



Night to Shine resumed this year for an in-person prom experience designed for people with special needs at the Moss Valley venue in Patton Valley. Sponsored locally by Discover Church, Cartoogechaye Baptist Church and internationally by the Tim Tebow Foundation, the evening featured music and dancing, a catered meal, face painting and more. The special guests were all crowned kings and queens and treated like royalty. For more photos, see page 12. Photo by Ellen Randall

## Franklin High student caught with handgun

Macon County Public Schools and the Macon County Sheriff's Office released statements regarding an incident that occurred at Franklin High School on Friday, Feb. 10.

A Franklin High School student reported a concern to a teacher about another student possibly having a weapon. An investigation was immediately initiated involving school resource officers and school administrators. The student in question was secured and school resource officers searched the student and an unloaded handgun was found among the student's belongings, but no ammunition.

Charges against the student are pending and include: Possession of a weapon on school property; carrying a concealed weapon; and possession of a weapon by a minor.

A spokesperson with the sheriff's office said that because the investigation is ongoing and involves a juvenile, no other information can be provided.

The afternoon of the incident, Franklin High School was deemed safe and secure, and no ongoing threat was detected at the time.

In addition to school resource officers, a Special Victims Unit was also called in to assist.

Macon County Schools superintendent Dr. Chris Baldwin was contacted regarding the possibility of installing metal detectors at Franklin High School in the future. As of presstime, no reply had been forthcoming.

## Library adopts new policy amid citizens concerns

Deena C. Bouknight – Contributing Writer

In December, a committee for the Fontana Regional Library Board of Trustees added eight pages to its previous two-page Collection Development Policy in response to months-long citizen outcries that children, youth, and young adults' books with sexually explicit content are too prominently presented and too easily accessible. Each board meeting in the last year-plus has attracted unprecedented public interest, with at least 80 people attending the most recent Feb. 7 meeting at the Macon County Public Library.

The newest Macon County Commissioner, Danny Antoine, addressed the board on Feb. 7. He summarized the concerns of many individuals present by referring to some of the children's section library books as "absolutely unacceptable and beyond reprehensible ... too explicit. If a child cannot walk into an X-rated video store, not walk in until 18 years old, how can we have pornographic materials available to kids in the public library. There is no sexually explicit material that should ever be available to any child –

not in a public library."

The new Collection Development Policy went into effect in January. Tracy Fitzmaurice, Jackson County librarian and Fontana Regional Director, explained.

"We follow the Collection Development Policy and the law when adding books and other materials to our collection. Displays are part of the collection process and are covered by this policy," said Fitzmaurice.

Jim Gaston – along with his wife, Leah – has been an outspoken opponent of sexually explicit books being readily available in the

Macon County library's youth section since learning of books presented in last June's Gay Pride Month display. Gaston and other citizens have attended meetings and shared excerpts of some of the sexually explicit books available in the children's section; one solution presented was for an identification label to be affixed on such books, similar to labels on DVDs, to indicate general content so that parents and children can be aware before they begin

"absolutely unacceptable and beyond reprehensible ... no sexually explicit material that should ever be available to any child – not in a public library"

– Commissioner Danny Antoine

See LIBRARY page 4

### IN THIS ISSUE



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FHS indoor track teams bring home the trophies

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# TDA increases support to AT community council

Dan Finnerty – Contributing Writer

On Monday afternoon, Feb. 12, the Franklin Tourism Development Authority (TDA) again gathered for its monthly meeting. With all eight members present, the TDA discussed a request for support from the Franklin Appalachian Trail (A.T.) Community Council (ATCC), received in January. Outgoing ATCC Chairperson, Natasha Sebring, along with Eric Haggart, interim chairperson, attended the meeting and provided input on some of the costs realized in 2022, plus estimates for 2023.

Sebring spoke to the increased budget necessity prompting a higher amount of support funding needed.

“More projects have aligned this year, resulting in more activities as compared to previous years,” she said. In addition to the usual advertising products costs, such as stickers, wristbands, etc., new events will be added to the schedule. Sebring added, “Gracious Plates will be offering an event this year ... our supporter base is growing; we’ve been doing a lot of recruiting this past year.”

ATCC also updated its website: [atmile110.com](http://atmile110.com). The increased budget includes three years of website maintenance and management funding. Sebring also said that inflation is factored in, especially for print media advertising, which is the highest realized cost within the council’s budget.

After thanking the ATCC representatives for their input, the TDA agreed to provide \$2,420 for funding in support of



the upcoming 2023 Franklin A.T. Celebration. The TDA provided an additional \$1,590 to the cause this year over 2022. The month-long event takes place from March 20 through April 22 and event locations include: Macon County Public Library, First Baptist Church, Outdoor 76, Currahee, Lazy Hiker, The Rathskeller, and Gooder Grove Hostel.

The TDA December financial report was delivered by Amie Owens. The report covers a 13-month comparison on occupancy tax collections, collections versus expenditures, and budget. December marked the fifth consecutive month

of record-breaking occupancy tax collection totals. This revenue is derived from various hotels, bed and breakfast establishments, and other hospitality-centric businesses. Owens also reported the TDA budget ordinance having a balance of \$145,232 at the end of the calendar year, with net collections revenue totaling \$108,548 resulting in a TDA fund balance of \$155,040.

Statistics for the Discover Franklin NC-TDA marketing report are derived from the LocalIQ, which provides updates every month. Current information revealed a “click through rate” (CTR) of 5.55%, indicating how many times, after information pops up on a screen, that computer users are actually selecting to visit the website. The average CTR for travel and hospitality is 4.68% indicating above average performance. Keywords are used to promote CTR’s with “fun things to do in Franklin” and “North Carolina family vacation” being the most

productive.

Mobile applications are seeing increased usage across the board. Social media advertising is also going well according to Owens.

“Our YouTube presence has really expanded; they’ve gone from 58.47 to 60.98% ... we’re getting a lot of bang for our buck. Even though the CTR is low, the view rate has gone up significantly,” she said.

The next TDA meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 13, at 5:30 p.m. in the Town Hall Board Room.

This month by donation, with 100% proceeds going to on going mission of the church



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# Mardi Gras King and Queen event Tuesday raises funds for REACH

Deena C. Bouknight – Contributing Writer

Although REACH's ongoing services may be considered somber business,

since the nonprofit organization primarily serves victims of domestic abuse, sexual assault, and human trafficking, its annual main fundraiser is festive and fun. On Tuesday, Feb. 21, the 6th Annual Mardi Gras event to honor six couples vying for the night's king and queen is one of the largest fundraising events for REACH (Resources, Education, Assistance, Counseling, Housing).

To be held at the Root + Barrel restaurant on Main Street in Franklin, the event primarily raises funds through reserved seating sponsorships. For example, a table for four is \$600; for 10 - \$2,500. Open seating cost \$100. Plus, each couple raises money to determine who will be crowned king and queen. While sponsorship tables have sold

out, some individual \$100 tickets may be available. Food and some drinks are included for ticket holders.

Besides New Orleans' inspired food and a champagne toast for the crowned king and queen, participants of the evening will enjoy a live jazz band, a silent auction, and a photo booth.

Competing king and queen couples this year are: Luke and Kristy Smith, Joe and Candice Sunderhaus, Ronnie and Nicole Dilbeck, Ryan and Becky Bilibrey, Davis Anders and McKayla Sanders, and Tim and Meta Sadlon.

Monies raised assist with myriad needs. Plus, due to the December cold snap, a burst pipe at a REACH shelter requires major repairs.

REACH, a member of the N.C. Coalition Against Sexual Assault, also takes donations throughout the year via its website.



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# LIBRARY

Continued from page 1

to read. That proposal has not been implemented at the Macon County Library.

In addition, Macon County Commission Chair Paul Higdon was also present at the Feb. 7 meeting, and he addressed the board.

"We've made two requests [at past meetings]," he stated. "Can we segregate into a separate section and label them [books] and not allow someone under 18 years old, with just a library card, to check them out and have access to them. That was flatly rejected. My request is simply this, let's make Macon County library, a beautiful building, a neutral facility. By neutral, I mean that when we walk in, there are no displays of any kind supporting any ... [organizations and groups] with a political bone to grind. But that was [also] flatly rejected. Two simple requests."

After the Board of Trustees' January meeting, Gaston conveyed his concerns about the new Collection Development Policy's approval.

"Parents attended and spoke at the Fontana Library Board meeting and were completely ignored. New policies were voted on without any discussion. New restrictive policies towards parents and taxpayers went into effect. This new policy was intended to shield the library from criticism of any of their radical agendas while giving the library a blank check to do whatever they want. Only one courageous board member voted against adopting these policies, and another board member resigned before the vote."

Fontana Regional Library is a local government entity and a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, clarified Fitzmaurice.

"The majority of the funding for the libraries in Macon County (MCPL, Hudson [in Highlands], and NCL [in Top-ton]) comes from the Macon County budget. About 90% plus goes to salaries and benefits," she said.

Former librarian, Karen Wallace, who retired last month, pointed out prior to the new Board of Trustee-approved Col-



The Feb. 7 Fontana Library Board of Trustee meeting at the Macon County Library drew a standing-room-only crowd of at least 80 people.

lection Development Policy's additional eight pages of verbiage that the process of redoing the policy was "to address a clearer process for people to ask for reconsideration of materials that they think either shouldn't be included in the collection or should be placed somewhere else."

The main controversy over the newly adopted Collection Development Policy's statement rests primarily in this verbiage: "FRL provides information on many topics, reading levels, and interests in an environment that supports an individual's right to have access to ideas representing multiple points of view. To meet its goals and objectives, FRL must protect the freedom of all to choose their own information. Access is provided readily and equitably to users, regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, age, disability, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or political views. FRL affirms the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights and its interpretations, the Freedom to Read, and the Freedom to View state-

ments in support of acquiring and managing collections."

In the former two-page document, no text was included regarding "... gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation ...," etc. Of the list of 12-plus criteria points in the former policy, one was "breadth, depth, variety," and another was "appropriateness for intended audience."

General criteria for purchasing and accepting library materials per the new policy now has 10 points, while content criteria has 18 points, including "objectivity." In fact, selection criteria in the policy have been broadened with this statement: "Fontana Regional Library represents a broad demographic and selection criteria takes into account the various interests and needs of the patrons served by FRL. ... In selecting materials and developing collections for adults, as well as for children and teens, FRL staff includes materials that represent the broad range of human experience, reflecting the race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, age, disability, gender identity, gender expression, sexual

orientation, socioeconomic status, and political diversity, not only of the region it serves but also the larger global perspective. Library collections will provide a wide range of opinion on current issues. ... In building collections, Library staff is guided by the principle of selection, rather than censorship."

Gaston further commented, "The very next day after the new policy was adopted, a patron who had led a book drive to donate wholesome materials (such as devotional books) to the library was told by an administrative library staff member that of the 59 family-friendly books that were listed for donation, 48 of them were rejected. The library showed no diversity in rejecting virtuous materials being donated at no cost to them. Basically, certain library staff are censoring books they do not want in their collection. Certain library staff are discriminating against family-friendly books. A total double standard."

Current Macon County Public Library librarian Abby

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The Feb. 7 Fontana Library Board of Trustee meeting at the Macon County Library drew a standing-room-only crowd of at least 80 people.

Hardison stated that the new policy provides thorough information about the library system’s mission, selection criteria, procedures, and more. The officially revised Jan. 10, 2023, Collection Development Policy in its entirety is available as a PDF under Fontana Regional Library’s website heading of “Policies and Guidelines.”

Despite ongoing controversy regarding the newly adopted policy as well as some library materials made available and presented in the children’s section of the library, Higdon told the Board of Trustees on Feb. 7: “We have disagreements right now ... those things will be worked out. But Macon County Commissioners see the need to continuously fund the Macon County Public Library ... at the tune of about \$1.1 million a year.”

However, Antoine stressed, “As a leader and as a county commissioner, I am never going to support this [books for children with sexually explicit content].” Before leaving the podium where he was speaking, Antoine encouraged the Board of Trustees to respond to meeting attendees concerns.

The next Fontana Regional Library Board of Trustees meeting is Tuesday, March 14, at 4 p.m., at Hudson Library. Meetings are held at different libraries in the Fontana Regional Library system, but the public can attend. Additional meetings for 2023 are as follows: May 9, Albert Carlton Cashiers Community Library; July 11, Nantahala Community Library; Sept. 12, Macon County Public Library.



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Panther men won overall first place at the 3A State Championship, besting more than 100 programs. Photo by Crystal Cochran

## FHS men take 3A Indoor Track State Championship

Dan Finnerty – Sports Writer

The North Carolina High School Athletic Association (NCHSAA) Indoor Championship Meet was held Saturday, Feb. 10, at the James D. Letchinger (JDL) Fast Track in Winston-Salem. Franklin High School (FHS) participated in the event, led by coaches Matt Harlfinger and Melissa Ward. The Panthers had nearly 30 qualifiers competing in 20 events and were pitted against top runners representing many other 3A high school programs. The 109.5 points tallied up by FHS were the most of any school participating in the statewide event. In team competition, the men finished in first place and the women won second place - missing the top spot by one point.

