



Pickin' on the Square in downtown Franklin is still a popular event with residents and visitors alike with the Town of Franklin having sponsored the free Saturday night concerts for decades. This past weekend hometown favorite The Lisa Boone Band drew in the crowds to hear a variety of styles and tunes. Pickin' happens every other Saturday night beginning at 6 p.m. See page 9 for information on next week's scheduled band.
 Photo by Betsey Gooder

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New section of Bartram Trail runs through town



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Local veteran identifies dogs for potential service

Commissioners fail to pass FY '23-24 budget

Dan Finnerty – Contributing Writer

On Tuesday, June 13, Macon County Commissioners (MCC) met for their monthly meeting at the county courthouse. Previous meetings appeared to have prepared the commissioners to pass a new budget for fiscal year 2023/2024 (FY 23/24). However, after five hours, in a 2-3 vote, the budget failed to pass. Instead, commissioners will meet again on Monday, June 19, to hash out remaining issues.

In addition to three speakers, who all commented on their perceived lack of budget support for the Town of Highlands' needs and projects, numerous questions on the proposed \$64,566,978 county budget came up throughout the evening. Macon County Manager Derek Roland repeatedly addressed various concerns posed primarily by John Shearl, the first term commissioner from District 1 which includes High-

lands. Shearl's main point was that with additional revenue, the county is not compelled to place it all in a budget or even contingency funding pools. He opined that if the taxing millage rate was lowered even more (current proposed rate is already \$.13 less than last year at \$.27) taxpayers could benefit from it. Roland and Chairman Paul Higdon repeatedly argued that given encumbrances already in place, through capital projects such as the Franklin High School (FHS), too many commitments exist to lower rates further.

Additionally, toward the end of the meeting when Co-chairman Josh Young attempted to make some changes which would assist with Highlands projects in response to Shearl's objections, the vote was again held off. The other first term commissioner, Danny Antoine, questioned whether the budget contained enough coverage for Macon County

See COMMISSIONERS page 2

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COMMISSIONERS

Continued from page 1

youth and younger families.

“We have hardly anything in this community for kids. What are we bringing within this budget that is going to help with that? We talk about a drug problem and what are we doing to actually help communicate that problem – what is in this particular budget toward ending that?”

Roland replied that a refurbished (or replaced) Molar Roller for youth dental care and ongoing funding for school nurses is budgeted. School resource officers and increased Medicaid coverage through the Department of Social Services funding are also included within the budget. He concluded, “As far as capital [projects] go, this is the most increase in capital expenditures within this budget of \$1.7 million over last year, due mostly to interest on investment.”

Young then chimed in that regarding education and other needs within the area of youth and schools, “capital expenditures for education increased 9% - \$2.1 million in this budget was originally allocated to capital improvements in the Macon County School System. There is \$1,150,000 of that total which goes toward making sure all the children have iPads and other technology to help them learn in an ever-changing environment.”

At the end of the nearly two-hour budget discussion, Shearl stated he did not come to the meeting prepared for what took place regarding questions and concerns by other board members. He further offered that “there are still items in this budget that I don't agree with.” A few minutes later, a vote was taken with Commissioners Gary Shields and Young voting for the budget but Antoine, Shearl, and Higdon voting against it. Failing by a 3-2 margin, a follow-up meeting was scheduled for Monday, June 19, at 6 p.m. in the Commissioner Board Room, at the Macon County Courthouse.

Decker retiring; First Responders honored

The meeting started off with recognition of Mike Decker, who is retiring as the human resources director within the county manager's office. After 31 years and 283 meetings, Decker's last day on the job will be June 19.

Macon County Chaplains, Bonnie Peggs and Danny Antoine also recognized numerous First Responders with a plaque and \$60 gift certificate. Recipients were from the Sheriff's Department, Franklin Police Dept., Emergency Medical Services, and Dispatch.

Public Hearings

A public hearing was held on two topics, both Macon County Ordinance Code (MCOC) amendments – one on cryptocurrency mining facilities regulation and the other on prohibition of camping along the Little Tennessee River Greenway. A couple people did speak on each topic with concern primarily with the former and support for the latter. Additional high interest items included an Interlocal Agreement regarding the Higdon Property, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Macon County and the Board of Education and Macon County Middle School track improvements.

The only new business item on the agenda was recommendations for use of \$75,000 in the community funding pool, which was presented by Department of Social Services director Patrick Betancourt. Betancourt explained that 11 nonprofit organizations vied for a portion of the funding. Through a scoring process, it was determined that six of the recipients will receive full request funding while the remaining five would receive a portion of their requests. Which organizations were chosen for full or partial funding was not revealed at the meeting.

An amendment to Chapter 157 of the MCOC would add “high impact land uses” associated with adding cryptocurrency mining facilities and/or similar server-based facilities to a list of regulated uses. In general, cryptocurrency mining is the process by which networks of specialized computers generate and release new cryptocurrency, e.g., Bitcoin, and verify new transactions. County Planning Director Joe Allen was on hand to discuss the amendment and answer questions from the board. After a couple speakers voiced their concern over noise generated by server facilities, attendees were reminded that the amendment is for regulating such facilities, not authorizing them. The amendment passed without further issue.

Macon County Sheriff Brent Holbrooks talked on a re-



Macon County Commissioners work on FY 23-24 budget.

quested amendment to Chapter 28 of the ordinance code and was at the meeting to add any additional necessary details or answer questions regarding camping along the Greenway. Again, some citizens spoke on the amendment and mostly supported it, with further concern of how to best address situations which necessitated the amendment in the first place. Most of the attention focused on the problem of homelessness and how best to deal with it. While the commissioners generally agreed prohibiting camping on the Little Tennessee Greenway would not solve homelessness, drug addiction, or mental illness, they also agreed it was a necessary step in the process. This amendment also passed, 4-1, with Shearl opposing.

Macon Middle School Track

Chairman Paul Higdon requested an evaluation on the Macon Middle School (MMS) track improvements scope of work. Macon County Schools Auxiliary Director Todd Gibbs spoke on varying issues associated with fixing or replacing the track. He referred to a Request for Proposal (RFP) that was released a few months ago which has revealed, among other things, that some evaluation of the track will be required before determining the best solution for fixing it. He explained that a track has two parts – an asphalt base and a urethane or latex topping over it. While it is readily evident that the top layer is no longer usable or safe, it is not yet clear whether the asphalt base will need replacing.

Part of the RFP process will be to have potential companies, vying for the contract, to conduct surveys in order to better understand the full track condition. What was agreed to was that a six-lane track for the middle school, which can be used by the high school while their new track is developed, will suffice. There was some talk about making the MMS track eight-lanes to support state level meets but the idea was dismissed for various reasons including cost and logistics involved with enlarging the current site.

Young read the MOU between the County and the Board of Education (BOE) that is tied to the FHS project. The MOU essentially states that the County and the BOE, jointly referred within as “the Parties,” have “Jointly applied to the North Carolina General Assembly for funding ... which proposes to include in the upcoming biennial budget as much as \$60 million in grant funding for construction of a high school through the Education Lottery Needs-Based Public School Capital Fund.” Conversations then ensued between commissioners, mostly from Shearl questioning plans to raze current school buildings eventually and also asking if another location was not better suited for the FHS project. Shields, primarily due to his thorough knowledge of the school system and its history, offered numerous processes undertaken and lessons learned that resulted in the current plan for the new school project. He ended with, “You have to build a curriculum first and then build ‘brick and mortar’ based on the curriculum.” A motion was then made to approve and passed unanimously.



County HR Director Mike Decker was recognized for his 31 years of service at Tuesday’s county commissioner meeting. Pictured (L-R) are County Manager Derek Roland, Decker, and County Commission Chairman Paul Higdon.

Higdon Property

Young also introduced an Interlocal Agreement, also with the BOE, concerning the use of the so called “Higdon Property, located at 195 Wayah Street in Franklin. The property is being considered for possible use in conjunction with the FHS project although it was not locked into that purpose legally prior to the meeting. The agreement, signed May 4 by BOE Chairman Jim Breedlove, states in part, “Whereas the County has offered the Higdon Property to the Board for appropriate school uses; and whereas the Board wishes to acquire Higdon Property for appropriate school and educational purposes ... the two parties agree to a lease agreement on the property.” Commissioners talked to the specific uses the property, and in particular what the home located on the eight-plus acres, could provide to the high school. Primary focus was on using land to grow crops/food and then using the home to teach practical application skills to students, such as food preparation, service, hospitality, etc. A motion was made to approve the Agreement, which passed 4-1, with Shearl again opposing.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Higdon announced a follow up meeting to be held June 19 at 6 p.m. in order to continue hammering out an acceptable budget.

The next regularly scheduled County Commissioner meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 13, at 6 p.m. in the Macon County Courthouse.



The Higdon property is located at 195 Wayah Street near Franklin High School. Photo by Vickie Carpenter

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Town of Franklin names four new members to TDA board

Dan Finnerty – Contributing Writer

At the recent Town of Franklin council meeting in early June, six Tourism Development Authority (TDA) positions were announced, with four of the members joining the TDA for the first time. Returning members include Josh Drake of Drake Enterprises and Tim Crabtree of Crabtree Family Enterprise. On Monday, June 12, 2023, TDA Chair Connie Grubermann welcomed new members Guy Gooder, owner of Gooder Grafix; Rob Reale co-owner of Kitchen Sink, Inc.; Hannah Edwards with Eat Real Food Inc./Yonder; and Angela Faye-Martin of Alarka Expeditions. Three of the positions will be filled for three years, while the remaining three will expire in two years. This is done to facilitate membership changes within the TDA on a more frequent level. Who is filling which positions will be announced at the July meeting.

As for the new members, Faye-Martin is in her sixth year leading an eco-tour-for-profit business after spending many years in non-profit positions.

“I’m really proud of Alarka Expeditions ... it’s run, basically on the beauty of this place and the biological integrity of it,” she said.

Edwards has been in business almost six years and defined Yonder as a “specialty food



Four new members were added to Tourism Development Authority. Pictured (L-R) are Guy Gooder of Gooder Grafix; Angela Faye-Martin with Alarka Expeditions; Rob Reale with Kitchen Sink; and Hannah Edwards with Yonder.

store focused on locality and regionality of the food.”

Reale moved to the Franklin area five years ago and has been a part of the Streets of Franklin organization since arriving.

Gooder has been running his business for 35 years.

“I just want to give back to the community and it’s good to be involved. I’m a member of Rotary and have been involved with the

chamber of commerce and other organizations,” said Gooder.

Town of Franklin Manager and TDA member Amie Owens presented financial statistics for FY [Fiscal Year] 2022-23, which runs from July through June. As of April 30, \$14,428.14 was collected in occupancy tax, the second-highest total historically for that calendar month. The total budgeted for the current FY was \$265,000. With \$191,999.48 in expenditures and an additional \$57,405.52 remaining in encumbrances (obligated funds), the balance is \$73,350.52.

