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Vietnam Veterans Day commemorated in downtown Franklin

Brittney Lofthouse
 Contributing Writer

“Never again shall one generation of veterans abandon another”

The Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 994, also known as the Nat Henry Chapter 994, hosted the annual Vietnam Veterans Day celebration on Saturday, March 26, beginning parade that began at the Franklin Town Hall and proceeded up Main Street before finishing at the Town Gazebo.

Leigh Holbrooks, director of Macon County Veterans Services was the featured guest speaker. In addition, The White Sisters performed special music and Bernie Coulson, presented information on the VVA Chapter 994 Photo Project.

Vietnam Veterans Day commemorates the sacrifices of Vietnam veterans and their families and is part of a national effort to recognize the men and women who were denied a proper welcome upon returning home more than 40 years ago.

The Vietnam War Veterans Recognition



Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 994 led the parade in downtown Franklin on Saturday to honor the service men and women who served or were lost in the Vietnam War. The Vietnam War Veteran Recognition Act was signed in 2017 designating March 29 as National Vietnam War Veterans Day. On that day in 1973, the last combat troops were withdrawn from Vietnam and the last known prisoners of war landed on American soil. For more photos, see page 12. Photo by Vickie Carpenter

Act, signed into law in 2017, designates March 29 of each year as National Vietnam War Veterans Day. March 29 was chosen be-

cause on that day in 1973, the last combat troops were withdrawn from Vietnam and the last prisoners of war held in North Viet-

nam arrived on American soil. It is also the date President Richard Nixon chose for the first Vietnam Veterans Day in 1974.

Locally, since 2009, the Macon County Vietnam veterans have recognized their fellow Vietnam veterans and their families with the parade and ceremony, especially those who made the supreme sacrifice of giving their lives during the Vietnam conflict.

It is estimated that nearly 60,000 servicemen lost their lives, including the nearly 1,600 now considered missing in action. Approximately nine million actively served during the Vietnam War era and it is estimated that about seven million are still living today.

White crosses representing and honoring the 79 Maconians who gave their lives in the Vietnam War are always lined up in rows in front of the county courthouse during the annual celebration.

While Vietnam Veterans Day is now recognized around the country, Macon County veterans led the charge, with the help of former North Carolina Congressman Heath Shuler, to have Vietnam Veterans Day formally recognized as a national holiday.

MMS construction is nearing completion

Diane Peltz – Contributing Writer

The School Board held its regular meeting on Monday, March 28, in Highlands.

On the agenda was the ongoing construction of Macon Middle School, which is winding down.

"The project is in its last phase in the west wing of the school and will go quickly," said Todd Gibbs, Macon County Schools Personnel Director. New pumps have been approved for the ball field and should be delivered by June 8.

Gibbs explained an issue with the new flooring which Flex Company installed at MMS.

"It is Solid Vinyl Tile (SVT) flooring. This is different in many ways to the VCT (Vinyl Composite Tile) that we have in all of our other schools. This SVT was an \$83,000 upgrade to VCT. It was an alternate, which means if other bids on other parts of the project come under bid, then we can go with construction and renovation alternates. With the MMS renovation, the whole bid came under estimate so we were

able to include all the alternates, including 'upgrading' to the SVT. This particular vinyl tile is very soft and chairs with sled runners as legs (vs. individual legs) have a tendency to mark up soft tile. Those chairs with runners, and most all of the other furniture at MMS, were marking up the SVT, while it did not have wax on it. As soon as we put wax on the supposedly no-wax floors, the furniture does not mark up the floor."

"So in the long run these no wax low maintenance floors turned out to be high maintenance after all," commented Superintendent Chris Baldwin.

Gibbs could not comment on possible future litigation due to this issue. The county manager will have to answer that question.

Health care benefits sought for VIP Program employees
 In October 2021, the VIP After School Program received

See **SCHOOL BOARD** page 2

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Ross Chastain wins first NASCAR Cup series race

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SCHOOL BOARD

Continued from page 1

a North Carolina Early Childhood Sustainability grant. The grant runs through September 2023. The grant contains specific items that could be implemented with the grant money. One item is offering health insurance and other benefits to VIP employees. Lenora Clifton, Macon County Schools VIP & SEC Director, completed a survey with VIP employees, and found nine employees that are interested in taking the health insurance if it is offered.

Clifton would like to offer Health insurance to VIP Staff using the North Carolina Early Childhood Sustainability Grant that they have received.

If it is possible to offer the health insurance, the grant money will pay the monthly cost for health insurance for each employee that is interested. When the grant expires in 2023, Clifton hopes that the state will continue to provide money to sustain the health insurance coverage. However, if the funding is not available at that time to continue to offer paid health coverage, VIP employees could continue the insurance coverage by paying the fees.

VIP employees have signed a statement saying that they understand the terms. VIP staff will be responsible to pay out of pocket monthly for the deductibles, depending on the coverage that they decide to take out.

Other business

Dr. Baldwin gave a shout out to the Highlands Girl's Basketball Team for their successful season, winning the Championship in their conference. He also stated that the UNIFY March Madness at Franklin High School was a tremendous and successful event. This was the fourth year that this event has been held and it is well received in the community.

Spring break will begin at 3 p.m. on Friday, April 8, and run through Friday, April 15. Students will return to school on Monday, April 18.

The next school board meeting will be held on April 25, at the Macon County Administrative office.



The scope of work being done on Macon Middle School includes the addition of a locker room facility, roof repairs, wall assembly, cabinet and window replacements, interior finishes such as paint and restroom partitions, HVAC replacement, and plumbing updates. Photos by Vickie Carpenter



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Railroad in WNC virtual program offered

A free online program hosted by the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources will examine the history of the railroad in Western North Carolina.

It is widely recognized that the railroad opened the mountain region to the outside world, but few realize the Western North Carolina Railroad between Salisbury and Murphy was built primarily with convict labor.

An estimated 95% of the laborers who built the railroad in the region in the late 1870s were inmates of the North Carolina Penitentiary system — and at least 98% of them were African American. A memorial to these laborers was recently unveiled at Andrews Geyser near Old Fort.

This free virtual program will be presented by Dr. Daniel Pierce and Ashley McGhee Whittle on Thursday, March 31, from 6:30-8 p.m.

Pierce is UNC Asheville's Interdisciplinary Distinguished Professor of the Mountain South and a western North Carolina native. He received his B.S. in Education from Western Carolina University, M.A. in History from the University of Alabama, and Ph. D. in History from the University of Tennessee. He is the founding member of the RAIL Project and Steering Community Chair.

Whittle received her B.A. in History from UNC Asheville in 2016. She worked in the Archives and Museum Services program at Biltmore House before returning to UNCA where she is an assistant archivist at the Ramsey Library Special Collections. She is currently pursuing a Master's of Library and Information Science degree.



The Western North Carolina Railroad between Salisbury and Murphy was built primarily with convict labor, including a considerable number of African Americans.

To register and attend via Zoom, visit ncdcr.gov and look for upcoming virtual programs. For questions, call (828) 250-3105, email jeff.futch@ncdcr.gov, or visit www.ncdcr.gov.

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Macon among the 73 counties that has seen growth since 2020

The 2021 county population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau are the first set of population estimates based on the 2020 Census. Here's what the new data tells us about how North Carolina counties have changed in the year following the Census.

73 NC counties have grown since 2020

North Carolina grew by 112,000 people or 1.1% between April 1, 2020, and July 1, 2021, faster than the national rate of 0.1%. According to the estimates, 73 North Carolina counties grew in the 15 months following the Census.

The counties with the fastest-growth were coastal counties or Triangle suburbs: both Brunswick and Currituck had an estimated population increase of 5.5%, followed by Johnston (4.9%), Camden and Franklin (4.6%), and Pender (4.3%).

Other counties with growth above the state rate included:

- Dare, Carteret, and New Hanover on the coast
- Suburbs around Mecklenburg (Lincoln, Iredell, Cabarrus, Union, and Gaston)
- Wake County and other Triangle suburbs and exurbs (Chatham, Harnett, Granville)
- Moore, Hoke, and Lee counties
- The western counties of Clay, Macon, and Cherokee, as well as Yancey, Madison, and Polk

Macon County tallied a 1.5% change from 37,014 to 37,564, a difference of 550; and 816 net migration. The value for net migration includes the "residual" population change that the U.S. Census Bureau could not directly attribute to births, deaths or migration.

Counties with estimated population losses are concentrated in the (non-coastal) east, with the counties experiencing the largest percentage losses—Bertie (-2.4%), Northampton (-2.0%), and Hyde (-1.8%)—in the northeast. Another cluster of counties with population losses—Caldwell, Surry, Wilkes, and Yadkin—is in the northwest.

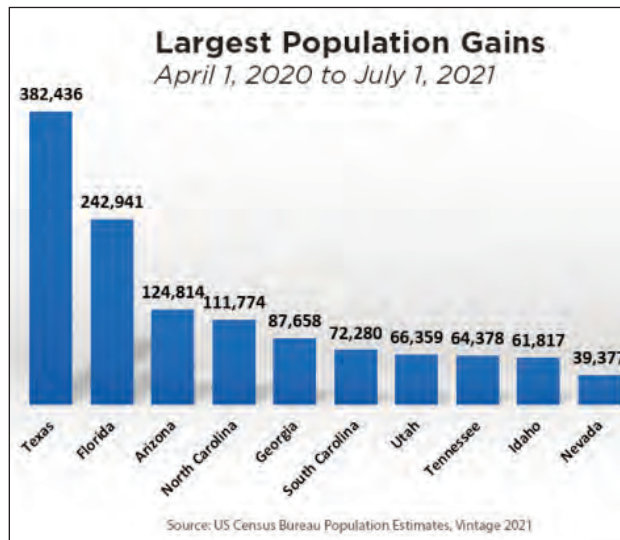
84 counties had more deaths than births

Between April 1, 2020, and July 1, 2021, North Carolina had natural decrease—or more deaths than births—for the first time. This reflects the combined impacts of population aging and the pandemic, which decreased births and increased deaths. This means that the state's population growth over this period was entirely due to more people moving into

the state than moving away (net migration).

Eighty-four North Carolina counties had more deaths than births. The county with the largest difference between deaths and births was Brunswick (-1,509), a leading retirement destination, followed by Buncombe (-1,159) and Henderson (-971) in the west.

The 16 counties with births than deaths were primarily in major metropolitan areas (Charlotte, the Triangle, and the Triad) or the military-associated counties of Onslow, Cum-



North Carolina was among the states that saw growth higher than the national average at 1.1%.

berland, and Hoke. While both Guilford and Forsyth had more births than deaths, the small margins—52 and 9, respectively—suggest these counties could see natural decrease later in the decade.

For four of these 16 counties—Mecklenburg, Onslow, Cumberland, and Durham—natural increase was the only source of growth; they all had estimated net out-migration. This is a common pattern for Onslow and Cumberland but represents a divergence from pre-pandemic trends for Mecklenburg and Durham.