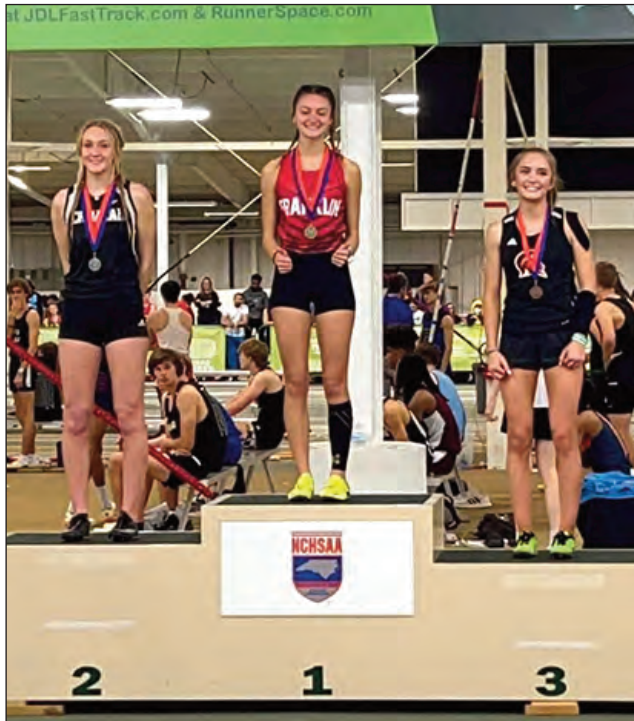
FHS team members offered outstanding individual performances. Senior Blake Cassada won the men's pole vault competition at 13-feet, 6-inches. Sophomore Adam Rogers was second, with Junior Aaron Jennings coming in fourth. Three out of the top four pole vaulters in the state 3A are Panthers. Junior Boston Stringer also won best in the state with the pole vault on the girls' side with a height of 10-feet, 6-inches.

"Getting to be the pole vault coach of the #1 boy and #1 girl at the 3A meet was a pretty awesome privilege," he said. "The NCHSAA gave the boys program a big shout out here," Harlfinger said at the meet.

The Lady Panthers took first place in the 4X200 meter relay with a time of 1:45:48 and second place in the 4X400



FHS women took second place at the State competition in Winston-Salem, missing the top spot by just one point.



Junior Boston Stringer won best in state in the pole vault with a height of 10 feet, 6 inches. Photo by Amanda Stringer



Senior Blake Cassada won best in state in the pole vault with a height of 13 feet, 6 inches. Sophomore Adam Rogers was second. Photo by Melissa Ward

relay at 4:12:03. Sophomore Laura Covarrubias finished second in the jump (17-feet, 5-inches). On the men's side, FHS had no relay finish higher than seventh, but the combined placement of team and individual performances netted them first place overall. Other standout performances included junior Elijah Cochran, who placed third in the 300-meter dash (36:04) and fourth in the 54-meter hurdles (7:88); senior Isaiah Roots with fourth place in the 500-meter dash (1:07:29); and, senior Cal Drake, who placed second in the high jump at 6-feet, 2-inches.

Covarrubias and Jennings also were recognized with the Farm Bureau Sportsmanship award.

The track program is currently conducting fundraising efforts to assist with paying bus drivers, hotel costs, entry fees for meets, and myriad other items such as team shirts, ice cream for the kids, and more. Anyone wanting to contribute can send a check to the high school, annotating use for "Track."

Harlfinger and Ward will not have much time to rest; track and field practice began Feb. 15.

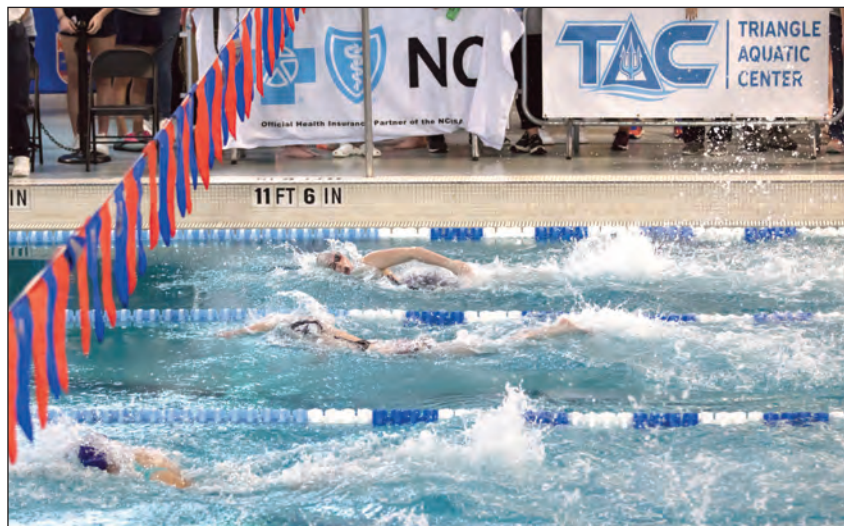
## Panther swim program competes at State

Dan Finnerty – Sports Writer

Franklin High School (FHS) swimmers' season culminated Saturday, Feb. 10, at the Triangle Aquatic Center in Cary, N.C. After seven regular season meets, then conference and regional tournaments, it all came down to the 3A State North Carolina High School Athletic Association Championship. When the final scores were tallied, the Lady Panthers finished in 12th place (out of 41 teams) with 77 points and the boys finished 33rd (out of 45) with 16 points.

In the girls' medley relay, Kate Phillips, Claire Ballard, Callie Roper, and Rylee Cassada finished 13th with a time of 2:04.44. On the boys' side, Gavin Rinker, Clayton Guynn, Jose Gomez, and Jonah Brant finished 22nd in their medley relay with a 1:57.59. The girls 200-yard (yd) freestyle relay team broke their own school record from last week at the regional meet with a 1:45.93 in preliminaries. The team of Zoi Walker, Roper, Cassada, and Ballard then finished 5th in the finals with a 1:46.07. The boys' team of Gomez, Brant, Guynn, and Rinker finished 20th with a 1:41.15 in the same event.

The same girls 400-freestyle relay team also broke their own school record again from the regional meet, with a 4:00.31 (in preliminaries). They finished 7th in the finals with a 4:01.53. The boys team took off a little more time



Franklin's Zoi Walker leads off the 200 yard free relay team, which placed 5th.

Photo by Amy Ballard

from their regional time and finished 21st, with a 3:48.69.

In individual events, Ballard finished 6th in the 50-yd freestyle with a 25.41, and Cassada finished 13th with a 26.09. Jonah Brant earned Franklin's only medal, finishing 3rd in springboard diving. In the process, he also improved his 227.55 regional score with a 274.55.

"We are really proud of this year's team's accomplishments. We will really miss our graduating seniors and are looking forward to seeing how we will do next year," said coaches Dwain and Dina Picou.

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# FHS varsity loses in semi-finals, JV playing championship games

Dan Finnerty – Sports Writer

On Thursday, Feb. 10, Franklin High School (FHS) hosted the first round of 3A Conference 54 playoff games for both men and women. On the men's side, the Panthers dominated Tuscola with a final tally of 70-28 to bring their season record up to 20-4. Senior Parker Cabe led the way with 20 points, going six for six in shooting. Also contributing to the scoring were sophomore Max McClure with 16 points and senior Cal Drake, who scored 13, had five rebounds, three assists, and two steals. The win provided an opportunity for the #2 seeded Panthers to face North Henderson at Waynesville on Feb. 14 in the second round of the conference tournament. The Knights, who finished just behind FHS in regular season conference standings, bested Smoky Mountain in its first-round game, 99-90.

In the semi-final round on Feb. 14, the Panthers struggled against North Henderson all night and lost 59-55. The Knights out-rebounded FHS and had a much higher three-point success rate, both taking and making more shots. The final score was closer than it was during most of the game. Earlier in the evening, top-seeded West Henderson lost to East Henderson, so the championship will

now be the #3 versus the #4 seeded teams on Thursday, Feb. 16, in Waynesville.

The varsity women improved to 16-8 on the season after easily defeating their first-round opponent with a 56-29 victory over the East Henderson Lady Eagles. On Tuesday evening, the #3 seeded Lady Panthers took on #4 seeded West Henderson in their second-round conference game and for most of the game seemed to be headed to victory.

However, late in the contest fouls played a role in the final outcome. With just over a minute left, Franklin led by three points, 56-53. Within the last minute plus, referees made five different calls, most of them for double dribbles and all but one of them on the Panthers. The momentum shifted from Franklin to their opponent, who prevailed 58-56. Seniors Roslynn McCollum and Avery Moffitt had big games, along with sophomore Cali Queen; but, despite the standout performances, their season is now over.

The #1 seeded Lady Bears of Pisgah will face West Henderson in the championship game Thursday, February 16, in Waynesville.

### JV teams head to tournament finals

Monday evening, Feb. 13, FHS junior varsity teams began their conference playoffs.



Max McClure goes up for a shot against North Henderson.



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The second seeded junior Lady Panthers hosted #3 Tuscola, while the top seeded JV boys were pitted against the fourth seeded Falcons of West Henderson.

The girls prevailed, 41-25, and the boys won, 58-50. With just over five minutes left in the game, FHS girls only led by six. The boys' game was a series of double-digit leads enjoyed by the Panthers, only to have Falcons fight back to bring the separation closer again.

Both squads will now face the Pisgah Bears for the JV conference championship today, Feb. 16. The games are being held at Tuscola High School in Waynesville and are scheduled to begin at 4 p.m. for the girls and 5:30 for the boys.

**Panther Wrestler competes at championship level**

FHS' Nathan Diaz (senior), wrestling in the 220-pound category, made it to the championship round of the NCHSAA 3A West Regional competition. Finishing his season and high school career at 29-13, Diaz was bested by St. Stephens' Isaac Burgin in the championship round. The regionals competition concludes the 2022-23 wrestling season.



Roslynn McCollum scores a layup versus the Falcons.

**4th Annual Franklin High School Unify: March Madness**

"Continuing the movement of building community," the UNIFY March Madness Basketball Event will be hosted by Franklin High School in the Panther Den Thursday, March 30, with opening ceremonies and player introductions beginning at 6 p.m. Entertainment will be provided at halftime. The Franklin High School Booster Club will be sponsoring concessions.

What is UNIFY March Madness? Through shared basketball training and experiences, UNIFY March Madness will join and benefit students with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team. With the help of teachers and coaches, Franklin High Leadership students will help plan and lead this event.

Through weekly practices, Franklin High Special Education students are currently practicing the game of basketball in preparation to compete in the UNIFY March Madness game.

The Unify March Madness game is free admission and is open to the public. Franklin High School and the student body invite the Macon County community to come enjoy this very special night in the Panther Den.



Sophomore Cali Queen shoots a free throw in semi-final game against West Henderson.

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## The Legislative Review

Rep. Karl E. Gillespie

In this week's edition of The Legislative Review, the North Carolina General Assembly gears up with bill filing and committee meetings.

For the legislative week beginning Monday, Jan. 30, 2023, no-vote sessions were held for both the House and the Senate. Prior to votes being held, bills have to be filed, assigned and heard in committee(s). Currently, bills are being introduced by members, and one House and one Senate committee met this week.

On Tuesday, the Senate Judiciary Committee met and held a confirmation hearing on Acting Secretary of Adult Correction, Todd Ishee. In the House, the House Education K-12 Committee met, marking the first House committee meeting for the biennium. The committee heard a presentation from the Department of Public Instruction. The committee also considered HB26, Education Omnibus.

On Wednesday morning, my colleagues and I attended a legislative breakfast where a discussion was held regarding closing the health insurance coverage gap. Afterwards, I met with my fellow Chairs of Appropriations, Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources (AgNER), and we discussed logistics for the committee and reviewed a big picture overview of the AgNER budget with committee staff.

After meetings with a couple of advocacy groups, members of the Western Delegation met to discuss economic opportunities for the region. Later in the afternoon, I met with staff from the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality. We had a productive discussion regarding agency requests as well as more specific concerns I have, including the agency's overburdensome trout farm permit regulations, which I have mentioned in a previous edition of the legislative newsletter.

For the week beginning Monday, Feb. 6, 2023, I arrived Monday evening to Raleigh, as I had several meetings scheduled early Tuesday morning. After two meetings with Appropriations Chairs and committee staff, I attended a caucus meeting with my House colleagues.

