



Appalachian Trail thru-hiker Eddie Thomas of Port Orange, Fla., puts his autograph on the hikers welcome sign on the square in downtown Franklin. Thomas began his journey from the start of the trail on Feb. 24 and stopped off in Franklin to refuel and recharge. Thomas is hoping to become a true thru-hiker, finishing the more than 2,000-mile trek at the terminus of the Appalachian Trail at Mt. Katahdin, Me.

Photo by Vickie Carpenter

Welcome Hikers! Town rolling out the welcome mat

Deena C. Bouknight – Contributing Writer

Welcoming Appalachian Trail (A.T.) hikers to the Town of Franklin is an annual affair. Hosted by the Franklin A.T. Community Council, the Franklin A.T. Celebration is a yearly event open to hikers, visitors and the general community and is held from the first day of spring to Earth Day.

At the end of February, already more than 200 hikers were on the Appalachian Trail. Typically, thru- and section-hikers attempting the Springer Mountain, Ga., to Mt. Katahdin, Maine, trek start sometime in March. However, the mild winter encouraged more hikers onto the A.T. in January and February. The first main stop on the south-to-north A.T. trek is Franklin, 110 miles from Springer Mountain. Thousands of hikers leave the trail near Standing Indian or at Winding Stair on Hwy. 64 and are expected to take a break in the town, resupply, check shoes and equipment, and patronize businesses.

From March 20 to April 22, hikers will also have opportunities to participate in the 2023 Franklin A.T. Celebration.

See HIKERS page 4

Town swears in two new police officers

Dan Finnerty – Contributing Writer

Franklin Town Council members gathered Monday, March 6, in the Town Hall boardroom for its regular monthly meeting. The March meeting included a public session focused on use of the former Angel Medical Center building, political sign ordinance amendments, and departmental updates.

The meeting opened with Franklin Police Chief Devin Holland recognizing Master Officer Eli Kirkland for his years of service with a 15-Year Employee Service Award.

“He’s the one and only canine officer [with the police department], with his canine Toro. There is a lot of work behind the scenes that goes into the canine program,” said Chief Holland. Kirkland also conducts “Canine Care Time” outside of work hours to demonstrate the canine program throughout the community.

Mayor Jack Horton conducted a swearing in ceremony for two new police officers, Kaitlyn Harper and Jonathan Lauffer.

“These are the two we’ve invested in for our (town-sponsored) Basic Law Enforcement Training program,” stated



Franklin’s two newest police officers were sworn in March 6 at the Town Council Meeting, from left, Jonathan Lauffer, Police Chief Devin Holland, and Kaitlyn Harper.

Chief Holland, quipping: “They started in September and they can now hit the mean streets of Franklin tomorrow morning.”

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Seeking solutions for mental health crises

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COUNCIL

Continued
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As reported by Town Clerk and Human Resources Director Nicole Bradley, the police force now has only three openings remaining to be filled.

Next, Town Finance Director Sarah Bishop presented Budget and Fiscal Analyst Ali Stamey with a Certified Local Government Finance Officer qualification certificate. Since 1985, North Carolina's Finance Officers Association has offered a program of voluntary certification for local government finance officers. In order to become certified, one must complete six core courses offered through the N.C. School of Government, possess the equivalent of an associate degree or higher, have at least four years of experience in a professional position - specifically with an administrative responsibility from one or more financial functions - and complete four exams in the public finance field.

"It's not required for her job; this was completely voluntary on her part. She wanted to enhance her knowledge and I'm very proud of her and I'm honored to present her with this certificate," stated Bishop.

Under new business, the Council discussed appointing two new members to the Firefighters Relief Fund Board (FRFB), as recommended by Franklin Fire Department Chief Ben Ormond. The current relief fund board members have been in place for many years.

"Myself, along with the executive board, felt it was time to refresh this board and put members on it who were more in touch with the department's needs," said Ormond, adding that last month a business meeting was held at which six nominations were submitted. Of those, Ormond requested to the Town Council that Brian Leopard and Rick Westerman be appointed to the board.

Leopard currently serves as a member-at-large, meaning he serves as the voice of all volunteers, has a seat on the executive board of officers for the FRFB, and has been a member for 30 years. Westerman, who has not been associated as long, was formerly a firefighter in Florida and is now the Franklin Habitat for Humanity director. Both nominees were unanimously approved.

A Resolution of Support for Medicaid Expansion in North Carolina was presented by Councilman Stacy Guffey.

"The resolution talks about not only economic benefits but also the benefits for the people of Franklin and Macon County," Guffey said. "It's my understanding that the (North Carolina) House and Senate have reached an agreement on the expansion and this board has passed such a resolution before."

Council member David Culpepper offered that while he intended to vote for the resolution, "Insurance does not equal healthcare ... Insurance at its best helps people get health-



Town of Franklin Finance Director Sara Bishop presented Budget and Fiscal Analyst Ali Stamey with a Certified Local Government Finance Officer qualification certificate at Monday's monthly Town Council meeting.

care; at its worst it is a barrier and an obstacle to getting healthcare."

The Council subsequently approved adoption of the resolution. The expansion is reported to provide affordable health insurance to approximately 600,000 people, whereas up to half of those people have no other affordable insurance options currently available. The plan is predicted to create up to 37,200 additional jobs statewide and will reportedly bring \$11.7 billion in additional federal funding to the state in its first three years.

Updates on human resources, tax collections, and the fire department were also provided by personnel from each department. Leading off the updates was HR Director Bradley, who reported the hiring of a new police officer, Brandon Hooper, who is a lateral transfer from Jackson County and has 18 years of service already logged. Additionally, a firefighter, Darian Greene, was brought in via a transfer from the Public Works Department and will join the fire department by the end of March. His pump maintenance mechanic position is now open within Public Works. A new meter reader was also hired recently and is slated to start work on Friday, March 10.

Regarding tax collection, Sabrina Scruggs reported that as

of March 1, \$2,360,000 has been collected for 2022 taxes. Scruggs informed that "330 past due notices have been sent out, just for real estate. People are paying now but they're also coming in mad." They have until March 31 to pay without incurring additional penalty. Thus far, collection is at 93% with approximately \$177,000 left to collect.

Lastly, Ormond presented an annual report on the fire department. The new substation passed its final inspection and is now in use. Three new positions created over the past year have resulted in "the first time in history our community is covered full-time, 24/7 by three personnel a day," Ormond said. He also provided data on calls issued to the department, revealing in 2022, 1,974 total responses were conducted; 103 were for fires, equaling a 14% increase; 1,462 were medical, which comprises about 74% of the department's call volume; the national average is 66%. He reported the above-average numbers are probably related to Franklin having numerous retirees and an older population.

Town Planner Justin Setser opened a public hearing on text amendments to the Sign Ordinance. These amendments are designed to bring Franklin in compliance for political signs in driveways (General Statute 136-32). According to Setser, under the current ordinance, "signs must be removed three days after elections but there is no timeframe before. The recommended amendments are intended to mirror what's in the general statute for a compliant political sign, which states, "Signs are allowed 30 days prior to early voting and must be removed 10 days after primary or general election days." Other amendments include sizes of signs and clarification on where they can be placed, which prohibits placement at any location that inhibits line-of-sight for drivers on roads/highways. The text amendments were approved as submitted.

The Addiction Dilemma

The public session comprised the majority of the meeting time and focused primarily on use of the former Angel Medical Center building as a facility to assist with the rapidly growing addiction problems, mental health issues, and suicide in Macon County. Most of the close to a dozen speakers were either directly connected to or in some way associated with No Wrong Door, a local organization offering support to those struggling with substance abuse or other addiction and mental health issues.

No Wrong Door Executive Director Sheila Jenkins was one of the speakers and she led her discussion with a brief overview on the organization's interaction with those struggling in Franklin and Macon County.

"When people get out of rehab or prison/jail, they come back to the community with absolutely nothing. We need to have something for them to be able to get their feet back on the ground ... they need support, they need classes, to where

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The possible uses for the now-closed Angel Medical Center building has been the subject of discussion at recent Town Council meetings. Although the building is still owned by HCA, who purchased the Mission Health System of which AMC was a part, the town has discussed using it for senior housing (since rejected) and now addiction recovery advocates are making a case to use the building for treatment for victims of Macon County's growing addiction crisis and mental health issues.

Photo by Vickie Carpenter

they can then move into housing and a job, and keep it."

She went on to state that "we're going to have people keep going back on their drugs; recovery's not going to last and they're going to lose their homes, their jobs; we've got to fill in that stability piece and the best way is if we can have somewhere they transition back out into the community."

She also lamented about the current waiting time involved with getting people treatment, explaining that with addicts, the effective window for help that prevents overdose or death can be quite small. No actions or motions were taken in response to the public session; however Mayor Horton stated that the town will do all it can to assist with the issue.

Upcoming

The Streets of Franklin Heritage Association requested street closures for two events: the Spring Makers Market to be held May 27, and for the Hometown Heritage Festival, scheduled for July 15. Both requests include streets normally closed for in-town events: Iotla, Phillips, and Main.

Also requested was a street closure for April 22 to support the Feeding the Future event, hosted by Altered Frequencies. The closure request affects Carolina Mountain Drive and includes the area between South Patton Ave. and Technology Drive. The event will include music, food trucks, a bounce house, and bands and will run from noon until midnight.

The next Town Council meeting is scheduled for April 3, at 6 p.m.



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HIKERS

Continued from page 1

The Schedule

- March 25, 5 p.m. - Hiker Bash at Currahee Brewing Co.
- March 31 - All-weekend 29th Anniversary Hiker Fest at Three Eagles Outfitters
- April 1, 12-2 p.m. - Nantahala Hiking Club Thru Hiker ChowDown at Lazy Hiker Brewing Co.; 3 p.m. Hiker Hunger Games



Conservancy
 - April 21, 11 a.m.-3 p.m. - Happy Trails to You at Gracious Plates on Main
 - April 22, 6 p.m. - Outdoor Music Jam & Gear Exchange at Lazy Hiker Brewing Co.
 For A.T. hikers only, from March 14 through April 14, breakfast is also available at no charge at First Baptist Church in downtown Franklin.

Franklin A.T. Community Council, which plans, organizes, and publicizes its annual celebration as well as provides information to hikers and promotes the trail, is made up of representatives from the county commission, town council, town and county planners, the Nantahala Hiking Club, county school system, the library, the chamber of commerce, tourism businesses, and the United States Forest Service. The local council was developed as part of the broader trail-wide A.T. community network, specifically the national A.T. Conservancy in Harper's Ferry, W.V.

For more information about the Franklin A.T. Celebration, visit www.atmile110.com or Facebook and Instagram.

- & Gooder Grove's Groovy Gathering at Gooder Grove Hostel
- April 7, 6 p.m. - AT110 Fest at The Rathskeller Coffee Haus & Pub
- April 8 - Nantahala Hiking Club's Easter on the Trail-Trail Magic
- April 14, 5 p.m. - Food, Flix & Brews at Outdoor 76 with Blue Ridge Bartram Trail

County Transit offers rides to hikers

Deena C. Bouknight – Contributing Writer

Although various individuals and organizations volunteer to pick up Appalachian Trail (A.T.) thru- and section hikers at one of the nearby trailheads, hikers also have opportunities to access the Macon County Transit for rides into Franklin and back to the trailheads at Winding Stair, which is off Hwy. 64; and Rock Gap, near the Standing Indian Campground off West Old Murphy Road.

The shuttle service for hikers this season began March 6 and continues through May 26, which is the time period when the concentration of northbound A.T. hikers stop in Franklin, after typically traveling the 110 miles from Springer Mountain, Ga., on their way to Mt. Katahdin, Maine. The distance of the A.T. is approximately 2,200 miles, with most hikers attempting to hike from Georgia to Maine from spring to fall each year.

