The School Board adjourned the meeting without making any new decisions regarding changing in-person learning as it stands now. Plan "A" is in-person for grades K-5; and plan "B" permits two days per week for grades 6-12 with virtual the remainder of the week; and fully virtual Plan "C" is offered for those 500 students still enrolled.



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Drake Software takes on outside investor 'to accelerate growth'

Brittney Lofthouse – Contributing Writer

One of Franklin's largest businesses is making significant business moves this week as the international private equity firm, Cinven, announced that it has agreed to make a significant investment into Drake Software.

Employees were notified via email last week and were assured that nothing within the company is expected to change.

Established in 1977 by Phil Drake, Drake Software is a leading provider of professional tax preparation software. It provides the tools and resources that tax professionals need to build their businesses and attract new clients. Drake employs more than 600 people across five offices in North Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia. More than 64,000 tax professionals nationwide use Drake, and each year the company processes more than 33 million federal and state-accepted returns.

"This is a truly outstanding opportunity for Cinven to invest behind a team that has not only built a product that is loved by its customers, but also has a well-established position in a stable market with a wide range of exciting growth prospects," Chris Good, partner at Cinven said. "We believe Cinven is well positioned to support the company through its next stage of growth, especially given its track record of investing successfully in technology-focused

companies such as Visma and Jaggaer."

While the locally owned company is taking on an outside investor, Phil Drake said that operations will continue to be business as usual for the company's employees.

"We are partnering with Cinven in order to accelerate our growth, while still remaining anchored in Western North Carolina," said Drake. "This partnership is going to be good for our company, for our employees, and for our customers."

Cinven's investment in Drake builds on its successful track record in Technology, Media and Telecom, following its investment in Visma, a leading business solutions provider in May 2019; Ufinet Group, a provider of fibre infrastructure and transmission services to telecom operators in July 2018; and HEG, a provider of hosting and domain services in April 2017.

Jamie Stiles will continue in his role as president and Chief Executive Officer of Drake Software.

"We are delighted to have the chance to work with Jamie and the Drake management team. We plan to invest behind the company's growth plans to expand Drake's presence in the market, renew its technology platform, and enhance its product offerings for the benefit of Drake's employees and customers," said Daniel Garin, principal at Cinven.

The transaction is subject to customary anti-trust approvals.

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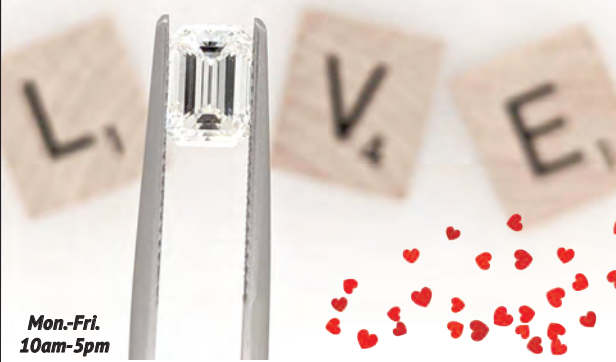
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Lingering pandemic impacts mental health in Macon County

Deena C. Bouknight – Contributing Writer

Pandemic upheaval, fear, and even chaos resulted in 40% of adults struggling with mental health issues by last June, reported Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“Symptoms of anxiety disorder and depressive disorder increased considerably in the United States during April–June of 2020, compared with the same period in 2019,” the report stated.

By September, Mental Health America’s findings revealed that the number of people looking for help with anxiety and depression has skyrocketed.

Other findings:

- The number of people screening with moderate to severe symptoms of depression and anxiety has continued to increase throughout 2020 and remains higher than rates prior to COVID-19.

- More people are reporting frequent thoughts of suicide and self-harm

- Young people are struggling most with their mental health.

- People screening at risk for mental health conditions are struggling most with loneliness or isolation.

None of the statistics are news to Meridian Behavioral Health, which has been providing Western North Carolina with child and adult mental health and substance abuse services since 2003. Meridian Behavioral Health Services is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization employing 172.

“As a result of COVID-19, we have seen a significant increase in behavioral health challenges associated with depression, anxiety, and substance abuse experiences,” commented Candace Burton, Meridian’s Macon County director. “We have seen a number of individuals during COVID-19 who, prior to

COVID-19, have not needed or utilized behavioral health services. We have seen an increase in behavioral health challenges for a lot of individuals established in care prior to COVID-19 and a number of other individuals previously served with Meridian in times past, re-enter services during COVID-19.

“For some members in our community, they have experienced increased isolation and other hardships due to a loss of employment, loss of access to a natural support system, or limited access to professional



services,” she added. “For parents and guardians of youth, managing routine responsibilities of work, home, and parenting have been met with additional responsibilities of supporting the virtual educational programming for their children, now at home more often.”

Meridian’s team consists of qualified and licensed medical and behavioral health staff and N.C.-certified peer support specialists who have real-life recovery experiences with mental health and/or drug and alcohol issues, explained Burton. The staff at Meridian has also received extensive training to provide face to face, telephone, and virtual services during COVID-19.

From March 16, 2020, until the present, Meridian served 487 adults and 356 youth in Macon County.

“When you think about the total number of individuals served, then consider how many parents, family members, and community partnerships that Meridian supports, the number of lives we have touched during COVID-19 is exponentially larger,” said Burton.

Burton shared additional reasons for the uptick in youth and adults needing Meridian services.

“Pre-COVID, all of us experienced the ups and downs of life; maybe we experienced grieving the loss of loved ones, or encountered financial, employment, housing, medical, relationship, legal, parenting, and other related stressors that brought forth periods of anxiety and depression ... While statements such as ‘hopefully this will end soon’ or ‘maybe we will get back to normal soon’ may seem routine and benign in nature to some [since the pandemic began], the reality is that living in a perpetuating state of unknown without the traditional access to coping outlets can take a toll on the mind, body, and spirit, and lead to unending, sometimes unbearable worry, dread, sense of

doom, feelings of helpless and hopelessness, etc.”

She pointed out that Meridian’s walk-in center has remained operational, while its Recovery Education Center regularly offers a multitude of virtual classes. Plus, the Substance Abuse Intensive Outpatient Program continues to support individuals in their recovery from drug and alcohol addiction.

The public is encouraged to refer anyone to Meridian who is experiencing concerning mood and behavior changes.

“There is help available and recovery is possible for anyone,” she said. “Any member of our community, no matter if you have insurance or not, no matter of your financial situation, can access support in the following ways:

- call our main office at (828) 631-3973 to speak to a live member of our team or leave a voicemail that will be returned as immediately as possible;

- visit our open access center located at 674 Highlands Road, Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. to initiate services or receive crisis support from a member of our youth and adult services clinical team;

- visit www.meridianbhs.org and leave a general e-mail, responded to 24/7/365 within the same or following business day;

- call Meridian CARES at 828-339-1552; or if immediate access to a live member of our team is needed Monday-Friday, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.”

Overall, Burton stressed that people should reach out to Meridian, if necessary, whether issues are pandemic-related or not.

“Meridian Behavioral Health Services is blessed to be a part of a strong and compassionate community,” she said. “Despite COVID-19, we remain resilient and readily available to support our community.”

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Emergency services assumes COVID testing duties

Brittney Lofthouse – Contributing Writer

During the January meeting of the Macon County Board of Commissioners, county leaders expressed concerns posted by citizens surrounding COVID19 testing and vaccination being handled by the Public Health Department. With limited staffing, health department director Kathy McGaha told the county that in order to change things, the health department needed additional support.

That got the wheels turning for Macon County Emergency Services to take over COVID19 testing for the county — to free up staff and time at the health department to focus on vaccine administration.

Macon County Emergency Management Director Warren Cabe updated commissioners last Thursday and reported that since assuming COVID testing duties at the public health department on Jan. 21, testing is now being conducted five days per week and is now housed in a drive-thru operation routed in front of the Sheriff's Office under a canopy separate from the vaccination site.

"We have been able to double COVID19 testing appointments scheduled from 16 per hour to 32 per hour with the capability of expanding to 40 per hour if needed," said Cabe.

Since taking over, Cabe reported that EMS had averaged administering 42 COVID tests per day with a total of 481 administered as of Feb. 3.

Staffing for the COVID19 testing site is provided by Emergency Management, EMS, fire, veterans services, code enforcement, and the dental clinic staff.

Cabe also noted that his department has established the drive-thru to also be able to administer vaccines, once additional supplies are made available from the state.

"The drive-thru COVID test site has been modified slightly so once we get an adequate supply of vaccine, we can administer COVID vaccinations after all testing appointments are fulfilled each day," said Cabe. "This should allow one to two hours for testing each day and the remainder of the day open for vaccinations, in addition to the regular vaccination line."

EMS and Emergency Services have also been able to staff the observation section of the regular vaccination drive-thru line with a full ambulance crew and operations support staff for the health department as well.

The additional work by EMS has not impacted regular op-

erations for the county's EMS support.

"None of our regular daily ambulance staffing assignments (five ambulance crews and one EMS supervisor) have been affected by the additional staffing," said Cabe. "All other duties have been filled by part-time or off-duty full-time EMS staff."

Cabe said that his department has also developed a plan to administer COVID vaccinations to home bound individuals with the assistance of Senior Services, the health department, EMS, and the Highlands-Cashiers Community Vaccination Clinic.

Not only will EMS also continue to help Highlands with their walk-in clinics when supplies allow, but Cabe noted that a plan for a walk-in clinic for the Franklin area has been developed for when supplies are available.

While EMS is now managing the testing site for Macon County — a newly developed call center has been launched to accommodate the volume of calls the county is receiving for both vaccines and testing appointments.

