

The Macon County **NEWS** & Shopping Guide

*Free
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www.themaconcountynews.com



The faculty and staff of Macon Early College hosted an “MEC Graduating Students Recognition Drive Thru” event on Thursday, April 30, at the luminary-lined entrance of the Macon County Public Library. Teachers cheered for the graduates and honored them as they drove through and presented them with a bag of special goodies and treats. Above, MEC principal Mark Sutton hands Erica Myers her goody bag. For more photos, see page 12.
Photo by Vickie Carpenter

Bill Harrell appointed Franklin Police Chief

The following is a press release issued by Highlands Town Manager Josh Ward:

“Town of Highlands Police Chief Bill Harrell, submitted his resignation on Wednesday and informed the Mayor and me that he had accepted an offer to become the next Town of Franklin Chief of Police.

“I would like to thank Chief Harrell for his 14-plus years of service with the Highlands Police Department. During his tenure, Chief Harrell has presented strong leadership and has elevated the Highlands Police Department to a high level of professionalism. His education and training requirements for his staff have led HPD to become one of the most proficient departments in Western North Carolina.

“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.

“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.”

“On behalf of the Town of Highlands, we congratulate Chief Harrell on his new appointment as the Police Chief for the Town of Franklin. We are certain he will serve Franklin, like he has Highlands, with faithfulness and distinction,” reads a statement from Highlands Mayor Patrick Taylor.



Bill Harrell

Governor announces transition to Phase 1

On Tuesday, Governor Roy Cooper signed Executive Order No. 138 to modify North Carolina’s Stay At Home order and transition to Phase 1 of slowly easing certain COVID-19 restrictions effective Friday, May 8 at 5 p.m. Certain businesses remain closed as the state continues battling COVID-19.

“COVID-19 is still a serious threat to our state, and Phase 1 is designed to be a limited easing of restrictions that can boost parts of our economy while keeping important safety rules in place,” said Cooper. “This is a careful and deliberate first step, guided by the data, and North Carolinians still must use caution while this virus is circulating.”

“We must continue to protect our families and neighbors as we take this cautious step forward. When you leave your home, follow the three W’s: Wear a face covering, wash your hands, and wait six feet apart,” said Dr. Mandy Cohen, Secretary of the NC Department of Health and Human Services.

Tuesday’s Order removes the distinction between essential and non-essential businesses. Retail businesses are allowed to open at 50% capacity and will be required to direct customers to stand 6 feet apart, perform frequent cleanings, provide hand sanitizer when available, screen workers for

symptoms and more. The Order allows people to leave their homes for commercial activity at any business that is open.

Certain businesses remain closed, including bars, personal care businesses, entertainment venues, and gyms. Restaurants may only continue to serve customers for drive-through, take out and delivery.

All workers at retail and other businesses are recommended to wear cloth face coverings. Teleworking is still encouraged for businesses that can practice it.

Though small outdoor gatherings will be allowed in Phase 1, gatherings of more than 10 people generally are still prohibited. The Order encourages cloth face coverings to be worn when outside the home and in contact with others.

During Phase 1, childcare facilities will be open to serve families of parents who are working or looking for work. These centers will be required to follow strict cleaning protocols. Summer day camps can operate in compliance with NC DHHS guidelines.

In explaining the new Order, Cooper and Secretary Cohen reported North Carolina remains stable on the following key metrics:

See PHASE 1 page 2

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Nikwasi Initiative informs council of next project

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Virtual SCC Town Hall Meeting addresses business re-opening issues

Deena C. Bouknight – Contributing Writer

On Wednesday, May 6, Tiffany Henry of Southwestern Community College Small Business Center hosted a mid-afternoon COVID-19 Virtual Town Hall Meeting live webinar featuring individuals who addressed various idiosyncrasies regarding reopening for business.

Carmin Thomas, marketing manager for AccruePartners, led the discussion by offering her input from a human resources perspective. She advised businesses to make sure their contingency plans are up to date and to “document everything, conversations, plans, etc. from an employee engagement and training perspective.”

She also suggested that business owners be mindful that May is Mental Health Awareness month, just in case any employees need resources, and that businesses “celebrate wins ... recognize successes and their employees’ ability to adapt to changes.”

John Yarbrough, a partner with Constangy Brooks Smith & Prophete law firm office in Asheville, had plenty to offer regarding what employers must be aware of during these unprecedented times.

“Employers might be wondering, ‘How do we get folks back on board?’ ‘What are the laws that apply now?’ ‘How can we deal with employees who refuse to come back to work?’ I will say that we’ve already seen lawsuits filed against employers relating to issues of COVID-19. We will have to work our way through this for a long time,” he said.

Yarbrough conveyed that some of the reasons employees might be hesitant to come back to work is because they are scared, or because they are making more money while laid off.

“North Carolina’s unemployment benefits are low relative to other states,” he said. “Ours cap out at \$350; but add in the \$600-a-week because of federal money and that’s more in many cases than many were making to begin with. At the risk of sounding harsh, employers need to contact the [NC Department of Commerce Employment Security]. Of course, someone may not be able to come back because of sickness or taking care of someone who is sick.”

Yarbrough also said employers should expect push-back from some employees. For example: “An employee not wanting to wear a face mask, you could actually terminate that employee, but you have to consider the public relations issues that go along with that.”

He said employers can do temperature checks without violating guidelines. “And, employers can ask employees about symptoms and can have a plan in place for an employer who comes down with COVID-19,” said Yarbrough. He reminded employers that OSHA, ADA, and EEOC all have updated COVID-19 related information available.

“Seek legal counsel before taking action against anyone protesting against coming into work,” stressed Yarbrough, “to hopefully avoid a lawsuit. And remember that good documentation could save the day for employers.”

Franklin ACE Hardware owner Josh Patrick, has stayed open during the pandemic, but he has had to adjust business and retailing practices significantly and he shared his insight with people tuned into the Wednesday, May 6, webinar.

“Fortunately for us, we were deemed essential and could continue doing business,” said Patrick, “but had to change the way we do business. One of first things we had to do was get a bunch of signage to indicate to everyone we were still open. We had to get the

word out in papers, on the radio, etc.”

Phone and online ordering, curbside pickup, and delivery have become commonplace at ACE in recent weeks.

“Then ACE corporation launched the ACE app,” he said. “That helped a ton of people use our store, but also we have had to make sure we have enough employees to do things differently. We had to hire a few people. I suggest to other businesses to hire a specific person to handle the orders and set up for curbside, if necessary.”

ACE in Franklin also put in place a temporary no-returns policy on most items due to the curbside pickup or delivery.

“When someone calls in, that’s when having a designated person helps. We may not have exactly what customers need, but that specific person can suggest something else. We are doing some returns, but curbside is tough in itself, so we have a no-return policy on many items.”

Finally, Patrick said, “Safety in the store is huge. We’ve made sure the 6-foot line is indicated, put up plexiglass, and we wear masks; most employees wear gloves, but gloves get soiled every time, so we mostly make sure our hands stay sanitized. And any surface is sanitized regularly – door handles, counters, carts, etc.”

Jennifer Garrett, with the Macon County Health Department explained that she and others within the department are, and will be, visiting business establishments to make sure businesses have what they need.

“We will help businesses out with questions,” she said. “We are here as a resource to help businesses open up with ease.”

She said that businesses need to make people feel comfortable by making environments safe. “A lot of times it’s about public perception ... showing that there is an increase in sanitation practices in general.” She added that businesses that make sure they have customers’ best interest in mind, regarding health and safety, “may be a selling point for the businesses.”

Garrett said businesses can contact the health department with inquiries or visit the website, and information is also available on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Tonya Snider, who owns a training and consulting firm in Western North Carolina, said she is working with many businesses on how to re-engage customers and “keep moving forward.”

She pointed out that many business owners and managers are “confused and overwhelmed. And all are facing unknown areas.”

Her message was that during uncertainty, marketing and advertising is still crucial.

“Many feel they should just cut expenses, especially marketing,” said Snider. “The knee jerk reaction is panic mode ... to slash advertising budget. But that can fast make things worse. Businesses need to keep spending money on marketing, but when it’s justified. I’m not talking about a situation where you just don’t have anything to invest in marketing. But if you have a little bit available for marketing, you don’t want to lose customers you’ve worked so hard to get. It’s hard to recover a customer if you lose them.”

Snider said that businesses may have to think differently for the time being. “They may have thought demographically in the past, but they need to put consumers into a psychology segmentation:

- 1) slam on the breaks group – buy necessities only
- 2) pained but patient group – most resilient; will still spend but may put things off
- 3) comfortably well off group – have money; not overly affected

4) live for today – younger population, typically; rent instead of own; not concerned about savings.”

She added that products and services fall into four categories: essentials (needs), treats (wants), postponeable (want or need but putting off), expendables (no longer justifiable).

“So businesses need to reach out to customers through marketing based on the segmentation factors and products and services categories. Consumers need you to be consistent with your marketing ... your message. Henry Ford said, ‘A man who stops advertising to save money is like a man who stops a clock to save time.’”

Her advice to businesses is that they communicate with customers by 1) highlighting the value of what is offered; 2) interacting through social media and other avenues; 3) focusing on trust regarding expectations, hours, specials, etc. 4) staying balanced and smart by taking advantage of the less expensive advertising and marketing opportunities currently available – “don’t overspend but stay in front of customers”; and, 5) by not over-reacting and completely shifting the business’ identity and makeup. “Don’t change so completely that customers don’t recognize the business,” said Snider.

The Wednesday webinar was provided free due to numerous co-sponsor(s): SBTDC, Jackson County Chamber of Commerce, Franklin Chamber of Commerce, Bryson City Chamber of Commerce, Cashiers Chamber of Commerce, Highlands Chamber of Commerce, Jackson, Macon and Swain Economic Development.

Henry pointed out that the ncsbc.net website “offers free webinars daily that are specific to business owners and how they can respond and react during this time. On those webinars is a lot of helpful information and resources.” Advance registration is required.

PHASE 1

Continued from page 1

– Trajectory in COVID-Like Illness (CLI) Surveillance Over 14 Days - North Carolina’s syndromic surveillance trend for COVID-like illness is decreasing.

