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FREE INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

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The Overlook Theatre Company will present "The Descendants" Thursday, Friday, Saturday at 7 p.m. nightly, along with a 2 p.m. matinee on Saturday at the Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts. "The Descendants" offers a glimpse into the kingdom of Auradon where all of Disney's beloved heroes are living happily ever after. That is until their children get mixed up with the offspring of the evilest villains. As they enter a completely foreign world and way of life, the Villain Kids have a difficult choice to make: should they follow in their parents' wicked footsteps or learn to be good? Based on the popular Disney Channel Original Movies, "Disney's Descendants: The Musical" is a brand-new musical comedy featuring the beloved characters and hit songs from the films. A two-act musical production presented by The Overlook Theatre Company. For ticket information, visit smokymountainarts.com or call (866)273-4615. For a preview of the production, see page 12.

Highlands group touts need for preschool

Brittney Lofthouse – Contributing Writer

The lack of available early learning slots in Macon County is why the Advancing Highlands Education Committee (AHEC) is requesting more than \$8 million for renovations at Highlands School. The renovations would include space for two pre-school classrooms, which according to the AHEC committee, would be filled immediately.

Initially, AHEC was formed to fill a void in technology at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Jeff Weller with AHEC told commissioners Monday night. However, since then, they have worked to address other needs within the school system, most recently focusing on the need for additional early education opportunities in Highlands.

"There is always an abundance of interest in our program and oftentimes we have had individuals call when they became pregnant to put their child on a waiting list," said Brooke Keener, director of Exceptional Children/AIG/PreK for Macon County Schools. "This was not a sustainable practice keeping waiting lists five years in advance. We ask interested parties to begin contacting us and looking for applications in March of the year they'd like their student to

enroll in one of our preschool programs."

Members of the AHEC committee presented to the Macon County Board of County Commissioners Tuesday night explaining that after spending \$35,000 on architectural services for a concept to renovate Highlands School, the \$8.6 million would be needed to add two preschool classrooms, expanding opportunities for Project-Based Learning (PBL) and provide CTE (Career Technical Curriculum) for students.

According to the planning study, space needs at Highlands School are two pre-K classrooms at 1,200 square feet each, 36 students and a 2,700 square foot playground. For project based learning and career technical education, the planning study found that labs/maker's spaces need to be added to the elementary, middle and high schools at 1,200 to 2,000 square feet each, more square feet in the media center and independent learning areas.

Weller explained that the new pre-K classrooms are being proposed to be integrated into the elementary wing with long-term enrollment flexibility and proximity to existing

See **PRESCHOOL** page 2

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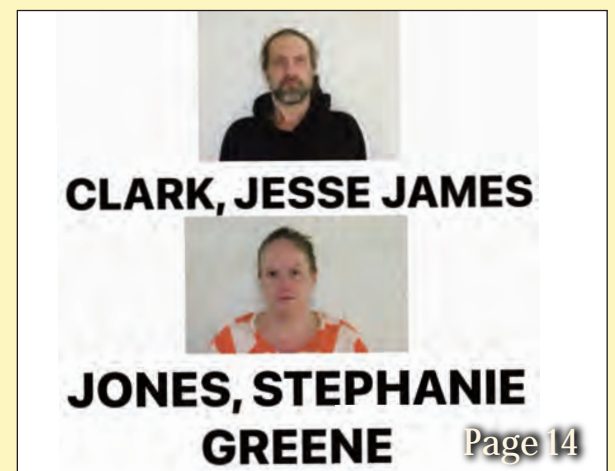
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ODWC honors women for community service



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FUMC youth fight food insecurity locally, globally



CLARK, JESSE JAMES

**JONES, STEPHANIE
GREENE**

Page 14

Two arrested following Tuesday high speed chase

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PRESCHOOL

Continued from page 1

plumbing. An adjacent playground area will be fenced in and landscaped/screened from car traffic, which is required by the state for preschool classrooms.

In addition to preschool options within the Macon County School system, private preschool and early education options exist in both Highlands and the Franklin area such as Macon Program for Progress in Franklin and the Gordon Center in Highlands. However, even with options outside of the school system, a long waitlist remains for families in Macon County.

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services lists about a dozen registered childcare families in Macon County who have slots available for 951 children under the age of 5. Those slots are primarily for children 3 or older, or preschool-aged. Only 48 infant slots, 109 1-year-old slots, and 146 two-year-old slots are listed for the entire county. The 2010 U.S. Census indicated Macon County's under 5 population was at nearly 1,800.

According to Maci Bears, a fourth grade teacher at Highlands School and a member of the AHEC committee, children have been put on the waitlist for slots in the private preschool programs in Highlands who have not even been born yet.

"Implementing public preschool bridges a large gap in learning," said Bears. "Studies have shown that an efficient early childhood education reduces the need for special education by 39 percent by the third grade. Special education costs nearly twice as much as regular classroom education."

While Macon County's biggest hurdle for providing additional preschool classrooms within the school system currently is the lack of space for the classrooms, Janice Edgerton, executive director for the Region A Partnership for Children said there is a lack of staff to fill the classrooms that are available now.

"Studies have shown that an efficient early childhood education reduces the need for special education by 39 percent by the third grade. Special education costs nearly twice as much as regular classroom education."

— *Maci Bears, Highlands 4th grade teacher*

Alison Tate, who has been working with AHEC is set to retire this year after operating one of Highlands' preschool programs for more than a decade. Tuesday night she told commissioners that even though they have been trying for two years to find a replacement to take over the program, a lack of qualified staff may result in having to close the program.

According to Tate, the two existing preschool classrooms in the Highlands area are

currently at capacity and have a waitlist of 87 children.

Richard Delany with Old Edwards Inn addressed commissioners and said the lack of childcare in Highlands is an economic issue as employees moving to the area don't have options for childcare, therefore, can't work. Without childcare and early education options for potential employees, Delany says that Old Edwards struggles to fill needed spots resulting in a staffing shortage.

As Bears noted when speaking to commissioners, early education is also crucial for the overall development and long-term ben-

efits for the community.

"While a public preschool would serve the entire community, it would be especially beneficial for our English language learner population. Having children immersed in a new language at a young age supports their oral development, leading to higher reading ability in the future," said Bears.

"Unfortunately, as of the 2021 NCDPI data, 61.6% of English Language Learners placed at a Level 1 out of 5 on the Grade 3

Reading EOG [End of Grade] last year. These children deserve an opportunity to become proficient readers, and that begins in preschool. As a teacher, I focus a lot on the importance of fluency and reading. However, there are several other benefits to preschool education for our community. Children who attend quality preschool are proven to be more successful at socializing, regulating emotions, interacting with others, and gaining confidence. Children who go to preschool are more likely to be employed, own a house, and have a savings account. Preschool is crucial in the foundation of a child's life, and the entire community only reaps the benefits in the future. It is time for all of our Highlands community children to be allowed access to public early childhood education."


The funding request from AHEC is just one of the requests commissioners are considering for capital improvements across Macon County this year. The Macon County Board of Education reviewed more than \$24 million in capital outlay requests during its February board meeting. After a lengthy board discussion, the school system approved \$10,569,960.44 in capital outlay requests which will be submitted to county commissioners as part of this year's budget planning process.

Region A is the nonprofit organization responsible for administering North Carolina's Smart Start and NC Pre-K initiatives in the

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seven western-most counties and on the Qualla Boundary. Right now, Region A has 48 classrooms in their coverage area and 96 teachers.

Macon County Schools Preschool overview

Macon County Schools currently has space for just under 100 preschoolers, all of which are located in the Franklin area between the five available preschools. The school district's preschool classrooms are located at South Macon (two classrooms) Iotla Valley (two classrooms) and one at Cartoogechaye.

"Currently in Macon County Schools we have five preschool classrooms and each classroom has 18 student slots. That allows us to serve 90 students. Today we have 88 students enrolled," said Keener. "We have put out applications to our community for Fall 2022 enrollment and we have currently 44 completed applications that have been turned into us. Even for returning students, a new application must be filled out every year. Applications are due April 20."

Calls received by Macon County Schools this year expressing interest in enrolling their student at the following preschool sites:

- At Iotla Valley: 22 inquiries
- At Cartoogechaye: 30 inquiries
- At South Macon: 28 inquiries

"In our program we prioritize serving 4-year-olds in these classrooms," said Keener. "We do take 3-year-olds who are developmentally delayed and are placed in these

classrooms by an IEP (individualized education plan) team. As a retention incentive, we do take 3-year-olds that have a parent employed by the Macon County School system."

Cartoogechaye Elementary has one classroom with one teacher and one teacher assistant. The district has nine slots that are specifically for NC Pre-K 4-year-olds. These students must meet income guidelines and/or have documented medical/developmental needs. NC Pre-K spots are subsidized by Region A. The other nine slots are private pay slots. This class is currently at its 18 student maximum capacity.

Iotla Valley Elementary has two classrooms. Each classroom has one teacher and two assistants. These classrooms are made up of developmentally delayed students, NC Pre-K students, and private pay students. These classes are at max capacity with 36 students.

South Macon Elementary has two classrooms. Each classroom has one teacher and two assistants. These classrooms are made up of developmentally delayed students, NC Pre-K students and private pay students. South Macon currently has 34 out of 36 slots filled with the two unfilled slots for private pay four-year-olds.

Macon County Schools is looking at an expansion project at East Franklin Elementary that will add preschool classrooms to that school for the first time in the district's history with available COVID19 relief funding.



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One found dead in house fire

According to a press release from the Macon County Fire Marshal's office, fire destroyed a home in the Otto community on Monday. Otto Fire and Rescue responded to 104 Ridge Circle around 4 a.m. and found a home on fire with reports of an occupant still inside the residence. The fire was brought under control in about 15 minutes and one person was found to be deceased. The name of the person is being withheld pending notification of the family. The cause and origin of the fire is under investigation. Otto Fire and Rescue was assisted by crews from Franklin and Clarks Chapel Fire Departments.

EDC reports shows that economic health of Macon County improving

Brittney Lofthouse – Contributing Writer

The Macon County Economic Development Commission released the latest economic indicator report for the county and results showed the county's economic health improved significantly at the end of 2021. The county not only ended 2021 with a lower unemployment rate than in previous months, but the report also showed that at the beginning of 2022, retail sales spending for the first half of fiscal year 2022 is over half of the entire previous fiscal year's retail spending.

The Macon County Economic Commission 2021 Economic Indicator Update was compiled from federal, state, and local resources and features key metrics important to Macon County's economy.

Despite the COVID19 pandemic, retail spending in Macon County hit a high in 2021 with \$723,867,297 from July 2020-June 2021. Comparing Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 to FY 2020, retail spending increased from 2019 to 2020 in every month with the exception of April, May and June. Retail spending continued to increase month after month for FY 2021 and to date, in FY 2022 compared to previous months. So far for fiscal year 2022 – which began in July 2021 – retail sales in Macon County totaled more than \$451 million while the entire previous year was at \$723 million.

A travel indicator for Macon County, the amount of occupancy tax collections were

also reported as well above the previous year. For Highlands, almost \$1.5 million was collected in FY 21 for occupancy taxes, which is around \$500,000 more than FY 20 and close to double the amount collected in FY 2019. The same percentage of increase was replicated in Franklin, which collected \$476,111.51 in FY 21, \$302,678.39 in FY 20, and \$226,428.51 in FY 19. Nantahala's occupancy tax collection more than doubled from \$66,527.59 in FY 19 to \$153,685.19 in FY 20 to a record high of \$197,262.07 in FY 21.

Building permits issued significantly increased in Macon County with 129 residential permits being issued in FY 20 and 147 issued in FY 21. Commercial permits also experienced an increase during the same time period. Not only were more new homes being built, but the cost of homes also experienced an increase with an average price of \$ 213,000 in 2020 for a home to \$267,000 in 2021. Highlands prices went from \$741,000 to \$841,000. In 2020, homeowners remodeled their dwellings to the tune of \$26 million according to the report, while in 2021, \$32 million was spent on residential alterations.

Unemployment remains at a low rate with many local businesses still scrambling for employees. April 2020 saw the highest rate of unemployment at 11.3% for Macon, and 12.5% statewide. December 2021 was the lowest at 2.5%, compared to the state unemployment for the same month at 3.7%.



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The One Dozen Who Care organization held its annual Elder Dinner event at First Presbyterian Church in Franklin on Saturday, March 5. Pictured, from left: Honoree Wanda Moore, Gabby Tollette, Eli Crawford, Liz Crawford, Gigi Tollette, Honoree Mary Ricketson, Founder Ann Woodford, and Honoree Barbara Austin.

One Dozen Who Care honors women for community service

Deena C. Bouknight – Contributing Writer

The organization, One Dozen Who Care (ODWC), was started in 1998 in Murphy, N.C., as a group of women gathered to discuss the need for an organization to help bridge the gap between ethnic populations and civic and business communities in Western North Carolina. A dozen women initially focused on building bonds and helping lower-income people of color develop marketable skills; thus, ODWC was founded.

On March 5, at the First Presbyterian Church in Franklin, three women were spotlighted during the organization’s annual Elder Dinner, which highlights the community service and involvement of women over 50 years of age. Recognized at the event in Franklin, as a Community Treasure Honoree, was Mary Ricketson, while Rev. Wanda Moore and Barbara Austin were recognized as Emma Kline Moore Honorees.

ODWC’s vision is: “A unified community that honors and respects racial and cultural diversity,” while its mission focuses on empowering, educating, and encouraging “economic development for women, youth, and elders in far Western North Carolina in order to bridge cultures and create community bonds.”

According to Mary Sue Casey, who joined ODWC in 1999, and is ODWC’s financial officer and chairwoman of the Elder Dinner,

being involved with the organization has given her an opportunity to work together with all races and religions. The retired high school math teacher shared, “I like helping people, and this event that we had last Saturday honors women who help people.”

Part of ODWC intention is to link children with older individuals, so children were asked to conduct the interviews of the honorees for a presentation shown at the Elder Dinner on Saturday. “We also do a book collection for children and we reward them for reading ... to encourage reading,” added Casey.

Plus, ODWC offers an annual \$1,500 scholarship for college and university-level learning to two applicants per year. Applications are available through high schools and African American churches in the seven westernmost counties, and by contacting the scholarship chair at odwc.prescottscholarship@gmail.com or by visiting the One Dozen Who Care, Inc. website at www.one-dozenwhocare.org.

Although members of ODWC are from all over WNC, Franklin’s First Presbyterian Church was chosen as the site of the annual Elder Dinner due to not only a few members residing in the area, but also because it was centrally located.

One Dozen Who Care’s Multicultural Women’s Development Conference will take place April 29-30, at Hinton Rural Life Center in Hayesville, N.C.

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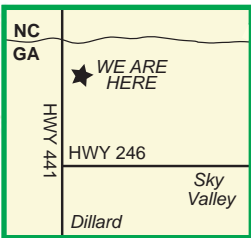
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SCC's Appalachian Farm School draws variety of ag-related businesses

One farm sells honey and fresh vegetables and is working to address the Christmas Tree shortage that affected the nation this past holiday season.

Another specializes in multi-colored eggs, poultry and rabbits.

And one set of partners is hoping to offer trout fishing experiences.

Despite representing different spectrums of the agricultural community, participants in this year's Appalachian Farm School have at least one thing in common: They all have expansion goals centered around agri-tourism.

The eight-week farm school, which is organized and overseen annually by Southwestern Community College's Small Business Center, provides existing and aspiring entrepreneurs with the resources and training they need to enhance or launch their operations.

The weekly series concluded on Feb. 28 with final presentations by each participating farm. It marked the Appalachian Farm School's eighth consecutive year, and – as with all services provided by SCC's Small Business Center – participation is free of charge.

"We eventually want to have an Air B&B or two on the property," said Jarod Schoeberl, who attended the series with his wife, Maggie, and their 1-year-old daughter Ayda.

The Schoeberl's run a small farm in Cullowhee with poultry, rabbits and plans to add small livestock and more in the near future.

"We're new to North Carolina, we just moved here two years ago, so we had no idea there were so many resources as kind of wannabe farmers," Maggie Schoeberl said. "Just learning about the extension office, and having an opportunity to network with other farmers who are doing similar things – it's all been extremely helpful."



This year's Appalachian Farm School concluded with formal presentations on Feb. 25 at SCC's Jackson Campus. Pictured here are, from left, Marne Harris, Director of SCC's Small Business Center; facilitator Tonya Snider; Maggie and Jarod Schoeberl with daughter Ayda of Cullowhee; Natalie Rayburn of Tuckasegee; Patrick Cardona-Cosner of Tuckasegee; and Alan Wamsley of Robbinsville.

Also attending the class was Robbinsville-resident Alan Wamsley, who runs Simple Life Mountain Retreat and Campground and is grateful for programs like Appalachian Farm School that are helping the next generation of farmers find their way.

"There are pieces of the puzzle that I don't understand," said Wamsley, who started Simple Life in 2010 and has recently begun adding apple and Christmas trees to his property in Graham County. "Just like beekeeping, apple trees and Christmas trees – those are three different facets of the business. The farm schools have taught me to diversify and stay on the cutting edge of farming."

On the other end of the experience spectrum were participants Natalie Rayburn and Patrick Cardona-Cosner, who enrolled in the Appalachian Farm School with some ideas and the desire to work in agri-tourism.

Their goal: To open a fee-based, trout-fishing operation on some private property in Tuckasegee. Rayburn and Cardona-Cosner picked up some valuable insights and connections through the farm school.

"It went over a lot of topics like liability and insurance and introduced us to a lot of people in the extension offices – as well as actual farmers," Rayburn said. "It's been very helpful. Pretty much everything applied in some way

or another."

This year's school was organized by Marne Harris, SCC's Small Business Center Director, and facilitated by Tonya Snider of TenBiz.

Overall, representatives of six area farms participated in



Alan Wamsley of Simple Life Mountain Retreat and Campground in Robbinsville makes his formal presentation on the final session of the Appalachian Farm School on Feb. 25 at SCC's Jackson Campus in Sylva.



