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See Pg. 4



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FREE INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

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The FHS Theater Department presents "Twas the Opening Night Before Christmas" on Dec. 17 and 18, at 7 p.m., in the Franklin High School Fine Arts Center. The story centers around a church play in which the players are not prepared, the producer's big plans are over budget, the directors are engaged in a power struggle, the chorus keeps clucking away, and all the while the pastor's hopes to raise funds to help the homeless hang on a wing and a prayer. Will the show fly in time? Or will it be left grounded like the wingless angel who wants only to reach for the stars? Tickets are \$7 per person and can be purchased at the door. For more information, contact Robert Jessup at (828)524-6467. Pictured are (L-R) Sasha Widman, Lisbeth Dominguez Martinez, Chloe Tarter, Gage Pendergrass, Augustine Stockdale and Bradley Steinmetz. Photo by Vickie Carpenter

Adam Kimsey is appointed to fill Horton's council seat

Brittney Lofthouse – Contributing Writer

During a special called meeting Monday night, the Franklin Town Council unanimously voted to appoint Adam Kimsey to fill the board vacancy left when Jack Horton was elected as mayor.

The motion was made by vice-Mayor Joe Collins and seconded by Council member Mike Lewis before passing unanimously.

Kimsey, who owns Rathskeller Coffee Haus in Franklin, previously served on the town board after being elected in 2015. He served one term before leaving the board in 2019.

Although Kimsey has not served on the board since 2019, he has remained active in the Franklin political scene, most recently addressing the board to express his support of the town's future skatepark.

Statute dictates that the town board is charged with filling vacancies on the board. The last time the board filled an apportionment was after the 2017 election that saw the late

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Supreme Court suspends filing for the 2022 election

Brittney Lofthouse – Contributing Writer

North Carolina's primary election will now be held in May after the North Carolina Supreme Court issued an order late Wednesday evening halting all candidate filings in the state and moving the primary election to May due to pending litigation surrounding the state's new election maps.

"Today's order by the state Supreme Court restores faith in the rule of law and it is necessary for the Court to rule on the constitutionality of these unfair districts before the next election," NC Governor Roy Cooper said last week.

House Speaker Tim Moore expressed disappointment in the decision. "To throw this process into chaos in the middle of filing leaves North Carolinians with uncertainty ahead of the election," he said in a statement. "Despite this delay, we are confident that we will prevail at trial and our maps will stand."

The Supreme Court's order stems from three lawsuits that have been filed against the redistricting plan approved last

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School Board highlights MEC graduation rate



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Celebrating Christmas all around the county



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'Luminescent' art exhibit at Macon library

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Franklin's first engineer resigns the position

Brittney Lofthouse – Contributing Writer

The Town of Franklin recognized Nathanael Moore during December's regularly scheduled meeting because after four years working as the town's first engineer, Moore will be leaving to pursue employment elsewhere.

Franklin leaders made it a priority in the 2017 budget to create the town's first engineer position while looking toward multiple renovation projects such as the expansion of the town's water and sewer treatment facility.

Shortly after including funding for the position in the town's budget, former Town Manager Summer Woodard announced the position would be filled by Moore, a Macon County native.

Moore began working at the North Carolina Department of Transportation in 2008 for the Division 14 Traffic Engineering Office. In 2009, he took a job for Vaughn and Melton Consulting Engineering in Asheville as a Contract Engineer Inspector before returning to NC DOT Traffic Engineering in Sylva in 2010. Moore received his Highway Engineering Concepts Certification in January 2012 and his Engineer Intern Certificate in August 2014 before going on to become a registered professional engineer in the state of North Carolina.

While hired as the town's first engineer, Moore was also appointed as the town's Public Works Director after the retirement of Jay Gibson in 2018. Gibson had served as the Town's Public Works Director since 2000.

The most significant project Moore was involved in during his tenure was the upgrade to the town's Wastewater



Town of Franklin Mayor Jack Horton presents Town Engineer Nathanael Moore with a certificate of appreciation. Moore has resigned and will be leaving the position.

Treatment Plant which has been in the works for the better part of the last decade. The project has been designed to increase the facility's capacity from two million gallons per day to three million gallons per day as part of a \$15.1 million capital improvement plan for water and sewer infrastructure.

Moore stated that he is proud of the things accomplished during his tenure. In addition to the Wastewater Treatment Plant, Moore stated he is excited to see the progress and development of the Whitmire Property.

SUPREME COURT

Continued from page 1

month by the General Assembly that would be in place through the 2030 election cycle. Democrats and critics say the Republican-drawn maps are illegally gerrymandered to maintain dominance by the GOP in Congress and the General Assembly for a state that historically has been split evenly between Republicans and Democrats.

Just after 6 p.m. last Wednesday, The North Carolina Supreme Court made the announcement suspending candidate filing for all offices for the 2022 primary election including filing for rescheduled municipal contests, and any separate filing period in January for those contests.

The Supreme Court pushed the date of the primary and rescheduled municipal elections back more than two months – to Tuesday, May 17, 2022. It had been scheduled for March 8.

According to the State Board of Elections website, for

any candidate whose filing has been accepted by the State Board of Elections or any county board of elections, that candidate will be deemed to have filed for the same office in the May primary, subject to any court rulings that would impact that candidate's eligibility, according to the Supreme Court order.

Any candidate who wanted to withdraw their candidacy during the new filing period would be able to do so. Any individual who withdraws their candidacy is free to file for any other office for which they are eligible during the reopened filing period, should the courts rule that maps need to be redrawn. The State Board of Elections would need time to figure out the boundaries so potential candidates would be sure to file for the right office.

Dates for a new filing period have not been set. Candidate filing had begun on Monday at the N.C. State Fairgrounds for state- and federal-level contests and at all 100 county boards of elections for local contests. As of Wednesday evening, more than 1,400 candidates had filed statewide.

On Thursday, Macon County Commission Vice-Chair Ronnie Beale announced that he would be seeking re-election, and would be filing for office as soon as the courts allow.

"As soon as filing re-opens and I am able, I will file for re-election for the Macon County Board of Commissioners," said Beale. "We have been able to accomplish many things over the last 15 years that I have served on the board, but there is still work to do. I hope to be given the opportunity to continue doing what I have always vowed to do, and that is serve the folks of Macon County."

Beale joins the other incumbent in the county commissioner race, Gary Shields, in seeking re-election. Despite filing only being open for a short time last week, candidates for more than a dozen local and state offices have filed for office.

COUNCIL SEAT

Continued from page 1

Billy Mashburn be re-elected to office. Franklin leaders voted 4-1 to appoint Dinah Mashburn to replace her late husband on the board.

Kimsey was the lone dissenting vote against Mashburn, instead arguing that Angela Moore, who lost the election by just a few votes, should be appointed to the board.

On Monday, rather than appoint the next highest vote getter in the recent election, which would have been Frances Seay — or JimBo Ledford who also ran for office — town leaders unanimously voted to appoint Kimsey.



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School Board recognizes accomplishments, retains former leadership

Diane Peltz – Contributing Writer

Mina Jenkins, fourth grade teacher from Iotla Valley Elementary School was nominated by student Dawson Kendall, for the WLOS "Thanks to Teachers" event. During the regularly scheduled School Board meeting on Dec. 13, School Board Superintendent Dr. Chris Baldwin gave recognition to Jenkins for her outstanding work. Dawson stated that Jenkins is a "good teacher with a good personality."

"As a classroom teacher you want to go home every day feeling like you accomplished something, but to get this recognition and actually know that you did, is very special," said Jenkins.

Macon Early College (MEC) School Counselor, Kathy Breedlove accepted a recognition certificate on behalf of the school for having a 100% graduation rate. MEC offers students the opportunity to complete their Associate of Arts or "AA" degree along with their high school diploma. The students who attend MEC also have an opportunity to receive a Trade Certificate from Southwestern Community College. Breedlove explained that many of the students choose a trade in place of attending a four-year college.

The school board voted on a chairperson and a vice chairperson. By a motion made by



Macon Early College counselor Kathy Breedlove accepts a certificate from Dr. Baldwin on behalf of MEC for 100% graduation rate.

Carol Arnold and seconded by Hillary Wilkes, the board unanimously voted to re-elect Jim Breedlove as chairman. Melissa Evans made a motion to elect Tommy Cabe as the board's vice chair. That motion was seconded by Arnold and the board unanimously voted to maintain Cabe as their vice chair.

State mandates LETRS training

The board also heard from Macon County

School's Curriculum Director Josh Lynch regarding a legislative mandate that says teachers in grades PreK-5 must enroll in LETRS training. Developed by renowned literacy experts Dr. Louisa Moats and Dr. Carol Tolman, LETRS® (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) is a flexible literacy professional learning solution for preK-5 educators. LETRS provides teachers with training to make a significant improvement in the literacy and language development of students. LETRS is a 168-hour course that helps teachers learn more about phonics, phonemic

awareness, fluency, comprehension and other reading skills. Lynch explained that this course is similar to obtaining a masters level certificate. Although this program would offer teachers higher level skills for teaching reading, the school board members felt that the amount of time the teachers would have to devote to taking this course would only add to the enormous pressure that they are under now. Giving teachers a stipend for the study

was mentioned and will be discussed in more detail at a later date.

Teachers to get Mental Wellness Resources

Josh Lynch also spoke about the Everfi Mental Wellness program that will be offered to teachers in Macon County Schools. EVERFI provides digital lessons so teachers, schools, and districts can bring real-world skills to students online. Digital learning resources focus on the skills students need for life — skills in social-emotional learning, health and wellness, financial capability, and career readiness. These resources are offered for free to teachers.

Highlands School looking at PreK

Brooke Keener, director of Exceptional Children/AIG/PreK, spoke to the board about the necessity of making room for a PreK classroom at Highlands School. Keener stated that if Highlands wants to attract young families to the area a PreK classroom is a must. In Highlands daycare rates start at \$600 per month and go up to \$1800. An advanced planning study for PreK will be looked at for both Highlands School and Nantahala School.

MMS to address well pump failure

Macon Schools personnel director Todd Gibbs spoke to the board regarding the

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The Macon County School Board recognized lotla fourth grade teacher Mina Jenkins who was nominated by student Dawson Kendall for WLOS-TV's Thanks to Teachers campaign. Pictured (L-R) are lotla principal Michelle Bell, Jenkins and Kendall.

irrigation pump failure. Macon Middle School (MMS) has maintained two, 5 HP well pumps that are used to irrigate the ball field. These pumps are failing and dripping water on site, causing the grass to grow only where the water is dripping. The school is hooked up to municipal water which is used for the MMS building needs. MMS had tried to use municipal water for irrigating the field but found the water bill to be astronomically high. The two well pumps will either have to be repaired or replaced in order to be able to continue to use the ball field. Estimates are being evaluated and the hope is to have this issue fixed in time for the next sports event in the spring.

MMS is also contracting with Paul Boney with LS3P Architecture, in a joint committee approach project. This project involves two parts. Part one will look at re-doing the sports fields to incorporate an eight lane track and

field-house. Part two will include an extensive study on existing buildings. Boney explained that this was not just paint and carpet, but looking at a new mechanical system, fixing what needs to be fixed.