The Environment Committee met for the first time this legislative session on Tuesday afternoon. We heard one bill, HB28, NC Managing Environmental Waste Act of



Rep. Karl E. Gillespie

See GILLESPIE on page 12

## Letters to the Editor

### ALA principles not right for Macon County

It was refreshing to see over 80 Macon County community members present at the library board meeting on Feb. 7 in Franklin in support of children and teens. The entire meeting can be viewed on Macon Media News on Facebook for anyone interested in what was actually discussed. Individuals voiced concerns over the intentional leftist drift in which our local library is moving, especially questioning the appropriateness of materials promoted on displays for minors that contain graphic and explicit sexual content. The material in question may likely be a violation of NC General Statute 14-190.7. The directors of our library are members of the American Library Association (ALA), a corrupt Marxist organization whose agenda includes sexualizing minors. Examine [www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org) to see for yourself. Our local library subscribes to the principles of the ALA, as evidenced in its Collection Development Policy,

[https://fontanalib.org/sites/default/files/users/contentmanager/docs/collection\\_development\\_policy.pdf](https://fontanalib.org/sites/default/files/users/contentmanager/docs/collection_development_policy.pdf)

which was secretly revised, discussed, and approved in an ad hoc committee meeting of only three Fontana board members, unbeknownst to the public until after the fact. American Libraries, a publication of the American Library Association, instructs members to update policies to "protect themselves," (notice it's not to protect minors.) And with regards to public library meeting space, the ALA publication advises library workers that "there are ways you can craft your policy to limit who can have access to your space."

<https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/blogs/the-scoop/same-fight-new-tactics/>

In "Creating a Socialist Vision for Public Libraries: A Conversation with Emily Drabinski," the incoming president of the ALA, Emily Drabinski, a self-proclaimed Marxist lesbian, stated "I'm looking forward to thinking through how the resources that will be given to me can be put to good use for the goals that I think all of us on the left share," said Drabinski. She has made the ALA agenda clear for the future of our local library.

<https://lockesociety.org/marxist-lesbian-to-run-american-library-association/>

The community members at the Feb. 7 meeting implored the local board to make overtures to the Fontana Regional Library (FRL) Board, the governing policy-making board, to cut ties with the radical ALA and to withdraw from the Fontana Regional Library System and return control of our local library to a local board. Currently, Macon County taxpayers are sending approximately \$1.2 million to the Fontana Regional Library System instead of keeping that money in our own county for Maconians. It's time for the residents of Macon County to take charge of our library and our future.

Leah Gaston – Franklin, N.C.

### Policy undermines family, society's foundation

While attending the Library board meeting on Feb. 7 of either allowing or not allowing the display of LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) books and literature within the library system. I am proud to say that there was overwhelming support, but not sure the board agreed, of not having these materials exposed to our young and most vulnerable children.

Although we had standing room only, I myself wished we could have overwhelmed the entire building of changing the direction that our library and governing systems seem bent on proceeding. Any authority that replaces a family's role and duty becomes itself an enemy of the family, because it undermines the basic foundation of what family and society's structure is to be. Government's role is to represent, "we the people," which honors and supports the basic truths of being human with equality for all, not a equal outcome but a freedom with your given abilities that you yourself can achieve, allowing the rest of society the freedom to agree or disagree.

The truth of what we are is verified within creation, nature, life and supported by science. Within our DNA and chromosome structure, from the point of conception until death, all shows itself in truth that we all are placed as either male or female. We cannot change what we are physically. The battle is internal and being comfortable in what creation has given us, and any altering cannot change the imprinted DNAs given us, even though we might feel differently. Our existence is born within the genders given us, of male or female, nature shows this daily. Gay, lesbian, bisexual and even queer seek the role of the opposite even within their same gender, which looks for companionship and acceptance. Transgender is trying to find its role in who they are but not sure who they themselves want to be or have become.

So the working out life can be confusing, but we all are given choices whether male or female. This is nothing new. If we as a people or governing system have no true foundation then all sexual desires are fair game. Incest, bestiality, bondage, anything the human mind can invent is acceptable because we have no foundation or guard rail that society is guided by. The foundational evidence within creation, science or nature, are pushed aside for the uncertain foundation of man himself within his own pride and selfishness. The forces of this is not of, "we the people," but of elite modern culture which forces its will upon us, which it is we, that have lost our way if allowing this.

Unselfish love shown to those we disagree with can be difficult, but it's what we all should seek and desire. Untold songs, poetry, art, expresses what we all want. But love seems more a fuzzy feeling than anything we call true. There are four definitions or types of love. (Philia) brotherly love, (Eros) a romantic love, (Storge) loving family, then

See next page

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# LETTERS

Continued from page 10

there's (Agape) love which is unconditional or God's love towards us. Agape or God's love is the less sought and not fully understood, but it's one we all should be in search of. For myself, I never found God's true meaning within church or from any pastor or book. The Divine had little meaning

because its direction was external. It only became real when I allowed God access to the deepest part of me, it was then I found its truest meaning. Yet I search for more of His love because its depths are endless and all the other loves are really built upon this love's foundation. Whether you agree or disagree I would love to meet over coffee or email.

Re-thinking life,

Deni Shepard - nds13@frontier.com

# GILLESPIE

Continued from page 10

2023. House Bill 28 would enact several measures related to food service ware, such as:

- Allocate 5% of the revenue generated by the solid waste disposal tax to cities and counties in the State that provide plastics recycling services and food service ware reduction programs within their jurisdictions.

- Restore certain annual reporting requirements concerning the amounts and types of materials and supplies with recycled content purchased and the amounts and types of materials collected for recycling by State agencies, community colleges, and local school administrative units.

HB28 passed committee by a voice vote. After the committee meeting adjourned, I met with committee staff to discuss preparations for the next Environment meeting. Shortly thereafter, I met with NCDEQ.

On Wednesday, after an Appropriations, Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources Committee meeting, we held a voting session, where we voted on the following bills:

- HB40, Prevent Rioting and Civil Disorder, would increase the penalties for rioting or inciting rioting that causes damage to property, serious bodily injury, death, or assaulting emergency personnel during a riot or state of emergency. I voted in favor and the bill passed by a vote of 75-43.

- HB26, Education Omnibus, would revise the governance structure and admissions standards for the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching (NCCAT). HB26 would also require the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to contract with Gooru Inc., to provide software that would help evaluate and improve student learning and performance in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It will also require DPI to purchase and share attainment data from the National Student Clearinghouse, and it will require the Superintendent of Public Instruction and DPI to study and recommend changes to the system for evaluating schools. I voted against the bill and the bill passed by a vote of 75-42.

- SJR31, Confirm Nels Roseland, State Controller, is a joint resolution confirming Nels Roseland as State Controller. SJR31 passed unanimously, 117-0.

On Thursday, I attended an Appropriations, Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources committee meeting. After the committee I met with various policy associates and discussed a variety of issues concerning conservation, arts funding, and more. Thursday's House session was a non-voting session.

I also had the privilege of visiting with three mayors from the district who were in Raleigh on business: Town of Andrews Mayor James Reid; Town of Murphy Mayor Tim Radford and the Town of Franklin Mayor Jack Horton. Thank you all for taking time out of your busy schedules to visit me at the legislature.

### Committee assignments announced

For the 2023-2024 legislative biennium, I have been appointed to serve on the following committees:

- Appropriations, Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources, Chair



Rep. Gillespie met with three mayors from the district who were in Raleigh Thursday on business: (from left) Town of Franklin Mayor Jack Horton, Gillespie, Town of Murphy Mayor Tim Radford, and Town of Andrews Mayor James Reid.

- Environment, Chair
- Agriculture, Vice-Chair
- Appropriations, Vice-Chair
- Federal Relations and American Indian Affairs, Vice-Chair
- Wildlife Resources, Vice-Chair
- Disaster Recovery and Homeland Security

### Co-sponsored bills

Thus far, I have co-sponsored the following bills:

- HB6, Uniformed Heroes Voting Act, would clarify that no voter may be denied the opportunity to vote due to the voter appearing in the voting place in uniform, such as law enforcement or the military.

- HB10, Require Sheriffs to Cooperate with ICE, would require compliance with immigration detainers, and administrative warrants. HB10 also would require certain reports from local law enforcement.

- HB18, Elk Conservation Permit Auction/Raffle, would direct the wildlife resources commission to issues two elk conservation permits and raffle. HB18 is also conforming changes to various wildlife statutes.

- HB40, Prevent Rioting and Civil Disorder, would increase the penalties for rioting or inciting rioting that causes damage to property, serious bodily injury, death, or assaulting emergency personnel during a riot or state of emergency. HB40 will also allow recovery of treble damages for property damage or personal injury caused by rioting or looting. It will also require pretrial release conditions for rioting and looting offenses to be determined by a judge.

- HB77, Drivers License Designation/Autism, would direct the Division of Motor Vehicles to develop a designation for drivers licenses that may be granted upon request to a person with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

### Let us know what you think

Do you have a suggestion? Concerned about a particular issue? Contact us and we will assist you in any way we can.

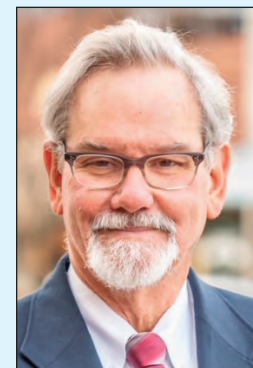
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Telephone: 919-733-5859

*Karl Gillespie is a member of the North Carolina House of Representatives, representing District 120 since January 1, 2021. Gillespie is from Franklin.*

# What's new on the plateau

Patrick Taylor  
Highlands Mayor



Patrick Taylor

On Saturday, Feb. 4, we had a major structure fire on Sagee Woods Drive. I was at home and heard fire trucks coming to Highlands from Cashiers, and any time that happens, I know there must be a major fire or rescue situation in the area.

Concerned that we had a major event, I went to the new fire station and saw several parked vehicles of our volunteer firefighters. I stopped and went to the open fire truck bays, and all the trucks were gone except for the large hook and ladder truck, which confirmed my fear of a major event. I would later learn that truck was also to be used in fighting the fire.

The home on fire was a 7,000 square foot structure, and firefighters had their hands full in getting equipment and water to the site by way of a very narrow residential road. I know some folks have questioned in the past why the fire department has so many trucks, but in a major fire, all that equipment is desperately needed. Other fire departments from Cashiers and Scaly also responded and provided firefighting support to this serious fire event.

The fighting of this fire was a coordinated effort. The fire department called the water plant to inform them of the fire and that huge volumes of water would be needed. The water plant operators stayed on duty for about 20 hours, ensuring sufficient water would be available for the firefighters. In fact, the fire department used 250,000 gallons of water on Saturday. As the firefighters continued to put out hotspots throughout Sunday; the final water usage will probably top out near 300,000 gallons.

The operations of the fire department do not end after the fire is put out. There are major reports that have to be done, and an investigation of the cause gets underway immediately. All the gear firefighters used had to be cleaned in the fire department's new extractor system. Even all the fire hoses were dried in the new extractor system and then all the equipment had to be repacked and repositioned on the trucks.

In short, this tragic fire underscores the value of our first-rate modern firefighting facility that serves this large Highlands fire district. Like you, I saw photographs of our firefighters manning hoses and on ladders fighting the fire. One unanticipated event or sudden situational change can put those firefighters in great danger. They need the best equipment and protection that we can provide for the hazardous business that firefighters undertake.

Our next step for the fire department is to go to basic full-time staffing. This fire underscores not only the need for full-time personnel but also the vital need to maintain a full core of volunteer firefighters. In large fire situations, we need all available firefighters. Their service is essential to the protection of the community. On behalf of the town, thanks so much to our firefighters.

The town board meeting is Thursday at 7 p.m. at the Highlands Community Center.

*Note: Statement regarding action taken by the Highlands Town Board from Feb. 9, closed session meeting: The Highlands Town Board of Commissioners authorizes its attorney to proceed with entering into a stay order for 6 months concerning the Huff v. Town of Highlands lawsuit to avoid unnecessary court costs while we wait to see if the general assembly adopts legislation pertaining to short term rentals.*

# Night to Shine

Smiles all around at last week's Night to Shine event – in-person for the first time since 2019 – with folks getting the red carpet treatment and some even catching a ride in a limo. Karaoke was part of the fun along with photo opportunities, music and dancing and plenty of good food. Preparations are happening all year long for the Night to Shine event acquiring formal wear, makeup artists and hair stylists, decorations, corsages, and all the trappings of being a prom king and queen along with buddies for all the guests. Even local law enforcement showed up to help out in any way they could including participating in a dance off.

Photos by Ellen Randall





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# Arrest Report

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



## Macon County Sheriff's Department

February 4

Kevin Allen Johnston, was charged with governors warrant for fugitive. Deputy Cody J. Howard made the arrest.

Dustin Carnell Sheppard, was charged with assault on a female. Sergeant Jonathan A. Taylor made the arrest.

February 6

Charles Wright, was charged with assault on a child under 12 years of age and child abuse. Sergeant Clay A. Saunders made the arrest.

Marcus Cody Waldroup, was charged with offenses committed in jurisdiction. Denver J. Elliott made the arrest.

February 7

Miguel Olmos, was charged with indecent liberties with children, communicating threats and all other offenses. Anthony Zari made the arrest.

Ronnie Lee Queen, was charged with failure to appear for defraud drug/alcohol test. Jay Wright made the arrest.

February 8

Jeffrey Michael Miller, was charged with offenses committed in jurisdiction. Robert Young made the arrest.

February 9

Crystal Eve Hayes, was charged with failure to appear for a felony. Costin Jigla made the arrest.