"At the Board of Commissioners meeting on Jan. 12, Macon County, like all counties across the state and nation was in the infancy stage of the vaccination process," said Macon County Manager Derek Roland. "Similar to every other aspect COVID-19 pandemic, a vaccination process of this magnitude was a first for this organization. The moment vaccine became available, our phone system was overwhelmed with calls to the testing and vaccination call center. In the days, leading up to the Jan. 12, meeting, call volume was exceeding 500 calls per hour, every hour, every day. This resulted in a complete shutdown of the entire county phone system for hours and sometimes days at a time.

After the call center — which was opened with the help of local business owner Phil Drake — was launched, the 45-minute wait time is now less than four seconds a call.

"Thanks to Phil Drake who has graciously allowed the county to establish a call center at his training and education building, providing us with equipment, technical assistance and even fully staffing the call center with his employees. This partnership has been an absolute game changer," said Roland.

The call centers have been staffed using county employees from multiple other departments, in addition to five part-time employees who were hired and started work the week of Jan. 18. The call centers are in operation from 8-5, 5 days per week. Call (828)349-2517 for testing and (828)524-1500 for vaccinations.

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News from the Legislature

From the office of Rep. Karl Gillespie

I. We officially gavelled in on Wednesday, Jan. 13, 2021. Opening day consisted primarily of the swearing-in ceremony and the adoption of session rules.

II. The legislature reconvened on Wednesday, Jan. 27, 2021. Committee assignments were announced and I was appointed to the following committees:

- Agriculture
- Appropriations
- Appropriations, Education
- Federal Relations and American Indian Affairs
- Wildlife Resources

III. On Feb. 4, 2021 the legislature passed SB36, 2020 COVID Relief Bill Modifications. The legislation made various adjustments in light of additional federal legislation and guidance.

Senate Bill 36 does the following:

- About \$1.6 billion to help schools reopen and ensure students, teachers, and staff can safely return to in-person learning

- Approximately \$95 million to health care providers, local health departments and hospitals for coronavirus vaccinations

- More than \$546 million in emergency rental assistance. An additional \$155 million in rental assistance will go to local governments with more than 200,000 residents

- The bill provides parents of school-aged children additional time to apply for \$335 state grants to help pay for online learning expenses and provides \$30 million to expand broadband in rural areas

- The legislature also passed HB4, Extend ABC Permit Renewal Fee Deferral.

- The bill retroactively extends the deferral of ABC permit fees for businesses prohibited from operating under the Governor's Executive Order until 90 days after all executive orders limiting those permittees' full operation are rescinded or expire. The bill would also allow certain ABC permittees whose operation is limited by executive orders to request a refund of any permit fees paid for the 2020-2021 permit year, and direct the ABC Commission to reinstate or reactivate any permits that the Commission cancelled or moved to inactive status

Important to note: SB36 is the first COVID related assistance package of the new year. I expect us to take up additional pandemic-related legislation in the coming weeks.



Karl Gillespie

Letters to the Editor

No authoritarians are welcome

Senator Patrick Leahy (Eight-term Democratic Senator from VT) recently wrote a column charging former President Trump with a dozen (well), transgressions, you might say. I'll paraphrase for simplicity and space.

(1) Donald Trump failed to uphold his oath to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution, (2) emerged as the greatest threat to the Constitution and American democracy in a generation, (3) sparked the flames of sedition and fanned them relentlessly, (4) lied about the election in an effort to undermine Americans' faith in our democracy, (5) promoted division, disruption, and violence, (6) attempted to thwart our nation's unbroken history of a constitutional and peaceful transfer of power, (7) incited and promoted a riot that laid siege to our Capitol building - the very heart of our democracy, (8) Insurrectionists chanting Trump's name viciously beat Capitol Police Officers protecting the building, (9) Insurrectionists called for the death of the Vice President, (10) Insurrectionists delayed Congress from fulfilling its constitutional duty of certifying the election of President-elect Joe Biden, (11) they left a trail of destruction in their wake, including the deaths of five people, and (12) the former President of the United States fueled and exploited the dark undercurrent of insurrection.

Senator Leahy also reminded us that even President Nixon understood he had to resign after his crimes were exposed; and that this former President's crimes are far worse.

Former President Trump bears accountability for this attack and the fact that he has disavowed any responsibility for the violent assault on our democracy makes clear he was unworthy of the office he held and should have been removed.

That didn't happen and now it's once again up to the Senate to convict former President Trump and to prevent him from holding future office. And, as Senator Leahy so eloquently stated, "send a message across the ages; no authoritarians are welcome in the halls of the world's greatest democracy.

It pains me deeply, as a 20-year Naval veteran, that so many veterans clearly have forgotten what their uniform and oath stand for, and chose (so wrongly) to participate in the insurrection of January 6th and that veterans organizations (American Legion, VFW, DAV and others) continue to remain deafeningly silent. These are not the veterans of WWI, WWII, and Korea.

Having failed to uphold his oath of office (which alone warrants impeachment) senators who vote to acquit former President Trump are irresponsible, derelict in their duty and, having put the interests of their party and their own self-serving welfare above that of the national interest are, in my opinion, accomplices in the wrongdoings for which former President Trump is charged.

David Snell - Franklin, N.C.

Better pull your heads out of the dirt and look around

The news can leave a person speechless. To think that any American will except the fact that our president can commit treason on his own country, and left a few people dead. He had been getting this group ready for a long time. As he said he told them to bring all the ammunition they could. It sounds like Mr. Bill O'Reilly, and some others, better pull their heads up out of the dirt and look around. This country has been run by the Republican party and a leader for the past 4 years. Not the Democrats. Since Trump has been the president, who is so full of hatred an lies is why we don't have a peaceful protests any more. He is the one who has been bent on violence. There has been several investigations, and has been proven the election was legal. He convicted him self of treason when he stood out in the street, and told them to walk up to the white house, and he'd be right there with them. But he hightails it back to the house and watches it on tv, and a party going on. He has such love and admiration for himself he can't believe not everyone loves him like he does. It's called narcissism. He can't face reality. Most historians have stated that he is the worst president in the 232-year history of the United States. Worse than R. Nixon. He is so in love with him self, he thinks he should be on Mt. Rushmore. God forbid, great men like Lincoln and Jefferson in Washington an Roosevelt, would come tumbling down being disgraced. Trump even has what looks like the two dollar bill out trying to sell, it has him and his wife standing in front of Mt. Rushmore on it, and a coin. After you realize that Trump has been president for the past 4 yrs. This country has never been more divided. He admires Hitler an L Putin. of Russia. He want to destroy are Democracy, that so many men and women in military have fought and died for. Which he doesn't even know about. Remember Pearl Harbor, how the Japs came bombing it. If it wasn't for those brave men and women, we could be flying their Japanese flag or a German flag after that war. We wouldn't have our Democracy. We better pray that Biden can straighten up the mess that Trump has left for him, and he can bring this country back to gether. Oh yes, protect human rights. From what I hear the baby is not taken after they hear a heart beat. But when a woman don't want the baby, she will kill it after its got life after its born. Is that ok? It's happend right here in Franklin.

Kathy Whitley - Franklin, N.C.

The Macon County News letters page is a public forum open to a wide variety of opinions. Writers are asked to refrain from personal attacks against individuals or businesses. Email to: maconcountynews@gmail.com

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Seniors getting pushed back on vaccine list

Are you a senior and trying to get your virus shot? Good luck if you're trying in Macon County. After trying for the last two weeks to get through the online application I finally got registered. However, I have been told that it may not be until early March before I get the shot. The fact that I'm 84 matters not. It seems that it depends on when you actually get signed up. No priority on age. The nice lady that registered me told me that Macon County receives only 300 doses of serum at a time, and this shortfall backs up those waiting. Imagine what this will do to those scheduled for the second shot. Who is going to get pushed back? Me and all those seniors that are still waiting for their first shot. You may notice that the online registration form tells you to contact their Family Health Care person. My doctor knew of this erroneous statement but assures me that he is not authorized to do the virus shots. He also mentioned that I should check with Jackson County, apparently get considerably more vaccines. Who is to blame for this debacle, Biden or the Governor? Maybe both!

G.G. Puckett – Franklin, N.C.

Ignorance a disease spread by misinformation

It is sad but true that many well-intentioned people are being deceived by the current events in society today. Whether it's the bogus notion that we have systemic racism even though a black man attained the highest office in the land from 2008-2016, or that "mostly peaceful protests" were justified in mob burning, looting, and killing, or whether January 6 was an actual insurrection where security guards are on camera removing the barricades and unarmed citizens neatly filed through the velvet ropes inside the building while carrying American flags; the masses are being ordered to believe the phony narratives of the ruling elite. Even in Western North Carolina where we enjoy a better lifestyle than the corrupted big cities, there are a handful of what I call dumb-smart people here. For example, the way that some are so deranged in hoping for an impeachment of Donald Trump is embarrassing to the rest of us who have critical thinking skills. The man is no longer holding office. Impeachment is for removing a magistrate that is actively in office; not for an emotional axe to grind in order to further divide a nation. It is the machine of federal government that is everyone's danger on both left and right. It has never been "blue states vs red states." It is the federal government vs. We the People. Human history should have taught us this fact long ago.

As far as the so-called impeachment trial of Donald Trump taking place this week, the left is frenzied in their excitement to stick it to a man they hate so much even though there is absolutely no constitutional grounds to impeach a former president. Even the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court is distancing himself from this monkey show. I had to laugh out loud reading someone's attempt at eloquence by his saying, "it remains to be seen whether the U.S. Senate has the courage, dignity, and integrity to do the right thing" in a previous letter to the editor. First of all, those characteristics left Washington DC a very long time ago and have been replaced by corruption, lies, self-serving agendas, and unconstitutional chaos. If a person truly understands foundational principles such as Natural Law and our US Constitution, it is crystal clear that the den of thieves in Washington has repeatedly been guilty of real treason. This reality is merely a symptom of the overall problem of society's total ignorance of history and complete lack of holding government accountable in our once self-governing republic. Ignorance is a disease that spreads through misinformation by virtually all of the MSM that spoon feeds society into dividing a nation so

that the foxes have full roam of the henhouse.