One of the TDA’s main purposes is to allot funding for promotion of travel and tourism on behalf of the town. New business included an application submitted from the Streets of Franklin Heritage Association for the Hometown Heritage Festival, which takes place July 15. Marie Roberts and Brooke Reale were on hand to address the TDA on their request for support in the amount of \$3,207. The request was only \$207 more than in 2022. The ninth annual event will be held Saturday, July 15. While an application is normally not voted on until the following month, the TDA decided to proceed with a vote on this request before the end of the current fiscal year. Support for \$3,000 was approved.

TDA members also voted on two other

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events requesting support over the summer: '80s Flashback Weekend and the Franklin Area Folk Festival. The Smoky Mountain Shrine Club submitted a request for \$5,000 in April in support of the '80s Flashback event, which occurs annually on the first weekend of August. This year, it will take place Friday, Aug. 4 and Saturday, Aug 5. The event is held to benefit the Greenville Shriners Hospital for Children. Support for \$1,250 was approved by the TDA.

The 17th annual Franklin Area Folk Festival will be themed "A Celebration of Appalachian Heritage" and will take place Aug. 19, from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. at the Cowee School Arts and Heritage Center. The Folk Heritage Association of Macon County submitted a request for TDA support in the amount of \$2,000, which matches their request for 2022. The TDA voted on and approved the request. The event is free of charge to the public.

The last order of business was approval of the fiscal year 2023/2024 budget ordinance. Carly Moser with Drake Enterprises, presented data to drive discussion and consideration of the new budget at the May TDA meeting. The total budget projected for the next year is \$265,000 of which \$220,000 will be spent on advertising and marketing. A total of \$36,000 is already allocated for festivals and events in the coming year.

Drake Enterprises provides marketing data collection and analysis for the budget tracking and presentation. TDA member Josh Drake offered input on behalf of the data analysis provided by the LocaliQ marketing platform and conducted in various budget areas, including advertising and marketing.

"We've [Drake Enterprises] taken a lot of what we've learned over the years and implemented it in tracking for the TDA," he said. "We've gone to a lot of tracking so that we can make sure what we are doing is working, first and foremost. If you can't prove what you are doing is working, you are throwing money into the wind."

The only additional budget expense is for an audit, which totaled \$200. TDA members unanimously approved the budget.

"The budget we work with is TDA money to spend to continue to bring in tourism. The TDA determines how the funding is spent," explained Grubermann regarding the budgeting process.

Meetings are always open to the public to attend to learn what goes into the budget, how it is spent, and how decisions on expenditures are reached by the TDA; however, public input is not part of the TDA meeting purpose or makeup.

The next scheduled meeting will be Monday, July 3, in the Franklin Town Hall Boardroom, at 5:30 p.m.

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New section of Bartram Trail meanders to and through Franklin

Deena C. Bouknight – Contributing Writer

On the backside of the Macon County Fairgrounds is a decades-old Jobs Corp metal bridge over Cartoogechaye Creek. It is here that close to 50 people met on Wed., June 7, for the dedication of a new Bartram Trail sign constructed by the Blue Ridge Bartram Trail Conservancy (BRBTC). The sign marks a segment of the trail opened up to connect the fairgrounds to the Little Tennessee Greenway and into the Town of Franklin.

The BRBTC maintains the 110-mile-long segment of the Bartram Trail that extends from Rabun County in Georgia through Macon County to end at Cheoah Bald, beyond Nantahala Lake. While most of the 110-mile section is through clearly marked wilderness paths, this new section is an attempt to keep hikers/walkers off the roadways.

BRBTC Executive Director Brent Martin explained that the Conservancy has worked for the last two years with the Town of Franklin, Mainspring Conservation Trust, Friends of the Greenway, and the Macon County Recreation Park to eliminate more than five miles of a 12-mile road walk that required hikers to cross US 441 and US 64. Representatives from these entities attended the June 7 noon-day event, as did the general public and anyone interested in hiking/walking the new trail section. Also present were representatives from the U.S. Forest Service, the Chamber of Commerce, Folk Heritage Association of Macon County, and more.

“Essential to the project’s success was the acquisition of the 13.9 acre ‘Dills tract,’ made possible through Mainspring and the N.C. Land and Water Fund,” Martin pointed out. “This acquisition connects the Greenway to the Macon County Recreation Park and the fairgrounds, providing additional greenspace for local citizens and visitors, and a safer and more scenic experience for those hiking the



Representatives from several local entities participated in the ribbon-cutting dedication of a new Bartram Trail sign on June 7. The sign is located at the back side of the Macon County Fairgrounds near Cartoogechaye Creek.

Bartram Trail.”

When 18th-century American naturalist William Bartram traveled the southeastern United States between 1773 and 1777 to document and illustrate species of plants and animals previously unknown to western civilization, Franklin was not yet a town; in fact, North Carolina was not yet a state but a colony – and Western North Carolina was considered a territory. Thus, Bartram’s path followed wagon and Native Indian trails, many of which still exist and are part of what is known as the Bartram Trail. But the trail that went through where Franklin and roads exist today has essentially disappeared. New sections of the trail meandering through Franklin help safely connect hikers from the

wilderness paths so they do not have to walk on busy roads or drive from one trailhead to another.

“So much has gone into acquiring and establishing this new section,” said Martin, “including rights of way ... approval. The Dills tract was sold to the Town of Franklin, but we [BRBTC] have to maintain and monitor it.”

Mainspring’s Stewardship Manager/GIS [geographic information system] Specialist Kelder Monar told attendees of the June 7 sign unveiling that, “This new section of the trail is great for public access and for wildlife preservation.”

Added Town of Franklin Council member Stacy Guffey,

“I’m excited about two things,” added

Franklin Town Council member Stacy Guffey. “One is that in 2001, when the building of the Greenway was being discussed and a slide show was created to build interest, one image in the presentation showed kids trying to push their bikes along 441 to get to the park. Now they can take this trail. And I’m happy for the Bartram Trail community, that they there is a place to walk that is not along the highway.”

Also present on June 7 was Estela Acevedo Ruiz, a recent graduate of Franklin High School. Ruiz, who will attend Appalachian State University in Boone, N.C., in the fall, has been interning with BRBTC to serve as a Spanish interpreter in order to encourage the Spanish-speaking community of Macon County to learn about and traverse the Bartram Trail. She recently helped lead a group to hike a section of the trail at Wayah Bald.

Ruiz was for the last two years a part of Macon County Schools STEM Program’s summer Youth Trail Corps, which involved camping on and maintaining the Bartram Trail with representatives from Southeast Conservation Corps.

“I want to make the Spanish-speaking knowledgeable about the Bartram Trail and to make them feel welcome to the trail,” she said. “I translate to them information about plants and trees as Brent points them out. It’s a great experience for me.”

After the sign dedication and ribbon cutting, Martin led about 20 attendees to the event on the five-mile new section that ended at Lazy Hiker Brewing Company, where a special beer was brewed, dubbed Bartram’s Brew, to celebrate the new trail section. During the evening of June 7, Martin led a William Bartram-themed trivia contest and presented BRBTC raffle winners a variety of items, including many native plants – some of which were documented by Bartram when he visited the area in the 1700s.

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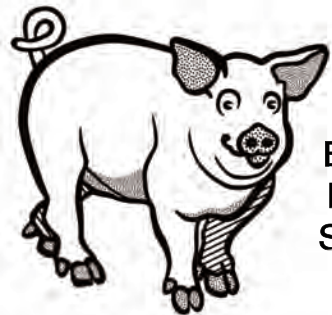
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FHS basketball coach resumes summer camps for young athletes

Dan Finnerty – Sports Writer

On June 1, 48 Franklin area boys, from 5th through 8th grade, finished up a three-day basketball camp at Franklin High School (FHS), where they learned myriad skills, techniques, and lessons. FHS Head Coach Doug Plemmons knows a thing or two about coaching basketball, on various levels. Back for his second stint as varsity basketball coach, Plemmons' passion for and dedication to the sport does not stop there. Probably few people know – and who could blame them – that he is still the all-time scoring leader in basketball at Swain County High School (SCHS). When Plemmons also revealed that his brother, Tony, who is six years younger, and who also applied the same techniques FHS uses in its camps, is the second leading scorer in SCHS history, the kids in attendance took notice.

In addressing participants, Plemmons advised them that the purpose of the camp was not just to assess basketball skills or even teach them.

“Any time you are around coaches, they are going to be evaluating you ... on basketball ability but also your attitude, your coachability, and ball sharing, etc.” While he refers to himself as “old school,” Plemmons is also wise enough to know that any undertaking is better accomplished with assistance from others. Assistants, who both possess prerequisite knowledge, and in the case of a camp, the desire and patience to teach were also an integral part of the camp experience for the boys. Old school principles bring with them some timeless attributes.

“We don't wait until tryouts to find out how our team is going to be ... and if you're a smart basketball player, you won't wait until tryouts to try to show you are a good basketball player,” he advised the boys finishing his camp. “If you'll start right now – you've got a good start; three days in a row that you've been working on basketball – if you add to that as summer goes along, you'll be really surprised, in a positive way, how much better you can get.”

Plemmons began his FHS coaching career in 1993, but he departed for various reasons in 2009 before returning in the same capacity in 2016. During his first tenure, Plemmons started summer basketball camps for those who were not yet at the high school age nor skill level. His intent all along was to not only teach basketball skills, but also prepare participating youth for other challenges that awaited them as they grew into adolescence and adulthood. Upon his return to his current position, Plemmons observed that others were carrying on his basketball camp tradition and they “weren't messing it up.”

At the same time, he yearned for an opportunity to start up his camps again if only to have additional avenues to positively impact young boys/men in both basketball and life skills. He reminded the participants that while



Forty-eight students participated in the 2023 FHS Summer Basketball Camp.

he cannot hold a camp every week of the summer, there may be an additional window to get together again before the next school year starts in late August. He also welcomed them to come to other camps he and his assistants will be conducting, including one scheduled this week with his varsity players that includes scrimmages against other schools. For the next few weeks in June, the varsity and junior var-

mores Max McClure, Braylen Dezarn, and Noah Brannon, and freshman Addix Sutton all dedicated their first few days of summer vacation to help the coaches and teach the boys.

Plemmons left the camp participants with a bit of sage advice.

“My dad used to say this: it's hard to teach somebody something that already thinks they know everything.”

Coach Rogers also added, advising the student athletes on basketball vs. life skills, “If you can't handle things off the court, you can't expect to handle things on the court; always remember that – that's not just basketball, that's any sport.”

Each of the students received a certificate from the camp as well as a sheet that in-

game time strategies. Part of that is based on physical attributes, while also due to experience levels and skill sets. Other than a couple N.C. state-mandated weeks off during the summer, coaches will be conducting some type of basketball skills, fitness, and game environment applications throughout August. Once school starts and an acclimation period ends, Plemmons also has opportunity to conduct additional preparedness skills during the Bigger, Faster, Stronger (BFS) physical education classes that are held each day as part of high school course offerings. Starting Labor Day week, he will schedule pick-up games in between other sports' practices at least one night a week. By October, he ramps practice games up to two a week. With this approach, by the time the season begins in November, FHS players are already used to playing and, for the most part, are in game shape.