Fare for transportation to and from the A.T. trailheads – Winding Stair, which is off Hwy. 64; and Rock Gap, near the Standing Indian Campground off West Old Murphy Road – is

\$5 per hiker. The Macon County Transit offers rides to hikers three times daily, Monday-Friday, and drop offs are at numerous locations in Franklin. A Deviated Fixed Route Service allows hikers to travel within Franklin and costs \$1 per person, per stop. Multiple stops throughout Franklin enable hikers to visit stores and other businesses in



order to gather supplies, use library services, and more during their respite off the trail.

Hikers who need shuttling after May 26 can call Macon County Transit at (828)349-2222 to learn if a shuttle opportunity is available. Hikers can also visit macontransit.com or check out the site on Facebook.

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Wrestler Carpenter heading to Bluefield State

Dan Finnerty – Sports Writer

Franklin High School's (FHS) Abby Carpenter has already notched her name in Panther lore as the first female wrestler to win "Athlete of the Month" and as part of the first varsity class participating in a conference-recognized wrestling program. In September, she will depart with her very successful high school record (34-3) behind her and attempt to make her mark at Bluefield State University (BSU) in West Virginia.

BSU recently became the 13th full-time member of the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) and is starting a brand-new women's wrestling program. BSU is small, made up of around 1,250 students. Carpenter visited the school and appreciated its campus, location, and atmosphere. Some of the CIAA schools against which Bluefield wrestling will compete include: Bowie State, Elizabeth City State, Fayetteville State, Saint Augustine, and Winston-Salem State.

On Friday, March 1, Carpenter and her family joined many others in the Panther Den to sign her Letter of Intent (LOI) with BSU. Numerous faculty and students gave testimonials to her athletic drive and leadership qualities.

Bekah Brooks, who coaches volleyball and basketball, reminisced about interacting with Carpenter the past few years.

"I had the joy of coaching Abby in volleyball and basketball for many years. When I think about Abby, I think of one word: warrior," said Brooks. "This is a dream and she has made an impact at Franklin High School and made an impact for female athletes across the state."

Vice Principal Blair King talked about his son starting wrestling this year and that he liked to watch Carpenter wrestle.

"[My son] saw at practice how hard this young lady worked. He wanted to be successful like her," said King.

King also shared how Carpenter hurt her shoulder in this year's state tournament match, yet she kept wrestling. He noted that after taking a loss due to injury, Carpenter felt she had "let everybody down." King told her at the signing, "You displayed so much heart and we couldn't be prouder of you."

Head Wrestling Coach Coley Tyler commented.

"You left everything out there and that's all anybody can ever do," said Coach Tyler. "You can't fail if that's how you pursue life." He also reminded attendees, "The amount of

Abby Carpenter signs Letter of Intent with Bluefield State as her family looks on: (from left) Aiden, Dennis, Abby, Melinda, and Avery Carpenter.

growth and success she has had in such a short amount of time ... Abby's been wrestling for little over a year. And that is absolutely amazing to now go to the college level and commit herself solely to one sport."

Carpenter thanked her family and all those who had helped her achieve success in wrestling the past couple years.

"Logan Mack went above and beyond to put me where I am today," she said. "My teammates gave me constant support. Without wrestling, I don't know where I'd be."

Later, Carpenter also talked about her anticipated college experience.

"It's very exciting to make it official. It's [Bluefield State] a small school, so I can focus on my education," she said.

Explaining how she ended up choosing BSU, Carpenter said, "Over the summer I went to a big wrestling tournament and she (new BSU wrestling coach, Brooke Richards) saw me and contacted me. Then I went to a camp there and she provided a tour of the campus."

After her FHS wrestling season was over, Carpenter again visited Bluefield with her mother before deciding to accept the offer to attend.



FHS Athletic Director Matt Bradley was with Abby Carpenter and Davis Anders on March 1 at Carpenter's signing ceremony.

Four FHS mens basketball players earn All-Conference honors

Dan Finnerty
Sports Writer

The 3A Conference 54 has named its All-Conference Team for 2022-2023. Franklin High School (FHS) saw four members of the men's varsity basketball program selected for the team. Players are chosen by receiving the most votes from seven participating conference coaches; a coach cannot nominate his own player(s).

On March 1, FHS Varsity Basketball Head Coach Doug Plemmons announced that seniors Cal Drake, Parker Cabe, and Kehler Lamb, along with sophomore Max McClure, each of whom played in all 25 games this season, will represent the Panthers.

Power forward/center Drake led the team in many scoring categories, including points (439), field goals (FG) made (155), and attempted (304), FG% (51), and free throws (FT) made/attempted (97/126). He also led the team in rebounds (191) and in blocks (44). Cabe, at power/small forward, tied for second in FG% (48), 2-point FG's attempted (157), and FT's made/attempted (72/100). Cabe was third in points scored (265). He was also second in both steals (68) and blocks (21).

At the guard position, Lamb finished first in steals (72), second in assists (65), third in both FG% (45) and rebounds (164), and he led starting players with fewest turnovers (28). The point guard, McClure, is the only returning player for 2023-24. He was first in 3-point FGs made (49) and attempted (144), and he tied (with Drake) for first in FT% (77), second in points (358), FG's

(128), and FG's attempted (293).

Coach Plemmons reported that all three seniors intend to sign on with a college and that word will be forthcoming soon on where they will end up. Some of the other senior players have intentions to undertake college careers as well; but again, the exact locations are still undecided/unannounced.

As for McClure, the coach explained, "Max took on a huge role for us this year as our point guard ... he did a fantastic job stepping into that role as a sophomore."

Anticipating next year, Plemmons believes the team is going to be fine. Addix Sutton is one player coming up to the varsity level who will help bridge the gap left by departing senior players.

"He settled us down and was a backup point guard," the coach said about Sutton. "He is one of the main reasons we won at



Four Franklin High School varsity basketball players were named to the 2022-23 All-Conference team (L-R): Max McClure, Cal Drake, Parker Cabe, and Kehler Lamb. Photo courtesy of Franklin Panthers Sports Network

Hayesville, ending a long home-winning streak by them. I think he's a winner. I don't think he will wow you, but he makes good decisions and he's always calm."

Sutton's development and maturity may actually allow the Panthers to move McClure to another position to provide McClure more scoring opportunities. And while some height is lost, especially with Drake's departure, Plemmons's returning players are expected to compensate in growth over another year, experience, and athleticism.

"Braylen (Dezarn) is really fast, Noah Brannon is going to be a heck of a player, and we have some guys coming back with size," pointed out Plemmons. "Kaleb Chapman is 6'5", Jacob Gibson should be about 6'5" by next year, and Braxton Deal is around 6'2" or 6'3"."

FHS Men's Alumni Basketball Game revived

Plemmons has also organized and scheduled a FHS Men's Basketball Alumni Game/Get Together, Saturday, March 18, at 6 p.m. in the high school gymnasium. He said that it has been at least 20 years since a similar gathering has taken place in honor of former FHS basketball athletes. All former players who finished their careers at Franklin are invited.

"I am hoping to have a good turnout and if they can play in the game that's okay," said Plemmons. "Even if they can't play, I still want them to come because I'm hoping a lot of the guys show up. There are still people in town that played basketball here and it's just an opportunity to recon-

nect."

Plemmons coached at FHS from 1993 until 2009 and came back again in 2016. This will be the first attempt at getting alumni together since then.

A raffle will be a part of the gathering that includes a variety of prizes, such as meals at local restaurants and rounds of golf. Basketball jerseys will be sold as well. The coach is hoping some of the returning alumni will help fundraising efforts by purchasing their former jersey or even one from another era with their number on it. He announced 20 people signed up already as of March 2. Tickets are \$5 for adults, \$2 for FHS students, and \$1 for children under 12 years old. Concessions will also be sold at the game.

For more information, contact Cindy Christie at 864-506-5691; or, follow her on Facebook.

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Macon County Schools seeking solutions for mental health crisis

Diane Peltz – Contributing Writer

The COVID-19 pandemic era ushered in a new set of challenges for youth in the United States, leading to a mental health crisis as declared by the United States surgeon general just over a year ago. But U.S. children and teens have been suffering for far longer. In the 10 years leading up to the pandemic, feelings of persistent sadness and hopelessness—as well as suicidal thoughts and behaviors—increased by about 40% among young people, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC). In addition to the social isolation and academic disruption nearly all children and teens faced, many also lost caregivers, had a parent lose their job, or were victims of physical or emotional abuse at home during the lockdowns. All these difficulties, on top of growing concerns about social media, mass violence, natural disasters and political polarization—not to mention the normal ups and downs of childhood and adolescence—can feel insurmountable for those who work with kids. (2023 TRENDS Report)

A Child’s Dilemma

Little Gracie Parker knows all too well how mental health issues and substance abuse affects families. Gracie is a 4th grader at South Macon Elementary School. Gracie was adopted by her grandparents when she was just an infant. Her parents were both substance abusers. Gracie’s mother died from drug use, after falling off a 25 foot dam, when Gracie was only six months old, and her father remains an absent parent due to his substance abuse. At the tender age of nine, Gracie decided to talk to some of her class-

mates about her parents and she found out that she wasn’t alone. Many of her peers have also experienced some type of trauma due to parents using illegal drugs, deployment, divorce, loss of a family member or even loss of a pet. Gracie found out the hard way, that there was not much help for her, or her peers to deal with the issues they were feeling. It became apparent to Gracie that more counseling in the schools was needed so she set out to help get more trauma counselors back into the schools. Gracie partnered with Stephanie Almeida from Full Circle Recovery. Full Circle assists many local residents who are dealing with using illegal drugs, homelessness and mental health issues. Gracie prepared a speech which she presented at a Harm Reduction Event in town last November. Harm reduction consists of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with substance use. Harm Reduction also includes advocating for social justice and rights for those who use substances and those suffering from Substance Use Disorder (SUD). Gracie composed a speech and poured her heart out speaking about how her parent’s drug abuse affected her life and the lives of her grandparents, who had to pick up the pieces of Gracie’s broken heart. In her speech she says, “I don’t know why my parents chose drugs over me.”

Her speech touched the hearts of the community and Gracie was offered the chance to go to Washington DC to speak. Alexis Pleus, who is the founder of Trail of Truth, offered Gracie the opportunity to speak in Washington in front of the U.S. Capitol. Trail of Truth is a live performance art piece that will honor loved ones, elevate discussions of Substance Use related deaths, and reduce drug related fatalities. Serving as both a memorial and public art installation, the piece will remember those who were lost, while calling



Nine-year-old Gracie Parker wanted to help the homeless during the bitter cold Christmas holidays by creating “Blessing Bags” to give out to those that would come to the warming station set up at the First Methodist church in downtown Franklin. She, along with the fourth graders at South Macon put together 100 bags to distribute.

government attention to these matters. Pleus, Gracie, her grandfather, and Stephanie Almeida all went to D.C. to voice their message. In front of 40,000 people, Gracie once again poured her heart out begging lawmakers to give the funding needed to get more trauma counselors into the schools. She helped make 125 cardboard tombstones, which she displayed as a backdrop, to represent loved ones who died from drug overdoses. She asked each family to stand by their loved ones’ tombstone. The message was powerful. That same day she again gave her speech on front of the Department of Labor to a large crowd.

During the bitter cold weather in December, Gracie spoke to her principal, Allison Guynn, to explain that she wanted to help the homeless at the warming station that was set up at FUMC. Guynn was on board with Gracie’s plan so she challenged her fourth grade classes to help raise money, to buy blessing bags, by rewarding them with a pizza party. The blessing bags were used at the warming station that opened over the Christmas holiday. The bags contained much needed essential items. Gracie’s class collected enough to make 100 bags.

Gracie says she is not done, not by a long shot. She continues to advocate for more mental health professionals in Franklin and she would like to see her voice heard nationwide. Gracie hopes to speak before Congress and perhaps even the President of the U.S. one day. Gracie says she might run for office when she gets older.

A teacher speaks out

A former teacher from Union Academy (UA), who spoke under the condition of anonymity, speaks about the pros and cons

of attending the school.

“I think Union is a good environment for students with mental health issues or other issues. There is a lower teacher to student ratio and they get more attention. The environment is more structured for them and there is less room to be ‘out of sight’ because of the policy of eyes on all the time and the smaller campus.