On Feb. 25 at SCC's Jackson Campus in Sylva, Natalie Rayburn of Tuckasegee presents the business plan she and Patrick Cardona-Cosner, also of Tuckasegee, developed through the Appalachian Farm School.

the hybrid school that featured several weeks of online meetings interspersed with in-person sessions.

"We had a wonderful group and a great blend of experienced farmers and newcomers to agribusiness," Harris said. "The entire reason we put this on every year is to help provide information and access to resources that can help these individuals and farms to succeed."

For more information about SCC's Small Business Center and the services it offers, contact Harris at m_harris@SouthwesternCC.edu or 828.339.4211.



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FUMC holds annual 30-Hour Famine

First United Methodist Church youth participated in a 30-Hour Famine to raise funds and collect non-perishables to address food insecurity both locally and globally. The students did without food for 30 hours, then were rewarded with a meal and the satisfaction of knowing they are making a difference in their community. The event brought in more than \$10,000 in monetary donations and almost 7,000 food items to help feed the hungry. The younger students put together a shoe made of soup cans (at right).

Photos by Vickie Carpenter and Diane Peltz



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What's new on the plateau

Patrick Taylor
Highlands Mayor



Patrick Taylor

I am was ready to write about the town retreat, and then about tonight's board meeting [Thursday]. But, then I drove to Founders Park on Monday to begin a road-running workout. I came upon depressing site. A trash bag was stuffed in the top of a bear resistant street can.

Realizing that someone had carelessly attempted to place that household trash bag in the street can was distressing. A half eaten lunch plate was also left on top of the can. What are some people thinking? Are they unthinking slobes that simply do not care about this beautiful community? The mayor was crushed to know such reckless behavior is still afoot in Highlands.

I rationalized why someone would do such a dastardly deed. I thought maybe the trash crews didn't empty the cans after weekend activities. Even if they hadn't, there's no excuse for such behavior. So, I went around the park and checked the other street cans. They were not full, and all had been emptied that day.

The painful truth is that someone decided to dispose of their household garbage by just stuffing the bag in a street can that is designed to handle only small amounts of garbage, fast food trash or coffee and ice cream cups. Several years ago when we first deployed the street cans I caught a woman trying to put her household trash bags in a street can near Reeves. I confronted her and she stopped. I wish I had seen the person stuffing this can.

Since implementing the BearWise program, we have removed those ugly shared dumpsters that used to be on public streets. These dumpsters that were rented by businesses became magnets for people depositing their household garbage and overfilling the dumpsters. The new roll cart system has greatly reduced that problem.

If you see someone stuffing a street can take a photo and send it to Askmayorpat.com. We will investigate, and I will at least photo shame the offender. I know some may think their mayor is over reacting, but I not going to let these kinds of trashy behaviors become the norm in Highlands.

Also, a citizen recently sent me a photo of a bear resistant roll cart in a neighborhood that had been overfilled to where the lid could not be closed. There were additional bags of garbage on the side of the cart. I urged the person to contact the police at 526-9341. Our

Continued on page 11

Letters to the Editor

We needs more civil disobedience and fearless leaders

Today America is facing unprecedented censorship of free speech and attacks on honest debate as never before in our nation's history, but We the People are not standing against it in large numbers because we haven't been hurt in our lifestyles yet. However, when that time comes, it may be too late to resist the authoritarians who are growing more powerful by the day. If each of us do not search out the real truth and act on it, our America will surely go the way of all other empires to the waste bin of history. Genuine truth will seem like the popular term "misinformation" to people who have repeatedly believed the lies of the mainstream for too long, but for those of us who believe in freedom, now is the time to withdraw all of our consent from the tyranny of good intentions. We need smaller government and bigger individuals. We need more civil disobedience and leaders who are not afraid to stand for the Constitution and Biblical principles. The middle of the road leads to socialism which leads to lost freedom forever. History is clear on that fact.

As the DHS recently released new rules on extremism to combat the false boogeyman of white supremacy and right-wing ideology (a.k.a. independent and common sensed thinking), I'd like to submit a few questions for us to ponder so that we become vigilant to remain a free and independent people. If we don't see through the propaganda from an obviously corrupted government, we will be susceptible to their false flags and fall for their scheming that gives them more control over our lives.

Why do liberals want violence here and conservatives want violence abroad?

If we condemn Russia for invading Ukraine to destroy illegal biolabs and stop NATO's expansion along with western meddling (i.e. U.S. backed coup of a democratically elected government in 2014), why was it alright for the U.S. to invade and occupy Iraq over proven false pretenses of WMDs?

Why does society more easily fall victim to the greater lies from government instead of the small lies?

When government assumes undelegated and unconstitutional powers, why don't we demand our rights and resist?

Why do we blindly believe life-long bureaucrats just because they have some meaningless credentials after their name?

Why can't Republicans mind their own business and Democrats spend their own money? It's not complicated.

Why is government's urge to save humanity always a false-face to rule and control it?

Why do we give lip service to being a constitutional republic that practices democracy, while at the same time cheer the unconstitutional and destructive global empire?

Why does the US global military support Islamic terrorists sometimes and other times bomb those same groups?

Why would we ever trade essential freedom for false security?

If the federal government is supposedly legitimate today,

then why does it function like organized crime?

Why does the self-righteous cheer taxation of others by theft, but never want to give up their own stuff?

Why isn't it called hypocrisy to defend borders in eastern Europe but not defend the southern border of our own country?

These questions and many, many more should be considered when we understand that human nature in today's advanced and so-called civilized society is no different than human nature thousands of years ago. The same entity that tried to ethnically cleanse Native Americans through re-location, starvation, and war crimes is the same entity that raped, murdered, and pillaged innocent civilians and unconstitutionally invaded and occupied sovereign Southern States in the 1860s is the same entity that useful idiots still trust today to keep them safe. Hitler once said, "What good fortune for governments that the people do not think." William Casey, former CIA Director in the USA, has said "We'll know our disinformation program is complete when everything the American public believes is false."

Jim Gaston – Franklin, N.C.

We will defend the right for people to be free

I'll get right to the point. NATO and every free nation should use force to oppose the Russian attack on Ukraine.

People worry that NATO involvement may cause Putin to widen the war to horrific proportions (WW III and/or nuclear). My reading of history is that such risk existed the moment the first bullet whizzed across the Ukrainian border. It may be worse if we do not act now. In fact, not acting now could lead to the very outcome we wish to avoid.

I believe every person on Earth has an unalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The purpose of a just government is to protect those rights. Admittedly, governments (including the United States) do not always live up to these standards but people deserve the right to try. Judging from his treatment of human life, Putin does not think so.

Free nations vary in the degree to which they protect and encourage freedom. But Putin's actions are not a matter of degree, they are a matter of kind. Taking innocent lives of another nation is clearly a crime. Attorney/client privilege does not extend to the commission of a crime, and neither should sovereignty.

This may be the time that sovereignty no longer trumps human rights. Humanity may not be ready for such responsibility, but if we believe freedom is worth defending we may not have the luxury of being "ready."

If the free world acts against Putin now, it is a clear message for the other thugs in the world. People deserve to be free and we will defend that right.

From the news reports it sounds like Russian troops are somewhat disorganized and suffering from poor logistics. If this is true the free world should act before Putin has a chance to address these problems.

The time for free nations to unite, is now.

David Hubbs – Franklin, N.C.

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Sales tax increase to appear on November ballot

Brittney Lofthouse – Contributing Writer

Voters in Macon County will decide in November whether or not a sales tax increase earmarked for education should be established. During the March meeting of the Macon County Board of Commissioners, the board unanimously voted to pass a resolution adding language to the November ballot regarding an increase to the county's sales tax.

Macon County Manager Derek Roland estimates the sales tax referendum would raise around \$1.7 million in additional yearly revenue, would provide funds to assist with ongoing capital improvement needs in the county school system.

From renovations at Highlands School to a new Franklin High School, the district's capital outlay needs are extensive. Macon County Commission Chairman Jim Tate noted that the needs are essentially required at this point and now it's up to the county to determine how those projects are going to be funded.

"The question is, how do you pay for it? It's not a question of whether or not we're going to do it – we've already decided we're going to do it," Tate said. "Would you rather pay for it with an increase of property taxes, or would you rather pay for it by letting some of our visitors who pass through this county also help pay for it through a quarter-cent sales tax increase?"

North Carolina offers individual counties the option to increase the 6.75 percent statewide sales tax to an even 7 percent, with all revenues from the extra quarter-cent going

back to the county — the base 6.75 percent sales tax is shared between the county and state.

As it stands, funding for the school system, including capital outlay projects and infrastructure needs, are funded out of the county's general budget, which is funded through the county's property taxes, meaning Macon County landowners and homeowners pay the bill. Neighboring counties like Jackson County, and Rabun County, Georgia, have taken a different approach to funding school needs by approving an education-specific sales tax that generates revenue for infrastructure needs. Rather than raising property tax rates to generate additional revenue from property owners, a sales tax revenue would mean anyone shopping in Macon County and paying a sales tax, would be funding the school improvements, rather than just residents.

Sales tax is often rounded up to 7 percent already, and those dollars get rolled into the redistribution of sales tax across the state. Out of the 6.75 percent sales tax, less than 3 percent is currently returned to the county. An education-specific 1/4 of a penny tax would be guaranteed to Macon County each year.

In Jackson County, nearly two-thirds of Jackson County voters voted in favor of a referendum question allowing the county to increase the county's sales tax by one-fourth of a cent in 2016. The measure increased the county's sales tax from 6.75 to 7 percent and is expected to generate an additional \$1.2 million a year for the county.

The referendum will now be appearing on the ballot during the November 8 general election for voters across Macon County to decide.

TAYLOR

From previous page

code enforcement officer will investigate those violations. In addition, our sanitation crews have been directed to report these violations to the code enforcement officer.

As for the offending neighborhood residents, those folks may need to acquire an additional bear resistant trash can, especially if they are operating an STR [short term rental].

We do have a town board meeting tonight [Thursday] with a full agenda. It starts at 7 p.m. at the Highlands Conference Center. The board had a productive retreat last Thursday. More information to come.

Law enforcement conducting drug take-back event

Law enforcement across Macon County is hosting Operation Medicine Drop events for National Poison Prevention Week March 20-26

The Macon County Sheriff's Office, in partnership with the Franklin Police Department & Highlands Police Department will host a prescription drug take back event on Wednesday, March 23, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., either at the Robert C. Carpenter community building in Franklin; or the Highlands Police Department in Highlands.

An average of four people a day are dying from overdose in North Carolina with 79 percent of those deaths involving some type of opioid. Drugs not properly disposed of may end up getting into the wrong hands or end up in the water supply. Since 2010 Operation Medicine Drop has collected more than 266 million pills and supported more than 4,332 pill take-back events across North Carolina.

Operation Medicine Drop (OMD) is a free drug take-back program that gives people a safe and secure way to dispose of unwanted over-the-counter and prescription medications. Safely disposing of old medications through Operation Medicine Drop events instead of flushing them down the drain prevents those chemicals from ending up in the water supply.

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National Poison Prevention Week March 20-26

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Unwanted medications can be dropped off at two locations on Wednesday, March 23, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.: The Robert C. Carpenter Community Building, 1288 Georgia Road, Franklin; and Highlands Police Department, 372 Oak Street, Highlands.

Bring your unwanted, expired over-the-counter and prescription medications to the Robert C. Carpenter Community Building Center or the Highlands Police Department from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., on Wednesday, March 23. The Franklin Police Department, the Highlands Police Department, and the Macon County Sheriff's Office also each have permanent drop boxes within their facilities for unwanted medications to be safely disposed of throughout the year.

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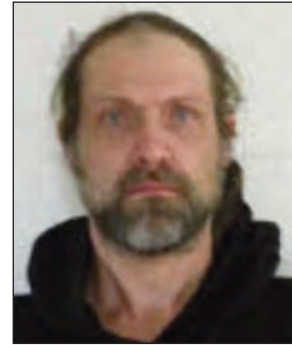
Suspects arrested following high speed chase

Brittney Lofthouse
 Contributing Writer

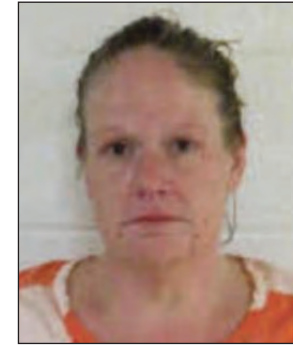
On Tuesday afternoon the North Carolina Highway Patrol tried to initiate a traffic stop on a vehicle that attempted to flee instead of stopping for law enforcement. Law enforcement began pursuing the vehicle at a high rate of speed through downtown Franklin, then headed south before the vehicle crashed.

The two suspects then fled the crash scene on foot, at which point a code red message was sent out via Macon County dispatch's Code Red system warning residents in the area of McClure Mill Road to be on the lookout for two suspects, a male and a female, dressed in all black.

Around 9 p.m. on Tuesday night, the Franklin Police Department received a call from 911 dispatch with information regarding the whereabouts of the two suspects involved in the vehicle pursuit.



Jesse James Clark



Stephanie Greene Jones

Franklin Police officers were able to locate the suspects on Highlands Road near Rogers Road. After a brief foot pursuit, both suspects were taken into custody.

The suspects, identified as Jesse James Clark and Stephanie Greene Jones, were arrested and booked into the Macon County Detention Center.

Jones was charged with three counts of resisting a public officer, failure to stop for flashing red lights, two counts aiding and abetting larceny, misdemeanor larceny, possession of stolen goods, aiding and abetting driving while license revoked, flee and elude arrest with a motor vehicle, reckless driving to endanger, and failure to appear on a misdemeanor. Jones was booked in on a \$40,000 bond.

Clark was charged with resisting a public officer, larceny from a merchant, two counts of possession of stolen goods, and flee and elude arrest with a motor vehicle, Clark was booked in on a \$44,000 bond.

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Arrest Report

The Macon County Sheriff's Department, Franklin Police Department or Jackson County Sheriff's Department made the following arrests March 4 - 12. All suspects are innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.



Macon County Sheriff's Department

March 7
 Hannah Logan Rose Krumholt, was charged with possession of marijuana paraphernalia, possession of drug paraphernalia and resist/obstruct/delay law enforcement officer. Matthew L. Long made the arrest.

Jesse Boone Locke, was charged with arson. Deputy Cody J. Howard made the arrest.

March 8
 Austin William Engelskind, was charged with child support enforcement contempt. Costin Jigla made the arrest.

Austin Harley McCall, was charged with breaking and entering and communicating threats. Joel Lynch made the arrest.

March 9
 Heidi Johanna Dreml, was charged with possession of methamphetamine, possession of a schedule I controlled substance and possession of drug paraphernalia. Sergeant Jonathan A. Taylor made the arrest.

March 10
 Frank Jacson Alexander, was charged with possession of methamphetamine and possession of drug paraphernalia. Matthew L. Long made the arrest.

William Dale Sheffield, was charged with violate domestic violation protective order, flee/elude arrest, reckless driving and resist/obstruct/delay law enforcement officer.

Michael Anthony Hunt, was charged with flee/elude arrest. Sergeant Jonathan A. Taylor made the arrest.

March 11
 Charles Samuel Carpenter, was charged with probation violation. Jordan C. Sutton made the arrest.

Lance Edward Hughes, was charged with failure to appear. Costin Jigla made the arrest.

Travis Collins, was charged with failure to appear for driving while impaired, reckless driving with wanton disregard and child abuse. David Blanton made the arrest.

Amanda Jo Dixon, was charged with failure to appear for fail to report crime against juvenile. David Blanton made the arrest.

Jessica Burton Blankenship, was charged with failure to appear. Joel Lynch made the arrest.

Justin Johnson Stanfield, was charged with failure to appear for felony possession of schedule I controlled substance, larceny, possession of stolen goods/property and obtaining property by false pretenses.

Pherris Swafford, was charged with simple assault and assault and battery. Cassie J. Shuler made the arrest.

March 12
 Ronald Scott Jones Jr., Violate domestic violence protective order. Timothy B. Carter made the arrest.

Nicole Tabitha Bates, was charged with child abuse. Joseph A. Raby made the arrest.

Franklin Police Department

March 4
 UT Van Huynah, was charged with trespassing. J.A. Riles made the arrest.

Rachel Jewel Urrutia, was charged with burglary/breaking and entering. C.T. Chastain made the arrest.

March 7
 Marcus Brandall Dorsch, was charged with felony possession of a schedule I controlled substance, driving while license revoked impaired revocation and operate a vehicle with no insurance. A.R. Holland made the arrest.

March 10
 Brandon Cody Mann, was charged with disorderly conduct. M.A. Bingham made the arrest.

Rachel Jewel Urrutia, was issued a probation violation warrant. M.A. Bingham made the arrest.

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New recipe sharing software ‘Morsel’ has Macon County roots

Deena C. Bouknight – Contributing Writer

A Macon County couple recently launched a new software program called Morsel. It works as an online family recipe sharing platform. Caroline Lloyd and Ian Hoyt, the company’s co-founders who moved to Franklin last year from Harlem, N.Y., conveyed that their idea was inspired by ongoing queries to parents regarding favorite recipes.

“I never had a simple way to capture my family’s recipes in a way that would later be accessible to me,” said Lloyd, whose career has involved work in the arts industry as well as non-profit consulting.

“The idea was sparked by our ongoing frustration of never having the recipes we wanted from our parents when we needed them,” said Hoyt, a growth marketing and entrepreneur by trade. “These recipes have lived on

faded notecards, in text messages, screenshots, or emails, but those can easily be lost. Being able to collaborate with my mom or grandma to ensure that our family recipes are preserved, shared, and carried into the future is such a gift.”

The Morsel platform enables users to share and access recipes passed down through generations or even those recently discovered.



Caroline Lloyd and Ian Hoyt, who moved to Franklin last year from Harlem, N.Y., developed a new software program that helps people share and save recipes.

Adds Hoyt, “Morsel lets families and friend groups come together and share all the cherished recipes with those they care about most.”

