

Chamber, EDC create resources to promote small businesses

Brittney Lofthouse – Contributing Writer

Macon County’s Economic Development Team has been hard at work the last few months to help local businesses impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic. From being a resource hub for business assistance opportunities to serving as an information center for timely updates, the Economic Development Commission’s role in the county quickly shifted from growing the local economy to helping small businesses continue operating in an uncertain economic climate.

In an effort to reach as many business owners as possible, Macon County EDC led the charge in developing the website, “Reopen Macon,” which went live this week.

“COVID-19 has brought dramatic changes to our community in a very short time,” said Macon County Economic Development Director Tommy Jenkins. “With that in mind, the Macon County EDC, Franklin Area Chamber of Commerce, Highlands Chamber of Commerce and local governments worked together to provide a one-stop online resource portal for Macon County businesses.” The site includes state and local information, reopening guidelines, best practices, financial assistance options and additional resources of help to the local business community.”

Jenkins said that so many business owners have a variety of questions and concerns and the process to get people back to work varies from business to business. To be more efficient, the Reopen Macon website will ideally serve as a way to answer those questions and encourage residents to get out and shop local.

See EDC page 5



The Dusty Pallet on Main Street displays their “We’re Open” sign while also advertising kids’ paint kits.

Photo by Vickie Carpenter

Deena C. Bouknight – Contributing Writer

As of May 8, when Gov. Roy Cooper announced that a multi-phased reopening of businesses would begin across the state, Franklin Chamber of Commerce has been handing out signs as part of its new campaign, “Tying our Community Back Together.”

Cindy Cavender, director of membership for Franklin Chamber of Commerce, said she gleaned the sign campaign idea from a chamber located in a western state.

“I thought it was a great way to tie businesses together and help folks in the community,” she said.

The staff at the chamber is using recycled t-sign and window-sign boards and laminating them with an in-house printed message that reads: “We’re Open. Tying Us Back Together. Franklin Chamber.” The signage features a graphic of a red bow.

By Monday, May 11, 25 signs had been picked up or distributed to area businesses. Although chamber members, which total 441, have first dibs on free signage, non-chamber-members may call the Franklin Chamber to request a sign at a minimal cost.

“These are tough times. We want to help businesses in any way we can,” said Cavender, “to back up our businesses. We’re trying to think outside the box.”

As part of the sign campaign, the Franklin Chamber has since Friday also publicized on Facebook and on its website the fact that some businesses have reopened. In fact,

See CHAMBER page 5

Town council mulls economic challenges

Deena C. Bouknight – Contributing Writer

Thoughts on the economic health of the Town of Franklin were on the minds of council members at the Tuesday, May 12, 5:30 p.m. work session regarding the proposed budget for fiscal year 2020-2021.

Town Manager Summer Woodard pointed out that COVID-19 has caused unique issues and uncertainty. Before getting into a “deep dive” of the budget, she provided to the council an overview of the budget, which is available for the public’s view on the Town of Franklin website.

In the introduction, the proposed budget states the following: “The North Carolina League of Municipalities is anticipating that municipalities and counties could see at least a 25 percent reduction in sales tax revenues for fiscal year 2020-2021. Water and sewer revenues will also be affected due to COVID-19 and North Carolina Executive Order 124.”

In response, Vice Mayor Barbara McRae expressed concern for “someone who is unable to pay a water bill for ex-

ample ... will they ever be able to pay it off?”

Woodard commented, “There is a concern there ... that we may have to look at some loss at the end of the fiscal year.”

McRae also asked council members if they had any input regarding how small businesses were faring, even though they had only been open for a few days. Mayor Bob Scott conveyed, “What I’m hearing from business owners is that it was a whole lot easier to shut down than it is to reopen.”

– Mayor Bob Scott

Scott added that a “burr under his saddle right now” is the fact that such companies as Lowe’s and Wal-Mart “have made a tremendous amount of money [during the COVID-19 crisis] while mom and pop businesses were closed, but they pay the same on [business] licenses as the guy with a one chair barber shop.” There was no additional discussion about how that could be remedied.

“We tried to maintain the budget in a cost effective

See CHALLENGES page 2

IN THIS ISSUE



Page 12

FHS seniors collect caps & gowns, goodie bags

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CHALLENGES

Continued from page 1

manner for the citizens of the town,” said Woodard. “So when we started the budget process, we tried to trim it as much as possible.” For example, maintaining the current tax rate is recommended with the fiscal year 2020-2021 proposed Town of Franklin budget.

One COVID-19 inspired budget item is a new safety window for Town Hall. “We’ve noticed during the COVID crisis, we’ve had to keep that window closed,” said Woodard, “To do this right, a new window ... a one-time purchase, is estimated at \$6,200.”

A long anticipated budget item involves improvement to the town square gazebo. Woodard explained that it would be rebuilt, but not altered, with a new cedar shake roof at an estimated total cost of \$8,000. “We hope to have it nice and operational by 2021,” she said.

Memorial Park on Main Street is also tapped for some improvements. For the estimated cost of \$16,200, the plan is to replace the floor, repaint the exterior, add mulch, and address drainage issues. “We also want to look into putting games there for recreation purposes,” said Woodard.

Funds have also been budgeted for sidewalk repair and replacement.

A total of \$70,000 has been allotted in this budget for the purchase of two new patrol vehicles to replace two cars that have more than 100,000 miles each on their odometers. Woodard pointed out that some monies will be gained from selling the old police cars.

Woodard said the town “desperately needs” a new street sweeper. The current street sweeper is a 2008 Elgin Crosswind Sweeper with 21,000 miles and 4,100 hours. The approximate life for a sweeper truck is five to eight years. The proposed budget allots \$265,000 to purchase a new sweeper truck. Woodard added, “It’s a big chunk to take in, but it’s on its last leg. If we are able to secure a new one, we may can sell the existing street sweeper for around \$20,000 to offset cost of new one.”

The budget does plan for a July 4 celebration, Pumpkinfest, and two nights of Winter Wonderland. “If we’re open, the [August 21, 2017] eclipse celebration will be considered tiny in comparison,” quipped Mayor Scott, referring to Fourth of July festivities.

Overall, the total proposed budget for fiscal year 2020-2021 is \$9,211,635.00, which represents a decrease in expenditures of \$282,097 from fiscal year 2019-2020.

“Given all the uncertainties, it makes me feel hopeful,” said McRae, after hearing Woodard’s budget summary. Scott commended Woodard on a “tremendous effort.”

For the near future, discussion shifted to alternative ways to assist Franklin businesses. Mayor Scott pointed out that he understood \$831,000 may be coming to Macon County because of the March 19, 2020 CARES Act, which is a government bill set up “to provide emergency assistance and health care response for individuals, families, and businesses affected by the 2020 coronavirus pandemic.”

“If we get that money, how can we help people who are suffering?” asked McRae. “Can the council could come up with a plan for how we could get that money and get it to people who are hurting? Any restrictions on how the money can be spent?”

“It’s almost like the Depression must have been. Some people are extremely hurting right now. Let’s see if we can get some of those monies,” said Mayor Scott. “The hospital has been off 30 or 40 percent. Everybody’s in this boat together; we may not be in it equal, but we’re all in it.”

The Town of Franklin Council agreed to look into possible CARES Act funds opportunities.

“We’ve been really lucky in that we’ve only had three [COVID-19] cases,” said McRae. “But is there anything we haven’t done that we should be doing?”

Woodard said that on June 1, when the Town of Franklin Council meets again, “We can look at what we’ve spent as a whole on COVID-19 crisis. It’s not over yet.”

Finally, some Town of Franklin funds are already available to move forward to have a Main Street banner made to remind and encourage people to support local businesses and restaurants. The Council agreed that that banner would be made and installed.



An overhaul for the gazebo on town square in downtown Franklin has been banded about for years. The Town manager is allowing \$8,000 in the budget for new cedar shake shingles for the roof and a coat of paint.
Photo by Vickie Carpenter

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Highlands Police Department begins a search for new chief

Brittney Lofthouse – Contributing Writer

A search for a new police chief began in February when Franklin Police Chief David Adams announced his resignation to take over the chief spot at Waynesville Police Department. Captain Danny Bates has served as interim since Adams' departure.

The open seat in Franklin saw an influx of applications from capable candidates. The search for a new chief ended last week when Franklin announced the hiring of Bill Harrell – who has served as the Chief of Highlands Police for 14-plus years. Now, Highlands Police Department has a vacancy and is searching for their next leader.

"I congratulate Chief Harrell on his new appointment as Town of Franklin Chief of Police and I wish him the best. I know he will serve the Town of Franklin well," said Highlands Manager Josh Ward. "Chief Harrell's last day will be June 1. We will soon post the vacancy and begin the search for a replacement as soon as possible."

After addressing both the Highlands Police Department and Franklin Police Department, Chief Harrell released a statement thanking Highlands for their support during his career.

"I would like to start by recognizing my family for their unwavering support, patience and grace for this career path we have been invested for almost 27 years and it certainly hasn't been easy considering all the sacrifices of missed birthdays, holidays, vacations and other special occasions. They're the bomb," he said. "Next, I'd like to give a shout out to the Town of Highlands for their leadership's support.

It has been an incredible journey that I do not take for granted and I am forever grateful in their role of shaping me for my service there and this next chapter in my career. I am also eternally thankful for the camaraderie of my colleagues, HPD Officers and staff, Town of Highlands staff and last but certainly not least, the community. It has been a blessing beyond measure for the friendships developed and fostered by the loving hearts of the community and they will be sorely missed, but never forgotten."

Harrell stated that returning to Franklin has been a career goal of his, as he started with the department nearly 30 years when first entering law enforcement.

"Now, regarding this dream from the time I was a rookie for the Town of Franklin almost 27 years ago, I am nervously excited for this opportunity," said Harrell. "I have



Chief Bill Harrell has served as the Highlands Police Chief for more than 14 years. His last day in Highlands is June 1. Chief Harrell has been appointed the new Franklin Police Chief.

traveled for the experience of other agencies that would inevitably mold me for this transition and I look forward to getting to know and serve with the Town of Franklin leadership, police department, and other Town departments. I would be remiss if I didn't say that I am anxiously optimistic to continue to raise the bar for the police department for the betterment of public safety for everyone and I look forward to sharpening the strong talents, abilities and potential that I have recognized FPD Officers and staff possess."

Harrell has a B.S. in criminal justice from Western Carolina University as well as a Master of Justice Administration from Methodist University.

"The town of Franklin is pleased to welcome Chief Harrell," said Franklin Town Manager Summer Woodard. "His experience, education and proficiency will be an asset to the Franklin Police Department. He is an established leader in our community who is familiar with the town of Franklin and Franklin Police Department."

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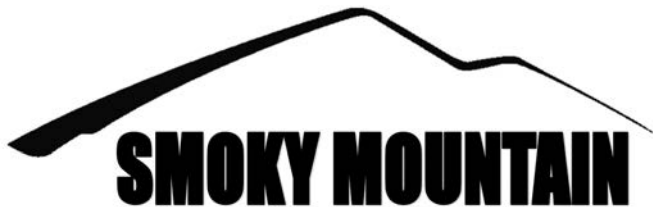
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EDC

Continued from page 1

“As reopening is phased in, the most important thing any of us can do is shop local,” said Jenkins. “Patronize your local retailer, restaurant, service provider...any of our local businesses. Remember, these folks are our neighbors. They work long hours, pay taxes and provide jobs for our community. They are the backbone of our economy and they will need everyone’s support in the coming months. Businesses will also need to utilize all available resources that will enable them to return to profitability and growth. That is a primary objective of the Reopening Macon site; to provide the tools for businesses to get back on track economically.”

The website is one of many measures the county’s economic development team is serving the business community. Jenkins said additional resources will soon be rolled out.

“Macon County EDC will also be partnering with GIS Planning to release ZoomBusiness, a free interactive online directory where local businesses can add their hours of operation, list services and details of their businesses to share with the local community and beyond,” said Jenkins. “We hope to roll that out in the coming days.”

For financial assistance, Jenkins, along with Macon County Commission Vice-Chair Ronnie Beale proposed developing a COVID relief fund for small businesses operating in Macon County. Beale and Jenkins asked commissioners to consider a loan program similar to the one implemented in neighboring Jackson County, which launched their program last week.

With nearly \$1 million in the county’s economic development fund, Beale proposed setting aside \$250,000 to establish a loan program for businesses who have operated in Macon

County for the last 12 months and employ between 1 and 50 people.