Most counties grew from net in-migration

Seventy-nine North Carolina counties had more people

move in than move away since the 2020 Census. In four of the five fastest-growing counties, net migration was either the only source of growth (Brunswick, Currituck, and Franklin) or accounted for virtually all population growth (Camden, with 2 more births than deaths). Broadly, the data suggest a potential "pandemic migration" to suburbs/exurbs and coastal/mountain counties; we'll need more years of data to understand how much these patterns persist.

21 NC counties with net out-migration since 2020 Census

The 21 North Carolina counties with net out-migration were primarily in the eastern and Sandhills regions of the state, with two notable exceptions: Mecklenburg and Durham. Both Mecklenburg and Durham had large estimated in-flows of international migrants but even larger out-flows of individuals leaving for other counties and states.

These out-migrations contributed to slower growth for Mecklenburg (0.6%) and Durham (0.4%); both counties grew more slowly than the state overall. This contrasts with their population growth rankings last decade. Like the pandemic migration mentioned above, whether this is a single year aberration due to the pandemic or a multi-year trend is unknown until more data is obtained.

Foreign-born population trends: Impact of COVID-19

The U.S. has been a popular destination for immigrants from across the globe since the 1820s. According to the Department of Homeland Security's records, approximately 86 million immigrants received lawful permanent residency between 1820 and 2019.

In recent years, we have seen slowing growth across the entire immigrant population. Data from the Migration Policy Institute shows that the increase from 2017 to 2018 was much lower than the previous year, and that growth remained flat from 2018 to 2019. This continued into the pandemic—the U.S. Census Bureau noted that the net international migration from 2020 to 2021 was the lowest it had been in decades, due to border closures and a reduction in the number of green cards given out to workers.

With an aging population, generally declining fertility, and increased mortality rates due to the pandemic, future population growth of the United States is increasingly dependent on continued immigration. In recent months, both the head of the Richmond Federal Reserve and the head of the Minneapolis Federal Reserve have spoken out about the need for more immigrants to ease the labor shortage. An analysis by researchers at the University of California-Davis indicates that there are about 2 million fewer working-age immigrants than there would have been had trends pre-2020 continued.

What does this mean for North Carolina?

Between 2010 and 2020, about 70% of North Carolina's population growth was from net migration, meaning more people moving here than moving away. About one-quarter of these net gains from migration--18% of all North Carolina's population growth--was from international migration. Between 2020 and 2021, North Carolina experienced natural decrease (more deaths than births) for the first time; net migration was the only source of growth over the year. At the same time, net international migration fell significantly.

Due to population aging and lower fertility rates, net migration is expected to be the primary (and potentially only) source of growth for North Carolina. Sustained lower rates of immigration to the United States would likely translate to lower than expected population growth in North Carolina in the coming decade.

Source: Carolina Demography

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Settlement announced in lawsuit on revocation of licenses for not paying traffic court debts

Over the next 60 days the North Carolina Division of Motor Vehicles (NCDMV) will be contacting by mail and email more than 185,000 drivers whose licenses were revoked for their failure to pay fines, penalties, and court costs. Those drivers will be informed in a special notice about their ability under North Carolina General Statute § 20-24.1 to have the NCDMV lift those revocations if the sentencing court finds their failure to pay was not willful and was instead due to their inability to afford the amount due. A driver may make this showing of inability to pay by filing with the sentencing court a motion for relief from fines and fees. The NC Administrative Office of the Courts has created a template motion that can be used for this purpose: Form AOC-CR-415. For a six-month period following the announcement of the settlement, the NCDMV will mail a copy of this template motion to drivers upon request.

The NCDMV has also revised the official notice it will send to drivers who will face future license revocations for failure to pay court debt. The revised notice will inform drivers that North Carolina General Statute § 20-24.1 permits them to prevent the revocation of their license by filing with the sentencing court a motion for relief from fines

and fees. Previously, the NCDMV revocation notice indicated that full payment of the amount of fines, penalties and court costs due was the only option to prevent an indefinite driver's license suspension.

The NCDMV agreed to these changes as part of a settlement of a class-action lawsuit filed in May 2018. The written settlement agreement, including the special and revised notices, as well as an advisement of Section 20-24.1 rights, will be made available on the NCDMV's website (www.ncdot.gov/dmv), and at local NCDMV offices, and in the North Carolina Driver Handbook.

The NCDMV has also agreed that it will help fund a North Carolina legal advocacy organization's creation, monitoring, and administration of a help and resources website, where the public can access informational videos, written explanatories and forms, and other best practices materials on how to prevent or remove a license suspension for non-payment from their record, as well as pro bono resources that may be able to provide representation to the public to help prevent or remove suspensions for non-payment from their record.

Individuals with questions may contact www.resolvetrafficdebtNC.org.

Did you know...

In 2020, the **overdose death rate** in Macon County was

25 out of 100,000 people.

This represents **9** people in Macon County who **died from overdose** in 2020.

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2022 numbers are not available but **expected to increase.**

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Endangered squirrels still flying high at Grandfather Mountain

It's a bird. It's a plane. It's a Carolina northern flying squirrel!

This past February, researchers with the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation and Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation conducted their annual population count of one of North Carolina's endangered species found on Grandfather Mountain: the Carolina northern flying squirrel.

During the Wildlife Commission's recent study on the mountain, the state agency was able to identify five Carolina northern flying squirrels using a series of nest boxes along a transect line. The researchers monitor trends in occupancy, or "presence/absence" of flying squirrels that exist on the mountain based on the squirrels they find in their studies. They then use this data to examine trends in occupancy over time.

Currently, up-to-date monitoring data are not available to the public. However, John Caveny, director of education and natural resources with the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation, the nonprofit organization that owns and operates the Linville, N.C., nature park, has participated in the studies for the past several years and said that, on average, it is typical to find six to 10 squirrels during one of these studies.

"For the most part, it is safe to say that our



Left: Researchers with the NCWRC search for Carolina northern flying squirrels in nest boxes on Grandfather Mountain.

Above: NCWRC wildlife biologist Christine Kelly holds a Carolina northern flying squirrel during the agency's annual population count on Grandfather Mountain. Photos by H Patton | Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation

population at Grandfather Mountain is stable," Caveny said.

The number of squirrels detected annually has varied throughout the study. This is due in part to the fact that northern flying squirrels have multiple den sites and may not be using a nest box on the day of the survey. Biologists suspect a variety of factors influence use of boxes, including recent weather and food availability. Imperfect detection of a rare, elusive, nocturnal species often requires multiple survey and monitoring techniques. NCWRC biologists supplement the nest box monitoring with acoustic monitoring that uses an automated recording unit to record the vocalizations of flying squirrels.

As part of the winter nest box monitoring, researchers gently coax the squirrel out of a nest box, which the squirrels use for denning and rearing their young, and into a mesh bag. They then measure the squirrel's hindfoot length in order to verify if it is a Carolina northern flying squirrel, whose feet are longer than the more common southern flying squirrel.

Moreover, the range of the northern species is restricted to high-elevation forests, while southern flying squirrels are more commonly found in lower elevations. Northern flying squirrels have bright cinnamon-brown colored fur and a cape of loose skin that stretches from their wrists to ankles, allowing them the ability to glide through the air. Other features that set the northern flying squirrel apart include bicolored belly hairs (gray and white) and the fact that these squirrels weigh nearly twice as much as their southern counterparts.

Biologists also examine the color of the squirrel's tail, which indicates its age, and they also verify its weight, sex and repro-

ductive condition. All five of the squirrels that the researchers found were male, which is not unusual given that the study is conducted during one of the squirrel's breeding periods when males are particularly active.

As a distinct sub-species of the more commonly found northern flying squirrel, which thrives in the boreal forests of Canada, the Carolina northern flying squirrel is a species that plays a critical role in determining the health of its environment. These squirrels are known as an indicator species, meaning that the health of this population of squirrels corresponds with the health of the forest as a whole.

"This species is only found in the spruce-fir forest and northern hardwood forests," Caveny said. "Spruce-fir forests are the second most endangered forest community in the U.S. If we lose these forests, then we lose these squirrels. What population trends can help show us is if there is something going on in that habitat, such as an invasive species like the balsam woolly adelgid that's killing trees that the squirrels den in or some other invasive species that is out-competing them for the food sources they have."

The Carolina northern flying squirrel perpetuates its own forest habitat. Unlike other species of squirrel that help populate the forests' trees and other plants by burying acorns and seeds, the Carolina northern flying squirrel does so by primarily feeding on and spreading truffles, a type of fungi that is found on the roots of trees.

These fungi are a critical organism that trees use as a source of water, while the fungi themselves use the trees as a source for sugar. As the squirrels eat the outer shell of the truffle, they inadvertently consume and then pass the undigested spores from the truffle throughout the forest in a way



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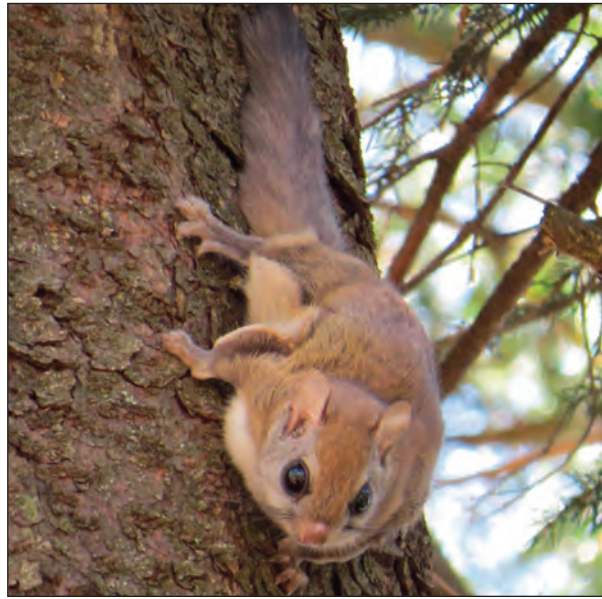
that only flying squirrels can.

As one of Grandfather Mountain's 72 threatened or endangered species, the Carolina northern flying squirrel has been studied at Grandfather Mountain since the 1990s. The species was first discovered in North Carolina in the 1950s and later listed as federally endangered in 1985. The Carolina northern flying squirrel is only found in nine locations throughout Western North Carolina, Eastern Tennessee and Southwest Virginia.

The species was identified at Grandfather Mountain once research expanded beyond Mt. Mitchell, Roan Mountain and the Great Smoky Mountains after it was classified endangered. Ever since, staff from Grandfather Mountain and Grandfather Mountain State Park have assisted in research.

To learn more about the endangered species that exist on Grandfather Mountain, visit www.grandfather.com/protecting-endangered-species.

The nonprofit Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation strives to inspire



As one of Grandfather Mountain's 72 threatened or endangered species, the Carolina northern flying squirrel has been studied at Grandfather Mountain since the 1990s.