"This complete study will be the best path for the citizens getting the most out of the investment. It is an investment in the future," said Boney.

The plan is for the work to begin on Monday and completed by May. County funds will be used for this project.

Masks remain optional

The board also voted to keep the mask mandate optional despite a small uptick in COVID cases. There has been no known school transmission of COVID aside from two teachers. No students have been infected through school transmission.

Rising music star makes move from West coast to the Mountains

Deena C. Bouknight – Contributing Writer

Known as FINLAY to her burgeoning national and international fan base, the Millennial musician (for privacy reasons, she prefers not to release her given name) chose to ditch her beloved Los Angeles, Calif., last year for personal and health reasons. Her mother had decided to move to Clayton, Ga., to “get back to nature” and experience the quiet of a mountain community, so FINLAY and her husband, owner of Upward Marketing Collective, followed. They purchased a fixer upper and settled into a less hectic lifestyle. However, FINLAY still has one foot in the music industry due to her rising popularity on a variety of social media and music streaming platforms. Yet, she has also ensconced herself as part of the worship team at a Franklin church.

One of her most popular songs, “Tides,” conveys through the lyrics – which she writes – as well as the official video, the shark attack she nearly did not survive when she was 21 years old. The music video features a distinct, catchy pop tune and beautiful oceanic scenery, but it is intended as a cathartic and personal move. A native of Houston, she decided one summer day in 2012 to visit a Gulf Coast beach with some family friends. She was on her surf board teaching a 9-year-old some surfing basics when she was swirled by a wave. When she came back up for a breath, she realized one of her legs was splayed open at the knee and she was bleeding profusely.

“I didn’t know what had happened at first because I didn’t see the shark,” she said. “The girl I was teaching was so brave. She ran to shore to inform an on-site nurse and I just tried to hold my leg together and get to shore because I thought if it really was a shark that I needed to get out of the water

quickly.”

Ironically, the night before the attack, FINLAY had read a devotional entry by surfer Bethany Hamilton (whose arm was bitten off by a shark in 2003) and she remembered Hamilton recalling, while riding in the ambulance to the hospital, a scripture in Hebrews 13 that tells of God never leaving our side.

“When I read it the night before, I thought there is no way that would ever happen to me. And then there I was the very next day in an ambulance, bleeding from a shark bite, and recalling the same scripture.”

She received emergency surgery to repair her leg and thought the prognosis would be positive. But oil, bacteria, and chemicals in the hot Gulf waters quickly caused her body to experience sepsis. She was given a 50% chance to live and a 50% chance to keep her leg.

In the meantime, another shark attack occurred a few days later in the same spot and the bull shark was killed.

FINLAY, a Christian since a young age, said she experienced God’s presence during a week of intense antibiotic treatments and drastic spikes and declines in her blood pressure. She hovered near death, but her parents, friends, and family prayed constantly. She completely healed, and years later she decided to allude to the experience in “Tides.”

“The number one question I’ve gotten since that attack is if I would ever go back into the ocean,” she said. “I pushed myself to get back into the ocean because I simply couldn’t lose what I loved.” She also met Hamilton a few years later and shared with her about the attack and the fact that she had read Hamilton’s devotional just the night before.

A graduate of Biola University in Southern California, FINLAY found her voice



The singer known as FINLAY moved to the area in 2020 and not only sings worship songs in a Franklin church but also has such internationally popular songs available as Tides, which she wrote and which alludes in words and the music video to the shark attack she survived.

while studying film and entertainment. She began singing in worship bands and decided to seriously pursue a music career while still in college.

“I have a distinct vision to use what I’ve been given to serve both the Church and the unreached – in worship music for the local church and in writing and performing industry-topping pop records for all ages.”

She chose the stage name FINLAY be-

cause it is her middle name and is of Irish-descent passed down to her through five generations. As not just a singer and songwriter, but as a musician and performer, she taps into her classical piano and choreography when creating and filming new songs.

Her music has garnered millions of listens and “likes,” and the attention of various media outlets, including National Public Radio.

Besides launching solo career releases (singles and extended plays [EPs] to date with a debut album on the way) and collaborating on projects with other popular musicians, FINLAY writes and records for commercials, trailers, etc., as an independent artist. Some of her other songs that the public can listen to include “Edge of Mine,” “Bones,” “Deep End,” and more. She also creates and oversees all of her release assets, official website and digital presence.

“Of course, my goal as an artist is to align with a major label team,” she said. FINLAY has reached some milestones, most recently achieving Top 100 status on the Apple Music charts in countries like Canada, South Africa, Philippines, and more.

“My goal as an artist is also reach and exposure with maximum positive impact ... creating music that’s memorable, powerful and hopefully points my generation to messaging that is reflective, countercultural, and purposeful. I’d also love to do a national and international tour in the very near future.”

In the meantime FINLAY will finish renovating the home she shares with her husband, and she plans to embark on new music projects and releases as well as settle into her new community.

“Being a part of this area has been such an incredible breath of fresh air, both personally and professionally,” she added.

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Hiking club presents awards at annual party

Deena C. Bouknight
Contributing Writer

The 350-plus-member Nantahala Hiking Club (NHC) serves the community primarily by keeping a 56.6 mile stretch of the Appalachian Trail (AT) accessible for locals, visitors, and serious section and thru hikers. Each year NHC awards various club members during its annual holiday party for their many hours of volunteer service. In addition, NHC and its cooperative partners, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and the Nantahala Forest District, provide a wide variety of gifts to club members who reach a designated number of volunteer hours.

This year's event took place at The Lodge at Cat Creek in Franklin. Due to unseasonably mild weather, the 75 participants were able to gather outdoors.

More than 20 NHC members received recognition for their service of 50 to in excess of 4,000 volunteer hours. This year, Gail Lehman received the Lifetime Membership Award. Lehman was also recognized for having reached more than 3,000 hours of accumulated volunteer time. David Sapin received the President's Award for more than 4,000 hours of accumulated service time, and both David and his wife, Nancy Sapin, also received recognition for reaching their 25th year as members of NHC. A letter and plaque from President Joe Biden was read aloud to the club members in attendance.

Other than maintaining a section of the AT from Bly Gap at the Georgia/North Carolina border to the Nantahala Outdoor Center on the Nantahala River at Wesser, N.C., the NHC also supports the local school system through the Trail to Every Classroom program, which is a professional development program for K-12 teachers that provides educators with the



David Sapin received the President's Award for more than 4,000 hours of accumulated service time, and both David and his wife, Nancy Sapin, also received recognition for reaching their 25th year as members of NHC.

tools and training for place-based education and service-learning on the AT; supports the town of Franklin by assisting with community outreach; and, offers opportunities for regular hiking trips.

Maintainers meet at the NHC Clubhouse at 173 Carl Slagle Road in Franklin Wednesdays at 8:45 a.m., and anyone is invited to help maintain the AT. NHC monthly meetings March through December are on the second Friday of the month.

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Small business optimism – and prices - up in November

The NFIB Small Business Optimism Index increased slightly in November by 0.2 points to 98.4. Four of the 10 Index components improved, four declined, and two were unchanged. The NFIB Uncertainty Index decreased four points to 63.

“As the end of the year nears, the outlook for business conditions is not encouraging to small business owners as lawmakers propose additional mandates and tax increases,” said NFIB Chief Economist Bill Dunkelberg. “Owners are also pessimistic as many continue managing challenges like rampant inflation and supply chain disruptions that are impacting their businesses right now.”

State-specific data isn't available, but NFIB South Carolina Director Ben Homeyer said, “Based on what we're hearing from our members here, the supply chain and labor will remain a major challenge in 2022.”

Key findings include:

- Owners expecting better business conditions over the next six months decreased one point to a net negative 38%, tied for the 48-year record low reading. This indicator has declined 18 points over the past four months to its lowest reading since November 2012.

- The net percent of owners raising selling prices increased six points to a net 59% (seasonally adjusted), the highest reading since October 1979.

- Seasonally adjusted, a net 54% of owners plan price hikes, up three points from October and a 48-year record high reading.

- Forty-eight percent of owners reported job openings that could not be filled, a decrease of one point from October.

Fifty-five percent of owners reported capital outlays in the last six months, down one point from October. Of those owners making expenditures, 39% reported spending on new equipment, 22% acquired vehicles, and 14% improved or expanded facilities. Six percent of owners acquired new buildings or land for expansion and 13% spent money for new fixtures and furniture. Twenty-seven percent of owners plan capital outlays in the next few months, down four points from October.

A net negative 2% of all owners (seasonally adjusted) reported higher nominal sales in the past three months, up two points from October. The net percent of owners expecting higher real sales volumes increased two points to a net 2%.

The net percent of owners reporting inventory increases gained two points to a net 3%. Thirty-five percent of owners report that supply chain disruptions have had a significant impact on their business, 31% report a moderate impact, and 22% report a mild impact. Only 9% of owners report no impact from recent supply chain disruptions. A net 15% of owners viewed current inventory stocks as “too low” in November, up six points from October and a record-high level. A net 10% of owners plan inventory investments in the coming months, up two points from October and historically a very elevated reading.

New director at SCC's Small Business Center

Over the years, aspiring and existing entrepreneurs have come to rely on Southwestern Community College's Small Business Center for support, seminars and counseling that are critical to helping their businesses succeed.

There's a new director putting small businesses first for SCC these days.

Marne Harris brings 20 years of combined experience in education, workforce and entrepreneurship to SCC, and she's ensuring that area business owners have access to all the assistance they need. She's already immersed herself in building relationships and collaborating with colleagues across the state.

“Having been an entrepreneur myself, I understand the challenges local small businesses face – and I also recognize the opportunities available today,” Harris said. “I am passionate about creating and keeping jobs in our communities, and I'm dedicated to helping small businesses grow and thrive.”

All of the services provided by SCC's Small Business Center are completely free to small business owners and entrepreneurs in Jackson, Macon, Swain counties and the Qualla Boundary.

“We're excited to have Marne leading our efforts to support small businesses throughout our service area,” said Scott Sutton, Dean of Workforce Continuing Education at Southwestern. “Small businesses are her top priority, and she is ready to be an advocate and champion for all the different types of small businesses, regardless of need or



Marne Harris is the new Director of SCC's Small Business Center.

whether they are well established or just starting out.”

To learn more about the seminars available – or to schedule a confidential, one-on-one counseling session, contact Harris at 828.339.4426 or m_harris@SouthwesternCC.edu – or visit www.SouthwesternCC.edu.SBC.

The net percent of owners raising selling prices increased six points to a net 59% (seasonally adjusted), the highest reading since October 1979. Three percent (unadjusted) reported lower average selling prices and 59% reported higher average prices. Price hikes were the most frequent in wholesale (88% higher, 0% lower), construction (75% higher, 7% lower), and manufacturing (66% higher, 1% lower). Seasonally adjusted, a net 54% of owners plan price hikes, up three points from October and a 48-year record high reading.