Jonathan Mark Zimmerman, was charged with domestic violence protective order violation. Costin Jigla made the arrest.

Jeffery Scott Johnson, was charged with breaking and entering. Jordan C. Sutton made the arrest.

Teresa Hensley, was charged with breaking and entering,

possession of stolen goods/property, possession of methamphetamine and possession of drug paraphernalia. Jordan C. Sutton made the arrest.

Steven Chase Stanley, was charged with failure to appear for reckless driving. Jordan C. Sutton made the arrest.

February 10

Roberto Rojas Tovar, was charged with domestic violence protective order violation and domestic criminal trespass. Robert Young made the arrest.

Jacquelyn Elyssa Miller, was charged with offense committed in jurisdiction. Robert Young made the arrest.

Lincoln Zane Holbert, was charged with possession of a weapon on school campus/property, carrying a concealed gun and intentionally possession or carrying a hand gun under the age of 18 years old. Greg Rogers made the arrest.

William Lynn Higdon, was charged with failure to appear and child support enforcement contempt. Costin Jigla made the arrest.

Lanny Edmund Hoffman Jr., was charged with offense committed in jurisdiction. Sergeant Anthony Hopkins made the arrest.

Joe Otis Norwood II, was charged with breaking and entering to terrorize/injure. David Blanton made the arrest.

Steve Royce Ulsh, was charged with breaking and entering, larceny after breaking and entering, possession of stolen goods and injury to real property. Gabe D. Bingham made the arrest.

February 12

Jonathan Wade Hurst, was charged with assault with a deadly weapon, simple assault, resist/obstruct/delay, breaking and entering to terrorize/injure and assault on a female. Gabe D. Bingham made the arrest.

## Franklin Police Department

February 6

Edwin Randall Grob, was charged with injury to personal property. M.A. Bingham made the arrest.

February 8

William Nickalus Prince, was charged with driving while impaired. R.S. Dula made the arrest.

February 12

Nery Chavez Lopez, was charged with driving under the influence. G.D. Hovis made the arrest.

# New transport offers right service at right time

Beginning this week, Charles George VA Medical Center will begin using its very own Veteran Medical Transport to provide inter-facility and necessary post-hospitalization transportation for veterans.

The Veteran Medical Transport (VMT) will be able to transport veterans who need specialized care to hospitals or facilities that will be able to meet veteran-specific medical needs.

The VMT will be staffed and operated by highly trained credentialed Paramedics and EMT's. They will provide transportation for veterans needing Basic Life Support up to Advanced Life Support.

Initial start-up will not cover 24/7 until sufficient staff are brought on board.

This new service is a direct result of the hard work and dedication of the Implementation Team. They are:

Dr. Andrew Beeghly: VMT Medical Director  
Patti Campbell, MSN, RN, Chief Nurse Outpatient (Implementation Team Chair)

John Ormand, RN, NRP ED RN (Implementation Team Co-Chair)

Craig Holbert, Chief of Logistics & Supply Chain



(From left to Right) The crew which will man the new VMT. They are: Dereck Lindsey EMT, Brittney Letterman EMT, Ricky Brown NR-CCP, VMT Supervisor, and sitting is Thomas Dunn NRP VMT Lead.

**COMMUNITY CALENDAR**

**Manna Food Bank is now at Bethel United Methodist Church.** To reserve a food box, call (828)634-1116 and leave a message with the following information: your first name and last initial; phone number to confirm pick-up time; number of people in your family; allergies in the family; and any specialty items needed, like diapers, etc. Pick up is at Bethel UMC, 81 Bethel Church Road, off Highlands Road.

**M.S. Support Group of Macon County** will meet on Thursday, Feb. 16, 2 to 4 p.m., at the Macon County Senior Center. For more information go to facebook MS Support Group of Macon County.

**Prentiss Church Food Pantry** will be open Thursday, Feb. 16, from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. If anyone is in need of a food box, drop by and be blessed.

**Living Successfully with Parkinson's Disease presented by Angel Medical Center's Outpatient Rehabilitation Session** will be held on Thursday, Feb. 16, 2:30 p.m., at the Macon County Public Library, 149 Siler Farm Road. The early signs and symptoms of Parkinson's Disease will be covered, as well as how to recognize them. Learn how various physical, speech, and occupational therapies can help those affected maintain full or modified independence throughout the progression of the disease. For more information, call AMC Outpatient Rehabilitation at (828)369-4171.

**Heartland Band Old Time Gospel Singing** will be held on Friday, Feb. 17, 6 to 8 p.m., at West Franklin Church, located on Sloan Rd., next to the Forest Service Office. All are welcome.

**Free Musical Entertainment at Frog Quarters** Saturday, Feb. 18, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Melody Lowery is the featured musician. Frog Quarters is located at 573 E. Main St.

**Holly Springs Community Development Association** will meet on Feb. 18, 8:30 a.m., at the community building at 2720 Cat Creek Rd. Everyone is welcome to bring a favorite breakfast dish and a friend.

**Murphy Art Center Making Colorful Clay Faces** will be held on Saturday, Feb. 18, 10 to 12 p.m. This is a MACKey Mouse Art Club Class, Suitable for Kids ages 7 to 17. Students will make, bake, and paint faces of clay and decorate to hang. Register at the center or by calling, (828)360-3038. For more information, call, Dianne Gardner (760)974-6583, rosie091504@gmail.com

**Men's Challenge of the Smokies Graduation** will be held on Saturday, Feb. 18, 10 a.m., at the center, 336 Living Hope Way, Franklin. Worship, a message, a short video and testimony, and a reception after with refreshments. All are welcome to attend. For more information about the 12-month, faith-based addiction recovery program, visit [www.living-hopeway.com](http://www.living-hopeway.com) or call (828)524-2157.

**Aglow International meeting** will be held on Saturday, Feb. 18, 10 a.m. to 12 noon, at the First Pentecost Church, 164 Iotla Church Rd., Franklin. For more information call, Marybeth at (407)951-4286.

**Trout Unlimited Sylva and the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce** are planning a trash pick-up day for North River Road on Tuesday, Feb. 21, from noon to 2 p.m. Meet at the CJ Harris boat launch on North River Road. Rain date is Feb. 28. Check [facebook.com/tuckaseigee373](https://facebook.com/tuckaseigee373) for last minute info.

**Macon County Horse Association Meeting** will be held on Tuesday, Feb. 21, 7 p.m., at the alumni building, Macon Co. Fairgrounds. For more information, call (828)342-7689.

**Macon County Republican Women's Club** will meet Tuesday, Feb. 21, 11:30 a.m., at Fat Buddies BBQ restaurant. Director of KIDS Place Alisa Ashe is the guest speaker. For additional club information, email [MCRWNC@gmail.com](mailto:MCRWNC@gmail.com)

**Share the Journey Support Group for Caregivers** whose loved ones are experiencing memory loss will meet on Wednesday, Feb. 22, 2 p.m., at First Presbyterian Church, 26 Church St. Enter the church from the parking lot, come through the double red doors in the courtyard and follow the signs. For more information, call (828)524-3119.

**Visually impaired New Support Group** will be held on Thursday, Feb. 23, 2 p.m. The group is for impaired individuals, spouses, caregivers and others who are intersted. They will provide information about equipment and services from the Division of Services for the Blind as well as giving individuals a chance to interact with others who are equally challenged by vision loss. For more information, call (828)349-2058.

**Yoga in the Living Room** Thursday, Feb. 23, 6 to 7 p.m. in the Macon County Public Library. Vinyasa flow yoga moves mindfully through the body with the breath to create a deep sense of calm and relaxation, releasing tension, stress and anxiety. Bring a mat and plan to arrive by 5:55 p.m. before the doors lock at 6 p.m. The library is located at 149 Siler Farm Road, Franklin. For more information, call (828)524-4800.

**Bascom, A Center for the Visual Arts Free Reception** will be held on Thursday, Feb. 23, at 5 p.m. to highlight its winter exhibitions. The Bascom is featuring 11 exhibitions this year in its gallery spaces, including Emergence: A Survey of Southeastern Studio Programs 2023; The Ravel & The Rest; and Selections from the Permanent Collection: Origins. The reception is open to the public and includes refreshments and brief remarks by Executive Director Karin Peterson. The center is located at 323 Franklin Rd., Highlands.

**Girl Scout Daisy and Brownie Volunteers** needed for Troop 2996 in Franklin. This is a great opportunity to help 5 to 8 year olds learn and grow. For more information, call Diane Peltz at (828)371-2823 or email [dianepeltz1953@gmail.com](mailto:dianepeltz1953@gmail.com).

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

**Macon Chips, Franklin's Wood Carving Club** meets on Tuesdays, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Macon County Public Library and on Thursdays, 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the Franklin High School Wood Shop just off McCollum Drive. Anyone interested is encouraged to attend. Anyone under 18 years of age must be accompanied by an adult. For more information, call (828)342-8126.

**Uptown Gallery Children and Adult Art Classes and Workshops** in acrylic, watercolor, acrylic paint pouring, encaustic, precious metal clay and glass fusing. Free painting in the classroom Thursdays, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. All skill levels and mediums are welcome. Participants are responsible for their own project and a bag lunch. Membership meeting second Sunday of the month at 3 p.m. The gallery is located at 30 E. Main St. in Franklin. For more information, call (828)349-4607.

**Crawford Senior Center officers a variety of classes** to older adults in Macon County. Classes include arts, crafts, exercise, and more. They also offer a variety of support groups: dementia caregivers, visually impaired persons, grief support and multiple sclerosis support group. For more information, call (828)349-2058 ext. 0.

**Crawford Senior Center Care Connection Adult Day Program** offers activities and supervision for adults with dementia and other forms of

**CHURCH HAPPENINGS**

**Spiritual Light Center** on Sunday, Feb. 19, at 11 a.m., Melody Cooper will be speaking about "Connecting." Yoga with Ashley is every Monday at 6 p.m., on Thursdays, a movie is shown at 3 p.m. and then out to eat afterward. The center is located at 80 Heritage Hollow Dr., behind the Gazebo Restaurant. For more information or to stream services go to [SpiritualLightCenter.com](http://SpiritualLightCenter.com).

**Resurrection Lutheran Church (LCMS)** invites you to worship with them in the Sanctuary beginning at 10:30 a.m., followed by fellowship with light refreshments in the fellowship hall. Adult Bible class begins at 9:15 a.m. The church is located at 38 Wayah Street, Franklin

**Watch Party with Free Chapel Church and Pastor Jentzen Franklin** on Sunday, 11 a.m., 22 W. Palmer St. For more information, call (828)421-6712.

**Son Rise International Ministries Christian Fellowship Services** are held on Friday evenings at 7 p.m.; Wednesday ladies prayer and Bible Study from 1 to 3 p.m. Mens Bible Study Thursday at 7 p.m. The church is located at 462 Depot St. For more information, call (828)369-2465.

**First Pentecost Church Sunday Services** are Sunday School 9:30 a.m., Worship 10:30 a.m., Bible study Thursday, 7 p.m., 164 Iotla Church Rd., The Pastor is Luke Bateman.

**Mountain Synagogue in Franklin** conducts services the first Friday and third Saturday of each month. For information, visit the website at [mountainsynagoguewnc.com](http://mountainsynagoguewnc.com), email us at [mountainsynagogue@gmail.com](mailto:mountainsynagogue@gmail.com), or call (828)634-1312.

**Memorial United Methodist Church** Worship Services in person and on Facebook at 11 a.m. every Sunday. They have communion the first Sunday of each month. The church is located at 4668 Old Murphy Rd. (across from Loafers Glory). The pastor is Evan W. Hill. For more information, call (828)369-5834.

**Franklin First United Methodist Church Sunday** In-person Worship is held at 10 a.m. or on Facebook at Franklin First United Methodist Church, either live or later on recorded video. The church is located at 66 Harrison Avenue in downtown Franklin; senior pastor is Rev. David Beam. For more information, call (828)524-3010 or visit us at <http://www.firstumcfranklin.org>

**Prentiss Church of God** is holding Sunday worship service in its sanctuary beginning at 10:30 a.m., and streamed online on the Prentiss Church of God Facebook page. Prayer and Worship service is the first Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. Sunday School relaunch in March. Sign up for Connect Groups at [prentisschurch.com](http://prentisschurch.com). The church is located at 59 Church Hill Lane, off Addington Bridge Road. Phone: (828)369-3885.

Email your church events to [maconcountynews@gmail.com](mailto:maconcountynews@gmail.com)

**SUDOKU ANSWERS FOR PG. 22**

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

R	E	R	S	S	M	A	S	E	R
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# Veteran couple establishes ministry to assist local widows in need

Deena C. Bouknight – Contributing Writer

Veterans Jack and Doreen Castle cleverly use their last name to convey the intentions of their ministry. Castles for Christ concentrates on the construction and general repair needs of “castles” or homes of women who have lost their spouses. The Franklin couple, both who served in the Air Force, determined the necessity for the local ministry through seeing the needs of their own mothers.