FHS basketball – both JV and varsity – practices start in June. With the exception of Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) events, which take players on the road for three days for a total of seven games, Plemmons will continue with three-days-a-week practices, each 90 minutes long, through the summer. The main focus will be running drills that incorporate plays and strategies the coaching staff intends to implement for the upcoming basketball seasons. The FHS varsity team is sponsored by the local FCA chapter, which pays for the participation of Panther players.

The various interactive relationships in which FHS basketball team participates – be it athletic, academic, civil, or church-based – have proven over the years to produce the level of student athletes the program teaches, coaches, and shapes. The life skills focused on, as well as basketball, has the potential to make the young men who participate in Coach Plemmons' camps, better adults, productive citizens, and successful members of whatever community in which they one day end up being involved.



Coach Doug Plemmons addresses Basketball Camp participants



Six Franklin High School varsity players assisted with the camp. They were (L-R) Parker Cabe, Max McClure, Braylen Dezarn, Reed Raby, Addix Sutton and Noah Brannon.

sity (JV) teams will play different teams from the area, including Rabun County (Georgia), Enka and Hayesville high schools, and others. Individual workout days will also be held at the Panther Den throughout the summer and Plemmons also encouraged the boys to attend some if they can. In all, the program is scheduled to play a “season's worth of games” in the month of June. This year the total will be 19.

The whole of the camp effort included Varsity Golf Coach Ryan Raby and Tres Rogers, JV basketball coach, as assistant coaches. Additionally, six varsity/JV players also provided mentorship and coaching during the camp; senior Parker Cabe, junior Reed Raby, sopho-

cluded ball handling skills and shooting routines, which coaches encouraged them all to apply to their summer activities.

Plemmons also revealed the upcoming season will include a different approach regarding how the team will function and approach

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Donnie Clay, Coordinator for Pickin' on the Square



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What's new on the plateau

Patrick Taylor
Highlands Mayor



Patrick Taylor

Congratulations to the Highlands Motoring Festival for again putting on a wonderful car show this past weekend. Mark Chamar and all the volunteers of the Motoring Festival are to be commended for all their hard work in coordination, planning, and delivering this nationally acclaimed event. The community payout is over \$100,000 in support of REACH, the Literacy Council, and the Community Care Clinic.

Last week, I was at a recent meeting of the Southwestern Regional Planning Commission, where a representative from Duke Energy made an important presentation concerning the electric grid in Western North Carolina. Lisa Leatherman, Duke Energy's Community Relations Representative, coordinated the presentation. This past winter, Highlands and other area communities lost power due to a failure of key components in the Duke Energy system. Duke Energy is addressing this problem by building a self-mending grid network. In the immediate future, they will have installed a system where if one service area loses power, an automated system will reroute the grid to restore power to the affected area. This will contain areas where power is lost, and their crews will focus work there to reconnect the grid. This new system will benefit the Highlands and Cashiers areas.

Thursday is the June meeting of the Highlands Town Board of Commissioners. The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. at the Highlands Community Center. The first item on the agenda will be public comment, but we will also have a public comment period when the board reviews the proposed budget for fiscal year 2023-2024.

The budget includes a 5% cost of living adjustment for town employees. The town is now in a recruiting war with other municipalities to attract and retain qualified, highly trained employees. A critical area that underscores this situation is in law enforcement. Just in the last few weeks, we have lost an officer to another jurisdiction that offered a higher salary. To be competitive with other agencies, our police chief will be asking for an additional \$4,200 increase for all current officers. While Highlands was at the top of the salary scale two years ago, other law enforcement agencies have eclipsed our pay scale in order to attract qualified law enforcement officers, who are in short supply across the nation.

In addition to the budget review, the board will hear a

See TAYLOR on page 11

Letters to the Editor

Be aware that gossip can become testimony

When did the Clerk of Court become a judge?

Recently in court in the Macon County Courthouse, I found out that my private business was discussed with the employees at the courthouse. A woman testified that she got her info about me from her friends at the courthouse. She works at the courthouse. So, people be aware that your business is not private in the Macon County Courthouse.

Glenda Shepherd – Franklin, N.C.

Fact-checking the fact checkers

You have got to love the Democrats of Macon County. Not really, I'm being facetious. It's truly amazing that a Democrat writer to these and other media outlets gets little to no "fact checking" from the Democrats, but boy; let it be a non-Democrat who responds - the fangs come out.

Yes, S. Williams, I speak of you. Out of my whole letter, you are appalled and only fact checked one small part. No, - it is truly appalling when you only fact check non-Democrats and let their lies and half-truths slide right on by. It's called hypocrisy. The information you did post as of 2021 - where's information for 2022 and 2023 - was correct on Ms. Cortez. If you Google Search it - it's amazing to note that all of Page 1 of Google are quote unquote left leaning "Fact Checkers." Wow, who actually vetted these media outlets like PolitiFact and others as the real Fact Checkers of American Politics. Was that Facebook, Google, or some other liberal institution? Maybe they just call themselves Fact Checkers simply because the can and who fact checks them? Can you also show us that Ms. Cortez did file on her financial statements the "free" \$50k a ticket entry into the Met Gala this past year. You know that is required, right!

On to another local Democrat who writes pretty frequently. Mr. Snell, reading your letter was 100% right on until you mentioned our ex-president, Donald Trump. Had you not mentioned the "Donald" at all - I would have said bravo, you are 100% correct. But since, you didn't and added the "Donald," then will you please add ex-president Obama, who was a community organizer in Chicago before being elected senator and soon there-after as president. President Obama - who is none the less a follower of Saul Alinsky. Do you know who Saul Alinsky is? If so, please let us know about Saul and how President Obama and Hillary Rodham Clinton are followers of him.

Next was the very often letter writer not from Macon County - Mr. David Waldrop. In my previous letter I asked Mr. Waldrop to please provide some answers to my questions about firearms. In true Democrat / liberal form, he pulled a Jen Psaki / Karin Jean-Pierre (White House Press secretaries under Joe Biden) move and I guess was going to circle back after more of his rants or as he did completely

pass right on by my questions. Why was that? Then as usual he spews more lies I'm sure he got from such places as Occupy Democrats, CNN, or some other media outlet about none other than MAGA and MAGA terrorists. Purely hilarious. Yet, I guess Joe Biden's "Build Back Better" is a better plan than Make America Great Again - because to me, America needs to be made great once again. From the mass division created under ex-President Obama to the ineptitude under current President Biden - America is the laughing stock of the world. We are no longer that superpower that everyone looks to as a model to follow. We have a dementia riddled 80-year-old president who can't speak for himself, remember where he is, where and how his son Beau died, or which way he needs to exit a platform hurriedly by his staff so he doesn't say things they don't want him to say without tripping and falling. He's more worried about another weekend getaway to one of his many beach homes - that has occurred well over 200 days total in 2 years of being in office. If memory serves me correct - the media and Democrats hollered to high heaven when Trump took a couple of days off to go play golf - yet not a word on over 200+ days for Biden.

So yes, "Making America Great Again" is a far higher priority to the not-so-great Democrat "Build Back Better" plan that wastes billions of dollars of taxes from hard working Americans. Are you one of those hard-working tax paying Americans Mr. Waldrop? Seems you aren't as you rant about tax cuts to the rich and corporations under Trump - but those cuts also came to every single tax paying American. I do have a few more questions we'd like answered. How many employees does a person living on welfare hire? When and if you did work - was it for a corporation or business that paid excessive taxes imposed by Democrats and President Trump simply lessened them to bring billions of dollars back to America? Do you not think that a corporation or business when paying corporate taxes (it's a real thing at 25%) - do they not then add those taxes to the price of their products? They have to Mr. Waldrop - just like they factor in employee wages, the FICA and FITW taxes they also pay for their employees, along with a host of other things so they can stay in business, make a profit, and keep those employees on the payroll. A businessman like Donald Trump understands and knows those things. A 50+ year career politician who helped make Social Security fully taxable does not. I think I and America prefer a businessperson running our country over a person who has probably not worked a day in the real world, but only in politics.

T. Swift – Franklin, N.C.

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New trustees added to the Macon County Library Board

Deena C. Bouknight – Contributing Writer

Last summer, some Macon County parents and guardians became concerned when they entered the Macon County Public Library and viewed a display in the children's section that included children and teen books with sexually explicit text and illustrations. Since then, the number of people on both sides of the aisle – supporting or challenging the availability of these materials – has increased. In fact, close to 200 citizens packed the Macon County courthouse on April 11 for that month's county commissioner's meeting, with 45 signed up for public comments – primarily about the library – and the public comment session halted and started up again to extend the meeting until almost midnight.

The controversy motivated 17 citizens to apply for three open spots on the Macon County library board, and at the June 13 county commissioner meeting the following three individuals were chosen to become trustees: Justin Bohner, Diann Caitlin, and Leah Gaston.

The result of so much outcry regarding this local issue has been generally positive for individuals who are concerned with sexually explicit materials made readily available for children and teens. In fact, on June 5, the Fontana Regional Library (FRL) board [Macon County's library is part of the Fontana Regional Library system] called a special meeting at the Jackson County Library in Sylva to respond to a patron's request to relocate a book. The board voted 5-2 to move the book "Let's Talk About It: The Teen's Guide to Sex, Relationships, and Being a Human" by Erica Moen and Matthew Nolan out of the teen/YA section and into the adult section of the Fontana Library system, due to its content. The vote came after FRL board member Ed Trask cited that the book was in violation of N.C. obscenity statute 14-190.7 involving dissemination of obscenity to minors because of its sexually explicit pictures. During the meeting, Trask noted that the book instructs readers how to take sexting photos, which is illegal for minors under the age of 18 in North Carolina. He added that someone over 18 who sexts a minor can become a lifetime registered sex offender.

In fact, the N.C. verbiage regarding sexting laws state: "When sexting involves images of children under the age of 18, it can violate state and federal laws against exploitation of minors, and teens can be prosecuted under laws intended to punish adult sex offenders." And: "The First Degree Sexual Exploitation of a Minor is a Class C felony resulting in 44 to 279 months of imprisonment."

"[Let's Talk About It] is filled with unnecessary vulgarity," said Trask, of the Nantahala Community.

"I've talked to a child psychiatrist about this ... we had a long conversation about this book, and he said young people are not mature enough," said Wood Lovell, of Highlands. "Particularly this book should not be exposed to young people. We shouldn't have young children or young adults read this book."

A few board members noted that even though "Let's Talk About It" has been moved to the adult section, it can still be checked out by teenagers who hold a library card.



On June 5, the Fontana Regional Library board called a special meeting at the Jackson County Library in Sylva to respond to a patron's request to relocate a book.

Positive Reaction

"I would like to say thank you to the five Fontana Library Board trustees who voted to move the book "Let's Talk About It" into the adult section of the Fontana Regional Library system," commented Gaston, who, along with her husband, Jim, has spoken out against books with sexually explicit content made available to children and teens in the FRL system. "Relocating a sexually explicit book into the adult section is obviously not banning a book. Instead, it is an act of discernment. Discernment is also necessary in avoiding promotional displays in the name of 'bringing awareness.' This recent vote to relocate sexually explicit material shows that these five trustees care enough to listen to concerned patrons and are willing to take necessary steps to protect the innocence of children. Many more patrons besides myself commend the five who voted to put children and teens first."

