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On Thursday, June 15, staff from Macon County Senior Services, Macon County Department of Social Services (DSS), REACH of Macon County and community members took part in World Elder Abuse Awareness Day with a walk through downtown Franklin. Statistics find that approximately 10% of elders experience some form of abuse, such as physical abuse, psychological or verbal abuse, sexual abuse, financial exploitation or neglect. If you suspect elder abuse, call Macon County DSS at (828)349-2124. Photo by Guy Gooder

Town and county pass budget after delays

Dan Finnerty – Contributing Writer

Following a June 13 meeting of the Macon County Board of Commissioners, the Franklin Town Council met June 15 to pass its own fiscal year 2023/2024 (FY-23/24) budget. Both governing groups had met previously, but neither board was able to complete approval of their respective budgets as originally scheduled.

At its special called meeting, the Town of Franklin quickly determined that their budget, as submitted and updated by Town Manager Amie Owens, was sufficient and acceptable. Mayor Jack Horton opened the meeting reminding all attending that several work sessions had been undertaken, and he thanked Owens, Finance Director Sarah Bishop, and their staffs for the time and work put into the budget.

“Budgets are not just numbers; that’s your plan of activity for the coming year,” Mayor Horton stated. “It’s proba-

bly the most important action any board can take – revising and adopting your budget, which is your plan of action for providing services to people of the community for the next year.”

Some of the largest expenditure increases stemmed from health (10%) and dental (13%) insurance, as well as mandatory increases in employer retirement contributions and utility increases proposed by Duke Energy. The budget also included a \$.33 per \$100 valuation tax rate for FY-23/24. The proposed fire department district tax is rated at \$.052 (per \$100 of valuation). The department continues to seek grant funding for expenditures needed to purchase a tanker and pumper/tanker to remain in compliance with National Fire Protection Association standards.

The total new budget is \$11,080,577 and addresses critical infrastructure needs, beautification and sidewalk

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BUDGETS

Continued
from page 1

improvements, and recreational opportunities, while maintaining a healthy fund balance and providing quality services in a cost-effective manner.

Commissioners pass budget on fourth attempt

Macon County Board of Commissioners gathered in the county courthouse commission boardroom, again, on Monday, June 19, primarily in an effort to pass their FY-23/24 budget. However, the evening started off with the swearing in of Tammy Keezer as Macon County Deputy Clerk. She is replacing Mike Decker, who retired June 16 after 31 years of service. Keezer was sworn in by Macon County Clerk of Superior Court Shawna Lamb.

The budgetary discussion period of the meeting kicked off with Commissioner Danny Antoine reading a nearly nine-minute statement about perceived confusion regarding the process of passing a budget.

"I'm sorry that many of you endured much fear and anguish. Better communication is needed regarding these items of business ... some have contacted me with concern that I should not delay the budget process. I just cannot and will not make a decision in that manner without taking the needed time to make a sound decision."

Antoine went on to summarize proposed budget expenditures that included pay raises for county employees and hiring of six additional positions. He also addressed pros vs. cons of a lower tax rate with the point being that a lower tax rate does give a small break to property owners. But it does so at the risk of reduced funding for starting and completing projects designed to improve services such as education, healthcare, recreation, and more.

Commissioner John Shearl spoke and similarly expressed his position on the proposed budget by making a motion to accept it, with some contingencies offered. He asked to have funding to be removed for the Molar Roller (\$869,983), the Highlands School soccer field (\$873,658), Animal Control (\$61,859 for a new truck and dog box and \$56,644 for an updated mobile patrol position), and the Contingency Fund (\$293,272). He then requested to add \$100,000 for the Zachary Park building repair and grading work to create practice fields, \$165,377 for Phase II and Phase III of the



Finance Director Lori Carpenter works the numbers for the county budget at the June 13 meeting of the Macon County Board of Commissioners.

Highlands School expansion, and \$200,000 for the Macon County Jail body scanner. Lastly, he asked there be no additional fees for the Macon County Landfill Highlands/Transfer Station.

The original recommended budget was for \$64,566,978. Taking into account Shearl's request, including lowering the taxing millage rate from \$.27 (per \$100 of assessed property value) to around \$.26., County Manager Derek Roland cautioned that lowering the rate below revenue neutral (the \$.27 rate) would have adverse effects on the county as it is the most reliable revenue source available for funding operations.

Regarding the Molar Roller, which is a mobile clinic service for county school children, Macon County Public Health Center Director Kathy McGaha addressed the Board. She clarified the main issue with the clinic. Although the interior is considered intact, due to its age and condition, parts and updates are increasingly no longer available. She did verify that even if a new/replacement unit is funded it will take up to two years for delivery and usability due to supply chain challenges and other predicted delay issues.