“Our moms, who live away from us, are both widows,” explained Doreen, “and seeing their need for home repairs on a limited income, we knew that need was also in our local area. Jack and I are both retired Air Force, involved with American Legion Macon Post 108 and 828Vets, and have realized the need for helping elderly veterans. Those needs began our passion for Castles for Christ Ministries, LLC.

“We started using my husband Jack’s carpentry skills and experience doing home repairs for our moms in 2020 and saw the joy it brought them,” she continued. “Jack quit his job at a Franklin roofing company and we began Castles for Christ Ministries, LLC in 2021. Usually labor costs outweigh the cost of items so we operate on the premise that if supplies can be paid for by the person in need, we provide the labor for free. We do accept donations to pass on to those that cannot afford the cost of supplies.”

Some of the projects Castles for Christ has undertaken include garbage disposal repair, replacement of busted water lines at a well head, gutter cleaning, replacement of rotted sub-flooring, replacement of rotted house trim, hanging clothes racks in closets, hauling debris, installing window A/C units, replacing broken toilets, and more.

Doreen pointed out that even though they organized Castles for Christ in 2021, they had been assisting individuals



Jack and Doreen Castle started a ministry in Franklin to assist widows with home repairs and construction projects.

with needs through their church and while on short-term mission trips for the past 20 years.

“But not until we left our jobs [she worked as a bank ac-

countant] were we able to help more widows in the community,” she pointed out.

Besides the two of them, Doreen noted that members in their church and additional fellow veterans assist them with projects on an as-needed basis. And sometimes their two grown sons, Justin and Dylan, help in the ministry as well.

“Otherwise, it is just Jack and I as a team,” she said. “But we would like to help more people and could use more talent and skills.”

As indicated in the ministry’s name, Castles for Christ is motivated by the Castles’ faith in God. “Because we are conservative Christians, we are sometimes perceived as peculiar and our passion drives us to press on cheerfully,” she said, pointing out the motivation for the ministry. “Titus 2:14 states, ‘Who gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.’”

She said that while they are working on a widow’s home, “We always praise God and give Him the glory in all that we do. And, we share the love of Christ in every job. Christ says we are to love and serve others. His love is so great because He knows His people by caring for them and their needs. So, as we try to be Christ-like in serving others we have discovered a love and joy that is almost unexplainable in common terms.”

Besides Castles for Christ, Doreen also started the Widows of Victory at Victory Baptist Church, which offers interaction through text messages, socials, and Bible studies.

“Our group also does community outreach,” she said.

Doreen said that she and her husband have experienced blessings from their endeavors.

“Seeing the joy on peoples’ faces when they realize someone truly cares about them and their needs. Lots of widows are just lonely and would like someone to talk to. Sometimes a one-hour repair might turn into a half day visit.”

Anyone interested in assisting with Castles for Christ can email [castles4christ@gmail.com](mailto:castles4christ@gmail.com).

## Sparky and Rhonda Rucker at WCU March 2

The Mountain Heritage Center is joining with Western Carolina University’s School of Music to present Sparky and Rhonda Rucker at 7 p.m. Thursday, March 2, in the Coulter Building auditorium. This concert is free and open to the public.

Sparky and Rhonda Rucker, of Knoxville, Tennessee, are internationally recognized as musicians, authors and storytellers. They accompany themselves with finger-style picking and bottleneck blues guitar, blues harmonica, old-time banjo, piano, spoons and bones. The Rucker’s take their audience on an educational and emotional journey that ranges from poignant stories of slavery and war to an amusing rendition of a Brer Rabbit tale, or their witty commentaries on current events. Their music includes a variety of old-time blues, Appalachian music, slave songs, Civil War music, spirituals, work songs, ballads, civil rights music and their own original compositions.

For more than 50 years, the Rucker’s have performed at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, Mountain Heritage Day, as well as NPR’s “All Things Considered,” “Prairie Home Companion,” “Mountain Stage,” and “Morning Edition.” Their recording,



Sparky and Rhonda Rucker take their audiences on educational and emotional journeys with poignant stories and amusing commentaries.

“Treasures and Tears” was nominated for a W.C. Handy Award, and their music is included on the Grammy-nominated anthology, “Singing Through the Hard Times.”

For more information on the concert, call the Mountain Heritage Center at 828-227-7129 or visit [mhc.wcu.edu](http://mhc.wcu.edu)

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# Nationally sought utilitarian knife artist moves to Macon County

Deena C. Bouknight – Contributing Writer

Less than a year ago, 26-year-old South Carolina native Alec Meier moved to Macon County and is living in the Cartoogechaye-area home his family has owned since he was a child. His goal: To work on his property, preserve a nearby historic cemetery, fly fish, hike, and make knives. Indeed, while Meier earned a degree in historic preservation at College of Charleston, he became known nationally a few years ago for his highly artistic yet utilitarian outdoor and chef knives.

Talk show host Jimmy Kimmel owns a few of Meier's knives, as do CEOs and James Beard-award-winning chefs.

One might not consider knife-making an artistic pursuit, but Meier's Stono Knife Works' creations are completely distinct and one-of-a-kind. Meier works, along with two associates, in a nondescript, cinderblock building in Franklin. The process of creating the knives is an arduous one that involves incorporating age-old practices and sometimes antique tools and equipment.

From design sketches to polishing, the making of each knife involves painstaking hours.

## Unexpected limelight

Meier recognized he had a do-it-yourself spirit early on. The self-prescribed "history nerd" was 14 years old when he decided he wanted to make a sword. He researched the process, found a car brake drum at a junkyard, filled it with coal, heated it, and generated air with a hair dryer. He heated metal and then pounded it first on a piece of granite and then on a chunk of railroad track to fashion a blade.

From that first attempt, Meier pored through online blade-making forums, watched knife-maker segments on YouTube, studied master knife makers' styles, and spent myriad hours figuring out the process. In fact, the insignia currently on many of his products is the Greek goddess Arachne, signifying attributes of self-efficiency.

"Making knives has required so much trial and error," said Meier, who credits his "crafty" family – grandfathers, mother, and father – with instilling a bent toward artisanship. When he desired to make something, he researched and figured it out until it was achieved.

While living in Charleston, after college, Meier worked on historic properties full-time and made knives as a side business. Most were and are custom projects, with him learning about how a client intends to use the knife – for hunting, fishing, camping, cooking, etc. – and then understanding a client's personality. With that knowledge, he determines the design and what ornamentation to add to both the blade and the han-

dle. He also garners inspiration from nature, art, and jewelry. And, because he grew up visiting Macon County from his home in South Carolina, most knife blades present an obvious or subtle outline of a mountain range.

"Knives don't have to just be practical," he said. "They can also be beautiful. But then again, I don't want someone putting a knife I make up on a shelf to look at and never use.

Not that my knives are only for guys, but guys often don't wear any or much jewelry, so these knives are kind of like jewelry for guys."

Thus, the multi-step process of making the knives results in them being so durable that Meier offers a lifetime warranty. And in the decade-plus that he has been crafting knives, he has only had to repair a few.

Besides the design, Meier's knife-making process starts by salvaging pieces of old railroad tracks. He heats and cuts thin sections of the tracks and alternately layers the pieces with white steel. Although tedious details too numerous to mention are involved in all the steps, he basically heats up the layers in a forge – to about 2,000

degrees – and then presses them flat in a hydraulic press. Additionally, from those layered and pressed sheets are cut knife blades and handles from established templates. Those knives and blades are refined in a forge, shaped on a belt grinder, heated and cooled more to harden, spend time in a kiln, and much more. Added to knife handles might be sections of 3-D maps, fossils, gems, burl wood, etchings, and more, depending on the intended design.

One final step for the actual knife involves using a 300-year-old Sheffield, England, anvil that Meier discovered and purchased.

"I consider myself not only a knife maker but a blacksmith," he explained, pointing out that work he does to knives on the anvil gives each one added uniqueness.

His shop in Franklin is filled with useful items such as the anvil. To make each knife's



A 300-year old anvil is used for finishing touches on blades and handles.



A Stono Knife Works knife starts with a sketched design and then different elements are used to make the handle and blade to make the end result distinct and beautiful.



Many different elements adorn knives, including mammoth teeth fossils, stones, and prehistoric resin.



Alex Meier's Stono Knife Works shop in Franklin includes sundry heavy-duty equipment to achieve the multi-step processes of hand-crafting knives.

sheath, he uses various types of leather – from cow to wild boar to water buffalo hide – and sews it on a 19th century heavy-duty, specialized manual sewing machine and then presses it to create a seam in a 1600s crank-handle book press.

"I like to take things back to the basics whenever I can," he said. "I would even like to raise my own cows so that I can process my own leather."



Alec Meier's hand-crafted knives are artistic and practical, with a mountain scene portrayed on most blades.

All that work and attention to detail earned Stono Knife Works in 2019 a coveted *Garden and Gun* magazine "Outdoor Category" Made in the South Award. Overnight, Meier's hand-crafted knives became sought after by celebrities, premier chefs, and specialty retailers such as Duluth Trading Company, which orders upwards of 100 Stono knives monthly to offer to customers via its online and printed catalogs.

"What I do is time-consuming," he said, "but if what I do encourages adults and kids to get outside and enjoy nature – to enjoy cooking – then it's worth it. And I want to preserve handcraftsmanship ... history. Making knives is one way to do that."

Meier hopes to some day offer some basic classes out of his Macon County shop so that he might be able to share a portion of what he has learned about knife making.

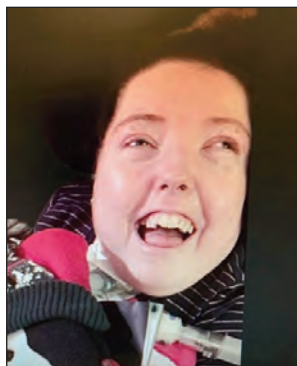


## Deaths & Funerals

### Kayla LeeAnn Hampton

Kayla LeeAnn Hampton, 34, of Franklin, N.C., went home to be with the Lord on Thursday, Feb. 9, 2023.

She was born in Sylva, N.C., on June 19, 1988. She was the daughter of Benny Lee Hampton and Karen Crowe Hampton. She was preceded in death by her grandparents, John Lloyd Hampton, Annie Sue Guffey Freimuth, Junior Crowe, and Margie Crowe; uncle, Johnny Hampton; and aunts, Ernestine Shelton and Jean Henry.



**Kayla LeeAnn Hampton**

She was a member of Emmanuel Baptist Church and loved listening to singing at her church. Everyone who ever met her, instantly fell in love with her, she brought so much joy to so many people in her life. Her smile spoke volumes though her words could not.

God sends angels to be with us on earth and we have had this little angel in our lives for 34 years. Kayla changed a lot of people's lives with her smile and her personality. To know her was nothing but PURE LOVE. God wanted her back with him and while all of us are left heartbroken Kayla has a new body and now is our angel in heaven. We will miss her, but we know we will see her again.

She is survived by her parents, Benny and Karen Crowe Hampton; brother, John Hampton and wife Julia of Franklin; nephew, Colter Hampton of Franklin; uncles, Wayne Crowe and wife Sandy, and Josh Crowe and wife Pam, of Waynesville; and an aunt, Kitty Speed and husband Dennis of Clayton, Ga.; and numerous cousins, extended family members, and her church family. She was loved and cared for by her doctors, nurses, and home health care providers.

A funeral service was held Tuesday, Feb. 14, at Emmanuel Baptist Church with Rev. John Hartley, Rev. Frank Rodriguez, and Rev. Bobby Cloer officiating. Burial was in the Tellico Baptist Church Cemetery.

Pallbearers were Josh Crowe, Wayne Crowe, Sheldon Crowe, Bobby Ledford, Ronnie Ledford, and Matthew Elliott.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be made to the Crippled Children's Foundation, 2019 4th Ave. N., Birmingham, AL 35203.

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

### Roosevelt Lesley (R. L.) Burrell Jr.

Roosevelt Lesley (R. L.) Burrell Jr., 95, of Franklin, N.C., passed away Thursday, Feb. 9, 2023. He was born Aug. 18, 1927, in Macon County to the late Roosevelt Lesley Burrell Sr. and Clyde Shope Burrell. He was a warehouse worker and a craftsman. He loved woodworking, gardening and was an Atlanta Braves fan. He was a member of Newman Chapel Baptist Church.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his wife, Flora Elizabeth Carpenter Burrell; sisters, Willie Kate McDowell and Viola Jenkins; and a brother, O'neal Burrell.

He is survived by a daughter, Linda Brooks of Franklin; two sons, James Burrell and Kevin Burrell both of Franklin; three grandchildren; four great-grandchildren; and one great-great-grandchild.

A funeral service was held Wednesday, Feb. 15, at Newman Chapel Baptist Church, with Rev. Danny Cannon and Rev. Dennis Ledford officiating. Burial was at Newman Chapel Baptist Church Cemetery.

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

### William Joseph Graham

William Joseph Graham, 79, passed from this life on Feb. 3, 2023. He was born on Jan. 9, 1944, to Donald and Kathleen Russel Graham.