“As far as resources at UA, there is the Habitudes program. Meridian and other mental health agencies can come to all the schools to pull students for counseling but there was no counselor at Union, not even a guidance counselor, when I was there and I don’t know if that has changed. I do think that overall, the at-risk students benefit from being in an alternative setting. My fear,

and part of the reason I no longer work at Union, is that the benefit of the smaller class sizes is dwindling because more and more students were coming and class sizes were getting close to the same as at MMS or FHS. The number of at-risk students is growing faster than the funds to grow a program to support them.

“Another issue I had was that we never had a real understanding of what the criteria for placement at Union was. Mostly, in my opinion, it is a place for any student who consistently disrupts learning at MMS or FHS, or any student who may not graduate with their cohort. The ‘not graduating with their cohort’ means they will not graduate with the group they began school with. Generally, this means the student is at risk for drop-out or failure for some reason but not always. I have seen students sent there for a wide variety of reasons, either for a ‘catch-up’ period or to stay until graduation. I also know of other students who I felt would have benefited from being sent there who weren’t, or not until nearing the end of their high school career. I always wanted there to be a checklist (or something like it) that would lead to a transfer to Union. I knew there would be exceptions but felt that letting parents and students know the process for potential transfer to Union would be helpful.

“I had a child with ADHD and anxiety disorder myself and she was never sent to Union but she had support at home. I think that is what makes the difference. A lot of the mental health issues we dealt with were not being addressed anywhere other than at school or through the juvenile justice system if the student had gotten into trouble. I know, from personal experience, that there



Gracie sits by the portion of the public art installation in Washington DC that represents her mother’s tombstone.

are schools with counselors paid for by the school system who are there for the kids and I believe that is a great thing. My other concern, being an educator, is where do we draw the line for what school is responsible for?

“We take on feeding students beyond the school day, helping find mental health, dealing with financial concerns, and the list goes on and on. I know that the people I worked with at Union Academy went above and beyond for their students (as I am sure happens at most schools). We helped with things that had nothing to do with education while they were our students and after graduation. We did it out of love, concern, and respect for our students. We thought of them as our kids, even the ones we didn’t ‘like’ most days in the classroom. We invested in each student in ways far above and beyond teaching a class and maintaining order and I think that is why I, and others, burnt out. You pour so much into your students and then have to see them ‘graduate’ to mobile patrol or death because

no matter what you gave you couldn’t overcome their home life. I would like to see some of the responsibility for these kids placed on some other organization than the school system. I think that we need more programs for students to offer mental health, after school programs that are for students



More and more students are being sent to Union Academy, Macon County’s alternative school, although according to one teacher, no criteria has been adopted for such placement.

who can’t pay or may not have transportation, and somewhere safe, supervised, and fun for teens to hang out.”

The teacher also spoke about the benefits of a smaller campus.

“Franklin High School is a big campus

with a lot of outdoor area to walk to and from classes which is where most of the kids that were sent to Union got into trouble. They didn’t as often get into trouble in class as they did on campus between classes or just simply wandering rather than going where they were supposed to go. Now some got into trouble in class as well but the environment at Union is a huge change. The school is small and students are under constant supervision. There is little to no opportunity to get into trouble without getting caught just because of that. Also, the class sizes are smaller so the students get more individual attention. There was always an effort made to involve students in community outreach, service learning, and other things to not only motivate them but to involve them in something outside of themselves. The smaller class sizes also gave me the opportunity to build better relationships with students and that is a help as well. I know that all teachers in all schools in Macon County do this, but Union kids were not always the most open to adults and having fewer students helped break down the barriers sometimes.

“I think that the number of students who have some type of mental health issue or learning disadvantage grows every single year. The pandemic just exacerbated this. I think teachers are overwhelmed with student issues and there is not enough help for the

students or the teachers. I know that counselors, even if it is just part time, have been hired at some schools and that is a help. I know that the local mental health agencies have counselors going in and out of the schools working with students and communicating with their teachers to try to help this problem. It isn’t enough and, like I said, I think what we are dealing with is beyond what the school should or can provide support for.” As far as parents who are irresponsible, she says, “My knee jerk reaction is that they should be put in jail and their children should be taken away. Isn’t that simple and seems like an easy answer but it isn’t. If the parents are jailed, then who raises the children? We don’t have enough foster homes as it is and I know of many students who are in the care of overwhelmed and exhausted grandparents and great-grandparents who don’t have the understanding or the resources to manage the scars left by what these children have endured. I think the system, I don’t know what else to call it, needs to help parents get help through agencies like No Wrong Door or [Men’s] Challenge. I think there needs to be more funding for those programs and for others that would help the extended family members with mental health and support for raising these kids.”

Next week: Macon County Schools response to the mental health crisis



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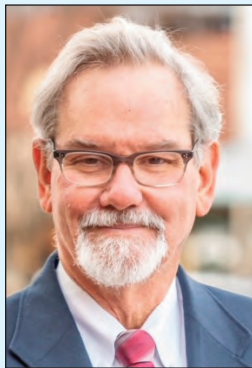
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 **MISSION HEALTH**

What's new on the plateau

Patrick Taylor
Highlands Mayor



Patrick Taylor

Last Friday afternoon, in anticipation of bad weather, I was in town hall monitoring the weather situation with our town manager Josh Ward and public works director Lamar Nix. Problems started around 2:30 with the total loss of power across the town.

After about 20 minutes into the outage, Lamar and his staff discovered the problem was with a major Duke transmission line coming from the Thorpe Power Plant located near Cullowhee and Lake Glenville. The Town of Highlands does not generate our own power. Power is bought wholesale from Duke Energy. If there is a problem on Duke Power's generation and transmission side, Highlands can be out of power until Duke crews correct the problem.

So, Lamar, Josh and I remained in Town hall in communication with Duke officials. They kept us updated on the power outage that affected the entire Highlands and Cashiers area. With the rain and winds increasing from a rapidly approaching front, Lamar became concerned that our crews would not know whether our electric grid was also damaged.

Around 9 p.m., Duke technicians attempted to reconnect power to our grid. There was about a brief flicker of light before the effort failed. Duke linemen had to troubleshoot and test their system again to determine the source of the problem. Later in the evening, they were able to restore power to Highlands. Miraculously, our local grid remained intact during the storm.

Some folks have asked me who was at fault for the power loss, and my response is Mother Nature. Lamar reminds me all the time that we do not live in a normal utility service area and that keeping power on in the mountainous region of the Highlands Plateau can be a considerable challenge. The town has made improvements over the years to reduce the frequency of outages, but still, communication and power systems can be shut down by Mother Nature in an instant.

Thursday, March 9, is the annual town budget retreat to be held at the Highlands Community Center. The staff will present reports to the Town Board concerning budget needs for the coming fiscal year. Lamar will propose a year-long study by an electrical engineering firm to study and evaluate the town's electrical grid. We will need to follow up this study with upgrades to our electrical

See TAYLOR on page 11

Letters to the Editor

Pre-K a significant need for working class families

I would request that the Macon County Commissioners reconsider the recent decision not to pursue the Highlands Pre-K project. This project was initiated by the previous Commission and approximately \$36,000 has been spent to study and prepare a schematic design. Additionally, the Commission previously agreed to allocate a total of \$329,000 for the design phases of the project. I understand the need to be good stewards of taxpayers' dollars but this is a critical project that will benefit working class families of Macon County for years to come.

Highlands is a unique town with unique requirements for continued success. Highlands' businesses generate significant tax revenues that benefit all of Macon County. It is these businesses that require numerous employees who reside in Franklin and other parts of Macon County and surrounding counties. The need for additional childcare for these employees' children has been growing with approximately 60 kids on waiting lists for childcare and Pre-K.

Of the approximate \$12,000,000 in sales tax revenue received by Macon County each year, Highlands' businesses generate a significant amount of this revenue. However, the small number of year-round residents only use a small amount of these funds to meet their needs. Additionally, Highlands' properties generate approximately 50% or more of the \$33,000,000 in property tax revenue, but the approximate 3,500 year-round residents only need a small portion of this revenue to meet their needs. The proposed Highlands Pre-K is a significant need for Highlands working class families as well as families who work in Highlands but live in Franklin.

When considering the need for additional revenue for important projects like Highlands Pre-K, it is important to note that Macon County voters rejected a 1/4 percent increase in sales tax which would bring us in line with all of the surrounding counties. This slight increase would have generated a minimum of \$1.5 million annually and could have been used for important projects like the Highlands Pre-K and other important school and county infrastructure projects. Maybe the Commission could consider putting this issue on the next ballot due to the admitted shortfall in current revenue to address critical county infrastructure projects.

Allowing the Highlands Pre-K project to move forward in light of the approval by the Macon County Commission on Nov. 8, 2022, will ensure this project is shovel ready when full funding is available. I would respectfully request that Macon County Commissioners reallocate the \$329,000 previously approved for the Highlands Pre-K to allow this project to come to fruition before it is too late for the kids and families it aims to serve.

Jerry Moore – Highlands, N.C.

Draft N.C. Clean Transportation Plan available for public comment

People are invited to provide comments on the draft version of the N.C. Clean Transportation Plan, which outlines strategies to accelerate the decarbonization of the transportation sector.

The N.C. Department of Transportation has published the plan to its website, prior to the first of six open house meetings. The meetings are aimed at educating people about the plan and giving them a forum to provide feedback. People can also provide feedback on NCDOT's website.

People have until March 15 to provide feedback on the plan.

NCDOT and more than 220 stakeholders worked for more than a year to develop the draft plan, which explores strategies to advance clean transportation investments and workforce development. The draft plan encourages an equitable transition to cleaner transportation alternatives, such as zero- and low-emission vehicles, and offers strategies to deploy electric charging stations and other clean transportation infrastructure to support the transition.

Governor Roy Cooper issued Executive Order 246 in January 2022 that directed NCDOT to work with stakeholders to develop the plan. The plan set the state on a course to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, advance environmental justice and create good-paying jobs tied to clean transportation. The executive order builds upon 2018's Executive Order 80 and establishes a goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50 percent from 2005 levels and increase zero-emission vehicle adoption to 1.25 million vehicles by 2030.



A draft version of the North Carolina Clean Transportation Plan is available for public comment from March 1-15. The N.C. Department of Transportation published the draft report to its website. The plan outlines strategies for accelerating the decarbonization of the transportation sector. It encourages the transition to electric and other low-emission vehicles and offers strategies for deploying electric charging stations statewide.

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NC Child Fatality Task Force releases 2023 annual report; infant mortality at record low

The North Carolina Child Fatality Task Force (Task Force) has submitted its 2023 Annual Report to Governor Cooper and the NC General Assembly. The report contains data on child deaths and recommendations for changes in law as well as for state funding to prevent child deaths and promote child well-being.

For 2023, the Task Force made 11 legislative recommendations that address a range of issues, among them: a significant increase in child gun deaths; an increase in youth suicide and a crisis in youth mental health; infant deaths in unsafe sleep environments; strengthening the statewide child fatality prevention system; preterm birth; child abuse and neglect; motor vehicle deaths; harm caused by tobacco and nicotine use, and more. Data and information supporting these recommendations are included in the annual report.

Task Force recommendations are formulated by examining data and hearing from experts about programs and prevention strategies. The Task Force also gets some information and recommendations from team reviews of child deaths, and one of the Task Force legislative recommendations seeks to significantly strengthen the collection, analysis, and reporting of such information.

“Our statewide child fatality prevention system, which includes child death review teams in every county, needs to be restructured and strengthened to optimize the work of these teams and to ensure that information learned from reviews is effectively used at the state and local level to prevent future child deaths and to strengthen child well-being,” said Karen McLeod, Co-Chair of the Task Force.

North Carolina is one of only two states not using the National Fatality Review Case Reporting System, a free system designed for states to collect and report aggregate information learned from child death reviews.

