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See Pg. 17



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Volume 39 Number 30

FREE INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

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The Macon County Public Library hosted a Storytime and Cookies with Santa event Tuesday, Dec. 7. The children were able to make fun crafts and cookies were provided by the Friends of the Library. For more photos, see page 13. Photo by Vickie Carpenter

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## Town of Franklin welcomes new leadership

Brittney Lofthouse – Contributing Writer

Monday night, Mayor Bob Scott performed his last duty with the Town of Franklin by swearing in the three recently elected members of the Town Council before swearing in Franklin's next mayor, Jack Horton.

Mayor Scott gavelled in December's meeting for the last time just after the clock struck 6 p.m., calling the meeting to order. As the meeting's first order of business and Mayor Scott's last, he called council members David Culpepper, Rita Salain and Stacy Guffey up one by one, along with their respective families, and swore them into office.

Monday night was not just the end of Mayor Scott's tenure on the board, but as Scott put it "the end of Franklin's longest running dynasty." Prior to the eight years Scott served as mayor and the 10 years he served on the Franklin Board of Aldermen, his wife Nancy served

See TOWN BOARD page 2



Mayor Jack Horton, with the help of his wife, Lydia, is sworn in by outgoing mayor Bob Scott.

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DECEMBER 21





Mayor Bob Scott swears in Town Council member Rita Salain, who is joined by her sister and her husband.



Stacey Guffey was joined by his family as he was sworn in as a town council member by Mayor Bob Scott. Pictured from left are Jerry Guffey, Jackie Guffey, (front) Suleica Watts, Eliza Wadewitz, (second row) Dorothy Bautista, Nigella Mangila, Shelby Guffey, (back) Samuel Smith, Eva Smith, Carter Guffey, Nevaeh Guffey, James Guffey, Stacy Guffey, and (holding the Bible) Kathie Parris.

## More than a dozen have already filed to run in 2022

Filing for the 2022 Election runs from Monday, Dec. 6 through 17 at noon. By noon on Wednesday, the following candidates had filed for office:

Board of Commissioners District I:  
Don Willis - Republican

Board of Commissioners District II:  
Gary Shields - Republican  
Richard Lightner- Republican  
Danny Antoine- Republican  
Danny Reitmeier- Republican  
Gregg Jones-Republican

Macon County Clerk of Superior Court  
Justin Stamey- Republican

Macon County Register of Deeds  
Todd Raby- Democrat

Macon County Sheriff  
Bob Cook - Republican  
Dereck Jones - Republican  
Chris Browning- Republican  
Brent Holbrooks- Republican  
Clay Bryson - Republican

Senate District 50 - Kevin Corbin - Republican

In addition to those who filed, Jerry Moore announced that he intended to run as an Independent for District I, which requires that he obtain 1,087 signatures before the March 8 primary in order to appear on the ballot in November.

## TOWN BOARD

Continued from page 1

for 11 years as well.

Culpepper was re-elected to the board in November and will be seeing another term. A native of Franklin, he graduated from Franklin High School in 1996 and from Western Carolina University in 2001 with a BS in Communication/Public Relations. Culpepper and his wife, Charlotte, have two children, Ledger, 12, and Daisy, 9.

Culpepper has owned and operated Architectural Salvage since 2001, which has allowed him to travel the world looking for unusual materials for distribution to dealers and designers. Culpepper, who is the only incumbent in the Franklin Town Council race, has served on the board since 2017.

Newcomer Salain is a Franklin native who grew up within the town limits. After graduating from Franklin High, Salain attended Appalachian State University and graduated from the University of South Carolina. She lived in both South Carolina and in Decatur, Ga. She retired in 2018 and moved home to Franklin in March 2020.

Stacy Guffey is a Macon County native who's grown into leadership in business and public life in the region his family has called home for generations. A graduate of Franklin High and Western Carolina University, Guffey served as Macon County's planner from 2004 to 2009. He helped establish and run the Cowee School Arts and Heritage Center, where he serves



Re-elected town council member David Culpepper is joined by his wife, Charlotte, and his children, Ledger and Daisy as he is sworn in for his second term.

as the part-time director, and founded a consultancy practice to help with economic development and planning projects throughout Western North Carolina. In 2018, to further his training in government policymaking, Guffey earned a Masters in Public Administration degree from the University of North Carolina while taking on a new role in downtown Franklin's preservation efforts with the purchase and rehabilitation of the 1897 building that contains the Scottish Tartans Museum.

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# Cowee F&R boasts state recognized K9 Search and Rescue Team

Brittney Lofthouse – Contributing Writer

The Cowee Fire and Rescue Department has been working for the last couple of months to strengthen their department's impact with the addition of search and rescue K-9s. After a search earlier this year in the dense woods of Macon County, leaders within the department took the initiative to prioritize the need.

"Earlier this year our department assisted with a search for a missing juvenile," said Cowee Fire and Rescue Chief Dustin Pendergrass. "We were providing assistance with our Dive Team and we also sent members to assist on foot. At that time the closest K-9 Rescue Team trained in "air scent" was located approximately three hours away in South Carolina. Once the team arrived, the juvenile was located within 45 minutes. After this call we began discussing the need for a K-9 team. Not only for Macon County, but for all of Western North Carolina. One thing led to another and within a couple months we were in contact with Mr. EJ Abel of PAWS Working Dog Support Network Inc., located in Blairsville, Ga. Mr. Abel immediately began searching for us a K-9."

Within a few months, Cowee Fire and Rescue's K-9 team reached six members, with two undergoing training now.



Pictured, from left with their K-9s are handlers Morgan McClure, Assistant Chief Benji Johnson, Assistant Chief Larry Pickens and Chris Southard; at right, is Dr. Lisa Briggs and Edwin Grant. Not pictured are handlers Lieutenant Kyle Southard and Firefighter Amber Southard.

"We have partnered with Edwin Grant from the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children and Dr. Lisa Briggs from Western Carolina University," said Pendergrass. "They have both joined our department along with their K-9s. This brings our current trained K-9 total to six, with two more about to begin Air Scent Training."

Members of the department's K-9 team include:

- K-9 Ava, Handler Assistant Chief Larry Pickens. Trained in Air Scent
- K-9 Tracker, Handler Assistant Chief Benji Johnson. Trained in Air Scent
- K-9 Daisy, Handler Edwin Grant. Trained Cadaver, Land and Water
- K-9 Wes, K-9 Onna, and K-9 Laila, Handler Dr. Lisa Briggs. All trained Cadaver. Laila currently has 29 victim recoveries.
- K-9 Riley, Handlers Firefighter Morgan McClure and Fire Captain Killian Carpenter. Being trained in Air Scent.
- K-9 Colt, Handlers Firefighters Chris and Cierra Southard. Will train for Air Scent search.
- K-9 Indy, Handlers Lieutenant Kyle Southard and Firefighter Amber Southard. Will train for Air Scent search.

"Our vision is to develop and maintain a top notch and professional K-9 Search &

Rescue Team that will be available anywhere in North Carolina along with any surrounding states," said Pendergrass. "These K-9's will be able to partner with our Swiftwater Rescue Team and Dive Team."

Funding for the program has been possible through donations as well as individual members taking on the financial responsibility themselves. K-9 Ava and K-9 Tracker were fully trained and certified by Abel and his staff and were donated to Cowee Fire & Rescue. Grant and Dr. Briggs own their dogs and joined Cowee Department at no cost to the department. K-9 Colt and K-9 Indy are individually owned by department members who agreed to participate in the training in order to become a part of the K-9 team. This is also at no charge to the department.

"An anonymous donation was made to Cowee Fire & Rescue to be used to purchase dog food and assist with any vet

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expenses,” said Pendergrass. “Our long term goal is to utilize a portion of our annual donations to fund the K-9s’ food and vet expenses. To date, all training and certifications have been provided free of charge.”

Over the last month Cowee Fire and Rescue has completed the necessary paperwork and been approved by the State to be recognized as a State Response Team, specializing in K-9 Search & Rescue, Swiftwater Rescue, and Rescue Dive.

“Each year the county sees several searches for missing people, and by all means the firefighters and law enforcement in our county do an outstanding job,” said Pendergrass. “Where I feel that our K-9s will be most beneficial is they are specifically trained on air scent. Meaning they do not rely on ground tracking. For example, if rescuers have been in an area searching and we bring our K-9s in, the foot traffic from the rescuers should not hinder the K-9s’ ability to get a scent on the missing person(s). Depending on the weather and wind (speed and direction) the K-9s can be up to a mile and a half away from the victim and still get their scent. They are trained to locate the victim(s) then return to a handler in order to lead them back to the victim(s). We simply want to be an asset, an additional resource to Macon County and our neighbors. Having such a large number of K-9s means that even if our team is deployed to another county, we will keep some behind to be available in our county. If we can turn an all-night search into a couple hours or less, then it makes this entire effort worthwhile.”

Pendergrass noted that the addition of Grand and Dr. Briggs to the department has also made equipment available that otherwise would have been costly.

“We now have two boats with SONAR capabilities,” said Pendergrass. “This will aid our dive team in recovery missions.”

Pendergrass said the department also now has access to three drones to utilize for search

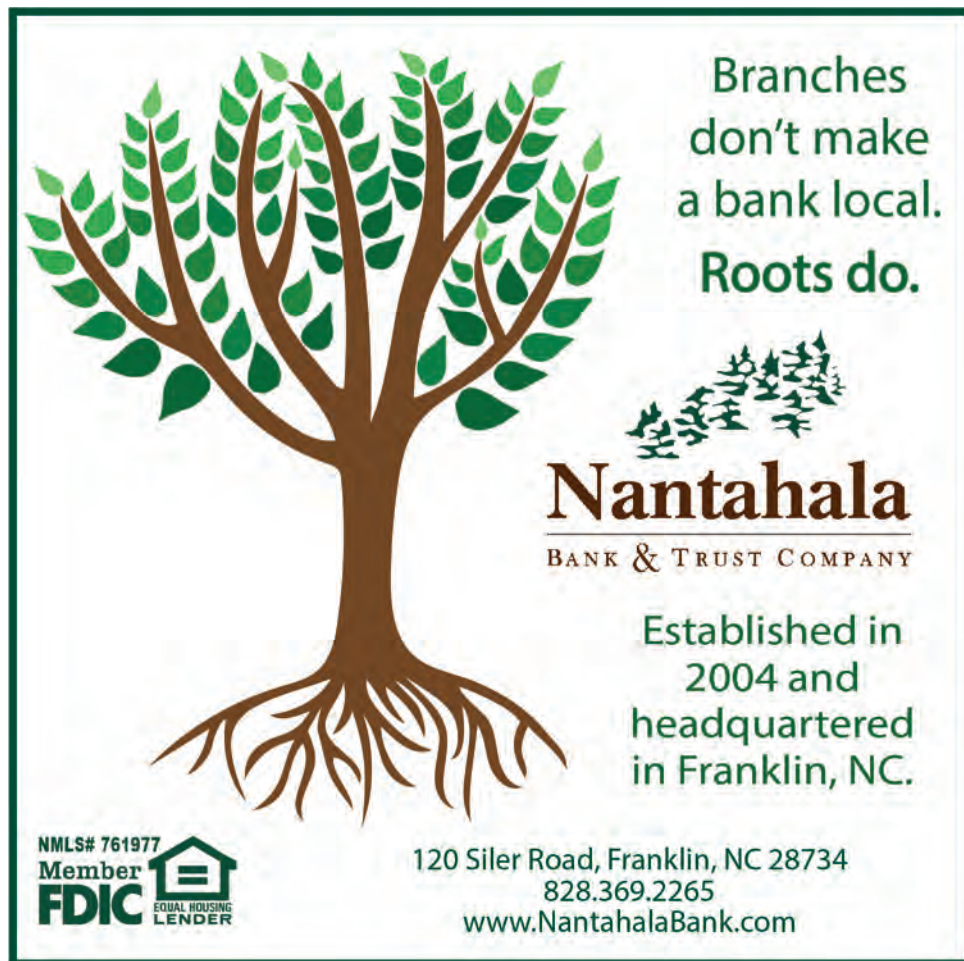
and rescue as county fire departments take the lead on such incidents.