The vast majority of Americans, especially Trump supporters, do not want to overthrow the government, we just want the government to stop stealing our money and stop stealing our freedoms and actually uphold the rule of law. They are doing exactly the opposite of their constitutional jobs. It should be apparent to everyone that the federal government is too big and too controlling to ever have society's best interests as their motivation. Time does not allow for all the examples of their atrocities over the years, but the facts are there for anyone willing to dig past the smoke screens and mirrors... After a very obvious fraudulent presidential election with mountains of proof that is being blatantly ignored by the information gatekeepers, isn't it time for everyone on both sides to unite in our opposition to evil? Isn't it time for We the People to pursue truth and freedom instead of allowing the government to divide us? We do that by first learning historical truth as well as the truth of human nature and then act on this new understanding accordingly. We put it into practice at the proverbial water cooler, voting booth, fighting for individual and state's rights (9th and 10th Amendments), and with civil disobedience when government refuses to comply with democracy in any given geographical area. If that fails or the government takes us over the edge into unprecedented financial catastrophe, then we will in fact see true insurrection, the likes of which January 6 will look like a picnic to the over-reacting simpletons. However, it will be completely justified just as it was in 1776, 1836, and 1861.

Jim Gaston – Franklin, N.C.

The reality is that not all election cases were lost

A lot of people think that "Trump lost all his court cases regarding the 2020 election."

The reality is rather different. As of Feb. 4, 2021, there have been 80 court cases based on the 2020 presidential election, of which 25 remain active.

Of the 55 others, 34 were thrown out on legal technicalities, with no evidence actually heard.

Of the 21 cases decided on the merits to date, Trump has won 14 and lost seven.

If only more cases could have been heard on the merits, and more quickly, things might look very different today.

One of several good websites related to this is hereistheevidence.com.

Patrick Wallace – Franklin, N.C.

Advice on vaccine varies from all sources

It is difficult these days to make choices concerning health when contradictory advice is given by different scientists and doctors. We want to trust experts, but which ones? Do we accept personal responsibility for researching on our own? Do we question whether experts may have agendas behind their advice? I am concerned when I read of many anxiously waiting to get vaccines which supposedly will protect them from COVID-19, an experimental vaccine which has been rushed to market without the lengthy testing usually required. It is said that knowledge is power. My purpose in writing is to question some of what we may or may not have been told in the media.

Have we weighed pros and cons of getting this mRNA vaccine when COVID-19 has been survived by 99.98% of those who have gotten the illness? Do we know what an mRNA vaccine is or what it does in our bodies? Do we know that serious side effects have been reported, including anaphylactic shock, neurological damage, and death? I read that the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) reported 40,000 adverse reactions in the first 30 days of the

vaccine being given in the U.S. In Norway, numerous serious reactions led to the recommendation that those over 75 not be vaccinated. Today I read about a CNA who, at personal risk, reported on deaths after residents got the Pfizer vaccine at his nursing home.

"James reports that in 2020 very few residents in the nursing home where he works got sick with COVID, and none of them died during the entire year of 2020. However, shortly after administering the Pfizer experimental mRNA injections, 14 died within two weeks, and he reports that many others are near death." His video is here: <https://beforeitsnews.com/health/2021/01/nursing-home-whistle-blower-seniors-are-dying-like-flies-after-covid-injections-speak-out-video-3037541.html>

Do we know about treatments that have successfully treated people who got COVID-19? In early stages of the outbreak in the US, doctors reported how they were successfully treating patients. Many doctors, including America's Frontline Doctors, shared protocols for early treatment in public presentation. Their website <http://www.americas-frontlinedoctors.com>, has information on medications and protocols, as well as information about the vaccines.

Dr. Joseph Mercola, in his online analysis, "Seniors Dying after Covid Vaccine Labeled as Natural Causes," on 2/2/21, states that, "Around the world, reports are pouring in of people dying shortly after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. In many cases, they die suddenly within hours of getting the shot. In others, death occurs within the span of a couple of weeks. Ironically, when seniors die before vaccination, it's due to COVID-19 and something must be done to prevent it, but when they die after vaccination, they die of natural causes and no preventive action is necessary."

On Feb. 1, 2021, Dr. Mercola analyzed an article "Journal of Medicine Says HCQ + Zinc Reduces COVID Deaths." He stated, "Early on in the COVID-19 pandemic, doctors around the world reported high success rates using an inexpensive treatment protocol of hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) and zinc, typically in combination with an antibiotic to treat secondary bacterial infections...[The] medical review in the January 2021 issue of *The American Journal of Medicine* now urges early use of HCQ and zinc to reduce hospitalizations and deaths from COVID-19."

Dr. Mercola's complete articles with references are at <https://articles.mercola.com>.

I hope that fear of COVID-19 will soon be a thing of the past, that my fellow Maconians who contract it will recover quickly, and that any who have taken or choose to take the vaccine will not experience serious side effects. In addition, I hope that those who read this and choose to take the vaccine have researched the pros and cons

Panthea Crawford – Franklin, N.C.

Company adds garlic and onion to favorite bread

Everyone, I need community input to find my footing regarding recent changes to Arnold Bread Co. products. Last week the Horsham, Pa., company altered all their rye breads to now contain garlic and onion. Research showed they were responding to Pepperidge Farm doing the same a couple of weeks ago. While I'm sure many people would prefer this change, I absolutely hate it. Why couldn't the company make a new version with garlic and onion, or change merely ONE of their breads; why do it across the board? If there are others out there who feel as I do, email me at narellekirkland@gmail.com and let me know that I am not alone.

Narelle Kirkland – Franklin, N.C.

See page 12 for more letters

LETTERS

Continued
from page 11

Research reveals plenty of evidence of election fraud

For those skeptical, delusional and obviously lazy people drunk on the Socialist/Communist kool aid who do not think there is proof of election fraud in the Nov. 3, 2020, election, please explain away the following:

There are people who do research using various open source Secretary of State voter registration and results data bases, driver's license registration data bases, U.S. Post Office open data bases, and have the skills to use LEXUS/NEXUS, a massive legal resource website used by attorneys and the open source government www.paed.uscourts.gov, also known as PACER, website for various Federal District, Appeals, and U.S. Supreme Court dockets and filings to look for relevant data.

What these extensive research efforts reveal:

Georgia:

- Over 65,000 underage people illegally voted and their illegal votes were counted
- 1,043 people registered illegally using a P.O. box
- 4,926 voted after illegally registering late
- 40,279 people voted after moving out of state at least 30 days before the Nov. 3rd election and are illegal
- 10,315 dead people registered and voted
- Many voter addresses are vacant lots
- There is photographic evidence of a commercial shredding service truck shredding bag after bag of something coming out of the counting center in the middle of the night

What was in the four roll-around cases that were pulled out from under the table after poll watchers were sent out of the area?

What was the woman doing when she was seen on surveillance tape repeatedly putting the same stack of ballots through a tabulating machine multiple times?

Pennsylvania:

- At least 220,000 more people voted that were actually

registered to vote

- USPS employee Jesse Morgan testified he drove over 144,000 ballots from New York to Pennsylvania and then when he parked for the night, his truck mysteriously disappeared.

- 100,000 ballots had no return date or the date was earlier than the date records show they were mailed

- Nearly 40,000 requested ballots from heavily Republican districts were not logged in as returned

- In Delaware County, all logs and records showing chain of custody and tabulation have disappeared

- Over 8,780 dead people registered and voted

- In Delaware County over 100,000 ballots are impossible to verify

- In Delaware County in excess of 200,000 ballots have disappeared from storage

Nevada:

- 42,284 people voted twice

- Over 78,000 illegal aliens or out of state voters voted

- Over 20,000 ballots have no mailing address

- Over 10,000 dead people registered and voted

With respect to the specious Woke Folks' arguments about no evidence in the courts, in virtually all of the Trump Campaign filings the judges immediately dismissed the cases without a single hearing or requiring a counter filing by the Defendant party. This is clearly coordinated judicial tyranny, misfeasance and malfeasance of office on a massive scale and a clear violation of 5th Amendment Due Process clause and the 7th Amendment Right to Jury Trial clause.

This clearly demonstrates the corrupt judiciary aided and abetted the Socialist/Democratic Party in stealing the election and covering up the direct evidence proving that happened.

If you were to take the time to go up on the dockets for the filings in Federal U.S. District Courts, as I did, you would find literally hundreds of Sworn Affidavits tendered as evidence of the fraud and illegalities listed as Exhibits in every one of the Trump Campaign filings. The evidence is on the record. The corrupt judges simply are co-conspirators in the

cover up hoping you will be too busy, distracted or too lazy to actually check the record.

The Main Stream Media depends on you taking everything they tell you as "Gospel Truth" when they are actually lying.

If you were to take the time to go on LEXUS/NEXUS, and search for the Trump Campaign's court filings in various State courts, as I did, you would also find that you can see the same large stacks of Sworn Affidavits, the highest form of evidence except for direct testimony, filed as evidence exhibits.

None of the filings was ever allowed to be heard in open court nor tested on the merits of the case so y'all "stuff it" on the claims that "no evidence was presented."

While I could table more statistical evidence of election fraud in other states, if this does not change the minds of the Woke folks fellow travelers who hate America and who are parroting the Socialist/Democratic Party line spewed by the Main Stream media, trying to get their neighbors to buy into the Communist scheme, more clear evidence won't.

I am taking time to give my neighbors the truth of this matter so you won't be hoodwinked by those who care so little for our precious liberty and rights that they won't defend them.

Yea therefore and verily I say unto you, the Truth shall set you free, but first it will make you very angry.

Peter K. Stern, U.S.A.F. Retired – Franklin, N.C.