A net 44% (seasonally adjusted) of owners reported raising compensation, unchanged from October and a 48-year record high reading. A net 32% plan to raise compensation in the next three months, also unchanged from October and a record high reading. Ten percent of owners cited labor costs as their top business problem and 29% said that labor quality was their top business problem.

The frequency of reports of positive profit trends remained at a net negative 17%. Among those owners reporting lower profits, 32% blamed the rise in the cost of materials, 25% blamed weaker sales, 9% cited labor costs, 9% cited the usual seasonal change, 16% cited lower prices, and 2% cited higher taxes or regulatory costs. For owners who report higher profits, 61% credited sales volumes, 11%


cited usual seasonal change, and 17% cited higher prices.

Two percent of owners reported that all their borrowing needs were not satisfied, 23% reported all credit needs were met, and 65% said they were not interested in a loan. A net 2% reported their last loan was harder to get than in previous attempts. Zero percent of owners reported that financing was their top business problem. A net 2% of owners reported paying a higher rate on their most recent loan.

The NFIB Research Center has collected Small Business Economic Trends data with quarterly surveys since the 4th quarter of 1973 and monthly surveys since 1986. Survey respondents are randomly drawn from NFIB's membership. The report is released on the second Tuesday of each month. The survey was conducted in November 2021

About NFIB

For more than 75 years, NFIB has been the voice of small business, advocating on behalf of America's small and independent business owners, both in Washington, D.C., and in all 50 state capitals. NFIB is non-profit, nonpartisan, and member driven. Since our founding in 1943, NFIB has been exclusively dedicated to small and independent businesses and remains so today. For more information, please visit www.NFIB.com.



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State health officials report first flu-related death of 2021-22 flu season

Officials with the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services have announced the first reported flu-related death of the 2021–22 flu season. An adult in the western part of the state died due to complications of influenza during the second week of December. The person tested positive for influenza and negative for COVID-19. To protect the privacy of the family, the person's hometown, county, age and gender will not be released.

“This is a sad reminder that flu can be a serious illness and can lead to complications and even death in some cases,” said State Epidemiologist Zack Moore, M.D., MPH. “With flu cases increasing and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, it is more important than ever for people to get a flu vaccine this year, as well as a COVID-19 vaccination or booster if they have not already done so.”

While influenza cases and deaths were historically low during the 2020-2021 influenza season, the number of influenza deaths reported in North Carolina ranged from 186–391 during the five prior seasons. Currently, North Carolina is seeing more influenza activity than at any time since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020.

“Unfortunately, COVID-19 cases are on the rise in the midst of the flu season, creating even more demand of our state’s hospi-

tal beds,” said NCDHHS Chief Deputy Secretary for Health Kody H. Kinsley. “It is important to get a COVID-19 vaccine and flu shot as soon as possible, and get your booster when you become eligible, to protect yourself and your family and to preserve hospital bed capacity for emergencies.”

The CDC recommends flu vaccination every year for everyone 6 months and older. Vaccination is the best way to prevent infection with the flu. Vaccination can also make illness milder for those who do get the flu, making it especially important for those at higher risk of more serious outcomes, such as people over 65 years old, children younger than 5, pregnant women and those with certain medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease and obesity.

Flu and COVID-19 vaccines can be administered at the same visit, and the CDC recommends COVID-19 vaccination for everyone 5 years old and older and COVID-19 booster for everyone 16 years of age and older when eligible.

Flu vaccinations are available at hospitals, pharmacies, private medical offices, some federally qualified health care centers and local health departments. To find a flu vaccine near you, visit vaccinefinder.org/find-vaccines. To find a COVID-19 vaccine

location, or for more information about COVID-19 vaccines in North Carolina, visit MySpot.nc.gov or call the state’s COVID-19 Vaccine Help Center for free at 888-675-4567.

Anyone who thinks they have the flu should contact their doctor right away to see if they need treatment with a prescription antiviral drug. Early treatment with an antiviral drug can help prevent flu infections from becoming more serious. Treatment with a prescription antiviral drug is especially important for hospitalized patients, people with severe flu illness and those who are at high risk of serious flu complications based on their age or health.

In North Carolina, flu infections are most common from late fall to early spring with activity usually peaking in January or February. The following precautions should be taken to protect against the spread of flu, COVID-19 and other viruses:

- Continue to practice the 3Ws — wearing a face covering over your nose and mouth, waiting 6 feet apart, and washing your hands often can help slow the spread of COVID-19 and flu.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and then discard the tissue promptly.
- Stay home when sick, except to seek medical care or testing and take steps to

avoid spreading infection to others in your home, including:

- Staying in a separate room from other household members, if possible
- Using a separate bathroom, if possible
- Avoiding contact with other members of
- Not sharing personal household items, like cups, towels and utensils
- Wearing a mask when around other people, if you are able to

Individuals who feel ill should call ahead before going to a doctor’s office, local health department or urgent care to avoid exposing others. COVID-19 and flu symptoms are similar, so consult with a doctor about getting tested for flu and/or COVID-19.

- Flu symptoms include:
- Fever
 - Cough and/or sore throat
 - Runny or stuffy nose
 - Headaches and/or body aches
 - Chills
 - Fatigue
 - Nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea (most common in children)

A combined COVID-19 and influenza surveillance summary that includes information on flu-related deaths and activity is posted every Thursday at covid19.ncdhhs.gov/dashboard/cli-surveillance.



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What's new on the plateau

Patrick Taylor
Highlands Mayor



Patrick Taylor

Tonight [Thursday] is the December meeting of the Highlands Town Board of Commissioners. The meeting is at the Highlands Community Center next to the ball field. It begins at 7 p.m. with public comment.

The meeting will have two parts. First, the current board will complete old business. There will be two public hearings, one for the annexation of the Ellis property that is adjacent to the Ravenel Subdivision. The second hearing will be for the zoning of that property to R1.

Also under old business will be an update from Kaye McHan, the director of the Highlands Chamber of Commerce, concerning the impending snow festival in Founders Park. The festival will be held Saturday, Jan. 29. Equipment will be brought in prior to Saturday to make snow. Kaye will present the schedule for the snow-making process.

The first item under new business will be the swearing in of the mayor and two board members, Amy Patterson and Eric Pierson.

I will be starting my third term as mayor. I am honored to serve Highlands for another four years. The town is facing many challenges and opportunities. In coming weeks I will review what I believe are future decisions for Highlands that will have to be addressed. Certainly, the town has several immediate issues for the board to review. The short term rental issue is a current, major issue followed by the adoption of the Highlands Comprehensive Community Plan. Both issues impact how Highlands will progress and develop as a community in the coming years.

Another new item will be the presentation of the completed town audit by Martin and Starnes Associates. This current audit has also been sent to the North Carolina Local Government Commission where their accountants have reviewed the audit that the public accountants conducted.

Another pressing item will be a budget amendment to replace a critical sewer pump station on Arnold Road. For several months our town crews have been managing this situation. The town has rented portable pumping station in order to bypass the failing station. Our workers have been trying for months to acquire parts to get the station back on-line. The supply chain backlog

Continued on page 11

Letters to the Editor

We can see Jesus in all things involving Christmas

This is the time of year that Christmas has a special meaning to us Christians. We see Jesus in all kind of things involving Christmas.

We give gifts that remind us of the wise men giving baby Jesus gifts.

The red berries on the holly tree reminds us of blood that Christ shed for us.

The sharp leaves on the holly tree a symbol of the crown of thorns.

A box of fruit a symbol of fruit of the spirit.

Mistletoe is a symbol of God's love for us.

Christmas trees cut down and erected is a symbol of Christ resurrection.

Candles are a symbol that Jesus is light of the world.

Candy canes are shaped like a shepherds staff that reminds us the Jesus is the good Shepherd who watches over his sheep.

Candy cane held upside down is a J which is first letter of Jesus and the color red - represents the blood Jesus shed for us and white - represents the purity of Jesus.

Santa Claus who gives gifts remind us of the gift of eternal life that Jesus gives us. Also his suit is red and white like the color of the candy cane.

The wreath is a circle with no end and reminds us that life is eternal and will never end. We sing Christmas carols that focus on Jesus.

We put an angel or star on top of the Christmas tree that reminds us of the angels that announced the birth of Jesus or the star that guided the wise men.

We put out a nativity scene that reminds us that Jesus was born in a stable because there was no room for Jesus at the inn. That scene is still going on today. People are still saying that they have no room for Jesus in their inn (their heart).

Yes, you can see Jesus in all phases of Christmas. I hope this season you look at all the different things that reminds you of the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ. God bless.

Mike Townsend – Franklin, N.C.

Does America really want peace on earth?

During this Christmas season, most people will at least give lip service to the ideas of "peace on earth" and "good will toward men." But, are we as a country really practicing that in regard to our nation's foreign policy? Is America spreading good will toward men in other parts of the world? Apart from private charities, the evidence is a resounding, "No."

In today's America, too many of us get caught up in phony narratives (a la David Snell wrongly believing our republic is a democracy or mindlessly blaming everything on Trump)

and are too trusting of an obviously corrupt government.

While most intellectual people understand that any form of socialism or medical tyranny are completely against the ideals that made America great in years past, I'd like to submit to my conservative and Republican friends along with fellow Christians that the current foreign policy of America is also very much against the ideals that made our country great. It seems the military is the sacred cow of the Right, and we have been spoon-fed Islamic boogeyman stories to tickle our fears in the same way as the COVID charade that is exacerbated by lying media scumbags and simpletons repeating those lies. Just like the ongoing mask and vaccine manipulated nonsense, we mistakenly think that we must comply so that it will end. Yet, it's because we comply that it will never end. Believing Islamist terror narratives creates a false sense of patriotism by cheering world dominance, worshipping the military, and feeling superior when our favorite celebrity politician talks tough on Iran as if the troops were a sports team for global warfare.

Completely lost in America's policing the world as a bullying "global force for good," is the fact that we do not belong in this role any more than the Soviets, British, or the Romans. The Constitution clearly states that Congress must declare war before going to war, but America cannot even keep our own house in order. If we are honest with ourselves by searching for truth and common sense, America has become the aggressor towards these other countries – the majority of whom would never be an invading threat to our borders and millions of gun owners. If we truly desire good will toward men, we cannot accomplish it by bombing others into submission, setting up puppet governments, threatening sovereign countries, forcing democracy on non-Westerners, or sanctioning (aka starving/punishing innocent civilians). America has become an immoral empire that is financially and spiritually bankrupt; therefore, our world dominance cannot last.