The department has equipment to monitor search areas while canvassing an area much larger than possible otherwise.

“We have purchased tracking hardware for our members and for our K-9s,” said Pendergrass. “This includes mapping software called CalTopo. When out on searches we can monitor the entire search area from the command post and make sure that the entire search area has been covered. Each member on our department with a smartphone has the option to add this software by using the CalTopo app. We can also track their search pattern by using the GPS in their phone. This software also allows us to send a message to the missing individual’s cell phone (if they have cell service), once they open the message and accept, this person’s location will be identified on our map with GPS coordinates.”

The department recognized a need not just in Macon County, but across Western North Carolina, and the pieces quickly began to fall in place for implementation and execution.

“This entire adventure has happened very fast and the credit must go to the group of very dedicated men and women of Cowee Fire & Rescue, Mr. Grant and Dr. Briggs for joining our department and bringing their years of service and expertise, and Mr. Abel for generously training and donating Ava and Tracker,” said Pendergrass. “Mr. Abel and his staff are also training our other K-9s for free. Even though we only have a select few becoming handlers at this time, our entire department has trained weekly becoming more knowledgeable in all aspects of search and rescue. I am truly honored to be the chief of Cowee Fire & Rescue, but none of this would be possible without our dedicated group setting high standards and working tirelessly for the betterment of our department.”



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For information about the concert, contact Pastor Scott Eichelberger at [scott@franklincma.com](mailto:scott@franklincma.com) or 828-200-5166.



# Chamber of Commerce board members step up for Toys for Tots

Deena C. Bouknight – Contributing Writer

Smoky Mountain Chrysler Dodge Jeep RAM's sales and finance manager Tiffani Tallent, has been involved for many years with Toys for Tots. When, as a Chamber of Commerce board member, she found out that Toys for Tots might not happen this year, she stepped up, along with several other board members, to make sure that it did.

Tallent, a native of Franklin, explained that she was involved in the organization while working for other automobile dealerships in town that hosted Toys for Tots car shows to raise money and encourage toy donations.

"I heard that the program coordinator for Macon and surrounding counties for the past several years, might not be able to do it anymore," she said. "So I talked to other members and we agreed that we didn't want to see this program not be available to children in need. We decided to make a go of seeing that Toys for Tots was successful again this year for kids."

Toys for Tots was founded by a United States Marine Corps reservist in 1947 as a way to make sure underprivileged children

received toys at Christmas. However, the volunteer-run organization has grown so that when families lose homes due to fires, accidents, and natural calamities, it can also replenish and provide toys for affected children year-round, not just at Christmas. Besides toys, Toys for Tots donates books through a 10-plus-year-old collaborative literacy effort with Scholastic, Inc.

Tallent said Foxfire Heating and Cooling's Andrew Huscusson, who also serves on the Chamber's board, as well as Brian Robinson of Select Bank, and other members, have been instrumental in making sure the needs of 300 families, which represent 700 children, are met this Christmas.

"We've distributed toy donation boxes all over the county," said Tallent. "They are at stores and local businesses. And we are asking people to fill them."

Registered Toys for Tots families will pick up toys for their children, upwards of four toys each, on Dec. 18 and 19 at Foxfire Heating and Cooling.

"All the toys are being held in Foxfire's warehouse space," said Tallent. "And Andrew has used his vehicles to pick up toys and advertising dollars to get the

word out. We are coming alongside him, but his efforts have been a huge component of this."



A Toys for Tots donation box is set up at the Franklin Area Chamber of commerce and in many business across Macon County. The chamber is located at 98 Hyatt Road.



The Open Mic family at Lazy Hiker presented a check for \$1,500 to Randy Hughes of Toys For Tots of Macon County. Pictured (L-R) are Sonia Brooks, Pete Mosco, George James, David Wilson, Dave Patterson, Gary Carter, Randy Hughes, Jay Baird (with Henry), Dave Dexter, Diane Chermier, Shawna Maxwell, and Melinda Pennington.

A toy drive held at Wal-Mart on Sunday, Dec. 5, generated many toy donations.

Added Tallent, "I think it's a worthwhile effort. I was born and raised in this community and I have children and I love our town. There is something to be said for local people helping local people, for this level of community involvement. And to know how many children Toys for Tots services ... I couldn't stand the thought of children not getting anything for Christmas."

Tallent said that although she and other volunteers have overseen Toys for Tots for 2021, an individual or organization needs to take over the local Toys for Tots effort for 2022 and beyond.

"All of us on the Chamber board who have helped this year have full time jobs,

so we would like to see Toys for Tots be taken on by someone, or a group, who can really devote time to planning, logistics, and legwork."



Randy Hughes has been diligent in collecting for Toys for Tots over the years.

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I want to take this opportunity to thank each and every one that has prayed for me, helped me financially, donated items for my benefit, brought items or ate at the benefit. It has been so uplifting to me to know that so many people care so much about me. I am so humbled by everyone's love and generosity. Continue to pray for me as I continue to work on my overall health. I give God all the Glory! God Bless each of you.

My love to all of you,  
**Gary Buchanan**

## Gwen's Speech Therapy offers tailored approach

The Franklin Chamber of Commerce recently held a ribbon cutting ceremony at Gwen's Speech Therapy located at 310 Terrell Road.

"At Gwen's Speech Therapy, we do not believe in one general broad-spectrum approach because every person that comes through our door is a unique individual with their own set of need," Owner Gwen Fowler-Berken says. "We believe our clients deserve the best care possible. That is why we pride ourselves on getting to know each and every one of our clients to build a unique approach tailored to the individual's goals and needs."

Some skilled interventions include the Hayden approach, the Milieu approach, Laura Mize activities, Picture Communication Systems, Oral Placement Therapy, Voice Intervention, Cognitive Rehabilitation, Swallow Right, Vital Stim. Fluency Intervention, Cycles of Phonological Processes and LSVT. They also offer free speech and language screenings that take 5 to

10 minutes to determine if additional services may be needed.

Office hours are Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Call (828)371-3940 for more information, or visit them on their website at [www.GwenSpeech.com](http://www.GwenSpeech.com) or on facebook at Gwen's Speech Therapy.



Cindy Cavender and Linda Harbuck with the Franklin Area Chamber of Commerce joined Gwen Fowler-Berken and her staff to formally open Gwen's Speech Therapy located at 310 Terrell Road.

## Hellcat Tattoo opens new studio near Walmart

The Franklin Chamber celebrates a ribbon cutting ceremony with Hellcat Tattoo located at 129 Commons Drive in the Walmart Shopping Center.

Hellcat Tattoo was founded in 2003 in West Palm Beach, Florida by Dave Porter and was named after his grandfather's tank destroyer battalion in World War II. Porter has 28 years of experience and is a veteran of the United States Marine Corps. He brings the core values and principles taught in the Marines to the tattoo industry. He moved his permanent residence to Franklin in October 2020 and recently opened his second shop.

The West Pam Beach location has been in operation for more than 18 years and is staffed by six world class artists. These artists will rotate through the shop here in Franklin periodically and they will also offer a variety of guest artists multiple times per year.



Tattoo artist and Marine Corp veteran Dave Porter has opened a shop in Franklin. He has owned and operated a tattoo shop in West Palm Beach, Fla., since 2003.

"We are excited to be a part of the Franklin business community and strive to offer top notch tattooing to Franklin and the surrounding area. Our artists can make old tattoos look new, cover up past mistakes, and create new art work," said Porter. "Visit our website at [www.HellcatTattoo.com](http://www.HellcatTattoo.com) or give us a call at (828)558-3122 if you have questions or want to schedule an appointment."

Shop hours are noon to 7 p.m. Tuesday thru Saturday.



# Tips and resources for navigating Alzheimer's during the holidays

While holidays can be a joyous time for many families, they can be challenging for families affected by Alzheimer's or another form of dementia. The Alzheimer's Association's Western Carolina Chapter and Eastern North Carolina Chapter are marking these events by sharing tips and resources for the 358,000 family members and friends across North Carolina who are currently caring for a person living with Alzheimer's.

From gifts to gatherings, the holidays can be overwhelming. For those living with Alzheimer's or related dementias and their families, a little planning goes a long way. Holiday celebrations can create extra anxiety for someone living with Alzheimer's and other dementias, especially large, noisy gatherings that depart from daily routines. The Alzheimer's Association is offering simple tips that can make holiday celebrations easier and more enjoyable for all involved.

"As the holidays near, we are raising awareness about the unique challenges caregivers face," said Katherine L. Lambert, CEO of the Western Carolina Chapter. "We want to help families navigate these challenges and provide meaningful and enjoyable occasions for their families."

Throughout the holiday season, the Alzheimer's Association in North Carolina is offering a free virtual education program, "Caregiving During the Holidays." Taking place on Dec. 9 and 16, this program is designed to teach caregivers to care for themselves, their loved ones, and about holiday

safety all while giving suggestions that may make the holidays more enjoyable for all. For a complete list of upcoming virtual programs or to register for a program, visit [act.alz.org/nc-monthlyprograms](http://act.alz.org/nc-monthlyprograms) or call 800-272-3900.

Additionally, the Alzheimer's Association is offering tips to help families plan appropriately for both in-person or virtual celebrations.

## Tips to help navigate Alzheimer's and other dementias this holiday season

**Plan Ahead.** In the early stages, a person with Alzheimer's or another form of dementia may be less comfortable socializing, while others may enjoy seeing family and friends. Make holiday plans together, focusing on the things that bring happiness, not stress. Here's some simple questions you can ask when planning:

- How do we maintain traditions?
- How can we incorporate travel or a virtual gathering?
- How do we plan for entertaining visitors?
- How do we assess if the environment is safe?
- How do we involve our loved one with dementia?

**Take a person-centered approach.** Focus on what is enjoyable for the person living with Alzheimer's. Take time to experiment with new holiday traditions that might be less stressful or a better fit for your loved one. If they get overwhelmed in large groups, a virtual or small quiet gathering may be preferable. If evening confusion and agitation are a problem, turn your holiday dinner into a holiday lunch or

brunch.