He served his country in Vietnam while a member of the United States Navy and later in the Naval Reserve.

Known as Bill, he was a genuinely kind and compassionate man who dearly loved his family and managed to touch everyone he met. He was a positive and happy person with a wickedly sharp sense of humor that drew people to him. It was just fun to be with him.

He loved fast cars and motorcycles and owned at least 54 of them during his lifetime. He never became too attached to one and would trade or buy another that happened to catch his eye. Once he even traded at a gas station with a man he had just met. He and his brother, Jim, always enjoyed each other's company but especially when they rode their motorcycles together.

He was crazy about his pups throughout his life, and he doted on Ozzy, Cash, Squirt, Gretchen, Ricky, and Bob. He was also crazy about his team, the Miami Dolphins. He was a dedicated fan, who followed them closely and developed a case of the nerves whenever they approached a perfect season. He listened to music constantly, mostly but not exclusively the great music of the '50s and '60s.

He was preceded in death by his parents; his wife, Linda Peller Graham; his daughter, Jennifer Graham; and his siblings, Shirley Graves and Donny Graham.

Left with many wonderful memories are his children, Cindy Ryan (Robert, IV) and Robby Graham (Kristin) both of Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.; his grandchildren, Kaley and Robert, V; his great grandchildren, Hawkins and Oxford; nieces and nephews, Tracy Graves Kelly, P.J. Graves, Jessie Graham; great nieces Ivy, Ashlyn, Skylar, Bethany, Destiny; and his brother, Jim Graham (Freda) of Franklin.

The United States Navy will provide military honors at the Western Carolina State Veterans Cemetery in Black Mountain, N.C., at a later date.

Moffitt Family Funeral Care is honored to serve the family.

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



**William Joseph Graham**

### Patricia S. Queen

Patricia S. Queen, 57, of Lexington, passed away Feb. 6, 2023, at Forsyth Medical Center in Winston Salem.

She was born March 17, 1965, in Macon County, to Jack Edward Queen and Joyce Lavonia Reeves Queen. She was a member of Amazing Grace Baptist Church, was retired with the Davidson County School System. Her passion was her faith, church, family and especially her nephew, nieces and great nephews and nieces. She was a loving sister and aunt, who will be missed by all. She loved animals, nature, loved working with kids and traveling to the Western North Carolina mountains.

Left to cherish her memories are her brothers, Steven Queen and wife Valerie, Patrick Queen and wife Tonia; sister, Tammy Wall, all of Lexington; nephew, Zak Queen; nieces, Nicole Craver, Cassandra Queen, and Jessica Queen; and four great nieces and nephews.

A celebration of her life was held Thursday, Feb. 9, at Davidson Funeral Home in Lexington.

A graveside service was held Saturday, Feb. 11, in the Roper Family Cemetery in Franklin, N.C.

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

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.



**Patricia S. Queen**

### Rev. Wesley F. Hooper

Rev. Wesley F. Hooper, 99, of Franklin, N.C., left this earth and joined the Church Triumphant Tuesday evening, Feb. 7, 2023. He was 99 years old and said he was born on the first big frost Oct. 25, 1923, in the MilkSick Cove above Cullowhee, N.C. He was the son of the late Rev. Corsey and Maggie Frady Hooper and was the last surviving child of their 13 children.

He was a Baptist pastor for 77 years, serving mountain churches in Macon, Jackson, and Swain counties. He grew up during the Great Depression and was able to go only through the seventh grade, but he was self-taught, as he served 17 churches and two of those churches he pastored twice. He was ordained June 22, 1946, and was the last of the charter members of the Pine Creek Baptist Church. He also served in several offices in the Macon and Tuckaseegee Associations including moderator. He served in the past as a chaplain for Cullowhee and Savannah volunteer fire departments. He worked hard at the variety of jobs he held during his life. He worked in logging, farming, construction, painting, and in maintenance in the Macon County Schools and with the paint department of Western Carolina University before retiring. He was a talented craftsman and made all kinds of tool handles, bot-tomed chairs, making oxen yokes, and wood carving. He shared many of his skills with children and others as well in the schools and at the county fair.

He was married to Gladys Davis Hooper for 72 years until her death in 2016. They were a working couple and shared in the ministry to all they could. They grew big gardens and were always sharing their bounty and gave all kinds of vegetables to their friends and neighbors. He was best known for the sweet potatoes he grew.

In addition to his parents and wife, he was preceded in death by a son, Dennis Hooper; daughter, Janie Matthews; and 12 brothers and sisters.

He is survived by his daughter, Karen Burch (Donald) of Franklin; a son, Rev. Davis Hooper (Sandra) of Franklin; nine grandchildren; 13 great grand-children; two great-great grandchildren; and several nieces and nephews. Also surviving are a multitude of children he had won to the Lord Jesus Christ.

A celebration of his life and praise service was held Saturday, Feb. 11, at Liberty Baptist Church, of which he was the oldest member and taught Sunday School until only a couple of months ago, when his health forced him to stop. Rev. Eddie Stillwell, Rev. Steve Reeves, and Rev. Charles Stevens officiated. Other fellow ministers, whom he loved and would have liked to have all of them officiate, served as honorary pallbearers, along with the deacons with whom he had served. Burial was in the Liberty Baptist Church cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorials can be made to Liberty Baptist Church.

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

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.

### Timothy Stewart

Timothy Stewart, 65, formerly of Franklin, N.C., passed away Tuesday, Feb. 7, 2023, in Canton, N.C.

Born in Macon County, he was the son of the late Fred Stewart and Betty Jo Roper. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his brother, Larry Stewart.

He is survived by several family members.

A special thank you to Gene Horrell of Arden and cousin, Blaine Roper of Tennessee, for overseeing Timothy and his affairs.

A graveside service was held on Monday, Feb. 13, at the Tellico Baptist Church Cemetery.

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

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.



**Rev. Wesley F. Hooper**



# Deaths & Funerals

## Bobby Wilson Teague

Bobby Wilson Teague, 84, of Marietta, Ga., passed away Tuesday, Feb. 7, 2023, at Greenville Memorial Hospital.

Born in Franklin, N.C., he was a son of the late Wilbur W. and Hattie Hodgkin Teague. He was a graduate of Clemson University with an Industrial Engineering Degree, and retired from J. P. Stevens after 47 years. He was a member of the Gold Wing Road Riders Association, and a member of St. Mark United Methodist Church.

He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Patricia Tatham Teague; daughter, Sherri Teague (fiancé Jody Foister); son, Barry Teague (Gail); grandchildren, Barry Teague Jr., Meredith Teague, Miriam Teague; and brother, Bill Teague (Luanne).

Funeral services were Friday, Feb. 10, at The Howze Mortuary Chapel. Burial was Saturday, Feb. 11, at Snow Hill United Methodist Church Cemetery in Franklin.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to Snow Hill United Methodist Church 330 Snow Hill Rd., Franklin, NC 28734.

Online condolences can be left at [www.bryantgrantfuneralhome.com](http://www.bryantgrantfuneralhome.com).

Bryant-Grant Funeral Home & Crematory is in charge of local arrangements.

## Karen Sue Jenkins Cabe

Karen Sue Jenkins Cabe, 62, of Franklin, N.C., passed away on Monday, Feb. 6, 2023.

Born in Crystal Lake, Mich., she was the daughter of the late Fred and Shirley Baker Jenkins. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by a sister, Virginia Scianimanico.

She loved playing cards and visiting with her friends, but what she cherished the most was spending time with her granddaughter, Braylee.

She is survived by two sons, Dennis Michael Cabe (Amy), and Dustin Jake Cabe (Betina) both of Franklin; granddaughter, Braylee Cabe; sister, Sue Watkins of Roswell, Mich.; two brothers, Freddie Jenkins of Clarksville, Tenn., and Michael Jenkins of Mt Pleasant, Mich.; and numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

A celebration of life will be Saturday, Feb. 18, at 2 p.m., in the Chapel of Macon Funeral Home. The family will receive friends from 1 to 2 p.m., one hour prior to the service at the funeral home.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Rathbun House, 121 Sherwood Rd, Asheville, NC 28803; or Appalachian Animal Rescue, PO Box 81, Franklin, NC 28744.

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

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.

## Richard 'Rick' A. Huscusson

Richard "Rick" A. Huscusson, 72, of Gainesville, Ga., formerly of Franklin, N.C., passed away on Jan. 27, 2023. He was born in Macon County on Jan. 8, 1951, to the late Calvin and Bertha Roper Huscusson.

He was a graduate of the class of 1969 of Franklin High School. He was very proud of his alma mater and the continued friendships that he kept throughout the years. He worked for General Motors for 33 years until his retirement. Upon retiring, he moved to his house on Lake Lanier, Ga., where he had many friends. He enjoyed fishing and spending time outdoors. He ran in the Peachtree Road Race many years in a row. He was an avid sports fan, enjoying any sport. However, his favorites were the Georgia Bulldogs, the Atlanta Falcons, and the Atlanta Braves.

He is survived by one sister, Ann Nichols; two brothers, Jim Huscusson (Clydia) and David Huscusson (Evelyn) and numerous nieces and nephews.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by two sisters, Rosemary Barbot and Frances Hernandez and three brothers, John, Don, and Bob Huscusson.

A memorial service will be held at a later date.

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

Macon Funeral Home is assisting the family with arrangements.



Richard A. Huscusson

## Sandra Anne Hamilton

Sandra Anne Hamilton, 85, of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., passed peacefully Feb. 9, 2023, at Eckerd Living Center with her daughter by her side.

She was born in Tampa, Fla., Aug. 31, 1937, to the late Lyle and Rita Wade Williams. She had a career as the quintessential flight attendant starting with National Airlines and retiring from Pan Am Airlines.

"I wore silver wings and a neat flight cap; I flew many times across the map. The job of a stewardess, I possessed, my job in the sky, I knew was the best. For I traveled the world enjoying each sight, The world smiling back was my big delight. Life is beautiful up here in the sky, and I thank God I was able to fly" – Sandy.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband, James A. Porter.

She is survived by her daughter, Candace Hamilton.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Macon County Animal Shelter or to Broward Public Library Funds, Talking Book, Main Library Broward County, 100 S. Andrews Ave. Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33301.

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



Sandra Anne Hamilton

## Corn Growers Assoc. of North Carolina Notice of Referendum

The Corn Growers Association of North Carolina will be conducting a referendum for the assessment of corn sold to first purchasers in North Carolina on March 14, 2023.

The polling location for Macon County has been established at the Macon County Extension Center located at 193 Thomas Heights Rd. Franklin, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The current assessment is 1.25 cents per bushel, and the Association is proposing to change the assessment to .30% of settlement. This will bring the Association's assessment in line with other row crop assessments across North Carolina.

If the Association realizes an increase in funds they will be applied to an endowed chair position at NC State University for the Extension Cropping Specialist-Corn position. This endowment will ensure the position will be filled with the highest qualified candidates in perpetuity. Additionally, any increase in revenue will cover the increased cost of conducting research which benefits all North Carolina corn producers.

The votes will be collected and tabulated by NC State University and results published by North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services.

The Corn Growers Association of North Carolina is governed by an all-volunteer board of farmers and industry representatives. The Association is committed to promoting production agriculture, funding research that benefits corn growers across the state, and representing all the state's farmers nationally and internationally.

For more information on the referendum, call your County Extension Office at (828)349-2046.

## PETS OF THE WEEK

Macon County Animal Services,  
Open M-F by appointment only, call  
(828)349-2106.

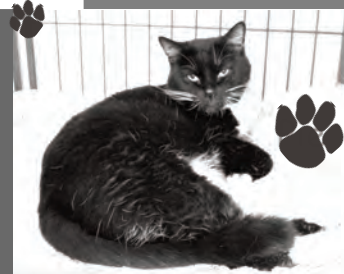
Pictures of Lost and Available Pets,  
[www.facebook.com/maconcountyanimalservices](http://www.facebook.com/maconcountyanimalservices)



Buster is approximately 1 year old, neutered. Loves dogs and is ok with cats. Buster has been at the shelter since November.



Pie is a 2 year old female that has been at the shelter since November.



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**PETS OF THE WEEK**

Macon County Animal Services,  
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Pictures of Lost and Available Pets,  
[www.facebook.com/maconcountyanimalservices](http://www.facebook.com/maconcountyanimalservices)

Buster is approximately 1 year old, neutered. Loves dogs and is ok with cats. Buster has been at the shelter since November.

Pie is a 2 year old female that has been at the shelter since November.

# Daytona International: the birthplace of speed

Holly Cain – NASCAR Wire Service

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. – With the NASCAR season-opening DAYTONA 500 set for Sunday at Daytona International Speedway, race teams and race-starved fans are excitedly arriving in Daytona Beach, Fla., this week.

THE locale. THE origin of it all.

From the iconic meeting of racing minds led by NASCAR founder Bill France Sr. at the beachside Streamline Hotel to the historical markers dotting Daytona Beach's famous sandy shoreline where the humble origins of this sport began 75 years ago; this year's edition of the NASCAR's grandest race is the perfect green flag to mark this important 75th Diamond Anniversary celebration.