Added Gaston, "I also thank Ms. [Abby] Hardison for selecting 'All Together Now: Friendship, Kindness, and Unity' as the theme for the Macon County Library June displays. This is a step in the right direction to bring unity to our community."

Moving Forward

Hardison stepped into the Macon County librarian position earlier this year. (See article in the Jan. 4, 2023, edition of Macon County News.) Although she entered a firestorm, she has approached her role with this mindset: "The first step for a new person in a position like the one I have is to listen and then try to build a foundation of cooperation. We announced back in February that the theme for the Summer Reading program would also be used for our June and July book displays and that theme is 'All Together Now: Friendship, Kindness and Unity.' In the intervening months, we have received a great deal of feedback from the community. The majority of that feedback has been very supportive, but there are still some criticisms and concerns, which are taken seriously."

Hardison pointed out that two apprehensions currently being researched at the behest of the FRL board "will hopefully address many of the community concerns we have heard." She explained, "The first one is a child's restricted library card, which would allow for a parent to limit their child to only check out library materials from the children's area. The other avenue of research is a possible modification to our Safe Child Policy, which could see a rise in the minimum age a child can be unattended inside the library, which is currently

eight. We are comparing the policies and practices of other public libraries in the state with regards to these two areas to determine what will work best for our library users."

Overall, "greater parental control with regards to access of library materials" is, indeed, a focal point of discussion and consideration. "Later this summer, the county managers from the counties that make up our regional system, Macon, Jackson and Swain, are to meet to review the regional library agreement ... Hopefully, modifications will sufficiently address the concerns of both the public and the county administrators and commissioners."

Summertime Fun

Regardless of controversies and concerns, overseeing libraries is a positive experience.

"We are very excited that summer has begun and the seasonal festivities have kicked off,"

Hardison expressed. "Our children's staff have worked incredibly hard to plan and implement a schedule of performers and entertainment ranging from music performances (June 15 and July 20 at 10 a.m.), to live animals (Little Rascals Petting Zoo June 21 and Miniature Ponies June 29, both at 10 a.m.), to events with wildlife educator Patrick Brannon (June 22 and July 27 at 10 a.m.). Fridays this summer at 11 a.m., there are free movie showings, and on July 6 at 10 a.m., there will be a Foam Brigade Party sponsored by John Hamlin State Farm. This was a huge hit last year, and our staff is very excited to host it again."

Anyone interested in all that is offered at the Macon County Public Library can check out www.fontanalib.org/events. The site provides information "about all the fun stuff we have happening this summer for kids, adults, and teens," said Hardison.

Finally, she reminds readers of all ages to register at www.maconcountylibrary.readsquared.com and log the time they read in order to qualify for prizes.

"When you finish all your favorite author's books and you need some suggestions, please let us know. We want you to have stories and information suited to you and your families' needs and preferences," she said.

Hardison encourages Macon County residents and visitors to call (828)524-3600 or stop by and ask for assistance identifying materials to meet needs: books, magazines, DVDs, ebooks, audiobooks, craft kits, and more. The library even enables card holders to check out more obscure items, such as varied-size telescopes or "Critter Food Protector" kits that secure food during a hike.

"We have all sorts of fun and useful things besides books that library patrons can enjoy," added Hardison.



Abby Hardison became the Macon County librarian earlier this year.

TAYLOR

Continued from page 10

proposal from the town manager for hiring a new electric consultant. Our previous consultant, Kevin O'Donnell, tragically passed away several weeks ago. Our town manager and our public works director have been searching for a new consultant, and as a result of their efforts Louis Davis of UTEC will be introduced to the board. He has a broad background in all phases of electric utility services.

The board will also review an amendment to the parking ordinance pertaining to the forthcoming electric charging stations. Simply put, it will be illegal for any vehicle not using the charging system to park in those designated spaces.

See you at Thursday's meeting, whether it be in person or by way of the YouTube feed on the town website.

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Canines with service potential is veteran's passion

Deena C. Bouknight – Contributing Writer

Richard Litchford, 72, often drives from his home in Macon County to Southeastern Pennsylvania – a 600-mile trip. But his excursions are not business or pleasure-related. Instead, the retired veteran has a distinct niche nonprofit that involves rescuing puppies and young dogs up to three years of age and placing them with a service dog training operation up north. In fact, through the nonprofit Canine Partners for Life, Litchford has seen many dogs readied for important purposes. Canine Partners for Life is focused on training service dogs, home companion dogs, and residential companion dogs to assist individuals who have a wide range of physical and cognitive disabilities.

“I’m retired, but I don’t want to sit in a rocking chair,” said Litchford, “so this gives me something to do for the greater community.”

Recently, Litchford took two Labrador puppies from Georgia to Pennsylvania that were accepted into the Canine Partners for Life two-year training program. He will be attending Canine Partners for Life’s next “graduation” in June.

In 1996, Litchford learned about Canine Partners for Life

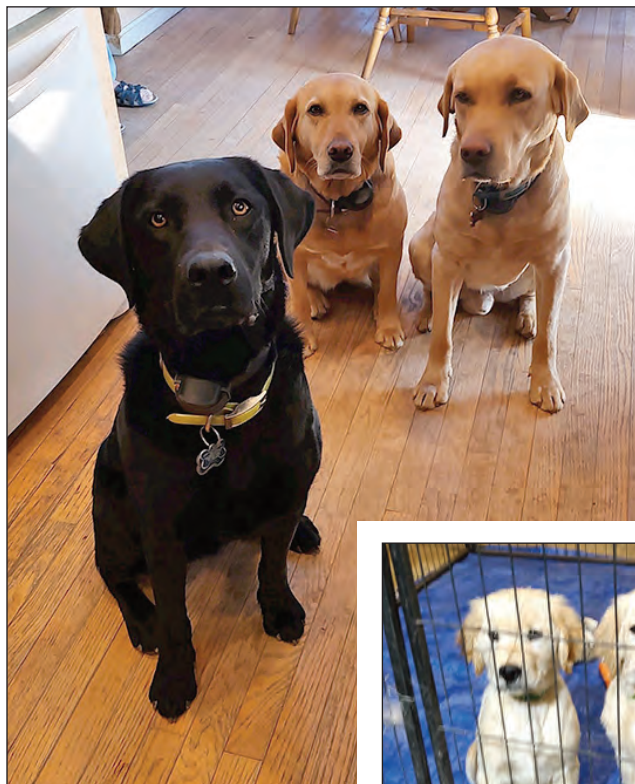
while living in Pennsylvania. His two labs at the time, Chelsea and Wilbert, were bred and a litter of 10 puppies was born. Litchford’s veterinarian suggested he take the puppies to be evaluated by Canine Partners for Life as possible service dogs.

“Out of a litter of 10, they took two to be trained to detect an epileptic seizure before it happened,” he said. “I went to the graduation and all these dogs were lined up on the stage sitting at attention next to their human companion. It was so impressive; the tears were just rolling down my face.”

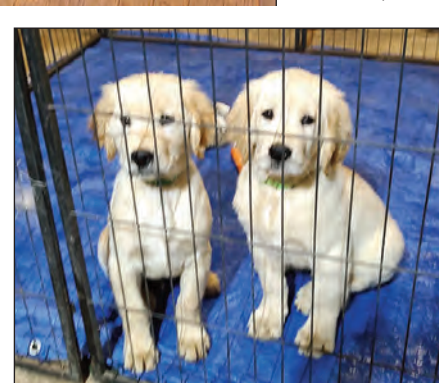
After that experience, Litchford took more of his puppies to Canine Partners for Life. Then, after traveling the world via military service and through a 47-year career investigating white collar crime, arson, insurance fraud, and more, he settled in Macon County in 2006. And, just last year, he started a nonprofit – Smoky Mountain Service Animal Rescue – because, instead of breeding labs and

supplying puppies to Canine Partners for Life, he decided to rescue and evaluate unwanted young dogs for possible training with Canine Partners for Life or for other organizations providing service dogs to include such areas as search and rescue. He regularly communicates with Macon County Animal Services and Appalachian Animal

Rescue Services to learn about dogs that may have the aptitude to become a service dog. Litchford also gets calls from



Richard Litchford's black lab, "Kevin," was a Canine Partners for Life trainee, but barking issues resulted in him becoming Litchford's pet in training. With Kevin is "Mr. Bojangles" and "Layla."



Two lab pups that Litchford transported to Canine Partners for Life this spring have begun their two-year journey of training in preparation for a lifetime of service.

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people in other states which is how he learned about two lab puppies in Georgia that he recently delivered to Canine Partners for Life.

“They have a rigid criterion,” explained Litchford, about Canine Partners for Life. “They want large, non-aggressive breeds, like labs. Puppies undergo a two-page list of ‘tests.’ They are looking for a good temperament, not reacting to loud noises, staying focused when other dogs are around, and much more. Things like barking and not responding well are issues that might keep them from graduating.”

One of Litchford’s puppies, named Violet, is with “Seizure Triggers” author Judi Bruns, from Western North Carolina. The lab has become Bruns’ service dog, serving as a companion and to assist in case of a seizure.

Dogs who do not make it through the firm training process are evaluated for other service-related tasks – or they simply become pets adopted by pre-screened individuals.

Out of Litchford’s last puppy litter in 2021, he kept one male lab he named Mr. Bojangles, and then another dog that did not make it through the Canine Partners for Life training due to a barking issue, Kevin, was returned to Litchford and is an almost constant companion.

“I am learning more about how to train dogs, so if a dog has issues, like barking, I will work with it to remedy situations. Kevin is so focused. I can tell him, ‘Look at me,’ and he will look directly at me and not avert his gaze until I tell him he can.”

Currently, Litchford is working with a rescued German Shepherd mix named Rooster, that may eventually become a service dog.

“It feels wonderful when you can work to find dogs who need a home and a life-long purpose,” he said. “It’s especially rewarding to take them to Canine Partners for Life to be evaluated and then they are accepted into their program.”

New ‘Hot Mess’ nonprofit rescues animals

Deena C. Bouknight – Contributing Writer

When visiting a farm in the Cartoogechaye community of Macon County, sundry animals moo, bleat, neigh, and bray their way to where hay is being distributed. One might imagine a scene from Hugh Lofting’s classic book, “The Story of Dr. Doolittle.” All the animals at the Hot Mess animal rescue farm seem to peacefully and amicably co-exist. Some are more outspoken than others, but every animal from the tiny miniature horses to “Murphy” the llama to the emu, “Alice,” to various horse and cow breeds (even long horns) meander to and from and intermingle tranquilly.

Laura Thornton has been rescuing horses since she lived in Florida, but decided to rescue other animals when she moved to Macon County a year ago. Assisting her is her fiancé, Lloyd Cox. She recently established Hot Mess as a 501(c)3.

“People just started calling me when there was an animal injured, ill, in need of rehoming, or about to be slaughtered,” said Thornton, a registered nurse.