– Trajectory of Lab-Confirmed Cases Over 14 Days - North Carolina’s trajectory of lab-confirmed cases over the last 14 days cases is slightly increasing.

– Trajectory in Percent of Tests Returning Positive Over 14 Days - North Carolina’s trajectory in percent of tests returning positive over the last 14 days is decreasing.

– Trajectory in Hospitalizations Over 14 Days - North Carolina’s trajectory of hospitalizations over the last 14 days is level.

In addition to these metrics, the state continues building capacity to be able to adequately respond to an increase in virus spread. These areas include:

– Laboratory Testing - North Carolina has doubled the daily testing rate.

– Tracing Capability - The Carolina Community Tracing Collaborative has received over 4,000 applications and is in the process of hiring 250 new contact tracers.

– Personal Protective Equipment - Supply chains continue to improve with the exception of gowns.

The order is in effect until 5 p.m on Friday, May 22. Phase 2 will only start if data and indicators are in the right place.

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Changes coming to 2020-21 school calendar

Brittney Lofthouse – Contributing Writer

Students in Macon County—and across North Carolina—can expect changes to the school calendar this fall as a result of COVID-19, the pandemic that caused schools to abruptly close this year. While Governor Roy Cooper has said returning to the classroom in the Fall will depend on how the virus statistics add up at that time, state legislators have passed laws amending how the school calendar is handled.

Senate Bill 704, which was signed by the governor on Monday, mandates that all public schools reopen Aug. 17 – and add five days to the school year. The included mandate overrides school board decisions and takes away the flexibility normally granted to charter schools.

The school calendar in North Carolina is a debate each and every year in the state capital with a balancing act to please coastal educational institutes who rely on students for work in the tourism industry, and mountain institutes who struggle with weather delays and cancellations during the regular school year.

The current calendar was the latest attempt to standardize the summer break with a late August opening and an early June close. But local variations mean the new plan could mean big adjustments.

For instance, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) approved an Aug. 31 start in 2020 to avoid traffic and distraction from the Republican National Convention, which falls during the first week of class in the standard North Carolina calendar. Assuming the in-person convention goes ahead as planned, CMS will either have to seek a waiver from the new mandate or start in-person classes Aug. 17 and go to remote learning the following week.

For Macon County, school officials have to consider the winter months which often result in classes being cancelled due to inclement weather. The current calendar allows the first semester of school to be completed prior to the winter break, so testing can be done before students leave school for break. Keeping testing close to the actual instruction is more beneficial to students than expecting them to undergo testing after being out of school for weeks over the holiday break.

The COVID-19 bill says public schools must have 190 days of class this year, up from 185. The additional days were suggested to be used to help measure students at the beginning of the school year to determine the appropriate grade level for individual students since so much instruction was lost this year.

Another blow to achievement in the state, the bill cancels this year's Read To Achieve summer reading camps, which are normally required for some third-graders to be promoted. The bill also lifts the requirement that third-graders earn a grade-level reading score on year-end exams to be promoted because the exams have been waived this year. While the normal summer program will be cancelled, the bill provides \$70 million for schools to implement a voluntary summer program deemed a "jump-start" program for K-4 students who are at risk of falling behind.

While some parents might be looking forward to the fall for school to continue to put the days of remote learning behind them, they shouldn't celebrate too soon. The General Assembly has mandated to give scheduled remote learning days in the next calendar year and that each district or charter school plan submit a remote learning plan by July 20.

In addition to legislative changes approved by state leaders this week – the state also voted on how to distribute the federal CARES Act dollars allocated to N.C.

The package includes nearly \$1.6 billion in relief measures related to public health and safety, educational needs, small business assistance, and continuity of state government operations. In North Carolina, \$1.4 billion has been allocated and \$150 million is set aside for future local government needs.

The spending package includes:

\$50 million to provide personal protective equipment and sanitation supplies

\$25 million to support enhanced COVID-19 testing and tracing

\$125 million in small business loans administered through the Golden LEAF Foundation

\$50 million in health support for underserved communities including rural areas and minority communities

\$95 million to support North Carolina hospitals

\$20 million to support local health departments and the State Health Lab

\$75 million for school nutrition programs

\$70 million for summer learning programs

\$30 million for local schools to purchase computers and other devices for students

\$6 million for food banks

\$9 million for rural broadband

\$85 million for vaccine development, antibody testing, community testing, and other COVID-19-related research

Town votes to allow alcohol sales at outdoor seating of restaurants

Brittney Lofthouse – Contributing Writer

Local restaurants owners petitioning to ease restriction of alcohol sales on sidewalks in front of their businesses were granted permission during a recent town board meeting.

In April, the town of Franklin voted to allow businesses within city limits to serve alcohol at outdoor seating locations, established on town-owned sidewalks. The town's vote was less about granting "permission" and more about changing the language in existing ordinances that prevented it.

The town's ordinance previously prevented the consumption of alcohol on property owned, occupied, or controlled by the town – and specifically listed sidewalks in the ordinance. The town voted to amend the existing ordinance to include the caveat "This section also shall not apply to the service of beverage

in a properly permitted outdoor seating area," which will now allow places such as Yonder, one of the businesses who addressed the town previously about the issue, who has outdoor seating that overlaps onto the sidewalk, to apply for a permit to serve alcoholic beverages at their outdoor location.

The ordinance specifies the rules and regulations businesses must follow in order to be issued a permit, such as the outdoor seating area cannot infringe on the original use of the sidewalk for pedestrian traffic, and that the area must be clearly marked.

Although restaurants in Franklin have not been given the go-ahead to re-open to dine-in customers after being closed due to COVID-19 – once the Governor allows restaurants to fully open, they can apply for the appropriate permits to be able to serve beverages along their outdoor seating locations.

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Nikwasi Initiative gives Council an update on upcoming projects

Deena C. Bouknight – Contributing Writer

The Franklin Town Council met May 4 for its regular meeting via a live YouTube feed, due to N.C. Governor Roy Cooper's Executive Order limiting gatherings to a maximum of 10. At the top of the new business agenda was a presentation on the current status of the Nikwasi Initiative by board member Bob McCollum.

"The process of building a nonprofit is a long and winding road. We've been very methodical in building a foundation for what we have in place now," said McCollum.

The Nikwasi Initiative was established in 2015 to promote, interpret, and link cultural and historic sites (such as the Nikwasi and Cowee mounds) along a Cherokee Cultural Corridor, an educational initiative with plans to run from Cherokee to Franklin and to the headwaters of the Little Tennessee River. The Initiative provides not only educational and cultural opportunities, shared McCollum, but also collaboration between the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and local communities.

Most recently, Elaine Eisenbraun (her bio is available on the Nikwasi Initiative website) was hired as executive director.

"We reached a point where we have to have professional leadership; someone who will work on [the Initiative] as a primary focus," said McCollum.



A kiosk and viewing platform were completed last summer across from the Cowee Mound off N.C. 28. The educational information, conveyed in English and Cherokee syllabary, is part of the Cherokee Cultural Corridor.

Photo by Vickie Carpenter

Until the Eisenbraun appointment, Nikwasi Initiative was an all-volunteer effort. "She will focus on our financial future," he said.

"The transfer of the [Nikwasi Mound] deed (last May) was the last piece in place," explained McCollum. "When we go out to get grants now, because of pieces we've put together

and the final piece of the deed transfer, we will be able to compete for money for the project now ... to build the Nikwasi Initiative for the future."

McCollum reminded the Council that the Nikwasi Initiative's first construction project occurred last year and was the Cowee Mound education kiosk, located one mile north of Cowee Baptist Church. The next and in-the-near-future construction project by the Nikwasi Initiative will be the Nikwasi Mound's kiosk.

He told the town council that local businessman Bob Sanders gave a small parcel of land for the purpose of the kiosk placement. McCollum asked the council for permission to utilize that parcel, which is .02 acres or 871 square feet, for the installation of the new Nikwasi Mound kiosk.

"When that decision is made, we can set a go date for construction," said McCollum, sharing that monies for design, construction, etc. will come from various foundation grants. He said that while local funding is not necessary, the "vote of confidence" from the Council provides credibility when the Initiative seeks grants.

Finally, McCollum said that the Initiative's partnerships with the [Qualla Boundary] tribe has been a positive aspect. "We're working with the chief's [Richard Sneed] office to make sure everything that's done is compatible with the comprehensive plan."

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McCollum added that another possible addition to what is being referred to as the Nikwasi Gateway area, where there will eventually be the Women's History Trail sculpture and other historical and cultural education components, is an aviary for disabled American bald eagles.

The Council agreed to discuss McCollum's request regarding land use for the Nikwasi Mound kiosk.

Sidewalk ranking

Another new business discussion involved a presentation by Town Planner Justin Setser to develop a ranking system for the town's current sidewalks that would involve mapping, measuring, and photographing, as well as inventorying sidewalks for ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] compliance, all of which would lead to a comprehensive sidewalk plan "as a tool for future development," he said. "We will also look at obstructions ... cracking, cleanliness ..."

Sidewalks will be classified based on various criteria and shape of sidewalk. For example, "A poor sidewalk is one with major defects and poor ADA compliance," said Setser, while a fair sidewalk "potentially would need to be upgraded in the next five to 10 years." A poor sidewalk classification would need to be replaced "as soon as possible," he added.

A motion was made to accept Setser's plan.

Homeless task force

In other new business, the Council revisited briefly a March 11 proposal by Bob Bourke, president of Macon New Beginnings, regarding a homeless task force. The proposed task force would consist of representatives from the town, local businesses, non-government agencies, and concerned citizens, with the goal of cataloguing resources currently available to the homeless population, identifying needs, and

determining how to take necessary actions to assist the population.

Bourke has reported to the Council that around 100 people in Macon County were identified as homeless in 2019, with Macon New Beginnings serving 229 people. Homeless individuals and families generally seek shelter in vehicles, along riverbanks, in parks, wooded areas, abandoned buildings, storage units, and more.

Mayor Bob Scott suggested the matter be moved to June for more in-depth discussion.

Other business

Town Manager Summer Woodard distributed the proposed fiscal year 2020-21 budget. A budget work session was scheduled for Tuesday, May, 12, at which time there will be a "deep dive" evaluation and discussion of the budget. The public can view the budget on the Town of Franklin website and a summary at themaconcountynews.com.