“Use of this national data system would dramatically increase our ability to understand child deaths, but we also need to restructure the child fatality prevention system to eliminate duplication of reviews and provide sufficient state-level support for local teams to ensure effective use of the national data system,” McLeod said.

A few data highlights that illustrate the importance of Task Force recommendations include the following:

- The infant mortality rate in 2021 was 6.8 per 1,000 live births compared to 6.9 in 2020, and 6.8 in both 2018 and 2019. While the rate of 6.8 remains the lowest rate N.C. has recorded, this rate keeps North Carolina among 15% of states with the highest infant mortality rates in the country. The Task Force is recommending Medicaid funding to support maternal healthcare strategies known to produce better birth outcomes, and funding to expand efforts to prevent infant deaths related to unsafe sleep.

- The firearm death rates for children ages 0 - 17 increased dramatically in 2020 and in 2021. N.C. saw an increase of 231.3% between 2012 and 2021. Firearms were the lethal means used in most youth suicides and homicides. A 2021 CDC student survey showed 30% of North Carolina high school students reporting that it would take them less than an hour to get and be ready to fire a loaded gun without a parent or other adult’s permission. The Task Force is recommending a statewide firearm safe storage initiative.

- The 2021 suicide rate (ages 10 - 17) represents the highest rate in two decades, and firearm-related suicides in particular have increased. A 2021 CDC student survey showed 22% of NC high school students had seriously considered attempting suicide and 43% of high school students said they felt sad or hopeless. The Task Force is recommending funds to increase numbers of school nurses, social workers, counselors and psychologists, as the numbers of these professionals in N.C. are far below national recommendations.

Finalized child death and infant mortality data for 2021 was not available in time for the Task Force to examine prior to concluding its meetings in 2022, however, the Task Force was able to examine provisional 2021 data. Finalized 2021 data is now available and is included in the 2023 Annual Report.*

*2021 child death data and infant mortality data are available on the website for the NC State Center for Health Statistics.

challenges lie ahead. “Rome was not built in a day,” nor will these electricity demands have an immediate solution.

Like so many others, I can bash Duke Energy with a litany of their failings; and some town residents may criticize our electric system as well. But, when the power goes off, we all just want to know how fast workers can get it restored. To paraphrase the old Robert Palmer song, “we might as well face it, we are addicted to love,” and electric power is that. In times like last week, it can be a love-and-hate relationship.

TAYLOR

Continued from page 10

system in the next several years.

With the national and state efforts to embrace green energy initiatives, upgrading our power grid will be essential. The goal is to transition to electric vehicles and move away from relying on gas to heat homes to rely on electric heat. These changes will require a huge expansion of electric generating complicity and the building a stronger electric grid. Major



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Woods is 106 years young

Mildred Woods will celebrate her 106th birthday on March 18. Woods has lived in this area her entire life, first on Buck Creek and then 80 years in the Cullasaja community. Birthday cards may be mailed to Mildred Woods, 639 Orchard Hill Road, Franklin NC 28734.

School Board hears info on tobacco use prevention

Diane Peltz – Contributing Writer

The Macon County School Board met on Feb. 27, for its regularly scheduled meeting. In addition to the student recognitions in last week's *Macon County News*, Tobin Lee, NC Regional Tobacco Prevention Manager, Mountain Wise, gave a presentation on tobacco usage in youths.

Tobacco use has increased in youths ages 18-21, says Tobin. Many of them use e cigarettes. Just one pod has the nicotine found in two packs of cigarettes. Tobin stated that many states have raised the age for tobacco purchases from 18 to 21. Statistics show that 95% of smokers start smoking before age 21. This includes cigarettes and e cigarettes. Tobin spoke about the Synar Amendment. In July 1992, Congress enacted the Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration Reorganization Act (PL 102-321), which includes an amendment (section 1926) aimed at decreasing youth access to tobacco. This amendment, named for its sponsor, Congressman Mike Synar of Oklahoma, requires states to enact and enforce laws prohibiting the sale or distribution of tobacco products to individuals under the age of 18. States must comply with the Synar Amendment in order to receive their full Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant (SABG) awards. The regulation requires that states:

- Enact laws prohibiting any manufacturer, retailer, or distributor of tobacco products from selling or distributing such products to any individual younger than age 18.
- Enforce these laws.
- Conduct annual inspections that provide a valid probability sample of tobacco sales outlets accessible to minors.
- Negotiate interim targets and a date to achieve a noncompliance rate of no more than 20% (SAMHSA requires that each state reduce its retailer violation rate to 20% or less by FY 2003).
- Submit an annual report detailing activities to enforce the law. North Carolina has not complied with this amendment yet and is in danger of losing much needed funding, said Tobin. He admonished that North Carolina needs to:
 - Collaborate (creation of a youth access tobacco group/committee). Enforce youth tobacco access laws – statewide enforcement.
 - Mobilize the community to reduce minors' access by implementing local efforts.
 - Place stronger restrictions/policies on retailer sales of to-

bacco products.

- Provide retailer education (letters and packets to all establishments along with training opportunities). Increase the price of tobacco products and implement mass media campaigns.

The School Board will review the ability to create a tobacco group/committee in Macon County.

Summer Career Activator Camps

This summer the CTE Program will be offering 13 courses for students to learn about different careers. Forged in Fire will teach about the welding industry. Jr. Chef offers students culinary skills exposure. Game On is for those interested in computer gaming and coding. Shark Tank is for those interested in becoming entrepreneurs. Kids and Pros-Careers in Sports provide insights into the different careers involving the sports industry. First on Scene gives students a chance to examine the world of medicine including EMS, CPR and First Aid training. Medical Explorers delves into the world of Health Career opportunities. Learn to Fly offers aviation enthusiasts the opportunity to learn about flight through use of a flight simulator. Girls who Code dives into computer science and coding. The Littlest Vet Shop offers future veterinarians the chance to explore Veterinary Science, animal care, and anatomy. Be Our Guest invites students into the world of Hospitality and Tourism. Mock Trial allows students to experience the legal field and the trial process. Kids at Work, focuses on the Retail industry, Food Service and Technology.

All courses will be held at FHS and are provided at no charge.


Summer Edventure Camp

This year the Summer Edventure Camp will run from June 12 to July 28. Prices are the same as last year. The entire Camp June 12 – July 28 costs \$1026.63. Session "A" runs from June 12 - June 28, for a cost of \$500.00. Session "B" runs from July 3 - July 28 for a cost of \$600. This year's Summer Adventure Camp will be held at South Macon Elementary School.

Dr. Baldwin to retire in September

Dr. Baldwin announced that he will be retiring effective Sept. 1, 2023. Dr. Baldwin has served as Macon School's Superintendent for 10 years.

The next board meeting will be held on March 27 at the Macon Schools Administrative Building.



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Classes help gardeners prepare for Spring planting

Deena C. Bouknight – Contributing Writer

A recent N.C. Cooperative Extension class on “caneberries,” drew 60 people who signed up to learn how and when to grow berries – as well as how and when to prune them in order to maintain health and longevity of bushes. “Caneberries,” the umbrella category that includes blackberry and raspberry variations, was taught by Macon County Extension Director Christy Bredenkamp who provided practical information to attendees packing the session.

Through detailed power-point charts, helpful information was provided regarding both summer and fall fruiting types, life expectancy and yield of variations, and soil and sun conditions.

While red raspberries are the most common type grown in the United States, attendees of the Feb. 27 event learned that purple, yellow, and black varieties exist as well. This area’s hardiness zone of between 6a-8a, but primarily 7a, provides an ideal climate for growing raspberry bushes that thrive and produce significant yields.

“Raspberry bushes can take the cold,” said Bredenkamp, “and some raspberry bushes can even handle -20 degrees.”

She added that most blackberries also thrive in Western North Carolina due to cooler temperatures.

Some do’s and don’t’s associated with planting blackberries and raspberries include:

- Test the soil and determine if lime or sulfur needs to be added in order to increase or decrease pH, which should be

around 6.5.

- Avoid mulching with wood bark or chips as it could possibly breed bacteria that can affect bushes; use pine needles or landscape cloth instead.

- Thin out dense bushes by cutting out some of the canes.

- If canes flop to the ground, consider tying up to a trellis.

- Follow specific pruning instructions, which are different for floricane (fruiting on two-year-old canes) varieties versus primocane (fruiting on current season canes) varieties.

Printed information about growing caneberries is available at the Extension office. Plus, soil sample kits are available, and soil samples are free after April 1.

The Extension office offers a Master Gardener class on Wednesday mornings starting April 12 that lasts for 10 weeks and takes place from 8:30 a.m. until noon each week. A cost is associated with this program due to materials needed, but most educational programs at the Extension office are free to the public – but they require registration so that the number of expected attendees is determined.

Other upcoming programs include “Fruit Trees: How to Start and Foster Your Home Orchard,” March 16, from 6-8 p.m.; and “Gardening Basics 101,” March 21, from 6-8 p.m.

Event information is available at www.macon.ces.ncsu.edu, or the public can stop by the Extension office at 193 Thomas Heights Road in Franklin to pick up printed information sheets.





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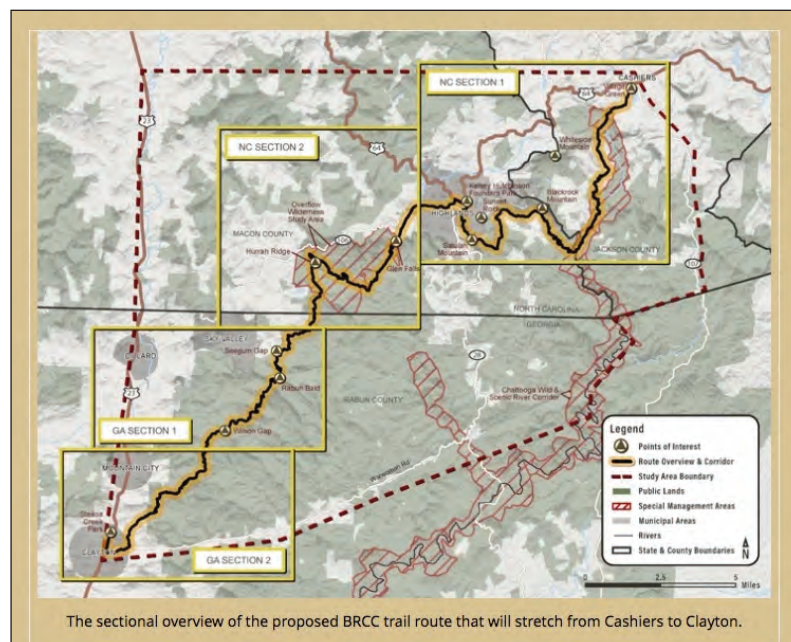
Plans unveiled for a new connector trail in WNC

Deena C. Bouknight
Contributing Writer

Last week, the public had an opportunity to view plans for a new trail – part of which will be located in the Highlands area of Macon County. The Blue Ridge Community Connector (BRCC) is a proposed hiking route to connect the communities of Cashiers, Highlands, and Clayton, Ga., through a regional trail system. At the Highlands Recreation Center on Feb. 28, the project’s Boone, N.C.-based planning firm, Destination by Design, presented maps and was available to answer questions.

The Highlands Plateau Greenway was responsible for contacting Destination by Design to come up with a trail system that will include four proposed sections: from the Village Green in Cashiers to the Kelsey Hutchinson Founders Park in Highlands; from Kelsey Hutchinson Founders Park to Hale Ridge Road in Georgia; from Hale Ridge Road to Wilson Gap in Georgia; and, from Wilson Gap to Stekoa Creek Park in Clayton, Ga.

Destination by Design informed that the plan was developed with the minimization of environmental impact in mind. The trail will use existing infrastructure, such as the Highlands Plateau Greenway, sidewalks, paved roads, gravel roads, U.S. Forest Service, and natural surface trails. In fact, the proposed trail involves using approximately 37 miles of existing trails and eight miles of proposed trail.