Currently, she and Cox are overseeing the care of around 100 animals and they admit they are “at capacity” until they can re-home some of the menagerie.

“I’ve always loved horses and I love donkeys, but some of these other animals needed a chance,” she added, indicating

the cow who is hobbled due to an injury or the alpaca that was at an auction and no one was bidding on it.

“It’s always been my dream to care for animals. I care for people with my job, but when animals are weak or homeless or in need some way, I want to care for them.”

Thornton and Cox spend at least \$800 a week feeding the animals. She hopes to eventually elicit donations and work out a rehoming system so that other individuals can care for a rescue animal, some of which still could be used for practical purposes – such as horses that can be ridden or donkeys that might help protect livestock.

For more information about Hot Mess, contact Thornton at (407) 399-7095.



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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 June 5 - 11. All suspects are innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.



Macon County Sheriff's Department

June 5

Destiny Paige Jones, 32, was charged with possession with intent to manufacture/sell/deliver methamphetamine, maintaining a vehicle/dwelling/place for a controlled substance, trafficking methamphetamine and conspire to traffic methamphetamine. Timothy B. Carter made the arrest.

Naim Jacob Muniz, 20, was charged with failure to appear for communicating threats. Jordan C. Sutton made the arrest.

June 6

Luther Victory Stinnett IV, 29, was charged with possession of marijuana up to 1/2 oz. Lieutenant Nick Lofthouse made the arrest.

June 8

Kayleb Chase Bates, 31, was charged with violate domestic violence protective order. Jay Wright made the arrest.

Celeste Devereux Henry, 21, was charged with misuse of 911 system. Timothy B. Carter made the arrest.

William Eugene Wuesthoff, 41, was charged with communicating threats. Timothy B. Carter made the arrest.

Travis Scott Mason, 41, was charged with larceny, possession of stolen goods/property, larceny of motor vehicle parts, attempted break/enter a building, possession of methamphetamine and possession of drug paraphernalia. Timothy B. Carter made the arrest.

Trance Lewis Stoudemire, 34, was charged with violate a domestic violence protective order. Matthew D. Long made the arrest.

Brandon Lex Penland, 35, was charged with indictment. Jay Wright made the arrest.

Miguel Angel Lopex-Hernandez, 30, was charged with failure to appear on a felony. Jay Wright made the arrest.

Jonathan William Talley, 36, was charged with failure to appear. Jay Wright made the arrest.

Samuel Vernon Anderson, 53, was charged with possession of methamphetamine. Matthew D. Long made the arrest.

June 9

Jason Michael Field, 47, was charged with assault by strangulation, second degree kidnapping, interfere with emergency communication and resist/obstruct/delay law enforcement officer. Denver J. Elliott made the arrest.

Chandler Reed Stanley, 28, was charged with possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. Joseph A. Raby made the arrest.

June 10

Michael Lynn Antes, 30, was charged with failure to appear for possession of methamphetamine, possession of drug paraphernalia. Deputy Cody J. Howard made the arrest.

June 11

Jennifer Marie Gerba, 43, was charged with simple assault. Joel Lynch made the arrest.

Franklin Police Department

June 5

Tanya Bryson Cromer, 50, was charged with concealment of goods. R.S. Dula made the arrest.

June 9

Jonathan M. Morgan, 35, was charged with probation violation. R.S. Dula made the arrest.

Jackson County Sheriff's Department

June 5

Heidi Johanna Dremel, 51, of Franklin, was charged with warrant service for other jurisdiction. A secured bond of \$1,500 was set.

Devan Cunningham, 30, of Cullowhee, was charged with simple assault. No bond was set.

Kristin Leanna Cunningham, 31, of Cullowhee, was charged with simple assault. No bond was set.

Wesley Adam Cate, 44, of Sylva, was charged with possession of marijuana paraphernalia and possession with intent to manufacture/sell/deliver marijuana. No bond was set.

Alexander O. Hunter, 33, of Simpsonville, S.C., was charged with attempted breaking and entering. No set bond.

June 6

William Leroy Wright, 43, of Cherokee, was charged with warrant service for other jurisdiction. A secured bond of \$1,999 was set.

Michael Dewayne Putman, 39, of Cullowhee, was charged with possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of methamphetamine, felony possession of a schedule I controlled substance, possession with intent to manufacture/sell/deliver methamphetamine, maintain a vehicle for drugs and possession with intent to manufacture/sell/deliver a schedule II controlled substance. A secured bond of \$50,000 was set.

Ricquise Byfield, 23, of Sylva, was charged with larceny, larceny after breaking and entering and breaking and entering. No bond was set.

Randy Bryant Conn, 37, of Sylva, was charged with injury to personal property, simple assault, assault with a deadly weapon with intent to kill and break/enter to terrorize/injure. A secured bond of \$10,000 was set.

Tyler Dallas Cagle, 32, of Waynesville, was charged with failure to appear for driving while license revoked. A secured bond of \$500 was set.

Nicole Dominique Bradley, 30, of Cherokee, was charged with failure to appear for second degree trespass. A secured bond of \$500 was set.

Tonya Lynn Banks, 42, of Whittier, was charged with all other offenses. A secured bond of \$1,200 was set.

Cory Clyde Keith Case, 34, of Glenville, was charged with second degree trespass. A secured bond of \$1,000 was set.

June 7

Devon Ray Watson, 29, of Waynesville, was charged with assault on a female. No bond was set.

Catilyn Davis Tarlton, 29, of Waynesville, was charged with simple assault. No bond was set.

Faustino Hernandez, 34, of Cullowhee, was charged with misdemeanor child abuse and assault on a female. No bond was set.

Jayden Christopher Gibson, 18, of Sylva, was charged

with simple assault. A secured bond of \$500 was set.

Krystle Caroline Worley, 38, of Sylva, was charged with failure to appear for driving while license revoked. A secured bond of \$1,500 was set.

Kayla Ansley Welch, 29, of Cherokee, was charged with failure to appear for resisting a public officer. A secured bond of \$10,000 was set.

Tabitha Sherrell Henry, 33, of Sylva, was charged with probation violation and breaking or entering. A secured bond of \$15,000 was set.

Tracy Brandon Hall, 49, of Sylva, was charged with failure to appear for false report to police station. A secured bond of \$1,000 was set.

June 8

John Everett Morton, 48, of Leesburg, Ga., was charged with open container alcohol violation and carrying a concealed gun. No bond was set.

Wesley Adam Cate, 44, of Sylva, was charged with possession of marijuana paraphernalia, manufacture marijuana, felony possession of a schedule VI controlled substance, maintain a vehicle/dwelling/place for a controlled substance, possession with intent to manufacture/sell/deliver marijuana, felony possession of marijuana and domestic violence protective order violation. No bond was set.

Jerry Eugene Lance, 57, of Sylva, was charged with fictitious/alterd title/registered card/tag and driving while license revoked not impaired revocation. A secured bond of \$1,500 was set.

June 9

Tracy Lee Gibson, 45, of Sylva, was charged with simple assault. No bond was set.

Colbie Jordan Cochran, 24, of Waynesville, was charged with possession of marijuana paraphernalia and possession of marijuana up to 1/2 oz. No bond was set.

George Adam Morris, 40, of Sylva, was charged with possession of drug paraphernalia and possession of methamphetamine. No bond was set.

Johnny Lee Frady, 65, of Cashiers, was charged with violation of court order. A secured bond of \$4,000 was set.

Jalen Tyler Burns, 26, of Franklin, was charged with communicating threats and simple assault. No bond was set.

Lehua Joan Walkingstick, 44, of Sylva, was charged with failure to appear for possession of controlled substance on jail premises. A secured bond of \$10,000 was set.

Christopher Sterling Elders, 38, of Sylva, was charged with larceny and possession of stolen goods. A secured bond of \$1,000 was set.

Brandi Nicole Moore, 29, of Sylva, was charged with possession of stolen goods and larceny. No bond was set.

June 10

Tiffany Michelle Hollified, 23, of Whittier, was charged with simple possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of a schedule II controlled substance, failure to appear for drug paraphernalia, simple possession of a schedule II controlled substance and shoplifting concealment of goods. A secured bond of \$10,000 was set.

Christopher Ray Milkey, 51, of Sylva, was charged with failure to maintain lane control, driving while license revoked impaired revocation and driving while impaired. No bond was set.

June 11

Dennis Woodrow Shelton, 34, of Sylva, was charged with conspiracy to sell or deliver methamphetamine and conspiracy to traffic methamphetamine by selling. A secured bond of \$85,000 was set.

Scottish music duo performs Sunday in Franklin

The "Caledonia Women" duo of Marie Dunkle and Margie Swint will perform a program of Scottish music and share stories of how this music expresses Scotland's land, history and culture on Sunday June 18 at 3:00 p.m., in Franklin's First Presbyterian Chapel to close Franklin's annual Scottish Heritage weekend.

The two seasoned musicians have studied, sung, and played Celtic music together for over 20 years. Marie Dunkle has played violin since she was a child, and performed with orchestras and bands in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Georgia, and North Carolina. She discovered and began learning the special style of Scottish fiddling 20 years ago in Boone, NC, and has traveled to Scotland and Ireland many times to soak up the music and spirit of those lands that inspire her playing.

Margie Swint has been singing and playing guitar for over 50 years. With family roots in Scotland, she was inspired to travel extensively through the old land, collecting wonderful stories of history, culture, geography, and music from her travels. She has worked as a music educator and as a Board-Certified Music Therapist, specializing in senior citizens.

In addition to traditional Scottish music, the event will feature an exhibit of works by visual artists from Franklin's Uptown Gallery. The historic Chapel, on the corner of Church Street at Harrison Avenue in Franklin, is an acoustically near-perfect venue, with wheelchair access from the Church's parking lot. This pay-what-you-can event is produced by the Arts Council of Macon County. For information phone 828-524-ARTS or email arts4all@dnet.net.



Scottish Tartan Museum to celebrate 35 years

Downtown celebration Saturday, June 17, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The Scottish Tartans Museum and Heritage Center in Franklin was founded by Dr. Gordon Teall of Teallach, Baron of Huntly, president of the Scottish Tartans Society in Scotland, as the singular satellite location for the central Tartan Museum in Comrie, Perthshire, Scotland.

The museum's early records show the location in the U.S. was to be "devoted to Scottish culture, and will serve as a focal point for people of Scottish heritage from all over the United States and Canada." It was founded as a reliable resource on tartan, Highland dress, and Scottish culture.

The doors of the Scottish Tartans Museum opened on May 2, 1988, in Highlands, N.C. The museum, desiring to increase the gallery of exhibits and artifacts and additionally, expand the size of the gift shop, moved to the current Town Hall building in Franklin in 1994. After the passing of Dr. Teall in July 1997, the parent museum in Comrie, Scotland experienced financial trouble that subsequently led to its closing, leaving the location as the sole source specifically curating tartan history.

The Scottish Tartans Museum and Heritage Center Inc., committed to staying in Franklin, moved again in 1999 to its present location. The new location substantially increased the size of the museum and the gift shop. Since that time, the museum has undergone an expansion of more than 725 square feet, that now includes the Neolithic, Roman and Celtic migrations in Scotland.