Photo by Clifton Avery | N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission

conservation of the natural world by helping guests explore, understand and value the wonders of Grandfather Mountain. For more information, call 800-468-7325, or visit www.grandfather.com to book a trip.

Grandfather Mt. sees average weather

February 2022 saw average winter weather on Grandfather Mountain, according to data recorded at the park's official National Weather Service reporting stations.

The coldest day recorded last month, Feb. 5, saw a temperature of 8° Fahrenheit, with a wind chill of -20.2. The lowest temperature ever observed on Grandfather Mountain in the month of February (not counting wind chill) was -19° on Feb. 25, 1967.

The warmest temperature recorded last month was 57° on Feb. 24, seven degrees shy of the mountain's record February high of 64°, observed Feb. 22, 1977, and Feb. 15 and 16, 1989.

The average high temperature for February 2022 was 41.3°, with an average low of 25.7°, for a mean of 33.5°.

On Feb. 19, the weather station near the Mile High Swinging Bridge recorded a wind gust of 83.4 mph, along with a sustained wind speed of 73.3 mph. The station noted six days in February with wind gusts higher than 60 mph. The highest gust ever recorded on Grandfather Mountain was 124 mph, observed Feb. 25, 2019.

The station reported 6.07 inches of precipitation in February 2022, while observations recorded near the park's Nature Museum saw 5.65 inches. Precipitation is also measured at the latter location, as high winds can make it



Grandfather Mountain experienced average winter weather in February 2022, according to data from the National Weather Service recording station located near the Mile High Swinging Bridge.

Photo by Monty Combs | Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation

the record 23 days in 1964 and 1986. The rainiest day last month was Feb. 4, when 1.36 inches were recorded at the top. The rainiest day on record for February was Feb. 2, 1965, when the weather station observed 4.7 inches.

For more information on weather at Grandfather Mountain, visit <https://grandfather.com/visit/plan-your-visit/real-time-weather/>.

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Mission Health updates its visitation restrictions

As of March 29, all Mission Health hospitals have reviewed and updated visitor restrictions. As COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations continue to decrease, we are now at a Level I visitation policy. This means two healthy visitors are allowed per inpatient during the regular visitor hours of 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. and one guest may remain overnight. In an effort to keep everyone safe, we will still require that all patients, visitors, and employees be masked in all public and patient care areas of Mission Health hospitals. Visitors younger than 12 will require administration permission.

Due to the limited space in some of the physician practice waiting rooms and to ensure the safety of our patients, visitors in our practices and clinics may still be limited. All visitors two years of age and older must be masked throughout the entire visit. Visitors should review symptoms of COVID-19 and be able to attest to screening negative.

Mission Health uses established protocols to care for patients with infectious diseases and follows CDC guidelines related to COVID-19 cases, including isolating the patients and taking steps to ensure the safety of our patients, employees and visitors. As a precaution, only one visitor will still be allowed for COVID-19-positive patients or with patients awaiting a COVID-19 test result. Proper PPE [Personal Protective Equipment] will be required for all visitors. Electronic devices are available upon request to assist with virtual visitation.

AMC focuses on community engagement in March

Clint Kendall
Angel Medical Center CNO/CEO

March is a time of year that signifies renewal and calls for celebration. In the world of healthcare, we acknowledge several special highlights this month.

I believe our community has much to celebrate — specifically who we are and what we have done in the face of this harrowing storm called COVID-19 — which we are still weathering.

I very much hope that we are seeing the end of this battle with COVID, but without vaccination, masking when appropriate, and good hand hygiene, we still have a high risk for variants and spikes in the COVID numbers. Throughout the pandemic, our community physicians and healthcare providers worked tirelessly to serve our community. On March 30th, we celebrate Physicians (Doctors) Day, a special time devoted to honoring the important role physicians fulfill in both caring for their patients and supporting the families and loved ones of patients.

The pandemic has touched the work of physicians in a profound way, making it even more challenging. Our physicians have consistently risen to every challenge set before them, however, and we should all be so grateful. Thank you, physicians, for everything you do for Angel Medical Center and Macon County.

First and foremost, our physicians allow our patients to receive care that is close to home. Continuous investment in AMC's growth and our community's health is required to make this possible. Community input is a critical component in this process. There are many ways for the hospital to partner with our community that benefit both community members and the entire AMC team.

A focus for 2022 that we are excited about is venturing beyond the bricks and mortar of our hospital to connect with our community in two key ways. The first is our Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC). Council members are community members who have either been patients here at AMC or have family members who were cared for here. Their meetings with hospital staff will focus on continually reviewing our processes in an effort to make AMC even more patient and family-friendly. The PFAC will review patient experience data and hospital processes to help ensure that we are providing the level of care that our community deserves.

A second group we're forming is the Community Engagement Group. They will both counsel us on how we can better engage with the community and advise us on ways that we can better support the community. We are very enthusiastic about launching both of these initiatives and are seeking community members to participate. If participating in one of the groups sounds appealing to you, we'd appreciate your help. Simply email me at Clint.Kendall@hca-healthcare.com and I'll make certain your name is place in



Clint Kendall

the hat.

Another part of AMC being a good neighbor is doing all we can to improve the health of our community through education.

The other major health awareness theme for March is that it's Colorectal Cancer Awareness month. About 1 in 25 people will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer, and risk factors include age, having a family history of colorectal cancer, a personal history of polyps, lifestyle factors such as eating a diet that's deficient in fiber and fruits and vegetables, high alcohol consumption, and tobacco use. Health conditions like obesity and inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) also raise

your risk. African Americans are also more likely to be diagnosed with colorectal cancer.

You've got several options for colorectal cancer testing, including a noninvasive test that analyzes a stool sample for hidden blood and altered DNA, and colonoscopy, a minimally invasive screening that is both a test and treatment (if needed for polyp removal) in one. It's recommended that adults 45 years and older get a colonoscopy every 10 years, or as directed by their provider.

March is also National Nutrition Month, and we all know that what we eat greatly affects our health. Moving toward a more plant-based diet with fewer processed foods is what is advised now, and there are delicious ways to do this.

We at AMC wish to be a good neighbor in all sorts of ways. In addition to delivering care to our community, providing health education to you is most important. I plan in subsequent columns to touch on topics that impact community health, as I did last month when I talked about healthcare disparities. It's important for everyone to stay informed about these problems and the gaps that exist. Only through doing all we can to care for everyone in this community equally can we realize our mission.

Clint Kendall, FACHE, MBA, MSN, BSN, RN, is Chief Executive Officer/Chief Nursing Officer of Angel Medical Center. He started his career as a nurse, and that perspective still informs his work and passion for the patient experience. Clint holds a Master's Degree in Business Administration, Nursing, and Health Care Management from the University of Phoenix, and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Western Carolina University. He comes to Angel Medical Center from Andalusia, Alabama, where he served as Chief Executive Officer of Andalusia Health, part of LifePoint Health. He oversaw the management and strategic planning for a 113-bed acute care facility there, and led Andalusia Physician Services as well, after serving in leadership roles at LifePoint facilities in Richlands, Virginia and Henderson, North Carolina. Clint has also earned the Certified Professional in Patient Safety (CPPS) certification, and is a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE), the American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE), and the American Nurses Association (ANA).



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SCC, NC Wesleyan sign transfer agreement

North Carolina Wesleyan College (NCWC), located in Rocky Mount, recently signed an agreement that will help qualified graduates of Southwestern Community College (SCC) transfer to NCWC. The agreement aims to provide seamless transfer for students who enroll at NCWC following completion of their two-year degree at SCC.



Dr. Don Tomas is President of Southwestern Community College, which signed a transfer agreement with North Carolina Wesleyan College.

“We’re pleased to offer this new opportunity for our students,” said Dr. Don Tomas, SCC’s President. “Helping our students succeed is our top priority, and North Carolina Wesleyan College offers a wide variety of career paths to help students do just that.”

The agreement is the newest in a long list of SCC’s transfer agreements, and will enhance and expand the educational opportunities of Associate in Arts, Associate in Fine Arts, Associate in Science and Associate in Applied Science graduates by offering SCC graduates access to the benefits of the Wesleyan Works program, pre-admission advising, generous transfer credit and a clear definition of the transfer of courses from SCC to NCWC.

This MOU allows SCC Associate in Applied Science students to transfer an additional 15 hours of general education credits for a total of 75 transfer credits.

“NCWC is excited for this new partnership with Southwestern Community College which recognizes the value of a

community college education. This partnership will provide SCC graduates with flexible transfer opportunities to complete their four-year degree, in a supportive environment similar to their experience in their associate’s program,” stated Katie Farrell, Associate Dean of Adult & Professional Studies at NCWC. “Our goal has always been to support the community college mission and provide their graduates with a convenient and affordable transfer pathways.”

Students who graduate from SCC and transfer under this agreement may select any of NCWC’s programs of study or may transfer to the college’s Adult and Professional Studies program, taking advantage of the Wesleyan Works program. Students are required to maintain a minimum GPA of 2.0 and be in good academic standing. The agreement brings NCWC within the

reach of SCC students who may not have otherwise been able to attend the College.

Wesleyan Works is a transfer program designed for community college students who plan to continue their education at NCWC. Students who participate in Wesleyan Works will have access to academic advising and financial aid counseling through NCWC, as well as access to events on the College’s main campus. The program is ideal for students who would like to attend NCWC’s evening or online programs.

SCC’s C-STEP program is accepting future Tar Heels; deadline for high school seniors is April 1

More than 250 miles separate Southwestern Community College’s Jackson Campus from UNC Chapel Hill.

For area residents dreaming of attending the state’s oldest public university, a growing program at SCC brings a Carolina degree within reach.

Now in its fourth year at Southwestern, the Carolina-Student Transfer Excellence Program (C-STEP) is designed to guarantee admission to UNC from community colleges around the state. SCC is now accepting current high school seniors to join the fall C-STEP cohort with a deadline of April 1.

SCC’s first two C-STEP graduates – Puja Patel and Trevor Cole - are currently working toward their degrees in Chapel Hill.

“The University of North Carolina may feel like it’s a long distance away, but this program can make it a reality for high school seniors who graduate this May and come to Southwestern this fall,” said SCC C-STEP advisor Deanne Oppermann. “Besides ensuring admission to UNC, C-STEP saves students a lot of money because the first two years at Southwestern are exponentially more affordable. Plus, this is a great place to get



C-STEP program coordinator Deanne Oppermann (center) is shown here with Trevor Cole (left) and Puja Patel – the first two SCC students to complete the program and transfer to UNC Chapel Hill. The deadline to join SCC’s fall cohort for this program is April 1.

acclimated to college life before moving halfway across the state.”

Once students have transferred to UNC, the C-STEP program continues to provide transition and support services.

For more information about C-STEP, visit www.SouthwesternCC.edu/cstep or contact Oppermann at 828.339.4298 or deanne@southwesterncc.edu.