Someone might say, "We have to spread our military throughout the world for safety because if we don't, there will be chaos." Well, there will always be some degree of chaos no matter what, but we must first ask ourselves if the U.S. presence in these other countries (many of which have told us we are not welcome) is actually accomplishing any good whatsoever given the many unintended consequences and killing of innocent life that does not make the headlines. Sure, we all know about Islamic extremists' hatred for America, but do we understand that they hate us because of our meddling and occupation rather than simply because we are Westerners? It was the self-righteous Crusaders who invaded the middle east only to find that the sovereign inhabitants would actually fight to defend their homeland. Our military is not keeping us safe; in fact, our foreign occupations and secret CIA missions are making us less safe while creating a police state at home. The very real danger is what is known as blowback. The more America intrudes into other country's affairs, the more Americans are attacked. If

See LETTERS page 13

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LETTERS

Continued from page 10

our military is scattered throughout the world wasting tax dollars to the tune of \$300 million per day as in the 20-year Afghan debacle, it creates that many more targets for terrorists which causes a never-ending cycle of violence. This cycle is exactly what the military industrial complex counts on to generate huge profits from arms sales. President Eisenhower warned America about the Raytheons and Lockheed Martins of the world and implored our nation to mind our own business just as the founders intended, i.e., Monroe Doctrine as well as Jefferson's philosophy of "peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations ... entangling alliances with none" which allowed freedom to thrive at home.

It should be crystal clear that the same government machine who is beholden to Big Pharma companies to generate fear over a virus with 99.9% full recovery rate is also attached at the hip with the military industrial complex to keep the sheeple afraid of a terrorist attack. Meanwhile, these con men on both sides of the aisle keep the Southern border wide open for any Islamic extremist to walk right in. We have been fooled by dishonest men solely for their profit in both the so-called pandemic and never-ending wars.

For the record, I fully support our troops while opposing the unconstitutional policies. We can genuinely support the troops by pressuring government to bring them home and stop using them as pawns in their bankrupt empire. We can support the troops by demanding a non-interventionist policy. None of the soldiers want to suffer and die on a fool's errand to make Raytheon more money. We must teach our children historical truth and biblical principles of peace while encouraging them not to join the global military. We need to admit that we have been duped into thinking our soldiers are fighting for our freedoms. This is far from the truth and our founders never intended for America to have a standing federal army to meddle overseas. State militias/National Guard mobilizing was/is the better way to defend against rare invasions. The Islamists are not taking away American freedoms. Only the U.S. government is doing that while giving us a straw man argument that we must support never ending conflict in order to stay free. If the history of mankind is any indication, it is only a matter of time before a tyrannical government (created one tiny step at a time) begins using the military (and police) to control us. I wonder how many Christians will be praying for God to bless the military then? Christians are certainly not praying that in countless other countries today. Even Australia and several European countries have begun using their militaries as authoritarian tools against their own citizens. America is next.

In short, America's current foreign policy (and COVID tyranny) is not bringing peace on earth. It is hindering it in a devastating way, but we must be able to read between the lines to fully understand the bigger picture. Two of the best books explaining the danger of American imperialism are Murray Rothbard's "War, Peace, and the State" along with "Anatomy of the State." They would be great stocking stuffers for freedom-minded people.

But alas, due to sinful man living in a fallen world, there will never be peace on earth until Christ returns. That promise along with the Gospel message is the only sure thing we can trust in and be encouraged by, so come quickly, Lord Jesus. Merry Christmas!

Jim Gaston - Franklin, N.C.

Email letters to the editor to maconcountynews@gmail.com

TAYLOR

From previous page

has impacted our ability to acquire critical parts. In the meantime, our town engineer determined that the best longterm solution would be to replace the entire pump station which is about 22 years old. It is analogous to repairing an aging car, the pump station will fail again down the road if we simply replace some needed parts. Our public works director wants to appropriate the funds now, rather than wait until a new budget year in July. He indicates that even with ordering the new pump station immediately, it could take months for the order to be fulfilled. The town is currently dealing with supply chain issues in several major departments.

Another item under consideration is to purchase a portable pump station in case another fixed station fails. The town should always plan for worse case situations.

Dogwood Trust supports broadband expansion

The Institute for Emerging Issues (IEI) at NC State University today announced it has been awarded a \$2 million grant from the Dogwood Health Trust in support of the Building a New Digital Economy in NC (BAND-NC) program. The grant will support community-based efforts to increase the number of people with the internet in their homes in North Carolina's 18 westernmost counties and the Qualla Boundary. The project will position western NC as a national leader in digital inclusion and will move BAND-NC closer to its goal of making North Carolina the first state in the nation where every county has a digital inclusion plan in place.

"Ensuring that communities across the state have proper access to broadband and have a deeper understanding of the benefits of adopting digital technologies are essential components of our economic vitality," said Chancellor Randy Woodson. "The work that the Institute for Emerging Issues is doing and the generosity of the Dogwood Health Trust will continue to connect our state and its people to ideas and solutions for digital equity."

Working closely with the NC Division of Broadband and Digital Equity, BAND-NC provides mini-grants to communities across the state that are implementing digital inclusion plans, beginning a digital inclusion planning process, or are looking to meet immediate digital needs. BAND-NC has supported 61 \$5,000 "rapid response" and "digital inclusion planning and implementation" grants covering 62 counties since the program's inception and has helped develop digital inclusion plans in 18 North Carolina counties.

The new project will focus on development of formal, sustainable digital inclusion plans. IEI will work closely with regional councils of government to help lead development of community-level plans to increase broadband adoption rates among all citizens, then provide counties startup funding to begin implementing the plans.

"Broadband access is a key factor for achieving a fulfilled and healthy life, and is critical if we are to realize our vision of creating a Western North Carolina where every generation can live, learn, earn and thrive - with no exceptions," said Dr. Susan Mims, interim CEO of Dogwood Health Trust. "Programs like BAND-NC help our neighbors and communities overcome the connectivity hurdles presented by geography or poverty to ensure that everyone has equitable access to this vital service. We look forward to seeing the digital inclusion plans that our communities develop to help their residents take advantage of the opportunities broadband connections provide."

To learn more and apply, visit iei.ncsu.edu/band-nc.

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Christmas scenes around Franklin



Photos by Vickie Carpenter





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Arrest Report

The Macon County Sheriff's Department, Franklin Police Department or Jackson County Sheriff's Department made the following arrests Dec. 3 - 12. All suspects are innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.



Macon County Sheriff's Department

December 3

Justice Lee Littlejohn, was charged with possession of methamphetamine, possession of heroin, possession of a schedule I controlled substance, simple possession of a schedule IV controlled substance, possession of drug paraphernalia and simple possession of a schedule III controlled substance. Matthew T. Breedlove made the arrest.

December 7

Walter Jennings Schwuchow, was issued warrant service for fugitive from out of state felony. Corporal Clay A. Saunders made the arrest.

Reyna Angelica Garcilita, was trafficking opium or heroin, possession of a controlled substance with intent to sell or deliver, possession of a firearm by a convicted felon and maintaining a place for controlled substances. Matthew T. Breedlove made the arrest.

Reyna Angelicka Garcilita, was issued warrant service for trafficking opium or heroin, maintaining a place for a controlled substances, possession of a firearm by a convicted felon and possession with intent to manufacture/sell/deliver a schedule I controlled substance. Jordan C. Sutton made the arrest.

David Wright Sarvis, was charged with larceny of a motor vehicle and possession of a stolen motor vehicle. William D. Stamey made the arrest.

Matthew Owen Carpenter, was charged with larceny of a motor vehicle and possession of a stolen motor vehicle. William D. Stamey made the arrest.

December 8

Nathaniel Thomas Vogler, was issued warrant service for assault on a female. Costin Jigla made the arrest.

Lindsey Erdman, was issued warrant service for school attendance law violation. Jordan C. Sutton made the arrest.

Brantley David Potts, was issued warrant service for offense committed in jurisdiction. Denver J. Elliot made the arrest.

Chelsea Briana Heaton, was issued warrant service for failure to appear for felony. Costin Jigla made the arrest.

James Richard Atkinson, was charged with possession of methamphetamine, possession of drug paraphernalia and probation violation.

December 9

Davin Lane Eldridge, was issued warrant service for indictment. Costin Jigla made the arrest.

Joseph Lee Samarco, was issued warrant service for child support enforcement contempt. Costin Jigla made the arrest.

Anthony Shamal Bryson, was issued warrant service for child support enforcement contempt. Costin Jigla made the arrest.

John Paul Carver, was issued warrant service for misdemeanor larceny and injury to personal property. Costin Jigla made the arrest.

Jacqueline Helena Kidd, was issued warrant service for failure to appear for a misdemeanor. Costin Jigla made the arrest.

December 10

Elizabeth Claire Cook, was issued warrant service for indictment. Costin Jigla made the arrest.

William Stephen Shepherd, was issued warrant service for simple assault. Matthew L. Long made the arrest.

December 12

Juan Luis Lopez, was charged with driving while impaired. Matthew L. Long made the arrest.

Franklin Police Department

December 4

David Lindsay Hunt, 33, was charged with resist/obstruct/delay. A \$200 bond was set.

December 7

Ronald Lee Wickham, 51, was charged with possession of methamphetamine, possession of a firearm by a felon and possession of drug paraphernalia. A \$25,000 bond was set.

Jackson County Sheriff's Department

December 6

Laranzo Daniel Wilnoty, 34, of Cherokee, was charged with probation violation. A secured bond of \$5,000 was set.

December 7

Devin Tyler Reid, 28, of Robin Hood Dr., Walhalla, S.C., was charged with domestic violence protective order violation. No bond was set.

Angela A. Granados, 27, of Comet Court, Cullowhee, was charged with simple assault. A secured bond of \$500 was set.

Charles Michael Nash, 33, of Union Hill Rd., Whittier, was charged with possession of a stolen motor vehicle. A secured bond of \$5,000 was set.

December 8

James Victor Rose, 32, of A Johnson Catolster Rd., Cherokee, was charged with larceny and second degree trespass. A secured bond of \$500 was set.

Todd Marcus Watty, 29, of Bunches Creek Rd., Cherokee, was charged with driving while impaired. A secured bond of \$5,000 was set.

December 8

Colby Taylor Price, 29, of Big Witch Rd., Cherokee, was charged with contributing to the delinquency of a juvenile, aid and abet larceny, possession of stolen goods/property and conspire to commit felony larceny. No bond was set.

December 10

Jeffery Lynn Carpenter, 46, of Willow Pond Rd., Franklin, was charged with failure to appear for possession of drug paraphernalia and possession of methamphetamine. A secured bond of \$5,000 was set.

Furman Anthony Smith, 47, of Union Hill Rd., Whittier, was charged with failure to appear for possession of a stolen firearm, receive stolen goods and larceny. A secured bond of \$8,500 was set.

Laurence Matthew Downes, 45, of First St., Athens, Ga., was charged with driving under the influence. No bond was set.

December 11

Clement Joseph Leclair, 54, of Potts Community Rd., was charged with assault on a female. No bond was set.

Ermelinda Montelongo, 63, of AWI Dr., Cherokee, was charged with misdemeanor larceny, contributing to the delinquency of a juvenile, possession of stolen goods/property, conspire to commit felony larceny and felony larceny. No bond was set.

December 12

Edwin Martinez Correa, 44, of Skyland Dr., was charged with assault on a female. No bond was set.