The intensity and expectation that first popularized NASCAR racing all those decades ago on the famous Daytona Beach sand, remains absolutely intact and in full display this weekend for the 65th running of the DAYTONA 500, "The Great American Race" at the sport's premier superspeedway a few miles down the road.

Team Penske's Austin Cindric is the defending race winner, taking his first-ever NASCAR Cup Series victory last February in his first DAYTONA 500 start – one of only nine drivers in series history to earn his first series win in this iconic race.

It's a nod to the race's incredible history which holds an indelible place in the sport.

"I love history anyway, so for me, this is our birthplace," NASCAR President Steve Phelps said. "Not just as a sport, but then the specialness of what this facility means."

"It is our crown jewel, the race itself, the race track and the redevelopment of the race track. But when you go through that tunnel, it's that specialness right when you get up to the other side and you look behind you and it's so cool. And the specialness of this race for sure because it's the start of the season and everyone has hope. I'm going to win. My team's going to win. My driver's going to win. I think that's a neat thing."

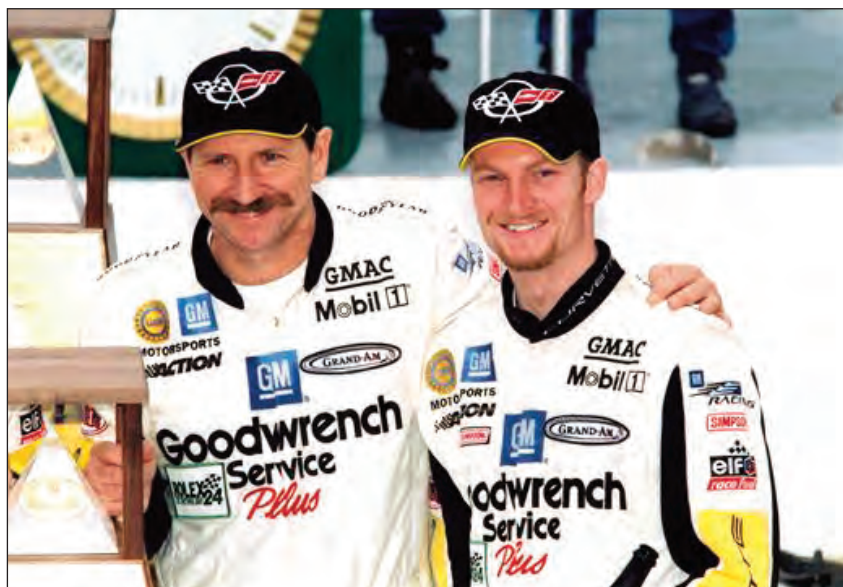
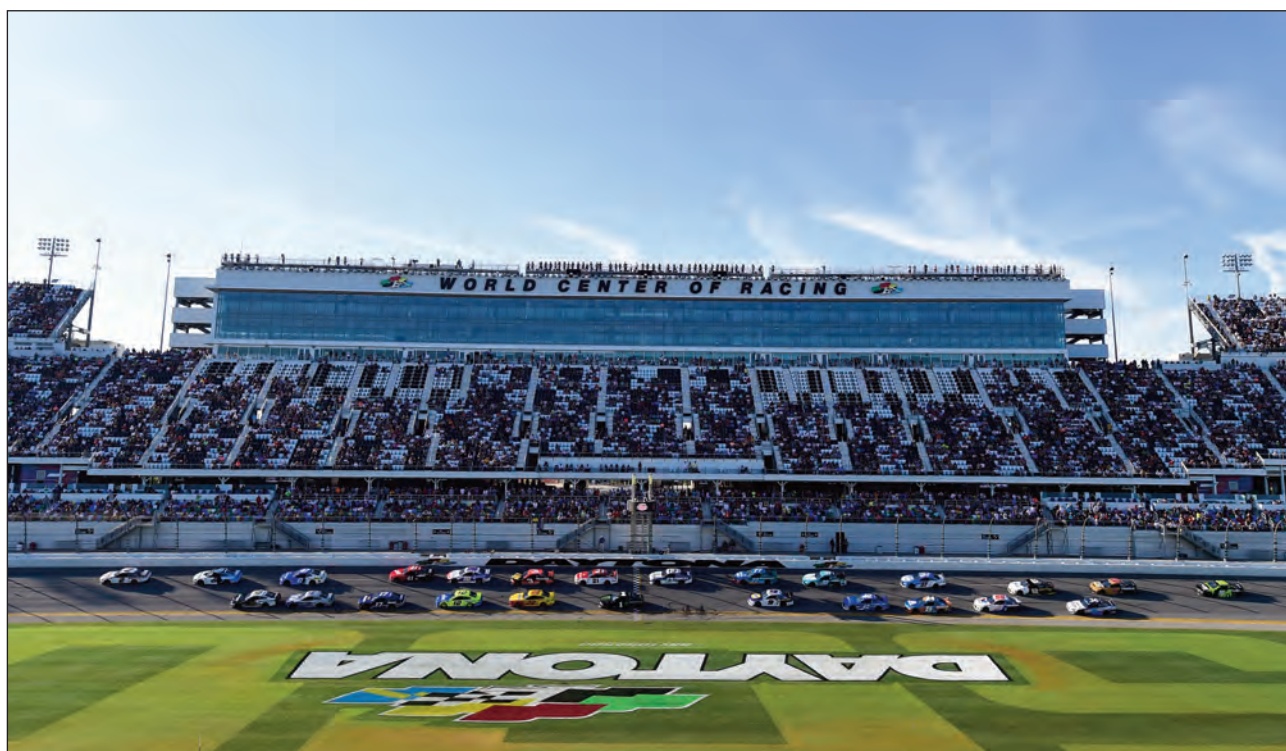
The very first DAYTONA 500 on the 2.5-mile track's high banks was won in 1959 by Lee Petty, whose son Richard would go on to become the very first seven-time NASCAR Cup Series champion and the all-time winningest series driver (200 wins) in history. An original member of the NASCAR Hall of Fame known simply as "The King," Petty's seven Daytona 500 wins are unmatched.

So many of the all-time greats in the sport similarly and fittingly cemented their legacy with DAYTONA 500 victories. Another NASCAR Hall of Famer, three-time series champion Cale Yarborough has four DAYTONA 500 crowns – second only to Petty.

Only 10 other drivers have multiple wins, including Joe Gibbs Racing's Denny Hamlin (three) and Legacy Motor Club's Jimmie Johnson (two), who will be hoping to earn another this weekend. The seven-time series champion, Johnson, is the last driver to win the NASCAR Cup Series championship in the same year he won the DAYTONA 500 in 2013.

Racing greats from other genres, open-wheel icons such as Mario Andretti (1967) and A.J. Foyt (1972) have hoisted Daytona trophies. And this week, action-star Travis Pastrana and IndyCar Series regular Conor Daly are hoping to add their names to that unique DAYTONA 500 winners list too.

Should Cindric earn another victory on Sunday, he would be only the fifth driver in race history to win back-to-back Daytona 500s – the last was Hamlin in 2019-20. Before that,



The late seven-time champion Dale Earnhardt (L) is the winningest driver in Daytona International Speedway history with 34 wins. His lone Daytona 500 victory in 1998, remains one of the most iconic victories in NASCAR history.

"That would mean a lot to me personally to move up that list," Hamlin said of the historic implications. "I feel very good about it. [Crew chief] Chris [Gabehart] and my team do an unbelievable job, especially at this race, to give me a great opportunity, so I feel confident we'll have a great chance Sunday."

So much has changed during the seven and a half decades of competition since NASCAR became a sanctioning body in that famed closed door meeting at the Streamline.

The cars look and race differently, the schedule includes every kind of track configuration – short track, superspeedway, road course, street course – in an array of exciting cities from Los Angeles to Atlanta; from Homestead-Miami to a downtown Chicago street course debut this summer.

The safety innovations – from track to car to driver – have evolved and provide confidence. The season's broadcast outreach is worldwide. And the grid of competitors has never been more diverse.

The DAYTONA 500 not only officially signals the season start, but it's long held a special place, provided a unique "feel" and been the most celebrated of victories in the sport – all the result of that meeting on the beach nearly eight decades ago.

"There's nothing like coming to the green flag at the DAYTONA 500," said 2007 DAYTONA 500 winner Kevin Harvick, who will be retiring from competition at the end of the season.

"The reason is hard to explain unless you've done it. There's no other race like the DAYTONA 500 and I realized that when I won the DAYTONA 500 in 2007. You look at the names on that trophy and you go back and look at the history of our sport and a lot of it has been made at Daytona.

"Whether it's from the beach or the big track, it's the Who's Who of NASCAR. The DAYTONA 500 is the biggest race you'll ever be a part of and it's the biggest win you'll ever have. It's definitely the heart of NASCAR and what we do."

The NASCAR regular season gets underway with the 65th running of the DAYTONA 500®, the Great American Race,

Sterling Marlin created some 500 history of his own, winning the 1994-95 races – his first two career wins in the series coming in the biggest race.

Three-time Daytona 500 winner Dale Jarrett is the last driver to win from pole position – doing so in 2000. Only two drivers have done that multiple times – Yarborough (1968 and 1984) and fellow NASCAR Hall of Famer Bill Elliott (1985 and 1987).

The late seven-time champion Dale Earnhardt is the winningest driver in Daytona International Speedway history with 34 wins – most of those trophies coming in a combination of The Clash, the Duel qualifying races, the Xfinity Series, the IROC Series and the summer NASCAR Cup Series races at the track. His lone DAYTONA 500 victory in 1998, however, remains one of the most iconic victories in the sport.

Even with a trophy case full of championships, winning the DAYTONA 500 is an honor and accomplishment like no other; it's ensuring your name holds a place in NASCAR's great history at the track forever associated with the sport.

"The 500 is always such a great atmosphere and the racing is always great because everyone wants to put their name on the list of winners for this race," said Hamlin, who with a win on Sunday, would tie Yarborough with four DAYTONA 500 victories.

on Sunday, February 19 at 2:30 p.m. ET on FOX, MRN and SiriusXM NASCAR Radio.

**Daytona International Speedway announces complete sellout for DAYTONA 500**  
DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. (Feb. 13, 2023) – Daytona International Speedway has announced a complete sellout of the 65th running of the DAYTONA 500, as NASCAR prepares to open its 75th Anniversary season in style.

Following on the heels of a January announcement of a reserved grandstand and camping sellout, Daytona International Speedway has now sold out of all ticket inventory for The Great American Race, including UNOH Fanzone admissions and all hospitality options. The DAYTONA 500 opens the NASCAR Cup Series season this Sunday, Feb. 19, at 2:30 p.m. ET (FOX, FOX Deportes, MRN Radio and SiriusXM NASCAR Radio). The sellout is the eighth consecutive for The Great American Race.

DIS also announced the 66th running of The Great American Race will take place on Sunday, February 18, 2024. Fans can begin renewing their tickets immediately, and exclusive pre-sale options are available, to ensure their place in history for next year's race.

"From the roar of the USAF Thunderbirds overhead to the sight of the sellout crowd on their feet as the field takes the green flag for the DAYTONA 500, there will be no place more electric than Daytona International Speedway this Sunday afternoon," said DIS President Frank Kelleher. "Now there will be an even bigger spotlight on Thursday night's Bluegreen Vacation Duel races, where fans will get to see the likes of seven-time Cup Series champion Jimmie Johnson and X Games gold medalist Travis Pastrana attempt to race their way into The Great American Race."

Fans can stay connected with Daytona International Speedway via [daytonainternational Speedway.com](http://daytonainternational Speedway.com), on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, as well as the NASCAR Tracks App, for the latest speedway news.

**Platinum artist-songwriter Breland to perform National Anthem Ahead of DAYTONA 500**  
DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. – Daytona International Speedway has announced that platinum artist-songwriter Breland will sing the National Anthem prior to the 65th running of the DAYTONA 500 on Sunday, Feb. 19, bringing the fans, drivers and teams together before the intense competition begins.

"We're honored to have Breland lead us in the National Anthem before the 65th running of The Great American Race," said Frank Kelleher, President of Daytona International Speedway. "His creative style and unique singing voice adds an extra element of excitement to a momentous weekend of racing and entertainment."

Breland has emerged as a bold new force on today's music landscape since the release of his Platinum smash "My Truck," which hit #1 on Spotify's Global Viral 50 in 2019, and a remix featuring Sam Hunt landed on best-of-the-year



Artist/songwriter Breland will sing the National Anthem at the 65th Daytona 500 on Sunday, Feb. 19. Breland has emerged on the music landscape since the release of "My Truck," which hit #1 on Spotify's Global Viral 50 in 2019.

lists from NPR to *The New York Times*.

Following in the success, Breland has been dubbed the "king of collabs" by Associated Press, stacking infectious releases with artists such as Dierks Bentley, Hardy, Ingrid Andress, Keith Urban, Lady A, Mickey Guyton and Thomas Rhett for. Adding to his 1 billion-plus career streams, the



New Jersey native's debut album "Cross Country" is out now and features current chart-rising single "For What It's Worth." Hailed as the "symbol of Country music's ongoing evolution" (Rolling Stone), the Bad Realm Records/Atlantic Records/Warner Music Nashville artist has more high-profile performances on deck for 2023 with supporting Walker Hayes and Shania Twain on tour, plus a return to Stagecoach Festival.