Cost projection is estimated at \$2.5 million. Destination by Design gathered feedback that the firm will use to create a master plan for the trail. Feedback will be accepted by email to Tim Johnson, director of outdoor recreation planning at Destination by Design, tim@dbdplanning.com, until the end of March.

The project could take five to 15 years to complete, depending on funds donated and raised.



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Arrest Report

The Macon County Sheriff's Department, Franklin Police Department or Jackson County Sheriff's Department made the following arrests Feb. 23 - March 5. All suspects are innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.



Macon County Sheriff's Department

February 28

Alejandro F. Garcia, 26, was charged with possession of methamphetamine, carrying a concealed gun, maintaining a place for controlled substances and possession of drug paraphernalia. William D. Stamey made the arrest.

Nidia Cuellar-Rea, 33, was charged with possession of methamphetamine and possession of drug paraphernalia. William D. Stamey made the arrest.

Everardo Vargas-Mandujano, 30, was charged with possession of drug paraphernalia. William D. Stamey made the arrest.

Adam Brock Crawford, 35, was charged with possession of methamphetamine, possession of marijuana up to 1/2 oz and possession of drug paraphernalia. Jonathan C. Bean made the arrest.

Bradford John Brandon Jr., 30, was charged with a domestic violence protective order violation. Jordan C. Sutton made the arrest.

Richard Lewis Guritz, 62, was charged with driving while impaired. William D. Stamey made the arrest.

March 1

William Dale Sheffield, 43, was charged with violating a domestic violence protective order. Denver J. Elliott made the arrest.

Rachael Moore, 44, was charged with assault and battery. Costin Jigla made the arrest.

March 2

Amy Murray Gibson, 44, was charged with possession with intent to manufacture/sell/deliver a schedule II controlled substance, simple possession of a schedule II controlled substance, simple possession of a schedule IV controlled substance and possession of drug paraphernalia. Jay Wright made the arrest.

Brandon Lex Penland, 34, was charged with possession of a stolen firearm, larceny of a firearm, felony conspiracy, felony aid and abet, possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, first degree burglary, larceny after break/enter, possession of stolen goods/property and injury to real property. Costin Jigla made the arrest.

James Ronald Teems Jr., 35, was charged with child support. Gabe D. Bingham made the arrest.

Brittany Gibson, 30, was charged with warrant service. Gabe D. Bingham made the arrest.

March 3

Shayla Amara Cope, 26, was charged with failure to appear. Sargent Jonathan A. Taylor made the arrest.

Robert Samuel Snyderburn, 40, was charged with failure to appear. Sergeant Jonathan A. Taylor made the arrest.

James Allen Gibson, 45, was charged with possession of methamphetamine and possession of drug paraphernalia. Detective Darrell J. Brooks made the arrest.

Davin Lane Eldridge, 36, was charged with failure to appear for carrying a concealed weapon and probation violation. Jordan C. Sutton made the arrest.

Justin Dwayne Waters, 32, was charged with failure to appear for flee to elude arrest with a motor vehicle. David Blanton made the arrest.

March 4

Wilburn Wesley Holt, 63, was charged with failure to appear. Sergeant Jonathan A. Taylor made the arrest.

Jackson County Sheriff's Department

February 23

John Marion Hall, 73, of Sylva, was charged with resist/obstruct/delay. No bond was set.

John Dustin Hall, 46, of Sylva, was charged with felony larceny, misdemeanor larceny, driving while intoxicated, seat-belt violation, wild life, failure to appear for possession of stolen goods and injury to real property. A secured bond of \$38,000 was set.

February 24

Pedro Junior Cruz, 41, of Tuckaseegee, was charged with domestic violence protective order violation. An unsecured bond of \$1,500 was set.

Cameron Chad Sutton, 23, of Whittier, was charged with obtaining property by false pretense, larceny after breaking and entering and breaking and entering of a motor vehicle forcible. An unsecured bond of \$10,000 was set.

February 25

Ann Toleene Hewitt, 68, of Sylva, was charged with simple assault. No bond was set.

Dale Henry Hooper, 55, of Sylva, was charged with failure to appear for obtain property by false pretense and break or enter. A secured bond of \$6500 was set.

David Russell Johnson, 41, of Newborn, Ga., was charged with possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of marijuana paraphernalia, misdemeanor child abuse, possession with intent to manufacture/sell/deliver a schedule VI controlled substance, maintaining a vehicle/dwelling/place for a controlled substance, conspire to traffic methamphetamine and trafficking in methamphetamine. A secured bond of \$250,000 was set.

Mariah Jordan Bell, 31, of Rayland, Ohio, was charged with possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of marijuana paraphernalia, misdemeanor child abuse, possession with intent to manufacture/sell/deliver a schedule VI controlled substance, maintaining a vehicle/dwelling/place for a controlled substance, conspire to traffic methamphetamine and trafficking in methamphetamine. A secured bond of \$200,000 was set.

February 27

Alexander Martinez Garcia, 27, of Cherokee, was charged with failure to appear for misdemeanor larceny. A secured bond of \$4,000 was set.

Salvador Mendez Diaz, 35, of Cashiers, was charged with possession of an open container of alcohol in the passenger area after consuming, no operators license and driving while impaired. No bond was set.

Andrew Eric Jones, 23, of Cullowhee, was charged with sexual battery and second degree forcible rape. A secured bond

of \$100,000 was set.

February 28

Tony Dustin Gregory, 32, of Waynesville, was charged with possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of methamphetamine, flee to elude arrest, reckless driving with wanton disregard and driving while license revoked. A secured bond of \$20,000 was set.

Travis Aron Zepeda, 26, of Whittier, was charged with driving while license revoked. A secured bond of \$1,000 was set.

Mary Lou Autrey, 56, of Waynesville, was charged with failure to appear for driving while license revoked. A secured bond of \$750 was set.

Brandon Jordache Bark, 32, of Cherokee, was charged with warrant service from other jurisdiction and failure to appear for flee to elude arrest. A secured bond of \$10,000 was set.

Randy Topez Stewart, 48, of Franklin, was charged with true bill of indictment. A secured bond of \$30,000 was set.

March 1

Stacie Lee Glance, 39, of Canton, was charged with failure to appear for communicate threats and second degree trespass. A secured bond of \$3,000 was set.

Carlos Luis Cruz Marrero, 28, of Cherokee, was charged with true bill of indictment. A secured bond of \$3,205,000 was set.

March 2

Stefany Carissa Hoy, 21, of Whittier, was charged with assault with a deadly weapon. No bond was set.

Stanley Bryon Sherrod, 24, of Smithville, was charged with failure to appear for injury to real property. A secured bond of \$7,500 was set.

Derrick Lane Bryson, 40, of Glenville, was charged with true bill of indictment. No bond was set.

Tammy Lynn Thornhill, 54, of Sylva, was charged with true bill of indictment. No bond was set.

Johnathan Aarron Wheatley, 48, of Whittier, was charged with third degree sexual exploitation of minors. A secured bond of \$100,000. was set.

March 3

Isiah Darius Evans, 22, of Cherokee, was charged with assault on a female. No bond was set.

James Victor Rose, 33, of Cherokee, was charged with failure to appear for violation of a court order. A secured bond of \$500 was set.

Crystal Renee Bryson, 50, of Townville, S.C., was charged with warrant service for other jurisdiction and obtain property by false pretense. No bond was set.

Austin Moody Terril Rattler, 28, of Robbinsville, was charged with warrant Service for other jurisdiction. A secured bond of \$999 was set.

March 4

Travis Aron Zepeda, 26, of Whittier, was charged with communicating threats. No bond was set.

Ryan Keith Watty, 27, of Sylva, was charged with failure to appear for driving while license revoked and possession of stolen motor vehicle. A secured bond of \$25,000 was set.

Michael Ray Zepeda, 50, of Cherokee, was charged with allow unlicensed driver to drive. No bond was set.

March 5

Jonathan Daniel Barker, 47, of Robbinsville, was charged with possession of drug paraphernalia. No bond was set.

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Bookstore hosts monthly book club

Deena C. Bouknight – Contributing Writer

An article published a few years ago in a national business magazine expressed the importance of participating in book clubs, and Franklin's A Novel Escape offers a no-pressure opportunity to not only discuss books selected for the monthly "club," but also any books patrons are reading.

For April's A Novel Escape book club, the science fiction read "The Measure," by Nikki Erlick, has been selected. Book club meetings at the 60 East Main Street store take place the first Tuesday of every month at 6:30 p.m. "The Measure" was selected as a nominee for "best science fiction" and "best debut novel" in 2022 by Goodreads. According to a Goodreads synopsis, the book explores proposed life-altering questions. "It seems like any other day. You wake up, pour a cup of coffee, and head out. But today, when you open your front door, waiting for you is a small wooden box. This box holds your fate inside: the answer to the exact number of years you will live. From suburban doorsteps to desert tents, every person on every continent receives the same box. In an instant, the world is thrust into a collective frenzy. Where did these boxes come from? What do they mean? Is there truth to what they promise?"

While April's book club focuses on "The



Measure" and anyone can participate, March and May are open discussion sessions – when anyone can bring up questions and comments about the books they are reading and share excerpts, and more. In fact, a reading list book is only discussed every other month.

A Novel Escape's owner, Liz DeWandeler, who mostly facilitates book club discussions, commented, "Most of the people who come to book club are either new to Franklin and want to find like-minded people and are interested in making friends, or they are the avid readers – the book nerds – who just love to read and talk about books. I personally love to talk about books, and I have found in my life that my enjoyment increases when I talk to someone in-depth about them. I often find I have much more appreciation about a book when I talk about it. Plus, the discussions in book club often lead to book-related life topics, giving participants a chance to think out loud about things. That's a nice side effect."

No reservations are necessary to participate in monthly book clubs at A Novel Escape. Information about upcoming books to read can be acquired at the store and on its website. And, while it is not necessary to purchase book club selections at A Novel Escape, DeWandeler makes certain to have copies available for interested patrons.

'Don't Rock the Boat' at FHS March 17 & 18

The Franklin High School Advanced Theatre class presents its first production of the spring semester, "Don't Rock the Boat," March 17 and 18, at 7 p.m., nightly in the Franklin High School Fine Arts Center. Tickets are \$7 and can be purchased at the door.

"Don't Rock the Boat" centers on Tom Butterworth who is determined to be the youngest cruise ship captain in history – even if this means sailing on a converted gunboat named "Vengeance" with a crew of rejects from Maritime High School, and a trio of girl singers who are passing themselves off as a famous show biz act.

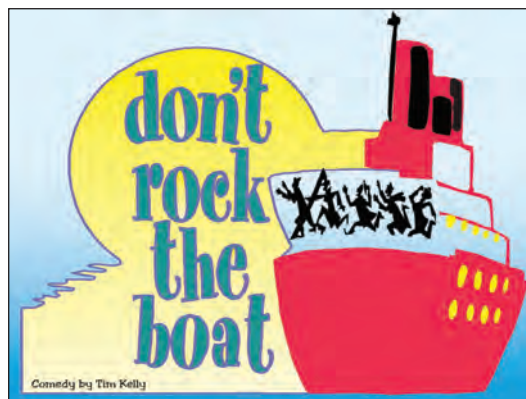
As the story unfolds, the engineer is seasick, the cruise hostess is pulling her hair in

frustration, and a gung-ho nurse is practicing giving hypos by stabbing anything that's handy.

And on top of that, the passengers are a pretty unusual bunch as well. There's a fabulous Hollywood star, Honey Hotchkiss, a clumsy pair of thieves, a lady who loves pets but is allergic to fur and a non-stop jogger. To top it all off, there's a hijacking by a misguided group of pirate loonies.

"Don't Rock the Boat" is a comedy by Tim Kelly that includes lots of romance and laughter.

The Fine Arts Center is located on the campus of Franklin High School at 100 Panther Drive, in downtown Franklin.



Photography walk at the library

As part of the Walking with Spring series, the Macon County Public Library will present "Listening to the Land: Contemplative Photography Walk" Thursday, March 16, from 5 to 6 p.m.