Ethan Garrett Owen, 28, of Norway Dr., Cullowhee, was charged with larceny and breaking and entering forcible. A secured bond of \$10,000 was set.

Jaylynn Alexander Tarver, 20, of Martha St., Columbia, S.C., was charged with resist/obstruct/delay. An unsecured bond of \$1,000 was set.

Aryian Nicholes Burch, 21, of Overdrive Rd., Franklin, was charged with possession of stolen goods/property and larceny. No bond was set.

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Prentiss Church Food Pantry will be held on Thursday, Dec. 16, 2 to 5:30 p.m. The church is located at 59 Church Hill Lane. For more information, call (828)369-3885.

Veterans are invited to bring their families for Coffee & Doughnuts and Visit with Santa on Friday, Dec. 17, 9 to 11 a.m. at the Robert C. Carpenter Community Building, 1288 Georgia Rd. This is a casual event to engage the veteran community to be there for one another during this holiday season.

Jackson County Branch #54AB of the NC NAACP Online Meeting will be held on Saturday, Dec. 18, 10 a.m. Program includes a year-in-review and plans for MLK Day 2022. Email jcnacp54ab@gmail.com to receive instructions to join online. All are welcome.

Clarks Chapel Community Center and Fire Department Drop-in Holiday Get-Together will be held on Monday, Dec. 20, 4 to 7 p.m.

Red Cross Blood Drive at Food Lion in Franklin will be held on Dec. 23, 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., 245 Macon Plaza Dr. To donate blood, individuals should bring a blood donor card or driver's license or two other forms of identification that are required at check-in. Donors are urged to schedule an appointment now by using the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visiting RedCrossBlood.org or calling (800)733-2767.

Thursday Painters meet at the Environmental Research Center every Thursday 10 a.m. Bring your own project, a table covering, and a bag lunch. All skill levels and mediums welcome. Free and open to the public. Contact Pat Mennenger at pm14034@yahoo.com For more information, visit Franklinuptowngallery.com.

AL-ANON Family Groups In-person meeting with Covid 19 preventive measures is held each Thursday, noon at First Presbyterian Church, 471 Main St., Highlands. An AL-ANON Zoom Meeting is held on Saturday, 10:15 a.m. ID:889-3772-7928 Password: EasyDoesit or call to speak with a member of AL-ANON at (828)342-6866.

Franklin Alcoholics Anonymous In-person meetings with Covid 19 preventive measures are held on Tuesday, 5:30 p.m. at No Wrong Door, 102 Thomas Heights Rd.; Sunday at 1 p.m., Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 5:30 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church Outreach Center, 66 Harrison Ave.; Tuesday, 8 a.m., Thursday, noon at St. Agnes Episcopal Church on 66 Church St.; Wednesday, 7 p.m. at St. Cyprians Episcopal Church, 216 Roller Mill Rd. On-line meeting information is available by visiting www.aawnc80.org. or to speak with a member of A.A., call (828)349-4357.

The Uptown Gallery Winter Hours hours are May through December, Monday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Wednesday and Sundays by appointment. The Uptown Gallery is located at 30 E Main St Franklin. For information, call the gallery at (828) 349-4607.

Macon Chips, Franklin's Wood Carving Club meets on Thursdays, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. inside the Franklin High School Wood Shop just off McCollum Drive. Anyone interested is encouraged to attend. Anyone under 18 years of age must be accompanied by an adult. For more information, call (828)342-8126.

Franklin Duplicate Bridge Club Wednesday afternoon games are held from 1 to 4 p.m. Arrive no later than 12:45 p.m., at the Robert C. Carpenter Community Building on 441 S. For more information, call Larry Noyes at (828)200-9394 or email LarryRNoyes@gmail.com

Gem & Mineral Museum, located in the Old Jail on Phillips Street in downtown Franklin is now open Fridays and Saturdays from 12 to 4 p.m., featuring gems and artifacts from North Carolina as well as all over the world.

Franklin Seventh Day Adventist Community Services are open on Monday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., to help Macon County residents in need with rent, power bill and a fully stocked food pantry. The church is located at 93 Church St., Suite 212. For more information, call (828)369-9000.

Habitat for Humanity of Macon/Jackson County needs volunteers to share skills or gain some experience learning new ones. From carpentry to cleaning, marketing to moral support, computer skills, planning and organizing or just plain common sense, the greatest gift you could ever give is time. Any amount is good. Some great times, lasting friendships and rewarding experiences await. Call (828)369-3716 or (828)371-5442.

Friends of the Greenway FROG Quarters is now open Wednesday to Saturday, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., at 573 E. Main. Stop by for coffee, a soft drink and a snack, and free internet. Reservations taken for the shelters.

Celebrate Recovery at Discover Church every Monday night, 6 to 8 p.m. Celebrate Recovery is a Christ-centered, 12-step recovery program for anyone struggling with hurt, pain or addiction of any kind. Celebrate Recovery is a safe place to find community and freedom from the issues that are controlling our life. Free childcare up to five years old for attending parents. Discover Church is located at 47 Macon Center Dr. (behind Bojangles). For more information, email cr@discover.church for questions.

Smoky Mountain Pregnancy Care Centers in Cullowhee and Franklin have an educational parenting program to earn "points" to use to obtain free items for your family. The centers carry formula, diapers, wipes, baby items and clothing up to size 6, as well as strollers, car seats, high chairs, pack n' plays, etc. Donations are always welcome. Services are free and confidential. For more information or an appointment, call (828)349-3200, (828)293-3600 or smpcc.org

Crawford Senior Center Zoom Classes will include exercise, tai chi, and others. For more information, or to register, call the Senior Center at (828)349-2058.

Uptown Gallery on Main Street hours through December are Monday through Saturday 10 a.m. - 5 pm and Wednesday and Sundays by appointment. The Uptown Gallery is located at 30 E Main St Franklin. For information call the gallery at (828) 349-4607.

Alzheimer's Association Western Carolina Chapter Telephone Support Group for Caregivers of Persons with Alzheimer's Disease or dementia is designed to provide caregivers opportunities for sharing, education, and support through a telephone conference. Support group participants and a support group facilitator connect each month for one-hour confidential sessions. For more information, call (800)272-3900.

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

CareNet on Bidwell Street is open on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. A box of food may be picked up once a week.

Email calendar items to maconcountynews@gmail.com

SUDOKU ANSWERS FOR PG. 22								
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8	3	4	9	5	7	1	6	2
6	7	5	1	2	3	9	8	4

CHURCH HAPPENINGS

Spiritual Light Center on Sunday, Dec. 19, 11 a.m. Lisa Ezzard Lisa will speak on "Winter Solstice." The church is located at 80 Heritage Hollow Dr., behind the Gazebo Restaurant in Heritage Hollow. On Tuesdays a movie is shown at 3 p.m. and then out to eat afterward. For more information or to stream services visit SpiritualLightCenter.com.

First Alliance Church Sunday service will be held at 10:30 a.m., Sunday School for all ages is held at 9:30 a.m. Pastor Scott Eichelberger will give a message on Christmas Peace. The church is located at 31 Promise Lane (off Womack, next-door to Trimont Christian Academy). For more information, call the church office at (828)369-7977.

Grace Baptist Church Christmas Play "The Redeemer" will be persented on Sunday, Dec. 19, 10:30 a.m. The church is located at 143 Setser Branch Rd. For more information, call (828)369-2435.

Coweeta Baptist Church presents "The Legend of the Candy Cane" on Sunday, Dec. 19, 6 p.m. The church is located at 780 Coweeta Church Road., in Otto.

The White Sisters will sing Christmas Songs at Ridgecrest Baptist Church on Sunday, Dec. 19, 6 p.m. .

All Saints Episcopal Church, Franklin Services are held Rite I, 8 a.m. without music and Rite II, 10:15 a.m. with music, every Sunday. First and third Sundays at St. Agnes Chapel, 66 Church St. and second and fourth Sundays at St. Cyprian's Chapel, 216 Roller Mill Rd. Sunday 10:15 a.m. services can be viewed live on the website: www.allsaintsfranklin.org and past Sundays can be viewed on YouTube search "All Saints Franklin".

Olive Hill Church Services are held on Sunday at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; and Wednesdays at 7 p.m. Pastor is Keith McWhite. The church is located at 2389 Olive Hill Road.

Lifespring Community Church is holding Sunday services beginning at 10 a.m. Brian Lamb in the pastor. The church is located at the intersection of Cheek Road and Addington Bridge Road.

Tellico Baptist Church is now having in-person Sunday School at 10 a.m. and worship service at 11 a.m. inside the church building with the Reverend L. E. Angel. Everyone is welcome.

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.

Prentiss Church of God is holding Sunday worship service in its sanctuary beginning at 10:30 a.m. Services are also streamed online on the Prentiss Church of God Facebook page. The church is located at 59 Church Hill Lane, off Addington Bridge Road. Phone: (828)369-3885.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE											
A	R	T	A	L	I	R	E	L	Y	A	R
P	A	I	N	T	S	A	G	O	I	L	A
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Library's December art exhibit said to be a 'luminous' experience

Deena C. Bouknight – Contributing Writer

In a region where portrait, landscape, and nature-themed paintings, drawings, and photography dominate artistic pursuits, artist Jesse Dallas has chosen to distinguish himself with a geometric abstract style all his own. Currently, his art is displayed in the Meeting Room and in the lobby at the Macon County Public Library through the month of December.

Kristina Lynn Moe, adult services assistant at the Macon County Library, referred to Dallas' work as "luminous." She said participants of a recent yoga class in the library agreed, and the yoga instructor asked the class to "face the illuminated artwork."

"Jesse's art makes for a warm, glowing environment," Moe added.

"Nothing could prepare me for how his work would light up the library and sing to the natural dimensions that surround us in our sun and starlit mountains," said Angela Faye-Martin, who attended the exhibit's opening. "It's a pretty stunning feat to bring universal light into an interior."

Dallas said he gets "in the zone" when he is painting a new piece and works to achieve variations of light and soothing colors and shapes. During the height of last year's pandemic until the present, he said he has completed many paintings – most of which are exhibited at the library or in the Adair Art Gallery space in Franklin that Dallas shares with his brother, psychotherapist Robert Dallas, Ph.D.

The Dallas brothers moved to Macon County from Georgia in 2020 after vacationing with family in Western North Carolina for many years. They share a home and the studio and Robert Dallas said he has always admired his brother's artistic talents.

"I just love his art," he said. "I may sound biased, but I find it to be very accessible ... mindful – the patterns and forms. It is ideal for the studio space because clients feel at ease with the many colors, contrasts, and compositions."

"When people look at Jesse's work, their minds don't automatically put it into a category. They see something different each time. There is dimensionality ... depth," he added.

Some of Jesse Dallas' work is based on the mandala, which is a geometric configuration of symbols that sometimes represents a spiritual journey, starting from the outside to the inner core. Some of Dallas' work is based on commission; some is waterproof for outdoor use. Dallas makes the frames for his art pieces in a barn space on the farm he shares with his brother.

"My pieces have been purchased for residential use and commercial use, for homes, cafes, coffee shops, offices ...," he said.