Morsel is subscription based, with an offer to try it for free for 30 days, and then an annual fee is charged to

anyone interested in continuing the subscription. The platform offers such features as:

- an unlimited group creation option to allow friends and family to collectively share

recipes

- the ability to share one recipe across multiple groups or families
- unlimited recipe uploads to document recipes from multiple generations

• a community activity feed on recipes-to-share tips, tricks, photos, and more

While there is not currently a Morsel app for smartphones, Hoyt explained, “During our design and development phase, we made it a top priority to make the mobile web experience of Morsel simple and functional.”

The pandemic in some ways inspired the new recipe-saving software, pointed out Hoyt.

“The pandemic has certainly changed the way that Millennials and Gen Zers approach cooking. The sheer nature of being home more often has ignited the need to try new recipes, recreate old ones, and most importantly, share recipes with others. We’ve seen

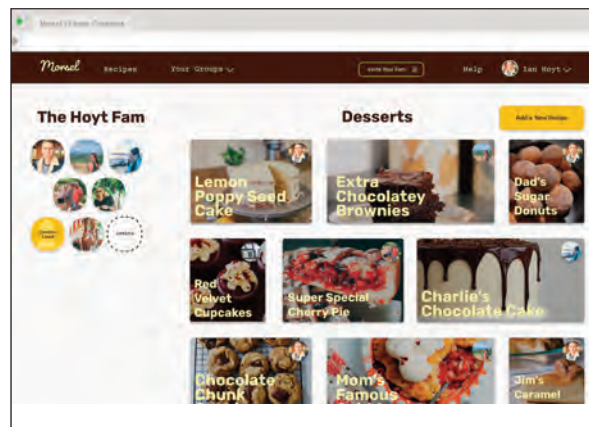
this play out through food social media accounts, the bread-making craze at the beginning of Covid-19 quarantine, and a re-centering around family traditions. Suddenly gathering with family around holidays

has increased in importance after spending multiple holidays without loved ones by your side. The pandemic... certainly has elevated the importance of family tradition and food.”

Blogs on the www.getmorsel.com site, where there is also more information

about the software and its services, provide helpful recipe-related information, such as “Can You Freeze Pancake Batter?” and “How to Make a Family Cookbook.”

Lloyd and Hoyt, who first visited Franklin as RVers, decided to become permanent residents last year. “We fell in love with this community and its people, and we are so thankful for the warm welcome we’ve received over the past year.”



The subscription-based Morsel platform enables users to share and access recipes passed down through generations or even those recently discovered.

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Wolf education offered at the library at next Hiker's club meeting

Deena C. Bouknight
Contributing Writer

Rob Gudger, an outdoorsman and avid naturalist, has presented in past years his wolves for educational purposes at area schools. But next month Franklin-area adults will be able to experience a wolf up close and personal and also learn a plethora of information regarding their habitat, feeding habits, and other idiosyncrasies.

Wayaha, one of Gudger's wolves, will be presented to the general meeting of Nantahala Hiking Club (NHC) on April 14 at 6 p.m. at the Macon County Library. Wayaha is a female wolf that has been exposed often to children and adults.

Gudger's career with Duke Power for 24 years involved helping to map out the Foothills Trail. He became involved with wolves 33 years ago and has much information and many stories to share, according to Katharine Brown of NHC.

The 77-year-old currently has three timber wolves, and he keeps them in a one-acre, natural enclosure with secured fencing.

"They can climb like a squirrel," said Gudger, "so I had to give them a habitat that keeps them safe but also allows them to be a pack and run. They are definitely not indoor lounge animals, like dogs. In fact, they get nervous when they are inside four walls for very long."

While Gudger began owning wolves when he learned of some pups that needed raising, the wildlife expert informs the public that "wolves are not dogs and they are not coyotes. They are an entirely different species and they are often misunderstood or lumped in with the understanding of dogs or coyotes."

Coyotes, which are common in Western North Carolina, have adapted to humans in such a way that they are not as afraid to attack chickens, cats, dogs and other small animals. Wolves, on the other hand, are very elusive and skittish and typically only hunt in packs to take down a wild animal that the pack family can eat together.

On April 14, Gudger will educate those in attendance about the different aspects of a wolf's predatory nature.



Rob Gudger, an outdoorsman and avid naturalist, will bring one of his wolves to educate the public about the wild animals at the general meeting of Nantahala Hiking Club (NHC) on April 14 at 6 p.m. at the Macon County Library.

"I do a question and answer session for most of the time," he said. "That seems to work best and provides information to cover everyone's curiosity."

Gudger does allow people to touch his wolf because he said they are more predictable, in terms of temperament and growling and biting, than dogs are. However, he is emphatic that hybrids, which are a man-made breed that includes mixing dog and wolf bloodlines, as well as rescues, which are wolves that need to be in the wild, are a bad idea for the general public to consider owning.

"I'm not an advocate for people owning wolves, but I have because of my experience and because I have used them to help people understand them better so they are treated with respect in the wild."

While Gudger's wolves have lived "a good, easy life," with the oldest at 15 years, he explained that wolves in the wild typically only live to around age six due to challenges such as disease, parasites and broken bones.

Gudger added that the only reason he is "let into the pack" is because he feeds the wolves around 10 pounds of raw chicken leg quarters once or twice a week.

"They can't handle dog food. They have to eat raw meat, and they have to gorge on food and then it takes several days for them to digest it."

Gudger said a highlight of every educational program is

for those in attendance to try to get one of his wolves to howl.

Brown explained that NHC plans 10 meetings per calendar year, and seven of the 10 meetings are informative, entertaining or educational in nature as per the organization's bylaws. The other three are relegated to a fundraiser, a year-end awards program, and a holiday party.

"Most of our presentations are nature related, outdoor enthusiast related, travel related, (members do travelogues of their adventures, for example), or trail related. It's really wide open. The wolf program had been on our list for a while so we are glad we are able to present it," said Brown.

For 2022, all general meetings of NHC are being held at 6 p.m. at the library on the second Thursday and the meetings are open to anyone. For more information, visit www.nantahalahikingclub.org.

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Martina McBride



Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Lenoir-Rhyne is hosting 'The Art of Compassion'

Imagine One Hospitality is partnering with Lenoir-Rhyne University Visiting Writer's Series to host the inaugural The Art of Compassion, a three-day event at P.E. Monroe Auditorium from March 30-April 1. The Art of Compassion is an opportunity to participate in a positive, respectful, and affirming conversation guided by industry empathy experts and wellness professionals centered on equality, addictions, and recovery. This series of events serves hospitality workers and students in our community struggling with substance abuse and addiction and offers hope, fellowship, and a path forward.

On Wednesday, March 30, the Art of Compassion event will begin with world-famous storyteller, Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. She is best known for her politics, culture, race, and gender themes. Adichie's novels, short stories, and plays have received public and critical acclaim. Thursday, March 31, Steve Palmer, John T. Edge, and Chenelle Bragg will share a panel discussion on life, sobriety, and love in the restaurant business.

The symposium will conclude Friday, April 1, with a musical storytelling performance by country star Martina McBride. These events are a fundraising effort for Lenoir-Rhyne Visiting Writers Series and Ben's Friends, a recovery-based organization serving hospitality industry workers in our area and across the country.

For more information or to purchase tickets, visit theartofcompassion.net

We walked with Mark McClure, my son-in-law, as far as we could, to a perfect resting place beside the woods. To each person that has helped us and shown support in any way, may you be blessed because you have blessed our family. I especially want to thank Brian Hylton and the staff of Macon Funeral Home for your compassionate and highly professional attention to every detail for the service and burial.

To Dr Gary Jarnagin, Rev. Scott Matthews and Rev. Jamie Passmore for bringing comforting words at the service. To each pall bearer who wanted to carry Mark the final steps. To April of April's Florist for beautiful flowers. And to the hospitality of dear friends of Prentiss Baptist Church for the wonderful food after the service. Many of you have brought food and made donations in Mark's memory and it is greatly appreciated. In the days to come I ask to keep praying for my precious daughter. And pray for me to be have the answers to help her. Thank you from all our family.

NCWRC says: Find a bear den, leave it alone

Biologists at the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission say if you find a bear den, leave it alone. Black bears are very resourceful in finding places to shelter late December through April as cold weather lingers and cubs are born. Dens may be found in rock cavities, brush piles, tree cavities, excavations under fallen trees, ground nests, under decks and in crawlspaces. As a result, you may stumble upon a bear den anytime time you are outdoors, whether hiking, working in your yard, cutting firewood or enjoying outdoor activities.



Wildlife officials are advising that if a bear den is found, to leave the area quickly and do not disturb the den.

Photo by Mike Carraway

If you find a den, either on your property or on public property, do not panic. Leave the area quickly and quietly, and do not disturb the den for the rest of the winter season. If the den is under your deck, shed, or crawlspace, leave the area and call the NC Wildlife Helpline at 866-318-2401, or contact your local district wildlife biologist for further guidance. In almost all cases, homeowners can safely co-exist with the bear until it leaves the den in the spring.

If you inadvertently flush a female bear from her den, do not approach the area. Keep any dogs on a leash and leave immediately. The female will return to the den if you leave it alone, even if she does not return right away. Do not go back to the den area, as additional disturbance may cause the bear to leave permanently.

Wildlife Commission staff have already investigated a report of an orphaned male cub in eastern North Carolina this winter.

"We received a call from the public about a cub found by itself and quickly investigated the situation," stated Colleen Olfenbittel, the black bear and furbearer biologist with the Wildlife Commission. "The den was likely disturbed, and we safely delivered the 4- to 5-week-old male cub to one of our two licensed rehabilitators specialized to care for orphaned cubs. Thanks to the correct response by the caller, we were able investigate, confirm the cub was orphaned and get the cub the care it needed within hours of the initial call, better assuring the cub's eventual release back into the wild."

The Wildlife Commission recently released a video about their cub rehabilitation program, highlighting the time and care that goes into ensuring a cub is ready for release back

into the wild after capture.

"We are fortunate to have two fantastic rehabbers in the state that are highly skilled at rehabilitating black cubs. They work closely with us on the care needed to assure the cubs will be successfully released," said Olfenbittel. "But we'd much prefer that the bears stay in the wild with their mother, so please don't accidentally cub-nap a bear cub; call us immediately if you suspect a cub is orphaned so we can investigate."

As spring arrives, black bears will emerge from their dens and become more active. Sometimes humans will come across cubs that are alone, waiting for their mothers to return from foraging and exploring. It's best to assume these bears are not orphaned. However, if you suspect a cub has been orphaned, do not handle or pick it up, feed it, or worse yet, remove it. The best thing to do is leave the cub alone, note the location and contact the NC Wildlife Helpline or your district wildlife biologist.

About the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission

Since 1947, the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission has been dedicated to the conservation and sustainability of the state's fish and wildlife resources through research, scientific management, wise use and public input. The Commission is the state regulatory agency responsible for the enforcement of fishing, hunting, trapping and boating laws and provides programs and opportunities for wildlife-related educational, recreational and sporting activities.

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Grow your own flowers for cutting from seed

Melinda Myers
Guest columnist



Melinda Myers

You don't need a lot of space or a big budget to grow and enjoy garden-fresh bouquets. Just fill a few vacant spaces, add an extra row in garden beds or fill a container with easy care flowers started from seeds.

You'll jump-start the season and enjoy earlier blooms by starting some of the seeds indoors to transfer into the garden after the danger of frost has passed. If you're not in a hurry, want to stretch your budget and extend your garden's bloom time, sow some seeds directly in the garden. Just follow the directions on the seed packet.

Annual flowers like these are known for season long bloom and a long vase life. You'll need to plant annuals each year, but you may decide the continuous bloom is well worth the effort. Supplementing them with perennial flowers and bulbs means you need to plant fewer annuals each year for a season filled with colorful garden-fresh bouquets.

Here are a few easy-care annual flowers that you can start from seed indoors or directly in the garden. These beauties will brighten those sunny spots in the landscape and bouquets in your home.

Start zinnia seeds indoors four weeks before the last spring frost or sow them directly in the garden. Either way, you'll have flowers about eight weeks after planting the seeds. Grow taller varieties like Benary's Giant for long stems, Queeny Lime Orange or Zowie! Yellow Flame for eye-catching color or Profusion and Zahara for small daisy-like flowers on compact mildew resistant plants in your low maintenance cut flower garden.

Like zinnias, cosmos make a great cut flower and both are heat and drought tolerant in the garden. Start cosmos seeds indoors four to six weeks before the last spring frost or directly in the garden. The fine foliage adds texture to the garden and the white, pink, lavender blooms light up the mid-summer through fall garden. Plant tall varieties en masse to eliminate the need for staking. Or grow shorter varieties

like Sonata and Cosmic. Once you plant cosmos in the garden, you may be rewarded with volunteer seedlings in subsequent years.

Marigolds have long been favorites in the garden, but they also make great cut flowers. Like zinnias, you can start them indoors or directly in the garden and have flowers in about eight weeks. Include a variety of single, double, large and small flowers to create a marigold only arrangement or mix with other flowers. The Gem series of marigolds have lacy leaves with a citrusy scent and small single flowers all summer long. Not only are these 12" tall plants great in arrangements, but the flowers are also edible and attract beneficial insects to your garden.

Include calendula, another edible flower, in your garden and arrangements. Plant seeds directly in the garden in fall through spring when growing in the Deep South, Gulf and Pacific Coast areas. Those in other regions can plant seeds directly in the garden after the danger of heavy frost has passed. Also known as pot marigolds, these plants thrive in cooler temperatures. If plants fade as temperatures rise, cut them back, continue to water as needed and watch for new flowers when the weather cools. These will reseed readily so watch for welcome seedlings the following year.

Sunflowers make dramatic statements in the garden and in the flower vase. The 2022 All-America Selections winner, Concert Bell grows 10 to 12 flowers on each stem. You'll have a ready-made bouquet with each stem removed. Suncredible® Yellow sunflower produces four-inch flowers on two to three feet tall plants. The plants continue to bloom throughout the season even if you don't remove the faded flowers.

Keep the flowers coming to enjoy in the garden and arrangements with regular picking. The more you pick, the more flowers you'll have. Share extras with friends, neighbors, or senior centers. Studies at Rutgers University found cut flowers immediately increased happiness and had a long-term positive impact on the recipient's mood.

Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books, including *The Midwest Gardener's Handbook, 2nd Edition* and *Small Space Gardening*. She hosts *The Great Courses "How to Grow Anything" DVD series* and the nationally-syndicated *Melinda's Garden Moment TV & radio program*. Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for *Birds & Blooms* magazine. Her web site is www.melindamyers.com.



Zowie! Yellow Flame is a semi-tall zinnia with a unique bicolor pattern of blooms with scarlet-rose center and yellow petal edges.

Photo courtesy of All-America Selections



Deaths & Funerals

Leigh Ann Cunningham

Leigh Ann Cunningham, 39, of Sylva, N.C., passed away on Friday, March 11, 2022.

Born in Jackson County, North Carolina, she was the daughter of Jean Ann Gregory Cunningham and the late James Porter Cunningham Jr. She graduated from Franklin High School; went on to receive an Associates Degree in criminal justice from Southwestern Community College, and later was certified in peer support. She was previously a member of the FFA and received an award for Woman of the Year by Carson Community Club.

She always enjoyed time spent with her family and her two dogs. She had a contagious smile, a love of the Lord, and those who knew her knew she had a big heart and was always there to help those in need.

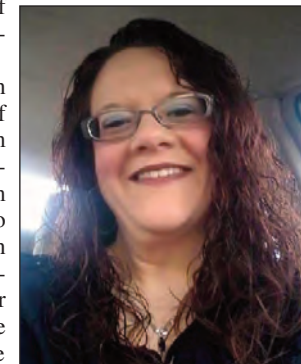
She is survived by her mother, Jean Ann Gregory Cunningham of Franklin, N.C.; her fiancé, Richard Owenby of Sylva; sister, Jessica McHan of Franklin; and a niece, Kalyn McHan of Franklin (who she loved like her own); and several aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Funeral service will be held on Friday, March 18, at 2 p.m., in the chapel of Macon Funeral Home. Rev. Bryon Lamb will officiate. Burial will be at Carson Cemetery.

The family will receive friends from 1 till 2 p.m., one hour prior to the service at Macon Funeral Home.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to No Wrong Door For Support and Recovery, PO Box 1594, Franklin, NC 28744.

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



Leigh Ann Cunningham

Ruth Tallent Wilkes

Ruth Tallent Wilkes, 93, of Franklin, N.C., passed away Thursday, March 10, 2022.

Born on June 11, 1928, in Macon County, she was the daughter of the late Jeff and Mae Dillingham Tallent. She was one of those rare, precious, old timers. She was born, lived, and died in these wonderful mountains. She loved God and she loved people. She was wife and widow of a WWII veteran, raised four children, and served the residents of Grandview Manor as a Nursing Aide for more than 20 years. Like her twin sister, Ruby, used to say, "You do what you have to do." Her friends knew her laugh and encouragement. Everyone knew and loved her wit and steel backbone; she was indeed a "pistol." She loved the mountains, worshipping God daily for the beauty. But especially she loved her family, and the steady accountability, encouragement and fellowship in Jesus is a treasure that will last. She looked for the return of Jesus daily, and now is in His arms, leaving us to walk with Him as she did.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Herman Wilkes; daughter, Tami Robbins (Eddie); son, Ellis Wilkes (Dorothy), three brothers, Jack, Don (Evelyn), and Tommy; and two sisters, Adalene Tallent and Ruby Wilburn (Guy).

She is survived by two sons, Terry Wilkes and wife Lynda, and Allan Wilkes and wife Elaine; one sister, Barbara Shuler (Pete); six grandchildren and 10 great grandchildren.

Funeral services were held Wednesday March 16, in the chapel of Bryant-Grant Funeral Home with Rev. David Williams officiating. Interment followed at Woodlawn Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made to www.samaritanpurse.org.

Bryant-Grant Funeral Home and Crematory is assisting the Wilkes family.