Many amateur photographers yearn to create photographs full of feeling and emotion. According to photographer and artist Susan Patrice, contemplative photography offers a path to accomplish that goal. By learning to listen to the land and centering the practice in humility and wonder, photographers can deepen the connection with the natural world and photographs come alive with meaning and beauty. This one-hour photo walk will introduce simple, contemplative photography practices.

Starting at the Macon County Public Library, the group will take a leisurely photography walk on the Little Tennessee River Greenway. Photographers of all levels are invited (camera phones are welcome) and even seasoned practitioners should find value in this unique approach to the medium.

Susan Patrice is a documentary photographer and contemplative artist. Her photography and public installations feature intimate images that touch deeply into questions of place, belonging, and ecological personhood. Since 2016, her work has primarily explored the power of beauty and its impact on our feelings of connection and kinship. Through the use of handmade cameras built in response to the land, she engages in deep



conversation with wild and natural places. Patrice lives in the southern Appalachian region, where she is the co-director of the Kinship Photography Collective.

The Macon County Public Library's "Walking with Spring" series in partnership with the Nantahala Hiking Club and the Franklin Appalachian Trail Community Council corresponds with thru-hiker season in Franklin and highlights the A.T.'s hikers and authors, as well as other great outdoor activities and opportunities in the area.

The library is located at 149 Siler Farm Road. For more information, call (828)524-3600.

Bear program at Cowee School

On Monday, March 20, at 6:30 p.m., Ashley Hobbs will present a program on Black Bears in Western North Carolina, as part of the historic Cowee School Monday night lecture series, "Where We Live: History, Nature, and Culture."

Attendees of the presentation will learn how to co-exist safely with bears and about black bears in North Carolina.

Asley Hobbs, Bear Biologist with the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission will discuss the natural history of black bears in Western North Carolina and how you can use that information to safely coexist with these North Carolina treasures. Among the topics covered will be:

- Bear behavior and biology in North Carolina.
- The BearWise initiative, which provides ways to prevent conflicts, provides resources to resolve problems, and encourages community initiatives to keep bears wild.
- What to do in a bear encounter.

A question-and-answer session will follow the presentation.

For tips on how to coexist with bears visit: bearwise.org

The program will take place at Cowee School Arts and Heritage Center at 51 Cowee School Drive in Franklin. The lec-



Bear Biologist Ashley Hobbs will present a program on Black Bears at the Cowee School Monday night lecture series Monday, March 20, at 6:30 p.m., at Cowee School Arts and Heritage Center.

ture series is designed to give people an opportunity to learn more about the local area, from many different angles, and to participate in community.

Youth Art Month celebrated at Uptown Gallery

Deena C. Bouknight
Contributing Writer

Uptown Gallery in downtown Franklin opened its Macon County Student Art Exhibition last Thursday to celebrate March as Youth Art Month. A reception to showcase the exhibition takes place Saturday, March 11, from 3-5 p.m.

The Main Street gallery will offer the exhibition through March 31. Anyone is welcome to visit the gallery to view dozens of art projects contributed by Macon County students. In fact, Uptown Gallery, which also sells local artists' works, is open year-round.

According to local artist Carol Conti, a member with Macon County Art Association and the organizer of the Student Art Exhibition, art instructors at thousands of schools nationwide participate in activities surrounding Youth Art Month. Locally, however, Macon County art instructors who encouraged art students' works this year are: Tracy C. Hagan, Franklin High School; Brooke Smith, Mountain View Intermediate; Jessica Carpenter, South Macon Elementary; Stephanie Hudson, Iotla Valley Elementary; Marion McClure, East Franklin & Cartoogechaye Elementaries; Jessica Moschouris, Highlands School; Chris Bell, Macon Middle; and Dwayna Jones, Nantahala School.

Conti explained that Youth Art Month began in 1961 to promote art education.

"I first got involved in Youth Art Month while teaching Connecticut high school students in the early 1980s and I made an effort to show students' work in every community where I taught. Macon County Art Association had the first Macon County student art show at the Uptown Gallery in 2019, with a reception that drew more than 120 guests. Then COVID-19 hit. We continued the shows in March 2020,



Dozens of art projects representing Macon County School students are on display through March 31 at Uptown Gallery to celebrate March as Youth Art Month.

2021, and 2022, but with no public receptions. This year is the first reception being held since 2019."

Conti added that Youth Art Month recognizes skills children develop by practicing the arts, including creativity, communication, and problem-solving.

"And with this month-long exhibit, the Macon County Art Association is pleased to be supportive of our local art teachers and the amazing talent of our students in grade K-12," she said. "I find this year's exhibition shows incredible skill using a variety of media, including pastels, paper folding, printmaking, mixed media, oil paint, watercolors, acrylic, charcoal, graphite, and colored pencil. So many pieces show personal expression and style inspired by a wide variety of subject matter. It is a wonderful display of the talent of our Macon County students, guided by awesome art instructors."

Uptown Gallery is open every day but Wednesday and Sunday; hours to view the exhibition are 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Conti will again organize a weekend-long art festival at the Macon County Library in October.

John Lane & Brent Martin in conversation at City Lights

John Lane and Brent Martin will visit City Lights Bookstore on Tuesday, March 14, at 6 p.m. They will discuss John Lane's new book, "Coming Into Animal Presence." This book of collected writing explores Lane's encounters with wild animals in wild places and the diversity and mystery of what's often called "the more than human world." In each piece, there is always an animal presence, sometimes central and sometimes peripheral. In one piece, the Columbian mammoth comes back to trouble the contemporary political landscape of South Carolina. In another, he ponders the fate of a wing-shot goose finding a last refuge in the Lane family's tiny frog pond. In another, Lane ventures into an abandoned Zimbabwean gold mine alone to check on the status of a common genet, a shy carnivore.

Brent Martin is the 2022 Thomas Wolfe Memorial Literary Award winner for his book "George Masa's Wild Vision." He is also the author of three chapbook collections of poetry and "The Changing Blue Ridge Mountains: Essays on Journeys Past and Present." His poetry and essays have been published in the *North Carolina Literary Review*, *Pisgah Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Chattahoochee Review*, *Eno Journal*, *New Southerner*, *Kudzu Literary Journal*, *Smoky Mountain News*, and elsewhere. He lives in the Cowee community in Western North Carolina.

John Lane is an emeritus professor at Wofford College, where he taught creative writing and environmental studies and directed the Goodall Environmental Studies Center. There he helped imagine and direct the "Thinking Like a River" Initiative. In the past decade, Lane has been named one of seven regional Culture Pioneers by Blue Ridge Outdoors, and he has been honored with the Water Conservationist Award from the South Carolina Wildlife Federation, the Clean Water Champion by South Carolina's Upstate Forever, and inducted in 2014 into the South Carolina Academy of Authors.

To reserve books, call City Lights Bookstore in Sylva, at (828)586-9499.



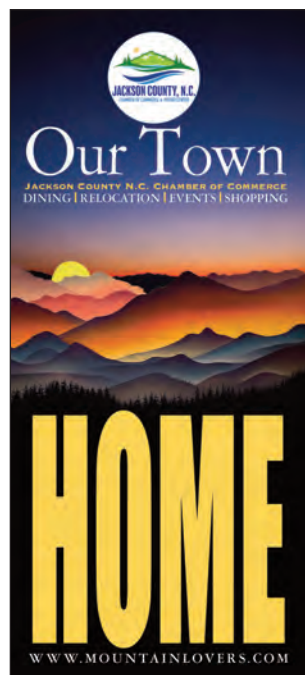
Jackson Chamber publishes '23 Our Town booklet

The Jackson County Chamber of Commerce has recently published its 18th annual Our Town community information and relocation guide, as well as its ninth annual Eating Out in Jackson County dining guide.

Both publications are available for locals and visitors to pickup at the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center, located at 773 West Main Street, Sylva. Hours are Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. They are also available at various mobile kiosks located throughout Jackson County.

"We're excited to offer these two popular guides, which are incredibly useful tools for visitors as well as new residents," said Jackson County Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Julie Donaldson. "It's a wonderful way to showcase our chamber members and our community to newcomers."

The 72-page Our Town publication contains local and regional relocation statistics, upcoming events, features about chamber



events and festivals, hiking trail and waterfall information, fishing highlights, and an up-to-date chamber membership directory, along with many advertisements from local partners and members.

"This is the perfect companion to carry around as you arrive in Jackson County for the first time and want to see where to eat, where to shop, where to hike, where to stay and more," said Chamber Assistant Director Kelly Donaldson. "For people thinking about visiting Jackson County from afar, they can view this product online or order a copy online at our website to be mailed to them directly. It's an excellent resource for planning a fun trip to our mountains."

The chamber would like to thank the Jackson County Tourism Development Authority for its support in publishing the 2023 Dining Guide.

For more information about both products, contact the chamber at 828-586-2155 or visit www.mountainlovers.com.

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Creating and growing a garden in the shade

Melinda Myers – Columnist

Don't let limited sunlight stop you from growing a beautiful garden. Make the most of shady locations with proper plant selection and design strategies.

Start the season with native spring ephemerals like hepatica, spring beauties and trout lilies. These plants grow and flower early in the season before the trees leaf out, shading the area. They die back soon after flowering as shade tolerant plants fill the garden. Look for those native to your region.

Select bright and lime green foliage plants that stand out in the shady corners of your landscape. Combine them with your favorite dark leaved and flowered plants that tend to disappear in the shade. The contrasting colors help both plants pop.

Use plants with variegated foliage to light up the garden long after their flowers fade. Siberian bugloss (*Brunnera*) has blue forget-me-not-like flowers in spring and variegated heart shaped leaves. Variegated Solomon Seal's upright stems covered with green leaves edged in cream, white bell-shaped flowers and yellow fall color provide multiple seasons of interest.

Barrenwort (*Epimedium*) also provides seasonal color in the shade. The heart shaped leaves are tinged red and emerge with the flowers in spring. The leaves turn green for the summer and then change once again to red in fall.

Add some height to those shady areas with bugbane. The leaves are topped with white spires of flowers in summer or fall, depending on the variety selected.

The white or pink blossoms of Roger's flower brighten the early summer garden. The big, bold leaves of this moisture-loving perennial resemble those of a horse chestnut tree.

The narrow leaves of sedges and Hakone grass create a striking contrast with the bold leaves of hostas. For an even bolder statement and focal point include a few elephant ears.

Look for shade tolerant plants with a variety of leaf shapes and sizes. The differences in texture add interest to the shade garden. Repeat the leaf sizes and shapes to unify the garden.

Use this same strategy to create continuity between sun and shade gardens in your landscape.

Include a variety of plant shapes. Use columnar plants to create a focal point and weeping and mounded plants for a sense of fluidity in the garden.

A lack of sun is not the only factor to consider when planning a shade garden. The density of the canopy of trees or an overhang may also limit the water that reaches and is avail-



Hostas grow in part to full shade and can reach heights of more than 36 inches. Most hostas flower white, lavender or purple June through July, although some flower from September to October.
Photo courtesy of MelindaMyers.com

able to the plants below. Growing dry, shade-tolerant perennials will help reduce your long-term maintenance. Barrenwort, liriopse, coral bells, foam flower, sweet woodruff and hellebores are fairly shade tolerant once established.

Make sure all new plantings are watered thoroughly and when the top few inches of soil are crumbly and moist. Proper watering the first few years will result in deep, drought tolerant root systems that will help these plants grow and flourish despite the dry shade.

When planting under or near trees, be careful not to kill the trees when creating your shade garden. Don't cut or remove surface roots, creating entryways for insects and diseases. Adding as little as an inch of soil over the roots can kill some tree species. Avoid deep cultivation which can damage the feeder roots that are critical for water and nutrient absorption since the majority grow within the top 12 inches of soil.

If there's too much shade to grow even shade-loving plants, consider mulch to protect the soil and tree roots. Add a chair for relaxing and enjoy this cool space as summer temperatures rise.

Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books and hosts The Great Courses "How to Grow Anything" DVD series and the nationally-syndicated Melinda's Garden Moment TV & radio program. Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for "Birds & Blooms" magazine. Her website is www.MelindaMyers.com.



Bugbane's white spires of flowers will provide some height to the shady areas in the landscape.
Photo courtesy of MelindaMyers.com



Deaths & Funerals

Wayne Vincent

Wayne Vincent, 95, went on to his heavenly home Sunday morning, March 5, 2023, at Macon County Nursing & Rehabilitation in Franklin, N.C.

Until Dec. 16, 2022, he lived all his life in Tennessee. He was born July 9, 1927, on a farm in Hardeman County, to Aubrey and Alma Vincent. In 1944, he joined the U.S. Navy and deployed to the Pacific to serve on the USS Hancock. Upon returning after the war, he continued his service at U.S. Naval Air Station Memphis, located in Millington, Tenn., until his retirement on May 1, 1975. During his time in Millington, he married Dot Carlisle of Lucy, and together they had four children. They lived outside of Millington and attended Lucy Baptist Church where he was ordained a deacon and remodeled Lucy Baptist Church as it stands now. Wayne and Dot owned and operated Millington Contractors for more than 35 years until Dot passed away in 2004. During this time he had become an active member of Gideons International, traveling across the U.S. and as far away as Venezuela and Ireland to participate in Bible distribution. In 1987, he was elected State President of the Gideons of Tennessee. Because his son was on the mission field in Argentina, three separate times Wayne gathered volunteers to travel to Argentina to work on churches. In addition to Gideon service, in 1975, he became an Auxiliary Probation Officer for Juvenile Court of Memphis and Shelby County, Tennessee, and also worked alongside men from First Baptist in Millington to visit with and witness to men in the West Tennessee State Penitentiary.

In 2005, he married Marion Rice Anderson in Lucy. The couple lived in Millington and attended First Baptist Church of Millington. Here, he served as an usher and Sunday School teacher. In August 2016, they moved to Robinwood, an independent living facility in Bartlett, Tenn. They lived here until Marion's death in December 2021, which led to Wayne moving to North Carolina. While there, at the retirement facility and three miles away from his daughter, he was cared for by nurses, doctors and caregivers with whom he established such a bond. His smile, wave, or just his presence became a joy for all of them. In all he did, it did not matter who you were or who you'd been, he loved you and lived a life devoted to serving God.

He leaves behind his daughter, Jane "Janie" (Rusty) Renfroe of Franklin, Gene Tate Vincent (Melanie) of Franklin, Ky., Alma (Dennis) Finger of Millington; six grandchildren, Jason (Vonda) Renfroe, Anthony Vincent, Ginger Vincent, Candace (Jamison) Hunley, Krystal (Preston) Visser; 11 great-grandchildren, Cooper and Landon Renfroe, Anzley and Kaiden Harper, and Gracilyn Vincent, Macney and Mackenzey Hunley, Aliza and Cora Visser; six surviving sisters, Helen Tolbert (Memphis), Opal (Bill) Young (Memphis), Edith Pipkin (Middleton), Emily (Marvin) Mills (Middleton), Kathrine Perryman (Memphis), and Sue (Bobby) Shelly of Middleton, Tenn.

He was predeceased by his son Glen Vincent in 2010, his brother, Emmett Vincent and sister, Jen-O Newman.

A funeral service was held at Munford Funeral Home Chapel, in Millington.

Memorials to Gideons International or First Baptist Church, Millington, Tenn.

Online condolences can be left at www.bryantgrantfuneral-home.com.

Bryant-Grant Funeral Home & Crematory is serving the Vincent family with local arrangements.



Wayne Vincent



Deaths & Funerals

Jill Oliver Risk

Jill Fay Oliver Risk, 71, passed from this life on Feb. 27, 2023. She was born on Nov. 11, 1951, to James Edwin and Joyce Morris Oliver.

During her lifetime, she did a wonderful job in showing her great love for God, her family, and her friends. But, Jill didn't stop there. She loved and cared about any and all who came within her reach.

She was unpretentious. Just like an open book, people always knew exactly where they stood with her. She loved everybody and proved it with her generosity. Her time, love, and resources were available to both individuals and groups. She was willing to help anyone anyway she could.

She had many interests. She liked traveling and seeing new places. She also enjoyed shopping in consignment stores. She was a stickler for good grammar and wanted everything to be precise. Even her notes and social media posts reflected her desire to communicate correctly. She owned a long line of pets with Lexi and Rocky, her last ones, being two of her favorites.

Her faith was very important to her as she was a member of First United Methodist Church in Franklin, N.C.

She was a member of Moose Lodge #1985 in Sylva, N.C., and Elks Lodge #1769 in Waynesville, N.C., as well as being the secretary of her Homeowners Association. A big supporter of Men's Challenge of the Smokies, she always helped provide refreshments at their graduations.

She is survived by her husband, John M. Risk; her son, Richard Thomsen (Stephanie) of Port Orange, Fla.; her siblings, Brenda Weeks (Don) of Middleburg, Fla., Ted Oliver (Susan), Sherri Leggett (Jack), surrogate sister, Joann Miller, all of Tallahassee, Fla.; and four step-children, Carolyn, John, James, and Jennifer Risk; six grandchildren; one great-grandchild; and a number of nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents; her first husband and high school sweetheart, Joe Thomsen; her half-sister, Barbara Wilson; and her half-brother, Paul Oliver.

A Celebration of Life will be held Sunday, March 12, at 4 p.m., at First United Methodist Church in Franklin. Revs. David Beam and Vic Green will lead the celebration. Another service will be held at her final resting place on Monday, April 3, at 2 p.m., at Tallahassee Memory Gardens, 4037 N. Monroe St., Tallahassee, Fla.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to Men's Challenge of the Smokies, 336 Living Hope Way, Franklin, NC, 28734.

Moffitt Family Funeral Care is honored to serve the family.

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



Jill Oliver Risk

Cecil Johnson

Cecil Johnson, 77, of Franklin, N.C., passed away at his residence, Tuesday, Feb. 28, 2023, after a period of declining health.

He was born in Murphy, N.C., to the late Ralph and Pearl Orton Johnson. He was preceded in death by his parents, as well as four brothers, RJ, Roy, Charlie, and Danny Johnson; and a sister, Hazel Brown.

He attended Cartoogechaye Church of God. He owned and operated Cecil's Auto repair and was very passionate about his lifetime career as a mechanic.

He is survived by his wife of 48 years, Teresa Kidwell Johnson; son, Adam Johnson (Tracy) of Franklin; four daughters, Tracye Holland (Jeremy) of Franklin; Erin Henson (Hollis) of Franklin, Heather Swanson (Terry) of Westville, Fla., Rosie Hash of Pinehurst, N.C.; two brothers, Kenneth Johnson of Akron, Ohio, Harvey Johnson of Jasper, Ga.; sister, Helen Johnson of Akron, Ohio; 19 grandchildren; and seven great grandchildren.

A funeral service was held Saturday, March 4, in the Chapel of Macon Funeral Home. Pastor Eddie Brewer, Pastor Tracy Talant, and Pastor Darian Cochran officiated. Burial was in the Addington Community Cemetery.

Pallbearers were Adam Johnson, Mitchell Thompson, Hollis Whitehead, Jeremy Holland, Hunter Bentley, and Terry Swanson. Honorary pallbearers were Kenneth Johnson, Harvey Johnson, Pierce Henson, Parker Henson, Gracin Holland, Carter Johnson, and Joseph Hash.

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

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.



Cecil Johnson

Christine McCall Wilson

Christine McCall Wilson, 92, of Highlands, N.C., passed away at Fidelia Eckerd Living Center Sunday, March 5, 2023, after a period of declining health.

She was born Aug. 8, 1931, to the late Rev. Jim McCall and Dovie Moss McCall. She spent her youth in the Franklin, N.C., area and her adult life in Thompson, Ga., where she worked in the restaurant hospitality industry before returning to Highlands to spend her retirement years.

She was of the Baptist faith. Her hobbies included Stock Car Racing, reading, and riding her golf cart.

In addition to her parents, she was predeceased by her husband, Robert Wilson; brother, James Shirley McCall; and niece, Mary Ann Houston Clayton.

She is survived by sister, Margie Houston; and brother, Richard (Freda) McCall; niece, Cathy (Gary) Hoffman; nephews, Jeffery (Debbie) McCall, and Jason (Sarah) McCall.

A funeral service will be held Friday, March 10, at 2 p.m., at Bryant-Grant Funeral Home in Franklin with visitation at 1 p.m. Burial will be in Sugar Fork Cemetery.

Online condolences can be left at www.bryantgrantfuneral-home.com.

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

George Ellison

George Ellison, 84, of Franklin, N.C., passed away peacefully on Feb. 21, 2023.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Rolf and Betty Mount Ellison, and a son, Randall Ellison. He lived a life of love and adventure.

He is survived by his wife, Linda Muir Ellison; son, Drew Ellison (Ginny) of Islamorada, Fla.; sister, Betty Eitnsier of Florida; and a sister-in-law, Jill Greene of Albuquerque, N.M.

No services are planned at this time.

In lieu of flowers, memorials can be made to AARC, 9425 N. MacArthur Blvd, Suite 100, Irving, TX 75063-4706.

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

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.



George Ellison

John Allan Keir

John Allan Keir, 77, of Franklin, N.C., passed away on Sunday, March 5, 2023, after a period of declining health.

Born in Staten Island, N.Y., he was the son of the late John Andrew and Bernice Moselle Welch Keir. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his wife, Elaine Catherine Keir.

He faithfully served in the United States Marines, where he had two tours in Vietnam. He was a member of the VFW and could often be found at Vito's Pizza and Italian Tavern in Franklin visiting with friends.

He is survived by two daughters, Paula Keir of Franklin, and Heather Critchfield of Braselton, Ga.; two grandchildren, Cody, and Kaycie Critchfield; brother, Frank Keir (Lawanda) of Mt. Dora, Fla.; a son-in-law, Aaron Critchfield; and a nephew, Wesley Keir.

No formal services are planned.

In lieu of flowers, memorials can be made to the Wounded Warrior Project, P.O. Box 758516, Topeka, Kansas 66675-8516.

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

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.



John Allan Keir

Dale Jarrett Dean

Dale Jarrett Dean, 83, passed away in his Franklin home on March 1, 2023. He was born on July 7, 1939, and was a lifelong resident of Macon County.

He is preceded in death by two sisters, Lolita A. Dean and Annie Ruth Dean Cabe; a brother, Ralph Dean; and his parents, John H. and Lessie Ammons Dean.

He is survived by his brother, Eugene Dean.

A graveside service was held Monday, March 6, at the Holly Springs Baptist Church Cemetery.

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

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



Dale Jarrett Dean

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William Byron leads Hendrick Motorsports sweep at Las Vegas

Reid Spencer – NASCAR Wire Service

LAS VEGAS—William Byron won the most important race of Sunday afternoon—by inches off pit road.

Quick work by Byron's pit crew enabled the driver of the No. 24 Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet to beat teammate Kyle Larson off pit road for an overtime restart in the Pennzoil 400 at Las Vegas Motor Speedway, and that was the decisive factor in Byron's fifth career NASCAR Cup Series victory.

When Aric Almirola spun into the Turn 4 wall with four laps left of a scheduled 267, the race turned upside down. Larson held a two-second lead at that point and appeared the almost certain winner.

After NASCAR called the fourth and final caution, Martin Truex Jr. stayed on the track, with Byron, Larson and most of the other contenders pitting for two tires. Byron's crew was a fraction of a second faster on the stop, and Byron claimed a front-row starting spot for the overtime to Truex's outside.

On the first overtime lap, Byron surged past Truex as the cars entered Turn 3 at the 1.5-mile track and pulled away to win by .622 seconds over Larson and by .766 seconds over teammate Alex Bowman. It was the third time Hendrick Motorsports had finished 1-2-3 in a Cup Series event.