County Commission Chairman Paul Higdon pointed out that for previous budget sessions there was much less interest in the process.

"We wanted to open it up and have public discussion ... we were trying to be transparent and open and have discussion," he said. "There are a lot of parts in this \$64 million budget ... I worked for the public sector 10 years before making the decision I did to move to the private sector ... We are all being hit with inflation; I've been there and done that," said Higdon.

Shearl finished the pre-vote discussion by noting, "I was committed to spending all the time in the world – I bet I've looked at this budget more than any county commissioner has in many, many years ... How do I know so much about this budget? Because I spent the effort and the time day in and day out trying to make this work for everybody involved."

More Motions in Motion

A motion was subsequently made and a vote taken that failed to pass, 2-3. At that point, Commissioner Gary Shields made another motion to adopt the original budget that was submitted on June 13 by Co-Chairman Josh Young. Again, a vote was taken and it failed, 2-3.

Budget discussion then continued, focused primarily on the Molar Roller; but, at one point, Macon County Veterans Services Office Director Leigh Tabor Holbrooks voiced her feelings concerning the budget process.

"I have a two-person county office and out of my two-person county office last year I brought in \$23 million in tax-free revenue. In this entire budget process, I've not heard veterans mentioned one time."

Shearl then re-voiced his concern with how the budget was constructed but at the same time acquiesced in stating that if the approximately \$300,000 associated with the Molar Roller was the only item holding up its passage, then it should be funded. Young reiterated the changes proposed and clarified the aspects before the board, including additional input from McGaha on animal control. He also offered to support the updated budget as presented if the

county could use interest on investments to cover the revenue gap realized by bringing the tax rate below revenue neutral. However, after further input from Finance Director Lori Carpenter, Young cautioned, "Seeing the importance of the ad valorem (property tax) on the operating budget and knowing that is the primary source of revenue, I can't, in good faith, go below the number that myself, the financial advisor, and our finance officer, at \$.27 revenue neutral and the lowest tax rate in the state of North Carolina, proposed. That's what we based our capital expenditures on, that's what we based this operating budget on, and that's the amount of revenue we need to run this organization."

Throughout the meeting, Carpenter worked and re-worked numbers based on proposed additions offered by Shearl and follow-on responses from other commissioners, as well as the effect those changes had on the tax rate, the contingency fund, and the overall budget total. She also repeatedly questioned and asked for clarification regarding various changes and proposals submitted.

Throughout the process with associated give and take by the Board, as well as some animated input from attendees in the room notwithstanding, the meeting was professional and productive.

The only exception was an outburst by Southern Scoop's Brittney Lofthouse who, upon Shearl again lobbying for his proposed tax break for county property owners, yelled from the press area, "You are already receiving a \$600 tax decrease." Chairman Higdon then advised Lofthouse and attendees to respect the Board and its purpose. "We're discussing this and we invited ya'll in here tonight, so please, out of respect, allow us to do this. We're the ones who have to explain ... so please afford us the respect to have these discussions."

The sticking point still centered around the property tax millage rate – be it revenue neutral at \$.27 or lower, in order to benefit property taxpayers a bit more, as proposed by Shearl.

At that point, Shields addressed the room.

"For the Franklin High School project, we're all depending on a grant. If the people who are looking to make a decision on this grant money we are receiving – there's a piece up there called 'ability to pay.' [A \$.27 tax rate] may be a negative in getting this grant. If you lower it more, it's definitely going to work out of your favor in getting that grant money. You're talking about \$50-60 million. And we've [Macon County] lost money before because it was viewed that Macon County has the ability to pay ... let's not strip ourselves here to the point where we're viewed as selfish ... we have a good organization and leadership that wants us to move forward. You don't want to be viewed as having the ability to pay for your capital projects. Revenue neutral is at \$.27 cents – I'm with you."

Another vote was taken on the updated budget total of \$63,754,537, and it passed, 4-1, with Shearl steadfastly maintaining his position – and the ad valorem tax rate remaining at revenue neutral. The approved budget was an \$812,441 reduction from the original proposal brought to the board.



Macon County Manager Derek Roland holds the Bible as Tammy Keezer is sworn in as Macon County Deputy Clerk by Macon County Clerk of Superior Court Shawna Lamb.



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N.C. receives federal employment training grant to respond to Haywood County paper mill layoffs

More than a dozen from Macon County worked at Canton mill

North Carolina has received approval for a \$7.5 million federal workforce grant to help workers who were affected by the Pactiv Evergreen layoffs in Canton and Waynesville, Gov. Roy Cooper has announced. \$2.5 million will be made available immediately, and the remainder will be distributed as needed to support workforce development efforts in the weeks and months to come.