One of the most frequently asked questions is: "Why is there a Tartan Museum located in North Carolina?" The museum's initial location in Highlands mirrored the village of Comrie, Scotland, even down to its climate. Western North Carolina has a deep and enduring connection to Scotland, as this area

was settled mainly by the Scots-Irish. The Museum is also centrally located between the two largest Scottish Highland Games in the southeast US, Stone Mountain Highland Games, located near Atlanta, Ga., and Grandfather Mountain Highland Games, located in "the high country of Western North Carolina."

A trip through the museum begins with information about a 5,000-year-old Neolithic village, and moves along a timeline that brings visitors all the way to the contemporary Space Tartans Display, that contains swatches of tartan that have literally flown around the moon.

Museum staff attend various Scottish Highland Games and Festivals in the Southeast, where, in keeping with the founding purpose of being a source on tartan and highland dress, a Tartan Search area has been set up. Visitors' surnames are researched, and, if clan associated, are shown their tartan(s), clan crest, clan information and history of their surname in Scotland. The visitor is then directed to their appropriate clan or Scottish district association in attendance.

As the museum receives no continual funding from state or local government, it is supported through the gift shop, memberships, donations and grants. Thanks to the generous support of Scottish Heritage USA, The Clan Donald Foundation, New World Celts, and J. Timothy Akins, the displays in the museum gallery are continually being improved and updated.

In 2022, more than 14,000 museum visitors also positively impacted the local shops, restaurants, hotels and entertainment venues.

Everyone is invited to help celebrate the anniversary of the "Only Tartan Museum in the U.S.," this Saturday, June 17, from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m.

This month by donation. 100% of proceeds benefit the on going mission of the church.



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The V8s make Concerts on the Creek debut

The 14th annual season of Concerts on the Creek continues on Friday, June 16, when The V8's will play on the Bridge Park stage for a 7-9 p.m. performance.

Who are The V8's? Just some local dudes...that know how to have a good time. When these guys first got together they agreed that the best part of playing gigs was when the audience would cut loose and dance. So that's what this band is about. Most of the V8s have been playing in various bands (often together) since 1975, so they've had a while to decide on what to play and how to play it. Classic, danceable R&B and R&R tunes delivered from old school musicians with feel. On any given night, the band will deliver their smokin' hot versions of songs by artists such as Otis Redding, Wilson Pickett, Sam & Dave, Johnny Rivers, Van Morrison and many more.



The V8s

Concerts on the Creek are held every Friday night from 7-9 p.m. at the Bridge Park in Sylva through Labor Day.

Bring a chair or blanket. Donations are encouraged. Dogs must be on a leash. No smoking, vaping, coolers or tents are

allowed. Food trucks are on site.

For more information, call the chamber at 828-586-2155, visit <https://www.mountainlovers.com/concerts-on-the-creek/> or Concerts on the Creek's Facebook page.

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Caledonia Women

Marie Dunkle - Margie Swint



This fiddle and guitar duo sings and plays traditional Scottish music, sharing stories of how the music expresses Scotland's land, history and culture.

With an Uptown Gallery Art Exhibit

Sunday June 18
3:00 p.m.

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www.artscouncilofmacon.org



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Deaths & Funerals

Gregory Kent Walker

Gregory Kent Walker, 49, of Franklin, N.C., died on June 2, 2023, after a difficult battle with glioblastoma brain cancer.

Born to Antoinette MacWatt and Rexford Kent Walker on July 12, 1973, he spent his youth in the Charlotte, N.C., area. He is predeceased by his maternal and paternal grandparents, his brother Jeff Walker, and his stepfather Jesse MacWatt.

He is survived by his wife Angela; his children, Sam and Sara; his mother, Antoinette; his father, Kent; his stepmother Annie; uncle, Eddie Puglisi; sister-in-law, Amy Walker; two nephews, Seth and Sawyer Walker, as well as his wife's side of the family.



Gregory Kent Walker

He was a quiet and observant person who was drawn to the inner world of thought and feeling. He spoke through his eyes and actions rather than words yet when he spoke his remarks were insightful and to the point. All of his life he was a gentle soul, and his mother and wife frequently compared him to Mister Rogers. However, he had a wry, sarcastic sense of humor that he shared with close friends and family.

He supported his family by working at Curtis TV Radio Shack for 13 years before taking a job at the Jackson County Public Library. During his time at Radio Shack, he met many people in our community and enjoyed working with his co-workers and the Curtis family. Although his time at the Jackson County Public Library was short, he thrived in the environment and made many friends there. A loyal person and dedicated worker, he cared about the quality of his work and was a kind person to all.

His greatest interest and hobby was in music, and he listened to an eclectic mix even through his final days. He owned a large collection of records and enjoyed listening to them. He wasn't into small talk, but get him on the conversation of musical artists and that quickly became a passionate discussion. Music therapy was important to him in his final month of life. The beautiful voice and music of Taylor, the music therapist, brought him great joy. His family is full of gratitude to Four Seasons Hospice and Taylor for providing this comfort to him.

He was a loving husband and father who cherished his home and family, including his beloved cat Camille who never left his side. He cherished the life he shared with his wife, their devotion to each other, their children, and many pets over 23 years together. Watching both of his children graduate and receive dual high school and associate degrees filled him with pride. He was proud of their accomplishments but also the caring and compassionate people they had become. During Greg's medical journey they both remained at his side to offer care and compassion and to help their father in any way possible.

With the help of Four Seasons Palliative Care and Hospice and wonderful home health aides, his family was able to care for him at home. Brave and courageous from his initial diagnosis, he held our hands and kissed them as we journeyed through this horrible disease that took him away from us. His mother did all that was possible to make sure her son was always loved and received the best quality health care available.

Angie wishes to thank her family, friends, co-workers, and community members for their kindness, love, prayers, and support. It has helped the family to remain functional and strong during this journey and we are fortunate to live in such a caring community.

He will be deeply missed, especially by Angie, Sam, Sara, and his parents. There will not be a memorial service at this time while they grieve privately. If you wish to honor Greg, donations to the Macon County Public Library or Jackson County Public Library or to his children would be deeply appreciated.

Online condolences at www.maconfuneralhome.com.

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.

Alton Neil Beasley Sr.

Alton Neil Beasley Sr., 88, passed away Tuesday, June 6, 2023. He was born Nov. 4, 1934, in Brooks County, Georgia, to the late Oscar Lee Beasley and Anna Bell Bambridge Beasley.

He was a U.S. Navy veteran serving from 1955-1960. He worked and retired from Burlington Industries and Fruit of The Loom. He volunteered at the hospital. He loved to ballroom dance and square dance. He was a member of the South Western Men where he was the first president. He was a member of Mulberry United Methodist Church, where he served on various committees. He also did mission work in Mexico.

He is survived by his wife, Rita Damm Beasley; daughter, Pamela Williams (Robert Price) of Commerce, Ga.; sons, Alton Neil Beasley Jr. (Sandra) of Franklin, N.C., and Robert Wayne Beasley (Sharon) of Shallotte, N.C.; stepdaughters, Debra Haag of Chesney, S.C., and Donna Martin of Franklin; a stepson, Michael Martin of Franklin; nine grandchildren, Christopher Beasley, Tasha Pilkerton, Natsha Lewis, Michelle Mardis, Taylor Aughtman, Johnathan Aughtman, Joyce Lewallen, Jacob Owens, Andrew Williams; and nine great grandchildren.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by a sister, Francis New.

A funeral service was held Saturday, June 10, at Mulberry United Methodist Church with Rev. Eric Henson and Rev. Jessica Henson officiating. Burial followed in the church cemetery.

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

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

Gerry Wayne Wyatt

Gerry Wayne Wyatt, 60, of Franklin, N.C., passed away on Sunday, June 11, 2023.

Graveside services will be Thursday, June 15, at 12 p.m., at Windy Gap Baptist Church cemetery. Rev. Mark Bishop will officiate.

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

Hildegard Maria Schroeder

Hildegard Maria Schroeder, 90, of Franklin, N.C., lovingly known to all as "Oma," passed away Thursday, May 18, 2023.

She moved to Franklin in 1982 from Cleveland, Ohio. She was a member of Cornerstone Presbyterian Church of Franklin.

She was born in Austria to the late Adolf and Marianna Moser Egger. She was preceded in death by her parents; husband, Otto Schroeder; two brothers, Wilhelm Egger and Richard Egger of Austria.

She is survived by her daughter, Heidi Makinson (David) of Seneca, S.C.

A funeral service will be held in the Chapel of Macon Funeral Home, Monday, June 19, at 11 a.m. The family will receive friends from 10-11am, one hour prior to the service. Burial will be in the Union United Methodist Church Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorials can be made to St Jude Children's Research Hospital.

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

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.



Alton Neil Beasley Sr.

Althea 'Marlene' Rogers Ross

Althea "Marlene" Rogers Ross, 80, of Otto, N.C., passed away on Tuesday, June 13, 2023.

She was born on June 18, 1942, in Granite City, Ill. She was the daughter of the late Marlin and Leora Allen Rogers. She loved genealogy, spending time with family and friends, and traveling. She was a member of the Morrison Presbyterian Church.

She is survived by her husband of 61 years, Owen Ross; three daughters, Julia Ringering (Robert) of Bethalto, Ill., Kimberly Yeager (Boe) of Bunker Hill, Ill., and Carrie Underwood (Thomas) of Franklin, N.C.; sister, Carol Boyd (David) of Fredericksburg, Va.; one granddaughter, Katrina Yeager of Bunker Hill, Ill.; one step great grandchild; and 13 nieces and nephews.

A celebration of life will be held at later date in Illinois. Memorial donations can be made to Morrison Presbyterian Church, 511 Morrison Road, Franklin, NC 28734.

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

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.



Althea Marlene Ross

Jerry Leslie Young

Jerry Leslie Young, 87, of Franklin, N.C., passed away on June 12, 2023. He was born April 11, 1936, to Leslie and Ruby Henry Young. He was born and raised in Macon County, North Carolina.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brother and sister-in-law, Jim (Linda) Young; and infant brother, Darrell.

He was a retired Air Force veteran who continued to work in civil service for 30 years, before retiring to Macon County. He was an active member of Ellijay Missionary Baptist Church.

He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Betty Wyatt Young; three daughters, Sherry (Eric) Brisendine of Maryland, Karen Young of Franklin, Kimberly Self of Franklin; four grandchildren, Matthew (Lexi) Brisendine of Grovetown, Ga.; Victoria (Addison) Zarnow of Martinez, Ga.; Emily Self of Franklin, and McKenzie (Josh) Bell of Newman, Ga.; four great grandsons; and several nieces and nephews.

Services will be held on Friday, June 16, at 2 p.m., in the Chapel of Macon Funeral Home. Rev. Rick Potts will officiate. The family will receive friends from 1 to 2 p.m., one hour prior to the service. Burial will be in the Ellijay Missionary Baptist Church.