The drivers accomplished the feat with their fourth driver, Chase Elliott, watching from North Carolina with team owner Rick Hendrick. Elliott broke his left tibia in a snowboarding accident in Colorado on Friday and will miss multiple races as he recovers from surgery.

Josh Berry, substituting for Elliott, finished 29th, two laps down, in his first race in NASCAR's Next Gen car.

"Yeah, just been really confident about the group of guys that I have on this 24 team," said Byron, who led 176 of 271 laps, swept the first two stages and won for the first time at Las Vegas. "They work extremely hard, and we spent a lot of time in the offseason just going through running at the [simulator] with Chevy and ... just trying to get better as a race car driver and as a team.

"Thinking of Chase back home. Wish he was out here with us. He's a great race car driver, great teammate. Wish he was out here."

For the overtime restart, Larson chose the inside lane behind Truex and was bottled up behind the No. 19 Toyota. But



William Byron, driver of the #24 RaptorTough.com Chevrolet, and crew celebrate in victory lane after winning the NASCAR Cup Series Pennzoil 400 at Las Vegas Motor Speedway on March 05, 2023 in Las Vegas, Nev. Photos by Meg Oliphant/Getty Images



cident forced overtime.

The first caution for an on-track incident didn't occur until Lap 183, nine laps after the final stage went green. Pole winner Joey Logano, Brad Keselowski and Kyle Busch were running three-wide through Turn 4 when disaster struck.

With Keselowski's No. 6 Ford in the middle, Logano ran out of room to the outside, and after contact with Keselowski's car, Logano's No. 22 Ford bounced off the wall and spun into the in-

field grass.

Logano brought his car to pit road, but his crew couldn't repair the Ford before the seven-minute time limit ran out under NASCAR's damaged vehicle policy.

Asked whether Keselowski pinched him into the corner, Logano replied, "Yeah, he did. I'm sure he didn't mean to do it. It is what it is. What are you going to do, right? We got fenced."

Dramatic late pass lifts Austin Hill to NASCAR Xfinity win at Las Vegas

LAS VEGAS—Austin Hill ran down rookie pole winner Chandler Smith from three seconds back, passed him as the cars approached the white flag and held on to win Saturday's Alco Uniforms 300 NASCAR Xfinity Series race at Las Vegas Motor Speedway.

The victory was the second of the year for Hill, who won the season opener at Daytona International Speedway. The driver of the No. 21 Richard Childress Racing Chevrolet won for the first time at Las Vegas and for the fourth time in his career.

Smith's car tightened up in the closing laps, allowing both Hill and Justin Allgaier to pass him on the final two circuits. Hill finished .268 seconds ahead of Allgaier, who was closing on the final lap but ran out of time.

Kyle Busch ran fourth in his first Xfinity Series start of the season and lost his chance to complete a Las Vegas triple. Busch won Friday night's CRAFTSMAN Truck Series race

Larson acknowledged the race was lost on pit road.

"Damn," Larson said with a wry laugh. "It's just part of Cup racing. It seems like kind of laps down, lap by lap, and then, sure enough, the yellow lights come on. You've just got to get over that and then try to execute a good pit stop, and I thought I did a really good job getting to my sign, and getting to the commitment line.

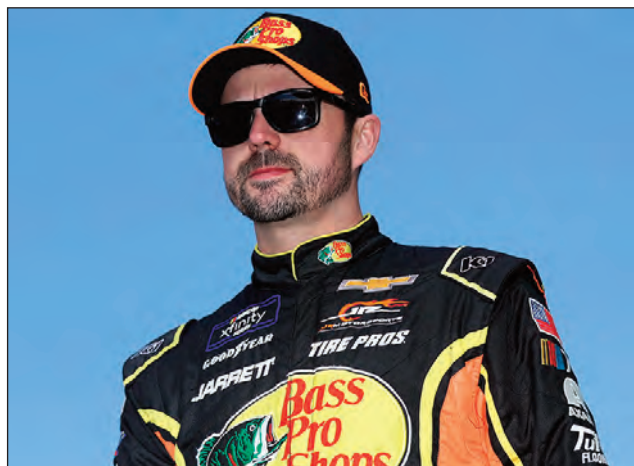
"I had a gap to William behind me, and their pit crew must have just done a really good job and got out in front of us, and that gave up the front row. I knew I was in trouble with the 19 staying out. I felt like William was going to get by him.

"Yeah, just a bummer that we didn't end up the winner, but all in all, William probably had a little bit better car than I had today, and their pit crew executed when they needed to there at the end."

In the overtime scramble, Bubba Wallace finished fourth and Christopher Bell fifth, both in Toyotas. Austin Cindric, who had been lapped at one point, recovered to run sixth as the top-finishing Ford driver. Truex, Justin Haley, Kevin Harvick and Daniel Suarez completed the top 10.

In a race that featured 13 lead changes among eight drivers, Larson took the top spot in Lap 196, after restarting third behind Denny Hamlin and Bowman on lap 190. The 2021 series champion extended his advantage to nearly five seconds over Byron during an exchange of green-flag pit stops before Almirola's accident caused the fourth caution on Lap 263.

Byron had cut Larson's lead to two seconds before the ac-



Josh Berry drove for the injured Chase Elliott coming in 29th in the NASCAR Cup Series Pennzoil 400 at Las Vegas Motor Speedway on March 5, in Las Vegas, Nev.

at LVMS and came in 14th in Sunday's Pennzoil 400.

"When the 16 (Smith) got by me (after a restart on Lap 98), I got really, really loose off of (Turn) 3," said Hill, who led 19 laps and won Stage 2. "Almost wrecked it, saved it. The 16 got really far out. I just knew I had to not abuse the tires and try to methodically just work my way through traffic. The track was really tough today. Had a really thin line between (Turns) 3 and 4. If you missed it by—it seemed like a half of an inch—you paid for it through the whole lap.

"That's just really what I stuck to all race long, was just trying to be disci-



Austin Hill, driver of the #21 Global Industrial Chevrolet, celebrates after winning the NASCAR Xfinity Series Alcos Uniforms 300 at Las Vegas Motor Speedway on March 4, 2023 in Las Vegas, Nev. Photo by Chris Graythen/Getty Images



plined through 3 and 4... I saw the 16 struggling in traffic and my spotter Derek (Kneeland) was like, 'Come on, baby. You can get it!' I saw him get tight off of (Turn) 4 there, and I knew I painted the line perfectly. I knew if I could clear him down the frontstretch, I felt like once we had clean air, we could hold him off."

In a green flag run to the finish that lasted 103 laps, Smith took the lead from Busch on Lap 102 of 200, regained it on Lap 146 after a cycle of pit stops and held it until Hill powered to the front on Lap 199.

"I just got a little tight there at the very end," said Smith, who led 118 laps. "It is what it is. That's a tough pill to swallow. There are some things I could have done inside before we started building tight. Getting by (lapped traffic)—we needed to have a bigger bumper.

"All in all, I can't be too disappointed. It's my sixth (Xfinity) start, third start with Kaulig Racing. We had a really fast Quick Tie Products Camaro, and I just really appreciate (owner) Matt Kaulig, (team president) Chris Rice, everybody at Kaulig Racing for bringing me on board, believing in me. We're going to win a few races this year, for sure."

John Hunter Nemechek won the first stage but lost track position when he had to pit on Lap 74 because of a loose

wheel and never got back in contention for the win. Nemechek, who led 45 laps, finished sixth behind Hill, Allgaier, Smith, Busch and Josh Berry.

"Probably one of the fastest cars—just didn't execute," Nemechek said. "It's frustrating, but to come home sixth after a loose wheel, going to the back and driving back up through. Then pitting and going to the back. Just shows the speed, and we'll have to go to Phoenix (next Saturday) and put it on them."

Sam Mayer, Riley Herbst, Sheldon Creed and Daniel Hemric completed the top 10.

Kyle Busch dominates NASCAR Truck Series race at Las Vegas

LAS VEGAS—Kyle Busch revels in changing circumstances.

Five days after winning at Auto Club Speedway in his second NASCAR Cup Series race in a Richard Childress Racing Chevrolet, Busch powered his own Kyle Busch Motorsports Chevy to victory in the NASCAR CRAFTSMAN Truck Series.

Despite a couple of twitchy moments in traffic, Busch dominated Friday night's Victoria's Voice Foundation 200 at Las Vegas Motor Speedway, leading 84 of 134 laps and beating runner-up Zane Smith to the finish line by 4.981 seconds.



Kyle Busch, driver of the #51 Zariz Transport Chevrolet, celebrates with a burnout after winning the NASCAR CRAFTSMAN Truck Series Victoria's Voice Foundation 200 at Las Vegas Motor Speedway on March 3, in Las Vegas, Nev. Photo by Chris Graythen/Getty Images

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ACROSS

- 1. Adam and Eve's son
- 5. Blink of an eye, for short
- 8. Tricep location
- 11. Laughing on the inside, in text
- 12. ___ bowl, frozen dish
- 13. Bid on a house, e.g.
- 15. Show off
- 16. Actor's role
- 17. Nostrils
- 18. **"Everything Everywhere All At Once" or "The Fablemans" nominee
- 20. Trampled
- 21. Humpty without t
- 22. *Cate Blanchett's 6-time nominated movie
- 23. Store in a silo
- 26. Tiny crustacean
- 30. Chop off
- 31. Not digital
- 34. Cut with a beam
- 35. Empty spaces
- 37. Not good
- 38. Relating to pond scum
- 39. Capri or Catalina
- 40. Lament
- 42. ___ Khan
- 43. Full event
- 45. *He's won the most academy awards
- 47. Jump key
- 48. Not yes, nor no
- 50. Male sibs
- 52. **"The Fablemans" composer John ____, 53-time nominee
- 55. Resin-producing tree
- 56. Call to Mary
- 57. Get-out-of-jail money

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- 59. Bye, in Castile
- 60. Ages and ages
- 61. Competitive advantage
- 62. Appetite
- 63. Farm female
- 64. Fender-bender damage

DOWN

- 1. Key often used with ctrl
- 2. Gold rush, e.g.
- 3. Purse with notions
- 4. Leeches, alt. sp.
- 5. Dandruff locale
- 6. This bird gets the worm?
- 7. Give a traffic ticket
- 8. Big do
- 9. Cattail, e.g.
- 10. ** ___ Harris Goes to Paris," Best Costume Design

- nominee
- 12. Tarzan and such
- 13. Like beer at a kegger (2 words)
- 14. **"The Banshees of Inisherin" nominee
- 19. Polynesian dance, pl.
- 22. Dress like Ancient Greeks
- 23. *Austin Butler's gyrating character
- 24. Gallows loop
- 25. Oil crisis
- 26. *Last year's Best Picture winner
- 27. Like a Druid, e.g.
- 28. Missouri River tributary
- 29. Flying nuisance
- 32. Lend a hand in crime
- 33. Order's partner

- 36. **Guillermo ___ ___'s Pinocchio"
- 38. "My wife can vouch for me," e.g.
- 40. Address to a boy, slangily
- 41. Bucolics
- 44. Desert traveler's hope
- 46. Bikini Bottom locale
- 48. Variation of meow
- 49. Skirt shape
- 50. Past tense of bid
- 51. Roman remain, e.g.
- 52. Cry of glee
- 53. Like a full-fledged Mafia man
- 54. Leo or Libra
- 55. Jared's competitor
- 58. Allow

HAULING

- DIRT
- GRAVEL
- MULCH



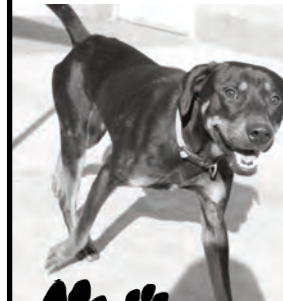
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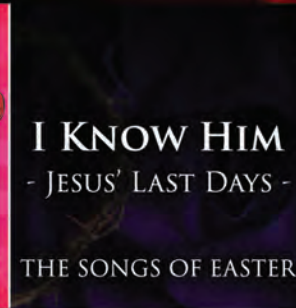
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MAY 12, 13



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