“This grant will provide new resources for our continuing effort to support people in the region around Canton who are dealing with the devastating impact of the paper mill’s closure,” Cooper said.

On March 6, Pactiv Evergreen announced plans to shut down the paper mill in Canton and substantially reduce operations at its facility in nearby Waynesville. These actions have resulted in almost 1,100 employees losing their jobs. Most of the layoffs occurred on June 9. The Canton mill has been in operation for more than a century and was the largest employer in Haywood County. Its closure is expected to economically impact other companies that serve the paper mill, such as trucking companies, rail lines and the forestry industry, as well as the grocery stores, restaurants, healthcare providers, and other small businesses that have served Evergreen employees.

The North Carolina Department of Commerce’s Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS) requested the new funds, which were awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor as an Employment Recovery Dislocated Worker Grant.

“Our Workforce Solutions team and our local NCWorks partners have made it a priority to respond to these layoffs in a coordinated, compassionate way,” said N.C. Department of Commerce Secretary Machel Baker Sanders. “With this new grant from our federal partners and other available resources, we will continue helping talented workers to gain new skills and connect with employers who are hiring.”

Through the grant, eligible dislocated workers may receive:

- Career Services, to help them make employment plans and informed decisions about jobs and education, based on local and regional economic conditions;
- Training Services, including On-the-Job Training (OJT) or other work-based learning opportunities with area employers, entrepre-

Economic Impact

Southwestern Commission of Governments commissioned Syneva Economics to study the economic impact of the closing of Pactiv Evergreen Packaging in Canton.

Note that these numbers are only a prediction based on a model. The report examined employment, income, output, and taxes to assess the potential consequences.

According to the findings, for every one of the 900 jobs lost at the mill, another 1.2 jobs would be lost or at risk, resulting in a total of 2,020 jobs across the region. Haywood County bears the brunt, with 93% of total jobs lost or at risk, followed by Jackson County with 75 job losses. Effects across the region, includes losses of 25 in Cherokee County, 17 in Swain County, 16 in Macon County, and 2 each in Clay and Graham Counties.

The report further revealed that out of the additional 1,120 jobs at risk, 712 were from local suppliers who directly served the mill. Additionally, reduced spending by households connected to these layoffs would affect another 408 local jobs.

Manufacturing is the most heavily impacted, with 38 jobs at risk, while administrative/support services and forestry are the second most, with 14 positions each.

The mill’s closure will result in a direct income loss of \$87.2 million and put another \$53.8 million at risk, jeopardizing a total of \$141 million in income loss. The impact on tax revenue will also be substantial, with regional county tax revenues estimated to decrease by \$5.8 million, state taxes by \$11 million, and federal taxes by \$32.7 million.

neurship training, and occupational skills training at community colleges or other providers, to prepare for in-demand careers; and

- Supportive Services, which can address barriers that may prevent individuals from participating in employment and training.

To administer this grant, DWS will partner with Southwestern Workforce Development Board (which serves Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon and Swain counties) and Mountain Area Workforce Development Board (which serves Buncombe, Henderson, Madison and Transylvania counties). The grant is intended to serve approximately 885 people living in the region.

Through the Rapid Response program, DWS, local workforce boards, Haywood Community College and other partners have collaborated to support the impacted workers and the community since March. They and others have held several job fairs and hiring events in the region, which will continue. NCWorks Career Centers (primarily the center in Haywood County) are already providing employment services to affected Evergreen employees, including career counseling, job search help (including resume assistance), tuition assistance for training, and veterans services.

People who are interested in receiving workforce services funded by the grant should contact their local NCWorks Career Center, which can be found at www.NCWorks.gov.

North Carolina, Tennessee officials remind public to drive safely on serpentine ‘Tail of the Dragon’

Tennessee and North Carolina officials recently reminded people to drive safely if they travel along the “Tail of the Dragon,” a winding stretch of U.S. 129 bordering both states.

The “Tail of the Dragon” takes people on a ride that has become well-known, but dangerous for motorcyclists and automobile enthusiasts because the 11-mile stretch includes 314 curves.

Officials want people who travel the road to drive the speed limit, stay in your lane, keep a safe distance between you and the vehicle ahead of you, always wear your seat belt and never drive distracted. Use the paved pull-offs for any sight-seeing.

“The mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee have some of the most appealing motorcycling terrain in the world, but that also means more motorcycle crashes than other places,” said Mark Ezzell, director of the N.C. Governor’s Highway Safety Program. “This cross-border enforcement effort shows our common commitment to keeping all road users, including motorcycle riders, safe in this unique area by encouraging reasonable speeds and attentive driving.”