**Prepare your guests.** As dementia progresses, an individual may show significant changes in cognitive abilities or behavior. Prepare guests for what to expect before they arrive, and explain that these are symptoms of the disease, not the person. Offer extended family members suggested activities to engage the person safely or best ways to communicate with them.

**Involve the person living with Alzheimer's.** Depending on abilities and preferences, make sure to keep the person living with Alzheimer's involved in the celebration. As the person's abilities allow, invite them to help wrap packages, decorate or set the table. Try to maintain a normal routine to avoid disrupting established schedules.

**Take Care of yourself.** It is important for you to take care of yourself, especially during the holidays, due to the high level of stress. If you find yourself not taking care of your own needs, you may be putting your health at risk.

- Many caregivers are sometimes hesitant to ask for help, but loved ones and friends are often looking for opportunities to contribute. Try to have a few tasks listed to offer to family & friends who desire to help. Remember, people may not offer their help, but may be very willing to if asked.

Most importantly, adjust expectations and be prepared to go with the flow. It may not be realistic to maintain every holiday tradition or event, but this is an opportunity to create new traditions that everyone can

enjoy.

## Tips for adapting gift giving for families impacted by dementia

For celebrations that include gift-giving, focus on practical and comforting items.

Encourage safe and useful gifts for the person living with Alzheimer's. If someone asks for gift ideas, suggest items the person needs or can easily enjoy, such as comfortable easy-to-remove clothing, favorite foods, music, videos, and photo albums of family and friends.

In the later stages of Alzheimer's, individuals may enjoy realistic baby dolls/toy pets or items to keep restless hands occupied.

Refrain from complicated electronics, challenging games, lengthy books or actual pets.

Gift giving extends to the caregiver too. Ideas include gift certificates for meal delivery, respite services or housekeeping or handyman services, or a membership to the Association's MedicAlert plan with Wandering Support. (Information can be found at [medicalert.org/alz](http://medicalert.org/alz))

When it comes to gifts wrapped for persons living with dementia. Consider the individual. If they enjoy a challenge, wrap the gift as you normally would. If they can become easily frustrated, consider putting in a gift bag or just putting a bow on it.

The Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline — 800.272.3900 — remains a vital resource for individuals and families who have concerns about cognitive changes affecting someone they know.



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## What's new on the plateau

**Patrick Taylor**  
Highlands Mayor



Patrick Taylor

I loved the Highlands Christmas Parade this year. I am always honored as mayor to lead the parade just behind the color guard. Sallie, our grandchildren and Lucy, our dog, had a great time walking in the parade and passing out candy.

At the end of the parade route all the participants turn on Second Street and go their merry ways. This year I stopped at the turn on Main Street and Second Street to greet and thank the parade participants. I especially wanted to thank the Franklin and Rosman High School Marching Bands for their participation in the parade. Their music created such a festive spirit for this traditional holiday event.

As I greeted and thanked parade participants I was struck by how important the many organizations are to the quality of life of this community. Now I won't attempt to cite specific organizations, but as I saw groups, cars and floats pass by I realized these are the folks and institutions that are the soul of our community.

A principle of Gestalt Psychology is that in observing an entity, that the sum of the parts is not greater than the whole. I sensed that concept in observing all the community groups who participated in the parade. Among us there is a synergy of cooperation, affection and community that becomes greater than all the individual organizations in Highlands. Our community endeavors and each group contributes to the whole, which becomes an extended effort throughout the Highlands community. I want to thank everyone for caring for this town and its people.

I also want to put in a plug for our downtown merchants during this Christmas season. I know it is convenient to order online, but shopping in our downtown area is a special experience. I encourage everyone to simply stroll around downtown in the coming weeks to see what special, unique items are in our stores. You might discover that creative gift that would preclude an internet search.

Let me cover a couple of brief items. Our road paving projects for this year ended with the paving of Upper Lake Road this past week. Moving to a new budget year the board will prioritize more roads that need to be paved. Someone asked me this week why the town was paving dirt roads when so many paved

Continued on page 11

## Letters to the Editor

### 'Authoritarian tendencies' threatening democracy

By now most Americans (and people around the globe) have learned that the United States (for the very first time) has been added to the list of "backsliding democracies" by the Stockholm-based International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. America has fallen victim to "authoritarian tendencies," the Institute stated in its Global State of Democracy 2021 report. We have been "knocked down a significant number of steps on the democratic scale," a direct result of former President Donald Trump's baseless allegations of fraud in the 2020 elections and his efforts to pressure state election officials into changing vote totals and, lest we forget, the January 6th insurrection that evidence clearly shows, Donald Trump provoked and inflamed.

The report added there were "spillover effects" around the world, an "anti-democratic model followed by political actors in Brazil, Mexico, Myanmar and Peru," to name a few. It should come as no surprise that the destruction of our democracy will have a deleterious domino effect throughout the free world. Talk about giving "aid and comfort to the enemy," we've done this to ourselves, no help needed from foreign adversarial powers, the leaders of which are dancing in the streets while we suffer, struggle and bleed democracy with every passing day.

It is imperative, absolutely essential that our leaders immediately acknowledge and respond to the most direct and dangerous threat to our republic since WWII. If they don't, the loss of our independence, our sovereignty and our democracy, beyond a shadow of a doubt, will trigger worldwide repercussions and consequences.

Make no mistake, Americans can no longer trust or take anything for granted. Donald Trump (endorsed and aided by the Republican leadership and Party majority) has rendered a previously functional democratic government - impotent. Approximately two and a half centuries after declaring our independence we have finally witnessed an American citizen proving himself (thus far at least) immune to and above the law. "Law and order" (as we conceived it) is essentially an illusion; "checks and balances, a figment of our collective imaginations; "representative government," a pipe dream, and our Constitution, simply meaningless dialogue from a bygone era.

If we, the American people, cannot convince our leaders to honor and respect their oath, to put our nation's well-being and prosperity above party politics and their own self-interest and do the jobs they were elected to do, right now this very day, then we aren't going to have much of a country left worth defending and the American experiment, that countless numbers of men and women have sacrificed so much blood and treasure for, will be lost forever.

David Snell – Franklin, N.C.

### Let's join together in peace and harmony

There once was a small town in the south, like most small towns everywhere. There were at least 58 churches with the word Baptist in it, Churches of God, Assemblies of God, 23 Methodist, 11 Presbyterian, six Lutheran, four Catholic, one Unitarian, one spiritual center, and many chapels, alliances, and various other religious and spiritual meeting places of all denominations. The town occupied 3.8 miles of land. That's a lot of God power.

Or is it?

The locals looked at any newcomers with disdain and the newcomers looked down their noses at the locals. The young thought their elders were out of step, and the elders thought the kids had lost their minds. The majority Republicans loathed the Democrats believing they didn't know the score, and Democrats thought Republicans only cared about themselves.

And all around them the blue mountains stood steadfast, the waterfalls flowed offering its bounty to all, and the forests sang silently of peace and harmony.

God stands outside debacles disguised as debates.

He stands away from self-righteousness.

He is saddened when people use His name to further their causes, beliefs, or political party.

God won't shout over the name calling.

God loves you and waits for you to know that.

Because once you really know and feel how much God loves you—you will reach out in love to every human being who comes your way—yes, the Democrat or Republican, Catholic, Jewish, or Protestant, the local or the newcomer. You'll hug them to your breast knowing how much God loves everyone—the other—the ones we talk about and make jokes about—the ones we think aren't as smart as us—the ones we think look or act differently.

God loves each one of us, all of us, more than we have imaginations to imagine.

And wants us to love each other.

Meanwhile, the blue mountains stand steadfast, the waterfalls flow offering its bounty to all, and the forests sing silently of peace and harmony.

Let's join them.

Pamela K. Keyser – Otto, N.C.

*The Macon County News letters page is a public forum open to a wide variety of opinions as a right guaranteed in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Letters are neither accepted nor rejected based on content. Letters must be signed and contact information provided. Views expressed are not necessarily reflective of the opinions of publisher, editor or staff. Writers are asked to refrain from personal attacks against individuals or businesses.*

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**Who are the best at being evil conspirators?**

To many of us it is important to know who the worst of the evil conspirators are, conspirators against the regular citizens of the world. If we can recognize who these evil individuals/groups are, then maybe we can make substantial changes for the good of all (or most).

Over the last few months, more and more people are realizing that their political/government “masters” are certainly not their friends, are indeed their enemies. Examples: The “vaccines” don’t work, so let’s force everyone to get jabbed. Huh? The “vaccines” have killed or maimed more people than the so-called virus (both the virus and the “vaccines” are apparently bio-weapons). There is a new “variant” so let us lock down whole countries. What? Let’s force legitimate gun owners to turn in their long guns, because they haven’t killed anyone (Canada, but coming soon to the USA.) No way! Do not use safe and effective medicines to combat this flu; use expensive and ineffective toxins that kill people (but they are free, at least to us; future generations will be paying). Forget it! Make sure big banks and big corporations and big Pharma companies are taken care of financially, but not the citizens over 60 (after all they are useless eaters). Never! Get rid of cash, go digital, so we can track everyone’s assets and determine whether they should have them or not. If this Covid thing peters out, we have smallpox waiting in the wings (Bill G. has purchased a company that makes the small pox vaccine).

By the way, did you know that some government-funded researchers have been ordered to create vegetables that have the Covid “vaccine” in them, so you can eat your toxin? Wow! Obviously GMO.

Back to my original premise: Who are the best at being evil? So many to choose from: The clown-puppet Fauci, or our Senile-in-Chief, or Big Pharma, Big Tech, Big Government, Big Banks, or the Obnoxiously Super Rich? And, or court, the Hystericals.

Since it is imperative that we constantly need correct and truthful information, I condemn the bought and sold so-called Mainstream Media as the Corrupt of the corrupt; this includes the TV network “news,” the national newspapers (NYT, et al), social media companies like Facebook and Twitter; Wikipedia and “fact checkers.” There are many other ways and outlets to get the truth, you just have to look for them.

We will win in the long run, for our children and our country and our world. I hope you, the non-Deplorables will join us.

Eric A. Blair – Franklin, N.C.

**Onset of winter brings newness of life**

While looking out my window on a chilly winter’s morning, gazing across our small valley, my mind was adrift with the wonder of what winter brings. It’s one of the seasons where gray skies and cold days seem to announce a time of ending. The closing of a year, memories of fragrant flowers once in bloom, or the brilliance of fall colors coming to a close and giving way to winter’s gray, darkening days. Birds move south and animals hibernate. Life itself seems to be on pause, waiting for a quickening day of renewed beginnings.

But in a strange way the onset of winter brings with it a newness of life which blossoms hope and promise into the future. In the onset of winter we celebrate “Christmas,” Christ’s birth with a uniqueness all its own. A lowly person never famous by world standards, no political ambitions, but yet is the most known and read person to this very day. Christ is celebrated and is given this day known as “Christmas.” His birth is looked upon the world over and by every

**TAYLOR**

From previous page

roads need to be resurfaced? My response is that the town has been aggressively resurfacing town roads for the past two years and will continue to do so. There are some roads in Highlands that are state roads that the town does not and cannot pave.