“The intention of a loan program like this is to help those small businesses who fell between the cracks and were unable to get help from the state or federal programs,” explained Jenkins. “We would look at partnering with an organization like Mountain BizWorks or the Sequoyah Fund to disburse the funds, we would just be providing the funding.”

Beale explained that for many small businesses, a small loan

ranging from \$2,500 or \$5,000 can help to meet payroll or cover operating expenses temporarily during the uncertain financial times.

“Most banks won’t make loans in such small amounts, so there aren’t any other options for these businesses,” said Beale. “If there has ever been a time that this board could make a difference, it’s now.”

Commissioners intend to consider an official proposal on establishing a fund at their next board meeting.

CHAMBER

Continued from page 1

Someone at the chamber is offering to take a video of a business’s staff saying “Come see us, we’re open” or take a photograph of the business and staff with the new sign, and then post either to the business’s Facebook page with the Franklin Chamber tagged so videos and photographs can be shared. For businesses that do not have a Facebook page, the chamber will simply share the information on its own page.

Cavender pointed out that the signs are being made in-house because of budget constraints.

“This pandemic has been tough on the chamber as well. We’ve lost out on a number of events already. So we’re trying to be as gracious and merciful to our members as possible and provide as much help as we are able to.”

Cavender and executive director Linda Harbuck agreed that

the signage campaign has gotten off to a good start.

“We certainly have hope that everything will rebound quickly. We have reopened the [Smoky Mountain Visitors Center] and are social distancing and only allowing so many in at a time,” said Harbuck. “And we hope businesses are able to hang in there and take full advantage of the different financial



opportunities as far as different grants ... monies designated for small businesses.”

Currently, Harbuck knows of no Franklin businesses that have had to close permanently due to the COVID-19 shelter-in-place mandate.

“I really think that our community can rebound nicely,” said Harbuck, “but they may not necessarily be able to do it quickly. It will take a while for people to adjust to limitations. But I really think that once people start traveling and come

here, and local people are not scared to get out, that there will be a resurgence at local businesses.”

To join the signage campaign, call (828)524-3161, or email Cindy Cavender at cindy@franklin-chamber.com.



COVID-19 has brought dramatic changes to our community in a very short time. As our economy safely phases in, the Macon County EDC, Franklin Area Chamber of Commerce, Highlands Chamber of Commerce and your local governments have come together to provide a one-stop online COVID-19 resource guide for Macon County businesses. Go to ReopeningMacon.com for the latest state and local information, reopening guidelines, best practices and financial assistance options.

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County manager presents \$52.3 million budget to commissioners

Brittney Lofthouse – Contributing Writer

Macon County Manager Derek Roland presented his proposal for the county's \$52.3 million budget Tuesday night. Like many governments across the state, Roland's budget proposal included a level of uncertainty as the lasting implications of COVID-19 remain to be seen.

"We really just don't know," Roland said of what to expect in terms of financial impacts of COVID-19 in the coming year. "We don't have anything else to compare this uncertain time to, so all we can do is plan using the data and predictions we have been given."

Roland noted that while substantial declines in revenue brought about by the pandemic presented many challenges during the budget process, the county's fund balance is helping Macon County remain in good financial position.

"In the coming fiscal year, Macon County will prove its ability to continue operating under what is projected to be a worst-case economic outlook, without adversely affecting employees, primary services or our solid financial position," said Roland. "This could not have been accomplished without the hard work and willingness to compromise shown by all department heads throughout this budget process. As required by state statute, the budget is balanced with revenues and expenditures of \$52,302,445 and is hereby submitted for your review and consideration."

When Roland began the budget process with department heads, COVID-19 was barely a conversation in North Carolina and as such, the budget requests from department heads didn't reflect anticipated impacts of the pandemic. As a result – department head budget requests reflected \$3 million more than what the county was actually able to budget based on Roland's recommendations.

In an attempt to keep the same level of service across the county and retain all employees during a time when many local governments are laying off workers, Roland's budget included a nearly \$1 million reduction in expenditures, most of which were made to capital projects.

Macon County budget cuts

Roland proposed eliminating the Macon County Adult Dental Clinic, which has seen a steady decrease in participants since 2018.

"A continued decline in participation at the Adult Dental Clinic combined with the inability to recruit and retain a dentist or dental hygienist will lead to an estimated revenue shortfall in the program of \$99,798 for coming fiscal year," said Roland. "Due to significant revenue loss anticipated in the coming year and uncertainty surrounding economic recovery, the FY'21 operating budget cannot continue to absorb annual revenue losses in Adult Dental, without sacrifice to those services upon which the majority of our residents depend. As a result, the FY'21 Recommended Budget proposes to eliminate the Adult Dental Program."

The Adult Dental Clinic provided services to 366 individuals, or approximately 1% of the county's total population last year. The dentist position in the Adult Dental Clinic has remained vacant since March 2018, despite continued recruitment efforts by MCPH, including a significant increase in the starting salary amount in the current year budget. During this period, MCPH has contracted with a staffing agency to fill the dentist position, as needed. While this arrangement has enabled the service to continue, the annualized rate charged by the contract dentist is 32% higher than the \$180,937 total compensation package budgeted for a full-time dentist. In addition to the significant rate increase, MCPH also must

pay mileage reimbursement and overnight lodging costs for the dentist. The dental hygienist position has remained vacant since September 2019. This position, has also been difficult to recruit as well as retain, due to higher starting salaries offered by the private sector. Similar to the arrangement with the dentist, MCPH pays a premium to fill the hygienist position using contract labor provided through a staffing agency. The annualized rate charged by the contract hygienist is approximately 19.3% higher than the \$69,515 total compensation package budgeted for a dental hygienist position.

School Capital Projects

Roland proposed leaving the school system's operational budget flat while reducing the district's capital outlay budget by \$250,000 – a decrease he is hopeful will be offset by federal funding available through the CARES Act.

"The FY'21 recommended budget proposes a decrease of \$275,000 to the school system's annual capital outlay budget which is a 9.5% decrease from the average capital funding amount received by the schools during the three prior fiscal years," said Roland. "While this reduction is substantial, reduced overhead costs and annual wear and tear at facilities resulting from extended closures in FY'20 combined with nearly \$200 million in COVID-19 statewide school relief, should help to offset this reduction. This reduction, which will be re-evaluated mid-year as well, does not adversely affect the learning opportunities of students or the livelihoods of locally supported school system employees."

Roland also noted that the future of the Macon Middle School renovations will be temporarily on hold. According to Commissioner Ronnie Beale, the \$15 million anticipated to fully repair the aging facility would

prevent the county from being able to secure another loan for more than seven years. That renovation project will be revisited and prioritized before moving forward.

County employee impact

Roland proposed a budget increase of \$186,151 in the coming fiscal year of 4% to cover the increased cost of health insurance for county employees.

"While this is an increase to the operating budget, it remains well below those experienced in the two prior fiscal years at 24.27% and 10.9% respectively," said Roland. "Health insurance accounts for \$4,242,893 in FY'21 or approximately 8% of the FY'21 operating budget."

Mid-year evaluation

Roland proposed county commissioners revisit capital expenditures requested in the budget by January 2021, when the county will have a better picture of the impacts of COVID-19.

"Rep. Kevin Corbin also told us this week that Macon County would be receiving \$833,000 for COVID-19 relief funds, but we aren't sure how or when that money would come to the county governments or how we can use it," said Roland. "When we receive clarification on that, those funds could be used to address other needs in the budget."

Any new position requests, new vehicle requests, or any change in capital expenditures such as software and equipment needs will be re-evaluated in the middle of the year.

Macon County Board of Commissioners are set to hold their first budget work session on May 26 to discuss potential changes. A public hearing on the budget is scheduled for June 9 at 6 p.m. The budget, along with the county manager's budget message, can be found at www.maconnc.org.


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NEWS BRIEFS

Sheriff's Office offers free smart phone app

The Macon County Sheriff's Office has released a free mobile smartphone app allowing the public access to vital information along with the ability to communicate with law enforcement and find out about MCSO's various services and divisions.

"We are excited to share our latest project with our community which I think will serve as an excellent tool for providing important information and depending on the importance, we can do so in a matter of a few moments and at the push of a button," said Sheriff Robert L. Holland.

Available on Apple App Store or Google Play App Store, the Macon County Sheriff's Office app was developed to improve communication between the sheriff's office and Macon County residents, businesses, and visitors. In addition to allowing the ability to report crime and submit tips, the app will provide the community with the latest public safety news and information. Residents can also access gun permit applications, information on incarcerated inmates, the latest weather and more.

The Macon County Sheriff's Office will also use the mobile app to alert citizens regarding law enforcement activity and/or to share crime prevention information. The app is linked to the MCSO's current social media platforms.

"While we are continuing to build on the information we have already put into our mobile app, we are looking forward to getting feedback from our citizens as to their thoughts of the app to improve it even more. Citizens viewing our mobile app can make comments and submit them directly to our new Macon County Sheriff's Office Mobile App," said Holland.

Check out the Macon County Sheriff's Office mobile app at: <https://apps.myocv.com/share/a42828734>

FHS clients can now use benefits at online EBT retailers

Beginning May 6, North Carolina Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) participants are now able to purchase groceries online using their Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards at authorized online EBT retailers. North Carolina is the 10th state to implement this flexibility, which will remain permanently in place beyond the COVID-19 emergency.

The new flexibility will allow participants to buy food while also promoting social distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and helping families with transportation and

mobility barriers.

"People need to feed their families while also practicing social distancing," said NC Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Mandy Cohen, M.D. "This will allow families to order groceries at home and lower their risk of getting sick."

Currently, Amazon and Walmart are the only authorized retailers approved for online FNS purchases nationally. The U.S. Department of Agriculture must approve other retailers who wish to participate in the FNS online purchasing program. NCDHHS encourages other EBT retailers to pursue USDA approval to become authorized online retailers.

All EBT retailers in North Carolina have received information from USDA about how to become approved for online FNS purchases and other retailers are encouraged to seek approval for online purchasing. More information for retailers is available on the USDA website.

More information about North Carolina Food and Nutrition Services can be found at <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/assistance/low-income-services/food-nutrition-services-food-s-tamps>.

North Carolina individuals and families can apply for FNS at <https://epass.nc.gov/CitizenPortal/application.do>.

Macon County Airport to get \$30K from CARES Act

The U.S. Department of Transportation is awarding \$238.7 million to North Carolina's airports to assist continued operations and save workers' jobs during the coronavirus pandemic. The funding comes from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act that was supported by Senator Tillis.

"North Carolina's airports have seen a dramatic decrease in passenger travel due to COVID-19. This unprecedented travel reduction has drastically impacted airport revenues putting operations and jobs on the line," said Senator Tillis. "The \$238 million in CARES Act funding for North Carolina will help ensure airports across the state have the resources necessary to maintain operations and payroll as we continue to work together to get through this crisis."

Local airports receiving funds:

- Macon County Airport will receive \$30,000
- Jackson County Airport \$20,000
- Asheville \$14.4 million
- Western Carolina Regional in Andrews \$30,000

This funding will support continuing operations and replace lost revenue resulting from the sharp decline in pas-

senger traffic and other airport business due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. The funds are available for airport capital expenditures, airport operating expenses including payroll and utilities, and airport debt payments.

NCDMV extends license, registration expiration dates through Aug. 1

To assist N.C. Division of Motor Vehicle customers and partners in dealing with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, a provision included in the COVID-19 bill signed into law today by Governor Cooper grants a five-month extension of the expiration date on more than two dozen DMV credentials.

The bill also allows the DMV to waive any penalties for a late registration renewal during the extension period. Customers who already paid a \$15 fee for a late renewal in March or April will be reimbursed.

The five-month extension applies to any credential that expires between March 1, and August 1. The list includes:

- Driver license and Learner's permit.
- Limited and Full Provisional licenses.
- Commercial driver license and learner's permit.
- Temporary driving certificate.
- Special identification card.
- Handicapped placard.
- Vehicle registration.
- Dealer license plate.
- Transporter plate.
- Loaner/Dealer "LD" plate.
- Vehicle inspection authorization.
- Inspection station and mechanic license.
- Transportation network company permit.
- Motor vehicle dealer license.
- Sales representative license.
- Manufacturer, Distributor or wholesaler license.
- Driver training school license and instructor license.
- Professional house-moving license.

The bill also extends the due dates for motor vehicle taxes that are tied to vehicle registration to correspond with the extended expiration dates.