“We are committed to partnering with all law enforcement agencies,” said Tennessee

Highway Safety Office Law Enforcement Liaison Armando Fontes. “Our mission is to reduce crashes and injuries, making our roadways safer for all motorists. One life lost is too many.”

In 2021 and 2022, there were 17 crashes on the North Carolina side of the Tail of the Dragon. Five of those crashes involved serious injuries. Twelve of the 17 crashes in-



involved motorcycles.

“Our law enforcement commitment to residents and visitors to this area who are looking to safely enjoy a scenic ride is that of continued traffic safety education and enforcement to help make an enjoyable time for all,” said Maj. Keyla Bell of the North Carolina State Highway Patrol. “And while we hope that being a visible deterrent is sufficient ... our strict enforcement of motor vehicle laws is necessary for some and can be counted upon to help prevent what we see as preventable life changing events.”

Governor Cooper proclaims June as LGBTQ+ Pride Month in N.C.

Governor Roy Cooper has proclaimed June as LGBTQ+ Pride Month to honor the state’s LGBTQ+ community, the ongoing fight for equality and North Carolina’s efforts to create a welcoming community for all.

“This month we recognize and celebrate our LGBTQ+ community and recommit ourselves to striving for equality,” said Cooper. “It’s on all of us to continue to work to ensure that North Carolina is a welcoming and inclusive place for everyone.”

LGBTQ+ Pride Month commemorates the riots that took place at the Stonewall Inn on June 28, 1969, which is commonly recognized as the origin of the modern LGBTQ+ rights movement.

Several landmark United States Supreme Court decisions upholding the rights of the LGBTQ+ community have been announced in June, including extending discrimination protections for LGBTQ+ employees under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in 2020 and upholding same-sex couples’ right to marriage in Obergefell v. Hodges in 2015.

Cooper has worked to make North Carolina a safe and welcoming place for the LGBTQ+ community, taking steps to ensure

protection for LGBTQ+ individuals.

In October 2017, Cooper issued Executive Order No. 24 which prohibits employment discrimination in the Governor’s administration on the basis of sex, sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. The order also prohibits the same employment discrimination for all entities engaging in business with the state. The Order also created the NC Commission on Inclusion to identify policies and actions to address discrimination and harassment and promote inclusivity.

In August 2019, the Governor issued Executive Order No. 97, making North Carolina the first state in the South to ban state funding for conversion therapy for minors.

Cooper’s administration continues to work to support the LGBTQ+ community. The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services provides guidance and instruction to child welfare workers and foster families to provide affirming care to the LGBTQ+ youth they serve. Cabinet agencies have created new positions and offices to increase diversity, equity and inclusion across areas of the state government—including the first Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in a N.C. Governor’s Office.



Lynch sworn in

Macon County Clerk of Superior Court Shawna Lamb administered the oath of office to Josh Lynch as the new Superintendent of Macon County Schools at the Macon County Administration Building on Tuesday, June 13, during a special called meeting. His wife, Kristen, and their children were in attendance. Lynch will begin his term as Superintendent of Schools on July 1, 2023, for the retiring superintendent Dr. Chris Baldwin (R).



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FHS Athletics: Catching up with coaches Josh and Bekah Brooks

Dan Finnerty – Sports Writer

While the 2022–2023 Franklin High School (FHS) school season ended recently, it quickly became apparent that there really is no “off-season” for school athletic programs. The basketball program finished a camp in early June and track and field just participated in a nationals-level meet. And the trend is no different for other sports, including football and volleyball. FHS is blessed to have a robust athletic program that benefits from having effective, impactful athletic directors, trainers, and coaches. You need look no further than the Brooks family to realize that impact.

Finishing up his first practice of the summer, FHS Head Football Coach Josh Brooks left the more than 50 student athletes in attendance with inspirational and sage advice prior to the closing team prayer. Speaking about an upcoming camp he proclaimed, “It will be about how we compete and how we handle adversity or a coach getting on us ... I’m proud of the 11 days we’ve had here but I don’t think we’re there yet; we’re not even close.” His last question to those under his instruction was “Anyone want to lose today?” While sounding like an open-ended question it also helped instill within his student athletes that while winning is not everything, it always feels better than losing. The

group’s final chant reflected his focus: “1-2-3 FAMILY!”

Brooks grew up in the Sylva area, graduating from Smoky Mountain High School in 1993 and then went on to Western Carolina University (WCU) and eventually found his way to Franklin for his first employment in the FHS sports environment, leaving a full-time landscaping business to do so. This upcoming school year will be his 18th year coaching in some capacity for the Panthers. He also taught in the classroom for 18 years before moving into a curriculum and instructional management coordinator position in support of career technical education classes.