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Chase Briscoe captures his first career Cup Series win at Phoenix

Holly Cain – NASCAR Wire Service

There was no shortage of motivation as three drivers all vying for their first-career victory in the marquee NASCAR Cup Series decided the dramatic outcome at Phoenix Raceway on Sunday afternoon.

Stewart-Haas Racing's Chase Briscoe had to hold off the field on not one, not two, but three late race restarts on the one-mile desert oval, including the final restart with three laps remaining to earn his first career NASCAR Cup Series win in the Ruoff Mortgage 500.

The 27-year-old Briscoe is the 200th different winner in NASCAR's premier series and last year's Rookie of the Year earned the victory- by .771-seconds over Ross Chastain - in only his 40th start.

"It's unbelievable," said Briscoe, who drives the No. 14 Stewart-Haas Racing Ford. "I was crying the whole last lap. This is definitely a team win, but I've got to thank everybody that's got me to this point. Just seven years ago I was sleeping on couches, volunteering at race shops and was literally driving home to give up. Unbelievable," he continued, smiling. "So blessed to be here driving for this organization this team and this car that was my hero's (NASCAR Hall of Famer Tony Stewart) growing up. To everybody that's believed in me, it's unbelievable."

Fast pit stops for Briscoe's John Klausmeier-led crew helped all day. His 101 laps out front was second only to pole-winner Ryan Blaney's 144 laps led. But Briscoe certainly had to earn this win on track holding off the field on those late race re-starts with cars sometimes fanning out seven-wide in the frenetic shuffle to the front.

Chevrolet drivers Chastain and Tyler Reddick took Briscoe three-wide on the final restart – all fueled by the motivation of that first win, but Briscoe's Ford was able to drive away leaving them to settle runner-up between themselves.

Chastain's runner-up finish is his second consecutive top-three finish for the Trackhouse Racing organization. Richard Childress Racing's Reddick placed third followed by polesitter, Penske Racing's Ryan Blaney and 23XI Racing's Kurt Busch.

"That was so much fun to get to race like that at this level," Chastain said, adding of the last lap competition, "That's so cool to race with Tyler and Chase. That's everything I've ever wanted."

Briscoe's veteran teammate Kevin Harvick finished sixth and that top-10 was good enough to tie a huge mark of success shared only by two NASCAR Hall of Famers. Harvick's 18th consecutive top-10 at Phoenix matches an all-time NASCAR Cup Series record set by both Richard Petty and the late Dale Earnhardt at North Wilkesboro (N.C.) Speedway.

Another former series champion, Kyle Busch finished seventh leading the Joe Gibbs Racing charge. Penske Racing's Joey Logano, Trackhouse Racing's Daniel Suarez and Roush-Fenway-Keselowski driver Chris Buescher rounded out the top-10 respectively.

Reigning NASCAR Cup Series champion Kyle Larson, who ran up front for much of the race, suffered a DNF – pitting with 74 laps remaining with what his crew diagnosed as a broken valve spring in his No. 5 Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet. Larson was officially scored 34th - the second sub-30th place finish of the season, including a crash at the Daytona 500 (32nd place finish).

Larson already scored a victory at Auto Club Speedway this



Chase Briscoe, driver of the #14 Mahindra Tractors Ford, celebrates in victory lane after winning the the Ruoff Mortgage 500 at Phoenix Raceway on March 13, 2022 in Avondale, Ariz.

Photo by Sean Gardner/Getty Images

the first win of the year, but it was the fourth straight top-five finish for the team and increased his Xfinity Series championship lead to a more substantial 39 points over rookie Ty Gibbs, who finished sixth Saturday.

"Feels great," said a grinning Gragson, who now has six career Xfinity Series wins. "Pit crew executed great and this team has been on a roll so far this year," he added. "Top three finishes in all four races. Can't thank everybody enough for all their hard work."

Jones, who used a short-pit strategy to close out the race, just couldn't hold off Gragson in the final laps of a race that had only four caution periods – and none in the final 101 laps of competition.

"I'm still all-in-all very happy to come home second," said Jones, whose season got off to a rough start with a crash two weeks ago and a 17th place in the Daytona season-opener.

There were 16 lead changes – primarily among Gragson, Jones – a former Phoenix winner – and Trevor Bayne, who won the 2011 DAYTONA 500 in his first try, but has raced sparingly in the last few years. Bayne won the pole position for Saturday's race and his third-place finish is his second top-five in as many starts in the No. 18 Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota this year.

Gragson's teammate Josh Berry, Bayne, and John Hunter Nemechek rounded out the top-five. The 19-year old Gibbs, who races for his grandfather Joe Gibbs' team, won last week at Las Vegas and finished sixth on Saturday. The three Kaulig Racing teammates A.J. Allmendinger, reigning Xfinity Series champion Daniel Hemric and Landon Cassill finished seventh eighth and ninth respectively and Gragson's veteran JR Motorsports teammate, Justin Allgaier completed the top-10.

Allgaier, a two-time Phoenix winner, had been running top-five all day – even leading five laps – but was penalized for a pit infraction on the final pit stop and had to race back through the field.

Bayne won Stage 1 and Gragson won Stage 2 for a series

season, however, and is still ranked fourth in the championship, 10 points behind new leader Logano. Kyle Busch is third, five points back.

Both Hendrick Motorsports' William Byron and Penske's Blaney earned their first Stage wins of the season. There were 15 lead changes among six drivers.

The NASCAR Cup Series next races at the newly-renovated Atlanta Motor Speedway in Sunday's Folds of Honor Quik-Trip 500 at 3 p.m. Blaney is the defending race winner on the 1.5-mile high-banks which will now feature new pavement and progressive banking.

Noah Gragson continues hot streak with victory in Phoenix

Noah Gragson came heartbreakingly close a week ago to his first NASCAR Xfinity Series victory of the 2022 season. On Saturday, his No. 9 JR Motorsports Chevrolet left no doubt as to who would be hoisting the winner's trophy.

Gragson led 72 of the final 87 laps – a race best 114 of 200 laps on the day - to earn the win in the United Rentals 200 at Phoenix Raceway. He passed race runner-up Brandon Jones with 15 laps remaining, negotiated lapped traffic and ultimately pulled away to an impressive 2.555-second win.

The 23-year old Las Vegas native and his team celebrated the victory by scaling the wire fence on the front straightaway and pumping their fists at the cheering crowd. It was not only



Noah Gragson, driver of the #9 Bass Pro Shops/TrueTimber/BRCC Chevrolet, celebrates in the Ruoff Mortgage victory lane after winning the NASCAR Xfinity Series United Rentals 200 at Phoenix Raceway on March 12, 2022 in Avondale, Ariz. Photo by Sean Gardner/Getty Images

Noah Gragson, driver of the #9 Bass Pro Shops/TrueTimber/BRCC Chevrolet, leads Brandon Jones, driver of the #19 Menards/Jeld-Wen Toyota, Justin Allgaier, driver of the #7 BRANDT Chevrolet, and Trevor Bayne, driver of the #18 Devotion Nutrition Toyota, during the NASCAR Xfinity Series United Rentals 200 at Phoenix Raceway on March 12, 2022 in Avondale, Ariz. Photo by Logan Riely/Getty Images

best third stage victory of the season.

The Xfinity Series races next at Atlanta Motor Speedway with the Nalley Cars 250 scheduled for next Saturday 5 p.m. Allgaier is the defending race winner.

NASCAR Names O'Donnell Chief Operating Officer; Kennedy Returns to Competition Team
DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. – NASCAR has announced

two key executive leadership moves, promoting Steve O'Donnell to Chief Operating Officer and returning Ben Kennedy to the Competition team where he will assume a key leadership position as Senior Vice President, Racing Development & Strategy.

“With more than 25 years of NASCAR experience across a variety of disciplines, Steve O'Donnell has earned the respect of the entire industry, and his collaborative leadership in the competition space has positioned the sport for incredible growth for years to come,” said Steve Phelps, NASCAR president. “In a short time, Ben Kennedy has proven to be an innovative, thoughtful leader with bold ideas and a tireless work ethic. He returns to his competition roots with this new role, one in which he will no doubt excel.”

As COO, O'Donnell will continue to provide oversight of all NASCAR Competition and Racing Operations, while adding Track Operations and Strategic Development to his purview. With these added duties, all NASCAR-owned track properties, track presidents and respective events fall under O'Donnell's responsibilities.

As Chief Racing Development Officer since 2014,

O'Donnell guided vital innovative advancements, including the introduction of the development of the Next Gen car, the implementation of the new Playoff format for all three of NASCAR's national series and the enhanced race format system that was implemented in 2017.

O'Donnell has worked in various areas in the company since joining NASCAR in 1996 as a marketing services representative. After being promoted to manage that group – including work on NASCAR's 50th Anniversary project – he was elevated to Director of Series Marketing. From there, he moved to Competition as Managing Director of Events and Operations to head the All-American Series and Touring Series before being promoted to Vice President of Racing Operations in charge of the national series. In 2008, he was named to Sports Business Journal's prestigious “Forty Under 40” list.

In returning to NASCAR's Competition team, Kennedy will maintain oversight of the national series schedule development, while assuming immediate oversight of Racing Operations, Track Services/Transportation/Officiating, Industry Relations and the NASCAR Touring & Weekly Series. He will work with O'Donnell in managing the areas of at-track competition and racing innovation.

Kennedy, a former race car driver who competed at the ARCA Menards Series, NASCAR Camping World Truck Series and NASCAR Xfinity Series levels, has held a variety of positions within NASCAR since leaving the driver's seat following the 2017 season. Kennedy began his corporate career as General Manager of the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series before a promotion to Managing Director, Racing Operations and International Development.

Most recently, Kennedy held the position of Senior Vice President, Strategy & Innovation, where he helped guide overall company strategy, including developing the most dynamic NASCAR Cup Series schedule in 50 years in 2021 and innovating the Busch Light Clash by building a quarter-mile oval inside the iconic Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum in February of 2022.

Both O'Donnell and Kennedy will assume their new roles effective immediately.

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1. "In the Hall of the Mountain King" composer Edvard _____
6. Marlboro debris
9. *Academy Award ceremony audience sound
13. Botch
14. Sigma _____ fraternity
15. Ten million, in India
16. Embryo sacs
17. Literary "even"
18. Tax evader's fear
19. *Most nominated streamer in this year's Oscar
21. *Most-nominated Black actor in Oscar history
23. Opposite of yang
24. Lard cousin
25. *Milk _____ movie snack
28. Poetic source of Norse mythology
30. 2020 demographic event
35. Arrival times, acronym
37. Baseball points
39. Camelot to King Arthur
40. Actress Campbell
41. *Where Oscar-winner "Slumdog Millionaire" was set
43. Not in favor
44. *What Halle Berry did when she won an Oscar in 2002
46. Jet black
47. Lively
48. Paid killers (2 words)
50. Upon
52. Rally repeater
53. Sweet-talk
55. Not outs
57. *Total Oscar nominations for "The Power of the Dog"
60. *One of this year's

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DOWN

1. J. Edgar Hoover's man
2. Ice on a window
3. Antonym of "is"
4. Enlighten
5. Puck stopper
6. Kilimanjaro top, e.g.
7. Pronoun

ACROSS

8. Hinduism follower
9. **"Parallel Mothers" nominee Penelope
10. Prospector's mother
11. Seed coat
12. Lassie, e.g.
15. Type of horse gait
20. Lemur from Madagascar
22. European Economic Community
24. Playground attraction
25. **"Belfast" nominee, "Shakespeare in Love" winner
26. First cradles
27. Lifeboat support
29. *Denis Villeneuve's sci-fi nominee
31. Type of tide
32. Not so crazy
33. Extremist
34. **"King Richard" nominee, once a fresh prince
36. Give an impression
38. Land of Israel
42. Shenanigan
45. Remove claws
49. Presidential election mo.
51. Waiting on the phone (2 words)
54. Eagle's nest
56. Like the Incredibles
57. Backside
58. Boat track
59. Not odd
60. Update, as in a FitBit
61. Formerly Facebook
62. *Julia Robert's 2001 Oscar-winning role
63. Colonel or captain
64. Gangster's gun
66. _____ eater or _____ hill

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2022	BMW	530	240
2022	Chevrolet	Corvette 2LT	201
2021	Kia	K5 LXS	4,963
2021	Tesla	Model 3 Standard Range Plus	15,196
2021	Chevrolet	Spark	1,167
2020	Chevrolet	Corvette 3LT	8,263
2019	Chevrolet	Sonic	59,039
2019	Nissan	Sentra SV	15,009
2019	Volkswagen	Golf SportWagen	56,048
2019	Volkswagen	Beetle	42,676
2018	Chevrolet	Cruze LS	54,872
2018	Toyota	Camry	60,256
2015	Chevrolet	Corvette 2LT	15,349
2015	Nissan	Altima 2.5 S	59,261
2015	Buick	LaCrosse	104,189
2014	Chevrolet	Cruze	113,152
2013	Hyundai	Elantra	55,328
2011	Cadillac	CTS Sedan Luxury	73,798
2008	Corvette	Coupe	9,007

SUVS

YEAR	MAKE	MODEL	MILES
2021	Chevrolet	Equinox Premier	23,547
2021	Chevrolet	Tahoe RST	4,798
2021	Chevrolet	Tahoe Z71	14,918
2021	Kia	Telluride S	8,173
2021	Toyota	Highlander	1,996
2021	Chevrolet	Suburban	388

2021	Ford	Bronco Badlands AWD	1,237
2021	Chevrolet	Equinox Premier AWD	16,427
2021	Jeep	Wrangle High Altitude	17,132
2020	Tahoe	Premier 4x4	24,476
2020	Chevrolet	Traverse LT	14,559
2020	Cadillac	Escalade Premium Luxury	7,309
2020	GMC	Acadia AT4	28,261
2020	Subaru	Outback Onyx Edition XT	27,594
2020	Subaru	Crosstrek Limited	14,430
2020	Hyundai	Palisade	34,462
2019	Chevrolet	Tahoe LT	46,162
2019	GMC	Yukon XL Denali	63,696
2019	Land Rover	Range Rover Sport HSE Dynamic	37,751
2019	Chevrolet	Express 2500	12,089
2019	GMC	Terrain	63,316
2018	Chevrolet	Tahoe	84,386
2018	Volkswagen	Atlas 3.6L V6 SE	71,947
2017	Toyota	RAV4 LE	83,441
2017	Volkswagen	Tiguan Wolfsburg Edition	59,132
2016	Buick	Enclave CXL AWD	81,859
2015	Chevrolet	Equinox IT AWD	87,398
2015	Jeep	Wrangler Unlimited Altitude	39,030
2012	Chevrolet	Traverse	120,790

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YEAR	MAKE	MODEL	MILES
2022	Chevrolet	Silverado 3500HD High Country	3,761
2022	Toyota	Tacoma 4WD	489
2022	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500 LT Trail Boss	651
2021	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500 LT Trail Boss	15,112
2021	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500	5,822

2021	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500	435
2021	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500	16,244
2021	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500	8,432
2021	Ford	Bronco Sport	209
2021	Ram	2500 Tradesman	3,647
2021	Toyota	Tacoma 4WD	4,746
2020	Ram	3500 Dump Truck	19,267
2020	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500 High Country	22,601
2020	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500 RST	90,498
2020	Chevrolet	Silverado 2500 HD	1,205
2020	Chevrolet	Silverado 2500 HD HC Diesel	23,536
2020	GMC	Sierra 1500 AT4	15,588
2020	Ram	2500 Longhorn Diamond	23,286
2019	Toyota	Tacoma TRD 4x4	43,577
2019	Chevrolet	Silverado 2500HD	30,903
2019	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500 High Country	44,359
2019	GMC	Sierra 1500	18,811
2019	Nissan	Frontier SV 4x4	60,592
2019	Toyota	Tacoma SR5	43,420
2018	Chevrolet	Colorado Z-71	23,542
2018	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500 Custom	104,810
2018	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500	31,379
2018	GMC	Sierra 1500 SLT	44,668
2018	GMC	Sierra 1500 Denali	25,059
2017	GMC	Sierra 1500 SLT	55,201
2017	GMC	Sierra 1500 SLT	61,657
2017	Ram	Nightfall 1500 4x4	79,143
2016	Ram	Diesel Crew 2500	60,495
2015	Chevrolet	Colorado	95,530
2012	Chevrolet	Colorado LT w/1LT	117,555
2012	GMC	Sierra 2500 Diesel	192,749



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Volume 39 Number 43

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The Overlook Theatre Company will present "The Descendants" Thursday, Friday, Saturday at 7 p.m. nightly, along with a 2 p.m. matinee on Saturday at the Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts. "The Descendants" offers a glimpse into the kingdom of Auradon where all of Disney's beloved heroes are living happily ever after. That is until their children get mixed up with the offspring of the evilest villains. As they enter a completely foreign world and way of life, the Villain Kids have a difficult choice to make: should they follow in their parents' wicked footsteps or learn to be good? Based on the popular Disney Channel Original Movies, "Disney's Descendants: The Musical" is a brand-new musical comedy featuring the beloved characters and hit songs from the films. A two-act musical production presented by The Overlook Theatre Company. For ticket information, visit smokymountainarts.com or call (866)273-4615. For a preview of the production, see page 12.

Highlands group touts need for preschool

Brittney Lofthouse – Contributing Writer

The lack of available early learning slots in Macon County is why the Advancing Highlands Education Committee (AHEC) is requesting more than \$8 million for renovations at Highlands School. The renovations would include space for two pre-school classrooms, which according to the AHEC committee, would be filled immediately.

Initially, AHEC was formed to fill a void in technology at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Jeff Weller with AHEC told commissioners Monday night. However, since then, they have worked to address other needs within the school system, most recently focusing on the need for additional early education opportunities in Highlands.

"There is always an abundance of interest in our program and oftentimes we have had individuals call when they became pregnant to put their child on a waiting list," said Brooke Keener, director of Exceptional Children/AIG/PreK for Macon County Schools. "This was not a sustainable practice keeping waiting lists five years in advance. We ask interested parties to begin contacting us and looking for applications in March of the year they'd like their student to

enroll in one of our preschool programs."