Also, there has been a lot of chatter on social media about the town’s position regarding short term rentals. My caution to folks is that no final decisions have been made. The Highlands Planning Board is currently reviewing a drafted conceptual proposal that our attorneys presented. That review process will continue in the coming weeks before planning board recommendations are forwarded to the town board.

nation known to mankind. No one is more known than Christ. But the renewal of life doesn’t come in knowing who Christ is, it is much deeper than that. It’s personally knowing Him with heart, mind and soul and allowing this into the depths of our being, where even in winter He takes bloom and brings the richness of color in a life that once seemed cold and frozen.

In Christmas we celebrate Christ’s birth coming into the world, but in Easter, what seemed the starkness of winter in His death, turns into blossoms in the fullness of color, in conquering death itself in the resurrected Christ. Christ did what mankind has never been able to do: Pay for all the injustice, selfishness, pride, hate, and abuse we do within ourselves then expresses itself outward towards others. Why is this ? Because we have both the image of God set within each of us, but we also have evil desires that war against everything that is good or truthful. We truly are a sinful people trying to find our way. Life makes little sense otherwise. Christ came for this very reason. Many refuse to see this and this is a choice each must make. If viewed honestly, it begins to make sense why our world is what it is, and more so why we are what we are.

He has come to bring hope, a hope born from His birth and His death, yet conquered it all for you. Christmas may mean different things to each of us, but Christmas truly is His gift to you, which if received, brings a blossoming of such richness of color in life which was once dark and frozen. This is the Hope, and if known, each of us in our own personal lives could use such a Hope as this.

To everyone, Merry Christ-mas !

Deni Shepard – nds13@frontier.com

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# Winter Wonderland

For two consecutive Saturdays each year, Winter Wonderland is a Town of Franklin event featuring holiday decor, music, and a plethora of Christmas-themed offerings around the town's gazebo, from Santa to photo opportunities to adorned trees. Saturday, Dec. 4, was the second Winter Wonderland event. Next up is Rockin' With Santa in downtown Franklin Dec. 11, at 1 p.m.



Photos by Betsey Gooder





# Discover Church holds 6th annual ornament exchange

Six years ago, a handful of women met together at Discover Church in early December to enjoy a meal, an encouraging message, music, and games. They also brought a wrapped Christmas ornament. What has become the annual Ornament Exchange has grown to include a packed evening of activities for around 300 women.

Photos by Deena C. Bouknight



## Cowee Christmas



Cowee Christmas and Balsam Bee, held on Saturday, Dec. 4 at Cowee School Arts & Heritage Center, focused on various traditional holiday activities, demonstrations, and exhibits. The overwhelming scent of Fraser firs and northern balsam filled the spaces due to swags, wreaths, and stuffed pillows marked for sale. Participants were able to watch a yarn spinner, view historic cars, purchase Cowee School-made pottery, listen to live music, and more.

## Storytime and Cookies with Santa at the library





# Arrest Report

The Macon County Sheriff's Department, Franklin Police Department or Jackson County Sheriff's Department made the following arrests Nov. 26 - Dec. 4. All suspects are innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.



## Macon County Sheriff's Department

November 29

James Allen Gibson, was charged with failure to appear. Costin Jigla made the arrest.

November 30

Jesse Mal Cowart, was charged with warrant service for offense committed in jurisdiction. Joseph A. Raby made the arrest.

Anthony Vincent Alos, was issued a true bill of indictment. Adrian L. Mace made the arrest.

Kristeena Byrd Gray, was charged with habitual felon. Costin Jigla made the arrest.

December 1

David Ronald Ames, was charged with assault on a female, assault by strangulation and interfere with emergency communication. Timothy B. Carter made the arrest.

Doyle Dooger Ramirez, was charged with violate domestic violence protective order. Costin Jigla made the arrest.

William Pell Hodges Jr., was charged with felony probation violation. Matthew L. Long made the arrest.

December 2

Matt Dillan Laws, was charged with assault inflicting serious injury. Sergeant Jonathan A. Taylor made the arrest.

Nathan Shane Humphries, was charged with simple assault. Corporal Clay A. Saunders made the arrest.

Thomas Lee Badoni, was charged with assault and battery. Jordan C. Sutton made the arrest.

Jose Luis Santiago, was charged with assault on a female, assault with a deadly weapon and interfere with emergency communication. Deputy Cody Tiger made the arrest.

Megan Joyce Ryan, was charged with child support enforcement contempt. Costin Jigla made the arrest.

December 3

Devan Trey Jones, was charged with injury to real property, injury to personal property, trespass, communicating threats and breaking and entering. Jay Wright made the arrest.

Adriana Nichole Garcilita, was charged with failure to appear, possession of a controlled substance on prison/jail premises, simple possession of a schedule III controlled substance and possession of drug paraphernalia. Adrian L. Mace made the arrest.

Morgan Corissa Cowart, was charged with probation violation, possession of stolen motor vehicle, attempt to obtain property by false pretense, possession of methamphetamine and possession of drug paraphernalia. Mace made the arrest.

December 4

Adam K. Ramsdell, was charged with indecent liberties with children, attempted first degree statutory sex offense with a child and attempted statutory sex offense with a child less than 15.

Kimberly Danielle Lee, was issued warrant service for offense committed in jurisdiction. Denver J. Elliott made the arrest.

Brendan Makenzie Williamson, was charged with probation violation. Joel Lynch made the arrest.

## Franklin Police Department

November 26

Ken Tapp, 53, was charged with larceny. A \$50 bond was set.

November 27

Cesar Alejandro Arevalo, 37, was charged with assault on a female. No bond was set.

November 30

Darius Reshad Williams, 30, was charged with resist/obstruct/delay and probation violation for methamphetamine. A \$10,500 bond was set.

December 1

Anthony Shamal Bryson, 28, was charged with failure to appear for injury to personal property, cruelty to animals, second degree trespass, misdemeanor larceny and possession of stolen property. A \$1,500 bond was set.

Nathan Roy White, 35, was charged with failure to appear for second degree trespass. A \$25 bond was set.

## Jackson County Sheriff's Department

November 29

Stephen Scheridan, of Bob Patton Rd., Clarksville, Ga., was charged with simple assault and assault by pointing a gun. A secured bond of \$1,000 was set.

Julian Tristen Garren, 21, of Badcreek Rd., Bakersville, was charged with probation violation, possession of drug paraphernalia, simple possession of a schedule VI controlled substance and possession with intent to sell/deliver cocaine. A secured bond of \$40,000 was set.

December 1

William Franklin Johnson, 47, of Mutts Place, was charged with harassing phone calls. A secured bond of \$1,000 was set.

Edward Dewayne Sherrill, 34, of Bluewing Church Rd., Cherokee, was charged with failure to appear for obtain property by false pretense. A secured bond of \$10,000 was set.

Calvin Donald Crosby, 60, of Alpha Dr., Greenville, S.C., was charged with simple assault. A secured bond of \$1,000 was set.

Dennis Whitman, 66, of Highway 394, Blountville, Tenn., was charged with larceny. An unsecured bond of \$1,000 was set.

Kendall Luanne Jackson, 27, of Beck Branch Rd., Whittier, was charged with possession of methamphetamine and possession of drug paraphernalia. An unsecured bond of \$5,000 was set.

December 2

Marlene Queen, 28, of Acree Dr., Cherokee, was charged with contributing the delinquency of a juvenile, aid and abet larceny, possession of stolen goods/property and conspire to commit felony larceny. An unsecured bond of \$10,000 was set.

December 4

Lori Jane Cantrell, 50, of Big Witch Rd., Cherokee, was charged with financial card theft, breaking and entering, larceny after breaking and entering, possession of stolen goods, conspire to commit felony larceny and contributing to the delinquency of a juvenile. A secured bond of \$20,000 was set.

William Homer Howard, 69, of Mitten Rd., Franklin, was charged with impeding traffic and resist a public officer. A secured bond of \$1,000 was set.

Ellen Yellowhammer Lincoln, 26, of U.S. 441N, Cherokee, was charged with contributing to the delinquency of a juvenile, possession of stolen property, conspiracy to commit larceny and larceny. An unsecured bond of \$10,000 was set.

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

**The Franklin Women's Club** will meet at noon on Friday, Dec. 10, at Fat Buddies restaurant in Westgate Plaza for its annual Christmas party. Members are asked to bring a gift for the Chinese Auction. To RSVP, call Brenda Jacobs at (828)421-0411.

**The Friends of the Rickman Store** will close out the season with the music of the Nikwasi Dulcimer Players, the harmonies of Christmas carols and the traditional Music Jam and a full day of activities on Saturday, Dec. 11. The Rickman Store is located on 259 Cowee Creek Road next to the Cowee School Heritage Center. Doors will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, call (828)332 8282 or visit Friends of the Rickman Store on Facebook.

**Free Public Community Christmas Concert** will be held Dec. 12, 3 p.m., at First Alliance Church, 31 Promise Lane. The concert will include Sacred Sounds and the Western Carolina Civic Orchestra members made up of local teachers, students, and community musicians. New players are welcome and should contact Cathy Arps at ronandcathy71@frontier.com or (828)586-5478. For information about the concert, contact Pastor Scott Eichelberger at scott@franklinma.com or (828)200-5166.

**American Legion Macon Post 108 and American Legion Auxiliary Unit 108** will meet on Tuesday, Dec. 14, light dinner at 6 p.m., regular meetings at 7 p.m., at the Post Home located at 614 W. Main St. All members, military veterans and spouses are encouraged to attend as the raffles from the membership renewal drive will be held, so come and bring a friend.

**Friends of the Greenway** will host an indoor "Experiencing Nature Through Expanded Senses" with leader Diane Wildermuth. Sessions will be held at FROG Quarters on Wednesday, Dec. 15, at 10:30 a.m. or 12:30 p.m. For more information or to register, call Diane at (828)421-5539 or dswnatureguide@outlook.com

**Depression - From Surviving to Thriving** free community class Wednesday, Dec. 15, 1:30 p.m. in the Macon County Public Library Meeting Room. Facilitated by Vaya Health GERO team. Register ahead by calling or emailing Kristina Moe at (828)524-3600 or kmoe@fontanalib.org. This course examines different types, common causes, symptoms and treatment methods for depression, focusing on moving from a place of simply surviving to one of thriving. CEU's are provided through NC Department of Health and Human Services.

**Yoga at the Library** Wednesday, Dec. 15, at 5:15 p.m. Register at Beyond Bending Yoga to ensure safe numbers. Come and get bending with us. The library is located at 149 Siler Farm Road.

**Graduation for Adult and Teen Challenge of the Smokies Men's Center** will be Saturday, Dec. 18, at 10 a.m. at the center at 336 Living Hope Way, Franklin. Worship, a message from the word and testimony. The public is invited. Please wear a mask coming in and as you leave and when you socialize. For more information about the program visit [www.livinghopeway.com](http://www.livinghopeway.com) or call (828)524-2157.