Before inheriting head coaching duties for football, he spent five years as a varsity assistant, after one year as the junior varsity (JV) head coach in 1999, and in 2000 he coached varsity quarterbacks. When legendary coach Fred Goldsmith took over the FHS football program in 2001, Brooks continued to coach quarterbacks but also took on offensive coordinator duties for five years. He pointed out that his father was a life-long coach and all of his brothers did so as well. Josh’s twin brother Jay, currently assists with various coaching duties at FHS.

In 2004, Franklin native Mary Rebekah (Bekah) Ran-

dall (Brooks) graduated from FHS and attended WCU, pursuing a degree in health and physical education. In the 2005/2006 school year, she started coaching volleyball as an assistant and never left, eventually assuming volleyball head coaching duties in 2009. In between, Brooks also coached two years at Macon Middle School. She also holds varsity basketball head coaching duties and is a student council advisor – all while also raising four children of her own. Josh and Bekah married in 2008, beginning their journey together as coaches and parents.

When asked what she appreciates most about coaching students, Bekah quickly pointed out, “I love competition and seeing kids be successful – but what I love most is just trying to make a positive impact on young ladies. I love watching them work hard and getting the results they want with the work they put in.” Regarding challenges encountered while carrying out coaching duties, she commented that every child and situation is different. “Listening to each student or athlete and trying to get on their level; Everybody has their own story to write ... sometimes they just need a help holding the pencil, or turning the page.”

Josh, speaking about his father, a 40-year coach in his own right, admitted, “My Dad never tried to coach for me, he never tried to



Josh Brooks addresses the more than 50 student athletes at the first practice of the summer. Brooks has been coaching football in some capacity for 18 years.



Bekah Brooks has been coaching Franklin High School volleyball since 2005 and has been head coach since 2009.

tell me what to do. He was always there and he was an amazing listener. It never bothered him to tell me the tough truth. I was a smart aleck 16-year-old who knew everything and he always set us straight when we needed it. I didn’t understand it then but man, I’m so thankful for it now.”

When asked what he has valued the most about coaching, Brooks quickly answered that it’s about relationships.

“It’s about relationships in this office with these coaches and it’s about relationships with the student athletes,” he said. He quipped that he has not recalled seeing win-loss records on any tombstones so while they

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matter in the moment, it is relationships with others that people will value and remember. "I want them (students) to understand that to me, there's a greater hope out there than wins and losses ... I want them to have the same peace I've got."

As for challenging aspects of coaching, Brooks lamented somewhat that he struggles to catch his kids playing sports of their own due to his busy schedule. His oldest daughter is playing volleyball and his oldest son is about to begin middle school football. Given that he coaches both varsity and JV football currently, in addition to assisting with other sports and holding down non-sports school duties, schedule balancing poses some issues.

While there are always challenges, he reminds his athletes and coaches that sometimes things just don't go the way we

expect. There are fewer coaches available than in previous eras, while time required to keep kids in shape and football-ready has increased. Coaches work most of the summer and for no additional pay or compensation. The program has 20 practices during the summer, including one just concluded June 15 at the high school, in addition to Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) camp that includes three consecutive days away from home.

Whether it's people missing or injuries or something else, there will always be adversity. Brooks named off kneecap displacements (three so far), a broken finger, another knee injury, people stepped on accidentally and hurt – all in the first practice session of the summer. Additionally, many of the skill players and linemen traveled to Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs, N.C.,

for the three-day camp June 19-21, which included 14 games of seven-on-seven, lineman drills, a lineman challenge, plus numerous team bonding activities, and some welcomed devotional time while away. A Franklin community resident affiliated with FCA is sponsoring the entire \$205 per student cost for the camp – 56 attendees in all (\$11,480).

Bekah Brooks vividly remembers the challenges presented during 2020 and all the inconveniences that came during that season. Predictably, she emphasized the positives she drew from that time.

"I was pregnant with our last child and was stuck in Gibson Cove (our neighborhood) at the time ... watching the kids learn to do school at home, practice sports on their own ... I think we all grew during that time."

She even worked with a student volleyball player to create a device that held her daughter's volleyball so she could work on her approach and swing, given the inability to practice with other players due to mandates for "social distancing." Brooks is a strong believer in the Macon County and Franklin community environment. When asked if she ever considered relocating, her response was telling.

"Community-support-love-beauty, as I like to call it, the 'all in' mentality. I don't think I could coach in a place where I didn't feel like everyone is all in ... You can't please everyone but you can try to be the best version of yourself and love on peo-

ple. I have Jesus in my heart and my goal is to try and shine His light through me to others ... whether that is showing passion the volleyball court, cheering for my husband's boys under the lights in the pit, or cleaning toilets."

Josh has had opportunities to leave for other opportunities as well but is clear in his desire to stay the course and be a positive influence within the community through whatever means that comes his way.