Members of the AHEC committee presented to the Macon County Board of County Commissioners Tuesday night explaining that after spending \$35,000 on architectural services for a concept to renovate Highlands School, the \$8.6 million would be needed to add two preschool classrooms, expanding opportunities for Project-Based Learning (PBL) and provide CTE (Career Technical Curriculum) for students.

According to the planning study, space needs at Highlands School are two pre-K classrooms at 1,200 square feet each, 36 students and a 2,700 square foot playground. For project based learning and career technical education, the planning study found that labs/maker's spaces need to be added to the elementary, middle and high schools at 1,200 to 2,000 square feet each, more square feet in the media center and independent learning areas.

Weller explained that the new pre-K classrooms are being proposed to be integrated into the elementary wing with long-term enrollment flexibility and proximity to existing

See **PRESCHOOL** page 2

IN THIS ISSUE



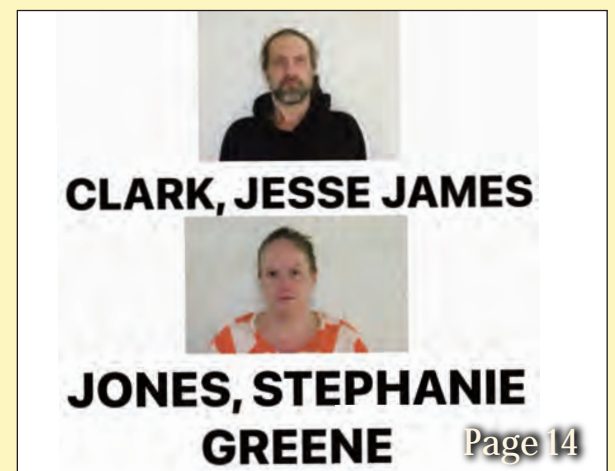
Page 5

ODWC honors women for community service



Page 9

FUMC youth fight food insecurity locally, globally



CLARK, JESSE JAMES

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Page 14

Two arrested following Tuesday high speed chase

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PRESCHOOL

Continued from page 1

plumbing. An adjacent playground area will be fenced in and landscaped/screened from car traffic, which is required by the state for preschool classrooms.

In addition to preschool options within the Macon County School system, private preschool and early education options exist in both Highlands and the Franklin area such as Macon Program for Progress in Franklin and the Gordon Center in Highlands. However, even with options outside of the school system, a long waitlist remains for families in Macon County.

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services lists about a dozen registered childcare families in Macon County who have slots available for 951 children under the age of 5. Those slots are primarily for children 3 or older, or preschool-aged. Only 48 infant slots, 109 1-year-old slots, and 146 two-year-old slots are listed for the entire county. The 2010 U.S. Census indicated Macon County's under 5 population was at nearly 1,800.

According to Maci Bears, a fourth grade teacher at Highlands School and a member of the AHEC committee, children have been put on the waitlist for slots in the private preschool programs in Highlands who have not even been born yet.

"Implementing public preschool bridges a large gap in learning," said Bears. "Studies have shown that an efficient early childhood education reduces the need for special education by 39 percent by the third grade. Special education costs nearly twice as much as regular classroom education."

While Macon County's biggest hurdle for providing additional preschool classrooms within the school system currently is the lack of space for the classrooms, Janice Edgerton, executive director for the Region A Partnership for Children said there is a lack of staff to fill the classrooms that are available now.

"Studies have shown that an efficient early childhood education reduces the need for special education by 39 percent by the third grade. Special education costs nearly twice as much as regular classroom education."

— *Maci Bears, Highlands 4th grade teacher*

Alison Tate, who has been working with AHEC is set to retire this year after operating one of Highlands' preschool programs for more than a decade. Tuesday night she told commissioners that even though they have been trying for two years to find a replacement to take over the program, a lack of qualified staff may result in having to close the program.

According to Tate, the two existing preschool classrooms in the Highlands area are

currently at capacity and have a waitlist of 87 children.

Richard Delany with Old Edwards Inn addressed commissioners and said the lack of childcare in Highlands is an economic issue as employees moving to the area don't have options for childcare, therefore, can't work. Without childcare and early education options for potential employees, Delany says that Old Edwards struggles to fill needed spots resulting in a staffing shortage.

As Bears noted when speaking to commissioners, early education is also crucial for the overall development and long-term ben-

efits for the community.

"While a public preschool would serve the entire community, it would be especially beneficial for our English language learner population. Having children immersed in a new language at a young age supports their oral development, leading to higher reading ability in the future," said Bears.

"Unfortunately, as of the 2021 NCDPI data, 61.6% of English Language Learners placed at a Level 1 out of 5 on the Grade 3

Reading EOG [End of Grade] last year. These children deserve an opportunity to become proficient readers, and that begins in preschool. As a teacher, I focus a lot on the importance of fluency and reading. However, there are several other benefits to preschool education for our community. Children who attend quality preschool are proven to be more successful at socializing, regulating emotions, interacting with others, and gaining confidence. Children who go to preschool are more likely to be employed, own a house, and have a savings account. Preschool is crucial in the foundation of a child's life, and the entire community only reaps the benefits in the future. It is time for all of our Highlands community children to be allowed access to public early childhood education."


The funding request from AHEC is just one of the requests commissioners are considering for capital improvements across Macon County this year. The Macon County Board of Education reviewed more than \$24 million in capital outlay requests during its February board meeting. After a lengthy board discussion, the school system approved \$10,569,960.44 in capital outlay requests which will be submitted to county commissioners as part of this year's budget planning process.

Region A is the nonprofit organization responsible for administering North Carolina's Smart Start and NC Pre-K initiatives in the

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seven western-most counties and on the Qualla Boundary. Right now, Region A has 48 classrooms in their coverage area and 96 teachers.

Macon County Schools Preschool overview

Macon County Schools currently has space for just under 100 preschoolers, all of which are located in the Franklin area between the five available preschools. The school district's preschool classrooms are located at South Macon (two classrooms) Iotla Valley (two classrooms) and one at Cartoogechaye.

"Currently in Macon County Schools we have five preschool classrooms and each classroom has 18 student slots. That allows us to serve 90 students. Today we have 88 students enrolled," said Keener. "We have put out applications to our community for Fall 2022 enrollment and we have currently 44 completed applications that have been turned into us. Even for returning students, a new application must be filled out every year. Applications are due April 20."

Calls received by Macon County Schools this year expressing interest in enrolling their student at the following preschool sites:

- At Iotla Valley: 22 inquiries
- At Cartoogechaye: 30 inquiries
- At South Macon: 28 inquiries

"In our program we prioritize serving 4-year-olds in these classrooms," said Keener. "We do take 3-year-olds who are developmentally delayed and are placed in these

classrooms by an IEP (individualized education plan) team. As a retention incentive, we do take 3-year-olds that have a parent employed by the Macon County School system."

Cartoogechaye Elementary has one classroom with one teacher and one teacher assistant. The district has nine slots that are specifically for NC Pre-K 4-year-olds. These students must meet income guidelines and/or have documented medical/developmental needs. NC Pre-K spots are subsidized by Region A. The other nine slots are private pay slots. This class is currently at its 18 student maximum capacity.

Iotla Valley Elementary has two classrooms. Each classroom has one teacher and two assistants. These classrooms are made up of developmentally delayed students, NC Pre-K students, and private pay students. These classes are at max capacity with 36 students.

South Macon Elementary has two classrooms. Each classroom has one teacher and two assistants. These classrooms are made up of developmentally delayed students, NC Pre-K students and private pay students. South Macon currently has 34 out of 36 slots filled with the two unfilled slots for private pay four-year-olds.

Macon County Schools is looking at an expansion project at East Franklin Elementary that will add preschool classrooms to that school for the first time in the district's history with available COVID19 relief funding.



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One found dead in house fire

According to a press release from the Macon County Fire Marshal's office, fire destroyed a home in the Otto community on Monday. Otto Fire and Rescue responded to 104 Ridge Circle around 4 a.m. and found a home on fire with reports of an occupant still inside the residence. The fire was brought under control in about 15 minutes and one person was found to be deceased. The name of the person is being withheld pending notification of the family. The cause and origin of the fire is under investigation. Otto Fire and Rescue was assisted by crews from Franklin and Clarks Chapel Fire Departments.

EDC reports shows that economic health of Macon County improving

Brittney Lofthouse – Contributing Writer

The Macon County Economic Development Commission released the latest economic indicator report for the county and results showed the county's economic health improved significantly at the end of 2021. The county not only ended 2021 with a lower unemployment rate than in previous months, but the report also showed that at the beginning of 2022, retail sales spending for the first half of fiscal year 2022 is over half of the entire previous fiscal year's retail spending.

The Macon County Economic Commission 2021 Economic Indicator Update was compiled from federal, state, and local resources and features key metrics important to Macon County's economy.

Despite the COVID19 pandemic, retail spending in Macon County hit a high in 2021 with \$723,867,297 from July 2020-June 2021. Comparing Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 to FY 2020, retail spending increased from 2019 to 2020 in every month with the exception of April, May and June. Retail spending continued to increase month after month for FY 2021 and to date, in FY 2022 compared to previous months. So far for fiscal year 2022 – which began in July 2021 – retail sales in Macon County totaled more than \$451 million while the entire previous year was at \$723 million.

A travel indicator for Macon County, the amount of occupancy tax collections were

also reported as well above the previous year. For Highlands, almost \$1.5 million was collected in FY 21 for occupancy taxes, which is around \$500,000 more than FY 20 and close to double the amount collected in FY 2019. The same percentage of increase was replicated in Franklin, which collected \$476,111.51 in FY 21, \$302,678.39 in FY 20, and \$226,428.51 in FY 19. Nantahala's occupancy tax collection more than doubled from \$66,527.59 in FY 19 to \$153,685.19 in FY 20 to a record high of \$197,262.07 in FY 21.

Building permits issued significantly increased in Macon County with 129 residential permits being issued in FY 20 and 147 issued in FY 21. Commercial permits also experienced an increase during the same time period. Not only were more new homes being built, but the cost of homes also experienced an increase with an average price of \$ 213,000 in 2020 for a home to \$267,000 in 2021. Highlands prices went from \$741,000 to \$841,000. In 2020, homeowners remodeled their dwellings to the tune of \$26 million according to the report, while in 2021, \$32 million was spent on residential alterations.

Unemployment remains at a low rate with many local businesses still scrambling for employees. April 2020 saw the highest rate of unemployment at 11.3% for Macon, and 12.5% statewide. December 2021 was the lowest at 2.5%, compared to the state unemployment for the same month at 3.7%.



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The One Dozen Who Care organization held its annual Elder Dinner event at First Presbyterian Church in Franklin on Saturday, March 5. Pictured, from left: Honoree Wanda Moore, Gabby Tollette, Eli Crawford, Liz Crawford, Gigi Tollette, Honoree Mary Ricketson, Founder Ann Woodford, and Honoree Barbara Austin.

One Dozen Who Care honors women for community service

Deena C. Bouknight – Contributing Writer

The organization, One Dozen Who Care (ODWC), was started in 1998 in Murphy, N.C., as a group of women gathered to discuss the need for an organization to help bridge the gap between ethnic populations and civic and business communities in Western North Carolina. A dozen women initially focused on building bonds and helping lower-income people of color develop marketable skills; thus, ODWC was founded.

On March 5, at the First Presbyterian Church in Franklin, three women were spotlighted during the organization’s annual Elder Dinner, which highlights the community service and involvement of women over 50 years of age. Recognized at the event in Franklin, as a Community Treasure Honoree, was Mary Ricketson, while Rev. Wanda Moore and Barbara Austin were recognized as Emma Kline Moore Honorees.

ODWC’s vision is: “A unified community that honors and respects racial and cultural diversity,” while its mission focuses on empowering, educating, and encouraging “economic development for women, youth, and elders in far Western North Carolina in order to bridge cultures and create community bonds.”

According to Mary Sue Casey, who joined ODWC in 1999, and is ODWC’s financial officer and chairwoman of the Elder Dinner,

being involved with the organization has given her an opportunity to work together with all races and religions. The retired high school math teacher shared, “I like helping people, and this event that we had last Saturday honors women who help people.”

Part of ODWC intention is to link children with older individuals, so children were asked to conduct the interviews of the honorees for a presentation shown at the Elder Dinner on Saturday. “We also do a book collection for children and we reward them for reading ... to encourage reading,” added Casey.

Plus, ODWC offers an annual \$1,500 scholarship for college and university-level learning to two applicants per year. Applications are available through high schools and African American churches in the seven westernmost counties, and by contacting the scholarship chair at odwc.prescottscholarship@gmail.com or by visiting the One Dozen Who Care, Inc. website at www.one-dozenwhocare.org.

Although members of ODWC are from all over WNC, Franklin’s First Presbyterian Church was chosen as the site of the annual Elder Dinner due to not only a few members residing in the area, but also because it was centrally located.

One Dozen Who Care’s Multicultural Women’s Development Conference will take place April 29-30, at Hinton Rural Life Center in Hayesville, N.C.

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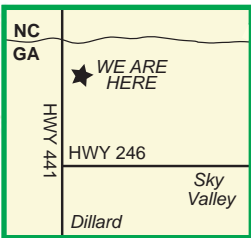
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SCC's Appalachian Farm School draws variety of ag-related businesses

One farm sells honey and fresh vegetables and is working to address the Christmas Tree shortage that affected the nation this past holiday season.

Another specializes in multi-colored eggs, poultry and rabbits.

And one set of partners is hoping to offer trout fishing experiences.

Despite representing different spectrums of the agricultural community, participants in this year's Appalachian Farm School have at least one thing in common: They all have expansion goals centered around agri-tourism.

The eight-week farm school, which is organized and overseen annually by Southwestern Community College's Small Business Center, provides existing and aspiring entrepreneurs with the resources and training they need to enhance or launch their operations.

The weekly series concluded on Feb. 28 with final presentations by each participating farm. It marked the Appalachian Farm School's eighth consecutive year, and – as with all services provided by SCC's Small Business Center – participation is free of charge.

"We eventually want to have an Air B&B or two on the property," said Jarod Schoeberl, who attended the series with his wife, Maggie, and their 1-year-old daughter Ayda.

The Schoeberl's run a small farm in Cullowhee with poultry, rabbits and plans to add small livestock and more in the near future.

"We're new to North Carolina, we just moved here two years ago, so we had no idea there were so many resources as kind of wannabe farmers," Maggie Schoeberl said. "Just learning about the extension office, and having an opportunity to network with other farmers who are doing similar things – it's all been extremely helpful."



This year's Appalachian Farm School concluded with formal presentations on Feb. 25 at SCC's Jackson Campus. Pictured here are, from left, Marne Harris, Director of SCC's Small Business Center; facilitator Tonya Snider; Maggie and Jarod Schoeberl with daughter Ayda of Cullowhee; Natalie Rayburn of Tuckasegee; Patrick Cardona-Cosner of Tuckasegee; and Alan Wamsley of Robbinsville.

Also attending the class was Robbinsville-resident Alan Wamsley, who runs Simple Life Mountain Retreat and Campground and is grateful for programs like Appalachian Farm School that are helping the next generation of farmers find their way.

"There are pieces of the puzzle that I don't understand," said Wamsley, who started Simple Life in 2010 and has recently begun adding apple and Christmas trees to his property in Graham County. "Just like beekeeping, apple trees and Christmas trees – those are three different facets of the business. The farm schools have taught me to diversify and stay on the cutting edge of farming."

On the other end of the experience spectrum were participants Natalie Rayburn and Patrick Cardona-Cosner, who enrolled in the Appalachian Farm School with some ideas and the desire to work in agri-tourism.

Their goal: To open a fee-based, trout-fishing operation on some private property in Tuckasegee. Rayburn and Cardona-Cosner picked up some valuable insights and connections through the farm school.

"It went over a lot of topics like liability and insurance and introduced us to a lot of people in the extension offices – as well as actual farmers," Rayburn said. "It's been very helpful. Pretty much everything applied in some way

or another."

This year's school was organized by Marne Harris, SCC's Small Business Center Director, and facilitated by Tonya Snider of TenBiz.

Overall, representatives of six area farms participated in



Alan Wamsley of Simple Life Mountain Retreat and Campground in Robbinsville makes his formal presentation on the final session of the Appalachian Farm School on Feb. 25 at SCC's Jackson Campus in Sylva.



On Feb. 25 at SCC's Jackson Campus in Sylva, Natalie Rayburn of Tuckasegee presents the business plan she and Patrick Cardona-Cosner, also of Tuckasegee, developed through the Appalachian Farm School.

the hybrid school that featured several weeks of online meetings interspersed with in-person sessions.

"We had a wonderful group and a great blend of experienced farmers and newcomers to agribusiness," Harris said. "The entire reason we put this on every year is to help provide information and access to resources that can help these individuals and farms to succeed."

For more information about SCC's Small Business Center and the services it offers, contact Harris at m_harris@SouthwesternCC.edu or 828.339.4211.



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FUMC holds annual 30-Hour Famine



First United Methodist Church youth participated in a 30-Hour Famine to raise funds and collect non-perishables to address food insecurity both locally and globally. The students did without food for 30 hours, then were rewarded with a meal and the satisfaction of knowing they are making a difference in their community. The event brought in more than \$10,000 in monetary donations and almost 7,000 food items to help feed the hungry. The younger students put together a shoe made of soup cans (at right).

Photos by Vickie Carpenter and Diane Peltz



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What's new on the plateau

Patrick Taylor
Highlands Mayor

I am was ready to write about the town retreat, and then about tonight's board meeting [Thursday]. But, then I drove to Founders Park on Monday to begin a road-running workout. I came upon depressing site. A trash bag was stuffed in the top of a bear resistant street can.

Realizing that someone had carelessly attempted to place that household trash bag in the street can was distressing. A half eaten lunch plate was also left on top of the can. What are some people thinking? Are they unthinking slobes that simply do not care about this beautiful community? The mayor was crushed to know such reckless behavior is still afoot in Highlands.