Even though his work is distinct, Dallas was inspired by many revered



Jesse Dallas and his brother, Robert Dallas, share the Adair Art Gallery space where Robert also offers psychotherapy and counseling services.



One painting by Jesse Dallas in his Adair Art Gallery features his depiction of mountains, yet he mostly paints modern abstracts.

masters: Van Gogh, Picasso, Gauguin, and more.

"I started drawing when I was a kid," he said. "I got my first blue ribbon in an art show when I was 11 or 12. I was really sup-

ported by teachers and then profes-

sors." Dallas attended Young Harris College and Georgia State University for art and then decided on architecture



Robert Dallas calls his brother Jesse Dallas' art "accessible." It is on display through December at the Macon County Public Library.

at Auburn University. However, he realized at Auburn that architecture was "too strict" a medium for his artistic talents.

During his lifetime, he has achieved hundreds of paintings primarily using enamel paint. Some of his pieces are in frames that appear to "float" an inch off the wall while others are in shadow-type boxes. Some are panel paintings. His favorite medium of late is canvas on wood that includes a layering effect. Sometimes he uses "styles" – or stencils – to create recurring shapes. "It's a mixture of techniques and I use different sizes of brushes, and sometime even spray paint. I'm like a street painter who paints inside and I've been influenced by street muralists."

Inspiration for Dallas' work comes while he is painting.

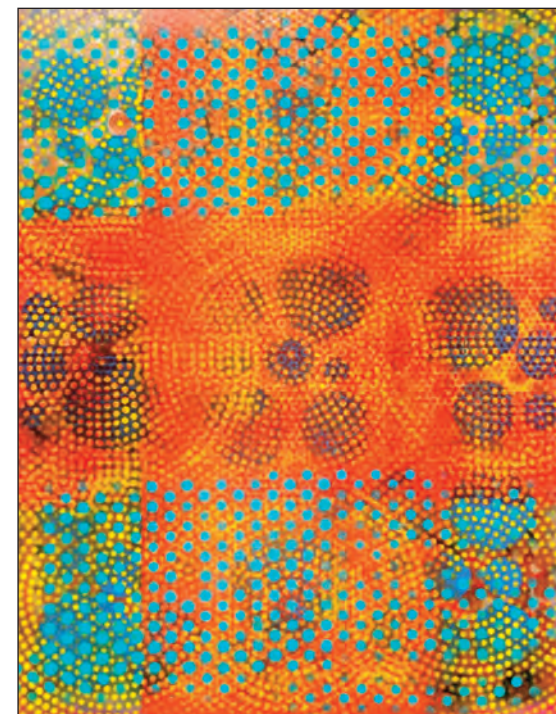
"I get an image in my mind and I start in an area and push the boundaries and keep working until it's done. I don't like to leave pieces if I don't have to. The art just reveals itself as I'm working. Sometimes I look at it and decide it's finished and other times I feel like I need to do more. When it's finished it's a rewarding kind of exhaustion. It's a surreal experience because I get in this place of being super creative. People ask, 'How did you do that?' and I sometimes tell them, 'I don't know.'"

Once he was asked to listen to a piece of music and paint something for a musician's home.

"I just got so inspired by that music that the art became a true expression of the music," he said.

Even though he admitted that many people in Macon County may not be familiar with modern abstract art, he received positive feedback during a Nov. 4 launch of his exhibit at the Macon County Library.

"It's not for everyone, but this is art people don't get tired of because when you spend time gazing at it, you see something different each time."



Award to support mental health services for youth

HIGHTS received an award from the Evergreen Foundation to fund crisis mental health services for youth in WNC. Youth in our communities are in critical need for more mental health support as self harm, anxiety, depression, and substance use are increasing dramatically.

Grant funds also provide training and supervision, in partnership with Western Carolina University, for Restorative Justice Continuum providers across Western North Carolina. Training includes Substance Use Series with Dr. Beth Young, addressing substance use psychoeducation and prevention. An Adolescent Mental Health Training Series will be delivered by Dr. Nathan Roth. Dr. Jonathan Campbell will provide training on youth on the autism spectrum. Dr. Young and Dr. Roth will also provide supervision to assist therapists in obtaining their clinical licensure and licensed addiction specialist credential.

HIGHTS (Helping Inspire Gifts of Hope, Trust, and Service) works with the communities' most vulnerable youth to provide essential clinical mental health services, workforce development, skill building programs, meaningful community service opportunities, Recreational therapy, and mentoring. Our continuum of services help the seven western counties of our state. HIGHTS' goal is to assist students as they develop necessary skills, connect to their community, and discover a sense of purpose to use as the building blocks for a healthy life. To learn more about HIGHTS, please visit hights.org. If you are interested in partnering with HIGHTS, please contact Paul Heckert at paul@hights.org.



Booze It and Lose It enforcement campaign underway

Christmas lights won't be the only thing lighting up the night this holiday season.

Starting today, through Jan. 2, law enforcement officers will be stepping up patrols across the state to stop impaired drivers as part of the "Booze It & Lose It" holiday enforcement effort.

"If you're out celebrating this holiday season, make sure you have a sober ride home," said Mark Ezzell, program director of the N.C. Governor's Highway Safety Program, or NCGHSP. "If you drive under the influence, you have a lot to lose. Not only could you kill yourself or someone else, but you could face thousands of dollars in court costs and fines, jail time, or a revoked license."

The "Booze It & Lose It" holiday enforcement effort is the largest of such campaigns operated each year by NCGHSP. During the 2020 campaign, officers issued more

than 1,700 violations for driving while intoxicated. NCGHSP will be supporting the campaign through a combination of paid media advertising and social media outreach.

To date, 326 people have lost their lives on North Carolina roads in impaired driving crashes in 2021.

NCGHSP reminds all travelers to stay safe on the roads this holiday season by:

- Never driving impaired and always finding a safe ride home;
- Buckling your seatbelt when riding in any seat in the vehicle; and
- Following the speed limit.

For more driver safety tips and program information, follow N.C. Governor's Highway Safety Program on Facebook and @NC_GHSP on Twitter and Instagram.

Gem Society gives to Union Academy

The Franklin Gem & Mineral Society presented a check for \$300 to Union Academy High School Science teacher Joseph Barnes to purchase fossils and minerals for his class. Pictured are (L-R) Alton Pribble, vice president, Gem Society; principal Diane Cotton; science teacher Joseph Barnes; and Marsha Harmon, education coordinator, Gem Society.



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Juvenile Justice implements new 'minimum age' law

In North Carolina, a 6-year-old can no longer be seen in juvenile court for grabbing a candy bar from a checkout aisle or for running away from home. A new law now in effect raises the lower age of juvenile jurisdiction from 6 to 10 for most youth and will provide alternatives to taking a vulnerable juvenile to court.

Thanks to recommendations from the Juvenile Jurisdiction Advisory Committee (JJAC), the efforts of its members, the hard work of the Juvenile Justice section, bi-partisan support in the legislature, North Carolina will no longer have the youngest minimum age of juvenile jurisdiction due to Senate Bill 207.

An 8- or 9-year-old who either has a prior court judgement (adjudication) of delinquency or who commits a felony A through G offense will remain under juvenile jurisdiction. The age of juvenile jurisdiction for all undisciplined offenses (e.g., truancy, runaways and other status offenses) is now 10.

"These changes are research-based and cost-beneficial. But, most importantly, it's the right thing to do," said Deputy Secretary for Juvenile Justice William Lassiter. "North Carolina has a rich history of juvenile justice reform that led to massive reductions in juvenile crime and set the stage for continued reforms like raising the upper age and lower age of juvenile jurisdiction."

For 6- to 15-year-olds, the North Carolina juvenile delinquency rate decreased from 27.55 in 2010 to 12.05 per 1,000 youth in 2020, the lowest juvenile delinquency rate on record. Over the past decade (2010-2019), detention center admissions declined 63% and youth development center commitments decreased 59%.

Equipped with coloring books and crayons, juvenile court counselors previously sought to occupy the minds of younger children while in the courtroom to reinforce appropriate behavior during court hearings. Now, armed with vulnerable juvenile consultations, the power of service referrals, screenings, assessments, community resources, and programming, juvenile court counselors can offer services to the young child and the parent without exposing that young child to court processes they do not understand.

S207/S.L. 2021-123 updates G.S. 7B-2502 regarding a court's authority to order a comprehensive clinical/mental health assessment for adjudicated delinquent youth with suspected mental illness (i.e., severe emotional disturbance), developmental disability, or intellectual disability prior to entering a disposition/consequence. A multi-system Care Review Team may be created for these youth who are subject to a youth development center disposition or placement in a Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility to recommend a plan for care.

"This group will determine what is the best placement for the youth," said Juvenile Justice Director of Clinical Services and Programs Peter Kuhns. "I expect this part of the law will highlight some of the mental health issues we have in the state, such as the need for more mental health resources, the need for alternatives to commitment, and the need to invest resources to meet the needs."

S207/S.L. 2021-123 also allows for prosecutorial discretion in whether to transfer a 16- or 17-year old to superior court for a felony class D, E, F, or G offense.

"Prosecutorial discretion allows prosecutors to decide what is more appropriate for a kid who commits D-G felonies," said JJAC member and chief district court judge for New Hanover and Pender counties Judge J.H. Corpening, II.

Gov. Cooper signed the bill on Aug. 30, and Juvenile Justice provided informational sessions to community stakeholders, training Juvenile Justice staff on the legislative changes. It also provided training to mental health providers and others involved in juvenile justice.



Aaron John Allen Alger

Aaron John Allen Alger, 41, of Franklin, N.C., passed away on Dec. 2, 2021.

He was born in Sarasota, Fla., to David and Jennifer Alger. He was a finish carpenter and enjoyed working on electronics.

He is survived by his parents, David and Jennifer Alger both of Franklin; children, Ethan and Dayson of Franklin; siblings, Jonathan Alger (Lindsay) of Fishers Ind., and Micah Alger (Naomi) of Charlotte, N.C.; niece, Elizabeth Alger; and nephews, LJ Alger, JJ Alger and Liam Alger.

A visitation will be held on Dec. 18, from 2 to 3 p.m., at Franklin Covenant Church, followed by a memorial service at 3 p.m., with a reception following the service.

In lieu of flowers, memorials can be made to Teen Challenge of The Smokies at Teen Challenge of the Smokies, PO Box 2157, Franklin, NC 28744 or at 1-828-524-2157.

Online condolences can be made at www.maconfuneral-home.com.

Macon Funeral Home will be handling the arrangements.

Donna Jean Green

Donna Jean Green, 51, of Franklin, N.C., went home to be with Jesus on Monday, Dec. 13, 2021.

Born in Rabun County, she is the daughter of Nancy Speed Tilson and the late William Don Green. She worked as a customer service representative with a cable company and was a member of the New Found Baptist Church. In her spare time, she enjoyed reading.