Finally, Town Attorney John Henning Jr. discussed the phased re-opening of the Town of Franklin. The governor made the announcement on Tuesday after the Monday board meeting that the state would enter phase 1 at 5 p.m. on May 8 with some loosening of restrictions.

Mayor Bob Scott pointed out that some rural counties are not experiencing as many cases of COVID-19 as more densely populated areas, but said, "I don't want the public to get their hopes up that on May the 8th everything is going to open wide up."

He and Henning reiterated that the Town will be open as much possible, while at the same time staying within the state's restrictions.

"Everybody has been on board and taking this seriously," added Mayor Scott.

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DRIVE FORWARD

Franklin bridal shop wins SCC's Regional Biz Plan contest

Connie Millsaps almost missed out on Southwestern Community College's Regional Business Plan Contest.

Instead, the owner of Anna Maria Bridal shop in Franklin entered at the last minute and went on to win the \$5,000 top prize.

The ongoing pandemic prevented organizer Tiffany Henry of SCC's Small Business Center from presenting Millsaps an oversized check in front of a crowded banquet hall, but that didn't keep the winner from enthusiastically celebrating her victory among friends and mentors during a Google Meet call on Thursday, April 23.

"This is amazing! I've never won a contest in my life, especially one that took this much work," said Millsaps, who opened her store in August of last year. "To be fully honest, I kept getting these emails from Tiffany – but I didn't actually open any until one came across that said 'last chance to enter.' I opened it and said to myself, 'I need to do that. It's just eight weeks.'

"It taught me a lot about what our market is and how to cater to potential customers," she added. "I think bridal shops in larger population centers cater to higher incomes. With us being in Franklin, we want to offer breath-taking gowns at a fair price so people in our area can have the weddings of their dreams. We have gowns to fit every budget."

Twenty-four entrepreneurs took part in the competition, which was organized by Henry. The contest included a series of eight seminars designed to help participants develop or



Connie Millsaps, owner of Anna Maria Bridal Shop in Franklin, celebrates on Google Meet after organizers announced she won the 2020 Regional Business Plan Contest.

enhance their business plans.

The seminars helped Millsaps identify one particular area of potential growth in which she plans to invest her winnings.

"I truly appreciate the support I received by taking part in this contest," Millsaps told judges and organizers who attended the online meeting. "I am so excited to be able to build on the fact that we're going to have a section of plus-size dresses.

"I really was hoping to win so we could use the money specifically for this purpose; we've received a lot of inquiries about carrying plus-size gowns," she added. "I think it's going to draw in a lot more brides. I hope that we do you all proud."

Russ Seagle, who is executive director of the Sequoyah Fund, served on the contest panel and said Anna Maria Bridal's entry rose to the top because it clearly showed the potential to succeed despite the current strain on the economy.

"She's already market-tested this, and this is to some degree a recession-proof business," Seagle said. "Even in the situation we're in right now ... a lot of people are still having their weddings but putting off the public ceremony until everybody can get back together. Connie's business plan checked off all the boxes in terms of being a really solid plan with really solid financial projections. In my view, a business plan is a story that communicates what your business concept is. It's so easy to see where she's going with this. It's a great narrative. The numbers worked. The whole package was there."

The competition was co-sponsored by the Jackson County Office of Economic Development, the Macon County Economic Development Commission and the Swain County Economic Development Commission, respectively.

For more information about SCC's Small Business Center and the free assistance it provides area entrepreneurs, contact Henry at t_henry@southwesterncc.edu or visit www.southwesterncc.edu/sbc.

Aerospace Company to invest \$2.3 million in Murphy facility

Moog, Inc., a New York-based advanced technology company, will create 12 new jobs in Cherokee County, Commerce Secretary Anthony M. Copeland has announced. The company will invest more than \$2.3 million to expand its manufacturing facility in Murphy.

"Nothing speaks more forcefully to the strength of North Carolina's economy than when a leading industry name chooses to grow its presence here," Secretary Copeland said. "As a company, Moog shares our respect for innovation, hard work and vision, and today's announcement is a reminder that every region of North Carolina shares in those values."

Established in 1951, Moog Inc. designs and manufactures advanced motion control products for aerospace, defense, industrial and medical applications. Headquartered in East Aurora, N.Y., Moog acquired the Murphy facility in 2003. Its location there, which currently maintains a 405-person workforce, manufactures brushless and brush-type motors and blowers for numerous aerospace and industrial applications.

"Moog looks forward to expanding its business at the facility in Murphy, N.C., and creating an innovative and engaging workplace for our employees," says Scott Keaton, General Manager of Moog Operations in Murphy.

Although wages will vary depending on the position, the average for all new positions could reach up to \$34,000. The current average annual wage in Cherokee County is \$31,820.

A performance-based grant of \$40,000 from the One North Carolina Fund will help facilitate Moog's expansion in Cherokee County. The One N.C. Fund provides financial assistance to local governments to help attract economic investment and to create jobs. Companies receive no money upfront and must meet job creation and capital investment targets to qualify for payment. All One N.C. grants require a matching grant from local governments and any award is contingent upon that condition being met.

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Mission hospitals resume surgeries; visitor restrictions are still in place

Mission Health has begun to re-introduce certain procedures and surgeries at its facilities across Western North Carolina as it continues to monitor the dynamic shifts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“These procedures have been classified within tiers of urgency and acuity, allowing us to prioritize services as we take a measured approach to this transition,” said William R. Hathaway, MD, Chief Medical Officer for Mission Health. “Our patients will see continued – and in some cases enhanced – screening, testing, masking and patient flow procedures, as well as infection prevention protocols in facilities.”

Most Mission Health hospitals resumed surgeries and procedures beginning Monday, May 4. On Tuesday, May 5, Mission Hospital in Asheville reopened its Entrance 2 surgical waiting area in the North Tower for scheduled patients. All Mission Health facilities will be providing patients with specific instructions about where to arrive and what to expect.

Patients arriving for these procedures will be allowed to have one adult accompany them into the waiting area. All patients and their escorts will be screened and provided masks upon entry. The escorts will be able to assist pa-

tients in the waiting area and, if discharged the same day, will be with them at discharge as well. The escorts will have the option to wait outside the facility if they prefer, and will be called with updates when the procedure is complete. Each hospital may establish specific additional logistics for the escorts and will communicate that to them upon arrival.

Mission Health is maintaining its Level 3 visitor limitations for now. This means that if a patient is admitted to the hospital following a procedure, visitors will not be allowed at this time (other than for pediatric or labor and delivery patients), as the heightened infection prevention policies continue.

Mission Health continues to have sufficient supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) for patients, visitors, clinicians, caregivers and staff, and its supply chain continually works with epidemiologists and data scientists to track usage and demand so we can allocate PPE appropriately.

“We’re committed to a safe and individualized care experience for all our patients,” Dr. Hathaway said. “Our dedicated team of caretakers is working diligently to ensure the best experience possible, now and every day.”

Vaya Health phone initiative connects WNC residents to telehealth services

Vaya Health is helping Western North Carolinians connect to telehealth services during the COVID-19 pandemic with a donation of 500 smartphones for individuals who have no other way to access behavioral healthcare.

The initiative will allow qualified Vaya members with mental health, substance use disorder or developmental disability needs to participate in critical treatment by phone or video amid county and statewide stay-at-home orders designed to slow the spread of the new coronavirus. Vaya will distribute the phones to local healthcare providers to issue to members who have no phone or other treatment options and who meet priority criteria.

Priority populations include individuals who are being discharged from an inpatient behavioral health unit, who visit the emergency department frequently, who are part of the Transitions to Community Living Initiative or who depend heavily on regular treatment contacts to maintain good mental health.

Based in Asheville, Vaya manages public funding for behavioral health and developmental disability services for individuals who receive Medicaid or are uninsured in 22 west-

ern North Carolina counties. Increasing access to telehealth services during the pandemic can help participants stay both mentally and physically well, said Vaya CEO Brian Ingraham.

According to the federal Substance Use and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), telehealth services are particularly useful in increasing access to care for residents of rural areas, like much of the Appalachians. Rural residents may have to travel greater distances to seek care and have fewer transportation options.

Vaya purchased the phones in April from Verizon Wireless to distribute to network providers that successfully applied to participate in the initiative. Providers will distribute the phones to Vaya members who lack other treatment options and assist with initial setup and app downloads.

Vaya will also maintain data plans on phones no cost to providers or participants for six months or until the COVID-19 crisis ends.

For more COVID-19-related behavioral health and developmental disability information, visit www.vayahealth.com/coronavirus-updates.




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Broadband not a 'luxury'

Patrick Woodie
Rural Center President



Patrick Woodie

If you are like me, your email has been flooded with stories about COVID-19 lately. Most articles use faceless data like unemployment figures, infection rates, and economic losses to paint a sobering picture of an unpredictable global health crisis with an uncertain outcome. One story, however, had a face. It was an article about a Lenoir County high school student travelling three miles every day to access WiFi so he could complete online assignments because he did not have broadband at home.

That story stuck with me because it is an experience known too well by our rural communities, long before the pandemic brought the importance of broadband access into our larger public dialogue.

At the NC Rural Center, we've been actively advocating for broadband expansion for the past five years, and we applaud the significant, bipartisan measures that seek to better connect all corners of North Carolina. Policy measures like the Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology (GREAT) program, an effort passed by the NC General Assembly and administered by the State Broadband Infrastructure Office, which provides grants to help deploy broadband service to unserved areas.

State-level policies like GREAT are a significant step in the right direction, but as the pandemic continues to impact our state, it's clear that now is the time to act on this issue at a higher priority.

Flattening the curve and keeping North Carolinians healthy during this time gets easier when people can visit their doctors through telehealth services and students and teachers can access online learning platforms at home. And as we at the Rural Center are seeing firsthand, broadband is a lifeline, keeping many businesses and nonprofits running during these times of social distancing and sheltering-in-place.

And it's not just COVID-19 that is raising greater awareness about the importance of broadband access. For the first time, the decennial census is available online, with the goal to make completing the census as easy as possible. But without broadband, the very mechanism intended to ensure an accurate count in places already at risk for an undercount, is rendered ineffective.