President Trump sacrificed for the good of America

For those who still believe that President Trump went into politics for his own gain, like the majority of politicians from both major parties, I want to share this.

When he decided to run in 2015, President Trump was listed as #121 of the wealthiest Americans by Forbes magazine. He was the first billionaire to run for president. Today his rank is #339. His net worth was \$4.5 billion in 2015. Now it is \$2.5 billion according to the *Washington Examiner*. He sacrificed nearly half of his wealth to serve the country he loves. Trump donated all his annual salary of \$400,000 each quarter to various causes like the Office of the Surgeon General, the Department of Homeland Security, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse, and more recently, the National Park Service to "repair and restore" national monuments. President Trump entered politics to improve the lives of millions of Americans and he was enormously successful even though he was under constant attack by the Democrats and many members of his own party. He was also viciously attacked and mischaracterized by the so-called mainstream media. As we all are painfully aware, he endured three years of torment over a phony "Russian dossier" paid for by Hillary Clinton. The FBI knew it was false but they obtained four FISA [Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act] court warrants to spy on his administration by lying to the court. We all helped pay for that hoax to the tune of \$40 million. To my knowledge, none of the perpetrators have paid anything for their crimes.

President Trump won the 2020 election by a massive landslide only to have it stolen by bad actors in China and other countries, aided and abetted by many traitors in our own country. To see some of the evidence of the largest cyber attack in history, watch the documentary "Absolute Proof" by Michael Lindell, CEO of My Pillow here: <https://michaeljindell.com/> If you don't feel you have time to watch it all, start at 1:36:00. The last half hour of the video was shocking to me.

I am not a Republican or a Democrat, but I love America and I am grateful to President Trump for the sacrifices he made for me and for you. I pray that God will vindicate him in the days ahead.

Ed Hill – Franklin, N.C.

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Sunday morning snow in Franklin

Photos by Betsey Gooder



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Arrest Report

The Macon County Sheriff's Department, Franklin Police Department or Jackson County Sheriff's Department made the following arrests January 20 - February 5. All suspects are innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.



Macon County Sheriff's Department

February 1

Joseph Lee Samarco, was charged with possession of heroin, possession of drug paraphernalia, larceny, possession of stolen goods/property, breaking into coin operated machine, larceny, possession of stolen goods/property. Jordan C. Sutton made the arrest.

Britni Moore Pinkham, was charged with possession of methamphetamine, possession of drug paraphernalia. Jordan C. Sutton made the arrest.

February 2

Toni Leann Brewer, was charged with possession of methamphetamine, simple possession of a schedule II controlled substance. Parrish W. Young made the arrest.

Christina Hope Perez, was charged with possession of methamphetamine, felony probation violation. Jordan C. Sutton made the arrest.

Ryan David Finn, was charged with failure to appear. Timothy B. Carter made the arrest.

February 3

Samantha Marie Bates, was issued a true bill of indictment for failure to appear for possession of methamphetamine,, felony probation violation. Mike Langley Sr. made the arrest.

James Barton Smith, was issued a true bill of indictment for forgery of instrument, uttering a forged instrument. Mike Langley Sr. made the arrest.

Michael Eugene Richards, was charged with failure to appear for possession of methamphetamine, possession of drug paraphernalia. Mike Langley Sr. made the arrest.

Nicole Dee Stewart, was charged with possession of methamphetamine, possession of drug paraphernalia. Jonathan C. Bean made the arrest.

Silas Parker-Kenna Vinson, was charged with resist/obstruct/delay law enforcement officer, possession of marijuana up to 1/2 oz, possession of drug paraphernalia, carrying a concealed weapon. Jonathan C. Bean made the arrest.

February 4

Paul Joseph Vatalaro, was charged with third degree sex exploitation of a minor. Jonathan C. Bean made the arrest.

Tabitha Sherell Henrt, was issued warrant service for offense committed in jurisdiction. Nick Lofthouse made the arrest.

February 5

Alexandria Rae Anglin, was charged with violating domestic violence protective order, simple assault. James E. Crawford III made the arrest.

Jody M. Stanfield, was charged with possession of methamphetamine, drug equipment violations. Matthew T. Breedlove made the arrest.

Kimberly Marie Cates, was charged with possession of methamphetamine, drug equipment violation. Matthew T. Breedlove made the arrest.

February 6

Chelsea Briana Heaton, was charged with possession of

methamphetamine. Clay A. Saunders made the arrest.

Franklin Police Department

January 28

Michael Anthony Duncan, 62, was charged with possession of methamphetamine, possession of drug paraphernalia. A secured bond of \$2,500 was set. Officer Hovis made the arrest.

James Bryson, 23, was charged with concealment of merchandise in mercantile establishments, issued an order for arrest for firearm by a felon. Officer Riles made the arrest.

Jennifer Lynn Nations, 48, was charged with breaking or entering, injury to real property. An unsecured bond of \$2,500 was set. Officer Bingham made the arrest.

Michael Adam Crisp, 27, was issued a true bill of indictment for possession of a controlled substance in prison/jail premises. A secured bond of \$3,500 was set. Officer Hovis made the arrest.

James Richard Atkinson, 47, was charged with probation violation, failure to appear for a felony. A secured bond of \$15,000 was set.

January 29

Anthony Christopher Beaver, 25, was charged with possession of heroin, probation violation. A secured bond of \$30,000 was set. Sergeant Ashe made the arrest.

February 1

Louis Algodon Garcia, 30, was issued an order for arrest for hit and run leaving scene, no operators license, unauthorized use of a motor vehicle. An unsecured bond of \$800 was set. Officer Riles made the arrest.

February 2

John Paul McCall, 37, was charged with burglary breaking and entering. A secured bond of \$16,000 was set. Detective Foster made the arrest.

Jackson County Sheriff's Department

January 20

Richard Calvin Jay Teesatuskie, 34, of Fisher Branch, Cherokee, was charged with possession of marijuana paraphernalia, possession of marijuana up to 1/2 oz, possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of methamphetamine. No bond was set.

Antony Garcia Sanchez, 32, was charged with possession of methamphetamine. No bond was set.

Christa Marie Schlef, 36, of Post Gardens Way, Boca Raton, Fla., was charged with simple assault. No bond was set.

January 21

David Jason Johnson, 39, of Beavor Rd., Lake Toxaway, was charged with failure to appear for felony probation violation. A secured bond of \$200 was set.

January 22

Marcos Edmund Mundo, 39, of Olivine Place, was charged with resisting a public officer, assault on a government official/employee, domestic criminal trespass, violation of a court order. No bond was set.

Chadwick Errol George, 47, of Poplar Tree Lane, Whittier, was charged with failure to appear for plant conservation act violation, larceny of ginseng. A secured bond of \$1,500 was set.

Christopher Jason Kent, 32, of Dahlia Dr., Whittier, was charged with indecent liberties with a child. A secured bond of \$15,000 was set.

Veronica Lynn Lewis, 47, of Sunrise Park, was charged with felony larceny. No bond was set.

Chris Ivan Lewis, 50, of Sunrise Park, was charged with felony larceny. No bond was set.

January 23

Krystal Rae Miller, 37, of Clay Haven Heights, was charged

with driving while license revoked. A secured bond of \$500 was set.

Levi Eric Jones, 26, of Mica Mine Rd., Waynesville, was charged with carrying a concealed gun. A secured bond of \$250 was set.

Emil Morice Mull, 55, of Allen Henson Circle, was issued an order for arrest for driving while impaired. A secured bond of \$1,500 was set.

January 24

Randall Dean Green, 61, of Rocky Branch Rd., Whittier, was charged with failure to appear for possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of methamphetamine. A secured bond of \$3,000 was set.

Bryan Keith Hughes, 53, of Partridge Place, Whittier, was charged with possession of a schedule II controlled substance, possession of methamphetamine. No bond was set.

January 25

Shannon Marie Graham, 41, of Sylva, was charged with fugitive/extradition from other state. A secured bond of \$5,000 was set.

Cara Jones Brown, 36, of Alarka Rd., Bryson City, was charged with resist a public officer, driving while impaired. An unsecured bond of \$500 was set.

January 26

Errika Leah Arkansas, 42, of Hallmark Lane, Whittier, was charged with second degree trespass. A secured bond of \$500 was set.

James Stephen Ray Gammon, 25, of Elmer Dr., Cherokee, was charged with assault on a female. No bond was set.

January 27

Amber Nicole Simon, 26, of Cullowhee, was charged with trespass of real property, violation of court order. A secured bond of \$3,000 was set.

Ellen Yellowhammer Lincoln, 25, of Cherokee, was charged with failure to appear for possession of stolen goods/property, misdemeanor larceny. A secured bond of \$3,000 was set.

Tarrell Lawshawn Williams, 40, of Old Greenville Hwy., Clemson, S.C., was charged with possession of fentanyl. An unsecured bond of \$500 was set.

January 28

James Parker Bryson 23, of Divide Dr., Cashiers, was issued a true bill of indictment for possession of a firearm by a felon. A secured bond of \$10,000 was set.

Shane Alexander Hancock, 31, of Webster Rd., was issued a warrant for arrest for speeding, resisting a public officer. A secured bond of \$500 was set.

Lyndsey Alicia Gonzalez, 25, of Windy Gap Rd., Cullowhee, was issued an order for arrest for probation violation. A secured bond of \$1,000 was set.

January 29

Robert Dewayne Lowery, 27, of Sylva, was charged with possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of heroin. An unsecured bond of \$2,500 was set.

Stephanie Ann Taylor, 43, of Sylva, was charged with cyberstalking, communicating threats. An unsecured bond of \$500 was set.

Jon Bantom Legere, 44, of Brown Ridge Rd., was charged with first degree trespass enter/remain. No bond was set.