I rationalized why someone would do such a dastardly deed. I thought maybe the trash crews didn't empty the cans after weekend activities. Even if they hadn't, there's no excuse for such behavior. So, I went around the park and checked the other street cans. They were not full, and all had been emptied that day.

The painful truth is that someone decided to dispose of their household garbage by just stuffing the bag in a street can that is designed to handle only small amounts of garbage, fast food trash or coffee and ice cream cups. Several years ago when we first deployed the street cans I caught a woman trying to put her household trash bags in a street can near Reeves. I confronted her and she stopped. I wish I had seen the person stuffing this can.

Since implementing the BearWise program, we have removed those ugly shared dumpsters that used to be on public streets. These dumpsters that were rented by businesses became magnets for people depositing their household garbage and overfilling the dumpsters. The new roll cart system has greatly reduced that problem.

If you see someone stuffing a street can take a photo and send it to Askmayorpat.com. We will investigate, and I will at least photo shame the offender. I know some may think their mayor is over reacting, but I not going to let these kinds of trashy behaviors become the norm in Highlands.

Also, a citizen recently sent me a photo of a bear resistant roll cart in a neighborhood that had been overfilled to where the lid could not be closed. There were additional bags of garbage on the side of the cart. I urged the person to contact the police at 526-9341. Our



Patrick Taylor

Continued on page 11

Letters to the Editor

We needs more civil disobedience and fearless leaders

Today America is facing unprecedented censorship of free speech and attacks on honest debate as never before in our nation's history, but We the People are not standing against it in large numbers because we haven't been hurt in our lifestyles yet. However, when that time comes, it may be too late to resist the authoritarians who are growing more powerful by the day. If each of us do not search out the real truth and act on it, our America will surely go the way of all other empires to the waste bin of history. Genuine truth will seem like the popular term "misinformation" to people who have repeatedly believed the lies of the mainstream for too long, but for those of us who believe in freedom, now is the time to withdraw all of our consent from the tyranny of good intentions. We need smaller government and bigger individuals. We need more civil disobedience and leaders who are not afraid to stand for the Constitution and Biblical principles. The middle of the road leads to socialism which leads to lost freedom forever. History is clear on that fact.

As the DHS recently released new rules on extremism to combat the false boogeyman of white supremacy and right-wing ideology (a.k.a. independent and common sensed thinking), I'd like to submit a few questions for us to ponder so that we become vigilant to remain a free and independent people. If we don't see through the propaganda from an obviously corrupted government, we will be susceptible to their false flags and fall for their scheming that gives them more control over our lives.

Why do liberals want violence here and conservatives want violence abroad?

If we condemn Russia for invading Ukraine to destroy illegal biolabs and stop NATO's expansion along with western meddling (i.e. U.S. backed coup of a democratically elected government in 2014), why was it alright for the U.S. to invade and occupy Iraq over proven false pretenses of WMDs?

Why does society more easily fall victim to the greater lies from government instead of the small lies?

When government assumes undelegated and unconstitutional powers, why don't we demand our rights and resist?

Why do we blindly believe life-long bureaucrats just because they have some meaningless credentials after their name?

Why can't Republicans mind their own business and Democrats spend their own money? It's not complicated.

Why is government's urge to save humanity always a false-face to rule and control it?

Why do we give lip service to being a constitutional republic that practices democracy, while at the same time cheer the unconstitutional and destructive global empire?

Why does the US global military support Islamic terrorists sometimes and other times bomb those same groups?

Why would we ever trade essential freedom for false security?

If the federal government is supposedly legitimate today,

then why does it function like organized crime?

Why does the self-righteous cheer taxation of others by theft, but never want to give up their own stuff?

Why isn't it called hypocrisy to defend borders in eastern Europe but not defend the southern border of our own country?

These questions and many, many more should be considered when we understand that human nature in today's advanced and so-called civilized society is no different than human nature thousands of years ago. The same entity that tried to ethnically cleanse Native Americans through re-location, starvation, and war crimes is the same entity that raped, murdered, and pillaged innocent civilians and unconstitutionally invaded and occupied sovereign Southern States in the 1860s is the same entity that useful idiots still trust today to keep them safe. Hitler once said, "What good fortune for governments that the people do not think." William Casey, former CIA Director in the USA, has said "We'll know our disinformation program is complete when everything the American public believes is false."

Jim Gaston – Franklin, N.C.

We will defend the right for people to be free

I'll get right to the point. NATO and every free nation should use force to oppose the Russian attack on Ukraine.

People worry that NATO involvement may cause Putin to widen the war to horrific proportions (WW III and/or nuclear). My reading of history is that such risk existed the moment the first bullet whizzed across the Ukrainian border. It may be worse if we do not act now. In fact, not acting now could lead to the very outcome we wish to avoid.

I believe every person on Earth has an unalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The purpose of a just government is to protect those rights. Admittedly, governments (including the United States) do not always live up to these standards but people deserve the right to try. Judging from his treatment of human life, Putin does not think so.

Free nations vary in the degree to which they protect and encourage freedom. But Putin's actions are not a matter of degree, they are a matter of kind. Taking innocent lives of another nation is clearly a crime. Attorney/client privilege does not extend to the commission of a crime, and neither should sovereignty.

This may be the time that sovereignty no longer trumps human rights. Humanity may not be ready for such responsibility, but if we believe freedom is worth defending we may not have the luxury of being "ready."

If the free world acts against Putin now, it is a clear message for the other thugs in the world. People deserve to be free and we will defend that right.

From the news reports it sounds like Russian troops are somewhat disorganized and suffering from poor logistics. If this is true the free world should act before Putin has a chance to address these problems.

The time for free nations to unite, is now.

David Hubbs – Franklin, N.C.

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Sales tax increase to appear on November ballot

Brittney Lofthouse – Contributing Writer

Voters in Macon County will decide in November whether or not a sales tax increase earmarked for education should be established. During the March meeting of the Macon County Board of Commissioners, the board unanimously voted to pass a resolution adding language to the November ballot regarding an increase to the county's sales tax.

Macon County Manager Derek Roland estimates the sales tax referendum would raise around \$1.7 million in additional yearly revenue, would provide funds to assist with ongoing capital improvement needs in the county school system.

From renovations at Highlands School to a new Franklin High School, the district's capital outlay needs are extensive. Macon County Commission Chairman Jim Tate noted that the needs are essentially required at this point and now it's up to the county to determine how those projects are going to be funded.

"The question is, how do you pay for it? It's not a question of whether or not we're going to do it – we've already decided we're going to do it," Tate said. "Would you rather pay for it with an increase of property taxes, or would you rather pay for it by letting some of our visitors who pass through this county also help pay for it through a quarter-cent sales tax increase?"

North Carolina offers individual counties the option to increase the 6.75 percent statewide sales tax to an even 7 percent, with all revenues from the extra quarter-cent going

back to the county — the base 6.75 percent sales tax is shared between the county and state.

As it stands, funding for the school system, including capital outlay projects and infrastructure needs, are funded out of the county's general budget, which is funded through the county's property taxes, meaning Macon County landowners and homeowners pay the bill. Neighboring counties like Jackson County, and Rabun County, Georgia, have taken a different approach to funding school needs by approving an education-specific sales tax that generates revenue for infrastructure needs. Rather than raising property tax rates to generate additional revenue from property owners, a sales tax revenue would mean anyone shopping in Macon County and paying a sales tax, would be funding the school improvements, rather than just residents.

Sales tax is often rounded up to 7 percent already, and those dollars get rolled into the redistribution of sales tax across the state. Out of the 6.75 percent sales tax, less than 3 percent is currently returned to the county. An education-specific 1/4 of a penny tax would be guaranteed to Macon County each year.

In Jackson County, nearly two-thirds of Jackson County voters voted in favor of a referendum question allowing the county to increase the county's sales tax by one-fourth of a cent in 2016. The measure increased the county's sales tax from 6.75 to 7 percent and is expected to generate an additional \$1.2 million a year for the county.

The referendum will now be appearing on the ballot during the November 8 general election for voters across Macon County to decide.

TAYLOR

From previous page

code enforcement officer will investigate those violations. In addition, our sanitation crews have been directed to report these violations to the code enforcement officer.

As for the offending neighborhood residents, those folks may need to acquire an additional bear resistant trash can, especially if they are operating an STR [short term rental].

We do have a town board meeting tonight [Thursday] with a full agenda. It starts at 7 p.m. at the Highlands Conference Center. The board had a productive retreat last Thursday. More information to come.

Law enforcement conducting drug take-back event

Law enforcement across Macon County is hosting Operation Medicine Drop events for National Poison Prevention Week March 20-26

The Macon County Sheriff's Office, in partnership with the Franklin Police Department & Highlands Police Department will host a prescription drug take back event on Wednesday, March 23, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., either at the Robert C. Carpenter community building in Franklin; or the Highlands Police Department in Highlands.

An average of four people a day are dying from overdose in North Carolina with 79 percent of those deaths involving some type of opioid. Drugs not properly disposed of may end up getting into the wrong hands or end up in the water supply. Since 2010 Operation Medicine Drop has collected more than 266 million pills and supported more than 4,332 pill take-back events across North Carolina.

Operation Medicine Drop (OMD) is a free drug take-back program that gives people a safe and secure way to dispose of unwanted over-the-counter and prescription medications. Safely disposing of old medications through Operation Medicine Drop events instead of flushing them down the drain prevents those chemicals from ending up in the water supply.

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National Poison Prevention Week March 20-26

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Bring your unwanted, expired over-the-counter and prescription medications to the Robert C. Carpenter Community Building Center or the Highlands Police Department from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., on Wednesday, March 23. The Franklin Police Department, the Highlands Police Department, and the Macon County Sheriff's Office also each have permanent drop boxes within their facilities for unwanted medications to be safely disposed of throughout the year.

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The Macon County NEWS & Shopping Guide

Commissioners' race highlights county's struggle to attract business, foster a qualified workforce

Election 2018

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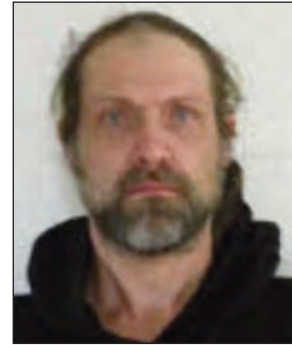
Suspects arrested following high speed chase

Brittney Lofthouse
 Contributing Writer

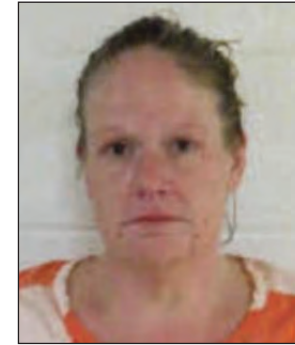
On Tuesday afternoon the North Carolina Highway Patrol tried to initiate a traffic stop on a vehicle that attempted to flee instead of stopping for law enforcement. Law enforcement began pursuing the vehicle at a high rate of speed through downtown Franklin, then headed south before the vehicle crashed.

The two suspects then fled the crash scene on foot, at which point a code red message was sent out via Macon County dispatch's Code Red system warning residents in the area of McClure Mill Road to be on the lookout for two suspects, a male and a female, dressed in all black.

Around 9 p.m. on Tuesday night, the Franklin Police Department received a call from 911 dispatch with information regarding the whereabouts of the two suspects involved in the vehicle pursuit.



Jesse James Clark



Stephanie Greene Jones

Franklin Police officers were able to locate the suspects on Highlands Road near Rogers Road. After a brief foot pursuit, both suspects were taken into custody.

The suspects, identified as Jesse James Clark and Stephanie Greene Jones, were arrested and booked into the Macon County Detention Center.

Jones was charged with three counts of resisting a public officer, failure to stop for flashing red lights, two counts aiding and abetting larceny, misdemeanor larceny, possession of stolen goods, aiding and abetting driving while license revoked, flee and elude arrest with a motor vehicle, reckless driving to endanger, and failure to appear on a misdemeanor. Jones was booked in on a \$40,000 bond.

Clark was charged with resisting a public officer, larceny from a merchant, two counts of possession of stolen goods, and flee and elude arrest with a motor vehicle, Clark was booked in on a \$44,000 bond.

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Arrest Report

The Macon County Sheriff's Department, Franklin Police Department or Jackson County Sheriff's Department made the following arrests March 4 - 12. All suspects are innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.



Macon County Sheriff's Department

March 7
 Hannah Logan Rose Krumholt, was charged with possession of marijuana paraphernalia, possession of drug paraphernalia and resist/obstruct/delay law enforcement officer. Matthew L. Long made the arrest.

Jesse Boone Locke, was charged with arson. Deputy Cody J. Howard made the arrest.

March 8
 Austin William Engelskind, was charged with child support enforcement contempt. Costin Jigla made the arrest.

Austin Harley McCall, was charged with breaking and entering and communicating threats. Joel Lynch made the arrest.

March 9
 Heidi Johanna Dreml, was charged with possession of methamphetamine, possession of a schedule I controlled substance and possession of drug paraphernalia. Sergeant Jonathan A. Taylor made the arrest.

March 10
 Frank Jacson Alexander, was charged with possession of methamphetamine and possession of drug paraphernalia. Matthew L. Long made the arrest.

William Dale Sheffield, was charged with violate domestic violation protective order, flee/elude arrest, reckless driving and resist/obstruct/delay law enforcement officer.

Michael Anthony Hunt, was charged with flee/elude arrest. Sergeant Jonathan A. Taylor made the arrest.

March 11
 Charles Samuel Carpenter, was charged with probation violation. Jordan C. Sutton made the arrest.

Lance Edward Hughes, was charged with failure to appear. Costin Jigla made the arrest.

Travis Collins, was charged with failure to appear for driving while impaired, reckless driving with wanton disregard and child abuse. David Blanton made the arrest.

Amanda Jo Dixon, was charged with failure to appear for fail to report crime against juvenile. David Blanton made the arrest.

Jessica Burton Blankenship, was charged with failure to appear. Joel Lynch made the arrest.

Justin Johnson Stanfield, was charged with failure to appear for felony possession of schedule I controlled substance, larceny, possession of stolen goods/property and obtaining property by false pretenses.

Pherris Swafford, was charged with simple assault and assault and battery. Cassie J. Shuler made the arrest.

March 12
 Ronald Scott Jones Jr., Violate domestic violence protective order. Timothy B. Carter made the arrest.

Nicole Tabitha Bates, was charged with child abuse. Joseph A. Raby made the arrest.

Franklin Police Department

March 4
 UT Van Huynah, was charged with trespassing. J.A. Riles made the arrest.

Rachel Jewel Urrutia, was charged with burglary/breaking and entering. C.T. Chastain made the arrest.

March 7
 Marcus Brandall Dorsch, was charged with felony possession of a schedule I controlled substance, driving while license revoked impaired revocation and operate a vehicle with no insurance. A.R. Holland made the arrest.

March 10
 Brandon Cody Mann, was charged with disorderly conduct. M.A. Bingham made the arrest.

Rachel Jewel Urrutia, was issued a probation violation warrant. M.A. Bingham made the arrest.

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New recipe sharing software ‘Morsel’ has Macon County roots

Deena C. Bouknight – Contributing Writer

A Macon County couple recently launched a new software program called Morsel. It works as an online family recipe sharing platform. Caroline Lloyd and Ian Hoyt, the company’s co-founders who moved to Franklin last year from Harlem, N.Y., conveyed that their idea was inspired by ongoing queries to parents regarding favorite recipes.

“I never had a simple way to capture my family’s recipes in a way that would later be accessible to me,” said Lloyd, whose career has involved work in the arts industry as well as non-profit consulting.

“The idea was sparked by our ongoing frustration of never having the recipes we wanted from our parents when we needed them,” said Hoyt, a growth marketing and entrepreneur by trade. “These recipes have lived on

faded notecards, in text messages, screenshots, or emails, but those can easily be lost. Being able to collaborate with my mom or grandma to ensure that our family recipes are preserved, shared, and carried into the future is such a gift.”

The Morsel platform enables users to share and access recipes passed down through generations or even those recently discovered.



Caroline Lloyd and Ian Hoyt, who moved to Franklin last year from Harlem, N.Y., developed a new software program that helps people share and save recipes.

Adds Hoyt, “Morsel lets families and friend groups come together and share all the cherished recipes with those they care about most.”

Morsel is subscription based, with an offer to try it for free for 30 days, and then an annual fee is charged to

anyone interested in continuing the subscription. The platform offers such features as:

- an unlimited group creation option to allow friends and family to collectively share

recipes

- the ability to share one recipe across multiple groups or families
- unlimited recipe uploads to document recipes from multiple generations

• a community activity feed on recipes-to-share tips, tricks, photos, and more

While there is not currently a Morsel app for smartphones, Hoyt explained, “During our design and development phase, we made it a top priority to make the mobile web experience of Morsel simple and functional.”

The pandemic in some ways inspired the new recipe-saving software, pointed out Hoyt.

“The pandemic has certainly changed the way that Millennials and Gen Zers approach cooking. The sheer nature of being home more often has ignited the need to try new recipes, recreate old ones, and most importantly, share recipes with others. We’ve seen

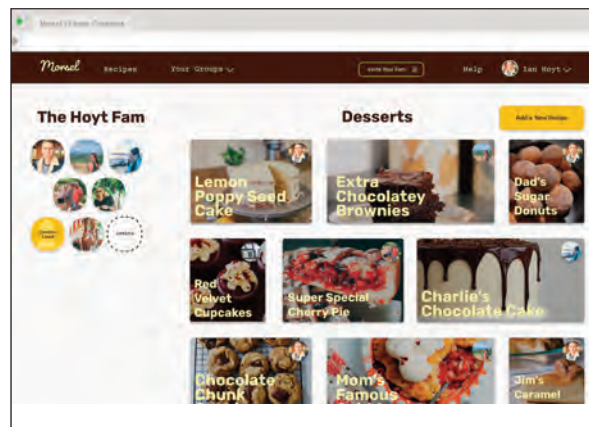
this play out through food social media accounts, the bread-making craze at the beginning of Covid-19 quarantine, and a re-centering around family traditions. Suddenly gathering with family around holidays

has increased in importance after spending multiple holidays without loved ones by your side. The pandemic... certainly has elevated the importance of family tradition and food.”