"I have a clear conscience every night when I lay down that we're doing the very best we can to get them prepared; we love them, we're going to discipline them, and for some of them, this is all they got and I want it to be a positive thing," he concluded.



Josh and Bekah Brooks and their children, from left, Rigley, Oakley, Welker and Bristol.



Franklin High School Head Coach Josh Brooks encourages his students during a recent practice.

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Main Street bakery is 'dream come true' for Renee Vargas

Deena C. Bouknight – Contributing Writer

For the past 20 years, Renee Vargas has been decorating cakes part-time at her home – while also raising two sons, one handicapped, and managing a job, most recently as a data manager at Franklin High School. Her husband, Isidro Vargas, a landscaper, has primarily been the one to bake the special-order cakes and cupcakes at their home, while Renee has applied her self-taught, cake-decorating artistry skills to achieve specialized confections for birthdays, weddings, retirement events, and much more.

The couple never imagined they would be owning and operating a brick-and-mortar bakery on Main Street in

Franklin has just come out in droves since we opened,” said Renee. “We’ve been doing custom orders for people in the community for 20 years, so we’ve had a following. I decorated my first cake for my son Samuel when he was two, and then I began decorating them for friends and family. In the past 10 years, the business from home has quadrupled and it’s enabled me to have extra income for medical bills for my son, Andrew, and for other expenses.”

For the past week, the couple has been working day and night to keep up with demand. In the three weeks prior to opening, their sons and many other individuals assisted with redecorating the dining area and reorganizing the kitchen. Samuel (Sam) Vargas, a pastor at Discover Church, plied his woodworking skills to construct the display counter; Andrew Vargas assembled and stained tables; Holly Vargas, Sam’s wife, is the bakery’s social media manager and will work in the bakery a few days a week; and, Brooklyn Hoaglan, Andrew’s girlfriend, will also work in the bakery part-time.

“I also had my best friends helping and so many in the community who just wanted to volunteer to get us opened,” said Renee. “And I hired really great employees, one who just graduated from culinary school.”

While Renee is meeting orders of 25 custom cakes a week, on average, the Cake Shoppe displays decorated cupcakes, as well as macarons, cookies, brownies, cake pops,



Renee's Cake Shoppe is "dream come true" for cake decorator Renee Vargas and her baker husband, Isidro Vargas. The Cake Shoppe offers plenty of house-made and decorated confections.

and more in the black and pink vintage-themed ambience. Featured cakes by the slice are also sold. In the future, cake decorating workshops will be offered.

“Right now, we are baking all night and not getting much sleep, but it’s okay,” said Renee. “I’m so happy about having this shop I just cry when I think about it. I’ve always been creative and crafty and I taught myself how to decorate cakes, by reading and watching

videos ..., but I never imagined I would have my own shop. So many people have asked me over the years when I was going to open my own shop, but I just never thought that was a possibility. But here we are.”

Renee said her personal favorite cake is a lemon cake with lemon curd and raspberry filling. “I like simple decorations. My sons’ favorite cake is a Reese’s [candy] flavored cake.”

Franklin. But when the former owner of Honeysuckle Bakery contacted them earlier this year and asked if they would be interested in purchasing the bakery, the Vargases decided to pray for guidance. They ultimately felt the opportunity was a “dream come true,” and last weekend they opened the doors of Renee’s Cake Shoppe and sold out several hours before closing time.

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The Franklin Area Chamber of Commerce recently held a ribbon cutting to welcome Renee's Cake Shoppe to the business community.

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These concerts are given to you by the town of Franklin free of admission. Concerts start at 6:00 p.m. till 8:00p.m. This year the town will be doing Pickin' twice a month. The schedule will be posted on the town website.

See you at the gazebo in downtown Franklin this memorial weekend!!

Donnie Clay, Coordinator for Pickin' on the Square



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The Legislative Review

N.C. Rep. Karl Gillespie



Karl Gillespie

In this week's edition of The Legislative Review, the two chambers meet to discuss the state budget, and the NC Farm Act passes the legislature.

For the legislative week of June 5, 2023-June 9, 2023, I returned to Raleigh on Monday afternoon to meet with my Appropriations, AgNER House Chairs, as well as the AgNER Senate Chairs to negotiate on our area budget. This meeting lasted for several hours as we attempted to reach a compromise.

Tuesday morning, the AgNER Chairs reconvened and met with staff to review and finalize our conference budget package. At 2 p.m., the House convened for a voting session and we considered numerous bills, including:

– HB87, Probation Modifications/Sheriff Authority, would make the following changes:

- Allow a district attorney to file a probation modification petition.
- Allow the court to delegate the ability to shorten a period of probation to a probation officer.