The N.C. Division of Motor Vehicles is expanding the type of payments it accepts at its license plate agencies to include non-contact credit and bank cards.

All license plate agencies now accept Apple Pay, Android Pay, Samsung Pay, and other contactless cards for Visa and MasterCard transactions.

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HCA files first annual report since acquiring Mission Health system

Neil Cotiaux – Carolina Public Press

HCA Healthcare has filed its first annual report on how it has complied with the promises it made when it acquired Mission Health system more than one year ago.

As part of its \$1.5 billion deal to acquire nonprofit Mission, for-profit HCA agreed to assume a series of legally enforceable service obligations in an amended purchase agreement hammered out with N.C. Attorney General Josh Stein and Mission.

As part of its promises, HCA consented to put into writing an annual report detailing how it is living up to the obligations.

Late last week, Greg Lowe, president of HCA's North Carolina Division, shared the Nashville, Tenn.-based health care giant's summary of its first-year performance with four parties.

Lowe's report is now in the hands of Stein, who demanded numerous yardsticks of accountability in the purchase agreement; Gibbins Advisors, the independent monitor that is serving as a third-party watchdog over HCA's performance; ANC Healthcare, the sales entity that has been winding down nonprofit Mission's affairs; and six advisory boards that inform decision-making at Mission's hospitals.

In a 17-page report explaining how it has responded to its obligations through Dec. 31, 2019, HCA addresses agreements concerning physical facilities, the provision of enumerated services, charity care, an investment fund to assist regional businesses and a variety of community programs.

New buildings, existing services

Two cornerstones of the HCA-Mission deal involved the construction of a replacement facility for Angel Medical Center in Franklin



The recently completed Mission Health North Tower houses the Asheville hospital's new emergency room, part of several changes in facilities at the Asheville-based medical provider recently acquired by HCA.

Colby Rabon / Carolina Public Press

and of a 120-bed inpatient behavioral health facility in Asheville.

In its report, HCA says it approved a budget of \$66.1 million for the new hospital in Franklin, acquired a site, is finalizing design work and expects to break ground by the end of 2020.

In Asheville, HCA says it expects to complete design and budget work on the behavioral health facility by year's end and plans on developing 25 acres off Crayton Road near Interstate 40 and Sweeten Creek Road. No completion date for the project was provided, but HCA must do so within five years of obtaining permits.

Regarding the continuation of specified

services at HCA facilities, the corporation states that it has "not discontinued the provision of the services" set forth in the amended purchase agreement for the period ending Dec. 31.

In a Feb. 25, 2020, letter to Lowe from Stein, the attorney general had raised concerns about the lack of a sexual assault nurse examiner, or SANE, at Angel Medical Center under Section 7.13(b) and Schedule 7.13 (b) of the amended agreement as part of "emergency services" or "acute medical services" that "shall not" be discontinued.

In Lowe's response of March 4, the division president referred not to SANE staff but to a forensic nursing program that existed at Mis-

sion prior to its being acquired. While Lowe's letter said an FNP nurse may travel from Asheville to Franklin to treat a sexual assault victim or the victim could go to Asheville to see an FNP, it did not address such services being available on a standing basis at Angel.

"It wasn't entirely clear to me whether a nurse moved from where it was to Mission headquarters in Asheville," Stein said in a March 11 interview with Carolina Public Press.

But discussion of the sexual assault treatment issue, along with concerns about HCA's new charity care policy, was then put on hold twice since mid-March, in part due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Charity care

Charity care emerged as a contentious issue during a Feb. 10 town hall meeting held by Gibbins Advisors, the independent monitor, when a delegation of area elected officials led by state Sen. Terry Van Duyn criticized HCA's plan for a lack of transparency.

Along with Stein, Van Duyn and other area officials have criticized the new policy for no longer allowing the preapproval of services, a practice that they said sometimes leads to financial hardships and bills being put out for collection. Stein has told HCA that its policy "appears inconsistent" with the purchase agreement.

In its just-filed annual report, Lowe says that HCA has, as required, maintained an uninsured and charity care policy throughout its first year of ownership. Lowe said the amount of financial assistance provided by HCA during the plan's first year — measured in terms of discounts from gross patient charges — exceeded nonprofit Mission's assistance over the prior 12-month period by \$108.6 million.

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During its first year, HCA provided “approximately \$252 million in charity care, uninsured discounts and other financial assistance,” according to previous statements by Lowe.

There is no indication when differences over how the policy is administered might be resolved.

New investment fund

In a lesser-known obligation within HCA’s purchase agreement, Mission’s new parent company agreed to create an investment fund to help businesses in Western North Carolina develop products or techniques that will improve the quality, cost or efficiency of health care services in the region.

Called HCA Healthcare Mission Fund, Mission’s new owner will deploy \$25 million to screen potential business opportunities that could take the form of direct investments, joint ventures or partnerships to build a sustainable investment pipeline and foster economic development.

The concepts that are funded must be a strategic fit for possible use in HCA’s activities, and any financial returns that are derived could be deployed in additional investments. Initial investments will range from \$500,000 to \$5 million with the possibility of additional support. The innovation fund has launched a website, HCAHealthcareMissionFund.com, to help solicit interest from area

businesses.

While HCA has operated an enterprisewide investment fund for years, the new Asheville-based fund is the only one in the HCA system that will serve a specific geographic region, a Mission Health spokesperson confirmed.

Community programs, local boards

Nearly half of HCA’s 17-page annual report consisted of itemized descriptions of community programs that the company engaged in during its first year of operating Mission. Highlighted programs addressed issues such as cancer, alcohol exposure during pregnancy, child safety and diabetes.

HCA’s first-year report also provides the names of the members of Mission’s local hospital advisory boards that were required to be established under the purchase agreement.

Those boards, composed of four members chosen by nonprofit Mission and four chosen by HCA, would, among other things, be responsible for approving any discontinuance of one or more services at a local Mission hospital, but only in agreement with the independent monitor.

Existing services at rural hospitals may not be discontinued for 10 years starting Feb. 1, 2019, the amended purchase agreement states. The agreement also stipulates that no hospital facility may be sold or closed before 2029.

Harris to resume non-urgent procedures

Harris Regional Hospital has announced that it is taking the appropriate steps to safely resume some elective and non-urgent surgeries and procedures that were previously rescheduled out of an abundance of caution amid the novel coronavirus pandemic. The decision to reschedule procedures when clinically appropriate was made in accordance with federal and state guidance, and aimed to help preserve critical resources in the event of a surge of COVID-19 patients in the community. Today, current projections indicate a lower than expected volume of COVID-19 in the region, which means less strain on health-care resources.

Throughout the pandemic, Harris Regional Hospital has continued to carefully follow guidance from federal, state and local officials, monitor the prevalence of the virus in the community, and evaluate supplies and resources – including personal protective equipment like masks, gowns, gloves and goggles.

The decisions about which procedures can safely move forward will be made only after assessing a comprehensive pre-operative checklist and evaluating potential risks. The hospital will initially focus on scheduling patients with more time-sensitive health needs. Patients who are scheduled and approved for procedures must meet specific requirements, including passing standard COVID-19

screenings. Surgical patients also will be asked to practice “safer at home” behaviors for seven days prior to their procedure to minimize potential exposure; check their temperature twice a day during this seven-day period and report temperatures over 100°F to their provider; and undergo testing for COVID-19. If the county and region begins to see an increase in cases, Harris will reevaluate the feasibility of the current plan and adjust accordingly.

Patients awaiting information about their previously postponed procedure can expect to hear from their provider to discuss rescheduling at the appropriate time.

Harris Regional Hospital will continue to screen and mask everyone who enters the facility and maintain a zero-visitor protocol for the foreseeable future. These measures have had a positive impact on ensuring a safe environment, and they also are aligned with the federal government’s guidelines. Additionally, the facility has implemented new processes and procedures to further protect the health of patients, providers and employees. Visit MyHarrisRegional.com to learn more.

For medical emergencies, call 911 or go directly to the Emergency Room. If possible, tell the dispatcher if the emergency involves symptoms possibly related to COVID-19.

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Costly corona crusade

George Hasara – Columnist



George Hasara

In saner times, (not to be confused with the insaner times we are now living in), there was this thing known as cost-benefit analysis. In other words, do the benefits of an action outweigh its drawbacks? Is it worth the cost? The cost of the corona crusade was fraudulently underrepresented with dubious claims of live-saving benefits based upon rigged computer models. Hey, you don't want to kill grandma do you?

The lockdown was promoted as if we would be taking off a few snow days from school that could be made up in the summertime. No big deal. Plus, what fun to designate one type of enterprise "essential" while another could be banished to the bowels of business purgatory. A very god-like type of power especially in light of the churches being shuttered.

In a matter of a few weeks, 30 million-plus workers were no longer workers. Congress quickly cobbled together a \$2 trillion stimulus bill to paper over self-inflicted seismic cracks in our economy. Most of the money went to the usual suspects of banking, big corporations and back to the government itself. The politicians did learn a lesson from 2008, because this time around, "hush money" of up to \$1,200 per recipient was doled out to the common folk.

Added to the mix of "stimulus" is a \$600-per-week "bonus," if you will, for standard unemployment benefits. For most workers, this makes it more profitable not to work. It's hard to imagine how incentivizing non-work is going to stimulate the economy. However, the United States government is broke. The money injected to provide "stimulus" will be digitally counterfeited printed, diluting the worth of existing currency.

The United Nations World Food Program is warning that the planet is at risk of widespread famines "of biblical proportions" due to the financial distortions created by the coronavirus-inspired shutdowns. The WFP estimates that the number of people at risk of starvation in 2020 will increase by an additional 135 million worldwide. Currently, India alone has 7,000 souls perishing daily from starvation. And, unlike viral infections, it's already known exactly how to prevent those deaths. The simple answer is food. Starvation is a slow painful process but you'll never see the daily death totals scroll

See HASARA page 11

Letters to the Editor

What is happening to the heart and soul of America?

Have you read the "Mueller Report?" The Articles of Impeachment? The Steele Dossier? Any intelligence linking China to the coronavirus? If not, how do you form your opinions regarding Trump's leadership? Reason or raw political emotion?

Do you know the basics of the scientific process? Do you believe America sent a man to the moon? Do you believe America basically preserved freedom during World War II? Do you rely on the achievements of science/technology in your everyday life? Do you trust Donald Trump despite his efforts to deny/distort scientific knowledge? Do you believe that Trump is the only person (as he claims) who can solve major problems for America?

What does it mean that Trump withheld American support to the World Health Organization? Do you know Trump has still not explained what happened in Helsinki? Do you know how many congratulatory calls he has (actually) received from world leaders? Can you trust someone who practices the level of secrecy that Trump does? Do you approve of his lying to the world?

Isn't it about time to ask ourselves these questions: What has Trump done to the heart and soul of the Republican Party? What is he doing to the heart and soul of America?

Dave Waldrop – Webster, N.C.

Thanks for serving and protecting

Thank you to our heroes at the Macon County Sheriff's Dept. and the Franklin Police Dept.

I, as well as all the staff at Grandview Manor Care Center, would like to say a big thank you to Sheriff Robert Holland and all his staff as well to the Franklin Police Dept.

We are so grateful to have dependable men and women we can count on. We sometimes take them for granted, but we are thankful they are here to serve and protect our county and communities while putting their own lives on the line.

Thanks again. You are our heroes.

Sara Holbrooks
Supervisor at Grandview Manor

The Macon County News letters page is a public forum open to a wide variety of opinions. Letters are neither accepted nor rejected on the basis of the opinions expressed. Writers are asked to refrain from personal attacks against individuals or businesses. Letters are not necessarily reflective of the opinions of the publisher, editor or staff of The Macon County News.

Liars believe their own lies

Unlike the time when WWII ended and the people of this nation joined hands and pulled together to get this nation underway again, it seems we have entered a period of fog and our visions are limited.

I really dislike calling Democrats sick but they seemingly are not at all like the Democrats of yesterday. Yes, to be honest, they made up the Ku Klux Klan, fought to keep Jim Crow laws in force and keep black Americans from getting an education that would let them improve their lives. In a real twist, the Democrats are calling the Republicans racists. Ain't that cute?

Democrats have run out of nasty things to call President Trump, probably the best and finest president we've had in over 100 years.

Another fact seems to be the Democrat Party has become the party of liars. You can observe yet another sick twist in this by noting they call anyone who questions them a liar.

Liars come in all sizes and shapes. Some are liars because of wishful thinking and a lie becomes their reality and indeed, they believe their own lies.