**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](http://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: Easy-Doesit 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](http://www.aawnc80.org). or to speak with a member of A.A., call (828)349-4357.

**The Uptown Gallery Winter Hours** January through April are 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday through Saturday and Wednesday and Sundays by appointment. Summer hours are May through December, Monday through Saturday 10:00 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. While allowing play without masks, current regulations require all players to be fully vaccinated. For more information, call Larry Noyes at (828)200-9394 or email [LarryRNoyes@gmail.com](mailto: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.

CHURCH HAPPENINGS

**First Alliance Church Sunday December 12 Service** will be held at 10:30 a.m., Sunday School for all ages will be at 9:30 a.m. Pastor Scott will give a message on Christmas Joy. 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.

**The White Sisters will sing at Sugarfork Baptist Church** on Dec. 12, 11 a.m. Everyone is welcome to attend.

**Sylva First Baptist Church Sanctuary Choir** will present a variety of Christmas music during the 10:30 a.m., worship hour Sunday, Dec. 12. Under the direction of Dr. Robert Holquist since 1983, the choir has maintained a tradition of special music during the Advent Season. Lorie Meservey and Linda Stewart will provide accompaniment on piano and organ. Guest cellist Stephanie Dickerson will play "Silent Night" with the women of the choir, and will also offer pre-concert music beginning at 10:15 a.m. The public is cordially invited to attend.

**Spiritual Light Center on Sunday**, Dec. 12, 11 a.m., Alexander III & Bishka Ravenell Alexander will be sharing on "The Gift of Sovereignty." The church is located at 80 Heritage Hollow Dr., behind the Gazebo Restaurant in Heritage Hollow.

**Memorial United Methodist Church** has joyful worship services in person and on Facebook at 11 a.m. every Sunday. Masks are required for indoor services. We have communion the first Sunday of each month. The church is located at 4668 Old Murphy Rd. (across from Loafers Glory). The pastor is Evan W. Hill. For more information, call (828)369-5834.

**Franklin First United Methodist Church Sunday** In-person Worship is held at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. or on Facebook at Franklin First United Methodist Church, either live or later on recorded video. They follow COVID-19 health protocols for in-person worship. Plan to arrive early for check in, masks are required. The church is located at 66 Harrison Avenue in downtown Franklin; senior pastor is Rev. David Beam. For more information, call (828)524-3010 or visit us at <http://www.firstumcfranklin.org>

**Son Rise Ministries** is a non-denominational, full-gospel, Christian fellowship that meets Friday evenings at 7 p.m., Intercessory Prayer is Monday night at 6:30 p.m., Ladies prayer and Bible study is Wednesdays, 1 to 3 p.m. The church is located at 462 Depot St. For more information, call (828)369-2465 or (828)421-4153.

**Seventh Day Adventist Church** meets on Saturday, with Sabbath School at 9:30 a.m., Worship Service at 11 a.m. Masks are optional. The church is located at 71 Brendle Rd.

**Prentiss Church of God** is holding Sunday worship service in its sanctuary beginning at 10:30 a.m. Social distancing is observed and safety measures are in place. 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.

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**SUDOKU ANSWERS FOR PG. 22**

4	1	6	8	2	7	9	3	5
5	2	3	4	9	6	1	7	8
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6	3	1	7	4	2	8	5	9
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1	5	4	6	7	9	2	8	3
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**CROSSWORD PUZZLE ANSWERS FOR PG. 22**

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# Christmas Show features music of The Carpenters

The Carpenters, a vocal and instrumental duo consisting of siblings Karen and Richard Carpenter, was one of the most successful recording acts of all time. The duo produced a record-breaking run of hit recordings and became leading sellers in multiple genres, selling more than a hundred million records in just over a decade. Some of their most popular hits include, "Close to You," "Rainy Days and Mondays," "For All We Know," and "We've Only Just Begun." They also released two Christmas albums, which continue to earn spots on holiday music charts.

Michelle Berting Brett has been paying tribute to The Carpenters for years with her show, We've Only Just Begun: Carpenters Remembered. Now she is bringing the sounds of The Carpenters back to the Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts for a holiday show called, Merry Christmas Darling: Carpenters' Christmas, on Friday, Dec. 17. Showtime is set for 7 p.m., and tickets start at \$20 each with priority seating available.

Michelle Berting Brett leads the show with richly gifted vocals that pay a remarkable tribute to Karen Carpenter as she recreates the sounds and spirit of The Carpenters. Brett trained in opera and theatre and began her performing career in roles such as the Baroness in "The Sound of Music." She has served as a band leader, production singer, and guest entertainer for many productions, and has made music in exclusive resorts and hotels in Europe and Asia as well as on many cruise ships. She has also had the privilege to perform for the troops in Bosnia. Brett is a long-time fan of The Car-

penters and describes the opportunity to perform as Karen Carpenter as a dream come true.

Brett is backed by a seven-piece Nashville-based band that is a collection of incredible, versatile musicians who have collaborated with notable artists such as Alison Krauss, Gloria Estefan, Trisha Yearwood, and Sara Evans, to name a few. The band is directed by Harry Sharpe who is both the music director for the show and plays keys and sings background vocals. Sharpe has had a successful career that includes touring with Tanya Tucker, serving as music director and touring partner to Donna Summer, and 11 years playing alongside and serving as music director for Wynonna Judd.

This group of talented musicians and performers put on a family show that includes Christmas favorites such as, "Sleigh Ride," "Winter Wonderland," "Santa Claus is Coming to Town," and, of course, "Merry Christmas, Darling." Brett's tribute to The Carpenters has been welcomed with great enthusiasm and sold out shows from California to New York City and on to

Las Vegas.

Merry Christmas Darling: Carpenters' Christmas starring Michelle Berting Brett, is guaranteed to put showgoers in the Christmas spirit. To purchase tickets to celebrate the Grammy-winning magic of The Carpenters, from Christmas favorites to Carpenters' classics, or to find out more about this or any other show at the Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts, visit SmokyMountainArts.com or call (866) 273-4615.



## Community Christmas Concert Sunday, Dec. 12

A free, public Community Christmas concert will be held Sunday, Dec. 12, at 3 p.m., at First Alliance Church, 31 Promise Lane, Franklin.

The concert is a joint effort of the local Sacred Sounds ensemble of flutes and string players and members of the Western Carolina Civic Orchestra.

The concert will begin with duets by members of the ensemble. Toby Pope, cello, and Diana Brailsford, piano, will perform "O Come O Come Emmanuel" arranged by Marshall McDonald and Steve Nelson. Kathy and Ed Hill will play "Greensleeves" as arranged by Matt Riley for violin and piano. The string ensemble will present portions of the "Christmas Concerto Grosso No. 8" by Arcangelo Corelli, conducted by Diana Brailsford.


Also included are favorite Christmas carols, "Pachelbel's Canon in D," and "Carol of the Bells."

For information about the concert, contact Pastor Scott Eichelberger at scott@franklinma.com or (828)200-5166.

Sacred Sounds and the Western Carolina Civic Orchestra members are local teachers, students, and community musicians. New players are welcome and should contact Cathy Arps at ronandcathy71@frontier.com or (828)586-5478.

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# Letters to Santa mailbox set up at Robert C. Carpenter Building

Safe Kids Macon County and the Macon County Sheriff's Office have once again been requested by Santa himself to help out this Christmas. Santa delivered a big red mailbox to the Robert C. Carpenter Community Building this weekend to allow kids to write a letter directly to Santa.

"We set up the mailbox last year at the detention center with the community building closed as we had such a great response from the community. We know that this year has still been really hard on so many folks so we wanted to once again do a little something to help spread some holiday magic to families in our community," said Sheriff Robert Holland. "The community building is the perfect central location to host Santa's mailbox this year. Make sure that you include a return address, so Santa can send a personalized letter back to your child."

With Safe Kids Macon County and the Macon County Sheriff's Office acting as Santa's elves, every boy and girl who writes a letter to Santa and drops it in Santa's mailbox located inside the lobby of the Macon County Detention Center will get a special personalized letter back from Santa himself. Sheriff Robert Holland is encouraging teachers to have their classes submit letters as a group and then the class will receive individual replies sent to their classroom teacher to have a fun activity to do together.

The mailbox will be located inside the Macon County Community Building until Sunday, Dec. 19. On Sunday, Dec. 19 from 3-5 p.m., Santa himself will be at the Macon County Community Building visiting with families while his special elves volunteer their time to wrap Christmas presents. The



annual fundraiser supports the sheriff's office's Shop with a Cop Event, which provides toys to children in need in Macon County.

Shop with a Cop provides Christmas to more than 400 children in Macon County who need a little extra holiday cheer. The program has been operating for nearly 30 years and continues to grow each year all because of the support of the community.

All gift wrapping and photos with Santa will be done as a donation for the Shop with a Cop program.

For those unable to drop off a letter in person, letters can be addressed to Santa and sent to 1288 Georgia Rd, Franklin, NC 28734.

# Free concert, fireworks Dec. 17 in Sylva

The Jackson County Chamber of Commerce and Jackson County Parks and Recreation Department are teaming up to deliver the second annual Holiday Fireworks at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 17 in Sylva, N.C.

The hope is that the display will create seasonal ambiance on the final weekend of before Christmas.

The fireworks display will be visible from all over the downtown Sylva corridor, including Mill and Main Streets, as well as from the Bridge Park, the historic Jackson County Courthouse, and limited other surrounding areas. The display will be shot from the same spot as the annual July 4 fireworks have been shot the last seven years, directly above the Coffee Shop/Speedy's Pizza, in Sunrise Park.

"This will be an approximately 10-minute Christmas-themed display," said Jackson County Parks and Recreation Director Rusty Ellis. "It will not be the same length or velocity as the July 4th show, but hopefully it

will lift some spirits and provide a safe family night out for our community."

A special free concert will be presented at 6:30 p.m., before the fireworks on the front porch of the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center (773 West Main Street). Local favorites Terri Lynn Queen (vocals) and Scott Baker (guitar) will perform festive holiday favorites, and maybe even be a special surprise guest from the North Pole.

"Bring your family, finish your shopping, dine out, and enjoy the concert and fireworks," added Donaldson. "You can sit on the lawn of the chamber, the sidewalk area or on the steps of the historic courthouse. This is something we hope provides some joy and holiday spirit as we close the book on 2021 and enter a new and promising year in 2022."

For more information, contact the Jackson chamber at (828)586-2155 or visit [www.mountainlovers.com](http://www.mountainlovers.com).



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## Deaths & Funerals

### Dexter 'Keith' Shaffer

Dexter "Keith" Shaffer, 44, of Franklin, N.C., passed away Dec. 1, 2021.

He was a lifelong resident of Macon County. He enjoyed watching his favorite shows on TV and loved his family, and his dogs.

He is survived by his grandmother, Shirley Shaffer and was blessed with a loving family, which included numerous aunts, uncles, and cousins.

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

In lieu of flowers, memorials can be made to Shriners Hospital at <https://donate.lovetotherescue.org>.