Our efforts to expand broadband to all of North Carolina cannot end when this pandemic ends or when the last person is counted in the census. While some small, rural broadband providers have stepped up to provide free hotspots for rural students, they alone cannot shoulder the costs of expanding this essential service.

Expanding broadband access and affordability will require a significant, increased fiscal allocation, public-private partnerships that leverage existing assets, and a commitment from every sector to not stop until every household is connected, down to the last mile.

Our rural communities know all too well that broadband is a necessity, not a luxury—for education, healthcare, and economic development. Broadband is an infrastructure no less important for a community's economic future than the electricity that runs to their homes. Broadband is a necessity today as we navigate an unprecedented global pandemic, and it will be a necessity for tomorrow as we reignite our economy after COVID-19.

Letters to the Editor

'The only thing we have to fear is: fear itself'

Why is fear such a fearful thing? It is because when we are afraid, we make irrational decisions. Fearful people are seeking security; protection from harsh realities. The Holy Scriptures say, "God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." (2 Timothy 1:6) The alternatives to fear are given here in this text.

First, to be free from fear, we must acknowledge the sovereignty and awesome protective power of the omnipotent God. The words of the Declaration of Independence are instructive of the mindset of the Founders of our great nation. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal (there ought not to be a sovereign ruling class), that they are endowed by their Creator (not the government, or some despot) with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." These rights cannot be taken away by men, because they don't come from men. The right to life does not include a guarantee of safety. Only God can do that, if He so chooses – He alone is sovereign. Liberty is a gift from God to be treasured above all. Men have no authority to strip it from us, as long as we live according to the "perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25) A prerequisite to liberty is personal responsibility. It is up to the individual to take care of one's own health – not up to the government to protect us from dying. The pursuit of Happiness includes many things, like being able to go to work, as long as you are well and able-bodied. It is not the government's prerogative to tell healthy people they cannot open their businesses or go to work or church or...

The Signers of the Declaration were not afraid of dying. They risked their lives for us, by signing in defiance of the superior power of the British military. Never in the history of our country, did the government shut down the livelihood of the people, ostensibly to save lives, or for any other reason. Those who are afraid are free to stay at home. They can suggest it, but it is not the place of government to force the people to stay home. This sets a terrible precedent. Will we now see, as some have already, the government deciding for us when it is safe to venture outside our doors, or face consequences when we fail to comply? This is not the country the Founders pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor, to give us. Courageous people are not afraid of death. They are willing to die, if necessary, to protect the values that our Fathers held dear. Fifty thousand brave American patriots died in the War for Independence. That represented 1% of the total population – equivalent to 330,000 today.

Every year, more than 38,000 Americans die in auto accidents. Over 10,000 are alcohol related. Another 647,000 die from heart disease. And another 606,000 from cancer. About 80,000 die from diabetes. And each year, over

600,000 American babies are intentionally killed by abortionists. Millions die every year from all causes. Clearly, if we want to be safe from death, Covid casualties is not the place to start. By now, most of us know that many people are being counted as Covid deaths, when they really died from a pre-existing condition. But even taking those numbers, you have a 0.018% chance of dying of Covid in America; and much less than that if you are healthy.

A sound mind will look at these numbers, and put things in perspective. Does that mean we should not care about (love) those who are at risk for Covid? Not at all. Treat them, if they get sick, with hydroxychloroquine, azithromycin and zinc. And take precautions to try to avoid infecting them. But one hundred times as many die from other causes every year. Many of these deaths could be delayed, not prevented, by making everyone stay home indefinitely. Is that what we want? If not, it is time to re-open America, and learn from this gigantic mistake.

Ed Hill – Franklin, N.C.

Letter writers should join the ranks of spin doctors

After reading the latest opinion column in *The Macon County News* it's obvious that some of the frequent writers to the newspaper, especially one really frequent writer, have master degrees in being a spin doctor. These writers are avid supporters of the Republican Party and believe that everything good done in the last few hundred years was accomplished by that party and anything bad or evil was spawned by anyone else, namely the Democratic Party.

"Stupid is as stupid does" was the thrust of a recent letter and somehow I can't think beyond the fact that these accusations are fronted by Fox News. The fact that this and other readers get most, if not all of their news, from this sham of a news source is disturbing.

That the ACLU is supposedly the entity that is forcing the end of lock down provisions required by governments of different states is the latest in fact distortion and down-right lies. Gee our idiot president and his administration are not chomping at the bit to force the whole country to open up because their constituents are losing money? Right!! It's always someone or somebody else's fault other than our sorry excuse for a president and his administration and party.

That's why these readers need to pack up their belongings and head to our nation's capital and become of the the country's many spin doctors because they would be in welcome company.

There is no shortage of idiots in all levels of our government regardless of their political affiliations and the losers, as always, are the ordinary citizens who take a regular beating from all sides.

Robert M. Wilson – Franklin, N.C.

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Clearing up misconceptions in Letters to the Editor

I just want to clear up two misconceptions that I read in the Letters to the Editor.

It was stated in several letters recently that Donald Trump called the coronavirus a "Democratic hoax." This is simply not true. What is true is the analysis by Snopes which investigates the truth or fiction of statements:

"During a Feb. 28, 2020, campaign rally in South Carolina, President Donald Trump likened the Democrats' criticism of his administration's response to the new coronavirus outbreak to their efforts to impeach him, saying, "this is their new hoax." Their conclusion was, "Trump did not call the coronavirus itself a hoax." This is fact!

Next, it was stated that from the first day of his inauguration President Trump had made it clear that if you did not vote for him he is not your president. Again, misinformation. Have you reread the President's inaugural speech lately?

Here are a few quotes:

"Together we will determine the course of America for many, many years to come.

"Together we will face challenges. We will confront hardships. But we will get the job done.

"Today, January 20, 2017, will be remembered as the day the people became the rulers of this nation again.

"The forgotten men and women of our country will be forgotten no longer.

"So to all Americans in every city near and far, small and large, from mountain to mountain, from ocean to ocean – hear these words – you will never be ignored again.

"Today I take an oath of allegiance to all Americans. When America is united, America is totally unstoppable."

Doesn't that sound like a man whose vision is for unity and to embrace all Americans?

Unfortunately, that vision was quickly interrupted by the media and the "Hate Trumpers" who from day one have made it clear that they reject President Trump and have criticized everything he has done, ignored all the good he has accomplished and divided Americans by propagating hatred, misconceptions and outright lies. Sadly, I agree with a commentator who suggested that if President Trump fed every starving person in the world, they would probably complain he had fed them the wrong kind of calories.

Let's strive to get to the truth and the facts and give credit where credit is due.

Loretta Hastings – Franklin, N.C.

U.S. withdraws WHO funding at inopportune time

I wish our former presidents would be more outspoken and unrestrained regarding presidential statesmanship, upholding the dignity of the office and overall fundamental duties of a president, any president. Americans really need to make comparisons, if for no other reason than to teach ourselves to make better choices.

In another petty and destructive self-serving tirade (for which this president is renowned) and in the face of a global pandemic, Trump announced on April 14th he was withdrawing U.S. funding of the World Health Organization (WHO), in an attempt (no doubt) to shift blame to the WHO for his own dithering, do-nothing early response to this killer virus, COVID-19.

We can argue the pros and cons of the WHO's worth till the cows come ambling home but the fact remains, rather than adopt the position of destroyer, any decent human being (which this president is not) would have employed a more "what can I do to help" attitude. The WHO did, after all, play a key role in eradicating small pox, the first time humankind has gotten rid of a deadly pathogen entirely.

The WHO's proposed budget this year is \$4.4 billion, of which the U.S. contribution was to be about \$500 million.

The U.S. spends \$718 billion (over 1,400 times that amount) on war every year.

WHO has inoculated five million children in Yemen against measles and other diseases, has fought yellow fever in Brazil, is trying to get rid of polio and is working on safe childbirth for women. As WHO will be central to the global response to the coronavirus, Trump is only making a difficult situation worse - an act for which he is well known.

Contrast Trump (whose misdeeds and misadventures are exceeded only by his over-inflated ego) with former president James Earl Carter Jr., an actual human being, distinguished Naval officer, president, and citizen. Jimmy Carter has labored for decades to fight the guinea worm infestation (mostly in Africa) by educating villagers (especially mothers) in a simple water-filtering technique. The guinea worm is a large parasite found in drinking water that invades the body and hatches a three-foot-long worm that has to come out of the body intact.

Carter enlisted the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF in the effort. WHO is dedicated to eradicating the worm (as well as sponsoring many other ongoing projects) and Donald Trump (having one of his daily snits) has cut off our rather meager contribution to this worldwide organization.

This is a simple tale of two presidents. One, a narcissistic, self-absorbed, incompetent, uncaring, greedy, corrupt national embarrassment. The other (as best described by Juan Cole, a professor at the University of Michigan) "probably the closest thing America will ever have to a president-saint."

David L. Snell – Franklin, N.C.

What's behind the mask ?

Each one of us it seems, along with our entire world, are desperate to find our balance in our out of balance world and bring things back to a somewhat normal setting. It's hard to realize that just a couple months ago, all seemed fine and life for most was doing well, until that little known virus took a world by surprise. Then feeling and seeing discomfort and uncertainty when going to the local store and seeing many wearing masks and when looking into their eyes, seeing the uneasiness of how things could be if you catch such a disease. My feelings of deep sadness when I heard about the virus hitting so hard in Spain, that many loved ones had to say their final goodbyes with a window separating them from their dying loved one or saying a final goodbye only by text or phone. Then the mandate of cremation of those infected that never felt the love, touch, or warmth of those they left behind, and for those living, the painful thought of dealing with all this heartbreak and not able to get closure of missing one last touch or kiss, will forever haunt them.

There are many thoughts that surround our dealings with this virus. The scolding by many who say we move too fast then say we didn't move fast enough. Or, our rights have been taken away and we want our freedom back, or we need to restrict our freedom and movement more to reduce the spreading. All this affects each of us differently, to the young and healthy the concerns are little, but only to get back to normal and getting our jobs back and running. Families disrupted without work, children schooling at home. The ones with deep concerns are those with poor health and the elderly. This virus brings out the concerns we all have that even a mask can not fully hide. Though it helps protect us from the virus on the outside, it doesn't protect the fears and anguish from within.