Some lie simply because it fits their personality and they can spew hatred for others through their lies.

Some liars are simply failures in life and spitting their hatred by lying is a way of life. It is one way of getting even with the successful people.

Then we have a group of people who frequently write trash in our local papers and frankly, it's difficult to figure out what their point is. All they can come up with is hatred for our way of life and especially President Trump. I suspect they are either Communists or Socialists angry because they didn't get to transform our system of government to match that of Cuba and Venezuela. One might see them as Chinese assets.

One thing has recently been uncovered is we had a whole team of corrupt politicians and bureaucrats working in powerful jobs who had been planning on getting rid of anyone who ran for president on a free market Republican platform. Pelosi, Comey, Schumer, Schiff, along with a dozen other criminal types were hard at work to bring about a Socialist central planning government. (Socialism mixed with Fascism)

As we have also seen, they would stoop to anything to get their way.

Just as a matter of interest, how did the FBI director James Comey become worth 14 million bucks?

The Russian hoax garbage revealed the dirtiest side of the current crop of Democrats and one must consider what sort of corrupt government would America have had if they were able to overthrow our Republic?

Frankly, I don't think there is a Washington Democrat alive smart enough to run this country and certainly none smart enough to tell me and my kids how to run our lives. God help President Trump keep us free.

Bob Wilson – Franklin, N.C.

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A bigger picture of liberty

Why do we sit down when all should be standing?
 And why do we back down at the critical moment?
 When it's time to stand upright, then why do we falter?
 Like placing our freedom on the sacrificial altar.
 We hold tight to our fears and defend our oppressors
 As we fight for their lies and become the transgressors
 When is the right time to stand up for freedom?
 Could it be when you start to fear for your children
 Who'll inherit the pain and the debt of this nation
 And be slaves to the banks who cause hyperinflation
 Who are masters of commerce, lies, and bad legislation.
 If you looked in the eyes of a thousand young children
 Through fences of razors, their innocence stolen
 As the red flag of tyranny flies in the open
 Is that when you'll finally notice?

I'm only a stranger who's looking to find better nature in my fellow man

But they keep telling me it's a sin to be free and that's more than I'm willing to stand

Where will you be when the order is given?
 To censor your mind as free speech is forbidden
 As martyrs for peace from the world will be driven
 Away by the sound of a bellowing thunder
 And choke on the blood of a dream going under
 As arrogant men tear up our Constitution
 And from every direction we cry revolution
 Standing together and without permission
 Soldiers for truth in the War of Attrition
 The love of our country as our ammunition
 I'm only a stranger here and I'm a long, long way from my home

But I'm going to change the things I find strange
 For I know that I'm not alone
 Yes, I know, I'm not alone.

Jordan Page – Franklin, N.C.

Honoring two great American patriots

I believe Helen Frances Andrews Flynn is looking down from above with joy and satisfaction, as the Justice Department dropped charges against her son, Lieutenant General Michael Thomas Flynn, 33-year veteran, U.S. Army. General Flynn has been through hell for the past three-and-a-half years. He has had to defend himself, racking up millions in legal fees. He has had to sell his house to cover fees. He was pressured to plead guilty to a process "crime" as he was set up under false pretenses, and without an attorney present. The ruthless and corrupt Mueller team threatened him with going after his son if he refused to plead guilty. He and his wonderful new attorney, Ms. Sidney Powell should immediately sue all those involved in framing him, for hundreds of millions of dollars in damages for defaming his good name, and putting him under such extreme duress. I believe he knew too much, and the Deep State couldn't risk allowing him to serve as President Trump's National Security Advisor.

Since the documents were released last week, much attention has been focused on a handwritten note by FBI counterintelligence head Bill Priestap in advance of the January 2017 interview with Flynn that would result in the retired lieutenant general being charged with lying to federal agents: "What is our goal?" Priestap asked, "Truth/Admission or to get him to lie, so we can prosecute him or get him fired?"

Seeing the corrupt basis for the interview and subsequent charges against Flynn, everything else done to Roger Stone, Paul Manafort, and others persecuted during the \$30 million three-year witch hunt led by Mueller should be called into question.

It is time to punish those who used the strong arm of the

intelligence agencies of the U.S. government, in collusion with foreign powers, notably the United Kingdom, to try to overthrow the duly elected president of the United States, Donald Trump. These actions are treasonous, and call for long prison sentences (at least).

Another mother who should be honored is the Dallas salon owner, Shelly Luther, who like her namesake, Martin Luther, defied the powers that be, and stood on principle. Shelley Luther was booked in the Dallas County jail on Tuesday following a video hearing during which she refused to apologize for repeatedly flouting the order, leading the judge to find her in contempt of court and sentence her to a week behind bars. "I couldn't feed my family, and my stylists couldn't feed their families," Luther testified Tuesday, saying she had applied for a federal loan but didn't receive it until Sunday. Dallas County Judge Eric Moye said during the hearing that he would consider levying a fine instead of jail time if Luther would apologize and not reopen until she was allowed to do so, but Luther refused. "Feeding my kids is not selfish," she told Moye. "If you think the law is more important than kids getting fed, then please go ahead with your decision, but I am not going to shut the salon." Moye wrote in his judgment of contempt: "The defiance of the court's order was open, flagrant and intentional." He noted that despite being given the opportunity to apologize, Luther "expressed no contrition, remorse or regret" for her actions.

Good for her! It took a lot of courage to stand up to that judge's attempt to trample on Shelley's constitutional rights.

Senator Ted Cruz showed his support for Salon a la Mode by getting his hair cut there Friday. "We're thrilled to be with you and know the whole State of Texas is standing with you, so thank you for your courage," Cruz told Luther.

Calling Luther an "American Hero," her supporters set up a GoFundMe page, which has received more than \$500,000 in only a few days. After spending about two days in prison, the Texas Supreme Court ordered her release immediately on Friday. Luther said "I have a lot of attorney's fees, and some mortgage to catch up on, but we have decided to spread some of that gift today in South Dallas. I've also reached out to the two ladies in Laredo, and I would like to pay for their attorney's fees and any citations they were given... and maybe give them a little bit of head start money."

I hope Shelley Luther and her staff had a wonderful Mother's Day. They deserve it for standing up for us all. We need more Americans with her kind of courage. No judge has the authority to violate any American citizen's constitutional rights. It takes guts, but if we don't stand up and claim our rights, they will be gone. And may God give us more people like General Michael Flynn. Maybe we will see a return of the rule of law, and of justice for all in our country.

Ed Hill – Franklin, N.C.

Urgency is in the eye of the beholder

It's almost impossible to think or talk about anything other than the Covid-19 pandemic. Countries throughout the world are deadlocked in a war with this lethal adversary and engagement with most issues other than the Coronavirus have been sidelined. But as we combat the Coronavirus emergency, is it possible that what we're learning now could help raise consciousness about another virulent crisis - one that has been insidiously, yet inexorably looming in the background of our lives?

Both the Coronavirus and climate change are conceivably catastrophic for humanity. They've evolved however, at different rates and over different timeframes. In just a few short months, Covid-19 has disrupted almost every aspect of societies around the world. For many of us, thoughts about Covid-19 are accompanied by an unrelenting subconscious existential anxiety. Thoughts about climate change may be less intense but the climate crisis

HASARA

Continued
from page 10

across your screen. There's no political value in it.

Meanwhile, back home, decreasing prosperity and social isolation are a very real health risk. In this country there are an estimated 160,000 "deaths of despair" per year, which are made up of suicides, fatal drug overdoses, and alcohol-related diseases. Which direction do you think those numbers are headed? Yet another cost not calculated.

I believe that we were already in a precarious economic situation prior to 2020, headed for a major recession or depression. The near-global lockdown however has hamstringed the world's economy in a similar way a runner is hobbled by a charlie horse. Maybe he can still run, but it's definitely bad news if the race has just started, and it's a marathon. We need to get better at making cost-benefit decisions and soon. There's a long, rocky road ahead.

Contact George at georgehasara@yahoo.com.

remains relentlessly sinister in its slow destruction of our environment and life on earth. We're simply not as conscious of the impact of climate change on a daily basis because we don't experience it as an existential threat every day in the way we are being forced to as we live through the Covid-19 crisis.

Climate change affects every aspect of our lives - our health and welfare, agricultural security, and our geopolitical and economic stability. These devastating effects, difficult to both quantify and to feel from day-to-day are corrosive, nonetheless. The impact of Coronavirus is immediate in a more palpable way. There's an "urgency component" to the Coronavirus that the climate crisis lacks. Those who test positive for Covid-19 next week were actually infected today... yesterday or the day before. That delay obscures the problem as cases continue to grow exponentially. As with the climate crisis, the less we do early enough to defeat this virus, the more overwhelming it will be in the future.

Most of us recognize the importance of addressing both Covid-19 and climate change, but the motivation for dealing with each is quite different. If you maintain social distancing, you help to disrupt the chain of transmission, offering some measure of protection to others, but you also protect yourself from infection—a compelling incentive. If you limit your greenhouse gas emissions, you have an impact on climate change, but the personal benefit from that reduction is negligible, providing you with minimal incentive to reduce emissions. If those who initially considered Covid-19 as comparable to the flu are now acting with urgency to limit the spread of Covid-19, perhaps climate change deniers can evolve to accept the reality of the climate crisis. Perhaps enough people will come to understand the gravity of these two problems before they're disastrous and irreversible. If Congress were to support a Carbon Fee and Dividend, such as HR 763, this could be the game-changing first step to mitigating the worst effects of climate change. Today should be your day to feel a sense of urgency about the climate crisis, before it's too late.

Melissa Schreiber – Topton, NC
Citizen's Climate Lobby

Email letters to the editor to
maconcountynews@gmail.com



The faculty and staff of Franklin High School handed out caps and gowns to graduating seniors on Monday along with some special goodies. FHS receptionist Renee Vargas baked 200 cupcakes for the students decorated with "Class of 2020."

Photos by Vickie Carpenter



Jami Waldrop and the Senior Class committee purchased signs with all the seniors names and posted them on the fence at the high school track. Once the signs are removed, they will be presented to senior class members.

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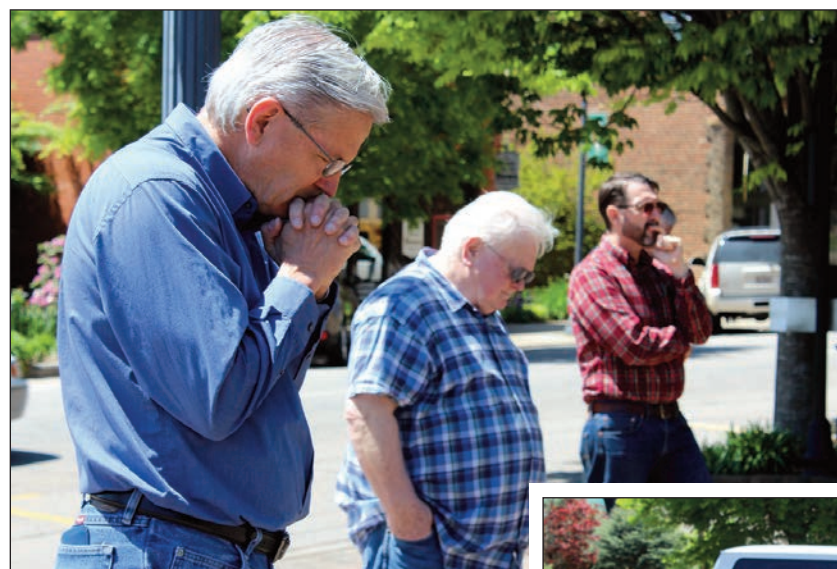
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National Day of Prayer observed in Franklin



The National Day of Prayer was quietly observed in downtown Franklin last Thursday. Led by Rev. Mike Barres, executive director of Teen Challenge of the Smokies, several local pastors prayed earnest prayers for the people of the county, state and nation. Barres led a few worship songs as observers practiced social distancing and some joined in from their cars.

Photos by Vickie Carpenter



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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 April 30 - May 10. All suspects are innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.



Macon County Sheriff's Department

May 1
 Jeffery Lee Fox, was charged with assault by strangulation, assault on a female. Nick Lofthouse made the arrest.

May 5
 Ralph Norman Peteman, was charged with simple assault, assault and battery. Joel Lynch made the arrest.

Joshua David Shelton, was charged with assault on a female, warrant service for offense committed in jurisdiction.

May 9
 Anne J'Lene Self, was charged with simple assault. Anthony Zari made the arrest.