Online condolences can be made at [www.maconfuneral-home.com](http://www.maconfuneral-home.com).

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.



Dexter 'Keith' Shaffer

### Glenn Dean Struble

Glenn Dean Struble, 61, passed away Nov. 30, 2021, surrounded by his family. He was born in Eustis, Fla., to Calvin L. and Mary Helen Smith Struble. His family moved to Otto, N.C., when he was a boy.

He will be remembered as a loving man who cherished his family, especially his grandkids. He also enjoyed fishing and boating, but being on the golf course was his favorite hobby. He also was a bit mischievous, but he said his blue eyes could get him out of any trouble, and they did.

He is survived by his mother; his wife, Joann Struble of Otto; three step-sons, Jerry, Scott and Justin (Amanda) Fuller, all of Otto; four grandkids, Krayden, Kaol and Gavin Fuller and Levi Blanton; three siblings, Barbara Tussing, Sorrento, Fla., Linda Sanders and Mark Struble, Otto; and several nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his father, and his brother, Calvin Eugene Struble.

A memorial service was held Wednesday, Dec. 8, at Newman's Chapel Baptist Church. Rev. Danny Cannon officiated.

Moffitt Family Funeral Care is honored to serve the family.

Online condolences may be made at [www.moffittfamilyfuneral-care.com](http://www.moffittfamilyfuneral-care.com).



Glenn Dean Struble

### Pauline Hazel Mashburn Williamson

Pauline Hazel Mashburn Williamson was born May 2, 1937, to the late John Henry and Rettie Anderson Mashburn. She was preceded in death by her husband of 35 years, Turner Odell Williamson; infant son, Freelen Williamson; granddaughter, Elaine Phillips; siblings, Jay Mashburn, Jessie Zimmerman, Ruth, Eula, Brenda, Ruby and Baby Mashburn.

She was a loving and devoted mother, grandmother and friend. She enjoyed time with all her "babies." She had overcome many tribulations by reading her Bible, praying fervently and never losing her faith in Jesus.

She is survived by her children, Evelyn Williamson, Roger Williamson (Cyndee), Genevieve Bingham (Mike), Pam Mathis (Jamie); grandchildren, Steven Williamson (Natasha), Seth Williamson (Mariah), Jacob Bingham (Samantha), Matthew Bingham, Gabe Bingham, Autumn Johnson (Benji); great-grandchildren, Jonathan Kresal, Savannah Johnson, Aubree Williamson, Ivy Williamson, Jayce Dewhurst, and MacKenzie Wilson; two brothers, Roy and George Mashburn; and several nieces and nephews. She loved her entire family dearly and has left here with pieces of each one of our hearts.

A funeral service was held Friday, Dec. 3, in the Chapel of Bryant-Grant Funeral Home, with Rev. Jason Smith and Rev. Carson Gibson officiating. Burial was in Iotla Methodist Cemetery.

Pallbearers were Seth Williamson, Steven Williamson, Gabe Bingham, Matthew Bingham, Jacob Bingham, and Benji Johnson. Honorary pallbearer was Jonathan Kresal.

Bryant-Grant Funeral Home is serving the family.

Online condolences may be made at [www.bryantgrantfuneral-home.com](http://www.bryantgrantfuneral-home.com).



Pauline Williamson

### Theodore Johnson

Theodore Johnson, 78, passed away Dec. 6, 2021.

No public services are planned.

Moffitt Family Funeral Care is honored to serve the Johnson family.

Online condolences may be made at [www.moffittfamilyfuneral-care.com](http://www.moffittfamilyfuneral-care.com).

### Robert Lee Swisher

Robert Lee Swisher, 84, of Franklin, N.C., passed away on Tuesday, Nov. 30, 2021.

Born in Tonawanda, N.Y., he was the son of the late Bernard LaRue and Thelma Mae McLain Swisher. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by a granddaughter, Ashlee Burd.

He loved to fish, work with the homeless and spent many hours volunteering in soup kitchens with Calvary Chapel Church in Florida, assisting with the Macon County GOP and served CCDO. He attended Cowee Baptist Church and Liberty Baptist Church, both in Franklin. He was a proud veteran who served in the United States Army.

He is survived by his wife of 35 years, Sandra Marie Lee Swisher; two daughters, Michelle Keisling of Milford, Mass., and Nicole Rosen of Angola, N.Y.; son, Michael Swisher of Tonawanda, N.Y.; and stepdaughter, Donna Burd of Franklin; four grandchildren, Nicholas Keisling and Lauren Keisling both of Milford, Allison Burd and April Burd both of Franklin; and two great grandchildren, Sophia and Xzavier Rios.

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

Online condolences can be made at [www.maconfuneral-home.com](http://www.maconfuneral-home.com).

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.



Robert Lee Swisher

### Jeremiah Gribble

Jeremiah Gribble passed away on the afternoon of Thanksgiving. He prepared the turkey earlier that day; this was to be the best yet. Family traveled in from out of town and we were so excited to see everyone. The tragedy of his sudden passing leaves us all re-assessing how precious life truly is.

He was phenomenal in the kitchen, always innovating and creating new, flavorful dishes. He had the uncanny ability to recreate dishes from his travels while somehow making them better than the restaurant.

Not only did he love creating memories through his love for his family and food, but he was a lover of all things art. Since childhood he had an interest in playing any instrument he could get hold of. He didn't need to read music; he listened to tones and melodies, matching them until he was playing a full song. He taught himself by persistence.

He could sit down and, within minutes, create a masterpiece - though he would humbly call it a mere sketch. When he spent time drawing or painting, (watercolor was his favorite) he did so with purpose. He immersed in his world while creating, putting his heart and soul into everything.

Photography fascinated him. He learned all the inner workings and technical aspects so that, through the lens, he could portray what he saw in his mind. His drive to constantly create is so inspiring. J's love for art and life continually grew throughout his journey as he was forever learning and evolving into the next phase - a continual metamorphosis. Continuing with the aforementioned talents, he'd always had a desire to make movies, both short films and feature lengths alike. This was to be the next step along with fine art prints. Every print planned to provoke each individual's in-depth thoughts, to relate to and to create one's own meaning through visual artistry.

In always having a love and zest for life, he felt driven to show how unique and beautiful humans are. He left a major impression on everyone who crossed his path; seeing the best in everyone is an amazing attribute. He was passionate about living life to the fullest and sought for everyone to understand that you can be and do anything if you want it badly enough. "No reserves, no retreat, no regrets" was a statement he lived by.

A few of his other passions were traveling, space exploration, gardening and being in nature. What better place to be in nature than with his best friend, Coda, the sweetest and most beautiful German Shepherd. They played games, swam and had so many fun-filled adventures. Coda loved spending all his moments with him. They had such a love for one another and still do.

Sarah Shuler, J's cousin and best friend meant the world to him as he does to her. Business partners for the last decade, what began with photography evolved into a production company. This metamorphosis was a result of their shared passion to cover even more aspects of the art that they thrived to create.

Sarah will continue forward with their pursuit and proudly entwine J's memory into each piece.

An insane amount of knowledge and creativity has left this world - leaving in us all an unmatched void that can never be filled. J truly was a multifaceted virtuoso that one rarely is lucky enough to witness in a lifetime. His beautiful mind was connected to something much more broad... the cosmos, perhaps. He was created to create as he lived it with every breath of his being. Art is his legacy.

No services will be held as per Jeremiah's wishes. Friends and family are encouraged to celebrate him in any of life's wonderful moments, keeping his memory alive.

He is survived by his mother, Michele Smiley; stepfather, Dale Smiley; grandparents, Michael and Joyce Wood; his cousin, Sarah Shuler and many, many other family members that meant so much to him. Heartfelt thank yous go out to everyone who has reached out and given love, kindness and support. J was such a selfless, giving person; he is missed more than words could ever express. Feel free to share photos and/or stories you may have with Jeremiah.

Online condolences can be made at [www.maconfuneral-home.com](http://www.maconfuneral-home.com).



Jeremiah Gribble

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# Deaths & Funerals

## Thomas 'Barry' Hedden

Thomas "Barry" Hedden, went home to be with Jesus on Tuesday, Nov. 30, 2021.

Born in Macon County, he was the oldest son of Thomas Gary and Phyllis Green Hedden. He was preceded in death by his daughter, Morgan Hedden; and father-in-law, Duel Carpenter.

He was a member of Iotla Baptist Church, where he was a RA [Royal Ambassador] leader investing in the lives of young boys to help grow their relationship with the Lord. He was also a member of the Archery Club, and the Junaluska Masonic Lodge, where he was a Past Master. He was an outdoorsman, enjoyed fishing, hunting, and taking care of animals. In his spare time, he loved watching the Atlanta Braves. But the thing that he loved most was spending time with his family.



Thomas 'Barry' Hedden

In addition to his parents, he is survived by his wife and best friend of 31 years, Kim Carpenter Hedden; two children, Blake Hedden (Destiny Cowart) and Olivia Hedden, both of Franklin; one brother, Phillip Hedden of Franklin; mother-in-law, Emma Lee Lovett (Walt); and sister-in-law, Valerie Norton (Steve) of Franklin; one nephew, Jarrod Hedden; one niece, Lauren Norton; and numerous aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends.

Funeral service was held Saturday, Dec. 4, at Iotla Baptist Church with Rev. Brandon Breedlove, Rev. Steve Reeves, and Rev. Greg Rogers officiating. Burial was in the Iotla Baptist Church Cemetery.

Pallbearers were Mitch Cabe, Steve Norton, Josh Teem, Steve Penland, Todd Duvall, Jimmy Katsch, Jarrod Hedden and Dave Miller. Honorary pallbearers were the Ferguson Enterprise employees, Tony Ledford, and his cousins.

In lieu of flowers, memorials can be made to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, TN 38105 or Shriners Hospitals for Children, Office of Development 2900 Rocky Point Drive, Tampa, FL 33607.

Online condolences can be made at [www.maconfuneralhome.com](http://www.maconfuneralhome.com).

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.

## Gary Philip Boston

Gary Philip Boston "Hunkie" of Franklin, N.C., passed away on Nov. 22, 2021, peacefully at his home surrounded by family. He was preceded in death by his parents, two older brothers and two older sisters.

He was born on Oct. 27, 1961, in York, Me. He spent his life working in construction, painting, plumbing and carpentry. He enjoyed laying in the sun as much as possible.

He was the youngest child of 11 and is survived by four older brothers and two sisters and several nieces and nephews whom he loved dearly.

No funeral services are planned at this time.

Bryant Grant Funeral Home and Crematory is serving the Boston family. Online condolences can be made at [www.bryantgrantfuneralhome.com](http://www.bryantgrantfuneralhome.com).



Gary Philip Boston

## Howard Wesley Carver

Howard Wesley Carver, 76, of Franklin, N.C., passed away on Dec. 1, 2021.

He was born in Macon County to Ethel Passmore Carver and the late James Wesley Carver.

In addition to his father, he was preceded in death by his daughter, Betty Carver; siblings, Lily Parris, Bessie Cooper, and Ott Carver; and three grandsons, Logan Cline, Justin Halstead, and Jeremy Halstead.