Blogs on the www.getmorsel.com site, where there is also more information

about the software and its services, provide helpful recipe-related information, such as “Can You Freeze Pancake Batter?” and “How to Make a Family Cookbook.”

Lloyd and Hoyt, who first visited Franklin as RVers, decided to become permanent residents last year. “We fell in love with this community and its people, and we are so thankful for the warm welcome we’ve received over the past year.”



The subscription-based Morsel platform enables users to share and access recipes passed down through generations or even those recently discovered.

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Wolf education offered at the library at next Hiker's club meeting

Deena C. Bouknight
Contributing Writer

Rob Gudger, an outdoorsman and avid naturalist, has presented in past years his wolves for educational purposes at area schools. But next month Franklin-area adults will be able to experience a wolf up close and personal and also learn a plethora of information regarding their habitat, feeding habits, and other idiosyncrasies.

Wayaha, one of Gudger's wolves, will be presented to the general meeting of Nantahala Hiking Club (NHC) on April 14 at 6 p.m. at the Macon County Library. Wayaha is a female wolf that has been exposed often to children and adults.

Gudger's career with Duke Power for 24 years involved helping to map out the Foothills Trail. He became involved with wolves 33 years ago and has much information and many stories to share, according to Katharine Brown of NHC.

The 77-year-old currently has three timber wolves, and he keeps them in a one-acre, natural enclosure with secured fencing.

"They can climb like a squirrel," said Gudger, "so I had to give them a habitat that keeps them safe but also allows them to be a pack and run. They are definitely not indoor lounge animals, like dogs. In fact, they get nervous when they are inside four walls for very long."

While Gudger began owning wolves when he learned of some pups that needed raising, the wildlife expert informs the public that "wolves are not dogs and they are not coyotes. They are an entirely different species and they are often misunderstood or lumped in with the understanding of dogs or coyotes."

Coyotes, which are common in Western North Carolina, have adapted to humans in such a way that they are not as afraid to attack chickens, cats, dogs and other small animals. Wolves, on the other hand, are very elusive and skittish and typically only hunt in packs to take down a wild animal that the pack family can eat together.

On April 14, Gudger will educate those in attendance about the different aspects of a wolf's predatory nature.



Rob Gudger, an outdoorsman and avid naturalist, will bring one of his wolves to educate the public about the wild animals at the general meeting of Nantahala Hiking Club (NHC) on April 14 at 6 p.m. at the Macon County Library.

"I do a question and answer session for most of the time," he said. "That seems to work best and provides information to cover everyone's curiosity."

Gudger does allow people to touch his wolf because he said they are more predictable, in terms of temperament and growling and biting, than dogs are. However, he is emphatic that hybrids, which are a man-made breed that includes mixing dog and wolf bloodlines, as well as rescues, which are wolves that need to be in the wild, are a bad idea for the general public to consider owning.

"I'm not an advocate for people owning wolves, but I have because of my experience and because I have used them to help people understand them better so they are treated with respect in the wild."

While Gudger's wolves have lived "a good, easy life," with the oldest at 15 years, he explained that wolves in the wild typically only live to around age six due to challenges such as disease, parasites and broken bones.

Gudger added that the only reason he is "let into the pack" is because he feeds the wolves around 10 pounds of raw chicken leg quarters once or twice a week.

"They can't handle dog food. They have to eat raw meat, and they have to gorge on food and then it takes several days for them to digest it."

Gudger said a highlight of every educational program is

for those in attendance to try to get one of his wolves to howl.

Brown explained that NHC plans 10 meetings per calendar year, and seven of the 10 meetings are informative, entertaining or educational in nature as per the organization's bylaws. The other three are relegated to a fundraiser, a year-end awards program, and a holiday party.

"Most of our presentations are nature related, outdoor enthusiast related, travel related, (members do travelogues of their adventures, for example), or trail related. It's really wide open. The wolf program had been on our list for a while so we are glad we are able to present it," said Brown.

For 2022, all general meetings of NHC are being held at 6 p.m. at the library on the second Thursday and the meetings are open to anyone. For more information, visit www.nantahalahikingclub.org.

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Lenoir-Rhyne is hosting 'The Art of Compassion'

Imagine One Hospitality is partnering with Lenoir-Rhyne University Visiting Writer's Series to host the inaugural The Art of Compassion, a three-day event at P.E. Monroe Auditorium from March 30-April 1. The Art of Compassion is an opportunity to participate in a positive, respectful, and affirming conversation guided by industry empathy experts and wellness professionals centered on equality, addictions, and recovery. This series of events serves hospitality workers and students in our community struggling with substance abuse and addiction and offers hope, fellowship, and a path forward.

On Wednesday, March 30, the Art of Compassion event will begin with world-famous storyteller, Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. She is best known for her politics, culture, race, and gender themes. Adichie's novels, short stories, and plays have received public and critical acclaim. Thursday, March 31, Steve Palmer, John T. Edge, and Chenelle Bragg will share a panel discussion on life, sobriety, and love in the restaurant business.

The symposium will conclude Friday, April 1, with a musical storytelling performance by country star Martina McBride. These events are a fundraising effort for Lenoir-Rhyne Visiting Writers Series and Ben's Friends, a recovery-based organization serving hospitality industry workers in our area and across the country.

For more information or to purchase tickets, visit theartofcompassion.net

We walked with Mark McClure, my son-in-law, as far as we could, to a perfect resting place beside the woods. To each person that has helped us and shown support in any way, may you be blessed because you have blessed our family. I especially want to thank Brian Hylton and the staff of Macon Funeral Home for your compassionate and highly professional attention to every detail for the service and burial.

To Dr Gary Jarnagin, Rev. Scott Matthews and Rev. Jamie Passmore for bringing comforting words at the service. To each pall bearer who wanted to carry Mark the final steps. To April of April's Florist for beautiful flowers. And to the hospitality of dear friends of Prentiss Baptist Church for the wonderful food after the service. Many of you have brought food and made donations in Mark's memory and it is greatly appreciated. In the days to come I ask to keep praying for my precious daughter. And pray for me to be have the answers to help her. Thank you from all our family.

NCWRC says: Find a bear den, leave it alone

Biologists at the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission say if you find a bear den, leave it alone. Black bears are very resourceful in finding places to shelter late December through April as cold weather lingers and cubs are born. Dens may be found in rock cavities, brush piles, tree cavities, excavations under fallen trees, ground nests, under decks and in crawlspaces. As a result, you may stumble upon a bear den anytime time you are outdoors, whether hiking, working in your yard, cutting firewood or enjoying outdoor activities.



Wildlife officials are advising that if a bear den is found, to leave the area quickly and do not disturb the den.

Photo by Mike Carraway

If you find a den, either on your property or on public property, do not panic. Leave the area quickly and quietly, and do not disturb the den for the rest of the winter season. If the den is under your deck, shed, or crawlspace, leave the area and call the NC Wildlife Helpline at 866-318-2401, or contact your local district wildlife biologist for further guidance. In almost all cases, homeowners can safely co-exist with the bear until it leaves the den in the spring.

If you inadvertently flush a female bear from her den, do not approach the area. Keep any dogs on a leash and leave immediately. The female will return to the den if you leave it alone, even if she does not return right away. Do not go back to the den area, as additional disturbance may cause the bear to leave permanently.

Wildlife Commission staff have already investigated a report of an orphaned male cub in eastern North Carolina this winter.

"We received a call from the public about a cub found by itself and quickly investigated the situation," stated Colleen Olfenbittel, the black bear and furbearer biologist with the Wildlife Commission. "The den was likely disturbed, and we safely delivered the 4- to 5-week-old male cub to one of our two licensed rehabilitators specialized to care for orphaned cubs. Thanks to the correct response by the caller, we were able investigate, confirm the cub was orphaned and get the cub the care it needed within hours of the initial call, better assuring the cub's eventual release back into the wild."

The Wildlife Commission recently released a video about their cub rehabilitation program, highlighting the time and care that goes into ensuring a cub is ready for release back

into the wild after capture.

"We are fortunate to have two fantastic rehabbers in the state that are highly skilled at rehabilitating black cubs. They work closely with us on the care needed to assure the cubs will be successfully released," said Olfenbittel. "But we'd much prefer that the bears stay in the wild with their mother, so please don't accidentally cub-nap a bear cub; call us immediately if you suspect a cub is orphaned so we can investigate."

As spring arrives, black bears will emerge from their dens and become more active. Sometimes humans will come across cubs that are alone, waiting for their mothers to return from foraging and exploring. It's best to assume these bears are not orphaned. However, if you suspect a cub has been orphaned, do not handle or pick it up, feed it, or worse yet, remove it. The best thing to do is leave the cub alone, note the location and contact the NC Wildlife Helpline or your district wildlife biologist.

About the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission

Since 1947, the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission has been dedicated to the conservation and sustainability of the state's fish and wildlife resources through research, scientific management, wise use and public input. The Commission is the state regulatory agency responsible for the enforcement of fishing, hunting, trapping and boating laws and provides programs and opportunities for wildlife-related educational, recreational and sporting activities.

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Grow your own flowers for cutting from seed

Melinda Myers
Guest columnist



Melinda Myers

You don't need a lot of space or a big budget to grow and enjoy garden-fresh bouquets. Just fill a few vacant spaces, add an extra row in garden beds or fill a container with easy care flowers started from seeds.

You'll jump-start the season and enjoy earlier blooms by starting some of the seeds indoors to transfer into the garden after the danger of frost has passed. If you're not in a hurry, want to stretch your budget and extend your garden's bloom time, sow some seeds directly in the garden. Just follow the directions on the seed packet.

Annual flowers like these are known for season long bloom and a long vase life. You'll need to plant annuals each year, but you may decide the continuous bloom is well worth the effort. Supplementing them with perennial flowers and bulbs means you need to plant fewer annuals each year for a season filled with colorful garden-fresh bouquets.

Here are a few easy-care annual flowers that you can start from seed indoors or directly in the garden. These beauties will brighten those sunny spots in the landscape and bouquets in your home.

Start zinnia seeds indoors four weeks before the last spring frost or sow them directly in the garden. Either way, you'll have flowers about eight weeks after planting the seeds. Grow taller varieties like Benary's Giant for long stems, Queeny Lime Orange or Zowie! Yellow Flame for eye-catching color or Profusion and Zahara for small daisy-like flowers on compact mildew resistant plants in your low maintenance cut flower garden.

Like zinnias, cosmos make a great cut flower and both are heat and drought tolerant in the garden. Start cosmos seeds indoors four to six weeks before the last spring frost or directly in the garden. The fine foliage adds texture to the garden and the white, pink, lavender blooms light up the mid-summer through fall garden. Plant tall varieties en masse to eliminate the need for staking. Or grow shorter varieties

like Sonata and Cosmic. Once you plant cosmos in the garden, you may be rewarded with volunteer seedlings in subsequent years.

Marigolds have long been favorites in the garden, but they also make great cut flowers. Like zinnias, you can start them indoors or directly in the garden and have flowers in about eight weeks. Include a variety of single, double, large and small flowers to create a marigold only arrangement or mix with other flowers. The Gem series of marigolds have lacy leaves with a citrusy scent and small single flowers all summer long. Not only are these 12" tall plants great in arrangements, but the flowers are also edible and attract beneficial insects to your garden.

Include calendula, another edible flower, in your garden and arrangements. Plant seeds directly in the garden in fall through spring when growing in the Deep South, Gulf and Pacific Coast areas. Those in other regions can plant seeds directly in the garden after the danger of heavy frost has passed. Also known as pot marigolds, these plants thrive in cooler temperatures. If plants fade as temperatures rise, cut them back, continue to water as needed and watch for new flowers when the weather cools. These will reseed readily so watch for welcome seedlings the following year.

Sunflowers make dramatic statements in the garden and in the flower vase. The 2022 All-America Selections winner, Concert Bell grows 10 to 12 flowers on each stem. You'll have a ready-made bouquet with each stem removed. Suncredible® Yellow sunflower produces four-inch flowers on two to three feet tall plants. The plants continue to bloom throughout the season even if you don't remove the faded flowers.

Keep the flowers coming to enjoy in the garden and arrangements with regular picking. The more you pick, the more flowers you'll have. Share extras with friends, neighbors, or senior centers. Studies at Rutgers University found cut flowers immediately increased happiness and had a long-term positive impact on the recipient's mood.

Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books, including *The Midwest Gardener's Handbook, 2nd Edition* and *Small Space Gardening*. She hosts *The Great Courses "How to Grow Anything" DVD series* and the nationally-syndicated *Melinda's Garden Moment TV & radio program*. Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for *Birds & Blooms* magazine. Her web site is www.melindamyers.com.



Zowie! Yellow Flame is a semi-tall zinnia with a unique bicolor pattern of blooms with scarlet-rose center and yellow petal edges.

Photo courtesy of All-America Selections



Deaths & Funerals

Leigh Ann Cunningham

Leigh Ann Cunningham, 39, of Sylva, N.C., passed away on Friday, March 11, 2022.

Born in Jackson County, North Carolina, she was the daughter of Jean Ann Gregory Cunningham and the late James Porter Cunningham Jr. She graduated from Franklin High School; went on to receive an Associates Degree in criminal justice from Southwestern Community College, and later was certified in peer support. She was previously a member of the FFA and received an award for Woman of the Year by Carson Community Club.

She always enjoyed time spent with her family and her two dogs. She had a contagious smile, a love of the Lord, and those who knew her knew she had a big heart and was always there to help those in need.

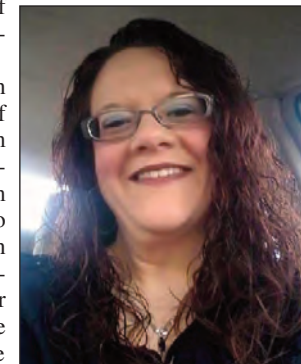
She is survived by her mother, Jean Ann Gregory Cunningham of Franklin, N.C.; her fiancé, Richard Owenby of Sylva; sister, Jessica McHan of Franklin; and a niece, Kalyn McHan of Franklin (who she loved like her own); and several aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Funeral service will be held on Friday, March 18, at 2 p.m., in the chapel of Macon Funeral Home. Rev. Bryon Lamb will officiate. Burial will be at Carson Cemetery.

The family will receive friends from 1 till 2 p.m., one hour prior to the service at Macon Funeral Home.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to No Wrong Door For Support and Recovery, PO Box 1594, Franklin, NC 28744.

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



Leigh Ann Cunningham

Ruth Tallent Wilkes

Ruth Tallent Wilkes, 93, of Franklin, N.C., passed away Thursday, March 10, 2022.

Born on June 11, 1928, in Macon County, she was the daughter of the late Jeff and Mae Dillingham Tallent. She was one of those rare, precious, old timers. She was born, lived, and died in these wonderful mountains. She loved God and she loved people. She was wife and widow of a WWII veteran, raised four children, and served the residents of Grandview Manor as a Nursing Aide for more than 20 years. Like her twin sister, Ruby, used to say, "You do what you have to do." Her friends knew her laugh and encouragement. Everyone knew and loved her wit and steel backbone; she was indeed a "pistol." She loved the mountains, worshipping God daily for the beauty. But especially she loved her family, and the steady accountability, encouragement and fellowship in Jesus is a treasure that will last. She looked for the return of Jesus daily, and now is in His arms, leaving us to walk with Him as she did.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Herman Wilkes; daughter, Tami Robbins (Eddie); son, Ellis Wilkes (Dorothy), three brothers, Jack, Don (Evelyn), and Tommy; and two sisters, Adalene Tallent and Ruby Wilburn (Guy).

She is survived by two sons, Terry Wilkes and wife Lynda, and Allan Wilkes and wife Elaine; one sister, Barbara Shuler (Pete); six grandchildren and 10 great grandchildren.

Funeral services were held Wednesday March 16, in the chapel of Bryant-Grant Funeral Home with Rev. David Williams officiating. Interment followed at Woodlawn Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made to www.samaritanpurse.org.

Bryant-Grant Funeral Home and Crematory is assisting the Wilkes family.



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Chase Briscoe captures his first career Cup Series win at Phoenix

Holly Cain – NASCAR Wire Service

There was no shortage of motivation as three drivers all vying for their first-career victory in the marquee NASCAR Cup Series decided the dramatic outcome at Phoenix Raceway on Sunday afternoon.

Stewart-Haas Racing's Chase Briscoe had to hold off the field on not one, not two, but three late race restarts on the one-mile desert oval, including the final restart with three laps remaining to earn his first career NASCAR Cup Series win in the Ruoff Mortgage 500.

The 27-year-old Briscoe is the 200th different winner in NASCAR's premier series and last year's Rookie of the Year earned the victory- by .771-seconds over Ross Chastain - in only his 40th start.

"It's unbelievable," said Briscoe, who drives the No. 14 Stewart-Haas Racing Ford. "I was crying the whole last lap. This is definitely a team win, but I've got to thank everybody that's got me to this point. Just seven years ago I was sleeping on couches, volunteering at race shops and was literally driving home to give up. Unbelievable," he continued, smiling. "So blessed to be here driving for this organization this team and this car that was my hero's (NASCAR Hall of Famer Tony Stewart) growing up. To everybody that's believed in me, it's unbelievable."

Fast pit stops for Briscoe's John Klausmeier-led crew helped all day. His 101 laps out front was second only to pole-winner Ryan Blaney's 144 laps led. But Briscoe certainly had to earn this win on track holding off the field on those late race re-starts with cars sometimes fanning out seven-wide in the frenetic shuffle to the front.

Chevrolet drivers Chastain and Tyler Reddick took Briscoe three-wide on the final restart – all fueled by the motivation of that first win, but Briscoe's Ford was able to drive away leaving them to settle runner-up between themselves.