I'm not making light of what we all are facing, some make jokes of this, some fear this, it's hitting home to some more than others, it's troubling and seems we re-adjust every couple days, and may have to do so for some time. Hoping for a good outcome is what we all seek and want. Hope seems to be a mainstay throughout life and we live for a hope that

can be with us to the end, and again, beyond what this life offers. The virus is something we fear, but it's death and separation we fear even more. It's the final destiny of us all by whatever means we each find ourselves in. Hope for now,... but there's a hope beyond the here and now, a hope that walks you through all of life and mostly through eternity's door. Knock, and it shall be open. Christ, the Hope for all mankind, for the now and forever. Hope is what we need. No matter what's behind the mask.

Re-thinking life,

Deni Shepard – nds13@frontier.com

America at the crossroads

The stakes for the upcoming elections have never been higher.

Make no mistake; if we take a sharp left turn to go down the road of Socialism that Democrats and their radical presidential candidates would take us, a dark cloud will descend upon our country.

You see, the Democrats want unfettered government control over every aspect of your life and to strip you of your Constitutional rights and freedoms. They want to turn America into a failed European welfare state that dictates wealth redistribution and makes your choices for you.

President Trump and Republicans want our country to stay on our current path: one of prosperity, freedom and opportunity for every citizen to achieve the American Dream.

While the extreme Left wasted America's time with their partisan impeachment hoax, President Trump and Republicans have been working to create new jobs, raise wages, enact fair trade deals, secure our border and appoint judges who interpret the Constitution as written.

If we fail to maintain the White House and our U.S. Senate Majority and Nancy Pelosi remains in charge of the U.S. House, the Democrats will bring a wrecking ball to all of President Trump's achievements and will do everything possible to enact their big government Socialist agenda of major tax increases on all Americans, massive spending, job-killing regulation, and a weakened military.

Democrats, wealthy Liberal Super PACs and progressive propaganda groups are pulling out all the stops to seize the White House and elect a Democrat-controlled Congress that will reverse the gains America has made under President Trump's leadership.

Thanks to the president's pro-growth, America First agenda, we are in the midst of the Great American Comeback and our country is stronger than ever before.

Robert Yates – Franklin, N.C.



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'Aftercare' partnership helps former inmates improve their mental health

Vaya Health and the N.C. Department of Public Safety (DPS) are working together to help formerly incarcerated individuals in Western North Carolina to get the behavioral health services they need to rebuild their lives upon release from prison.

Studies show that people in the criminal justice system nationwide experience significantly higher rates of both mental health and substance use disorders than the general public. Upon release from prison, when individuals face obstacles to finding work, housing and transportation, these behavioral health challenges can increase recidivism and cause health and safety concerns.

Vaya manages behavioral health and intellectual/developmental disability services for people who receive Medicaid or are uninsured in western North Carolina, including individuals recently released from prison who are returning to one of the 22 counties Vaya serves. Vaya reached out to DPS in August after finding the majority of recent releases were not attending their initial, critical behavioral health appointments. On average, only 22% attended the appointments during the three-month period from July to September.

Working together, Vaya and DPS more than doubled that to 48% during the following three months. During that time, 28 of 58 individuals in Vaya's region attended their appointments, said Vaya Chief Population Health Officer Rhonda Cox.

"Mental health and recovery from substance use disorders are essential in helping people successfully transition to life outside prison," Cox said. "These individuals are our neighbors, family, coworkers and community members, and it's in everyone's best interest that they receive the help they need to build stronger communities for all of us. We expect this collaboration will continue to increase the percentage of releases who receive treatment."

"High rates of serious mental illness and severe substance use disorders among people under supervision is a significant challenge for our probation and parole officers (PPOs)," said Sonya Brown, DPS social work program administrator. "This partnership with Vaya Health has enhanced our officers' ability to access behavioral health services on behalf of the people they supervise and has provided support to the officer, as well as the individual in need of services. Readily accessible services and recovery supports protect people and public safety."

The collaboration includes troubleshooting systemic problems, enhancing information-sharing and making probation officers key partners in helping releases get to appointments. For example, prison social workers identify people who may need mental health or substance use treatment upon release. DPS helps Vaya connect with PPOs to share appointment information, allowing PPOs more time to get involved.

Vaya is now working with select PPOs on issues such as how housing, transportation and employment affect an individual's overall wellbeing and chances for a continued successful transition to the local community.

Arrest Report

The Macon County Sheriff's Department, Franklin Police Department or Jackson County Sheriff's Department made the following arrests April 25 - May 3. All suspects are innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.



Macon County Sheriff's Department

April 25

Brandon James Parrish, was charged with breaking and entering, larceny after breaking and entering, possession of stolen goods, larceny of a firearm, possession of burglary tools, breaking and entering a motor vehicle, misdemeanor larceny, injury to real property.

Adam Lee Colier, was charged with larceny, possession of stolen goods/property, obtaining property by false pretenses, school attendance law violation, driving while license revoked, fictitious/canceled/ revoked registration card/tag. Jordan C. Sutton made the arrest.

April 26

Jose Luis Sanchez-Hoyos, was charged with breaking and entering, trespass.

April 27

James Meredith Kendall, was charged with assault with a deadly weapon with intent to kill.

April 28

Carl Floyd, was charged with sell/deliver heroin, speeding to elude arrest, driving while license revoked. William D. Stamey made the arrest.

Christina Melissa Ann Phillips, was charged with drug narcotic violations.

Rickey Anthony Caldwell, was charged with drug/narcotic violations. Patrick Merritt made the arrest.

April 29

Brandon James Parrish, was charged with possession of methamphetamine, possession of drug paraphernalia, warrant service for offenses committed in jurisdiction, possession of marijuana up to 1/2 oz, break and enter a motor vehicle.

Robert Ryan Oteri, was charged with break and enter a motor vehicle, breaking and entering, larceny, possession of stolen goods, break and enter a motor vehicle, larceny, injury to real property, larceny of a firearm, possession of burglary tools. Jonathan C. Bean made the arrest.

April 30

Lindsey Michelle Elinger, was charged with simple assault. Kimberly Osborne made the arrest.

Victor Lee Ellinger, was charged with assault on a female. Kimberly Osborne made the arrest.

May 1

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

Franklin Police Department

April 27

Kimberly Danielle Lee, 30, of Rolling Hills Dr., was charged with intimidating a witness, possession of stolen

property, obtaining property by false pretenses, burglary, kidnapping. A secured bond of \$20,000 was set.

Jackson County Sheriff's Department

April 27

Christopher Todd Jones, 34, of Cloudy Valley Rd., was charged with driving while license revoked not impaired revocation. A secured bond of \$10,000 was set.

April 28

Phillip Eric Mcgahee, 30, of Utsonati Lane, Brevard, was charged with possession of a firearm by a felon, discharging a firearm into occupied dwelling or vehicle. A secured bond of \$25,000 was set.

April 29

David Joe Melton, 22, Cullowhee, was charged with injury to personal property, larceny after breaking and entering, breaking and/or entering, larceny from a construction site, injury to personal property, larceny of motor vehicle, resisting public officer, possession of stolen goods/property, injury to real property, felony larceny. A secured bond of \$25,000 was set.

April 30

Andrea El Youngdeer, 32, of Awi Dr., Cherokee, was charged with failure to appear for fictitious registration plate, driving while license revoked impaired revocation. A secured bond of \$1,500 was set.

Sandra Taylor Maddy, 44, of Sugarfork Rd., was charged with failure to appear for communicating threats, obtaining property by false pretense, uttering a forged instrument. A secured bond of \$1,200 was set.

Robert Larry Sawyer, 50, of Lazy Bear Ridge, was charged with failure to appear for no operators license, failure to wear seat belt for driver, reckless driving to endanger, driving while impaired. A secured bond of \$2,000 was set.

Dennis James Cope, 49, of Henry Rd., was charged with misdemeanor probation violation. A secured bond of \$2,500 was set.

Araceli Garcilita, 21, of Roller Mill Rd., was charged with failure to appear for second degree trespass, possession of a controlled substance on jail premises. A secured bond of \$5,000 was set.

Samuel Paul Sneed, 28, of Wolftown Rd., Cherokee, was charged with unauthorized use of motor vehicle. No bond was set. Samuel Paul Sneed, 28, of Wolftown Rd., Cherokee, was charged with unauthorized use of motor vehicle. No bond was set.

Michael Williams Rhinehart, 48, of Dublin Ct., was charged with possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of methamphetamine. No bond was set.

May 1

David Gerald Mathis, 34, of Wiker Rd., was charged with probation violation. A secured bond of \$2,500 was set.

May 2

Michael Kevin Monteith, 58, of Fisher Creek, was charged with felony probation violation, possession with intent to manufacture/Sell/Deliver a schedule II controlled substance. A secured bond of \$20,000 was set.

May 3

Cody Douglas Campbell, 27, of Clemson View Dr., was charged with failure to complete community service. A secured bond of \$500 was set.

John Thomas Cunningham, 61, of Savannah Dr., was charged with communicating threats, assault by pointing a gun.

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

All A.A. meetings in the greater Franklin area including Otto have been suspended until further notice. To speak with a member of A.A. call 828 349-4357 or 828 837-4440 or visit www.aawnc80.com.

Nantahala Hiking Club General Meeting on Zoom will be held on Friday, May 8, 7 p.m. An update of the corona situation related to trails and parks will be given. Board members will update everyone on the status of NHC. Members may participate live with questions and comments, plus it will be fun to see and talk to NHC friends. If you wish, send questions to mary23stone@yahoo.com in advance. Join the meeting by computer, iPad/tablet, smartphone, cell phone, or landline telephone. Directions generally are to click on the meeting "link", click "yes" to allow zoom, click "join with video". Details and numbers: Topic: NHC May Meeting. Link to Join Zoom Meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/94841517073>. To join by phone call (646)558-8656, NHC Meeting ID: 948 4151 7073.

Franklin Covenant Church has a grocery delivery service for anyone at higher risk for COVID-19. If you are unable to leave home to get the supplies you need due to sickness, disability or age, please contact us for more details. The only cost to you would be the items you order, there is no delivery charge. FCCdelivery@yahoo.com

Adult Day Care at the Senior Center is closed until further notice. This action is consistent with other adult day cares in the region and across the state as they are either in the process of have already ceased providing this service.