He was an Army veteran who served in the Vietnam Conflict. He enjoyed puzzles, gardening, and loved to travel on his Harley.

He is survived by three children, Deborah Rorie (Jesse) of Monroe, N.C., Patricia "Trish" Halstead of Swannanoa, N.C., and Robert "Wes" Carver of Franklin; siblings, Terry Carver of Clarksville, Ga., Dale Carver of Franklin, Doyle Carver of Franklin, David Carver of Highlands, N.C., Barbara Franks of Sylva, N.C., and Nell Jenkins of Franklin; 13 grandchildren; 12 great grandchildren; and several nieces and nephews.

A service was held at Macon Funeral Home on Monday, Dec. 6. Burial was at Woodlawn with military honors provided by VFW Post 7339 and American Legion Post 108.

Pallbearers were Jordy Smith, Bernie Antis, Travis Brock, Scotty Cooper, and Wes Carver.

In lieu of flowers, memorials can be made to the American Lung Association at <https://action.lung.org/site/Donation>.

Online condolences at [www.maconfuneralhome.com](http://www.maconfuneralhome.com).

Macon Funeral Home will be handling the arrangements.



Howard Wesley Carver

## Uriel Enrique Labra Reyes

Uriel Enrique Labra Reyes, 31 of Franklin, N.C., passed away on Dec. 1, 2021.

He was born in Mexico City, Mexico, to Felipa Reyes Navarro, and the late Enrique Labra Mendoza. He enjoyed traveling, the beach and tending to his roosters. He was a hard worker and a loving father and husband.

He is survived by his wife, Monica Graciela Hurtado Cristobal; son, Uriel Enrique Labra Hurtado; mother, Felipa Reyes Navarro of Mexico City; sisters, Olga Lilia Labra Reyes of Franklin, and Marisol Labra Reyes of Mexico City; brothers, Jose Labra Reyes of Franklin, and Ricardo Labra Reyes of Franklin; his father-in-law, Ignacio Hurtado Romero and mother-in-law, Gracia Cristobal Jasso, both of Michoacan, Mexico; and his sisters-in-law, Cristina Hurtado Cristobal, Maricela Hurtado Cristobal, Graciela Hurtado Cristobal, and Veronica Hurtado Cristobal.

A funeral mass was held on Monday, Dec. 6, at St Francis Church in Franklin. Father Tien Doung officiated.

Burial was at Woodlawn Cemetery.

Online condolences at [www.maconfuneralhome.com](http://www.maconfuneralhome.com).

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.



Uriel Labra Reyes

## Simeon Banks Martin Sr.

DTHD Simeon Banks Martin Sr., 94, of Franklin, N.C., passed away on Dec. 5, 2021.

He was born in Sebring, Fla., to the late Maron and Dorothy Williams Martin. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his brother, Maron Merritt Martin Jr.

He was an Army veteran that served in World War II. He was an interim pastor at Iotla Baptist Church and a Supply Pastor at Higdonville and Yellow Mountain Baptist. He taught Hebrew and Greek for more than 20 years at Florida Baptist Schools.

He is survived by his wife of 67 years, Shirley Sylvia Leitner Martin; children, Banks (Bonita) of Panama City and Mary Brooks (n Jimmy) of Pine Log, Fla.; four grandchildren, Joseph Brooks (Suzanne), Christopher Brooks (Ana), Randall Brooks (Deanne) and Ashley Martin Ethridge; and 10 great grandchildren.

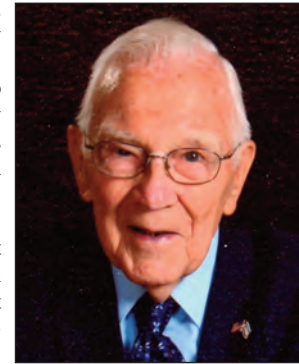
The family will receive friends and loved ones at Iotla Baptist Church on Thursday, Dec. 9, from 1 to 2 p.m., followed by a service at 2 p.m.

Burial will be at Iotla Baptist Church Cemetery with Military Honors provided VFW Post 7339, and American Legion Post 108. Rev. Brandon Breedlove, Rev. Steve Reeves, and Rev. Pero Varfi will officiate.

Pallbearers will be Tommy Bennett, grandsons, and great grandsons.

In lieu of flowers, memorials can be made to Iotla Baptist Church Cemetery Fund c/o Cynthia Rowland, 886 Younce Creek Rd, Franklin, NC 28734.

Online condolences can be made at [www.maconfuneralhome.com](http://www.maconfuneralhome.com). Macon Funeral Home will be handling the arrangements.



Simeon Banks Martin Sr.

## James Robert Lake

James Robert Lake, 80, of Franklin, N.C., passed away Friday, Nov. 12, 2021. Known to many as Subaru Jim, he is the son of the late Meredith and Pauline Sneed. He was married to his wife of 51 years, Judy Lake.

He got his nickname of "Subaru Jim" for his love of Subaru vehicles. He moved to the mountains of North Carolina in 1979. For more than 31 years he owned and operated Lake Subaru which became Lake Auto. He was a United States Navy veteran where he was a Frogman.

In addition to his wife, he is survived by one daughter, Ann Mock and husband Jason; two grandchildren, Joseph Crane and Charles Mock; and Jason Copeland and wife Mary and their son Mason Copeland.

A Celebration of Life will be held Saturday, Dec. 11, from 2 to 4 p.m., at Discover Church.

Bryant Grant Funeral Home is serving the Lake Family.



View obituaries online at [themaconcountynews.com](http://themaconcountynews.com)



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# NASCAR celebrates the stars of 2021 in Nashville

Holly Cain – NASCAR Wire Service

NASHVILLE – An abundant and enthusiastic welcome this week was punctuated by a packed ballroom and a litany of genuine feel-good moments as NASCAR celebrated and culminated its 2021 season with the Champion's Week Banquet in Nashville on Thursday evening.

NASCAR Cup Series champion Kyle Larson and his No. 5 Hendrick Motorsports team was properly feted at the annual Awards Banquet at the Music City Center, with a racing A-list attending to celebrate the highlights of the 2021 NASCAR season – and three first-time national series champions.

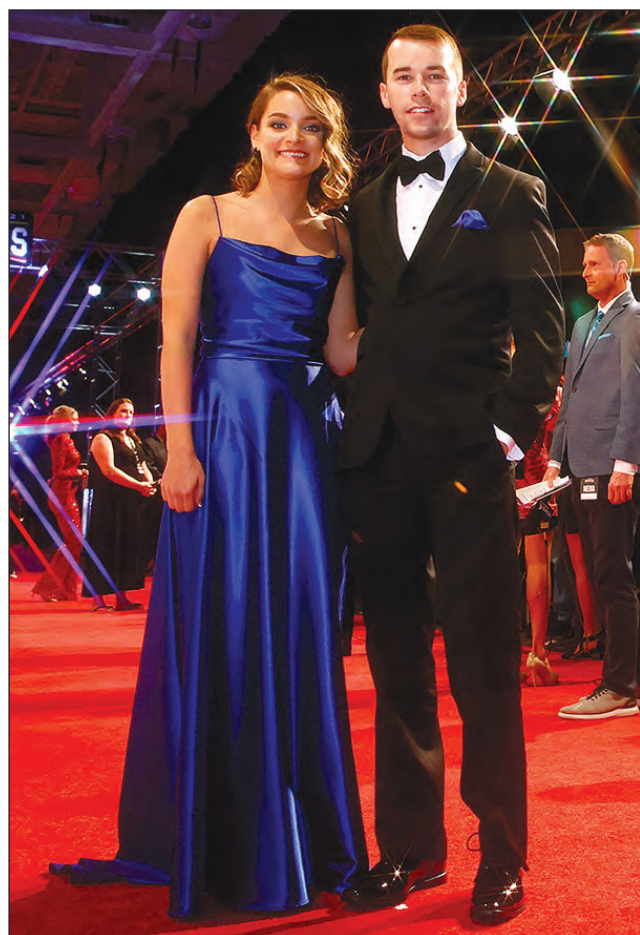
Larson's amazing statistical showing en route to the title included a Modern Day record number of laps led (2,581), and a career-best tally of wins (10), top-five (20) and top-10 (26) finishes.

"The numbers our champion put up this year were astounding," NASCAR President Steve Phelps said in comparing the 29-year-old Californian Larson to former legendary champions from Richard Petty and David Pearson to Jeff Gordon and Jimmie Johnson.

"This was his first [championship], but I'm sure it won't be his last," Phelps said as he introduced Larson.

After taking the stage, Larson promised not to get too emotional but the gratefulness was evident in his voice and on his face. He thanked his wife Katelyn, his team owner Rick Hendrick and team executive, former four-time champion and NASCAR Hall of Famer Jeff Gordon, recalling how he dressed up like Gordon for his first day of kindergarten and had always considered him his racing idol.

Larson thanked his sponsors and his fans, his longtime sup-



NASCAR Camping World Truck Series championship driver, Ben Rhodes and wife Caitlynn Rhodes 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



2021 NASCAR Cup Series championship driver, Kyle Larson, wife Katelyn, son, Owen, and daughter Audrey for pose for photos with the Bill France NASCAR Cup Series Championship trophy during the NASCAR Champion's Banquet at the Music City Center on Dec. 2, 2021 in Nashville, Tenn.

Photo by Chris Graythen/Getty Images



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

porters that made the difference in him transitioning from the California short tracks to NASCAR's big time, initially as a member of NASCAR's Drive for Diversity class. And he concluded his speech, thanking team owner Chip Ganassi, who in 2012 gave Larson his first big NASCAR shot.

"I'm humbled to be standing up here in front of many of my heroes, friends and family tonight. As many of you know, my journey over the last year and a half to get to this stage hasn't been easy," Larson said, before thanking his "best friend and wife Katelyn."

Larson spoke about how special it was to him to drive the No. 5 for Hendrick – the same car number and paint scheme that Hendrick's late son, Ricky used. And he ended his speech thanking his former team owner Chip Ganassi, for giving him his first opportunity.

"I left there 20 minutes later realizing my life was going to change forever. Larson recalled of his first – and brief – meeting with Ganassi. "I will always cherish my years on your race team and forever be grateful for the risk you took on a young kid from the West Coast."

Before Larson's championship conclusion, the NASCAR industry celebrated each of the other national series champions – Ben Rhodes in the Camping World Truck Series and Daniel Hemric in the Xfinity Series.

Larson's Hendrick Motorsports teammate Chase Elliott received his fourth consecutive Most Popular Driver Award.

"It's been super humbling honestly," Elliott said of the award. "For me, I think I'm as guilty as anybody," he continued. "I don't often realize just how much of an impact you can have or just how much someone is paying attention to what you do. ... And I think those things are important to recognize and I try to set a solid example at least.

"The fans have been a huge part of my career and super proud to have that support and I enjoy trying to make them proud in the process."

Another annual award recognized at the main banquet is the prestigious Betty Jane France Humanitarian Award. This year it went to Jeff Harmon, of Louisville, Ky. – a longtime volun-

teer with Down Syndrome Louisville.