Pallbearers will be Keith Braun, Brandon Braun, Gerald Woods, Wesley Peek, Morlan Bowman, and Jack Henry. Honorary pallbearers will be Randy Rogers, Bob Davidson, and Carl Mincey.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made in his memory to the Cemetery Fund of Ellijay Baptist Cemetery, C/O Kim Self, 81 Roxie Lane, Franklin, NC 28734.

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

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.



Hildegard Schroeder

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Deaths & Funerals

Thomas Aiello, Jr.

Thomas Aiello Jr., 84, of Franklin, N.C., passed away on Monday, June 5, 2023.

Born in Bronx, N.Y., he was the son of the late Thomas John and Louise Pelleteri. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by a brother, Richard Aiello.

He was the owner and operator of the Franklin Gemstone and Jewelry Warehouse.

He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Diane Adams Aiello; four children, Gigi Turner of Aiken, S.C.; Thomas Aiello III of Hastings, Fla.; Christopher Aiello of Aiken, S.C., and Amy Brink of Franklin; two sisters, Loretta Silverstein of Palm Beach, Fla., and Carol Dorsette of Pompano, Fla.; 10 grandchildren; and 23 great grandchildren; and numerous nieces and nephews.

No services are planned at this time.

In lieu of flowers, memorials can be made to First Alliance Church.

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



Thomas Aiello Jr.

Randy Hall

Randy Hall, 54, of Otto, N.C., passed away on Wednesday, June 7, 2023.

Born in Macon County, he was the son of the late Jessie Lee and Willie Kate Sanders Hall. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by a brother, Ronnie Hall, and an infant sister.

He loved collecting coins and his dogs; especially "Midnight."

He is survived by two brothers, Jimmy Hall (Rita), and Ricky Hall, both of Franklin, N.C.; three sisters, Nancy Stanley, Margaret Clark, and Janet Watson (Jimmy) all of Franklin; numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins.

No services are planned.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be sent to The Gideons International, PO Box 372, Franklin, NC 28744 or Appalachian Animal Rescue, PO Box 81, Franklin, NC 28744.

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

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.



Randy Hall

Larry Ross Cloer

Larry Ross Cloer, 75, of Franklin, N.C., went home to be with the Lord, on Thursday, June 8, 2023.

He was born in Athens, Ga., to the late Ross Alexander and Dorothy Nichols Cloer. He attended University of Georgia, graduating with a BS in Pharmacy. He retired as a pharmacist after 44 years. He was well known in Macon County and remembered from his time at Angel's Drug Store. He loved Disney, Georgia Bulldawgs games, deer hunting, watching Atlanta Braves, the Masters, Star Wars movies, and just going to the movies. He was a member of First Baptist Church in Franklin.

He is survived by his wife of 50 years, Loretta Barrett Cloer; daughter, Leigh Cloer (Bobby Baumgarner) of Cashiers; son, Joseph Cloer (Amanda); brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, Landy Holland (Elaine), Mark West (Dale); niece/nephews and their families, Landon Holland (Laura), Barrett and Ben Holland; Matthew West (Anna), James, John, and Emma West, of Raleigh; Emily Deal (Jimmy), Glenn, and Branson.

A celebration of life was held Tuesday, June 13, in the Chapel of Macon Funeral Home with Rev. Robert Brown and Gen. Bob Page officiating.

In lieu of flowers, the family request donations be made to the First Baptist Church, 69 Iotla St, Franklin, NC 28734 or Donate Life, P.O. Box 5536, Cary, NC 27512.

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

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.



Larry Ross Cloer

Elizabeth Annette Long

Elizabeth Annette Long, 79, of Franklin, N.C., went home to be with Jesus on Thursday, June 8, 2023.

Born in Clanton, Ala., she was the daughter of the late Ewell and Jewell Smith Headley. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by a brother, Tim Headley, and a sister, Marie Graviet. She was a member of the First Assembly of God in Franklin. She enjoyed pottery, painting, woodworking, baking cakes and many other arts and crafts.

She is survived by her husband, Johnny L. Long Sr.; two sons, Johnny "Van" Long Jr., and Rodney Long, both of Franklin; daughter-in-law, Dede Berlin; two brothers, Mark Headley and Sonnie Headley, both of Florida; and a sister, Lou Headley of North Carolina.

A celebration of life will be held on Saturday, June 17, at 2 p.m., in the First Assembly of God in Franklin. Pastor Mike George will officiate.

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

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.



Elizabeth Annette Long

Edna Laverne Tippett

Edna Laverne Tippett, 82, of Franklin, N.C., went to be with the Lord on Sunday, June 4, 2023.

She was the daughter of the late Louin Tabner and Lillie Jane Adams Young. She is preceded by her parents; husband, Jimmy Roger Tippett; siblings, Ray Young, Clifton Young, and Wardie Young.

She was a member of Watauga Baptist and loved politics and reading.

She is survived by her daughter, Kimberly Wilson of Franklin; five grandchildren, Brittany Mashburn (Clinton), Brooke Keener (BJ), Morgan Wilson, all of Franklin; Matthew Wilson of Asheville, and John Wilson of Franklin; four great grandchildren, Kiley, Rowen, Kole, and Mason; sister, Bonnie Angel of Gastonia, N.C.; brothers, Doyle Young of LaGrange, Ga., and Dale Young of Franklin.

A celebration of life was held on Friday, June 9, in the Chapel of Macon Funeral Home. Rev. Roy Lowe and Rev. Wesley Price officiated. Burial was in the Watauga Baptist Church Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to St. Jude's Children's Hospital.

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

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.



Edna Laverne Tippett

George Richard (Dickie) Gibson

George Richard (Dickie) Gibson, 80, passed away on June 7, 2023. He was born Feb. 9, 1943, in Macon County to the late George and Frances Cowan Gibson. He was a lifetime member and a former deacon of Iotla Baptist Church. He loved his family, friends, and farm. He will be remembered for his stories and his laughter.

Survivors include his wife of 56 years, Joyce Angel Gibson; daughter, Kimberly Gibson Lane (Walter) of Social Circle, Ga.; sister, Linda Gibson Cunningham; five grandchildren, Brett Gibson (Catherine), Adrienne Gibson Watts (Ethan), Colton Gibson, George Lane, and Samuel Lane; five great-grandchildren; nieces and nephews.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his son, Gregg Richard Gibson and a great-grandson, Gregg Carson Watts.

The family expresses special appreciation to Phil Scruggs and Joey Gibson for their service to the family and their care of Dickie.

A funeral service was held Saturday, June 10, in the Chapel of Macon Funeral Home. Rev. Steve Reeves and Rev. Brandon Breedlove officiated. Burial was in the Iotla Baptist Church Cemetery.

Pallbearers were Brett Gibson, Colton Gibson, George Lane, Samuel Lane, Ethan Watts, and Brad Cunningham. Honorary pallbearers were The John C Campbell Bible Class; Carol Tallent, Rick Tallent, and all the men who gather at Franklin Discount Furniture.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Men's Challenge of the Smokies (livinghopeway.com), P.O. Box 2157, Franklin, NC 28734 or Iotla Baptist Church, 1537 Iotla Church Rd., Franklin, NC 28734.

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

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.

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Martin Truex Jr. picks up fourth Sonoma victory in dominating fashion

Reid Spencer – NASCAR Wire Service

SONOMA, Calif. – What a difference a year makes.

After struggling mightily last year at Sonoma Raceway in the debut season for NASCAR's Next Gen car, Martin Truex Jr. pulled off a dominating 180-degree turnaround in Sunday's Toyota/Save Mart 350.

Overcoming an inopportune caution and leading a race-high 51 of 110 laps, Truex scored his second victory of the season and his fourth at the 1.99-mile road course, most among active drivers and second only to Jeff Gordon's five in track history.

Truex's 33rd career victory, by a 2.979-second margin over runner-up Kyle Busch, was a far cry from last season's lackluster performance, when Truex started 28th and finished 26th.

"Hats off to my team," said Truex, who was winless in the 2022 campaign. "To be so bad here last year and to come back and do that with the same car basically, it's really unbelievable. Just proud of them. We're having a great year. I feel really good about our team..."

"Man, it just feels incredible to have a day like that and a run like that and a team like I have. They're doing everything right, and it's a lot of fun to drive these cars... This is why you go through years like we had last year. You just keep fighting. You never give up on it. You always believe in each other.

"We haven't changed anything on our team other than parts and pieces. It's just through a lot of hard work of a lot of people."

On Lap 33, Truex passed Joe Gibbs Racing teammate and pole winner Denny Hamlin for the top spot, after Hamlin led the first 32 laps and won the race's first stage. For the next 18 laps, it appeared that Truex and Hamlin would deliver a 1-2 punch to the rest of the field.

That was before a tire from Zane Smith's Ford bounced off the inside pit wall into the middle of pit road on Lap 50. The resulting caution turned the race upside down and handed the lead to Busch, who had pitted seven laps before the yellow.

Busch won the second stage—his second stage victory of the season—but Truex caught the No. 8 Chevrolet on Lap 69, outbraking Busch into Turn 7 and regaining the lead. Truex pitted on Lap 75 but reclaimed the top spot five laps later and held it until Hamlin hit the wall in Turn 12 on Lap 92, ping-ponged between the two frontstretch barriers and broke the right rear toe link on his Toyota.

Chase Elliott, Tyler Reddick and Ryan Blaney stayed out on older tires during the ensuing caution, but Truex made short work of those drivers, retaking the lead off Turn 4 on Lap 97, with Busch following him into the second spot.

Busch chased Truex over the final 14 laps—to no avail.

"I wish we had a little bit more," said Busch, who won last Sunday at World Wide Technology Raceway. "I tried really hard at the end to at least try to keep Martin honest. Felt like I could beat him a little bit on a lap, then I would mess up. He would beat me by a little bit more on the next lap. We were just kind of trading a little bit there. He was able to pull away there late..."

"We gave it everything that we had. We made a lot of changes. We got a lucky break there with a yellow with only three laps on tires, so we were able to kind of cycle to the front. Once we got up there, we could maintain pace with some of the good cars and have a good top-three speed race car. Just kind of flip-flopped the race a little bit.



Martin Truex Jr., driver of the #19 Bass Pro Shops Toyota, celebrates after winning the NASCAR Cup Series Toyota / Save Mart 350 at Sonoma Raceway on June 11, 2023 in Sonoma, Calif.

Photo by Logan Riely/Getty Images

"Good fortunes for us. Nice to come out here with a P2 after a win last week."

Joey Logano finished third, followed by Chris Buescher and Elliott. AJ Allmendinger, Michael McDowell, Kyle Larson, Christopher Bell and Ross Chastain completed the top 10.

Truex leads the series standings by 13 points over William Byron, who finished 14th. Grant Enfinger came home 26th in relief of Noah Gragson, who missed the race because of concussion symptoms deriving from a hard wreck last Sunday at WWT Raceway.

Opportunistic Aric Almirola grabs NASCAR Xfinity win at Sonoma Raceway

SONOMA, Calif. – Aric Almirola knew Sonoma Raceway is a track that wouldn't make him look like a "wanker."