Volunteer drivers needed at Macon County Senior Services. Mileage will be reimbursed. For more information, call (828) 349-0211.

Adult Day Care at the Senior Center is closed until further notice. This action is consistent with other adult day cares in the region and across the state as they are either in the process of have already ceased providing this service.

Gastric Bypass Support Group will not meet in April.

Taste of Scotland and Celtic Festival scheduled for June 19 and 20 has been cancelled. The next Taste of Scotland is scheduled for June 18 through 20, 2021.

Macon County CareNet is in need of volunteers. Positions open are food pantry, soup kitchen and file room. If interested stop by for an application at 130 Bidwell St., or call (828)369-2642.

Volunteer at Angel Medical Center Enjoy the reward of making someone else's day brighter by sharing your talents and time. Become a volunteer at Angel Medical Center. Volunteers serve in a variety of roles such as mail and flower delivery, guest service, information desk assistance, student volunteer programs, pet therapy, chaplain, administrative support and more. For more information, call (828)349-6639 or email Bonnie.Peggs@msj.org.

CareNet on Bidwell St. is open on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. where folks can drive up and get a box of food. No paperwork; no questions asked. Backpacks are delivered to the schools on Fridays and the bus drivers take the regular lunch and also the backpacks to the families on their Friday deliveries. Five Fire Departments in Macon County – Nantahala, Cullasaja, Sky Valley, Clarks Chapel, and Burningtown – are open Monday thru Fridays for drive up deliveries from 1 to 4 p.m. for anyone who needs food. The fire departments and CareNet have plenty of food and MANNA is making deliveries from Asheville twice a month. No one should be going hungry; the food is plentiful.

CHURCH HAPPENINGS

Tellico Baptist Church has cancelled its Homecoming Celebration that was scheduled for May 22. Services are currently being held in the parking lot and any who wish to attend are asked to stay inside your car or near your car and maintain a 6 foot distance from others. Sunday services start at 10 a.m. on Sunday May 10. For further details, contact TJ Guffey at (828)347-1014.

Spiritual Light Center is closed until further notice

West Franklin Church services are held on Sunday, 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. The church is located on Sloan Rd. next to the Forest Service Office.

Editor's note: Most churches in the Franklin area are not holding services, although some are live streaming online. The Macon County News will continue to list churches to reference when the governor's meeting restrictions are lifted.

Bethel United Methodist Church Sunday Services are Conventional 9 a.m. and Contemporary 11 a.m. which includes a dismissal for Children's Church. Adult Sunday School is 10 a.m. Located at 81 Bethel Church Road, Franklin. For more call (828)371-2436.

Mulberry United Methodist Church's Sunday worship is at 11 a.m. The church is located at 155 Mulberry Rd., Otto. Everyone is welcome to attend. For more information, call Rev. Eric Henson at (828)342-0431.



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SUDOKU ANSWERS FOR PG. 22

3	5	9	7	2	8	4	9	1
3	5	6	7	2	8	4	9	1
1	2	9	4	6	5	8	7	3
2	4	8	7	3	9	6	5	2
6	1	7	8	4	2	9	3	5
8	3	2	9	5	1	7	6	4
9	4	5	6	7	3	2	1	8
5	9	4	1	3	6	2	8	7
7	6	3	2	8	4	5	1	9
2	8	1	5	4	8	2	3	6
6	4	3	7	9	5	1	8	2

CROSSWORD PUZZLE ANSWERS FOR PG. 22

H	A	S	T	E	M	S	T	A	I	L
A	R	I	S	E	T	E	R	E	C	T
B	E	S	E	T	A	L	P	A	L	P
L	A	R	C	H	I	N	A	N	A	N
V	I	V	I	E	N	O	L	I	V	I
T	R	E	Y	E	W	E	E	W	E	E
N	A	U	S	E	A	G	R	I	T	S
E	N	D	U	P	P	R	E	P	R	O
L	U	N	E	E	P	E	S	K	N	O
L	A	I	D	T	E	N	D	L	I	E
A	S	H	L	A	D	Y	M	A	M	A
F	O	S	T	E	R	S	K	I	D	S
R	E	C	U	R	E	G	O	A	P	T
P	R	A	N	A	V	E	T	C	U	R
T	A	I	L	E	M	S	T	A	I	L



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RGNS students earn performing arts scholarships

Three Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School seniors involved in the performing arts were awarded scholarships by the Classic Center Cultural Foundation.

Simon Park of Raleigh; Olivia Harris of Cashiers; and Cydni Coppage of Highlands, were this year's scholarship winners for Rabun Gap. The audition process is usually held at the Classic Center in Athens, Ga., but was done virtually this year. The generous \$2,000 scholarships are awarded to the students as well as a \$500 contribution to the students' performing arts departments. Park won for instrumental music, Harris won for vocal music, and Coppage won for dance. The Rabun Gap winners will attend the following schools: Park will attend Boston Conservatory at Berklee; Harris will attend UNC Chapel Hill and Coppage will attend Georgia College & State University.

This is the fifth year the scholarship has been offered to students in Rabun County. The Classic Center Cultural Foundation awards its performing arts scholarships to four students in Rabun County, four students from Athens and the surrounding counties, and one from Greene County.

About the Classic Center Cultural Foundation

The Classic Center Cultural Foundation provides resources to entertain and educate the community by providing and supporting diverse performing, visual, and culinary arts programs, while working to maintain The Classic Center, northeast Georgia's premier award-winning convention center and performing arts theatre located in downtown Athens, Ga.



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Three Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School seniors received college scholarships from the Classic Center Cultural Foundation. From left is Olivia Harris of Cashiers, Peyton Coppage of Highlands, and Simon Park of Raleigh.

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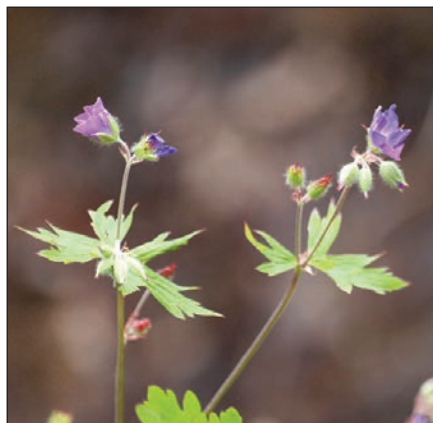
Macon County VFW Post 7339 is closed but we will continue our mission "to assist our comrades." During this difficult time, we are focusing our efforts on helping Veterans in need. If you are out of work and in need of help getting food or medicine, please reach out to the post by email: vfwncpost7339@gmail.com. Please provide your contact information and how we may assist you with your current situation.

Commander Geraldine Ronan
Senior Vice - Eddie Welch Junior Vice - Andy Boemig
Quartermaster - Robert Morrow Adjutant - Pat McConnell

Enjoying the great outdoors

Even in the age of COVID-19, folks can still get outside and enjoy fresh air and sunshine. With plenty of spring showers, wildflowers have burst forth in abundance in wooded areas. Last weekends warm temperatures also sent kayakers – and their dogs – to the rivers for some much needed respite.

Photos by Betsey Gooder



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FRANKLIN BYPASS WALMART

Franklin small business takes on manufacturing high-demand equipment for healthcare industry

“We will be closing until further notice. God bless us all.”

This is but one of many messages posted to storefronts across Western North Carolina.

For Luxury Therapeutics in Franklin, that kind of sign simply wasn't an option.

After the local economy took a turn for the worst, co-owner Debra Hedden reached out to Tiffany Henry, director of the Small Business Center at Southwestern Community College, to brainstorm ideas for transforming the business to meet the needs of the current market.

“We were looking for ways to bring in income and put our employees back to work during this difficult time,” said Hedden. “We had received some entrepreneurial help from Tiffany in the past, so we reached out again hoping she could point us in the right direction.”

Henry immediately connected them to the Carolina Textile District (CTD), a group of more than 60 manufacturing companies who have transitioned their production to manufacture medical supplies. The group reaches out to local businesses to secure supplies, develop sew kits, source shipping materials and begin producing masks.

Because Luxury Therapeutics specializes in making spa products (wraps, pillows, shoes and more), it was already well-equipped to join the CTD's endeavor to quickly provide for the healthcare industry. CTD provides Hedden with the cut fabric and elastic, and then Luxury Therapeutics sews the masks together and sends them back.

“Debra and her team already have the sewing machines and the know-how; it's just a different pattern they'll be using to manufacture masks and gowns,” said Henry. “Having this contract with the CTD is going to provide their business steady income, and it's going to help get much needed supplies in the hands of medical professionals faster.”

While Hedden was thankful for the opportunity, she admits it didn't come without any challenges.

“We had the tools we needed, but it was difficult to set up an efficient production to make 1,000 masks at a time,” said Hedden. “We started working on them in mid-April and have already shipped our first batch to CTD. We're work-



Mother-daughter team Debra Hedden (left) and Karen Kneeland of Luxury Therapeutics in Franklin.

ing on a second round right now. We expect this to go much smoother. It was a bit of a learning curve.”

With the CTD recently placing orders for 300,000 masks and 20,000 gowns, members of the effort such as Luxury Therapeutics will be hard at work for the foreseeable future.

“One of the main reasons we started Luxury Therapeutics in 2012 was to help others feel good, live well and reduce body ache stress through the use of our products,” said Hedden. “Making personal protective equipment helps other people much in the same way, and we're providing a product that helps keep people safe. We feel good about that.”

Hedden says she would recommend the opportunity to get involved with the CTD to any small business in the area that may be equipped with sewing tools.

“This is a great opportunity to put your team back to work with a low overhead cost, since CTD provides all the materials you need. You just need to have the tools,” said Hedden. “It may be worth investing in some tools and converting your small business into something that's in high-demand, such as distilleries that have converted equipment into producing hand sanitizer. It's definitely something you want to think about and research, because we're all having to adapt.”

For more information on the Carolina Textile District, visit <https://www.carolinatextiledistrict.com/>

For more information on any of the seminars or services offered by the Small Business Center at SCC, contact Henry at t_henry@southwesterncc.edu.