May 10
 Wesley Alan Hedden, was charged with domestic physical. Anthony Zari made the arrest.

Franklin Police Department

April 30
 Brandon Patrick Burke, 33, was issued a fugitive warrant for probation violation, maintaining a vehicle for use/sale/keeping of a controlled substance, possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of firearm by a felon, carrying a concealed gun, resist/delay/obstruct, possession with intent to sell/deliver a methamphetamine, possession of a firearm by a felon, possession of a schedule VI controlled substance, possession of drug paraphernalia, possession with intent to sell/deliver heroin, carrying a concealed gun, registration plate violation, possession with intent to sell/deliver heroin, possession with intent to sell/deliver methamphetamine. A \$100,000 bond was set. Officer Dula made the arrest.

May 5
 Anita Belle Rodriguez, 47, of Crisp St., was charged with trespass. A secured bond of \$500 was set. Officer Riles made the arrest.

May 7
 Drake Alexander Anderson, 32, of Bell Rd., was charged with simple assault. An unsecured bond of \$1,000 was set. Officer Bingham made the arrest.

Jackson County Sheriff's Department

May 4
 Evelyn Stewart Bailey, 49, of Wolfe Creek Rd., Almond, was charged with failure to appear. A secured bond of \$200 was set.

Robert Allen Hooper, 43, of Keyhole Lane, Cullowhee, was charged with possession of a controlled substance on

jail or premises. A secured bond of \$1,000 was set.
 Megan Dawn Wilnoty, 26, of Elsie Rattler Rd., Cherokee, was charged with possession of drug paraphernalia, simple possession of a schedule V controlled substance. No bond was set.

May 5
 Steven Dale Eplin, 39, of Fair Oaks Dr., Gastonia, was charged with failure to appear for misdemeanor, traffic violation. A \$500 bond was set.

May 6
 Tommy Lee Rickman, 34, of Julia Ann Taylor Rd., Cherokee, was charged with domestic violence protective order violation. No bond was set.

Katrina Lynn Cook, 22, of Sylva, was charged with injury to real property, breaking and entering. A secured bond of \$250 was set.

Devin Dakota Collins, 27, of Sylva, was charged with robbery with a dangerous weapon. A secured bond of \$50,000 was set.

Michael Lee Kelley, 58, of Fulcher Rd., Franklin, was charged with maintaining a vehicle for a controlled substance, possession with intent to manufacture/sell/deliver a schedule II controlled substance, possession of methamphetamine. A secured bond of \$2,500 was set.

Ellen Marie Clark, of Planters Way, Easley, S.C., was charged with assault by pointing a gun, misdemeanor child abuse. An unsecured bond was set.

Jessica Renee Yates, 38, of Webster Rd., was charged with possession of marijuana paraphernalia, possession with intent to sell/deliver marijuana, possession of methamphetamine. No bond was set.

Dakota Allen Cagle, 26, of Dakota Dr., was charged with driving while license revoked. No bond was set.

May 7
 Sierra Salone Jenkins, 30, of Whittier, was charged with misdemeanor probation violation for out of county, larceny of chose in action, possession of stolen goods/property, obtain property by false pretenses, possession of stolen motor vehicle, misdemeanor larceny. A secured bond of \$5,200 was set.

Ray Lamont Moore, 55, of Burton St., Asheville, was charged with failure to appear for driving while license revoked. A secured bond of \$500 was set.

April Denise McJunkin, 46, of Roselee lane, Swannanoa, was charged with probation violation. A secured bond of \$10,000 was set.

May 8
 Charles Jarrell Allen, 22, of Monty St., Asheville, was charged with assault with a deadly weapon causing serious injury, burglary/breaking and entering. A secured bond of \$50,000 was set.

Cody Lee Reitman, 23, of Pumpkintown Rd., was charged with possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of methamphetamine. No bond was set.

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N.C. state parks begin phased reopening

Following guidance from the Governor's office and the Department of Health and Human Services, North Carolina's state parks are increasing recreational access and services beginning May 9. The Division of Parks and Recreation is working with state and local public health authorities to closely monitor the COVID-19 pandemic and use a phased, collaborative approach to increase access to North Carolina State Parks.

Beginning last Saturday, 29 state parks that were closed reopened including most roads, trails, restrooms and some boat ramps. Some access areas may be closed, so visitors should check park webpages for details. Campgrounds, picnic shelters, swim areas, playgrounds, visitor centers, and other common gathering areas will remain closed during this phase.

The health and safety of employees, visitors, and residents remain the highest priority as the state moves forward with easing restrictions at parks. Park superintendents have examined each facility function and service provided to ensure those operations comply with public health guidance. Cleaning procedures effective for COVID-19 disinfection are established and staff are trained to disinfect restrooms and high-touch areas. Park staff have Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as they interact with the public and clean restrooms and other areas.

"The importance of our parks and trails to North Carolinians has become quite apparent during this pandemic," said State Parks Director Dwayne Patterson. "While we look forward to welcoming visitors back to the parks that have been closed, we are approaching this phased reopening with safety in mind. As we

balance the high visitation we expect with our responsibility to protect park staff and natural resources, we ask that everyone be respectful of park staff, other visitors, and the parks' natural areas."

A return to full operations will occur in phases. The current plan calls for reopening campgrounds in the second phase, and the third and final phase will include opening common areas and resuming educational activities and other programming.

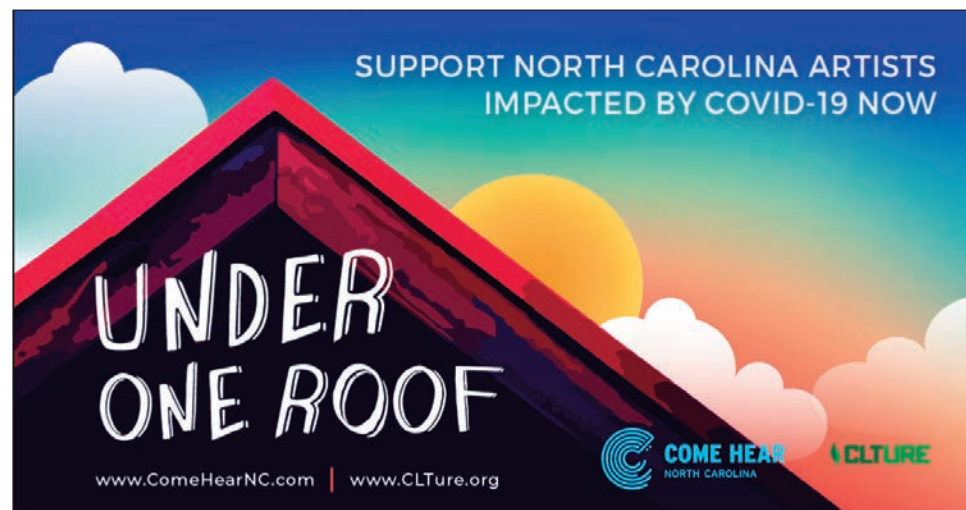
To ensure health and safety, park visitors



Windy Falls, Gorges State Park, Rosman, N.C.

should follow the "Three W's" as outlined by the N.C. Dept. of Health and Human Services – wear a mask or cloth face covering; wait in line at least six feet away from others, and wash hands frequently. Visitors should also follow local health orders, maintain social distancing, bring hand sanitizer and reusable water bottles, avoid high-risk activities and practice Leave No Trace principles.

Park staff ask that visitors check the park webpage for information before their visit rather than calling the park office. For the most up to date information about facility openings, service hours, and access, visit ncparks.gov/open.



'Under One Roof' benefit concert raises \$50,000 for N.C. artists

Presented by Come Hear North Carolina, "Under One Roof," a three-day, three-hour virtual music festival, raised \$50,000 to support artists across North Carolina whose work has been disrupted by COVID-19, organizers announced.

The benefit concert which featured virtual performances, interviews, and messages from North Carolina musicians, who participated to help artists across the state, has been viewed 120,000 times to date. All proceeds from Under One Roof will be distributed to artist relief efforts.

Musicians who donated their talent and time included Anthony Hamilton, 9th Wonder, Ben Folds, Fantasia, The Hamiltones, Petey Pablo, Tift Merritt, Jim Lauderdale, Steep Canyon Rangers, Brooke Simpson, Chatham County Line, Joe Troop of Che Apalache, and The Harvey Cummings Project. Additionally, videos created by the Emmy and Peabody Award-winning Markay Media in Durham chronicled the impact of COVID-19 on the lives of artists in our state.

"Under One Roof was a creative, inno-

vative statement on how artists come to the fore in the face of adversity," said Wayne Martin, Executive Director of the North Carolina Arts Council. "And the high level of viewer donations demonstrates how strongly North Carolinians feel about our artists. We always turn to artists for inspiration and solace during hard times, but we will also show up to support them in a crisis. Our citizens know that the arts and artists are key to our cultural identity here in North Carolina, as well as vital to our economy."

Under One Roof was produced by the Charlotte-based entertainment publication CLture in collaboration with the North Carolina Arts Council, an agency of the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. The North Carolina Arts Foundation, a nonprofit that raises funds from the private sector to support the work of the North Carolina Arts Council, is receiving and dispersing donations.

Contributions to the fund are still encouraged through the North Carolina Arts Foundation at www.paypal.me/NCarts.

Rabun Gap celebrates student artists

Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School students came together virtually to celebrate the arts in the annual MADFest Showcase.

MADFest is an opportunity for Middle School and Upper School students to create, perform and display their talents. COVID-19 moved the annual event online, and Rabun Gap students submitted video and photo entries in vocal music, instrumental music, visual arts, dance, drama, and film. More than 150 viewers tuned in to the live-streamed performance. The full show can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-jP7vmSML8>

The following students from Macon County received awards for their outstanding work.

Performance Art Awards Instrumental

Second Place: Lawson Webster, Franklin
Honorable Mention: Clayton Hutchison, Otto

Vocal

First Place: Tsering Lama, Highlands

Dance

Second Place: The Brenner Sisters - Sarah Katherine, Elizabeth and Abigail, Franklin

Visual Arts

High School 3-D

Second Place: Rachel Wu, Franklin

Middle School 2-D

Honorable Mention: Annalise Fon, Franklin

Middle School 3-D

First Place: Sophia Moore, Highlands

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Dillsboro's Front Street Arts & Crafts Festival set for July 18

As America re-opens, the walk-about mountain town of Dillsboro takes a deep breath, and plans to throw open their town in celebration with the Front Street Arts & Crafts Festival on Saturday, July 18, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Front Street gets its name from running alongside the tracks of the Great Smoky Mountain Railroad and when a festival hits the town, the street comes alive with fine arts and crafts from local artisans and home spun musical talent. Strewn with vibrant colors, inviting festival aromas—kettle corn, funnel cakes, fried pies—the ringing of stringed instruments, and the sound of dancing feet, the Front Street Arts and Crafts Show will provide fun for all ages.

Among more than 40 vendors on Front Street, visitors will find pottery, glass, candles, jewelry, needle crafts, bird-

houses, soaps, gourds, photography, metal art, fiber art and visual arts: oil painting, pen and ink drawings, pastel prints and so much more. Strolling through the town, visitors can also slip into the shops and peruse the many different items especially chosen with you, the visitor, in mind. At lunchtime there are many restaurants from which to choose to sit and relax.



The Front Street Arts & Crafts Show set for July 18 in Dillsboro will introduce J Creek Junior Cloggers, a new group created to help keep the mountain tradition of clogging alive.

The entertainment stage located at the end of Church Street, will host four local acts. Beginning at 11 a.m., a high-energy dance team, the J. Creek Cloggers, based out of Haywood County, North Carolina, will dance on the street. This group of dancers are keeping alive the old mountain tradition of clogging, audience participation square dances, and broom dances. Members will demonstrate different styles of dance including buck dancing, flat-footing, and clogging. Director for the team is Kim Ross.

At 12 noon, the crafts show will feature Scott McCracken on guitar and vocals. McCracken is a WNC native with a lifetime of guitar, bass and vocal projects from full bands to acoustic acts in many genres—all done with expertise, heart and soul.

Beginning at 1 p.m., once again the town of Dillsboro will feature the husband and



J Creek Cloggers from Haywood County dance on Dillsboro's Front Street at a previous festival.

wife team of Twelfth Fret, an acoustic duo with Craig Neidlinger on guitar and Kim Neidlinger on upright bass. Twelfth Fret performs original as well as pop and classic rock covers of music by John Prine, America, The Beatles, David Bowie, The Eagles, Elton John, Tom Petty and more.