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What's new on the plateau

Patrick Taylor
Highlands Mayor



Patrick Taylor

I attended the recent broadband meeting that Senator Corbin and Representative Gillespie hosted two weeks ago. There was a strong turnout of people throughout Western North Carolina where broadband accessibility is a vital issue. Just in Macon County we had people from Otto and Nantahala in attendance. These communities have been working hard to improve broadband connectivity. Our representatives are to be commended for putting on this meeting.

For years, communications companies have ascertained that it's not economically feasible to run fiber lines to these rural and remote areas. Now with over a billion dollars in state and federal funds available, the prospect of acquiring service for these distant areas has changed. The head of NC Broadband spoke at the meeting about how grants will be available across the state this spring.

I am glad this critical issue has now been addressed at the federal and state level through funds coming primarily from the recently passed infrastructure bill. The goal is to have 98% of the country connected to fiber by the end of 2025.

The 2025 target date is very optimistic. From our experience with building the Highlands fiber network, it will take more like 4 to 6 years to connect everyone. Once grants are secured, network designs and specifications have to be completed before actual construction can begin. Our fiber project experienced delays in procuring fiber optic cabling, not to mention weather and COVID work slowdowns. With this impending network construction boom, I foresee supply shortages and inflated prices causing major challenges.

A number of providers were at the meeting. All are very interested in these government grants for underserved communities. When Highlands first started our fiber project about seven years ago, we sent out a request for information and interviewed a number of these companies. Not to be critical, but given the economics back then, some providers were not as confident as now about fiber network construction outside large service areas. It is gratifying to know many of these concerns have now been resolved.

What caught my attention was that the federal government wants fiber networks to be the standard. Wireless

Continued on page 11

Letters to the Editor

Still good people doing good things

Two Tuesdays ago, March 15, my brother and I went for a short hike on the Bartram Trail where you access Jones Gap. We hiked to Jones Knob, and I recommend this hike if you like great views. Upon returning to the parking area I found to my chagrin that one of the sets of my keys was not with me. I looked in my vehicle, around the house and other places only to not find those missing keys. The only chance I could have really was to go back to Jones Gap and Jones Knob and search for the keys.

With this on Saturday, March 19, I went back to the trail. At the end of the parking area at Jones Gap is a Bartram Trail information board with a topographic map and highlights of where you are in relation to the surrounding area. Getting closer with my vehicle approaching the information board I could see something a little unusual on its side. Hanging by a small nail head were my set of missing keys! Some kind and thoughtful person or persons cared enough to return the keys to where I started and hoped that someone who lost them would come back to retrieve them.

This proves to me and I hope many other people that despite all the crazy and somewhat hostile stuff going on in this world of ours there are still good people doing good things.

My hat's off to all who were caring and thoughtful to return the keys to where I could find them!

Robert Wilson – Otto, N.C.

Volunteers needed for statewide Litter Sweep

The N.C. Department of Transportation needs volunteers to help clean up trash along roads during the Adopt-A-Highway Fall Litter Sweep from April 16-30.

Each April and September, NCDOT asks volunteers to help remove litter from roadsides. Volunteers from local businesses, schools, nonprofits, churches, municipalities, law enforcement and community groups play an important role in keeping North Carolina's roads clean.

Volunteers can request clean-up supplies such as trash bags, gloves and safety vests from local NCDOT county maintenance offices. No sign up is required.

"Last year, NCDOT and our partner organizations picked up more than 13 million pounds of litter," said State Roadside Engineer David Harris. "The Litter Sweep is a great opportunity to keep that momentum going and get your friends and family outdoors. Just a few hours volunteering can make a huge difference."

For more information, visit ncdot.gov/littersweep or call 919-707-2970.



Voter information for May 17 Primary Election

Absentee ballots request March 28-May 10

Request forms at www.maconnc.org or www.ncsbe.gov or by calling (828)349-2034 or email Macon.boe@ncsbe.gov.

Voter Registration Deadline Friday, April 22 at 5 p.m.

Same day registration is possible only during one-stop voting.

One-Stop Voting - Franklin April 28-May 14

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One-Stop Voting - Highlands April 28-May 14

Highlands Civic Center, 600 N 4th St.
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Primary Election Day Tuesday, May 17

Voters will cast ballots at their respective precincts.

Polls open 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Contact the Macon County Board of Elections at (828)349-2034 or visit www.maconnc.org/elections.

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Nantahala-Pisgah Forest Partnership issues objection to Forest Service management plan

The Nantahala-Pisgah Forest Partnership, which represents stakeholders from across the full spectrum of public land interests—including recreation, forest products, conservation, wildlife, hunting, and fishing—has filed an Objection to the draft management plan for the Nantahala and Pisgah National forests, which was issued earlier this year. The Forest Service will consider this formal objection as it crafts its final management plan, which will provide a framework for how the 1.1 million acres of Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests and their resources will be managed for the next 20 years.

The Partnership has collaborated with the Forest Service for nearly a decade on this management plan. As part of its comments on the draft forest plan in 2020, the Partnership stressed the importance of addressing possible conflicts in the Plan itself and submitted language that would help accomplish that goal. However, the latest draft plan did not include that approach, suggesting conflicts would be addressed on a case-by-case basis as the Plan was implemented. The Partnership Objection contends that this approach will substantially stall projects and delay much-needed restoration.

The Partnership's Objection identifies these critical areas where conflict resolution is needed in the Plan:

- Resolve conflict and increase efficiency during project implementation by changing land allocations to protect a wide range of interests, including young forests, wilderness areas, and eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers. The Partnership encourages an ambitious timber strategy that can support local communities without negatively impacting important ecologically sensitive areas, especially when coupled with controlling non-native invasive species and addressing the road maintenance backlog.

- Along with land allocations that are sensitive to recreationally important places, the plan should better provide for sustainable recreation through improving the management of climbing, paddling, mineral hunting, mountain biking, equestrian use, and all Forest visitation. This will reduce conflict between recreationists, the Forest Service, and natural resources, while encouraging collaboration and exceptional and sustainable visitor experiences.

- Establish a 256,000-acre old-growth patch network using a cap-and-trade approach that includes a process for identifying old growth during projects. This approach

would allow the Forest Service to replace lower quality patches of old growth with higher quality patches of old growth, should higher quality patches be encountered during projects. Such flexibility would reduce project-level conflict, ensure project-level success, and, most importantly, result in a higher quality old-growth network.

- Address the concern that Natural Heritage Natural Areas (NHNA) could be negatively impacted by management actions without consideration for their rare or unique values. The Plan released leaves 54,000 acres of NHNAs potentially open to commercial timber harvest and road building. These acres are home to ten federally listed species, 173 state listed species, and 129 species of conservation concern. The Partnership requests that standards be added to the Plan that further describe coordination with the Natural Heritage Program, including guidance on how and when some Natural Area boundaries could be re-mapped at the project level (if appropriate).

- Include collaboratively supported, ecological treatments into their timber management program. The Partnership urges the Forest Service to be more ambitious in creating and maintaining open forest woodland habitat, or forest conditions where sunlight reaches the forest floor. Such conditions support a wide variety of vegetation and tree species critical to ecological health. However, such ecological restoration treatments must be paired with commercial timber harvests that support local economies.

For more information on the Nantahala-Pisgah Forest Partnership or for press inquiries, contact Ashleigh Sherman at ashleigh@darbycommunications.com. The Partnership's full objection is available to view at <https://npforestpartnership.org/plan-revision-comments/>.

About Nantahala-Pisgah Forest Partnership

In 2013, the Nantahala-Pisgah Forest Partnership was formed by a variety of forest stakeholders to foster civic engagement and positive guidance in creating the best possible management plan revision for the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests. The Partnership strives to create a lasting voice for innovative management and public investment in the public forests of North Carolina's mountains for the future. For more information, visit <https://npforestpartnership.org>.

Deadline extended through May 4 for GREAT grants

The N.C. Department of Information Technology (NCDIT) has announced that qualified internet service providers and electric membership cooperatives providing internet service now have through May 4 to apply for up to \$350 million in grants to expand broadband infrastructure in North Carolina.

This round of the Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology (GREAT) grant program uses American Rescue Plan Act funds to provide matching grants to broadband providers that compete for funding to expand access to high-speed internet service to unserved households, businesses and farms. Organizations and counties across the state have expressed interest in participating in the GREAT Grant program, and several have requested additional time to meet the conditions required by the program's authorizing legislation and federal rules.

"The grant program encourages partnerships between local governments and broadband providers to best leverage available federal funding. We are extending the application window to allow more time for county governments and internet

service providers to create these partnerships and maximize the benefit to North Carolina residents," said NCDIT Secretary and State Chief Information Officer James Weaver. "We want to fund as many eligible projects as possible so more North Carolinians can connect, learn and work online. This extra time will allow applicants to work through the grant conditions with their partners."

Interested applicants should continue to review the GREAT Grant Guidance document and FAQs at www.ncbroadband.gov/grants/great-grant-federal/great-grant-2021-2022 and the NC OneMap GREAT Grant Mapping Tool and Online Mapping Tool Help Document at www.nconemap.gov/pages/broadband for any updates.

Once all eligible GREAT Grant applications have been reviewed and scored, NCDIT will begin awarding grants on a rolling basis to expedite critical broadband infrastructure projects across the state. Additional details on the GREAT Grant can be found at www.ncbroadband.gov/grants/great-grant-federal.

TAYLOR

From previous page

and satellite systems are not encouraged through these grants.

One may criticize Highlands for being too proactive in beginning our fiber project seven years ago. If only we had waited, federal and state grants may now be available. On the other hand, our network is active, and Hotwire is weeks away from initiating service.

Also, by leasing to Hotwire for 25 years for \$10.2 million, our construction loan of \$4.6 million will be recouped in 12 years. We will also be able to use lease revenue to become a Smart Digital City. Hotwire will invest several million dollars in building the underground portion of the network. In the long run, this partnership will result in no taxpayer funds being lost in our quest to be fiber optic city.

Our long road to becoming a fiber optic city has had many challenges and obstacles. And yes, the town has taken risks in making this network a reality. Many advancements in technology and services involve economic risks. There were folks in Highlands back in 1929 who thought that new fangled hydroelectric power plant was a big risk too.

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Vietnam Veterans Day Saturday, March 26, 2022



Photos by Vickie Carpenter





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Arrest Report

The Macon County Sheriff's Department, Franklin Police Department or Jackson County Sheriff's Department made the following arrests March 14 - 26. All suspects are innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.



Macon County Sheriff's Department

March 22

Hannah Erdman, was charged with second degree trespass. Deputy Cody Tiger made the arrest.

Matthew Thomas Lockwood, was charged with being fugitive from out of state. William D. Stamey made the arrest.

David Samuel Vinson, was charged with possession of a schedule II controlled substance and assault inflicting serious injuries. Adrian L. Mace made the arrest.

March 24

Randy Fay Prentice, was charged with felony larceny and possession of stolen goods/property. Jordan C. Sutton made the arrest.