Harmon, who has a 19-year-old son, Justin, with Down Syndrome, has worked with the organization for almost two decades and was extremely grateful for the \$100,000 award, mindful of the impact it will have. It started with only a handful of volunteers and now Harmon said the organization now serves more than 1,200 kids and families.

"We're going to use the money to help more people in the state and to the counties that can't come to the city of Louisville, so we're going to reach out and try to expand."

At the end of the evening, after the trophy photos, press conferences and speeches, Larson and Hendrick addressed the NASCAR media – the unmistakable feeling of gratitude evident as they closed out the celebration.

"It's a cool moment and one I'll never forget," Larson said.

"It never gets old," the 14-time NASCAR Cup Series championship owner Rick Hendrick added with a smile.

## Kyle Larson revels in the role of champion

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Under normal circumstances, Kyle Larson doesn't relish the media obligations that accompany his status as a top-level NASCAR Cup Series driver.

But these aren't normal times. Securing the series championship on Nov. 7 at Phoenix Raceway caused a substantive shift in Larson's perspective.

"It's been cool to enjoy all the championship stuff, all the interviews, pictures, everything – all the stuff that you wouldn't normally have fun with, I've been enjoying doing it this time," Larson said on Thursday at the Music City Center during an interview session with reporters before the NASCAR Awards.

"Being a champion, I went into this, and I want to enjoy every interview, every picture, every moment that I have."

As to recognition from the general public, Larson still maintains a relatively low profile. Out in his native California last week for the Turkey Night Grand Prix USAC midget race, Larson made a side trip to Disneyland.

"I don't know if any more people recognize me, now that I'm a champion," Larson said. "I went to Disneyland and only



had a handful of people recognize me, which was cool. Going to race the dirt stuff out West, there were a lot more people hanging around the pit area and taking pictures than normal.

“And all that stuff can get overwhelming at times, but again, it’s really cool. I want to just enjoy all of that.”

Before the race in Ventura, Larson’s hometown of Elk Grove gave its favorite son a parade worthy of a champion on Nov. 22.

“That was awesome, getting to go home, getting to go to Elk Grove and having that parade for me,” Larson said. “I wasn’t sure how many people were going to turn out. I was hoping it was going to be a lot, but you just don’t know, and I didn’t want it to be embarrassingly small either.”

“The turnout surprised the heck out of me. It was way bigger than I thought it would be. So that was really awesome. I got to see a lot of familiar sprint car fans and some aunts and cousins and stuff I haven’t seen for a little while. It was awesome to get there.”

#### Denny Hamlin’s Busy Season

It was a packed year for Joe Gibbs Racing driver Denny Hamlin, who fielded his own team 23XI Racing team, and nearly claimed his first NASCAR Cup Series championship.

Hamlin won a pair of races and posted career-best marks in top-five (19) and top-10 (25) finishes and took eventual NASCAR Cup Series champion Kyle Larson to the wire in challenging for the regular season championship. He won two Playoff races – at Darlington, S.C. and Las Vegas – and came a pit stop away from nearly pulling off his first NASCAR Cup Series title.

And in the immediate weeks following the season finale, his 23XI Racing team officially expanded by a car and will add veteran, former NASCAR Cup Series champion Kurt Busch to the fold for 2022.

On paper it’s a challenging balance, but Hamlin and his ownership partner NBA legend Michael Jordan, certainly delivered on the team side and the 41-year-old Hamlin certainly delivered on the competition side.

“My passion for work is still really, really high and I knew that I wanted to run a business,” said Hamlin. “I didn’t know what that business would be, it turns out its team ownership. And hopefully I make the right decisions in the long-term to make that all work out.”

“I’m planned, I’m programmed, that’s the way I work,” Hamlin added, insisting about his time behind the wheel, “I feel as good as I’ve ever felt about the driving aspect of my career.”

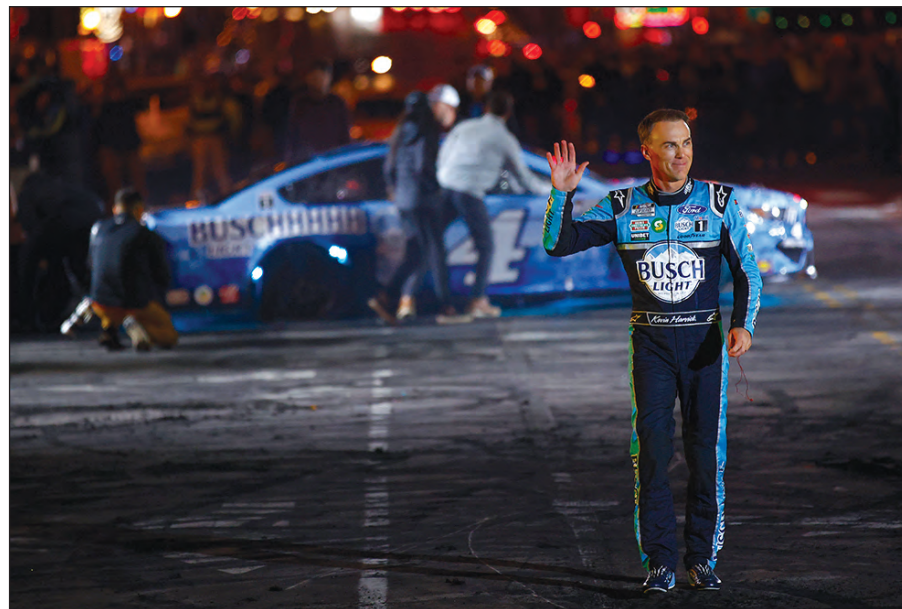
“If you had asked me three years ago, I’d have been like, ‘ughh, how much longer do I want to do this?’ And now I have no horizon, I don’t know. As long as I stay competitive like I’ve been doing, I don’t know. I’ll race until I’m Mark Martin, I guess.”

#### Kevin Harvick’s Reflective Perspective

The 2014 NASCAR Cup Series champions and perpetual title contender Kevin Harvick was philosophic about his 2021 season – the first winless year he’s had at the NASCAR Cup Series level since 2009.

Asked about the year, Harvick reminded reporters Thursday he finished in the exact same championship position in 2021 – fifth place – when he went winless that he did in 2020 when he won nine races.

“I think our guys did a good job. Obviously we’d love to have won but we did a great job in managing the season. I



Kevin Harvick, driver of the #4 NASCAR Cup Series Ford waves to fans during the Burnouts on Broadway Dec. 1, 2021 in Nashville, Tenn. Photo by Jared C. Tilton/Getty Images

don’t know what it says with how we currently exist with our current system.

“We won nine times last year and finishing fifth and we won nothing this year and finished fifth,” he added with a smile. “I don’t really know how to take that, personally.”

Harvick extended his run of 20 or more top-10 finishes to nine years. He’s had at least 10 top-five finishes for the past eight years. And while the driver of the No. 4 Stewart-Haas Racing Ford was eliminated following the second round of the Playoffs, he did score a pair of top-10 finishes, including in the Playoff race at Bristol, Tenn. He closed out the year with top 10s in three of the final four races.

“I thought there were two or three [races] that we were in position to win and for one reason or another, running out of laps or following a road block, whatever the scenario was [didn’t get them]. I thought Phoenix, the last race of the year we didn’t do a good job on pit road and to give ourselves a chance but I thought we had one of, or even the best car just needed to finish off track position.”

“I think as you look at the season and look at the result, most people would say, ‘How did that happen?’ and that’s just a huge credit to the guys for giving us something manageable at the end of the year.”

#### Impromptu Celebration and Farewell

The three Team Penske drivers – Joey Logano, Brad Keselowski and Ryan Blaney – celebrated Keselowski’s final “start” for the team with an impromptu three-car special formation at Wednesday night’s Burnout on Broadway in Nashville’s famed tourist district.

The idea to coordinate the championship week celebration was actually Logano’s wife and the three drivers said Thursday morning, with smiles, that they decided to alter the regular plan on the fly, in tribute to Keselowski who won the 2012 NASCAR Cup Series championship for Penske – the first NASCAR Cup Series title for the esteemed team.

Logano smiled and joked about the discussion among the teammates during the driver’s safety meeting for the famed “Burnout” sessions, implying it would be easier to ask for forgiveness than permission.

“Joey wanted to do something unique and cool with all three cars and we were trying to find something fun and he brainstormed and we executed, so it was fine.” Keselowski said with a grin.

“That’s a screenshot in my mind. It was cool and I’m glad we got to do that,” said Keselowski, who moves from the Penske operation to an ownership position with the newly-named Roush Fenway Keselowski Racing (RFK Racing) team for the 2022 season.

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# CROSSWORD PUZZLE ANSWERS ON PG. 15

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THEME:  
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### ACROSS

1. Pilgrim's destination
6. Make a scene
9. Rubik's puzzle
13. Hawaii environs
14. Toothy fish
15. Cone-shaped dwelling
16. White Swan in "Swan Lake" ballerina
17. \_\_\_\_-Wan Kenobi
18. \*Decorate with wreaths and holly, e.g.
19. \*Either dessert or source of heat (2 words)
21. \* \_\_\_\_ Day, or second day of Christmastide
23. Land parcel
24. Strauss of denim fame
25. Broadband access overseer, acr.
28. Clarified butter
30. Acute one and obtuse one
35. Southeastern Asian country
37. Joust's breastplate
39. Shrewdness
40. Caspian basin river
41. \*Pasadena's Tournament of \_\_\_\_
43. Tel \_\_\_\_, Israel
44. Native American emblem
46. "Why not?"
47. Hitchhiker's quest
48. Omits when speaking
50. Hard to find
52. Bear's winter quarters
53. Hoodwink
55. Scepter's partner
57. \*Number of days in Christmastide
60. \*\*"Ugly" holiday party garb?
64. Prepare a letter

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65. "Bingo!"
  67. Hunger for
  68. Pass-the-baton race
  69. \*Cranberry sauce sometimes comes from it
  70. Same as tori
  71. Raise the roof
  72. German river
  73. Stall sound
9. Ghana monetary unit
  10. Second word of many fairytales
  11. Cause of Titanic's demise
  12. Poetic "even"
  15. Burdensome
  20. Not this or that
  22. Lab eggs
  24. Time off
  25. \*Champagne holder
  26. \*Wassailing composition
  27. Raccoon's South American cousin
  29. Feeling of superiority, pl.
  31. \_\_\_\_ gum, food additive
  32. Furiously angry
  33. Exclude or omit
  34. \*Number of candles in kinara, Kwanzaa
  36. \*Troika vehicle
  38. "Will be," according to Doris
  42. Asian goat antelope
  45. Potpourri
  49. Chevy Suburban, e.g.
  51. Builds
  54. \*Popular holiday wish
  56. Munchausen's title
  57. \*Bedecked arbor
  58. Shakespeare, to his friends?
  59. And others, for short
  60. Minus
  61. Tropical edible root
  62. Anon's partner
  63. Take a load off
  64. Like some humor
  66. \*Traditional main holiday dish

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