At 2 p.m., an exciting young group will entertain the crowd. The J. Creek Junior Cloggers, echos of the adult clogging group, are a dance team also based in Haywood County, who are introducing a new generation to an old mountain tradition. Members range in ages from five years old to 13. Director and founder of the team is also Kim Ross.

Brenda Anders of Dogwood Crafts, an arts and crafts cooperative located on Webster Street says about the small town festival, "We are looking forward to seeing you...come on out and enjoy the day with us." Anders is the event planner of the festival. To learn more about the show, contact her at (828) 506-8331 or email: brendaanders@frontier.com.

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Could you be missing out on some senior discounts? Here's a few things to know

Chris Orestis – Senior Advocate

People who reach or near their retirement years often need to watch every penny.

Sure, some of them are financially fit and don't lose sleep worrying that their bank accounts and investments will run dry out of money. For many, though, frugality is the watchword as they struggle to make it through each month.

Fortunately, aging does come with at least one financial perk – senior discounts that restaurants, grocery stores, retail stores, airlines, car rental companies, hotels and other businesses offer to their older clientele. These discounts give older Americans a break on prices for everything from a gym membership to a fast-food meal to a movie ticket.

You would think all seniors and their families would be all over these opportunities. But, surprisingly, many people don't take advantage. In some cases, that could be because it doesn't occur to ask whether a discount is available. In other cases, people just have a hard time thinking of themselves as seniors.

But you need to be aware – and you should always ask. In scouring for discounts, here are a few other things to keep in mind:

Don't assume you're too young. How old do you need to be? It varies. That's one reason it's always good to ask. You could already be eligible for a discount at a business and not realize it. For example, AARP membership starts at 50 and comes with numerous discounts built into the membership. Chili's restaurants offer a 10 percent senior discount to those 55 and older. At the other end of the scale, Taco Bell will give you a free beverage, but not until you are at least 65.

Sometimes when you go matters. Some discounts happen on a particular day of the week. Just as an example, some Captain D's restaurants offer a "Happy Wednesday" discount where once a week seniors can choose from among eight meals at a reduced price. No one expects you to schedule your entire life around discounts, but for some individual things – such as a night at the movies or dinner out or even a shopping trip to a retail store – it's worth knowing that going a day earlier or a day later might make a difference.

Occasionally, you don't even have to be a senior. Plenty of opportunities exist to save money whether you're advancing in years or not. Many stores offer store "memberships" that come with a discount with each purchase. Also, the American Automobile Association is another organization whose members enjoy a number of discounts in much the same way AARP members do.

Individually, some discounts might amount to just a dollar or two. But as you take advantage of more of them, those savings grow. When you're on a fixed income – or just want to get the most out of every dollar you have – the difference over time can be significant.

About Chris Orestis

Chris Orestis, known as the "Retirement Genius," is President of LifeCare Xchange and a nationally recognized healthcare expert and senior advocate. He has 25 years experience in the insurance and long-term care industries, and is credited with pioneering the Long-Term Care Life Settlement over a decade ago. Orestis is author of the books "Help on the Way" and "A Survival Guide to Aging," and has been speaking for over a decade across the country about senior finance and the secrets to aging with physical and financial health.



Deaths & Funerals

Marjorie 'Margie' Pearl Bozeman

Marjorie "Margie" Pearl Bozeman, 71, of Franklin, N.C., passed away on Monday, May 4, 2020.

Born in Clarkesville, Ga., she was the daughter of the late Karl Stancil and Marie Ruth Harris Stancil. She worked as an LPN for many years and was a member of Pine Grove Baptist Church.

She is survived by her husband of 22 years, Ronald "Ronnie" Bozeman; three children, Marie Elizabeth Pitts of Cleveland, Ga., James Windham Byrnes III (Mandy) of Flowery Branch, Ga., Daniel Haskell Byrnes (Courtney) of Dahlonega, Ga.; and six grandchildren, Austin Pitts, Samuel Pitts, Faith Pitts, Caroline Byrnes, Dawson Byrnes and Kyle Byrnes.

A funeral service was held Sunday, May 10, in the Chapel of Macon Funeral Home with Rev. Greg Rogers and Rev. Mike Chastain officiating.

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.

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



Marjorie Pearl Bozeman

Shannon Paige Sticka

Shannon Paige Sticka, 50, of Highlands, N.C., passed away Monday, May 4, 2020. She was born July 29, 1969, in Denver, Colo., to Dale A. Sticka and the late Jane Lea Norman Sticka. She was an avid lover of animals, especially her dog "Chiquita." She loved being outdoors skiing and hiking and she enjoyed coloring and painting. She attended the First Presbyterian Church of Highlands.

She is survived by her father, Dale Sticka of Highlands, and her dog "Chiquita." She is preceded in death by her mother Jane Lea Norman Sticka.

A Celebration of Life Service will be held at a later date.

Bryant-Grant Funeral Home and Crematory is serving the Sticka family. Online condolences can be made at www.bryantgrantfuneralhome.com.



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Donald Beauchamp Fisher

Donald Beauchamp Fisher of Highlands, N.C., born on Sept. 22, 1941, entered the Church Triumphant on May 9, 2020. He had faced life valiantly while experiencing both Hodgkin's lymphoma and metastatic adenocarcinoma.



Donald Fisher

A native Virginian, son of the late Lee Washington and Violet Beauchamp Fisher, he loved his parents, his three brothers who survive – Lee Jr. (Nancy), Bobby (Sharon) and Albert (Brenda) – and life on the family farms in Northumberland County, Virginia. Always intrigued with nature, he would cultivate his interests of the land while assisting his dad and brothers on the farms. Later he would grow beautiful vegetable and flower gardens. He would further his knowledge of the farms' timberlands studying forestry at LSU, his beloved Alma Mater.

Busy on the farm as a youngster and teenager, he had never considered going to college. However, at the last hour he enrolled in Ferrum College in southwest Virginia.

His beloved professors at LSU, most of whom he spoke fondly, inspired him to always do his best in his field. As a forester, he worked with Union Bag Corporation/ Union Camp, and finally International Paper, working primarily out of Brunswick and Southampton counties in Virginia, as well as eastern North Carolina. His duties included wood procurement and land management, eventually in real estate sales of land and timber, working in the forests for 36 years. Later, he pursued his real estate license, practicing for several years before retiring again in 2018.

While at LSU, he participated in ROTC which led to his enlistment in the United States Marine Corps. He endured basic training at Parris Island, S.C., and Camp Lejeune, N.C. He spent the ensuing five years attaining the rank of Sergeant in the Marine Corps Reserve First 105MM Howitzer Battery, Force Troops, at Richmond and Quantico, Va. A loyal Marine, he loved his country and always remained a man of integrity.

Most important to Don Fisher was his family. He is survived by his wife, Betty, a Highlands native whom he met in 1962 while working a summer job with the U.S. Forest Service in Highlands. The couple were married in 1965. After an early retirement, the couple moved back to Highlands in 2001. He loved the countless friends he made throughout the years. If he knew you, you were likely his friend.

Loving, compassionate, caring, he was a devoted husband, providing well for the family which would welcome their daughter Caroline born to the couple in 1970. His face always beamed a bright smile at the sight and sound of his precious daughter who brought him joy, pride and happiness. In 2003, he and Betty welcomed son-in-law Neil McCown. Caroline and Neil presented Connor Zachary McCown to his newly appointed grandparents, Grammy and Gramps. Don always provided entertainment for Connor during visits, most recently sharing archery and a train table project. Among other gifts, he was a teacher, always using an opportunity to share his skills. Never boastful, never pretentious, he quietly went about doing projects that left every situation better than he found it.

He took time to engage in various community activities. While supervising the construction of a house in Lawrenceville, Va., as well as one in Highlands, he served his churches faithfully as active deacon and elder. As Worship Elder at Franklin, Virginia Presbyterian Church, he helped to guide the church through a transition of pastors. At First Presbyterian of Highlands, he served as Property Elder during the three-phase construction of the HCCDC and church educational building, as well as renovation of the sanctuary. He also served as head usher at FPCH. He participated actively for 14 years in Relay For Life for the American Cancer Society. He enjoyed square and round dancing, making many dance friends over the years. His travel ranged from canoe trips on the Cullasaja and Tuckaseegee Rivers to ocean and river cruises with auto and bus trips in between. He lived life fully and taught others how to enjoy life.

Grateful for every kindness rendered him, he especially appreciated his doctors and others who cared for him, including caregivers, nurses, CNAs, pastors, family, friends and church members.

A graveside service was held Monday, May 11, at Highlands Memorial Park with the Rev. Curtis Fussell and Rev. Emily Wilmarth officiating.

Online condolences at www.bryantgrantfuneralhome.com. Bryant-Grant Funeral Home & Crematory is serving the Fisher family.



Deaths & Funerals

Myra Connaree Nolen

Myra Connaree Nolen, 87, was born on Jan. 15, 1933, to the late Charles William Nolen and Glee Garner Nolen in Franklin, N.C., and died April 27, 2020, in Greensboro, N.C., following a long illness with dementia and complications from a recent stroke. In addition to her parents, she was predeceased by a brother, Charles Edwin Nolen. Surviving siblings are sister-in-law Joanne Nolen of Franklin; brothers, Frank (Nancy) Nolen of Grottoes, Va., Jim (Fredia) Nolen of Marshville, N.C.; a sister, Carolyn Nolen (Hardy) Spence of Greensboro; and 10 nieces and nephews.



Myra Connaree Nolen

Growing up in the Cartoogechaye Community, she attended Sledge Elementary School and was a co-valedictorian at Franklin High School. At Catawba College, she graduated magna cum laude, and did postgraduate studies in cytotechnology at Charlotte Memorial Hospital and Johns Hopkins Hospital. In 1954-1955, she was named in the Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges. She spent most of her career at Presbyterian Hospital in Charlotte, directing the work of the Cytotechnology Department and teaching cytotechnology to students. Her diligence and dedication was honored by the "Connaree Nolen Academic Achievement Award" given to the outstanding student of each class. She was a member of the American Society of Clinical Pathologists for over 40 years and a founding year member of the American Society for Cytotechnology. Her career involved traveling to many medical settings to present educational training in the latest cytotechnological techniques. She was also a lecturer in the Cytotechnology Program at Central Piedmont Community College, and was a consultant cytotechnologist on the ASC/HCFIA Inspection Team. After retirement, she continued to fill part-time needs of the Presbyterian Hospital Cytotechnology Department.

Her childhood in the mountains of North Carolina formed her interest in gardening with native plants, including involvement in a group that rescued native wildflowers and plants from impending development and roadway construction. She was also a supporter of the Charlotte art community, and a collector of NC art and crafts. An avid tennis player, she competed in the North Carolina Senior Games. Connie will most be remembered for being very generous with her time, talents, and various treasures.

No service will be held at this time.

Donations in her memory may be made to Alzheimer's Association designating on the memo line, WhiteStone Walkers/Connie Nolen, WhiteStone Community Life Services, 700 S Holden Road, Greensboro, NC 27407

Expressions of sympathy and memories may be shared at <https://www.triadfuneralservice.com/>

Donald 'Don' Calvin Huscusson

Donald "Don" Calvin Huscusson, 85, passed away Monday, May 4, 2020 in Sylva, N.C. He was born in Macon County on Nov. 10, 1934, to the late Calvin Huscusson and Bertha Roper Huscusson. He worked for General Motors in Pontiac, Mich., from 1953 to 1960. He came back to Franklin and bought the Esso Service Station and operated it for 15 years. He then bought and operated the Texaco Station until his retirement in 1998. He was residing in Georgia until his health was failing and he had to be taken to the rest home.



Don Huscusson

Survivors include his son, Keith (Linda) Huscusson of Franklin, N.C.; three brothers, John L. Huscusson, David Huscusson, and Rick Huscusson; a sister, Ann H. Nichols; his former wife, Olga M. Huscusson; grandchildren, Tiffany (Logan) H. Plemmons, Nathan Huscusson, Kevin Huscusson, Rebecca Huscusson, David Ridaio, and Jordan Ridaio; Step-grandchildren, Lisa (Zeke) Seigler and Tliad Ridaio; great-grandchildren, Katelyn Taylor, Mallory Huscusson, and Ray Lynn Ridaio; three step-grandchildren, Sebastian Seigler, Bailey Seigler, and Savannah Seigler.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by a daughter, Kathy Huscusson Ridaio; a great-grandchild, Zoe Seigler; two sisters, Rosemary Barbot, and Frances Hernandez; and a brother, Robert (Bob) Huscusson.