Joyce Michelle Winn, was charged with simple assault, assault and battery and injury to personal property. Cassie J. Shuler made the arrest.

March 25

Jaclyn Sue Poole, was charged with possession of methamphetamine. Denver J. Elliott made the arrest.

Sonya Watts, was charged with cyber-stalking and communicating threats. Adrian L. Mace made the arrest.

March 26

Kymerly Jeanne Owen, was issued a true bill of indictment. David Blanton made the arrest.

Derek Gene Camp, was charged with being a habitual felon. David Blanton made the arrest.

Ronald Scott Jones Jr., was charged with violate a domestic violence protective order. Adrian L. Mace made the arrest.

Franklin Police Department

March 17

Ashley Michelle Barrett, was charged with larceny/reckless driving and possession of marijuana/marijuana paraphernalia. R.S. Dula made the arrest.

Weston Darwin Lawrence, trafficking in opium or heroin and maintain a dwelling for controlled substance. M.G. Pellicer made the arrest.

March 18

Alfred Ato Akunor, was charged with possession of stolen firearm, carry a concealed gun and run steady red light. R.S.

Dula made the arrest.

March 20

William Jason Woodard, was charged with misdemeanor larceny and drunk and disorderly. C.T. Chastain made the arrest.

Donald Ray Van Meter Jr., was charged with simple assault. J.M. Norman made the arrest.

March 22

Richard Kayleb Bates, was charged with larceny. R.S. Dula made the arrest.

March 24

Gregory Allen Rhoden, was charged with possession of methamphetamine and possession of drug paraphernalia. M.A. Bingham made the arrest.

Vanessa Lynnette Griffith, was charged with misdemeanor larceny, possession of stolen goods/property and obtain property by false pretense. C.T. Chastain made the arrest.

Jackson County Sheriff's Department

March 14

Desmond Jerome Williams, 24, of Whittier, was charged with drive/allow registration plate not displayed, operate a vehicle with no insurance, disorderly conduct and drive/allow a motor vehicle with no registration. A secured bond of \$2,000 was set.

March 15

Patrick Allen McChesney, 37, of Marion Forrest, was charged with assault on a female. No bond was set.

James Robert Justice, 44, of Joe Branch Rd., Whittier, was charged with failure to appear for failure to register as a sex offender. No bond was set.

Vasti Atziri Salmoran Salazar, 22, of Gorman Lane, Fletcher, was charged with breaking or entering. No bond was set.

March 16

Brittney Hope Woodring, 32, of Marion Forest Rd., was charged with simple assault. No bond was set.

Jeremiah Eugene Justice, 42, of Firehouse Rd., Hendersonville, was charged with financial card fraud and uttering a forged instrument. A secured bond of \$10,000 was set.

March 17

Erin Miranda White, 39, of Regal Ave., was charged with violation of domestic violence protective order. No bond was set.

Pamela Kay Thompson, 63, was charged with possession of stolen goods/property and felony larceny. No bond was set.

Ashley Elizabeth Schaal, 21, of Old Soco Rd., Cherokee, was charged with possession of drug paraphernalia and felony possession of a schedule I controlled substance. No bond was set.

Nigel Jena, 23, of Helm Dr., Cullowhee, was charged with larceny. No bond was set.

Jordan Sales, 19, of Memorial Dr., Cullowhee, was charged with larceny. No bond was set.

March 18

Laura Surelle Henry, 49, of Bellview Park Rd., Franklin, was charged with extradition/fugitive from other state. A secured bond of \$75,000 was set.

March 20

Shayla Faye Trull, 23, of Locust Creek Rd., was charged with felony probation violation. No bond was set.

Thomas Robert Dylan, 24, of Ensley St., was charged with misdemeanor larceny. A secured bond of \$500 was set.

March 21

Alexandrea Nichole Carpenter, 25, of Cullowhee Mtn. Rd., Cullowhee, was charged with shoplifting concealment goods. Secured bond of \$500 was set.

Derek Alan Diehl, 50, of King St., was charged with cyber stalking and stalking. A secured bond of \$1,000 was set.

March 22

Austin Levi Ewart, 28, of Ray St., Waynesville, was charged with communicating threats. No bond was set.

Christopher Ian Cotterman, 38, of Sylva, was charged with being a habitual felon. No bond was set.

March 23

Eric Daniel Vaughn, 39, of Southeast Mimosia St., Fla., was charged with resisting a public officer, driving while license revoked and unsafe movement. A secured bond of \$51,000 was set.

Kenneth Earl Adams, 29, of Oteen Church Rd., Asheville, was charged with failure to appear for unsafe lane charge and driving while impaired. A secured bond of \$5,000 was set.

Jeremy Lee Gunter, 37, of Boo Holler Rd., Whittier, was charged with second degree trespassing. An unsecured bond of \$500 was set.

March 24

Errika Leah Bradley, 44, Cherokee, was charged with misdemeanor larceny. A secured bond of \$500 was set.

March 25

Shannon Eugene Breedlove, 52, of Mill Creek Rd., Cullowhee, was charged with possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of a scheduled IV controlled substance and possession of a schedule III controlled substance. An unsecured bond of \$1,500 was set.

March 26

Heather Nicole Moose, 32, of Gardina Lane, was charged with school attendance law violation. A secured bond of \$500 was set.

Juliane Bump, 56, of Wake Robin Dr., Cullowhee, was charged with possession of drug paraphernalia, simple possession of a schedule III controlled substance, simple possession of a schedule II controlled substance, possession of a controlled substance on jail premises and felony possession of cocaine. A secured bond of \$10,000 was set.

Jess Harvey Cagle, 50, of Mollybe Lane, was charged with reconnect utility. No bond was set.

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Lady Panthers soccer beats East Henderson 2-1



Brittany Hernandez-Moliona and Stephanie Ortiz battle for the ball.



#7 Kaitlyn Riddle



Cynthia Rios



Franklin Lady Panther Soccer overcame the East Henderson Eagles at Monday's game, 2-1. #5 Brittany Hernandez-Moliona scored the game-winning goal and was named Player of the Game. #2 Stephanie Ortiz scored the other goal.



Karli McMahan

Photos by Patri Cabe



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Photography exhibit, reception at the library

Photography by Wendy Kates will be on display in the Macon County Public Library Meeting Room in April. A drop-in reception will be held Saturday, April 9, between 1 and 3 p.m. Kates's photography has been exhibited at the Everson Art Museum in Syracuse, New York, the Columbia Arts Center in Columbia, Maryland, and the Joseph Miller Abstract Photography Exhibit in Northern Virginia. Kates spent the bulk of her adulthood in Chicago, Maryland, Upstate New York and now Washington, DC, she has enjoyed vacationing for the past 50 years in Franklin, where her husband's family owns a vacation farm. Pictured is a photo entitled "Beneath the Bridge."

Music with the Vagabonds back at Macon library



Music with the Vagabonds at the Library Monday, April 4, 2 p.m. in the Macon County Public Library Program Room. The Vagabonds are back with tunes to share. Join them and get some good music, good company, and plain old good fun. The library is located at 149 Siler Farm Road. For more information, call (828)524-3600.

Highland Games part of rich heritage

The Highland Games as they are known, is a celebration of Scottish heritage in the United States. But how and why did these contests start?

One claim is that the Games originated in Ireland in 200 B.C. The Games then crossed the water to Scotland with the fourth or fifth migration of the Scots into Dalriada, Argyll, and beyond. Another claim is a display of bravery and strength in front of the opposing Roman army after the invasion of Scotland in the 2nd and 3rd centuries.

Research found at "scotsontherocksmoab.com" has led to an intriguing idea. The Games could have been an informal test by Scottish kings and Clan Chiefs to test the agility, cunning, and physical strength of their clansmen. The victors were then awarded positions of leadership both on the battlefield and within the clan.

One example is King Malcolm II of Scotland proposed a foot race to the summit of the highest mountain, Creag Chonnich, the mountain the overlooks Braemar. That is how the fleetest feet in his kingdom were chosen as messengers.

These contests may look like just a test of brute strength, but that is a mistaken notion. Even the heavy athletic competitions take much more skill than just strength. The caber toss is a traditional Scottish athletic event in which competitors toss a large tapered pole called a

"caber." In Scotland the caber is usually made from a Larch tree and is typically 19 feet 6 inches tall and weighs 175 lbs. The contestant holds the log by the smaller end in his hands. It takes precision and timing to turn the long log in exactly the opposite position. The judging is how closely the small end of the log represents the 12 noon position from the competitor.



King Malcolm III



Queen Victoria

The Cowal Highland Gathering in Dunoon (Scottish Gaelic – Don O Mhain) traces its origins in the Braemar Games held by King Malcolm IV during the 11th century.

The Ceres in Fife are considered the longest continuous Highland games in Scotland and began in 1314. One of the biggest supporters for the Highland Games was Queen Victoria. She formed a deep bond with the Scottish people. Queen Victoria set the precedent for royalty in attendance in 1818.

Features of the large Highland Games include competition in piping, drumming, dancing, heavy athletic competitions, foot racing, as well we all kinds of exhibits and entertainment related to many aspects of Scottish and Gaelic Culture. The Cowal Highland Gathering, held in Dunan, annually in August, is the largest Highland Games in the world.

Submitted by Merrilee Bordeaux Taste of Scotland Society



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Deaths & Funerals

Luther 'Lou' W. Kuhlman

Luther "Lou" W. Kuhlman Jr., 79, of Franklin, N.C., passed away Saturday, March 19, 2022. Born in Brooklyn, New York to Luther and Evelyn Kuhlman, the family moved to Levittown, Long Island where he attended elementary school and graduated from Division Avenue High School class of 1960.

He served in the U.S. Navy for seven years on the nuclear submarine, USS Skipjack. Following his nuclear engineering education, he became a training supervisor at Shippingport Nuclear Station and later a shift supervisor at the Beaver Valley Nuclear Unit. His career as a test and start-up engineer took him to Catalytic Engineering in Philadelphia; Salem Nuclear Generating Station; River Bend Nuclear Project; Shorham Nuclear Generating Station; and Palo Verde Nuclear Station under the Arizona Nuclear Power Project. He retired to the mountains of North Carolina where he designed and built his own home. He started a business "Special Places" where he designed and built small structures and home additions.

Those passing before him include his parents; two sisters, Eileen Shroyer and Deborah Downey; two daughters, Lisa Kuhlman and Laura Ferrin; several aunts, uncles and cousins; and two special Border Collie buddies, "Molly" and "Dundee".

He is survived by his wife, Kathy; a brother, Ronald (Sue) of Long Island; a sister, Mary Moos of Rhode Island; two granddaughters, Dr. Tara Van Bommel (Jeremy) of Portland, Ore., and Melissa Ferrin of Tampa, Fla.; a grandson, Michael Kuhlman, of Denver, Colo.; a brother-in-law, John Shroyer, of Lexington, Mo.; and several nieces and nephews.