She is survived by her companion, Kim Lee "Mule" Moon; mother, Nancy Speed Tilson of Highlands, N.C.; stepdad, Ronnie Tilson of Highlands; and siblings, Demitria Passmore of Highlands, Lisa Ledford, Jillian Philipp, D.J. Green, Bryan Green, and Adam Green, all of Franklin; and numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins.

No services are planned.

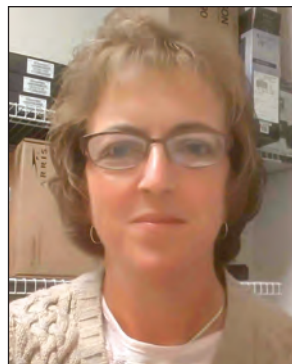
In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the VVA, 203 Sloan Rd., Franklin, NC 28734.

Online condolences at www.maconfuneralhome.com.

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.



Aaron John Allen Alger



Donna Jean Green

Mary Louise Dills

Mary Louise Dills, 75, of Franklin, N.C., passed away Saturday, Dec. 11, 2021.

Born on July 10, 1946, she was the daughter of the late Ralph and Maggie Cunningham. She retired from Whitley Products in Franklin. She loved fishing, playing cards and Yahtzee. She loved her family dearly and one of her biggest joys in life was helping people in their times of need.

Survivors include her children, Tammi Rae Waldorf (Rick Stiles) of Clio, Mich., and Rick Dills (Deidrea) of Franklin; grandchildren, Jose Pena, Jackie Timmons and Seth Dills; great grandchildren, Chevy, Abby, Isabelle and Ethan.

A special thanks to her close friends who helped take care of her and who were always there for her, Marion, Joyce, Barb, Lucy and Liz.

A memorial service will be held on Jan. 4, 2022, at 1 p.m., in the chapel of Bryant Grant Funeral Home with Rev. Mark Bishop officiating. The family will receive friends from noon until the service hour prior to the service.

Bryant-Grant Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.



Mary Louise Dills

Lois 'Jeannine' Justice

Lois "Jeannine" Justice, 89, of Franklin, N.C., passed away Monday, Dec. 13, 2021. She was born in Michigan on Nov. 16, 1932, to the late Arthur Tuffin and Beatrice Annett Tuffin. She was a member of Coweeta Baptist Church and served as church secretary for 37 years. She had a passion for playing the piano and volunteering. She had a servant heart, loved serving the Lord, would always visit in the community and if she couldn't visit, you could always expect a call.

She is survived by her daughter, JoAnn Justice; her son, Thomas Steven Justice; granddaughter, Felicia Justice-Roberts; two great-grandchildren, Alaina Beatrice Flowers and Alyssa Ann Roberts; brother, Tom Tuffin (Linda); adopted son, Davis Hooper. In addition to her parents, she is preceded in death by her husband, Thomas Max Justice; and two sisters, Wanda Kratt and Delores Carr.

A funeral service will be held Thursday Dec. 16, at 2 p.m., at Coweeta Baptist Church with Rev. Davis Hooper, Rev. Keith Ashe and Rev. Bryon Lamb officiating. Burial will follow at Wright Cemetery.

Bryant Grant Funeral Home and Crematory is handling arrangements. Online condolences can be made at www.bryantgrantfuneralhome.com.



Lois 'Jeannine' Justice



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themaconcountynews.com



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Bernice Adeline Thacker

Bernice Adeline Thacker, a child of God and a "mom" to those in her church and community, passed on to Glory on Dec. 9, 2021.

Born on Nov. 23, 1925, to George S. and Rose Landenburger Saylor, she was lovingly known as Ms. Bea.

She was a caring and compassionate lady who could be counted on to encourage and to help those in need. Some of her favorite times included visiting loved ones. She loved the Lord with all her heart and was glad to share her faith with others. She enjoyed attending church and being a part of the choir. She was a member of First Pentecostal Church of Franklin.

She was a great cook and knew how to prepare for two or 50. She enjoyed her reputation as "The Pie Lady," baking absolutely delicious coconut cream pies and cherry cream pies. She showed she could be quite a character, however, when it came to her famous caramel popcorn, which she refused to share with anyone.

Ms. Bea and her husband, George, are fondly remembered as a great dancing couple, whether it be the Cha-Cha, the Swing, the Foxtrot, or the Lindy Hop. Her favorite song through all the years was "Sentimental Journey" by Les Brown and his orchestra. She also loved the beach, fishing in the Gulf, and her dogs. She referred to her two dachshunds, Skittles and Skeeter, as her boys.

Left with many wonderful memories is her daughter, Linda P. Johnson of Franklin, N.C.; her granddaughter, Melissa R. Frantz (Daniel) of Cape Coral, Fla.; her great-grandchildren, Kate-Anne Frantz and Samuel Frantz; her sister, Betty Jean Gesler (Norm) of Lodi, Calif.; her step-children, Georgia Fallaw of Rincon, Ga., and Brenda Gregory (Benny) of New Cumberland, W.Va.; and step-grandchildren, Tracy Brooks (Norman) and Sarah Fallaw; and her sister-in-law, Marlys Saylor.

She was predeceased by her parents; her husband, George Thacker; her son, David S. Philson; and her siblings, Emerald Saylor, Verna Brown, Bernard Saylor, Adrian Saylor, and Raymond Saylor.

A Celebration of Life is planned for a later date. Memorials may be made to Care Partners in her name. Moffitt Family Funeral Care is honored to serve the family. Online condolences may be made at www.moffittfamilyfuneralcare.com.



Bernice Adeline Thacker

Virginia Casada

Virginia Casada, 84, passed away Saturday, Dec. 11, 2021.

Born on April 6, 1937, in Franklin, N.C., to the late Walter and Annie Waldrop Swanson. She worked and retired as a supervisor from Social Services. She loved volunteering her time and helping others out at CareNet. She was a lifelong member at Louisa Chapel United Methodist Church.

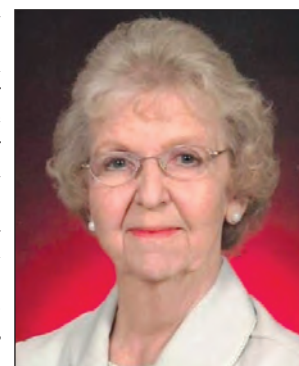
In addition to her parents, she is preceded in death by a grandson, Adam Green; brother, Carl Swanson; and husbands, Gordon Gibson and Erwin Casada.

Survivors include four sons, Larry Green (Peggy), Rick Green (Pat), Jason Casada (Jodi) and Jack Gibson (Jami); numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren; her first husband, Arthur Green Jr.; and a community of friends and family.

A memorial service was held Monday, Dec. 13, in the sanctuary at Louisa Chapel United Methodist Church with Rev. David Crunkleton officiating.

In lieu of flowers, consider a donation to CareNet, 130 Bidwell Street, Franklin, NC 28734

Bryant-Grant Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.



Virginia Casada

Deaths & Funerals

Diana Jander Pappagallo

Diana Jander Pappagallo, 73, passed away on Nov. 12, 2021.

She was born on Oct. 10, 1948, in New York and graduated from St. Gabriel's High School in New Rochelle in 1966. She lived in Mt. Vernon before marrying Yorke Jander and moved to Franklin, N.C., in the early 1970's. The couple owned Pappagallos Italian Restaurant for many years and did catering for many events in Western North Carolina. She will be remembered for her passion for cooking, her big heart, and her kindness. Loving mother and grandmother, she loved her family, her son Yorke, his wife, Megan, and her granddaughter Beckett, who is 5.

She is preceded in death by her mother and father, Sarafina and Thomas Pappagallo and her husband, Yorke George Jander.

She is survived by her brother, Tom Pappagallo and wife Carol Pappagallo from New York, their two sons Carlos and Tommy and their families; and her cousin, Lugina Pappagallo Fox in Lake Worth, Fla., and her family.

A grave side service will be held on Saturday December 18, 2021 at the Woodlawn Cemetery in Franklin, NC at 10:30 a.m.

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



Diana Jander Pappagallo

JD Humphries III

JD Humphries III, 61, passed away on December 12, 2021.

Services will be held at a later date.

Moffitt Family Funeral Care is honored to serve the family.

Online condolences may be made at www.moffittfamilyfuneralcare.com



JD Humphries III

Clifford Roy Pruett

Clifford Roy Pruett, 62, passed away Dec. 8, 2021. Known to his family and friends as Chip, he will always be remembered as a very caring man with a wonderful sense of humor.

An ordained minister, he loved to read, especially the Bible, and he was a big fan of anything Star Wars.

He is survived by his daughter, Kimberly Dawn Batton, Franklin, N.C.; son, Michael Pruett, Leicester, N.C.; granddaughter, Bella; three sisters and one brother.

At his request, no services will be held.

Moffitt Family Funeral Care is honored to serve the family.

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



Clifford Roy Pruett

John Joseph Keeler

John Joseph Keeler, 90, warm, patient, and kind soul, passed on Thanksgiving Day with family in Franklin, N.C.

Born in Michigan to Ione and L.J. Keeler, he enjoyed summers with his grandparents and fishing. He served in the Navy on the USS St. Paul during the Korean conflict and was awarded many medals. After graduating from Lawrence Tech University, he went on to open "Furniture Service of Birmingham" with a small, diverse team (and some celebrity clients). He played clarinet, organ, and harmonica, loved animals, and was active in church, historical associations, and charities in Kissimmee, Miami, and Franklin.

He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Grace; children, Kerry and Kevin; and cousins.

The family is forever grateful for the compassion and care of the V.A. and Four Seasons hospice staff.

A celebration of life will be held at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to a charity of your choice. Condolences may be made to the family at ashevilmortuaryservices.com.



John Joseph Keeler

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Kaulig Racing finalizes cup series driver lineup

NASCAR Wire Service

Acquiring three out of the four 2021 NASCAR Xfinity Series (NXS) Championship 4 drivers, Kaulig Racing's No. 16 Camaro ZL1 will be piloted by AJ Allmendinger, Daniel Hemric and Noah Gragson, as each will compete part-time in the NASCAR Cup Series (NCS).

While the team announced earlier this year that Allmendinger would pilot the No. 16 for select races in the 2022 NCS season alongside full-time driver, Justin Haley, Kaulig Racing has finalized its second, full-time entry with Gragson and Hemric.

"We think our roster for the 2022 season features some great drivers," said team president, Chris Rice. "Having three out of the four Xfinity Series championship contenders helping to build our new Cup Series program, is truly a tremendous opportunity for this Kaulig Racing team. While these guys have been fierce competitors for the last few years, having them bring that same tenacity as teammates will be extremely fun to watch and a great way for this team to grow in its first, full season in the Cup Series."

With the 2021 NXS champion already tabbed for Kaulig Racing's flagship, No. 11 Chevrolet in the series, Hemric will make his return to the NCS for the first time since winning the Cup Series Rookie of the Year award in 2019. Hemric has made 38 starts in the NCS, earning a pole award, one top-five and two top-10 finishes.