January 31

Tad Norman Thompson, 46, of Norman Dr., was charged with domestic criminal trespass, attempted breaking and entering. No bond was set.

Eugene Kelley Langley, 46, of Heady Mountain Rd., Cashiers, was charged with assault on a female. No bond was set.

Dierra Salone Jenkins, 30, of Levi Mathis Rd., Whittier, was charged with simple assault. No bond was set.

Prentiss Church's Christmas tree fundraiser benefits local school

Deena C. Bouknight – Contributing Writer

Prentiss Church Pastor Kevin Chapman has been overseeing the Buy a Tree Change a Life Christmas tree fundraising program in Macon County for the last few years. Around half of the proceeds of the sales of Christmas trees support efforts locally as well as in Cambodia, a country in which Chapman has worked and supported as pastor and missionary. This month, Chapman leaves Prentiss Church to pursue full-time ministry in Southeast Asia and China from his new home base in San Jose, Calif.

When Chapman, originally from Chattanooga, Tenn., began pastoring Prentiss Church in 2015, he introduced the national Buy a Tree Change a Life initiative, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization founded in 2012. Annually, a percentage of Christmas tree sales has been used to purchase backpacks for school-aged children in Macon County, while the remainder has supported ongoing efforts in Cambodia such as building projects, clothing, food, education, the needs of orphans and more. Historically, Cambodia has struggled with poverty and

ongoing government oppression since Cambodia was ravaged by the Khmer Rouge regime under the leadership of Pol Pot and 2 million people lost their lives in the mid-1970s.

During the 2020 holidays, Buy a Tree Change a Life in Macon County raised almost \$27,000. "Fifty percent stays local and the other half goes to Cambodian projects," said Chapman. "All the trees were sold, and several people volunteered, including Randy Stoudemire, who will continue Buy a Tree Change a Life in my absence."

Chapman said the project's efforts resulted in \$10,000 being donated to South Macon Elementary School for the purchase of updated equipment and a new playground for "exceptional children" attending the school.

"We've been wanting to refresh and rejuvenate the EC self-contained playground for a while," said Principal Allison Guynn. "We are very blessed by Prentiss Church, which asked us if we had an area we needed help with. We typically have 45-50 children who might need to use this special playground ... a space for them to play and run and use equipment that is appropriate for them. They need to be excited when they go outside and this new playground means they will have something to look forward to."

Two weeks ago, volunteers from Prentiss showed up at South Macon Elementary School to install the equipment and landscape the playground.

Chapman, who has worked full time in church ministry for 25 years, said, "One of the highlights of living in Macon County have been seeing the good-hearted nature of this community. People are more than willing to help other people when there are needs."



On Monday, Feb. 8, EC children at South Macon Elementary were introduced to brand new specially designed playground equipment, purchased due to a \$10,000 donation from Prentiss Church's Christmas tree fundraiser Buy a Tree Change a Life. "This will be the highlight of their day," said Jeremy Chapman, who teaches special education with Phyllis Castle at South Macon. Students are Staci Machburn, Ellie Messer, and Nicolas Perez-Richardo.



On Sunday, Jan. 31, Prentiss Church of God pastor Kevin Chapman (R) and Randy Stoudemire marked the symbolic presentation of a \$10,000 check to South Macon Elementary School for the purchase of playground equipment for special needs children. The playground was opened to the children on Monday.

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Fire scare at Wells Fargo Tuesday

Shortly after 1 p.m. on Tuesday, a crew with Franklin Fire and Rescue responded to a possible structure fire at Wells Fargo Bank on Main Street. The call to dispatch reported smoke being visible from the roof of the building. Franklin Fire and Rescue Chief Ben Ormond reported that crews arrived on scene and discovered a mechanical malfunction of the HVAC unit upstairs in the building. The scene was secured shortly thereafter.

Photo by Gwen Taylor



Habitat seeking volunteers for community projects

John Wert with Habitat for Humanity of Macon/Jackson County is issuing a call for volunteers. "Have you ever thought about volunteering but really didn't know where to begin? Habitat for Humanity of Macon/Jackson County can make it easy for you to share some of your skills or gain some experience learning new ones. There's nothing like working with your own two hands. Your hands might inspire others and two become four, six and even more. That's how we build a volunteer community to help those in need. Everyone has something to contribute. From carpentry to cleaning, marketing to moral support, computer skills, planning and organizing or just plain common sense. The greatest gift you could ever give is your time. Any amount is good. Some great times, lasting friendships and rewarding experiences are right here. What are you waiting for?" Wert concluded. For more information on volunteer opportunities, call (828)369-3716 or (828)371-5442. Above, Franklin High School Future Farmers of America helped Habitat construct a handicap accessible entry to the high school's greenhouse. Wert said, "A special thanks going out to Franklin's FFA, for the wonderful workday. Great group to work with."

Deaths & Funerals



John Richarme (Rich) Bankston

John Richarme (Rich) Bankston, went from his earthly home to heaven on Feb. 7, 2021, surrounded by his wife, Shelby, and his cat, Willie B. at the age of 88 years and 8 days.

He was born in Atlanta, Ga., on Jan. 30, 1933, to Alfred B. Bankston Sr. and Ione Catherine Richarme Bankston, spending his childhood and youth in then rural Ben Hill, Ga. He was a member of Ben Hill Methodist Church where he served as a Steward. He was president of the Greenbriar Kiwanis club of Atlanta and a member of Ben Hill Masonic Lodge #674. After high school he began his 27-year career with Southern Bell Telephone Company. He joined the Naval Reserve and was called to active duty when the Korean War began. Upon his discharge, he continued his career with Southern Bell where he rose to the position of Group Manager in Waycross, Ga. While in Waycross he served as president of the Waycross Kiwanis Club and was a member of First Methodist Church where he served as a Steward. He also served on the Ware County Bi-Racial Committee while there. After moving back to Atlanta he became a member of Mt. Paran Church of God.



John R. Bankston

On an early visit to the mountains of North Georgia he was so impressed he was determined to one day live in the mountains, which he did after retiring from Southern Bell. He moved to Franklin and began a second career as a Real Estate Broker and worked into his 80s becoming a partner in the Prudential Real Estate Firm. He was an active member in the Franklin Board of REALTORS, and was past president of the Franklin Area Chamber of Commerce. He served on the REACH board and was instrumental in helping to build the current REACH for Bargains thrift store. He was a member of Franklin Presbyterian Church where he served as an Elder and later became a member of Cornerstone EPC where he continued to serve as an Elder. He was an ardent supporter of Scottish Tartans Museum during its formative years. He served for several years as chairman of Macon County Tax Equalization and Review Board. He had a lifelong philosophy of giving back to the communities in which he lived in appreciation for the benefits he received by living there.

He was an eclectic reader with a thirst for knowledge, choosing subjects from Mark Twain to Henry David Thoreau. He was a member of the Thoreau Society. One of his favorite activities was hiking on the Appalachian Trail. He was a Life Member of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. He loved the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Natchez Trace and Motor trips out west, taking the road less traveled.

In addition to his parents, was preceded in death by a brother, Alfred Burton Bankston Jr. and a sister, Vivian Rose Bankston.


He is survived by his wife of 36 years, Shelby Rogers Bankston; his son, David Bankston (Belinda) of Beaufort, S.C.; daughter, Vivian Bankston (Donnie Hampton) of Marietta, Ga.; two granddaughters, Allyn and Laura; three great-grandsons; and a special lifelong friend, Bill Lewis (Sherry) of Dahlonga, Ga.

A Memorial Service will be held Sunday, Feb. 14, at 2 p.m., in the Chapel of Macon Funeral Home, open to friends and family, but attendees are asked to wear a mask and practice social distance. Rev. Dr. Tommy Jordan and Rev. Dr. Randall Rogers will officiate.

Visitation with the family will be held one hour prior to the service.

Online condolences can be made at www.maconfuneralhome.com.

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Deaths & Funerals

Bernard Huggins

Bernard Huggins, 86, of Franklin, N.C., passed away Friday, Feb. 5, 2021.

Born Feb. 1, 1935, in Macon County, he was the son of the late Forrest Huggins and Ruth Parrish Huggins. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his stepmother, Sadie Huggins; two brothers, Henderson Huggins and D.L. Huggins; sister, Annette Huggins and grandson, Benjamin Hilliard.

He retired after 36 years from Nantahala Lumber Co. where he worked as yard foreman. He enjoyed spending his time raising cattle and working on his farm in the Burningtown community. He was an avid coon hunter and a long-time member of the Macon County Coon Hunters Association.

He seldom met a stranger, and if he did they usually parted as friends. He will be remembered for his incredible generosity and his willingness to help anyone in need. He was a man with a strong faith in God who lived his faith through his actions more than words. He faithfully attended Central Baptist Church for more than 57 years.

He is survived by his wife of 56 years, Virginia Franklin Huggins; daughter, Lisa Hilliard (Joe) of Franklin; granddaughter, Michaela Brooks (Aaron) of Franklin; sister, Joyce Kinsland of Franklin; sister-in-law Irene Huggins of Franklin; two nephews, Joe Huggins & Darwin Huggins; and two nieces, Glynda Johnson and Ann Ayers.

Funeral service was held Tuesday, Feb. 9, in the Chapel of Macon Funeral Home. Rev. Don Moffitt, Rev. Jeremy Gibbs and Rev. Gary McCoy officiated. Burial was in the Woodlawn Cemetery.

Pallbearers were Joe Huggins, Darwin Huggins, Stan Ayers, Michael Johnson, Jeremy McConnell and Doug Welch.

Honorary pallbearers were Bud McClure, Jim Fouts, Mike Fouts, Gerald Fouts, Frank Hunter, Joe Jenkins, Lou Brown, Ralph Pitts, Wiley Hedden, Members of Central Baptist Church's Brotherhood, and members of the Macon County Coon Hunters Association.