A celebration of life will be held at the Fellowship Hall of Hickory Knoll United Methodist Church, Saturday, May 14 at 2 p.m.

Memorial donations can be made to: Hickory Knoll United Methodist Church, 86 East Hickory Knoll Rd., Franklin, NC.

Emilio Marquez Vincente

Emilio Marquez Vincente, 54, of Dillard, Ga., passed away on Saturday, March 26, 2022, following a brief illness.

Born in Mexico, he was the son of the late Emilio Marquez Broca and the late Ondina Vicente de la Fuente. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by three brothers. He was of the Catholic faith, loved to cook, and was an outstanding carpenter, who loved building different things.

He is survived by a daughter, Nahomi Marquez de la Fuentes of Mexico; four sisters; and two brothers. He was soon to be a grandfather for the first time, and he was so excited.

A funeral mass will be on Thursday, March 31, at 6 p.m., at St. Francis Catholic Church. Father Tien Duong will officiate.

Following the service, the family and friends will return to Macon Funeral Home for a time of gathering until midnight.

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

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.



Luther W. Kuhlman



Emilio Marquez Vincente

John Boyd Long Jr.

John Boyd Long Jr., 84, of Franklin, N.C., passed away on Wednesday, March 23, 2022, at North Carolina State Veterans Home.

A native of Franklin, he was the son of the late John Boyd Long Sr. and Helen Gribble Long. He was also preceded by his wife, Judy Chastain Long; his sister, Joann Long Gregg; brothers-in-law, Grady Gregg and Gene Brown; and sister-in-law, Nancy Long.

He served in the United States Airforce as a navigator. He was an educator for 30 years in the Cleveland County, North Carolina School system and later a realtor for 18 years. He had a love of history, poetry, and music. He loved spending time with his children and grandchildren. He was a devoted husband and father.

He is survived by his daughter, Donna Long Lipscomb and her husband Gerald of Forest City and their children Alisa Phifer, Jordan Phifer, Gerald Lipscomb (Anna) and their children, Emerson and Jackson; Patrick Lipscomb and great grandson, Aleck Lipscomb; daughter, Pamela Long Skinner and her husband Scott of Boiling Springs, N.C., and their children, Joshua Skinner (Chelsey), Lindsay Skinner and great grandchildren Oliver and Ruby Cate Skinner; and daughter, Caroline Long Ruch and her husband Ben of Oak Ridge, N.C., and their children, Holden Ruch and Alexandra Ruch; brothers, Charles Long, Dennis Long, and Donald Long; sister, Evelyn Huscusson; and numerous nieces and nephews.

A celebration of life was held Sunday, March 27, at Macon Funeral Home in Franklin. Rev. Ronnie Branson officiated.

Burial followed at Woodlawn Cemetery.

V.F.W. Post 7339 and American Legion Post 108 conducted military rites.

Pallbearers were Josh Skinner, Jordan Phifer, Holden Ruch, Stephen Baldwin, John Branson, Mark Brown and Bobby Brown.

Online condolences may be made to www.maconfuneralhome.com.

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.



John Boyd Long Jr.

Willard Eugene Browning

Willard Eugene Browning, 83, passed away Friday, March 25, 2022. He was born Nov. 22, 1938, in Jackson County, North Carolina, to the late Jim Browning and Annie Lou Stiles Browning. He worked and retired as a painter in the construction business. He was of the Baptist faith attending Wells Grove Baptist Church and Watauga Baptist Church. He served in the U.S. Airforce during the Korean War.

Surviving are his two sons, Keith Browning of Franklin and Mike Browning of Gainesville, Ga.; one granddaughter, Amber Chovanic and husband, Dustin of Sugar Hill, Ga.; a great-granddaughter, Ansley Chovanic; and a great grandson, Jett Chovanic all of Sugar Hill, Ga.; and a number of nieces and nephews.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by a sister, Mary Davis and a brother, Bennie Browning.

A Celebration of Life service will be held Saturday, April 2, at 2 p.m., in the Chapel of Bryant-Grant Funeral Home with the Rev. David Lee Williams officiating. The family will greet friends following the service.

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

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



Willard E. Browning

Wilford Ware Corbin

Wilford Ware Corbin, 94, Abingdon, Va., entered Heaven on March 28, 2022. He was preceded in death by his beloved wife of 58 years, Mary Virginia Moses Corbin; his father, Thomas Furman Corbin Sr.; his mother, Pauline Ware; his stepmother, Annalee Holland Corbin; and his brother, Jerry E. Corbin.

He is survived by his brothers, Thomas Furman Corbin Jr., Ph.D, (Joanne), Denver, Colo., Jackie David Corbin, Ph.D, Nashville, Tenn., James Michael Corbin (Sue), Garfield, Ariz.; his stepbrother, Eugene McIntyre (Sofia), Walnut Creek, Calif.; his daughter, Paula Corbin Kahn (Rob), Abingdon, Va.; his sons, Tommy Corbin (Cathy), Morehead, Ky., Carroll Corbin (Lori), Boone, N.C., and Eric Corbin (Vanessa), Waynesville, N.C.; his grandchildren, Rendon Corbin (Andrea), Palmer, Alaska, Chandler Corbin, Tuckasegee, N.C., Candice Corbin, Marco Island, Fla., and Mariah Corbin Stanick (Max), Winston-Salem, N.C.; his great grandchildren, Carolina Corbin, Addison Corbin, and Ivy Corbin, Palmer, Alaska; and many nieces and nephews.

He was born in a Gennette Logging Camp on Oct. 25, 1927, near Norma, Tenn., and received elementary and secondary education in Higdonville School and Franklin High School, Macon County, North Carolina. He served in the United States Navy from 1945-1948, was recalled to active duty on the USS Missouri (BB-63) during the Korean War and was the recipient of seven military service awards. He returned to his education plans following the Korean War, graduated from Western Carolina Teachers College in 1953, and received a master's degree in education from Western Carolina Teachers College in 1958. His education career included teaching and administrative positions in the Macon County School District and in Cherokee, N.C., Wales, Scammon Bay, Anchorage, and Fairbanks, Alaska as an employee of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

He grew tomatoes for commercial sale in the late 1960s as a member of the Macon County Tomato Growers Cooperative, and he also began growing Fraser fir Christmas trees at this time. Following retirement from his education career, he continued growing his Fraser fir trees until 2010. He also was a dedicated member of the Appalachian Trail Maintenance Crew, Nantahala and Mount Rogers Districts, from 1999 till 2017. He cherished the nickname, "axeman," given to him by members of the Trail Crew, and he also took pride in receiving the "Best Wood Chopper Award" at the Franklin 1955 Centennial Celebration.

He was an ardent fan in Western Carolina's Catamount Club, and his taxidermy skill resulted in his mounting the catamount that sat in the Western Carolina University trophy case for many years. He followed the Atlanta Braves baseball team game by game, and he coached Franklin Little and Senior League baseball teams for many years.

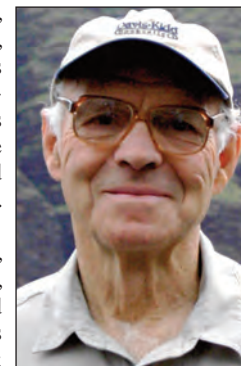
He didn't know any strangers; he made friends with all the folks he met, and he was a talented storyteller. He authored "A World Apart: My Life Among the Eskimos of Alaska" and co-authored "The Boys of Battle Branch" with his brother, Jackie Corbin.

He was a founding member of the Higdonville, N.C., Baptist Church, and a visitation will be held outdoors on Friday, April 1, from 1:30 to 2 p.m. with funeral services following at 2 p.m. at the church with Pastor Gene Hawkins officiating.

Memorial contributions can be made to Higdonville Baptist Church, 1990 Ellijay Rd, Franklin, NC 28734; Mt. Rogers Appalachian Trail Club, P.O. Box 789, Damascus, VA 24236-0789; Nantahala Hiking Club, Melissa Myers, 477 Holly Springs Estates Rd, Franklin, NC 28734.

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

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.



Wilford Corbin

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Deaths & Funerals

Casey Michael Holland

Casey Michael Holland, 27, of Franklin, N.C., passed away on Wednesday, March 23, 2022.

He was born in Jackson County to Kathy Elliott Holland and the late Michael Ray Holland.

He was known as easy to get along with and kindhearted. He loved spending time outside in the woods and sitting around the bonfire with his friends and family.

He is survived by his mother, Kathy Holland; and two daughters, Callie Holland, and Charlie Holland.

A graveside service was held Monday, March 28, at Holy Springs Baptist Church Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to Macon Funeral Home to assist with the arrangements.

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

Macon Funeral Home will be handling the arrangements.

Doyle Wayne 'D. W.' McCall

Doyle Wayne "D. W." McCall, 64, passed away Saturday, March 26, 2022. He was born March 4, 1958 in Macon County to the late Cletis McCall and Betty Norris McCall. He was a life long resident of Highlands and Macon County. He worked and retired from the tree service business. He loved fishing, hunting, children, and his family.

Surviving are his spouse, Teresa McClure; two brothers, Leroy "Spud" McCall and Daniel "Jabo" McCall both of Highlands; and two sisters, Linda McCall Webb and Mary Ellen Cooper both of Highlands.

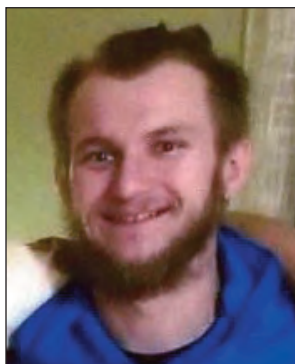
In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his sister, Roberta Holland.

A funeral service was held Wednesday, March 30, in the Chapel of Bryant-Grant Funeral Home with Rev. Marty Kilby officiating. Burial followed in the Miller Cemetery in Highlands.

Pallbearers were Mike Burton, Tom Holt, Jamie Holt, Jason Passmore, Zack Passmore, Kenny Talley, and Gary Cooper.

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

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



Casey Michael Holland



Doyle Wayne McCall

Columbus Jack Stiwinter

Columbus Jack Stiwinter, 81, passed away Sunday, March 27, 2022, in Monroe, N.C. He was born in Jackson County on Dec. 6, 1940, to the late L.C. Stiwinter and Ruby Fox Stiwinter. He was married for 50 years to the late Doris Ann Stiwinter who preceded him in 2012.

He was a lifelong resident of Jackson, County, a carpenter, and a Christmas tree farmer. He was a member of Yellow Mountain Baptist Church. He was a loving husband, father, and grandfather.

Surviving are two sons, Chris Stiwinter and his wife, Lisa of Waxhaw, N.C. and J.C. Stiwinter; and seven grandchildren.

In addition to his parents and wife, he was preceded in death by a brother, T.W. Stiwinter and two sisters, Ronnie Lowing and Lola Mae Stewart.