- Allow all sheriff's offices in the state to contract for food and food services supplies without being subject to certain public contract laws. The bill passed with unanimous consent. [Note: Gov. Cooper signed HB 87 June 16]

– HB347, Sports Wagering/Horse Racing Wagering, would authorize, regulate, and tax sports wagering and horse racing in North Carolina. The Lottery Commission would be responsible for issuing licenses to involved parties and regulating wagering. I voted in favor and the bill passed, 69-44.

– SB582, North Carolina Farm Act of 2023, would make various changes to the agricultural and wastewater laws of the state. I voted in support and the bill passed, 77-38. The Senate voted to concur with the House changes and sent the bill to the governor for his consideration.

At 3 p.m., my colleagues and I met for a caucus to discuss upcoming legislation.

On Wednesday, I attended the NC Advanced Air Mobility Legislative Caucus. We were provided an update on the drone industry nationally as well as here in NC, and a drone flight demonstration was provided.

At 1 p.m., the AgNER Chairs presented their budget proposal to the full Appropriations Chairs. For a general perspective on how the budget process works, the numerous area subcommittees (Education, Agriculture, Health, etc.) determine their respective budget priorities. Once this

See GILLESPIE on page 11

Letters to the Editor

Enjoys reading fiction; would rather have facts

Thank you for printing T Swift's "Fact-checking the fact checkers."

I often read MCN and grow "sick and tired" of reading the misleading rants of Democrats (I guess they are as I cannot imagine what other party they would be.)

I get frustrated by reading their misinformed statements. I'm convinced of nothing else but their belief that if they strongly state a "fact" often enough, I and others will, indeed, believe it.

I do enjoy reading their fiction, but I would rather read facts that are backed up by reality.

Thank you again for printing this editorial. Maybe a few will realize they were just ignorant of facts not cognitively incapable of understanding than.

Sharon Sand – Franklin, N.C.

We need to get back to raising our children

Commissioner John Shearl captured both attention and criticism for his comment that Pre-K was comparable to "free daycare." The fact that the RAPC's paid ad does mention "Free Childcare" aside, Mr. Shearl is not wrong. In truth, and over a span of the last several decades, kindergarten and Pre-K have essentially supplanted the family in whose arms the raising of our children was once entrusted. Child-rearing has been turned into a plethora of "for profit" industries as mental health and social services (in addition to education) have managed to commandeer huge portions of funds and functions once solely the responsibility of parents.

I know what you're thinking - "he's hopelessly mired in the 1950s." In truth, the 1940s would be more accurate. However, I am well aware that the global economy, along with technological advances and other societal developments have stressed family life to the max.

That aside, I think present generations have a right to know there was once a time in America when women (upon discovering they were with child) did not immediately and with great haste seek out professional care-givers to raise their children. My generation did not have Pre-K or kindergarten, we were raised at home by our parents, families and villages and during WWII when everyone who could, worked to support the war effort.

You may recall the book Hillary Clinton penned in 1996 ("It Takes a Village - And Other Lessons Children Teach Us"). The First Lady was castigated by the "Party of Family Values" screaming "only parents raise children, not villages." Her detractors were wrong then just as they're wrong now in advocating womb-to-the-tomb care and denying children the natural parent-family supervision they need to develop and mature.

My parents both worked and my father served in the Army during WWII. My generation had grandparents, aunts, uncles, older cousins and our villages. By the time we reached the age of six and entered first grade we could read, print, write in cursive, were well versed in the art of fair play, knew the colors, how to draw and make things (including change for a dollar). My piggy bank was a toy cash register, a coin bank that accepted pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters which (if I counted it correctly) my grandmother and I would deposit in the account we shared at our local savings bank. I was four years old.

It was parents, families, churches and schools (the village) which raised my generation (together) and schools were a major contributor. The stated objective of The National Congress of Parents and Teachers prior to 1950 was: "To promote the welfare of children and youth in home, school, church, and community and to develop between educators and the general public such united efforts as will secure for every child the highest advantages in physical, mental, social, and spiritual education."

I'm quoting my mother's membership card in the NCP&T - 1949, the card she carried on her person until she died in 1983. That's how important it was to my parents' generation and why they tried so very hard to pass their devotion on to my generation.

My generation failed to honor the sacred traditions that allowed this country to recover and to help the world heal after WWII. German philosopher Georg Hegel (1770-1831) offers an observation that "life has a value only when it has something valuable as its object." Our children were once deemed valuable, not in the sense of a profit or loss line item on a spreadsheet but as the intrinsic summation of past accomplishments and our last best hope for America's future.

I implore parents, teachers, and villages; return to raising and nurturing our nation's children as you once did - so very, very well.

David Snell – Franklin, N.C.