A private graveside service was held Sunday, May 10, at the Mt. Zion Cemetery with Rev. Burt Crawford officiating.

Online condolences can be left at www.bryantgrantfuneralhome.com.

Bryant-Grant Funeral Home & Crematory is serving the Huscusson family.

Ronald Martin Schott

Ronald Martin Schott, 79, of Hiwassee, Ga., passed away on Monday, May 4, 2020. Beloved husband, father, grandfather and friend, he was born Aug. 14, 1940, in Cincinnati, Ohio, to the late Martin Henry and Vera Louise Schott.

He proudly served in the U.S. Navy, and graduated from the University of Cincinnati. He spent most of his career with IBM then as a consultant with Achieve Global. A Civil War buff, he enjoyed re-enacting, and served as 2nd Sergeant in the 25th NC Infantry Regiment. He was a Macon County Senior Games competitor earning multiple gold medals at state level, and placed fourth in swimming at Nationals. A lifelong musician, he was a stellar saxophonist, and especially enjoyed playing his father's refurbished alto sax.

It is impossible to describe the depth of his character. Ron was a true gentleman and example for all. He lived with the highest integrity and put others before self. His nine-year old grandson and family spokesman says their Pops was "funny, smart, honest and reliable." There is no measure of the lives he impacted and the hearts he touched. He was his family's anchor and guiding light, and to him we say, "Bravo Zulu."

He is survived by his daughters, Laura Beth Schott and Julie Anne Schott; and three grandchildren, Elizabeth Ashley Schott, Jonathan Gabriel Raoul-Schott, Piper Elizabeth Raoul-Schott and his companion Mardi White. He is preceded in death by his wife, Patricia Lois Schott.

A private family graveside service will be held.

Online condolences can be made at www.bryantgrantfuneralhome.com. Bryant-Grant Funeral Home and Crematory is serving the Schott family.

Patricia Wishon

Patricia Wishon, 78, of Franklin, N.C., passed away Sunday, May 10, 2020.

Born in Alexandria, Va., she was the daughter of the late Phillip and Leslie Greene. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband, Willie Cleveland Wishon and a sister, Joan Smallwood. She was a very active member of Coweeta Baptist Church. She loved going to the flea markets, yard sales and thrift shops where she searched for treasures.

She is survived by her two daughters, Tracey Daynes and husband Mark of Orlando, Fla., and Robin Kane and husband Rusty of Green Cove Springs, Fla.; a sister, Jackie Saunders of Summerfield, N.C.; granddaughter, Courtney Smith; great-grandchildren, Ava, Gwen and Hudson and several nieces and nephews.

No services are planned at this time.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Appalachian Animal Rescue, P.O. Box 81, Franklin, NC 28744

Macon Funeral Home is in charge of the arrangements.

Online condolences may be made to the family at www.maconfuneralhome.com.

Wayne Roger Cunningham

Wayne Roger Cunningham, born on June 4, 1945, to Ralph and Maggie Elliott Cunningham, went to be with our precious and gracious Lord, on May 7, 2020.

A veteran of both Vietnam and Desert Storm, he served honorably as a member of the Army and the Army National Guard for 33 years.

He loved and attended Mountain Grove Baptist Church. He had a wonderful sense of humor and enjoyed gatherings with family and friends. He was one of several who founded the good ol' boys at the local Franklin Flea Market. They would gather regularly swapping tales about old times, war stories and undoubtedly, getting into mischief on occasion.

He was predeceased by his parents; his siblings, Ruth "Jo" Blanton and Woodrow Cunningham; and a granddaughter, Kristen Cunningham.

Surviving is his wife of 53 years, Judy Cochran Cunningham; their two sons, Boyce Wayne Cunningham (Kim) and Randy Lynn Cunningham (Sandy); and their two granddaughters, Jennifer Cunningham and Kamryn Cunningham; two siblings, Ray "Buddy" Cunningham and Louise Dills; and several nieces and nephews.

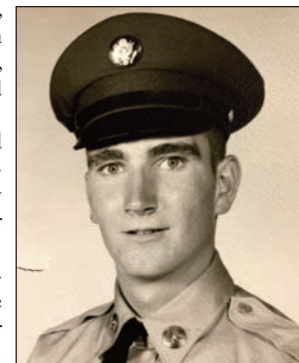
Dennis Hall and Burt Crawford will officiate at a private graveside service.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to:

Mountain Grove Cemetery Fund, c/o Jackson Tolbert, 465 Blackburn Branch Franklin, NC 28734

Moffitt Family Funeral Care is serving Wayne's family.

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



Wayne Cunningham

Vivian Lillian Napier

Vivian Lillian Napier, 97, of Franklin, N.C., passed away Wednesday, May 6, 2020. She was born March 5, 1923, in Beckley, W.Va., to the late Jessie and Georgia Thomas. She was a homemaker and a Jehovah's Witness by faith. She was a strong woman, she loved to travel and loved people and her family. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband, Lucien Napier.

Survivors include a son, Lou Napier (Helen Jean Hynes Napier); daughters, Susan Harris of Franklin, Katherine Flanagan of Ellijay, Ga., and Paulette Ennis of Nashville, Tenn.; seven grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

No services are planned at this time.

Bryant-Grant Funeral Home and Crematory is serving the Napier family. Online condolences may be made at www.bryantgrantfuneralhome.com.



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Hamlin wins eNASCAR iRacing Pro Invitational Series finale

Holly Cain – NASCAR Wire Service

Denny Hamlin's bump-and-run virtual victory in the North Wilkesboro 160 at the historic North Wilkesboro Speedway on Saturday afternoon book-ended an impressive showing in the eNASCAR iRacing Pro Invitational Series for Hamlin, this year's Daytona 500 winner. The race served as a competitive send-off for the resumption of the marquee NASCAR Cup Series next weekend at the very real Darlington Raceway (Sunday, May 17 at 3:30 p.m. ET on FOX, MRN and SiriusXM NASCAR Radio).

Hamlin, who drives the No. 11 Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota, also won the eNASCAR iRacing Pro Invitational Series inaugural race at virtual Homestead-Miami Speedway seven weeks ago kicking off a fun, well-received series of virtual races as the sport took time off during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This weekend, Hamlin had to nudge Ross Chastain's car in the waning laps to take the checkered flag, holding off one of iRacing's best, Timmy Hill by 0.914-seconds to claim a dramatic second win. Hamlin joins Hendrick Motorsport's William Byron, a three-time race winner, as the only two multi-time race winners during the eNASCAR iRacing Pro Invitational Series competition.

"Talk about a bump-and-run, it's a textbook way to do it, move him out of the groove, but you don't wreck him," Hamlin said of his battle with Chastain, who spun Hamlin in retribution on the virtual cool-down lap.

NASCAR Cup Series rookie and Richard Childress Racing driver Tyler Reddick finished third. Chastain rallied to fourth and Austin Dillon out-duelled another iRacing star, Garrett Smithley, for the fifth position.

Smithley, Brennan Poole, Parker Kligerman, Kevin Harvick and Landon Cassill rounded out the top-10 in what was a high-action day at the historic venue's iRacing debut. The race was essentially made possible by Dale Earnhardt Jr., who led the charge in getting the .625-oval on the iRacing platform, which opened it up for its first ever competition on Saturday.

Earnhardt finished 15th Saturday and NASCAR Hall of Famer Jeff Gordon, who won the last North Wilkesboro Speedway NASCAR Cup Series race on Sept. 29, 1996, finished 18th.

It was a busy day at the track, with eight caution periods for 53 laps. NASCAR Cup Series rookie Christopher Bell led a race high 61 laps – finishing 14th in the Leavine Family Racing Toyota. Chastain led 31 laps and Hamlin was out front for 24 of the 160 laps.

Hamlin conceded getting the last win heading back into regular season com-



Denny Hamlin, driver of the #11 FedEx Delivering Strength Toyota, celebrates after winning the eNASCAR iRacing Pro Invitational Series North Wilkesboro 160 at virtual North Wilkesboro Speedway on May 09, 2020 in North Wilkesboro, North Carolina. (Editors note: Images were computer generated in-game)

petition was a boost in confidence. Prior to the break in action, Hamlin had already earned his third Daytona 500 victory in the season-opener and is ranked 11th in the championship points standings with his Playoff ticket already punched.

"I can only speak for me, but yeah, sure, I'm way more excited than if I wouldn't have won," Hamlin said. "Winning the

last iRace, the first and the last one, it's significant.

"We have millions of people watching. It's good publicity for my sponsors. It's good for me and my confidence.

"We know, every driver knows, that everything is equal. There is no advantage for anybody. It's about who can hone their craft in iRacing. iRacing, we can always talk about it doesn't

relate, this, that and the other. In some ways it won't and it doesn't. But you have to use the same techniques that make you good in iRacing that make you good in real life. It's not like playing Madden or NBA 2K where you're using your hand eye coordination pushing the buttons. You're using the gas, brakes, running two at the same time, steering wheel. Everything is the same.

"I take pride in that," Hamlin continued. "Hey, if everything is equal, I've won a couple times, I feel pretty good about where I'm at as a driver. Certainly, I think there's some confidence that will spill over for a few weeks."

Hill, who started 25th in the 29-car grid on Saturday, earned his sixth top-three finish in the seven eNASCAR iRacing Pro Invitational Series events.

"Well, it's been a fun experience, we



Ross Chastain, driver of the #6 Acronis Ford, spins Denny Hamlin, driver of the #11 FedEx Delivering Strength Toyota, after Hamlin won the eNASCAR iRacing Pro Invitational Series North Wilkesboro 160 at virtual North Wilkesboro Speedway on May 09, 2020 in North Wilkesboro, North Carolina.

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finish off finishing second at North Wilkesboro," Hill said, adding, "We can't wait to get back to racing at Darlington next week. I've really enjoyed what this was but can't wait to get back to driving what we normally do."

Regular competition resumes at the venerable Darlington Raceway egg-shaped oval on Sunday, May 17 (3:30 p.m. ET, FOX, MRN SiriusXM NASCAR Radio) with a 400-miler. Kevin Harvick, who finished ninth Saturday, leads the NASCAR Cup Series championship standings by a single point over Joey Logano, whose already won twice in the four races to date.

Hamlin was, as you may anticipate, extremely eager to get racing again. No fans will be allowed at Darlington and there are strict social distancing standards applied to teams, drivers and crews. But Hamlin is optimistic that the racing at one of NASCAR's most historic venues, will be as good and compelling as ever.

"I think all-in-all it's going to be like an old shoe," Hamlin said. "I don't think from the TV's perspective, fans will see anything different than just a normal race that they would normally see at Darlington."

NASCAR rallies around front line workers with 'The Real Heroes Project'

NASCAR is teaming up with "The Real Heroes Project" to recognize and honor the courage of frontline workers who have stepped up and put others before themselves throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

After NASCAR and the rest of the sports world were sidelined in the beginning of March, athletes from 14 professional sports leagues got busy and came together to honor the real heroes using various social media platforms, community outreach and their charities. These everyday sports heroes flipped the script and became the fans for a change.

Reigning NASCAR Cup Series champion Kyle Busch and 2014 NASCAR Cup Series champion Kevin Harvick are the drivers participating in "The Real Heroes Project" by honoring a special healthcare hero who is helping the community on forefront of the coronavirus pandemic.

"The Real Heroes Project" also invites sports fans to join these world-class athletes on social media and dedicate their personal jerseys and team apparel to a frontline individual using the hashtag #TheRealHeroes

"Recognizing heroes and honoring those who serve, whether its members of the military or first responders, has always been very true to the DNA of our sport, our competitors, and of course, our fans," said Jill Gregory, NASCAR executive vice president and chief marketing and content officer.

The multi-league public service announcement debuted across league and team platforms on Wednesday, May 6.

The PSA features athletes, including Busch and Harvick, recognizing heroes working on the front lines across the country and honoring them by sporting their names on the athletes' most recognizable gear – their uniforms. The campaign also includes New Orleans Saints quarterback Drew Brees, New York Yankees outfielder Aaron Judge and United States Women's National Soccer Team stars Carli Lloyd and Alex Morgan, among many other superstar athletes across both sports and esports.

On Harvick's Stewart-Haas Racing Busch Beer firesuit is Dr. Josh Hughes, an emergency medicine physician with the Mid-Atlantic Emergency Medical Associates practice and the assistant director of the emergency department at Novant Health Presbyterian in Charlotte, N.C.