A graveside service was held Tuesday, March 29, at the Stewart Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers memorials can be made to the Stewart Cemetery C/O Jeff Stewart, 3401 Yellow Mountain Road, Cullowhee, NC 28723.

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

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

Anthony 'Tony' J. Fiorillo

Anthony "Tony" J. Fiorillo, 88, of Franklin, N.C., passed away on Saturday, March 26, 2022.

He was born in Long Island, N.Y., to the late Thomas Fiorillo and Josphine Cali Fiorillo. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his daughter, Christina Hirtriter.

He enjoyed camping and traveling.

He is survived by his wife of 65 years, Grace Sanchez Fiorillo; daughter, Lisa Zambrano; two granddaughters, Alexa Zambrano and Emily Zambrano; and several cousins.

A service will be held at a later date in the fall.

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

Macon Funeral Home will be handling the arrangements.



Anthony J. Fiorillo

Jeanette Hopkins Parks

Jeanette Hopkins Parks, 66, of Franklin, N.C., passed away Thursday, March 24, 2022.

She was born in Lakeland, Fla., on Dec. 7, 1955, to the late Rev. Robert Hopkins and Sarah Hopkins. She worked and retired from hotel work and grew up in the Baptist faith. She loved the mountains, people, and celebrating life.

Surviving are her husband of 21 years, Bennett Parks; a daughter, Amy Meloom of Orlando, Fla.; and two brothers, Robert and William Hopkins.

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

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

Margaret Marie Sorrells Bennett

Margaret Marie Sorrells Bennett, 87, of Franklin, N.C., went home to be with Jesus on Thursday, March 24, 2022.

Born in Macon County, she was the daughter of the late Lester and Annie Guffey Sorrells. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by two sisters, Virginia Frazier and Hazel Johnson; and five brothers, Herman Sorrells, Floyd Sorrells, T.J. Sorrells, Ralph Sorrells, and Marshall Sorrells. Before returning to Franklin, she and her husband owned and operated Lynn's Uniform in Calhoun and Rome, Ga. She was a member of Windy Gap Baptist Church, where she was very active with the care ministry.

She has been her husband's faithful and loving caregiver, going twice a day to visit and feed him at the nursing home. While visiting her husband, she developed many personal relationships with the staff, who are going to miss her daily visits and words of encouragement.

She is survived by her loving husband of 65 years, Frank W. Bennett; a daughter, Lynn Autry (Dr. Rodney Autry) of Gloucester, Va.; five grandchildren, Jonathan Autry (Rebecca), Joshua Autry (Jennifer), Jeremiah Autry, Joseph Autry, and Jessica Byrnside (Anthony); and five great grandchildren, Elijah Autry, Josiah Autry, Naomi Autry, Savannah Byrnside, and Luke Byrnside; siblings, Doris Cheek of Franklin, Kathryn Solesbee of Franklin, Ethel Sheffield (Wayne) of Georgia, Lessie Miller of Georgia, and Jack Sorrells (Cathy) of South Carolina.

A funeral service was held Tuesday, March 29, at Windy Gap Baptist Church. Rev. Mark Bishop officiated. Burial was in the Bethel United Methodist Church Cemetery.

Pallbearers were Jonathan Autry, Joshua Autry, Jeremiah Autry, Joseph Autry, Elijah Autry, and Anthony Byrnside.

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

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.



Margaret Marie Bennett

Lee Edwin O'Donnell

Lee Edwin O'Donnell passed away on March 29, 2022.

He was one of the founders of D & L Body Shop and an asset to the Franklin Community. His generosity, laughter, humor, and gentle spirit will be missed.

He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Barbara O'Donnell; daughters, Deborah Gravatt and Terri Garcia, grandsons, Alex and Andy Garcia along with Terri's husband Carl Garcia.

In lieu of flowers or cards, donations may be made to St. Jude's Children's Hospital or write a fond memory to The Macon County News, Franklin N.C. or at www.ferofuneralhome.com.

Fero Funeral Home in Beverly Hills, Fla., is handling the arrangements.



Lee Edwin O'Donnell

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Chastain gets Trackhouse Racing its first Cup win

Holly Cain – NASCAR Wire Service

AUSTIN, Texas – In exactly the kind of thrilling final lap, final-turn high-action finish NASCAR has so often provided on road courses, Ross Chastain persevered in the EchoPark Automotive Grand Prix to win his first career NASCAR Cup Series race at the Circuit of The Americas in Austin, Texas – the sixth different winner this season.

Chastain really had to earn this one – coming out on the right end of a frantic, four lead-change, two-lap final overtime. And he did – moving veteran A.J. Allmendinger and Alex Bowman in the final series of turns on the 3.41-mile, 20-turn circuit to take not only his first victory in NASCAR's premier series but also give his Trackhouse Racing's Justin Marks his first win as a new owner in stock car's big leagues.

After grabbing the position in the final corner, Chastain raced off to a 1.331-second victory over Hendrick Motorsports driver Bowman, who unlike Allmendinger was able to recover from the last lap contact and continue to the checkered flag. Joe Gibbs Racing's Christopher Bell, Hendrick Motorsports Chase Elliott and Richard Childress Racing's Tyler Reddick rounding out the top five.

Chastain's family owns a watermelon farm in tiny, rural Alva, Florida and as he has famously done with past victories in both the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series and Xfinity Series, Chastain stood on top of his winning car, the No.1 Trackhouse Racing Chevrolet, and dropped a watermelon to the track, crushing it on the ground as his team and fans exploded in cheers.

"It's insane to go up against some of the best and I know he's [Allmendinger] going to be upset with me, but we race hard, both of us," said Chastain, who has been runner-up in the last two NASCAR Cup Series races coming to Austin.

"But when it comes to this Cup win, I can't let that go down without a fight."

Allmendinger, who actually was a NASCAR Xfinity Series teammate with Chastain two years ago, was understandably crushed as well after the race. He finished 33rd.

"We just needed two more corners," said a disappointed Allmendinger, who also went door-to-door in a tight on-track battle with Chastain in winning Saturday's NASCAR Xfinity Series race at COTA.

"Everybody's got to be comfortable with the move they make and look in the mirror," Allmendinger told FOX Sports. "Everybody's different on what they view, and you can't judge a person for that."

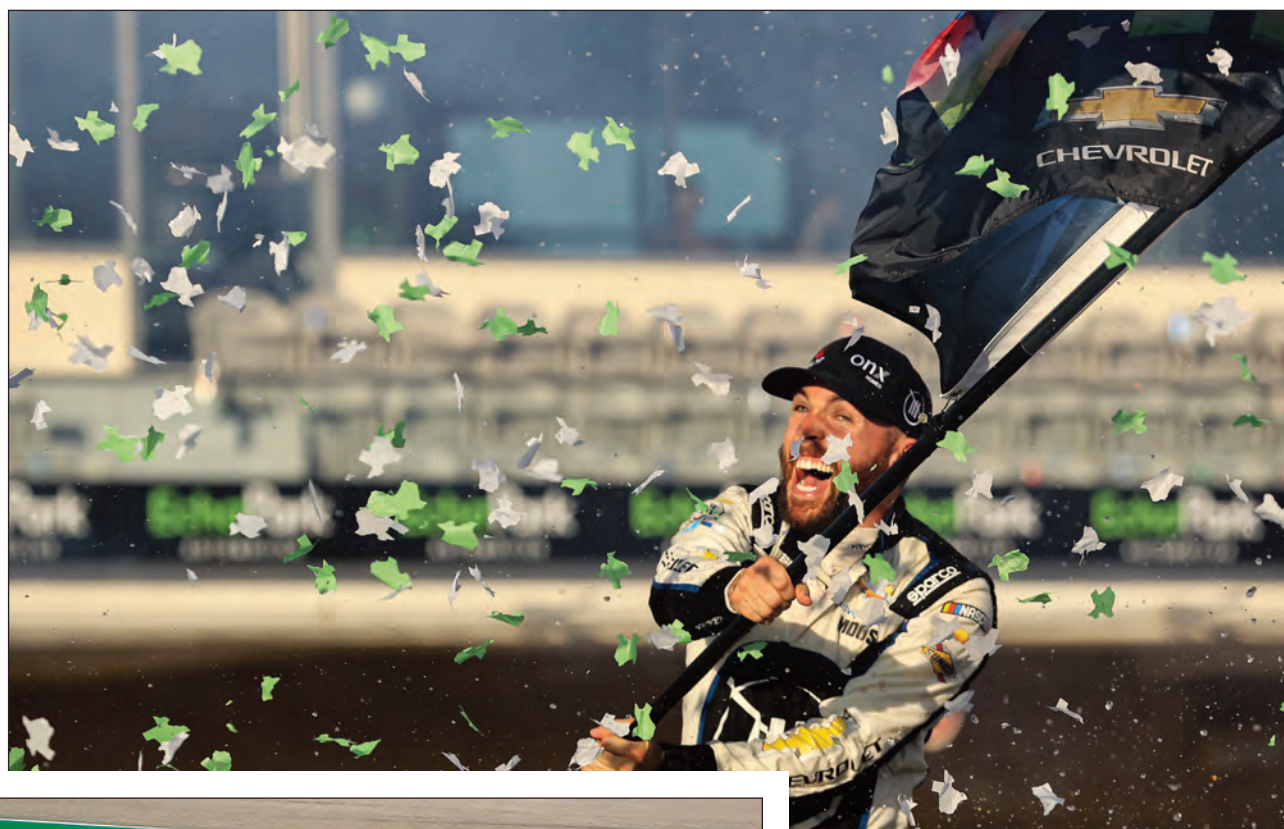
"So, at the end of the day, I'm just proud of Kaulig Racing for bringing such a fast Action Industry Chevrolet. We started at the back, drove to the front and if we had had a long run [at the end] it would have been game over. Nobody would have touched me."

"You know the moves are going to be made at times. Whether I'm okay with it, doesn't really matter."

"I wanted to sweep the weekend and we came two corners away," he added.

Chastain led a race high 31 of the 69 laps – one of nine leaders in the series' first road course test with the Next Gen cars debuting this season. The race produced a series road course record of 30 green flag passes for the lead.

And the 29-year-old Floridian becomes the 12th consecutive NASCAR Cup Series race winner under the age of 30 and the third first-time winner this season.



Ross Chastain, driver of the #1 ONX Homes/iFly Chevrolet, celebrates after winning the NASCAR Cup Series Echopark Automotive Grand Prix at Circuit of The Americas on March 27, 2022 in Austin, Texas. Photo by Dylan Buell/Getty Images



It was as equally a thrilling maiden win for the former NASCAR and sportscar driver Marks, who was interviewed during the FOX telecast just before the final restart, revealing with a smile that "It's a little easier to be a driver of one these things than to watch."

"It seemed like a real tall order when I dreamt this thing up," Marks said. "But every man and woman that's trusted the vision and committed to Trackhouse and worked so hard owns a piece of this victory."

"I'm so happy for everybody. Everybody believed in this, and I can't wait for next week."