Chastain's runner-up finish is his second consecutive top-three finish for the Trackhouse Racing organization. Richard Childress Racing's Reddick placed third followed by polesitter, Penske Racing's Ryan Blaney and 23XI Racing's Kurt Busch.

"That was so much fun to get to race like that at this level," Chastain said, adding of the last lap competition, "That's so cool to race with Tyler and Chase. That's everything I've ever wanted."

Briscoe's veteran teammate Kevin Harvick finished sixth and that top-10 was good enough to tie a huge mark of success shared only by two NASCAR Hall of Famers. Harvick's 18th consecutive top-10 at Phoenix matches an all-time NASCAR Cup Series record set by both Richard Petty and the late Dale Earnhardt at North Wilkesboro (N.C.) Speedway.

Another former series champion, Kyle Busch finished seventh leading the Joe Gibbs Racing charge. Penske Racing's Joey Logano, Trackhouse Racing's Daniel Suarez and Roush-Fenway-Keselowski driver Chris Buescher rounded out the top-10 respectively.

Reigning NASCAR Cup Series champion Kyle Larson, who ran up front for much of the race, suffered a DNF – pitting with 74 laps remaining with what his crew diagnosed as a broken valve spring in his No. 5 Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet. Larson was officially scored 34th - the second sub-30th place finish of the season, including a crash at the Daytona 500 (32nd place finish).

Larson already scored a victory at Auto Club Speedway this



Chase Briscoe, driver of the #14 Mahindra Tractors Ford, celebrates in victory lane after winning the the Ruoff Mortgage 500 at Phoenix Raceway on March 13, 2022 in Avondale, Ariz.

Photo by Sean Gardner/Getty Images

the first win of the year, but it was the fourth straight top-five finish for the team and increased his Xfinity Series championship lead to a more substantial 39 points over rookie Ty Gibbs, who finished sixth Saturday.

"Feels great," said a grinning Gragson, who now has six career Xfinity Series wins. "Pit crew executed great and this team has been on a roll so far this year," he added. "Top three finishes in all four races. Can't thank everybody enough for all their hard work."

Jones, who used a short-pit strategy to close out the race, just couldn't hold off Gragson in the final laps of a race that had only four caution periods – and none in the final 101 laps of competition.

"I'm still all-in-all very happy to come home second," said Jones, whose season got off to a rough start with a crash two weeks ago and a 17th place in the Daytona season-opener.

There were 16 lead changes – primarily among Gragson, Jones – a former Phoenix winner – and Trevor Bayne, who won the 2011 DAYTONA 500 in his first try, but has raced sparingly in the last few years. Bayne won the pole position for Saturday's race and his third-place finish is his second top-five in as many starts in the No. 18 Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota this year.

Gragson's teammate Josh Berry, Bayne, and John Hunter Nemechek rounded out the top-five. The 19-year old Gibbs, who races for his grandfather Joe Gibbs' team, won last week at Las Vegas and finished sixth on Saturday. The three Kaulig Racing teammates A.J. Allmendinger, reigning Xfinity Series champion Daniel Hemric and Landon Cassill finished seventh eighth and ninth respectively and Gragson's veteran JR Motorsports teammate, Justin Allgaier completed the top-10.

Allgaier, a two-time Phoenix winner, had been running top-five all day – even leading five laps – but was penalized for a pit infraction on the final pit stop and had to race back through the field.

Bayne won Stage 1 and Gragson won Stage 2 for a series

season, however, and is still ranked fourth in the championship, 10 points behind new leader Logano. Kyle Busch is third, five points back.

Both Hendrick Motorsports' William Byron and Penske's Blaney earned their first Stage wins of the season. There were 15 lead changes among six drivers.

The NASCAR Cup Series next races at the newly-renovated Atlanta Motor Speedway in Sunday's Folds of Honor Quik-Trip 500 at 3 p.m. Blaney is the defending race winner on the 1.5-mile high-banks which will now feature new pavement and progressive banking.

Noah Gragson continues hot streak with victory in Phoenix

Noah Gragson came heartbreakingly close a week ago to his first NASCAR Xfinity Series victory of the 2022 season. On Saturday, his No. 9 JR Motorsports Chevrolet left no doubt as to who would be hoisting the winner's trophy.

Gragson led 72 of the final 87 laps – a race best 114 of 200 laps on the day - to earn the win in the United Rentals 200 at Phoenix Raceway. He passed race runner-up Brandon Jones with 15 laps remaining, negotiated lapped traffic and ultimately pulled away to an impressive 2.555-second win.

The 23-year old Las Vegas native and his team celebrated the victory by scaling the wire fence on the front straightaway and pumping their fists at the cheering crowd. It was not only



Noah Gragson, driver of the #9 Bass Pro Shops/TrueTimber/BRCC Chevrolet, celebrates in the Ruoff Mortgage victory lane after winning the NASCAR Xfinity Series United Rentals 200 at Phoenix Raceway on March 12, 2022 in Avondale, Ariz. Photo by Sean Gardner/Getty Images

Noah Gragson, driver of the #9 Bass Pro Shops/TrueTimber/BRCC Chevrolet, leads Brandon Jones, driver of the #19 Menards/Jeld-Wen Toyota, Justin Allgaier, driver of the #7 BRANDT Chevrolet, and Trevor Bayne, driver of the #18 Devotion Nutrition Toyota, during the NASCAR Xfinity Series United Rentals 200 at Phoenix Raceway on March 12, 2022 in Avondale, Ariz. Photo by Logan Riely/Getty Images

best third stage victory of the season.

The Xfinity Series races next at Atlanta Motor Speedway with the Nalley Cars 250 scheduled for next Saturday 5 p.m. Allgaier is the defending race winner.

NASCAR Names O'Donnell Chief Operating Officer; Kennedy Returns to Competition Team
DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. – NASCAR has announced

two key executive leadership moves, promoting Steve O'Donnell to Chief Operating Officer and returning Ben Kennedy to the Competition team where he will assume a key leadership position as Senior Vice President, Racing Development & Strategy.

“With more than 25 years of NASCAR experience across a variety of disciplines, Steve O'Donnell has earned the respect of the entire industry, and his collaborative leadership in the competition space has positioned the sport for incredible growth for years to come,” said Steve Phelps, NASCAR president. “In a short time, Ben Kennedy has proven to be an innovative, thoughtful leader with bold ideas and a tireless work ethic. He returns to his competition roots with this new role, one in which he will no doubt excel.”

As COO, O'Donnell will continue to provide oversight of all NASCAR Competition and Racing Operations, while adding Track Operations and Strategic Development to his purview. With these added duties, all NASCAR-owned track properties, track presidents and respective events fall under O'Donnell's responsibilities.

As Chief Racing Development Officer since 2014,

O'Donnell guided vital innovative advancements, including the introduction of the development of the Next Gen car, the implementation of the new Playoff format for all three of NASCAR's national series and the enhanced race format system that was implemented in 2017.

O'Donnell has worked in various areas in the company since joining NASCAR in 1996 as a marketing services representative. After being promoted to manage that group – including work on NASCAR's 50th Anniversary project – he was elevated to Director of Series Marketing. From there, he moved to Competition as Managing Director of Events and Operations to head the All-American Series and Touring Series before being promoted to Vice President of Racing Operations in charge of the national series. In 2008, he was named to Sports Business Journal's prestigious “Forty Under 40” list.

In returning to NASCAR's Competition team, Kennedy will maintain oversight of the national series schedule development, while assuming immediate oversight of Racing Operations, Track Services/Transportation/Officiating, Industry Relations and the NASCAR Touring & Weekly Series. He will work with O'Donnell in managing the areas of at-track competition and racing innovation.

Kennedy, a former race car driver who competed at the ARCA Menards Series, NASCAR Camping World Truck Series and NASCAR Xfinity Series levels, has held a variety of positions within NASCAR since leaving the driver's seat following the 2017 season. Kennedy began his corporate career as General Manager of the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series before a promotion to Managing Director, Racing Operations and International Development.

Most recently, Kennedy held the position of Senior Vice President, Strategy & Innovation, where he helped guide overall company strategy, including developing the most dynamic NASCAR Cup Series schedule in 50 years in 2021 and innovating the Busch Light Clash by building a quarter-mile oval inside the iconic Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum in February of 2022.

Both O'Donnell and Kennedy will assume their new roles effective immediately.

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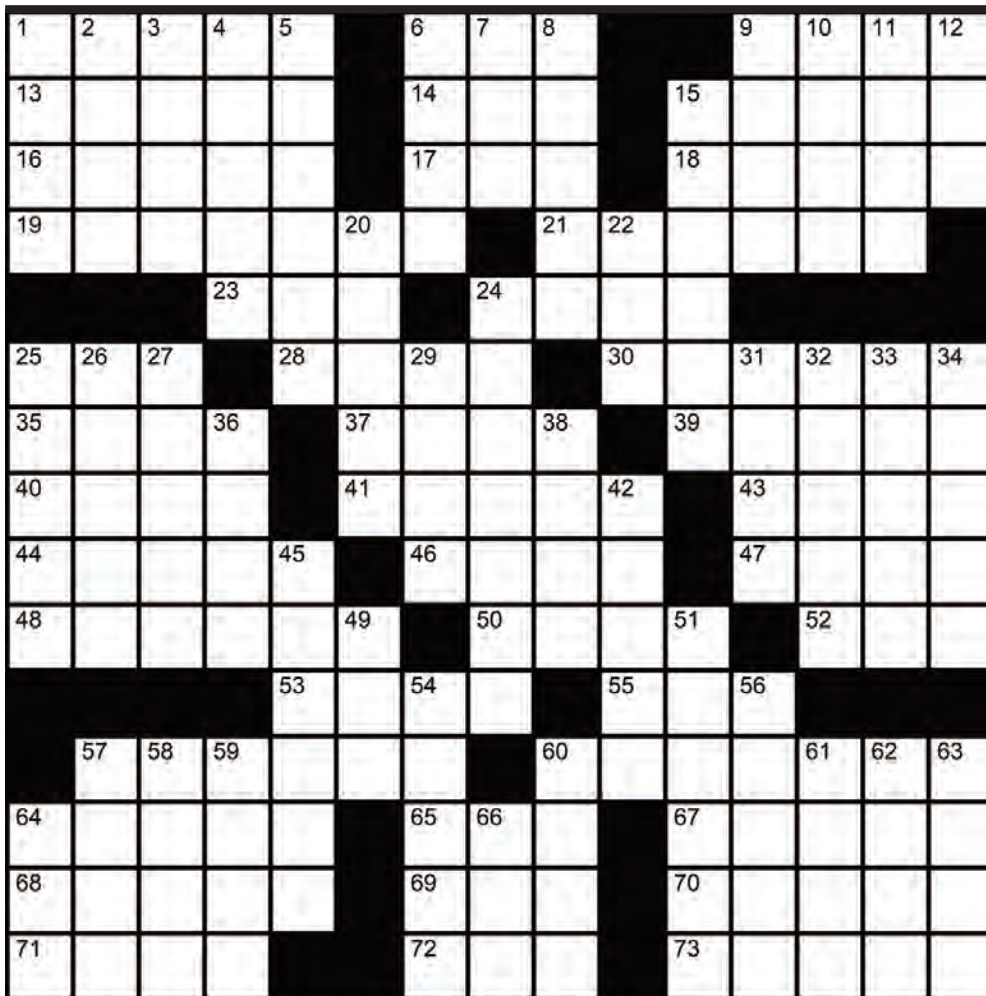
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14. Sigma _____ fraternity
15. Ten million, in India
16. Embryo sacs
17. Literary "even"
18. Tax evader's fear
19. *Most nominated streamer in this year's Oscar
21. *Most-nominated Black actor in Oscar history
23. Opposite of yang
24. Lard cousin
25. *Milk _____ movie snack
28. Poetic source of Norse mythology
30. 2020 demographic event
35. Arrival times, acronym
37. Baseball points
39. Camelot to King Arthur
40. Actress Campbell
41. *Where Oscar-winner "Slumdog Millionaire" was set
43. Not in favor
44. *What Halle Berry did when she won an Oscar in 2002
46. Jet black
47. Lively
48. Paid killers (2 words)
50. Upon
52. Rally repeater
53. Sweet-talk
55. Not outs
57. *Total Oscar nominations for "The Power of the Dog"
60. *One of this year's



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| <p>Oscar hosts</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 64. Exotic juice flavor 65. *Jamie Foxx won an Oscar in 2005 for this flick 67. Bizet's "Carmen," e.g. 68. Off kilter 69. *1942's "Holiday _____," Oscar winner 70. Admit (2 words) 71. Afterward 72. And so on acronym 73. Took the Kool-Aid <p>DOWN</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. J. Edgar Hoover's man 2. Ice on a window 3. Antonym of "is" 4. Enlighten 5. Puck stopper 6. Kilimanjaro top, e.g. 7. Pronoun | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Hinduism follower 9. **"Parallel Mothers" nominee Penelope 10. Prospector's mother 11. Seed coat 12. Lassie, e.g. 15. Type of horse gait 20. Lemur from Madagascar 22. European Economic Community 24. Playground attraction 25. **"Belfast" nominee, "Shakespeare in Love" winner 26. First cradles 27. Lifeboat support 29. *Denis Villeneuve's sci-fi nominee 31. Type of tide 32. Not so crazy 33. Extremist | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 34. **"King Richard" nominee, once a fresh prince 36. Give an impression 38. Land of Israel 42. Shenanigan 45. Remove claws 49. Presidential election mo. 51. Waiting on the phone (2 words) 54. Eagle's nest 56. Like the Incredibles 57. Backside 58. Boat track 59. Not odd 60. Update, as in a FitBit 61. Formerly Facebook 62. *Julia Robert's 2001 Oscar-winning role 63. Colonel or captain 64. Gangster's gun 66. _____ eater or _____ hill |
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2021	Kia	K5 LXS	4,963
2021	Tesla	Model 3 Standard Range Plus	15,196
2021	Chevrolet	Spark	1,167
2020	Chevrolet	Corvette 3LT	8,263
2019	Chevrolet	Sonic	59,039
2019	Nissan	Sentra SV	15,009
2019	Volkswagen	Golf SportWagen	56,048
2019	Volkswagen	Beetle	42,676
2018	Chevrolet	Cruze LS	54,872
2018	Toyota	Camry	60,256
2015	Chevrolet	Corvette 2LT	15,349
2015	Nissan	Altima 2.5 S	59,261
2015	Buick	LaCrosse	104,189
2014	Chevrolet	Cruze	113,152
2013	Hyundai	Elantra	55,328
2011	Cadillac	CTS Sedan Luxury	73,798
2008	Corvette	Coupe	9,007

SUVS

YEAR	MAKE	MODEL	MILES
2021	Chevrolet	Equinox Premier	23,547
2021	Chevrolet	Tahoe RST	4,798
2021	Chevrolet	Tahoe Z71	14,918
2021	Kia	Telluride S	8,173
2021	Toyota	Highlander	1,996
2021	Chevrolet	Suburban	388

2021	Ford	Bronco Badlands AWD	1,237
2021	Chevrolet	Equinox Premier AWD	16,427
2021	Jeep	Wrangle High Altitude	17,132
2020	Tahoe	Premier 4x4	24,476
2020	Chevrolet	Traverse LT	14,559
2020	Cadillac	Escalade Premium Luxury	7,309
2020	GMC	Acadia AT4	28,261
2020	Subaru	Outback Onyx Edition XT	27,594
2020	Subaru	Crosstrek Limited	14,430
2020	Hyundai	Palisade	34,462
2019	Chevrolet	Tahoe LT	46,162
2019	GMC	Yukon XL Denali	63,696
2019	Land Rover	Range Rover Sport HSE Dynamic	37,751
2019	Chevrolet	Express 2500	12,089
2019	GMC	Terrain	63,316
2018	Chevrolet	Tahoe	84,386
2018	Volkswagen	Atlas 3.6L V6 SE	71,947
2017	Toyota	RAV4 LE	83,441
2017	Volkswagen	Tiguan Wolfsburg Edition	59,132
2016	Buick	Enclave CXL AWD	81,859
2015	Chevrolet	Equinox IT AWD	87,398
2015	Jeep	Wrangler Unlimited Altitude	39,030
2012	Chevrolet	Traverse	120,790

TRUCKS

YEAR	MAKE	MODEL	MILES
2022	Chevrolet	Silverado 3500HD High Country	3,761
2022	Toyota	Tacoma 4WD	489
2022	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500 LT Trail Boss	651
2021	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500 LT Trail Boss	15,112
2021	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500	5,822

2021	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500	435
2021	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500	16,244
2021	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500	8,432
2021	Ford	Bronco Sport	209
2021	Ram	2500 Tradesman	3,647
2021	Toyota	Tacoma 4WD	4,746
2020	Ram	3500 Dump Truck	19,267
2020	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500 High Country	22,601
2020	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500 RST	90,498
2020	Chevrolet	Silverado 2500 HD	1,205
2020	Chevrolet	Silverado 2500 HD HC Diesel	23,536
2020	GMC	Sierra 1500 AT4	15,588
2020	Ram	2500 Longhorn Diamond	23,286
2019	Toyota	Tacoma TRD 4x4	43,577
2019	Chevrolet	Silverado 2500HD	30,903
2019	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500 High Country	44,359
2019	GMC	Sierra 1500	18,811
2019	Nissan	Frontier SV 4x4	60,592
2019	Toyota	Tacoma SR5	43,420
2018	Chevrolet	Colorado Z-71	23,542
2018	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500 Custom	104,810
2018	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500	31,379
2018	GMC	Sierra 1500 SLT	44,668
2018	GMC	Sierra 1500 Denali	25,059
2017	GMC	Sierra 1500 SLT	55,201
2017	GMC	Sierra 1500 SLT	61,657
2017	Ram	Nightfall 1500 4x4	79,143
2016	Ram	Diesel Crew 2500	60,495
2015	Chevrolet	Colorado	95,530
2012	Chevrolet	Colorado LT w/1LT	117,555
2012	GMC	Sierra 2500 Diesel	192,749



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