Memorial donations can be made to Central Baptist Church's Brotherhood Mission, and can be mailed to: 888 Dowdle Mtn. Rd., Franklin, NC 28734.

Condolences may be made to the family at www.maconfuneralhome.com.

Daniel Bruce Kierstead

Daniel Bruce Kierstead, 69, of Franklin, N.C., died Sunday, Jan. 31, 2021.

Born in Clinton, Mass.; he was the son of Marylou Ragsdale Oudshoff and the late Bruce Kierstead. He was a civil engineer, who helped design highways and parking lots all over the United States. He was a US Army veteran. One of favorite hobbies would often be reading one of his favorite science fiction books.

In addition to his mother, he has two daughters, three brothers, one sister and six grandchildren surviving.

No services are planned at this time.

Online condolences may be made at www.maconfuneralhome.com.

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.



Bernard Huggins



Daniel Bruce Kierstead

Bonnie Jean Smith Honeycutt

Bonnie Jean Smith Honeycutt, 75, of Garland, N.C., passed away Thursday, Feb. 4, 2021.

Born in Durham, N.C., she was the daughter of the late Albert Judson Smith Sr. and Bonnie Mae Blackburn Smith. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by a brother, A.J. Smith Jr.

She retired from Eckerd Youth Alternatives where she worked as the office manager. She was a member of Friendship Baptist Church, Garland. She enjoyed spending time with her granddaughters, sewing, cake making and tending to her roses.

She is survived by a daughter, Angie Stahl (Chris) of Franklin; sister, Mary Alean Kersey (Doug) of Garland; two brothers, John F. Smith (Sandy) of Clinton, N.C., and George F. Smith (Ada) of Garner, N.C.; and three granddaughters, Aliyah, Reilly and Olivia.

A private graveside service will be held at a later date at Friendship Baptist Church Cemetery, Garland.

Memorial donations can be made to the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 5501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, TN 38105.

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.

Condolences can be made to the family at www.maconfuneralhome.com.



Bonnie Jean Honeycutt

Hazel Barger Rickman

Hazel Barger Rickman, 81 of Franklin, N.C., died on Monday, Feb. 1, 2021.

Born in Clay County, Kentucky, she was the daughter of the late William Barger and Ida Felner Green.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her first husband, Elzie Couch and then her second husband, William Roger Rickman; and two daughters, Gracie Dean Jackson, and Kathleen Couch Dills.

She was a member of Cowee Baptist Church. She loved to quilt and garden. She will be remembered for her contagious smile and her love for her family.

She is survived by her children, Denver Couch (Janet) of Salem, Ind., Geraldine Bowling (Ralph) of Sizerock, Ky., Bettie Sue Couch of Franklin, and Stephanie Hamilton of Georgia; two brothers, Charles Edward Felner of Manchester, Ky., and Paul A. Felner of Oneida, Ky.; and one sister, Rosatta Gilbert of Oneida, Ky.; 14 grandchildren; a host of great grandchildren; and numerous nieces and nephews also survive.

Funeral services were at Wolfe and Sons Funeral Home in Hyden, Ky. Burial was in the Haystack Cemetery in Panco, Ky. Online condolences may be made at www.maconfuneralhome.com.

Macon Funeral Home is in charge of the arrangements.



Hazel Barger Rickman

Jake Adam Cloud

Jake Adam Cloud, 35, of Franklin, N.C., passed away Wednesday, Feb. 3, 2021.

Born in Macon County, he was the son of Charles Lamar Cloud and Sherri Queen Cloud. He worked in construction; attended Burningtown Church of God; enjoyed fishing and was a NASCAR and WWE fan.

In addition to his parents, he is survived by his maternal grandmother, Barbara "Nana" Queen; maternal great grandmother, Frances Waldroop; two brothers, Noah Cloud and Cadon Justice all of Franklin.

A private memorial service and celebration of life will be held at a later date.

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.

Condolences may be made at www.maconfuneralhome.com.



Jake Adam Cloud

James Harold Norton Sr.

James Harold Norton Sr., 88, passed from this life on Jan. 28, 2021. He was born on Aug. 12, 1932, to Edward Lafayette Norton and Minnie Bell Bradley Norton.

He was one of those people who seemed to be able to fix whatever was broken. He was an electronics whiz who loved to read. Almost anything written caught his attention, but technical manuals were his favorite reading material.

He liked helping people. He was known to treat friends and family as his personal guests and excelled in making everyone feel right at home.

Those who were fortunate enough to sit at a restaurant table with him never paid because he always insisted on picking up the tab.

He was a veteran of the U.S. Air Force, retiring from ITT Gilfillan in 1984. His career was spent selling air traffic control radar systems to United States military services. After retirement, he wanted a hobby, and the sawmill he operated in Otto gave him a way to connect with people in the community. That enterprise and being able to spend time proving just how much he loved fishing kept him busy.

He was of the Methodist faith. He was honest and honorable in all of his dealings, believing he should treat people the way he wanted to be treated. He was a hard worker who lived by his motto, "What my daddy gave me was his name and integrity."

He is predeceased by his wife, Barbara Eulalah Norton; his daughter, Carol M. Norton; his brothers, Maurice Norton and Jasper Norton; his twin, Carol Norton; and his parents.

He is survived by his son, James Harold (Jim) Norton Jr.; his grandchildren, Katelyn C. Norton and Jackson R. Norton; and his wonderful companion, Bea Johnson.

Moffitt Family Funeral Care is honored to serve the family.

Online condolences may be made at www.moffittfamilyfuneralcare.com.



James Harold Norton Sr.

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Deaths & Funerals

James 'Jamie' Shepherd

James "Jamie" Shepherd, 57, of Franklin, N.C., died on Tuesday, Feb. 2, 2021.

He was born on Nov. 20, 1963, in Winston Salem, N.C. He was the son of James Earlie Shepherd Sr. and the late Mary Nell Lampley Shepherd. Spending most of his life in Macon County, he joined Cowee Baptist Church and became very active with "Love In Action" at the church. He worked as a fuel piper and drove a school bus; it was here he would often say he was watching after all his kids. He enjoyed drag racing, paintball, and all sports in general, especially while coaching his children; but what he loved most was spending time with his family.



James Shepherd

He is survived by his father, James E. Shepherd of Franklin; his longtime companion, Debra Foster; son, Kaleb Shepherd (Amy); and his daughter, Kayla Shepherd, all of Franklin; two sisters, Dianne Brooks (Raymond) of Waynesville and Crystal Nix (Owen) of Franklin; two brothers, Shane Shepherd of Canaan, N.H., and Kent Shepherd (Betsy) of Franklin. He was so proud of his grandchildren, Kane and Kohen Shepherd, Case, Lane, Blakeleigh, Adie, and Benton.

Funeral service was held Friday, Feb. 5, in the chapel at Macon Funeral Home with Rev. Davis Hooper and Rev. Raymond Brooks officiating. Burial was in the Tellico Baptist church cemetery.

Online condolences can be left at www.maconfuneralhome.com. Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.

Viola Jenkins

Viola Jenkins, 91, of Franklin, N.C., passed away Thursday, Feb. 4, 2021. She was born July 16, 1929, in Macon County, to the late James Charlie and Effie Ellen McCall. She was a homemaker and life long member of Goldmine Baptist Church, where she was a former Sunday School teacher. She loved flowers, working outside, and quilting. She was also a caregiver and she loved animals.



Viola Jenkins

She is survived by two daughters, Elaine Wilkes (Allen) and Jane McSween both of Franklin; grandchildren, Craig McSween of Virginia and Brandon McSween (Desi) of New Mexico; great-grandchildren, Alyssa McSween of Virginia, Savannah McSween and Abigail McSween both of New Mexico; sisters, Frances Zachary, Martha Crescenzi, and Mary Owens, all of Franklin; brother, Lloyd McCall of Franklin; several nieces and nephews also survive. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her loving husband, Adam Harold Jenkins, and 11 siblings.

A private graveside service will be held at Mt. Moriah Cemetery, with Rev. Carson Gibson officiating. Pallbearers will be Neal Owens, Randy McCall, Dickie McCall, Ryan Collins, Bradley Collins and Wesley Mashburn.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made to Mt. Moriah Cemetery, 27 Pine Cone Dr, Franklin, NC 28734

Bryant-Grant Funeral Home and Crematory is serving the Jenkins family.

Online condolences may be made at www.bryantgrantfuneralhome.com.

Mae Marlene Batson Osborne

Some people enjoy life to the fullest, and Mae Marlene Batson Osborne, 88, who passed on Feb. 3, 2021, was one of them. She lived an interesting life and delighted in many different experiences.

Born on July 18, 1932, she was not one to sit and watch life go by. She wanted to be in the middle of it and stayed active, enjoying hiking and snorkeling. She could always find an adventure whether it be in the mountains or at the beach. One extra memorable experience was when Mae and her husband, Dick, visited Europe. Traveling on the Autobahn with Dick as her chauffeur was very exciting as they drove on the world famous road with no speed limits and a suggested minimum speed of 80 mph.

However, she also enjoyed being a homebody. She was creative and had many skills. She was a doll maker and a seamstress along with being able to knit beautiful pieces. She took pleasure in cooking, preparing delicious meals for family and friends. She was just a solid lady who was a wonderful friend to many as well as a caring and devoted wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother.

She loved the written word. She preferred nonfiction, but she was also a fan of Pat Conroy and John Grisham. Not only did she enjoy reading, she also wrote several short stories about her family and was the author of a novel.

Fellow members of Walnut Creek Baptist Church were like family to Mae. Her church was very important to her; and, if the service contained her favorite hymn, "The Old Rugged Cross," she felt extra blessed.