And, he reported with a grin, he spoke with the team's co-owner, music superstar Pitbull who promised he also was smashing a watermelon over his head and drinking champagne.

The race pole-winner Ryan Blaney finished sixth, followed by Martin Truex Jr, Austin Cindric, Erik Jones, and Austin Dillon rounding out the top 10.

With that fourth-place finish Elliott now holds a 13-point advantage on Blaney heading into next weekend's Toyota Owners 400 at Richmond (Va.) Raceway (3:30 p.m. ET on FOX, MRN and SiriusXM NASCAR Radio).

AJ Allmendinger dominates Xfinity Series race at the Circuit of The Americas

AUSTIN, Texas - A.J. Allmendinger was fast and agile when he needed to be Saturday afternoon negotiating the

famed Circuit of The Americas and reminding the field just why he's considered one of NASCAR's road course superstars.

Allmendinger's No. 16 Kaulig Racing Chevrolet took the checkered flag by 2.039-seconds over Austin Hill's No. 21 Richard Childress Racing Chevrolet in the first road course race of the year. It was the 40-year-old veteran's first NASCAR Xfinity Series win of the 2022 season and 11th of his career. He has seven road course

wins on six different road course tracks (series-most).

He led early and he led late, just when he needed to, holding off the field on two late, and dicey race restarts and controlling the race the final 14 laps en route to the checkered flag.

NASCAR Cup Series regular Cole Custer turned in an inspired comeback from a midrace pit road speeding penalty to finish third. JR Motorsports driver Noah Gragson was fourth – his sixth top-five finish in the seven-race season to date. Gragson's teammate Sam Mayer finished fifth.

With their work, Allmendinger, Hill, Gragson and Mayer are now eligible to win a \$100,000 bonus next week in the Dash 4 Cash sweepstakes opener at Richmond (Va.) Raceway. The top finishing driver among them in the ToyotaCare 250 will take the check, courtesy of sponsor Comcast.

"I told myself yesterday, I was not happy with where I put ourselves," said Allmendinger, who qualified fourth.

"Honestly, all these men and women here at Kaulig Racing between the Cup side of it and the Xfinity side of it, they don't sleep during the week, they're busting their tails and that's why I'm so fricking hard on myself sometimes because they deserve to win more than anybody here. And I just want to do it for them. Thankfully, we got it done today."

And it was not easy. Pole-winner Ty Gibbs and fellow NASCAR Cup Series drivers Ross Chastain and Custer joined Allmendinger at the front of the field for most of the early-going. Gibbs and Chastain exchanged the lead with Allmendinger, but both ultimately suffered setbacks during

the course of the 46-lap race around the 3.41-mile, 20-turn circuit.

Gibbs' Toyota suffered a flat time and put him well back in the field (36th place) after he was forced to pit during a green flag run, he recovered to finish 15th. Chastain ran among the front pack all the way until the end of the race when he was collected in an aggressive pack on the final race restart with seven laps remaining and finished 17th.

Myatt Snider finished sixth in a final lap duel with Mayer. Brett Moffitt finished seventh with Jade Buford, Miguel Paludo and Sheldon Creed – who won the pole position for the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series race earlier in the day rounded out the top 10.

The runner-up Hill was especially encouraged because he was able to keep Allmendinger honest in the closing laps.

"All in all, it was a solid effort for our Global Chevy Camaro," Hill said, adding, "I've always felt like I could get around road courses. I felt like I proved it last year in the trucks winning at Watkins Glen and it just kind of build the momentum and the confidence going forward into this year that when we come to road courses, we can get the job done."

"I guess A.J. was just a little bit better than us, because I felt we had a really good car, but this shows we can run with AJ."

With the showing at COTA, fourth-place finisher Gragson holds a single-point lead over Allmendinger in the Xfinity Series driver standings with Gibbs third, 31 points back.

The Xfinity Series' next race is Saturday, April 2, at Richmond (Va.) Raceway (1:30 p.m. ET on FS1, MRN, SiriusXM NASCAR Radio).

Zane Smith gets second Truck Series win of 2022 at Circuit of The Americas

AUSTIN, Texas – Ultimately, Zane Smith was out front when it paid off Saturday afternoon at the Circuit of The Americas road course. He led only 11 of the 46 laps – winning Stage 1, Stage 2 and then took the race lead with two laps remaining in the second overtime period to earn the victory in the XPEL 225 NASCAR Camping World Truck Series race.

It marked Smith's second win of the 2022 season – fifth of his career - and the second consecutive win at the 3.41-mile, 20-turn COTA circuit for his Front Row Motorsports team, who celebrated in Victory Lane last year with driver Todd Gilliland.

Veteran Kyle Busch – who led a race best 31 laps – led the vast majority of the race and held the point on the start of that final overtime. But his closest challengers Stewart



AJ Allmendinger, driver of the #16 Nutrien Ag Solutions Chevrolet, celebrates in victory lane after winning the NASCAR Xfinity Series Pit Boss 250 at Circuit of The Americas on March 26, 2022 in Austin, Texas.

Photo by Logan Riely/Getty Images

Friesen and Alex Bowman went in hard to the Turn 11 hairpin turn making it a three-wide door-to-door trying to wrestle the lead from Busch, the series all-time winningest driver.

As that was happening, the 22-year-old Californian Smith simply drove under of the slowed trio, taking the lead and then holding off John Hunter Nemechek for the win by 3.529-seconds.

"Once I got back up there, I was doing my best to read how those guys were racing," said Smith, who drives the No. 38 Front Row Motorsports Ford.

"It happened like that in such dramatic fashion and had to come from the back, it's just a huge statement for this team really. Every single race this year I've been in contention to win.

"This whole team, just awesome to see how it all worked out," he added.

"Scored some awesome points today," Smith said.

Busch recovered to finish third, followed by 2021 series cham-

pion Ben Rhodes and Busch's teammate Chandler Smith. Christian Eckes, Tyler Ankrum, Carson Hocevar, Friesen, and Grant Enfinger rounded out the top-10.

Had his bold move to the front paid off, it would have been Friesen's first win in the series since 2019 and the first career victory for Hocevar, who was also running among the top three late in the race but got shuffled back in the wild restart action. Parker Kligerman, who had run among the top five all afternoon, also ran out of gas and ultimately finished 19th.

"Felt like we deserved that one, but it doesn't matter if you deserve it or not, you've got to be the first one to the checkered flag and we were not," Busch said.

The race featured 10 lead changes among eight drivers and had eight caution periods.

"In races like this, you know it's never over till it's over and that [race] is the very definition of that," Smith said.

The top-five effort keeps championship leaders Smith and Rhodes close. Smith now holds a 15-point edge over Rhodes.

The series takes a break before returning to competition April 7 in the Blue-Emu Maximum Pain Relief 200 at Martinsville (Va.) Speedway (8 p.m. ET on FS1, MRN, SiriusXM NASCAR Radio)



Zane Smith, driver of the #38 Speedco Ford, celebrates in victory lane after winning the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series - XPEL 225 at Circuit of The Americas on March 26, 2022 in Austin, Texas.

Photo by Logan Riely/Getty Images

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70°/38° 87%	65°/34° 9%	66°/40° 15%	61°/37° 24%	64°/36° 16%

CROSSWORD PUZZLE ANSWERS ON PG. 15

STATEPOINT CROSSWORD

THEME: GARDENING

ACROSS

1. Betting probability
5. Once headed by J. Edgar Hoover
8. Formally surrender
12. Gravy holder
13. Nile dweller, for short
14. More certain
15. Tiny bit
16. a.k.a. Bruce Banner
17. One who plies one's trade
18. "Days to _____," on a seed packet
20. Big-ticket _____
21. Apartments, e.g.
22. *Plumerias are often used in this Hawaiian greeting
23. Scrooge's visitors
26. Digging into
30. What Carl Lewis did
31. Bestow
34. Month before Nisan
35. Dress with a flare
37. Cholera
38. On a store tag
39. Central points
40. Paul Reubens' Her-man
42. Mother lode stuff
43. African bloodsucking pests
45. Salty dogs
47. Current tense of #30 Across
48. Retches
50. Bovine cries
52. *Like an aggressive weed
55. Frustration, in a comic book
56. *Holds a plant stem to a support
57. Type of hot sandwich
59. One born to Japanese immigrants

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 60. Urban legends, e.g. 61. Check out 62. Shakespeare's "at another time" 63. "The _____ Who Loved Me" 64. *Flower's location after a garden? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Famous canal 10. Hold as a conviction 11. Make a blunder 13. Church service oil 14. Salesman's speech, e.g. 19. Loosen laces 22. Tennis do-over 23. *Splice, to a gardener 24. Nimbi on ikons 25. In the cooler (2 words) 26. Former Saint Brees 27. "Pulling my leg," e.g. 28. Mother-of-pearl 29. *Kind of thumb 32. Pizzeria output, pl. 33. "_____ you kidding?" 36. *N in N-P-K 38. Sneaked glances | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 40. Slammer 41. "The Shawshank Redemption" theme 44. Served raw 46. Isaac of science fiction 48. This Dogg can rap 49. What Elton John tickles, sing. 50. Street in Anytown, USA 51. Guesstimate phrase (two words) 52. Bodily disorders 53. Lope de _____, Spanish playwright 54. Building extensions 55. Nurses' org. 58. _____ time in golf |
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The Classifieds

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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	Nissan	Sentra SV	15,009
2019	Volkswagen	Golf SportWagen	56,048
2019	Volkswagen	Beetle	42,676
2018	Chevrolet	Cruze	34,692
2018	Chevrolet	Cruze LS	54,872
2015	Nissan	Altima 2.5 S	59,261
2015	Buick	LaCrosse	104,189
2014	Chevrolet	Cruze	113,152
2013	Hyundia	Elantra	55,328
2011	Cadillac	CTS Sedan Luxury	73,798
2008	Corvette	Coupe	9,007

SUVS

YEAR	MAKE	MODEL	MILES
2021	Chevrolet	Tahoe RST	4,798
2021	Chevrolet	Tahoe Z71	14,918
2021	Kia	Telluride S	8,173
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	GMC	Terrain	63,316
2018	Chevrolet	Tahoe	84,386
2018	Volkswagen	Atlas 3.6L V6 SE	71,947
2018	Kia	Soul	58,573
2017	Toyota	RAV4 LE	83,441
2017	Volkswagen	Tiguan Wolfsburg Edition	59,132
2016	Buick	Enclave CXL AWD	81,859
2015	Chevrolet	Equinox LTZ AWD	107,485
2015	Chevrolet	Equinox IT AWD	87,398
2015	Jeep	Wrangler Unlimited Altitude	39,030
2014	Ford	Explorer 4x4	68,342
2013	Mazda	CX-5	94,754
2012	Chevrolet	Traverse	120,790

TRUCKS

YEAR	MAKE	MODEL	MILES
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	Chevrolet	Colorado	31,506
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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