Gov. Cooper proclaims May 3-9 Hurricane Preparedness Week

Governor Roy Cooper has proclaimed May 3-9 Hurricane Preparedness Week in North Carolina and reminded residents that now is the time to prepare. Hurricane season runs from June 1 through Nov. 30.

“North Carolina knows all too well the damage and disruption that hurricanes can bring, but being prepared can help people fare better and recover quicker,” said Gov. Cooper. “Now is the time to make sure you and your family are ready this hurricane season.”

Gov. Cooper urges families to use this week to discuss their emergency plans, update their emergency supplies, and review their homeowners and renter's insurance policies.

When considering your evacuation planning during the COVID-19 pandemic, a plan to stay at a hotel, or with friends or family who live farther inland are better options than relying on a large emergency shelter. Be sure to include items in a preparedness kit like hand sanitizer, face masks, copies of your health insurance cards and documents and your medications. If you do evacuate, be sure to check in with family members, or an emergency contact, to let them know where you are.

The most dangerous threats from hurricanes and tropical storms are flooding and storm surge.

“Preparing for an emergency is an easy and simple way to help protect you and your loved ones when a disaster strikes,” said Public Safety Secretary Erik A. Hooks. “By having an emergency supply kit with enough non-perishable food and water to last each person three to seven days, you'll be ready for aftermath of a storm when you may be without power, water or other essential services.”

Essential items for your emergency kit include:

- Food/water for every member of your family for several days
- Copies of insurance cards/papers and identification sealed in a watertight plastic bag
- First-aid kit
- Weather radio and batteries
- Prescription medicines
- Sleeping bag or blankets
- Changes of clothes
- Hygiene items such as toothbrush, toothpaste, soap and deodorant
- Cash
- Pet supplies including food, water, leashes, bedding, muzzle and vaccination records
- Hand sanitizer
- Face masks


During storms, people should stay tuned into a trusted local news source and keep a battery-powered radio nearby for weather and evacuation information. They also need to heed the warnings of state and local officials and evacuate quickly when told to do so.

More information on hurricanes and overall emergency preparedness can be found on the ReadyNC website at www.ReadyNC.org.

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Deaths & Funerals

Grover Ray McCall Sr.

Grover Ray McCall Sr., 95, passed away Monday, April 27, 2020. He was born June 9, 1924, in Cherokee County, North Carolina, to the late Samuel Richmond McCall and Dovie Smith McCall. He was married to his first wife, Della Keener McCall who preceded him in 1992. He worked in logging, he also worked at Burlington Industries for 22 years, and for McCall Builders for 20 years. He loved to hunt and work in his garden. He was a member of Goldmine Baptist Church where he was a deacon, Sunday School teacher, and Sunday School Superintendent.



Grover Ray McCall Sr.

Survivors include his wife, Linda Dendy McCall of the home; two sons, John Wayne McCall and his wife Julie of Highlands, N.C., and Grover Ray McCall Jr. "Bodie" and his wife, Lynn of Franklin, N.C.; a stepson, Timothy Shirley of Franklin; nine grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren; and three sisters, Elberta Chastain of Walhalla, S.C., Edith McDowell of Franklin and Mavis Jones of Stone Mountain, Ga.

In addition to his first wife, he was preceded in death by a granddaughter, Cynthia McCall; two brothers, Virgil McCall and Carey McCall; and a sister, Hazel Wright.

A private graveside service was held Friday, May 1, at the Mt. Moriah Cemetery with Rev. Gary McDaniels and Rev. Gene Hawkins officiating. Pallbearers were Joe Brooks, Skip Keener, Jerry Arnold, Timothy Shirley, Weldon Keener, and Stephen McCall. Honorary pallbearers were Doyle Wayne McCall and Doyle Calloway.

A public memorial service will be held at a later date.

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

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

Stephen Alan Vance

Stephen Alan Vance, 66, of Franklin, N.C., passed away Thursday, April 30, 2020.

Born in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., he was the son of the late Orville and Wilma Cherry Vance. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death in 2015, by his wife, Robin Jane Vance. He was a builder and owned and operated Vance Builders.

He is survived by his three children, Jenny Lee Vance, Robin Rene Vance and Scott Alan Vance; granddaughter, Charlotte Young; and several nieces and nephews.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to Appalachian Animal Rescue, PO Box 81, Franklin, NC 28744

Macon Funeral Home is in charge of the arrangements.

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



Stephen Vance

Robert 'Bob' Akers

Robert "Bob" Akers, 83, resident of Franklin, N.C., passed away May 4, 2020.

He was born in Kalamazoo, Mich., and was a U.S. Marine Corp veteran. He is deeply loved and will be greatly missed by his surviving wife, Joan; their six children, 10 grandchildren, eight great grandchildren and two beloved sisters. He was preceded in death by a daughter.

He loved restoring antique tractors and engines and was a member of the Early Farm Days Tractor and Engine Club.

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

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to one's favorite charity.

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.

Online condolences at www.maconfuneralhome.com.



Robert 'Bob' Akers

Karen Wofford Alexander

Karen Wofford Alexander, 60, of Sylva, N.C., passed away on Thursday, April 30, 2020.

Born on Sept. 19, 1959, in Fulton County, Georgia, she was the daughter of the late Jesse and Myrtle Wofford. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her grandparents, who raised her, Hazel and Henry Parker and Columbus Brendle; and a brother, Marvin Rucker. She loved working at the animal shelter in Cashiers and she loved animals and children.

She is survived by the father of her children, Buddy Bryson of Cashiers; children, Cole Bryson of Cashiers and Michelle Bryson of Cullowhee; grandchildren, Kaylee and Natalie Floyd; mother-in-law, Univee Bryson; and her Uncle Phil and Aunt Pauline Terrell who all took loving care of her; sister, Valerie Bassett (Jerry) of Wetumkka, Ala.; sister-in-law, Leigh Ann Rucker; and several nieces and nephews.

A memorial service will be held at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be made to your local Humane Society.

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.

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



Karen Alexander

James Homer Hodgins

James Homer Hodgins, 84, of Franklin, N.C., passed away on April 17, 2020, at his residence

He was born on April 4, 1936, in Macon County, North Carolina, to the late Ed and Florie McClure Hodgins. He was a United States Navy veteran and was retired from the road maintenance department of the State of North Carolina. He was of the Baptist faith.

He was preceded in death by his parents, one daughter, Patricia Ann Hodgins, two brothers, Richard and Quincy Hodgins, and one sister, Frances Hodgins.

He is survived by his son, Kelly Hodgins of Lakemont, Ga.; and daughter, Carol Hughes of Franklin; three grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren.

A memorial service will be held at a later date.

Hunter Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

An on-line obituary and register is available at www.hunterfuneralhome.com.



James Homer Hodgins

Gloria Elizabeth Jackson

Gloria Elizabeth Jackson, 99, of Franklin, N.C., passed away April 27, 2020. She was born Feb. 10, 1921, in Vicksburg, Miss., to the late Andrew Jackson Green and Henrietta Myer Green.

She lived in Crystal River, Fla., and moved to Franklin in 2016. She was an auditor in bookkeeping and ran a hotel in the Caicos Islands, she also worked for Sears in sales and the credit department. She loved to scuba dive and dance, she performed in plays and theater in Florida. She was of the Roman Catholic faith and went to church in Crystal River.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband, Orville C. Jackson and a daughter, Claudette Merkle.

Survivors include daughters, Gloria Davis of Franklin, and Naomi Giles of Pulaski, Tenn.; eight grandchildren, four great-grandchildren, and one great-great-grandchild; and a sister, Henrietta Brasfield of Vicksburg, Miss.

A private service will be held at a later date.

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

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William Byron captures third Pro Invitational Series win

Holly Cain – NASCAR Wire Service

Hendrick Motorsports driver William Byron won his third eNASCAR iRacing Pro Invitational Series race in the last four weeks – making a dramatic surge to the lead in the waning laps and holding off Christopher Bell at the finish line for the victory in Sunday's Finish Line 150 at virtual Dover International Speedway.

Although it took that push in the final laps to secure the win, the 22-year old Charlotte native led the most laps (79) on the day, which was quite an accomplishment considering the event featured a very Dover-like nine caution flags.

"It was a lot of fun today," said Byron, who drives the No. 24 Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet in the NASCAR Cup Series. "Obviously there was a lot of cautions, so I just had to kind of pace myself.

"My help there, Nick [Ottinger], Matt Holden, did a great job of really kind of leaving the strategy up to them as far as what tires to take. I think four tires at the end was the right call to be aggressive. Just thankful for their support and ready to get back to our normal racing here soon."

Bell's runner-up showing in the No. 95 Leavine Family Racing Toyota was his best finish – and first top 10 – in the six eNASCAR iRacing Pro Invitational Series races to date. Timmy Hill, who battled Byron for much of the race, finished third – his fifth top-three finish in six races. Joe Gibbs Racing driver Erik Jones was fourth, followed by Front Row Motorsports' Michael McDowell, both earning their first top-five finishes in the virtual series as well.

JGR driver Denny Hamlin – winner of the inaugural series race at virtual Homestead-Miami Speedway – finished sixth with Team Penske's Ryan Blaney, last week's virtual Talladega Superspeedway winner Alex Bowman, Rick Ware Racing's Garrett Smithley and Stewart-Haas Racing's Aric Almirola rounding out the top 10.

The eNASCAR iRacing Pro Invitational Series was created to give both competitors and fans a way to enjoy the sport during the country's downtime fighting COVID-19.

Next week's race at the historic North Wilkesboro Speedway – no longer on the NASCAR Cup Series schedule – will be the last virtual race, however.

NASCAR announced this past Thursday it would return to real-time competition on May 17 at Darlington Raceway.

There will be a pair of NASCAR Cup Series events at Darlington – on May 17 and 20 – and then at Charlotte Motor Speedway on May 24 and May 27. There will be no practices and only one qualifying session – for the sport's longest race – the May 24 Coca-Cola 600, and no fans will be allowed to attend the races at this point.

But before the sport begins its initial return to real-time competition, Byron has certainly proven himself a dominant force in iRacing. His combined 406 laps led in the six races to date is more laps out front than all the other drivers combined.