Left with many wonderful memories are her husband, Richard "Dick" William Osborne; her children, Curtis C. Davis (Jan), Janet M. Patterson (David), Charles C. Davis (Francisca), Heather A. Gordon (Terry), and Ozzie Osborne (Suzy); 11 grandchildren; 14 great grandchildren; two nieces; a sister-in-law, Byna; and a number of great friends. She was predeceased by her parents, Curtis Franklin Batson and Hassie Jewel Durham Hughes and her brother, Curtis "Buddy" Batson.

A memorial service will be held at a later date.

Moffitt Family Funeral Care is honored to serve the family.

Online condolences may be made at www.moffittfamilyfuneralcare.com.

Michael 'Mike' T. Suttles

Michael "Mike" T. Suttles, 70, passed away Jan. 31, 2021. His battle against serious medical issues showed his courage for continually facing life's challenges with a smile. He was born March 4 1950, in Kansas City, Mo., however, was raised in Franklin, N.C., and called Franklin his home until his passing.

He was a dedicated father who instilled a strong work ethic and sense of family into his surviving sons. He was the hardest working and most generous man known to all his family and friends. He never met a challenge he could not complete. He was and still is loved by all.

He is survived by his two sons, Chris and Cary and their families, which include a total of four grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, the family would request to have monetary donations sent to the Macon County Horse Association. (<https://mcha.webs.com/contactus.htm>)

Funeral services were held Tuesday, Feb. 9, at Pine Grove Baptist Church.

Moffitt Family Funeral Care is honored to serve the family.

Online condolences may be made at www.moffittfamilyfuneralcare.com.



Mae Marlene Osborne

John H. Weber

John H. Weber, 89, of Franklin, N.C., passed away Saturday, Feb. 6, 2021.

Born in Dayton, Ohio, he was the son of the late Harry and Naomi Weber. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his wife of 56 years, Virginia Weber; two brothers, Bob and Hollis and two sisters, Gale Cathy Richardson and Joan Weber.

He was a U.S. Army veteran of the Korean Conflict and a lifetime member of the American Legion. He enjoyed gardening, canning, refinishing furniture, music, dancing and bowling. He cherished his wife, family, church and church family. He had a generous and caring heart.

He is survived by his niece, Kathy Snyder of Franklin; a granddaughter, Ashley Weber and many nieces and nephews.

Burial will be in the Casstown Cemetery, Casstown, Ohio.

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.

Condolences can be made to the family at www.maconfuneralhome.com.



John H. Weber

William David Brown

William David Brown, 71, of Franklin, N.C., passed away Friday, Feb. 5, 2021.

Born in Washington, Ga., he was the son of the late William Elmer Brown and Dulce McKinnon Brown. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by two sisters, Patricia Funckhouser and Becky Dixon. He was a U.S. Navy veteran and a member of Black Mountain Baptist Church. He enjoyed woodworking, was a ham radio enthusiast and loved spending time with his grandchildren. He was a lifelong minister of the gospel.

He is survived by his wife of 48 years, Mary Ann Darracott Brown; daughter, Alicia Price (David); one sister, Cliff Ware (Gwen) of Evans, Ga.; grandchildren, Austin Price (Andee), Dillon Price and Seth Price and two great grandchildren, Ava Price and Aliviah Price.

A memorial service will be held at a later date.

Memorial donations can be made The Gideons International, P.O. Box 97251, Washington, DC 20090-7251.

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.

Condolences can be made to the family at www.maconfuneralhome.com.

Thank You

from the bottom of our hearts for all the hard work, the donations, the calls and notes, but most of all, thank you for all of the prayers.

We sincerely thank you,
The Cody Brabson Families

Kyle Busch wins the Busch Clash at Daytona in wild finish

Holly Cain – NASCAR Wire Service

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. – Two-time NASCAR Cup Series champion Kyle Busch may carry the nickname “Rowdy” but it was a couple of his competitors acting that way that allowed him to move into the lead out of the final turn and earn his second career Busch Clash victory Tuesday night.

Busch’s No. 18 Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota led only the length of a football field en route to the checkered flag – the only time he was out front all night at the exciting 14-turn Daytona International Speedway Road Course. But it was enough – earning the former champion his first victory with new crew chief, Ben Beshore in the annual non-points exhibition that kicks off Daytona Speedweeks.

Race runner-up Chase Elliott had been fighting with then-race leader Ryan Blaney for the lead as the cars went into the final sequence of turns – called the bus stop. They collided. Blaney’s pole-sitting No. 12 Ford hit the wall. Elliott was able to recover enough to head to the finish line but Busch had already gotten around them both to take a .765-second victory.

Joey Logano, Tyler Reddick and William Byron rounded out the top five. Denny Hamlin, who led a race best 21 of the 35 laps, finished sixth, unable to make his way back to the front after a late race pit stop. Alex Bowman, Erik Jones, Ricky Stenhouse Jr. and Matt DiBenedetto rounded out the top 10.

“I kinda felt like there was an interesting opportunity that was developing there,” Busch said of the Blaney-Elliott situation, adding “When that started happening I was hoping they would wreck long enough I could get up there and get by them and win the thing. It’s never over until it’s over in these kind of things.”

Both Elliott, who won the last four NASCAR Cup Series road course events, and Blaney spoke about “going for the win” on that final series of turns. They are close friends off track and said that won’t change despite the competitive run for Tuesday’s trophy.

They had a conversation on pit road after climbing out of their cars and then came to the infield media center at the same time as well for post-race interviews.

Blaney said he was surprised Elliott was able to even make the race as close as it was, considering Blaney’s Ford had fresher tires.

“I hate it happened too, it didn’t work out for either of us,” said Blaney, who started from the pole position and ultimately ended up 13th. “We were just racing hard and I had a little bit fresher tires there. We saved a set [of tires] and got back to second there. His car was really good, I had to use up a lot to get to him. I tried to protect and drove into that last corner really deep to make sure I didn’t get dive-bombed like that. But we just came together.”

“Of course he didn’t mean to wreck me, but I ended up wrecked,” Blaney said later, in the post-race media conference. “I told him if you’re going to make a move like that, at least win the race.”

Elliott, the reigning NASCAR Cup Series champion, was apologetic for the hard contact – especially because it cost them both a victory. But he said he would do it again to win a race.

“Neither one of us won, that’s the big one,” Elliott said. “I was close enough to drive it in there. I feel like I’d be mad at myself for not at least trying. Obviously, I don’t mean to wreck anybody, especially him – some guys I wouldn’t



Kyle Busch, driver of the #18 M&M's Toyota, celebrates in Victory Lane after winning the NASCAR Cup Series Busch Clash at Daytona at Daytona International Speedway on Feb. 9, 2021 in Daytona Beach, Fla. Photo by Chris Graythen/Getty Images

as Tuesday night’s Busch Clash (7 p.m. ET on FS1, MRN and SiriusXM NASCAR Radio).

All told, seven of the 36 points races in 2021 will take place on road courses, but Elliott’s outlook might come as a surprise.

“There’s not been one part of me that watched the schedule change, saw seven road courses and thought, ‘Yeah, we’ve got it now,’” Elliott said. “That’s just not how I am. The schedule is what it is. I don’t enjoy having any more or less road courses. I really don’t care where we go. At the end of the day, you have to be good everywhere, and I want to be good everywhere.”

“We as a team want to get to the point where

we can win on any given week—road course, circle track, intermediate, dirt... whatever it is, we want to be able to win at any time. The great teams and the great drivers are capable of doing that, and I think we are capable doing that. So that’s where my head’s at—trying to be good everywhere.”

mind, but he’s not one of them. Hopefully he’s not too mad at me. I feel like you have to go for it in an event like this.

“I can’t be sorry about going for the win, but certainly didn’t mean to wreck him.”

Daytona Virtual Media Days Notebook

For Chase Elliott, the best title defense is a good offense. Chase Elliott may be the defending champion in the NASCAR Cup Series, but protecting his status isn’t remotely close to his focal point entering the 2021 season.

“There is no defending,” Elliott said on Monday during a video conference with reporters. “We need to be on offense. We need to keep pushing. I think if you’re back on your heels and trying to protect something, I don’t think your mind is in the right place.”

“We want more. We’re not trying to play defense. We just simply want more. That needs to be our outlook and keep it as simple as that.”

You might think Elliott would consider the addition of four road course races to the schedule a major advantage. After all, five of his 11 career victories have come on road courses. Elliott has won the last four NASCAR road races, including the Cup Series’ maiden voyage last year on the Daytona International Speedway Road Course, which will host the second points race of the season on Feb. 21 as well

No looking back for Kevin Harvick

Kevin Harvick topped the NASCAR Cup Series with a career-best nine victories last year. With that total, the driver of the No. 4 Stewart-Haas Racing Ford vaulted past Kyle Busch as the active leader in Cup wins with 58.

Despite winning the regular-season title, however, Harvick failed to make the Championship 4 for only the second time since the introduction of the current elimination Playoff format in 2014. As the 2021 season approaches, Harvick won’t be thinking about what went wrong last year.

“I think, as the season ended and we got about a week through it, I was done and over with it and had a lot to do moving forward,” Harvick said. “In this business, you just don’t have time to dwell on it. If you’re going to continue to be good at what you do, you have to be able to put your mind back to work and take the things that went wrong and make them better—re-focus, and you have to use those things as motivation in order to make those particular things better.”

“I feel like I’m wasting my breath talking about everything

that happened last year, because we've talked about what went wrong, and I've moved on and tried to be ready for this particular season... They (Harvick's team members) know that I'll get pretty frustrated if they want to sit and dwell on what happened last year when we're already into just over a week away from the Daytona 500. They better have moved on. If they haven't, they don't talk to me about it."

Hendrick Motorsports closing in on record for most cup victories

Petty Enterprises set the standard for victories in the NASCAR Cup Series, but Hendrick Motorsports is closing fast.