Breland's rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner" will blend tradition with his signature modern sound, creating a moment that captures the energy of The Great American

Race.

The fanfare of Speedweeks Presented by AdventHealth began on Wednesday, Feb. 15, with DAYTONA 500 Qualifying Presented by Busch Light determining the front row for the DAYTONA 500. That's followed up on Thursday, Feb. 16, with the Bluegreen Vacations Duel, where it will be high stakes on the high banks, as drivers such as Jimmie Johnson and Travis Pastrana battle it out for the chance to race on Sunday.

Friday sees the return of the NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series in the Next Era Energy 250. Then, the racing continues with a double header on Saturday, Feb. 18, with the ARCA Menards Series Race, followed by the NASCAR Xfinity Series' Beef. It's What's for Dinner 300.

Then, on Sunday, directly following a performance by Grammy-nominated artist Dierks Bentley, drivers in the NASCAR Cup Series will make their 2023 season debut in the 65th running of the DAYTONA 500 after Breland performs the National Anthem.

**NASCAR to name 75 Greatest Drivers as part of 75th anniversary celebration**

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. – NASCAR has announced it will name the 75 Greatest Drivers in NASCAR history as it celebrates the past, present and future of the sport throughout its 75th "Diamond" Anniversary.

A blue-ribbon committee comprised of former drivers, team owners, industry personnel, NASCAR executives and current and former media members will determine the 75 Greatest Drivers. The unranked list will be unveiled this Spring and culminate with an in-person celebration of the esteemed group during the Goodyear 400 race weekend at Darlington Raceway, May 12-14. Fans can purchase tickets to Darlington Raceway at [www.nascar.com/tickets](http://www.nascar.com/tickets).

"From the incredible races to the unforgettable moments to our larger-than-life stars, there is so much to celebrate during this 75th Anniversary season," said Jim France, NASCAR Chairman and CEO. "The 50 Greatest Drivers list from our Silver Anniversary is an anchor program to that era, and an honor each of those athletes holds dear. We look forward to adding 25 new drivers as we recognize the 75 Greatest Drivers by recalling the talents and heroics that made each so remarkable."

As a result of the selection process for the 75 Greatest Drivers, NASCAR also will shift the voting timeline for the NASCAR Hall of Fame Class of 2024. The Nomination Committee and Honors Committee will both meet on Wednesday, May 24, to select the nominees. Voting Day for the Class of 2024 will be Wednesday, Aug. 2, at the Charlotte Convention Center.

Additional details about the 75 Greatest Drivers and other 75th Anniversary programs will be announced in the future. Fans can visit the newly launched NASCAR 75 content hub to stay up to date, enjoy interactive historical timelines, sift through entire seasons-in-review, pick their four-driver "dream team," watch new interviews with iconic drivers and more.

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# CROSSWORD PUZZLE ANSWERS ON PG. 15

## STATEPOINT CROSSWORD

THEME: U.S. PRESIDENTS

### ACROSS

- 1. Biased perspective
- 6. Male sibs
- 10. Monday Night Football audience
- 14. Tapiridae representative
- 15. Rock opera version of "La Bohème"
- 16. Object of worship
- 17. Opposite of alpha
- 18. \_\_\_ Spumante
- 19. Novice
- 20. \*Unanimously elected President
- 22. Gusto
- 23. Eggy drink
- 24. Jig music, pl.
- 26. Stashed in a hold
- 30. Penniless
- 32. Wood turning device
- 33. Toll payment, e.g.
- 34. Not slouching
- 38. Like nay-sayers
- 39. Of many years
- 40. Malaria symptom
- 41. Instagram post
- 43. River, in Spanish
- 44. Bell-bottoms bottom
- 45. Dodge
- 47. Unexpected
- 48. The Cat in the Hat's headgear (2 words)
- 51. Campbell's container
- 52. International Civil Aviation Organization
- 53. \*President Hayes' first name
- 60. "Through" in a text?
- 61. Pelvic bones
- 62. Plural of #54 Down
- 63. Andrew Sean Greer's 2018 Pulitzer Prize winner

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- 64. Reverse action
  - 65. Mother-of-pearl
  - 66. \*Lake off Ohio, the state known as "the Mother of Presidents"
  - 67. Baseball's "The Say Hey Kid"
  - 68. Navigate
- DOWN**
- 1. \*Present tense of #26 Across
  - 2. Tibetan priest
  - 3. "Singes" in "La PlanÈte des singes"
  - 4. Nearly
  - 5. Apprentice
  - 6. Name on apple cider vinegar bottle
  - 7. R in R&R

- 8. Cognizant of
- 9. "Sophie's Choice" protagonist
- 10. \*F in JFK
- 11. Bye, to Emmanuel Macron
- 12. Relating to Scandinavia
- 13. Casino bandits
- 21. Sign of assent
- 25. \*Civil Rights Act of 1957 signer
- 26. Dueler's blow
- 27. Hyperbolic tangent
- 28. Football great Graham
- 29. \*Executive Mansion, colloquially (2 words)
- 30. Misrepresent
- 31. Make over
- 33. \*One of four presidents to have never been elected
- 35. "Goodness gracious!"

- 36. "Kiss Me, Kiss Me, Kiss Me" band, The \_\_\_
- 37. High school student, usually
- 42. Spermatozoa counterparts
- 44. Not marathons, pl. (2 words)
- 46. Central court in domus
- 47. Certain frat house letters
- 48. Ownership document
- 49. Autumn color
- 50. Zoroaster follower
- 51. Pandemonium
- 54. Elbow-wrist connection
- 55. Not a slob
- 56. Like certain Stanley
- 57. A third of thrice
- 58. Steak choice
- 59. Whitetail, e.g.

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**NEEDED: BUS DRIVERS** for the Macon County School System. Starting pay \$15.00/hour. State training is required but will be provided. To sign up for training and a route, please contact Macon County Schools Central Office and talk to Mrs. Janice Gibson to reserve your spot. Air Conditioned buses with electronic support. Applications are available online at <https://5il.co/1iakz> at the Macon County Schools Administrative Office. Macon County Schools is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

## Real Estate

**NEW 2-STORY HOUSE** 3.14 acres, Beautiful Developed Land, Large Garage, Shed, Paved Road, Cul-de-sac. No Realtors. email brainrenew99@icloud.com (828)332-8217 Message.

## Misc. For Sale

**CHIPPER SHREDDER** Troy-Bilt Model CS 4325, Briggs & Stratton 1150 Series 250 CC Engine. \$250. (828)349-2970.

**TV CONSOLE CHEST** \$100., Recliner \$100., Loveseat \$100. (828)342-2543.

**B & M MILITARY SURPLUS** MRE'S Military Boots, Clothing, Rain Gear, Cold Weather Gear, Sleeping Bags, Vests, Packs, Bags, Field Gear, W/C Poncho Liner, Woobie. We Buy, Trade all Types Military Clothes, Field Gear. Open Monday-Friday 9-6, Saturday 9-5, 329 Bennett Ridge Rd. Franklin, (828)349-3140. [bandmsurplus@gmail.com](mailto:bandmsurplus@gmail.com)

**FARMERS MARKET** 10-12, Every Saturday. Please Come Out and Support Your Local Farmers Market. Vegetables, Honey, Soap, Pastries, Preserves, Eggs. 200 Block East Palmer.

## Rentals

**OFFICE SPACE** for Rent Downtown Franklin, \$1,400/monthly. First, Last and Deposit Required. For more information call (828)369-6341.

**DOWNTOWN FRANKLIN** Large 2BR/2BA condo. No Pets, No Smoking. \$1200 month. Mary Mason. Owner/Broker. (706)746-5426.

**HOME 4-RENT** immediate occupancy. 1BR/1BA home for rent-max 2 persons, \$1,600 per month, min of 1 year lease. First, Last, Security Deposit=\$4,800 to move in. Go to Zillow.com, type in rentals for 28734. To see pictures and information. If interested complete the online application.

## Community Fundraisers

**BINGO** American Legion Hall, 614 W. Main St., Every Wednesday. Doors open at 3:30 p.m., bingo 4 p.m. Snack Bar Available.

**APPALACHIAN ANIMAL** Rescue Thrift Store, Open Tuesday thru Saturday, 9am- 4pm, 1521 Old Murphy Rd., (828)369-3046.

**HABITAT RE-STORE** 56 W Palmer St., Franklin. Furniture, Lighting, Plumbing, Building Materials, Doors & Windows, Appliances & More! (815)524-5273. Sylva Re-Store, 1315 W. Main St. (828)586-1800. Hours for both Stores Mon./Wed./Fri./Sat. 10-4pm.

**REACH FOR BARGAINS** in Heritage Hollow, open Tuesday-Friday, 10am-6pm, Saturday 10am-4pm, Benefits Victims of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault in Macon County. Information call (828)369-2040.

## Animals

**ADOPT A PET** AARC Animal Shelter, 851 Lake Emory Rd., Franklin. Call for an Appointment. (828)524-4588.

**VOLUNTEERS & DOG** Walkers Needed at Macon County Animal Services. 18 years and older. Call Debbie (941)266-7084.

**LOOKING FOR A LOVING** Pet or Lost Pet. Macon County Animal Services, Open M-F by appointment call (828)349-2106. Pictures of Lost and Available Pets, [www.facebook.com/macon-animal](http://www.facebook.com/macon-animal)

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**TRAILBLAZERS**

FROM **\$42,995**

FROM **\$28,995**

FROM **\$47,995**

FROM **\$24,995**

### CARS

YEAR	MAKE	MODEL	MILES
2021	Chevrolet	Corvette	5,792
2021	Kia	Optima EX	20,010
2020	Chevrolet	Camaro	25,641
2019	Chevrolet	Camaro	40,428
2019	Subaru	Outback	56,801
2019	Volkswagen	Beetle	42,676
2018	Chevrolet	Equinox	53,520
2018	Chevrolet	Cruze	34,692
2018	Hyundia	Elantra	51,067
2017	Dodge	Journey	110,982
2017	GMC	Acadia	80,692
2017	Honda	Fit	59,209
2016	Ford	Focus	68,653
2015	Ford	Flex	99,016
2013	VW	Beetle Convertible	67,099

### SUVS

YEAR	MAKE	MODEL	MILES
2023	Chevrolet	Tahoe	257
2022	Jeep	Wrangler Sahara Unlimited	10,539
2021	Chevrolet	Express 2500 Van	39,022
2021	Ford	Bronco Badlands AWD	1,237
2021	GMC	Yukon XL	53,356

2021	Jeep	Wrangler Sport	8,094
2021	Chevrolet	Tahoe High Country	28,303
2020	Acura	MDX AWD	46,606
2020	Buick	Encore	34,808
2020	Chevrolet	Trax	7,250
2020	Chevrolet	Trax Premier	28,030
2020	Grand Cherokee	Trailhawk	26,226
2020	Jeep	Wrangler Rubicon Unlimited	24,249
2019	Chevrolet	Trax AWD	16,288
2019	Honda	Pilot EX	40,801
2018	Chevrolet	Equinox LT	23,569
2018	Jeep	Compass 4x4	61,613
2018	Jeep	Renegade 4x4	79,635
2018	Mitsubishi	Outlander	44,985
2018	Nissan	Murano	53,903
2017	Hyundia	Sante Fe	97,104
2017	Nissan	Rogue SV	58,866
2016	Dodge	Grand Caravan	76,458
2016	KIA	Sorrento LX	112,933
2016	Toyota	Sequoia	96,869
2015	Suburban	LT	92,352
2013	Chevrolet	Tahoe LTZ	113,464

### TRUCKS

YEAR	MAKE	MODEL	MILES
2022	Chevrolet	2500 LTZ	4,635

2022	Chevrolet	2500 HD	5,114
2021	Chevrolet	1500 4x4	10,243
2021	Chevrolet	1500 RST	34,026
2021	Chevrolet	Colorado ZR-2	10,842
2021	Chevrolet	LT Trailboss	34,069
2021	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500	5,822
2021	Chevrolet	Trailboss Crew	22,256
2021	Ford	F-150	23,858
2021	Ford	F-150 SuperCrew Cab	32,251
2021	GMC	Canyon Elevation	50,934
2021	Ram	2500 Black Widow	13,542
2021	Ram	2500 Tradesman	3,647
2021	Toyota	Tacoma TRD Sport	10,557
2020	Chevrolet	2500 Diesel	8,241
2020	Chevrolet	Colorado ZR-2	36,463
2020	Chevrolet	Silverado	52,944
2020	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500 High Country	22,601
2020	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500 RST	90,498
2020	Colorado	Ext Cab ZR2	26,842
2020	Toyota	Tacoma SR	12,448
2019	Ford	F-150 Lariat	48,630
2018	Chevrolet	1500	77,642



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