Although, iRacing is a completely different scenario than



William Byron, driver of the #24 Axalta Voltatex Chevrolet, races by the flagstand during the eNASCAR iRacing Pro Invitational Series Finish Line 150 at virtual Dover International Speedway on May 03, 2020 in Dover, Del., then celebrates with a burnout.

again, but William did a great job throughout the iRace. I just want to win again."

He'll have that chance Sunday at the historic North Wilkesboro (N.C.) Speedway – a .625-mile oval that has featured some of NASCAR's most iconic racing names. NASCAR analyst Jeff Gordon – a four-time NASCAR Cup Series champion and member of the NASCAR Hall of Fame – said he was seriously considering competing next week. He is the last driver to win a NASCAR Cup Series race at the track in 1996 before it closed down.

It all makes for a highly-anticipated closure to the eNASCAR iRacing Pro Invitational Series and an enthusiastic send-off for the return to real-time racing in just two weeks.

"I'm excited," Byron said of the 2020 season resumption. "Obviously, we're going to have to be careful health-wise, really take care of ourselves. That starts with us as drivers to make sure that we're being smart and things of that nature.

"When it comes to the racing I'm honestly just very excited because it kind of goes back to your roots as a driver of when you show up and you race, maybe you have a few laps of practice, but ultimately you get in the car and drive. I'm looking forward to that aspect of the race, not really being there for a long time, but just getting out there and driving."

NASCAR announces May 17 to mark return to racing

NASCAR announced last Thursday an initial short-term schedule, beginning with a NASCAR Cup Series race May 17

real time NASCAR Cup Series competition, Byron conceded the work he has put in to earn these iRacing wins against the same top-line NASCAR competition he'll soon face on a real-time track, does have an upside.

"It honestly feels really good," Byron said. "I feel like even though obviously it's virtual racing, it's a very similar platform to what we do. The physics and geometry of everything is similar.

"What gives me confidence is the fact that in pressure situations, being able to deliver under those is critical in a real race car because everyone can go real fast, but it comes down to the strategy and execution of that.

"It gives me a lot of confidence in the heated moments of the race. I'm excited to bring that back over to the real race car."

Hill, who has perhaps been Byron's top competitor these weeks, was still smiling on the FOX broadcast even after being overtaken for the win.

"I knew I was a sitting duck," Hill said. "We came up short

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PRO RACING THIS WEEK

Racing News, Stats & Trivia

Last Week's Race: William Byron won iRacing race at Dover

Hendrick Motorsports driver William Byron won his third eNASCAR iRacing Pro Invitational Series race in the last four events. Byron made a dramatic surge to the lead in the waning laps and held off Christopher Bell at the end for the victory in Sunday's Finish Line 150 at virtual Dover International Speedway. Although it took that push in the final laps to secure the win, the 22-year-old Charlotte native led the most laps on the day, which was quite an accomplishment considering the event featured a very Dover-like nine caution flags. "It was a lot of fun today," said Byron, who drives the No. 24 Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet in the NASCAR Cup Series. "Obviously there was a lot of cautions, so I just had to kind of pace myself. It was hard to predict when we were going to get a longer run, so it's hard to know what to do with the tires in terms of how much to save, whatnot." Bell's runner-up showing in the No. 95 Leavine Family Racing



Toyota was his best finish, and first top 10, in the six eNASCAR iRacing Pro Invitational Series races to date. Timmy Hill, who battled Byron for much of the race finished third, his fifth top-three finish in six races. Joe Gibbs Racing driver Erik Jones was fourth, followed by Front Row Motorsports' Michael McDowell, both earning their first top-five finishes in the virtual series as well. Next week's race at the historic North Wilkesboro Speedway will be the last virtual race.

Top News Stories

Matt Kenseth comes out of retirement to replace Kyle Larson

Former NASCAR champion Matt Kenseth will again come out of retirement to compete for Chip Ganassi Racing as the replacement for fired driver Kyle Larson. Larson lost his job two weeks ago after using a racial slur during a live-streamed virtual race. Although Ganassi development driver Ross Chastain was assumed to be the leading contender to replace Larson in the No. 42 Chevrolet, the team instead announced Monday it will go with the two-time Daytona 500 winner. "I think Matt gives us the best chance to win, run up front and compete for wins," Ganassi said. "I've always gone with the mantra of trying to take the best driver available, and he's the best driver available right now." Kenseth, 48, is in a class of drivers that includes Hall of Famers Dale Earnhardt, Jeff Gordon, Richard Petty and David Pearson as the only competitors to win a Cup Series championship, rookie of the year award and the Daytona 500. NASCAR announced it has granted a waiver to make Kenseth, the 2003 Cup champion, eligible to race for the title this season. NASCAR completed just four of its 36 races before the season was suspended due to the coronavirus pandemic.

NASCAR Race Schedule News

NASCAR confirms return to racing at Darlington

NASCAR will resume its season with Cup Series competition on Sunday, May 17, at Darlington Raceway. Races will take place without fans in the grandstands. "NASCAR and its teams are eager and excited to return to racing, and have great respect for the responsibility that comes with a return to competition," said Steve O'Donnell, NASCAR

executive vice president and chief racing development officer. After hosting the Cup Series on May 17, Darlington will be the site of a return to Xfinity Series racing on Tuesday, May 19. The Cup Series will then run a second race at Darlington on Wednesday, May 20. "It's an honor for Darlington Raceway to resume the 2020 NASCAR season in just a few short weeks with three races in four days," said track president Kerry Tharp.

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

Racing Trivia

What year did Matt Kenseth win Rookie of the Year? ?

- a) 2000
- b) 2002
- c) 2004
- d) 2006

Answer: a) Matt Kenseth won Rookie of the Year in 2000.

at Darlington Raceway, to mark the return to the track for the first time since the middle of March.

The schedule includes a pair of NASCAR Cup Series races at the historic Darlington track on Sunday afternoon, May 17, and then on Wednesday night, May 20, with a NASCAR Xfinity Series event in between on Tuesday, May 19.

The schedule then moves to Charlotte Motor Speedway where there will be NASCAR Cup Series races on Sunday, May 24, and Wednesday, May 27, with Xfinity Series and NASCAR Gander RV & Outdoors Truck Series events on May 25 and 26, respectively. The May 24 NASCAR Cup Series race is the traditional Memorial Day weekend Coca-Cola 600 and will be held at 6 p.m.

FOX or FS1 will televise all the races. Fans will not be permitted at the track, all the races will be one-day shows with no practice sessions, and qualifying will only take place for the Coca-Cola 600.

The news of NASCAR's return was met with a welcome reaction on social media.

"It's nearly impossible to create a perfect schedule, but @NASCAR worked hard and has done a great job to make racing happen again," Team Penske driver Brad Keselowski immediately said on Twitter after the announcement. "Things will look different when we return but the changes are neces-

sary for the safety of everyone who makes our races successful, especially our fans."

In announcing the news, NASCAR said it had collaborated with public health officials, medical experts and state and federal officials in deciding when to resume competition.

Safety measures will include the use of PPE by everyone at the track and health screenings for individuals before they arrive at track, while inside the facility and upon leaving it. Strict social distancing will be required, as well as limits on the number of people allowed into the facility.

"NASCAR will return in an environment that will ensure the safety of our competitors, officials and all those in the local community," Steve O'Donnell, NASCAR's executive vice president and chief racing development officer said in announcing the news. "We thank local, state and federal officials and medical experts, as well as everyone in the industry, for the unprecedented support in our return to racing, and we look forward to joining our fans in watching cars return to the track."

The plan is still to run the full 36-race schedule, but said there will be some changes in venue and that details will be released before the first race back at Darlington. The 10-race Playoff portion of the schedule looks to remain intact, with the season finale for all three series still set for the Nov. 6-8 weekend at Phoenix Raceway.

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- ACROSS
1. "Flowers in the ____"
 6. Emergency responders
 9. Peacock's pride
 13. Life force in Sanskrit
 14. Doctor Dolittle, e.g.
 15. The Beast's problem
 16. Happen again
 17. Freudian topic
 18. In a fitting way
 19. *Hopkins' Lecter to ____'s Starling
 21. *McGillis' Charlie to ____'s Maverick
 23. Unagi
 24. Undesirable row
 25. Stuff in a tray?
 28. The Tramp's love interest
 30. Hairy vertebrate
 35. "Best ____ schemes o' mice an' men"
 37. Be inclined
 39. City in Belgium
 40. Debussy's "Clair de ____"
 41. D'Artagnan's weapon, pl.
 43. Speed on water
 44. "This _____," on a box
 46. The Chapin School, e.g.
 47. Å
 48. Post-roller coaster ride state
 50. The Coen brothers' "True ____"

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52. ____ Diego
53. Deuce topper
55. Lamb's mother
57. *Clark's Rhett to ____'s Scarlett
60. *John's Danny to ____'s Sandy
63. Continually annoy
64. Matterhorn, e.g.
66. Cooler clime conifer
68. Do like phoenix
69. Tiger's peg
70. "My Own Private ____"
71. Thou ____, or you have
72. Bajillion years
73. Article of faith
5. El Chapo's organization
6. "What ____ Happened to Baby Jane?"
7. *Billy's Hary to ____'s Sally
8. Investor's asset
9. ____-Guarani languages
10. Liberal pursuits
11. Archipelago unit
12. Bovine hangout
15. Posterior, anatomically speaking
20. Fill with optimism
22. Basketball target
24. Two heads are better than one, e.g.
25. *Keaton's Annie to ____'s Alvy
26. Sweating room
27. Hinduism follower
29. *Knightley's Swann to ____'s Sparrow
31. *Cameron's Fiona to ____'s Shrek
32. List of options, pl.
33. Ancient Greeks' assembly area
34. Pretend, two words
36. ____ ex machina
38. Doe, e.g.
42. Sales pitch
45. Smallest at the clothing store
49. Second person of be
51. Lighted by twilight
54. Related on mother's side
56. Avoid, as in taxes
57. Designer Bradley
58. Osiris' wife
59. One third of a three-piece suit
60. Welcoming sign
61. A Flock of Seagulls' hit, 2 words
62. Soreness
63. "____, humbug!"
65. *Kate's Rose to ____'s Jack
67. "Some Like It ____"

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