In 1949, Lee Petty gave his family-founded organization its first win, at Heidelberg Raceway in Pittsburgh. Fifty years later, John Andretti claimed the last victory—and 268th—for Petty Enterprises at Martinsville Speedway.

The Randleman, N.C.-based team ceased operations after the 2008 season, as seven-time Cup champion Richard Petty took on partners in what is now Richard Petty Motorsports, whose five wins don't count in the Petty Enterprises total.

Chase Elliott won five races for Hendrick on the way to the series championship last year, and Alex Bowman and William Byron added one victory each to bring the HMS total to 263. Even if Hendrick surpasses the Petty Enterprises total, team owner Rick Hendrick acknowledges that there will only be one "King".

"The Petty organization will always be kind of the backbone of the sport," Hendrick said. "Richard will always be the King. We may end up with more wins than they did, but what they've done for the sport—you know, Richard has been with Presidents. He is the kind of person that when you mention his name, it helps our whole sport.

"So I'm a little humble to think that 'Hey, I'm going to maybe one day pass his record of wins. I would love to, but I don't know if I'll ever contribute as much to the sport as Richard Petty and the Petty organization have."

Martin Truex Jr. hopes new spotter will help him end superspeedway drought

Before 2019, NASCAR's short tracks were pitching a shutout against 2017 NASCAR Cup Series champion Martin Truex Jr.

That changed dramatically when Truex won the April 13, 2019 event at Richmond Raceway. The driver of the No. 19 Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota completed the Richmond sweep in September before winning for the first time at Martinsville in late October.

In June of 2020, during last year's pandemic-interrupted season, Truex won a second straight race at the .526-mile Virginia speedway, giving him four short-track victories

over a 14-month period. There remains, however, one glaring hole in Truex's resume—something he hopes to correct this year.

Truex has never won a superspeedway race. To try to erase that deficiency at Daytona and Talladega, he has changed spotters this year, from Clayton Hughes to Drew Herring, who has NASCAR Xfinity Series driving experience with JGR (and a best finish of fourth at Kentucky Speedway in 2012).

"I've got a list of things I've been working on," Truex said. "I brought in a change in spotter this year to try to be better at speedways, which is now... you look at the 550 (horsepower) package, basically speedway racing on restarts for a few laps.

"Things like that, we've been working on to get better at. It's everything. It takes all of that to win these races. They are very difficult to win. We look at every avenue."

NOAH GRAGSON GETS GREEN LIGHT TO RACE IN CUP SERIES DEBUT

Now retired from NASCAR racing, Brendan Gaughan has handed off his superspeedway driving duties to a fellow Las Vegas resident.

When the No. 62 Beard Motorsports Chevrolet takes to the track this week, Noah Gragson will be behind the wheel, preparing for his NASCAR Cup Series debut in Sunday's Daytona 500 (2:30 p.m. ET on FOX, MRN and SiriusXM NASCAR Radio). The first Cup start for the full-time JR Motorsports Xfinity Series driver comes in the aftermath of the death of team owner Mark Beard Sr. on Jan. 31.

The original plan was for Gragson to race conservatively until the end of the Great American Race, but that changed recently.

"It started off as, 'You need to go ride and take your time and just be there at the end,' but now it's transitioned into Mrs. (Linda) Beard giving me the thumbs up to go," Gragson said. "She told me to 'drive the piss out of it.' Those were her exact words. I'm excited, because I feel like that's more of my driving style.

"It's definitely going to be a new challenge, a new opportunity. There's going to be adversity, but I know the car will be strong and, hopefully, I'll be able to adapt sooner rather than later with the package for the Cup car being so much different from the Xfinity car. I'm confident in my ability at superspeedway racing. In fact, I'm a lot more confident than I was at this time last year.

"I've been able to run up front at these superspeedway races, lead laps at pretty much all of them, win stages, and I won the race at Daytona last year in the Xfinity Series. It's going to be a great opportunity. I've been dreaming of it my whole, entire life to make a Cup start, and now I have that opportunity, and it's all thanks to the Beard family and Brendan and all the partners involved."

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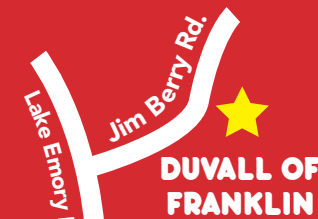
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SUDOKU ANSWERS ON PG. 15

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CROSSWORD PUZZLE ANSWERS ON PG. 15

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THEME: U.S. PRESIDENTS

ACROSS

- Newton's first name
- Part of smog
- Hissy fit
- Human trunk
- Form of "to be"
- Illegal booze
- Editorial changes
- Crematorium jar
- #56 Down, alt. sp.
- *One of six Presidents named James
- *First President previously divorced
- Civil War's Johnny
- Manage without help
- Military procedures
- Cone-shaped quarters
- MLB bench
- Cowboy's necktie
- A whole lot
- *Whig, e.g.
- Resembling wings
- Nightly necessity
- Experience emotion
- Large ray
- Glacier's deposit
- "Watch out!" on a golf course
- Traditional sock pattern
- Reduced Instruction Set Computer
- Knight's title
- Bypass
- Foot digit
- *President Chester
- *He signed legislation to create Medicare
- Fauna, Merryweather and _____, fairy godmothers
- Expert
- Convex molding

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68. Bumpkins

69. Café alternative

70. Car ways

71. Trans-Siberian Railroad city

72. Piercing part

73. Slightly drunk

9. Cheap form of payment?

10. Before Scotia

11. Clickable picture

12. Olden day "your"

15. Be in charge, two words

20. Newspaper notices

22. What all of #70 Across do

24. Painting or poetry

25. *He beat McCain and Romney

26. Kind of cap

27. Colloquialisms

29. *First "dark horse"

31. Gamecock's spur

32. Dessert sandwiches

33. Wombs

34. *#29 Down predecessor

36. Creative

38. 18-wheeler

42. Green pasta sauce

45. Big Island greetings

49. Australian flightless bird

51. Group of people, often in research

54. Extremely angry

56. Concluding stanza in poetry

57. *G. W. Bush to Yale, e.g.

58. Schneider and Lowe, e.g.

59. Major bike maker

60. Audience's rejection

61. Sold in bars

62. Auto pioneer

63. Like a busybody

64. Back, to a pendulum

66. Latin dance three-step move, once

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PRE-OWNED VEHICLES

CARS

YEAR	MAKE	MODEL	MILES
1997	Chevrolet	Camaro	16,606
2016	Chevrolet	Camaro	29,780
1972	CHEVROLET	CORVETTE	91,171
2019	Chevrolet	Cruze	14,078
2018	Chevrolet	Impala	8,465
2018	Chevrolet	Malibu	41,816
1930	FORD	MODELA	78,269
2002	Honda	Accord	217,842
2019	Hyundai	Elantra	36,506
2019	Jaguar	XE	22,558
2020	Nissan	Altima	38,911
2015	Mercedes-Benz	GLA 45 AMG	36,859
2019	Toyota	Corolla	27,529
2015	Nissan	Altima	41,616

SUVS

YEAR	MAKE	MODEL	MILES
2018	Chevrolet	Equinox	26,234
2018	Chevrolet	Equinox	21,036
2018	Chevrolet	Equinox	48,398
2016	Chevrolet	Equinox	107,191
2016	Chevrolet	Suburban	112,779
2016	Chevrolet	Suburban	51,478
2015	Chevrolet	Traverse	101,068
2017	Chevrolet	Traverse	91,874
2018	Chevrolet	Traverse	17,683
2017	Chevrolet	Traverse	37,692
2015	Chevrolet	Trax	135,060
2019	Ford	Edge	45,478
2018	Ford	Explorer	49,476
2013	Ford	Explorer	135,416
2012	Ford	Explorer	104,587
2014	GMC	Terrain	82,762
2019	GMC	Yukon XL	37,969
2020	GMC	Yukon XL	25,411
2019	Jeep	Cherokee	9,020
2019	Jeep	Cherokee	38,039
2004	Jeep	Liberty	130,097
2016	Jeep	Renegade	85,600
2019	Jeep	Wrangler	6,867
2018	Jeep	Wrangler JK	47,132
2017	Jeep	Wrangler Unlimited	88,737
2018	Jeep	Wrangler Unlimited	52,471
2016	Kia	Sorento	73,230
2019	Kia	Sorento	21,976
2016	Land Rover	Range Rover Sport	55,302
2016	Lexus	GX 460	81,717
2017	Lexus	GX 460	39,179
2018	Mitsubishi	Outlander	49,318
2019	Nissan	Rogue	39,871
2017	Nissan	Rogue	86,430
2018	Volkswagen	Tiguan	19,002

TRUCKS

YEAR	MAKE	MODEL	MILES
2020	Chevrolet	Colorado	4,769
2018	Chevrolet	Colorado	40,758
2018	Chevrolet	Colorado	13,389
2019	Chevrolet	Colorado	3,987
2019	Chevrolet	Colorado	6,928
2020	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500	11,584
2017	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500	41,705
2018	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500	37,411
2019	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500	9,141
2020	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500	6,147
2013	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500	201,568
2012	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500	103,128
2020	Ford	F-150	23,354
2016	Ford	F-150	73,912
2018	Ford	F-150	27,491
2018	Ford	F-150	25,711
2014	Ford	F-150	130,556
2017	Ford	F-150	45,495
2016	Ford	F-250	190,904
2019	Ford	Ranger	2,749
2013	GMC	Sierra 1500	108,664
2019	Nissan	Frontier	39,039
2019	Nissan	Frontier	38,612
2020	RAM	1500	25,556
2020	RAM	1500 Classic	18,621
2018	Toyota	Tacoma	35,770

RECREATIONAL

YEAR	MAKE	MODEL	MILES
2004	HARLEY DAVIDSON	ROAD KING	9,778
2019	KAUFMAN	TRAILER	
2019	POLARIS	SLINGSHOT SL	