"My day-to-day is driven by what I did beforehand, and that is taking care of sick and injured patients in our community," Hughes explained. "In the emergency department this means triaging patients, working towards a diagnosis, treating and stabilizing patients and then determining a disposition for them, whether that be at home or in the hospital."

Harvick is a friend of Dr. Hughes and has made a point to be a support system during the COVID-19 situation.

"Kevin and I enjoy road bicycling," added Hughes. "He's

PRO RACING THIS WEEK

Racing News, Stats & Trivia

This Week's Cup Series Race: Darlington 400

Race Details

Location: Darlington, S.C.
Date: Sunday, May 17, 3:30 p.m.

Darlington Raceway



Shape: Oval
Distance: 1.366 miles
Banking / Turns: 25 / 23 degrees

Race Preview

NASCAR is scheduled to make its return to racing on Sunday, May 17, at Darlington Raceway with a Cup Series race that will serve as the first of seven races over an 11-day span at two different race tracks throughout May, the sanctioning body announced Thursday. The race at the historic South Carolina track will be held without fans in attendance and is slated to be NASCAR's first on-track action in more than two months as the sport and world in general have been on pause during the COVID-19 pandemic. The May 17 race is a 400-miler, scheduled for 3:30 p.m. ET, live on FOX. It also is the first of three races at the track, including a second Cup Series race held midweek under the lights three days later.

Denny Hamlin won iRacing race at North Wilkesboro

Denny Hamlin's bump-and-run virtual victory in the North Wilkesboro 160 at the historic North Wilkesboro Speedway on Saturday afternoon book-ended an impressive showing in the eNASCAR iRacing Pro Invitational Series for Hamlin, this year's Daytona 500 winner. The race served as a competitive send-off for the resumption of the marquee NASCAR Cup Series next weekend at the very real Darlington Raceway. Hamlin also won the inaugural race at virtual Homestead-Miami Speedway seven weeks ago.



2020 Standings

Cup Series Top Ten

| Drivers | Points | Top 10s |
|---------------------|--------|---------|
| 1) Kevin Harvick | 164 | 4 |
| 2) Joey Logano | 163 | 2 |
| 3) Chase Elliott | 144 | 2 |
| 4) Alex Bowman | 138 | 1 |
| 5) Jimmie Johnson | 131 | 2 |
| 6) Ryan Blaney | 123 | 1 |
| 7) Kyle Larson | 121 | 3 |
| 8) Aric Almirola | 121 | 2 |
| 9) Matt DiBenedetto | 118 | 1 |
| 10) Brad Keselowski | 118 | 2 |

Xfinity Series Top Ten

| Drivers | Points | Top 10s |
|--------------------|--------|---------|
| 1) Harrison Burton | 176 | 4 |
| 2) Chase Briscoe | 173 | 3 |
| 3) Austin Cindric | 155 | 3 |
| 4) Brandon Jones | 148 | 3 |
| 5) Ross Chastain | 146 | 3 |
| 6) Noah Gragson | 143 | 3 |
| 7) Ryan Sieg | 143 | 3 |
| 8) Justin Haley | 140 | 3 |
| 9) Justin Allgaier | 138 | 1 |
| 10) Michael Annett | 119 | 1 |

Top News Stories

NASCAR cancels next month's event at Chicagoland Speedway as part of revised schedule

Chicagoland's NASCAR Cup Series weekend, which was originally scheduled for June 18-21, has been moved to Darlington Raceway on May 17 and May 19, NASCAR announced last week. Chicagoland's NASCAR Gander RV & Outdoors Truck Series and ARCA Menards Series races are also expected to be realigned for a future date on this season's NASCAR schedule. "The difficult decision to realign our race events was a combination of where we fell on the schedule, proximity to NASCAR's teams and the safety and well-being of our community and larger NASCAR industry," Chicagoland president Scott Paddock said in a statement last week. "We will miss the roar of the engines at Chicagoland Speedway this season, but we will be rooting for and supporting our NASCAR colleagues at Darlington Raceway as competition returns on Sunday, May 17." Chicagoland wasn't the only casualty of NASCAR's new schedule in light of the coronavirus pandemic. Sonoma Raceway and the April Cup race at Richmond Raceway have also been realigned to Darlington and Charlotte Motor Speedway. For the past two decades, Joliet's Chicagoland Speedway track has been a huge asset for the Joliet area economy. NASCAR weekend draws tens of thousands of racing fans from all over the country.

Racing Trivia

Which driver replaced Dale Earnhardt Jr. as most popular driver in 2018?

- a) Jimmie Johnson
- b) Kyle Busch
- c) Chase Elliott
- d) Kyle Larson

Answer: c) Chase Elliott

been a great friend to me and I'm not sure I'd be dealing with the COVID-19 anxiety as well as I have been without the many rides we've been on during this."

Busch is honoring another vital person in the fight against COVID-19. The PSA features the No. 18 driver adding "EMT Heather Pleasant" to the back of Busch's Joe Gibbs Racing M&M's firesuit.

Pleasant is an avid NASCAR fan and her favorite driver is Busch, a two-time NASCAR Cup Series champion. She and her husband, Chad, are both EMTs where they live in Spartanburg, S.C. with their three children. The couple continues to

serve on the front lines as first responders, helping to transport patients with COVID-19 symptoms to area hospitals.

In addition to the symbolic gestures associated with "The Real Heroes" campaign, the NASCAR industry has stepped up in other ways throughout the crisis.

NASCAR has been utilizing 3D printers at the Research & Development Center located in Concord, North Carolina, to produce face shields for healthcare workers. In total, 2,000 face shields have been sent around the country for medical professionals.

Several well-known drivers participated in a public service announcement to thank the front-line individuals, encouraging people to stay home and social distance. FOX, NBC Sports and other channels joined the effort by airing the PSA for support.

And while the eNASCAR iRacing Pro Invitational Series has been entertaining fans in the absence of on-track activity, each week The NASCAR Foundation has teamed with charities or foundations affiliated with the local tracks to lend a helping hand to those affected by the pandemic. Most recently, the Foundation joined the #GivingTuesdayNow movement, standing together in unity with people around the world sharing the same mission of helping children in need.





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SUDOKU ANSWERS ON PG. 15



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CROSSWORD PUZZLE ANSWERS ON PG. 15

STATEPOINT CROSSWORD
 THEME: 21ST CENTURY

- ACROSS
- A bit cracked
 - Traitor's blow?
 - Cause of Princess' downfall
 - Hawaiian tuber
 - Prospector's mother?
 - Heavy footsteps
 - "Iliad" or "Odyssey"
 - Caribbean color
 - Frustration, in print
 - Proponent of colonization of Mars
 - Small island
 - *Edmond Halley's apparition, 2061-2062
 - Expression of disgust or recoil
 - *2007 "Invention of the Year"
 - Give satisfaction
 - Neither a win nor a loss
 - Having no courage
 - Medicinal houseplant
 - Dodge, as in a tax bill
 - Take the gold
 - Anti-seniors sentiment
 - Immigrate
 - Bold and without shame
 - Take illegal drugs
 - Adverb of steep
 - Tower of London guard
 - *Legalized in many states
 - Cambodian monetary unit, pl.
 - Gift toppers
 - *Major spring 2020 occurrence
 - *23andMe unit
 - Baron Munchausen, e.g.
 - Original thought
 - Not yes or no
 - Nobel Peace Prize home
 - Long forearm bone
 - Formal wear, colloquially speaking
 - *Review service
 - *Walter White's concoction

- DOWN
- Polished off
 - Mock or make fun of playfully
 - Seed covering
 - Late Baroque
 - *Harvey Weinstein's new home, slangily
 - Part of chef's uniform
 - Sunbaked, archaically speaking
 - Bird's groomer
 - Opposite of knit
 - Competitive advantage

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- Boreal forest, in Russia
- *Number sign turned meta-data tag
- Time being
- Coffin alternative
- Agenda entries
- Turning point
- Launch or throw
- *Millennials' followers, for short
- One hipbone
- "Madagascar" predator
- *Site of Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi/Houthi conflict
- Best-laid plans often go _____
- Roman road

- *Sites with no easy access
- Anoint
- Sandwich with acronym name
- Ophthalmologist's prescription quantity
- Wild West group
- Os
- Pay hike
- All told
- One of the Bridges
- December stone
- Clever tactic
- Opposite of busy
- Copper coin
- Greenwich-related acronym
- Expression of pleasure

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NEW CREATIONS Landscaping LLC. Spring landscaping Projects, Cleanup, Annual Color, Mulch, Pine Straw, Aerating, Fertilizing, Hardscapes, Steps, Retaining Walls, Grading, Gravel, Design, Grounds Maintenance and Much More! Licensed & Insured, Free Estimates (828)524-6959.

PACKING CLEANING & Other Household Services, Organizing. Great References. Mountain Area Property Services. (828)550-4585.

GRAVEL*GRAVEL*GRAVEL- Franklin, Otto, Dillard, Jackrabbit Hauling (828)332-8283.

CNA TRAINED Caregiver, In Home Aid, Run Errands, Dr. Appointments, Light Housekeeping. References. Over 15 Years Experience. (828)342-3750.

LAWNS MOWED in Macon County Area, 24 Years Mowing Experience. Starting at \$30. Call (828)524-0114.

GRADING, FINISH GRADING Hydroseed, Driveways, Roads, Hauling, Land Clearing, Chipper. Install Septic Systems, Retaining Walls, Rock Work, Boulders, Patio, Perez. (828)524-8650, (828)347-6793 Excellent References.

HANDYMAN HOME REPAIRS Carpentry, Pressure Washing, Gutter Cleaning, Decks, Drywall, Painting, Electrical/Plumbing, Repairs of any kind. 40 Years, Fast/Reasonable/Reliable. (828)332-7247.

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Community Fundraisers

REACH FOR BARGAINS in Heritage Hollow is open Mon.-Sat. 10am to 4pm. Proceeds benefit Victims of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault in Macon County. For More Information call 369-2040.

CARENET THRIFT STORE 45 Macon Center Dr., Franklin, Hours, Monday through Friday 9am-5pm, Saturday 9am-1pm. 100% of proceeds benefit the Mission of CareNet to help bridge the gap during times of crisis for families in Macon County. (828)349-9064.

HABITAT RE-STORE 56 W Palmer St., Franklin. Furniture, Lighting, Plumbing, Building Materials, Doors & Windows, Appliances & More! Hours 10am-4pm Mon.-Sat. (828)524-5273. Hours for the Sylva Re-Store, 1315 W. Main St. are Mon.-Sat., 10am-4pm, (828)586-1800.

Animals

LOST CHIHUAHUA MIX four-year-old brown, male, named Percy. last seen in the Patton Valley area on April 28th and possibly 29th. He is very skittish! (941)809-3520.

VOLUNTEERS & DOG WALKERS Needed at Macon County Animal Services. 18 years and older. Call Debbie (941)266-7084.

Motor Vehicles

AUTO PARTS/COLLISION Parts: Bumpers, Fenders, Headlights and Used Parts, Motors, Transmissions, Accessories. Installation Available. Franklin Body Shop. (828)524-7494.

Rentals

SMALL APARTMENT In Town, No Pets, Non-Smoking, \$700/monthly, \$500/deposit, Utilities Included, References Required. Se Habla Espanol (828)347-1022.

2BD/1.5 BA IN TOWN Dishwasher, Ice maker, Self Cleaning Oven, W/D Hookup, \$595/monthly. No Pets. (828)371-0917.

Misc. For Sale

POPLAR WOOD FREE 2 Trees Cut up in City Limits. You Haul Off. (828)342-7617.

MILITARY SURPLUS BDU Pants/Shirts, Boots, M65 Field Jackets Gortex, Parkers, Field Gear, Sleeping Bags, MRE'S, Much More! (828)349-3140.

FARMERS MARKET Spring to Summer Season 8am-Noon, every Saturday. Produce, honey, trout, artisan breads, pastries, roasted coffee beans, preserves, handcrafted soaps, eggs, peonies, Hydrangeas, lamb, microgreens. 200 Block East Palmer.

Help Wanted

FLOORING SUBCONTRACTORS Wanted! Carpet and Hard Surface Installers/Crews, Franklin and Asheville Areas, call (888)867-1901 for more details and requirements.

COMPANION HEALTH CARE Now Hiring: CNA's and Experienced Caregivers Needed for in Home Care. Call (828)524-6444.

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