Far from it. Holding off the dominant car of Kyle Larson—until Larson made a critical mistake—and then outrunning road course ace AJ Allmendinger over the final laps, Almirola won Saturday's DoorDash 250 at the 1.99-mile road course.

The victory was Almirola's fourth in the NASCAR Xfinity Series and his first since 2017, when he won at Talladega for owner Fred Biagi.

The win also was the first-ever for Georgia-based RSS Rac-

ing, which fields cars for brothers Ryan and Kyle Sieg. The Stewart-Haas Racing shop prepared the car for Almirola.

Driving the No. 28 Ford, Almirola took the checkered flag 1.868 seconds ahead of runner-up Allmendinger, with Larson running third 3.329 seconds back. Almirola had taken the lead from the fifth position on a Lap 65 restart, an advantage he held the rest of the way.

"Oh, man, this is so special," said Almirola, who was making his second Xfinity start of the season after a 24th-place finish at Circuit of the Americas in April. "It's hard to explain. I know it's an Xfinity win—it's not a Cup win, but after COTA (I said) I don't think I should run any more road course races in an Xfinity car.

"It makes me look like a wanker, and I lose self-confidence going into Sunday. But I knew that this racetrack, this is one I that can run good at. I've run good here my whole career. I don't know what it is about this place, but I love racing here."

Larson swept the first two stages and held a lead of more than 13 seconds over Allmendinger when Jeffrey Earnhardt backed into the barrier in Turn 10 on Lap 60 and caused the race's second caution.

If the subsequent restart on Lap 65 was crucial to Almirola's victory, Larson's mistake on Lap 72 was even more so. On Lap 72 of 79, Larson drove hard into the Turn 11 hairpin within inches of Almirola's back bumper and clipped one of the stacks of tires defining the corner.

Larson's Chevrolet shot to the left of the racing line, and by the time he had righted the car, Allmendinger had passed him for second.

"I just got too greedy," said Larson, who led a race-high 53 laps to Almirola's 17. "I was kind of tucked up right behind him, clipped the tires, and it knocked the wheel out of my



Aric Almirola, driver of the #28 Michael Roberts Construction Ford, celebrates with a burnout as crew cheers after winning the NASCAR Xfinity Series DoorDash 250 at Sonoma Raceway on June 10, 2023 in Sonoma, Calif.

Photo by Logan Riely/Getty Images

hands. After that the toe was off. I was really tight in the left and really loose in the right, so I couldn't make runs at it...

"I'm really mad at myself right now, but I'm really proud of the car they (Hendrick Motorsports) brought. Congrats to Aric, too. He did a really good job out in front of me, hitting his marks. He could kind of get away from me in a couple of important areas and would make me have to work hard behind him. So hats off to him and that team."

Ty Gibbs ran fourth, as full-time NASCAR Cup Series drivers claimed the top four finishing positions. Parker Kligerman led the Xfinity regulars in fifth, followed by Cole Custer, Justin Allgaier, Austin Hill, Sammy Smith and Sam Mayer.

Induction ceremony highlights contributions of western drivers to NASCAR racing

To gain and understanding of the impact western states have had on NASCAR racing—and vice versa—one needs to look no further than the West Coast Stock Car Hall of Fame inductions last Thursday night in the Turn 11 Club at Sonoma Raceway.

Three NASCAR national champions were ushered into the Hall: Kurt Busch, Kevin Harvick and Matt Crafton. During NASCAR's 75th anniversary celebration, both Busch and Harvick were included in the elite list of NASCAR's 75 Greatest Drivers.

Busch grew up in Las Vegas and got his start racing Dwarf cars under the tutelage of his father, Tom Busch, who also was a racer. In fact, Kurt's extensive knowledge of the workings of a race car derived from working on his father's equipment.

At one point in his early career, Busch won 10 straight races on 10 different tracks, but his career didn't gain significant momentum until he began competing successfully in the Winter Heat Series at Tucson Raceway Park against fellow West Coasters Harvick, Crafton, Ron Hornaday Jr. and Greg Biffle.

In 1999, Busch won the championship in the NASCAR AutoZone Elite Division, Southwest Series and earned an invitation to a Jack Roush tryout, labeled the "Gong Show" for its merciless evaluation of potential driving talent.

Roush hired Busch to drive in the NASCAR CRAFTS-

MAN Truck Series in 2000, when Busch won rookie-of-the-year honors and finished second to teammate Biffle in the championship standings.

After one year in the Truck Series, Busch succeeded Chad Little in Roush's No. 97 NASCAR Cup Series Ford. In 2004, he won the series championship in the first year of a NASCAR Playoff system, then christened the Chase.

Busch would go on to win 34 Cup races, including victories at all four of the West Coast tracks that have been staples on the Cup Series schedule—Fontana, Phoenix, Las Vegas and Sonoma.

Harvick was a tough guy from a tough town—Bakersfield, California, which also gave us Buck Owens and the Bakersfield Sound in country music.

A multisport athlete in high school, Harvick was a gifted

wrestler, a talent that surfaced years later when he pinned Carl Edwards to the hood of his car in Charlotte Motor Speedway's Xfinity garage during an altercation in 2008.

Driving for Spears Motorsports in 1998, Harvick won five races and the Winston West championship, but his major break came when team owner Richard Childress signed him in 2000.

In 2001, he would win the Xfinity Series title, but another event that year was far more significant. After Dale Earnhardt lost his life in the 2001 Daytona 500, Harvick was thrust into the role of Earnhardt's successor in RCR's flagship ride.

Harvick didn't win a Cup Series championship until 2014, after he had left Childress for Stewart-Haas Racing. His 60 Cup wins are second among active drivers to the 63 accumulated by Kyle Busch, Kurt's brother.

The first of Harvick's victories came at Atlanta in his third Cup start.

"Well, everybody kind of already knew your name at that particular point, and I always tell people that things happened backward in my career," said Harvick, who will retire from Cup racing at the end of the season. "They all knew my name first, and then you had to figure out how to earn who you were from that point forward, and then you had to walk everything back in order to be yourself.

"Everybody knew your name because of Dale's passing and getting in his car, and then winning the race—that was kind of the moment that solidified the fact that you could do it. And at that point, you did it on the biggest stage because, outside of Dale Jr., you had the biggest spotlight shining on you driving that particular car. It was a lot to deal with. Definitely wasn't ready for all that."

Born in Tulare, Calif., Crafton started his racing career in go-karts before graduating to the Featherlite Southwest Series, where he won the championship in 2000.

Driving for ThorSport Racing, Crafton made his Truck Series debut in the 2000 season finale at Fontana. He has been driving for ThorSport ever since, with remarkable consistency. In 533 Truck Series starts, Crafton has 15 victories, 133 top fives and 316 top 10s—not to mention championships in 2013, 2014 and 2019.

Busch, Harvick and Crafton were inducted into the West Coast Stock Car Hall of Fame along with former Indianapolis 500 rookie of the year Lyn St. James and sprint car stand-out Brent Kaeding.

Held during the NASCAR weekend at Sonoma Raceway, the induction ceremony casts the focus on the important contributions of drivers from western states to the sport.



Sonoma Raceway

Photo by Logan Riely/Getty Images

CROSSWORD PUZZLE ANSWERS ON PG. 15

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THEME: TV DADS

ACROSS

1. Necklace lock
6. Blue
9. *Mr. Micelli in "Who's the Boss"
13. "The Tortoise and the Hare," e.g.
14. Beer acronym
15. Check recipient
16. Angler's basket
17. Circle part
18. "Orange" warning
19. *Mr. Keaton in "Family Ties"
21. *Mr. Cunningham in "Happy Days"
23. Dad's offspring
24. "Jack and the Beanstalk" instrument
25. General Post Office
28. Plural of cecum
30. Pompous windbag
35. Not written
37. Scotch ingredient
39. Complain
40. Spanish surrealist Joan
41. Formed #17 Across
43. Press back arrow key
44. Not odds
46. "Musical" constellation
47. Backgammon predecessor
48. Louisiana music genre
50. Aware of
52. Jeans brand
53. In a little while, old-fashioned
55. Old age, old-fashioned
57. *Mr. White "Breaking Bad"
60. *Mr. Stark "Game of Thrones"
63. Ruffle on a blouse
64. Determine the sum
66. Feline sound

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 68. Bronze, e.g. 69. Chasing game 70. "All joking ____" 71. Big Bang's original matter 72. Compass bearing 73. Type of stocking | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Egghead 12. Up to the present time 15. a.k.a. melon tree 20. Organ swelling 22. What organza and forgiveness have in common 24. Calm and peaceful 25. *Mr. Addams "The Addams Family" 26. Outhouse 27. Propelled like Argo 29. *Mr. Winslow in "Family Matters" 31. Give the cold shoulder 32. Twofold 33. *Mr. Johnson in "Black-ish" 34. Glittery stone 36. Like certain Ranger 38. Seaside bird | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 42. Old hat 45. Scatterbrained, in U.K. 49. Top seed 51. Nickname for dad (2 words) 54. Speak like Cicero 56. ____ Buchanan of "The Great Gatsby" 57. China's Great one 58. Often goes with "willing" 59. Rumpelstiltskin's weaver 60. Upper hand 61. Not top-shelf 62. Popular symbol of extinction 63. *Mr. Pritchett in "Modern Family" 65. *Mr. Conner in "Roseanne" 67. Skin cyst |
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**ADMISSION: \$10 AGES 16 AND UP, \$5 AGES 5-15,
CHILDREN UNDER 5 FREE**

9am-5pm Highland Games throughout the day - Bring a chair

9am-5pm Children's Games & Activities

9:30am Cherokee Demonstration, Main Stage

9am Harp Music, Main Stage

9:30am Cherokee Demonstration, Main Stage

11am Scottish Country Dancing Demonstration, Fiddlers Tent

11am Jacobites by Name, Main Stage

11am Wild Mountain Time, Second Stage

11:30am Sheep Herding Demonstrations, Fenced Paddock

12pm Mountain Muse Band, Main Stage

12pm Cherokee Demonstration, Second Stage

1pm Colin Grant-Adams, Main Stage

1pm Andrew Finn McGill, Second Stage

2pm Scottish Country Dancing Demonstration, Fiddlers Tent

2pm Jacobites by Name, Main Stage

2pm Cherokee Demonstration, Second Stage

2:30pm Sheep Herding Demonstrations, Fenced Paddock

3pm Mountain Muse Band, Main Stage

3pm Wild Mountain Time, Second Stage

4pm Colin Grant-Adams, Main Stage

4pm Andrew Finn McGill, Second Stage

SUNDAY, JUNE 18

at First Presbyterian Church
26 Church Street, Franklin NC

10am Kirkin' of the Tartan

3am FREE Music Concert, Traditional Scottish Music with Caledonia Women, a fiddle and guitar duo who plays Scottish music, sharing stories of how the music expresses Scotland's land, history and culture. In the Chapel of the First Presbyterian Church. Sponsored by the Arts Council of Macon County.

Note: The schedule during the day Saturday is subject to change so please check back frequently if you are concerned about the timing for a certain event.