"I have had the chance to race against some great drivers over the past few years," said Hemric. "AJ (Allmendinger) is a great competitor, who can win on any track, and Noah [Gragson] and I have been teammates in the past at JR Motorsports. Each of us are different, but seeing how intense both AJ and Noah are as professionals gets me excited for this upcoming season. Now we have the opportunity to be able to lean on each other and try to build a program here at Kaulig Racing at the highest level of our sport. I feel fortunate to be a part of this."

Finishing third in the 2021 NXS points standings, Noah Gragson will compete in 14 NCS races for Kaulig Racing, while Allmendinger and Hemric will participate in the remaining series events.

"This is a really unique opportunity I have with Kaulig Racing to be able to share the No. 16 with two of my biggest competitors in the Xfinity Series," said Gragson. "I've had the chance to work with Daniel before, but it will be a new experience working with AJ. We've raced against each other for a few years now, and I think working as teammates will only help us get better as drivers."

The 2022 season will mark Kaulig Racing's first-ever full-time season in the NCS, as the team will field two, full-time entries. More news regarding specific events and partners will be announced at a later date.

Mahindra partners with Stewart-Haas Racing

Mahindra Ag North America has joined Stewart-Haas Racing (SHR) as an anchor sponsor for its No. 14 NASCAR Cup Series team and driver Chase Briscoe beginning with the 2022 season.

The multiyear partnership with the championship-winning NASCAR team co-owned by NASCAR Hall of Famer Tony Stewart and industrialist Gene Haas will feature Mahindra Tractors, a brand of Mahindra Ag North

America, on Briscoe's No. 14 Ford Mustang for the majority of the NASCAR Cup Series schedule. The red-and-black No. 14 Mahindra Tractors Ford Mustang will debut in the non-points Busch Light Clash at the Coliseum Feb. 5-6 in Los Angeles before returning to action for the traditional



NASCAR Cup Series driver Aric Almirola and wife Janice Almirola pose on the red carpet prior to the NASCAR Champion's Banquet at the Music City Center on Dec. 2, 2021, in Nashville, Tenn.

Photo by Jared C. Tilton/Getty Images

start of the season with the 64th running of the Daytona 500 Feb. 20 at Daytona (Fla.) International Speedway.

Houston-based Mahindra Ag North America is part of Mahindra Group's Automotive and Farm Sector, the No. 1 selling farm tractor company in the world, based on volumes across all company brands. Mahindra offers a range of tractor models from 20-125 horsepower, implements and the ROXOR side-by-side. Mahindra farm equipment is engineered to be easy to operate by first-time tractor or side-by-side owners and heavy duty to tackle the tough jobs of rural living, farming and ranching. Steel-framed Mahindra Tractors and side-by-sides are ideal for customers who demand performance, reliability and comfort at a great value. Mahindra dealers are independent, family-owned businesses located throughout the U.S. and Canada.

"NASCAR, Stewart-Haas Racing and Mahindra's shared values form a strong platform for us to connect with existing and potential customers. Our partnership with SHR provides an opportunity to tell our story to the wide audience of NASCAR fans who enjoy the outdoors and working their land," said Viren Popli, President and CEO, Mahindra Ag North America and Mahindra Automotive North America.

"Chase Briscoe and Tony Stewart are relatable men of great character who have worked hard to get where they are today. Like our dealers, they have a tough work ethic and the drive to be successful. We are proud to have them representing the brand. In fact, Tony is already a Mahindra owner and has been putting his 5145 tractor to good use on his ranch in Indiana," Popli added.

Briscoe just completed his first year in the NASCAR Cup Series and the 26-year-old from Mitchell, Indiana, handily won the rookie-of-the-year title driving the No. 14 High-Point.com Ford Mustang for SHR.

"The NASCAR Cup Series is the toughest racing I've ever



2021 NASCAR Xfinity Series championship driver, Daniel Hemric, and his wife, Kenzie Hemric pose on the red carpet prior to the NASCAR Champion's Banquet at the Music City Center on Dec. 2, 2021 in Nashville, Tenn.

Photo by Jared C. Tilton/Getty Images

been a part of. It's so competitive," Briscoe said. "I learned so much this year and I really can't wait to apply it all next season."

"I'm incredibly honored to represent Mahindra Tractors and all of its dealers. We both want to continue to grow and perform – me on the racetrack and Mahindra in the marketplace. It's a true partnership that's valuable to both of us."

Prior to being promoted to the NASCAR Cup Series, Briscoe competed in the NASCAR Xfinity Series where he won a series-high nine races in 2020.

"Chase has earned his spot in the Cup Series," said Stewart, a fellow Hoosier from Columbus, Indiana, who lives on a 414-acre spread. "He was relentless. Anytime he was challenged, he never backed down, and that's the way you to have to be at this level."

"Chase is just a really hard worker. He's earned everything that's come his way and then made the most of each opportunity. That's what has always impressed me about him, and I think that's what impressed Mahindra Tractors. They're a really good fit. This is a very rewarding partnership and I'm proud to be a Mahindra customer."

Briscoe is a third-generation racer whose career began on dirt tracks in and around Indiana. Stewart raced with Briscoe's dad, Kevin, in USAC sprint cars and in non-wing cars, and he watched Chase come up through the open-wheel ranks of sprint cars and midgets on his way to NASCAR, just as Stewart did in the mid-1990s on his way to INDY-CAR and then NASCAR.

"When it comes to the 14 car, I obviously have a passion for having dirt drivers behind the wheel," Stewart said. "It's special, but also practical. With the lower horsepower package they have in the Cup Series, you have to run these cars a lot freer, and I think that suits a driver with a dirt background."

Briscoe will return to his dirt-track roots Jan. 10-15 during the 36th annual Chili Bowl Nationals at the Tulsa (Okla.) Expo Raceway inside the SageNet Center. Mahindra Tractors will be the primary sponsor of Briscoe's No. 5 midget.

"Dirt-track racing makes me a better Cup Series driver," said Briscoe, who will make his eighth Chili Bowl appearance in 2022. "It forces you to adapt. You have to run different lines to get the most out of your car and you have to do it quickly.

"When I won my first Xfinity Series race on the Roval at Charlotte, I drove it like a dirt track. I made sure to not spin the rear tires to where I was good at the end of a run. Running the Chili Bowl is fun, but it also keeps you sharp. It'll be a great way to kick off our first season with Mahindra Tractors."

Briscoe's first time behind the wheel of a racecar came in 2001. Driving a quarter midget, he won his first heat race and then won the feature event later that evening. Briscoe moved on to mini sprints and when he was 13, stepped into a 410 sprint car where, in his first race, finished 10th in a 40-car field. In a rookie season that saw 37 starts, Briscoe racked up eight top-five and 17 top-10 finishes, including a win in the last race of the season where he broke NASCAR Hall of Famer and four-time NASCAR Cup Series champion Jeff Gordon's record as the youngest person to win a 410 sprint car race.

Briscoe continued to race 410 sprint cars in the Midwest and people began to take notice. Soon, the switch from sprint cars to stock cars was on. Cunningham Motorsports hired Briscoe in 2016 to pilot its No. 77 Ford for a full-time drive in ARCA. Briscoe responded by winning six races and the championship by a whopping 535 points.



Mahindra Ag North America has joined Stewart-Haas Racing (SHR) as an anchor sponsor for its No. 14 NASCAR Cup Series team and driver Chase Briscoe beginning with the 2022 season.

Briscoe has thrived in his transition to NASCAR, which

was boosted by that ARCA title. He advanced to the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series in 2017, earning four poles and winning the season-ending Ford EcoBoost 200 at Homestead-Miami Speedway. Ten top-five and 14 top-10s allowed Briscoe to make the playoffs, finish sixth in points and score the series' rookie-of-the-year and most-popular-driver awards.

Briscoe parlayed a limited Xfinity Series schedule in 2018 where he drove for both SHR and Roush-Fenway Racing into a full-time drive in 2019 for SHR where he won the rookie-of-the-year title. His stout, nine-win season in 2020 earned Briscoe a well-deserved promotion to the NASCAR Cup Series in 2021.



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ACROSS

1. Coalition of countries
5. King trump-er, some-times
8. Cuckoo bird
11. ___ weevil
12. Smelting waste
13. Kitchen-wear
15. Coke or Pepsi
16. Check-in via text, email, etc.
17. Settler transport
18. *2021 Super Bowl winner, two words
20. Before long, to Shakespeare
21. Jeopardy
22. Auction action
23. Puts down
26. Coroner's performance
30. Band booking
31. Snicket of "A Series of Unfortunate Events"
34. Stravinsky's "The ___ of Spring"
35. Mine passages
37. *Build Back Better ___
38. Eucharist plate
39. Table hill
40. Good review
42. "Tit for ___"
43. Buck feature, pl.
45. *First female VP
47. Evergreen creeper
48. It goes with gin, according to Snoop Dogg
50. Mongolian desert
52. *COVID-19, e.g.
55. Poison ivy or Poison oak
56. International Civil Aviation Org.
57. Distinctive smell
59. House coat
60. Asian cuisine food

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61. Pelvic parts
62. Gallery display
63. Self-proclaimed greatest boxer
64. Count on

DOWN

1. "Monty Python" broadcaster
2. Rioter's take
3. Cantina pot
4. Fasteners or holders
5. Cover story
6. *Suez ____, too tight for Ever Given
7. Like custard
8. Mythological ship
9. "High" time
10. Wayside stop

12. Thinly spread

13. Look forward to
14. *___ Papers, leaked offshore account information
19. Banana refuse, pl.
22. Exchange for money
23. Old World lizard
24. *January 20th honoree
25. Anti-elderly one
26. Those not in favor
27. Pita, alt. sp.
28. Take without asking
29. Gossiper, Yiddish
32. *Perseverance landing spot
33. Edible tuber
36. *Kabul's organization in power
38. *The Nobel ___ Prize

was awarded to Ressa and Muratov

40. Snoop around
41. Snowmobile brand
44. Give the boot
46. *"Stronger" by Cindy McCain, e.g.
48. Southwestern hut
49. Sushi restaurant staple
50. ___ gum, food additive
51. Leave out
52. Home to the Leaning Tower
53. Not in use
54. One in mattress
55. Spot for a facial
58. *Actor Liotta, star in "The Many Saints of Newark"

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AWD, nicely equipped with power windows, locks, mirrors, tilt, cruise, keyless entry, alloy wheels and so much more!!

2019 COLORADO ZR2



4x4, 3.6 LT V6 with 8 spd. automatic transmission. One of the most capable off-road machines available. Fully loaded with leather, navigation, heated seats and ONLY 6,700 miles!!



COUNTRYSIDE CHEVROLET
FRANKLIN, NC



2013 CHEVROLET AVALANCHE LTZ



Black Diamond Edition V8, 4x4 with leather, sunroof, navigation, DVD players, 1 local owner with no accidents with 64,904 miles!!

2019 RAM 1500



Crew cab, 4x4, 5.7 LT. hemi, automatic transmission, Big Horn edition with power windows, locks, mirrors, tilt, cruise, keyless and so much more and ONLY 17,292 miles!!



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