Email Letters to the Editor to
maconcountynews@gmail.com

The Macon County News letters page is a public forum open to a wide variety of opinions as a right guaranteed in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Letters are neither accepted nor rejected based on content. Letters must be signed and contact information provided. Views expressed are not necessarily reflective of the opinions of publisher, editor or staff. Writers are asked to refrain from personal attacks against individuals or businesses.

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We need to change our gun laws now

In last week's *Macon County News* Mr. Swift wrote about some technical misunderstandings I may have about firearms. If he is right I certainly stand corrected. I will defer to his extensive background of handling weapons. He is a retired serviceman. I appreciate his sacrifice for our country. I served four years in the Navy. Yet, my experience with firearms pales in comparison to his.

Still, the current gun issue is about much more than the "right to keep and bear arms" as provided for in the second part of the Second Amendment. It is also about the first part of the Amendment- "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State..." Does the right to the security of a free State belong to only certain people? Or should it be provided to all? Does it mean protection from outside forces? Does it mean protection from internal threats? Could it be that some will need to yield a little on their right in order to broaden security?

As Abraham Maslow showed years ago safety/security is a basic human need. In our technologically advanced world it has become quite challenging to act on/respond to all the internal and external threats.

"Oh, Lord, please don't let me be misunderstood." are the

words sung by The Animals. I support the entire Second Amendment. I am an American. However, I wonder how long we can go on endangering all because a few refuse to see the difference between "arms" in 1789 and those we have in 2023. Is there nothing we can do to protect the "right to bear arms" while at the same assuring security for all Americans?

Bear in mind-I own a 45 caliber handgun, a 17-shot semi-automatic 22 rifle and a double-barrel 20 gauge shotgun. Yet, I would give up the most dangerous of these if our society asked me to do so through modern gun legislation.

I choose not to own a military-style weapon. That choice reflects my belief that America is misguided to allow private ownership of that category of arms.

There are few rights provided by the Constitution that are not without accompanying responsibilities. Speech. Helmets. Driver's licenses. Seat belts. Raising children. And others.

We have ignored the Second Amendment far too long. Too much focus has been on only a part of this important Amendment. We must examine it in its entirety. Consider it in relation to our modern firearms. We need to change our gun laws now. We must provide protection for all Americans.

Dave Waldrop – Webster, N.C.

GILLESPIE

Continued from
page 10

process is complete, the area chairs present their budget to the "Full Chairs" on the Appropriations Committee. When this process gets under way, it typically indicates that the budget process is in its concluding stages.

At 2 p.m., the House convened for a voting session and we considered various bills, including:

– SB347, Sports Wagering/Horse Racing Wagering, was considered for third and final reading, and it passed by a vote of 69-44. The bill was signed into law on Wednesday, June 14.

– HB834, Juv. Capacity/Transfer/Interrog/Confidential, would make various changes to the juvenile justice system, including:

- A procedure to determine a juvenile's capacity to stand trial would be created.

- Services to assist a juvenile attain the capacity to stand trial or consideration of involuntary commitment of a juvenile if attainment of capacity is not likely would be required. I voted in favor and the bill passed, 106-9. The bill is currently in Senate Rules Committee.

Following session, the AgNER Chairs finished their budget presentation. Thursday's House session was administrative and no votes were taken. The House concluded its legislative business for the week.

The legislative week of June 12-June 16, 2023, began with a non-voting session on Monday. Legislative business began in earnest on Tuesday with various committee meetings. House Rules, House Energy and Public Utilities, and House Environment all met throughout the day. I chaired the Environment Committee and we voted on one bill, SB240, which would provide choice of erosion and sedimentation control permitting authority for certain airport authorities. The bill passed committee.

Tuesday afternoon the House reconvened for a voting session and we considered several bills, including:

– HB130, Energy Choice/Solar Decommissioning Rqmts, would do the following:

- Prohibit local governments from adopting any ordinance that prohibits connection, reconnection, modification, or expansion of an energy service based on the type or source of energy to be delivered to the end-user of the energy service.

- Require owners of utility-scale solar projects to responsibly decommission the projects upon cessation of operations, and to establish financial assurance to cover the decommissioning.

I voted in favor and the bill passed, 74-36. It now heads to the governor.

– SB22, Rename Outdoor Heritage Advisory Council, would change the names of the Outdoor Heritage Advisory Council and the North Carolina Outdoor Heritage Trust Fund and to authorize the use of grants and programming to promote youth outdoor recreational activities. SB22 passed by unanimous consent. It was presented to the governor for his consideration.

On Wednesday, several committees met including, House Health, House State Government, and House Rules. A voting session convened that afternoon and we voted on a handful of bills, including:

– SB58, Protect Critical Infrastructure, would do the following:

- Update and consolidate existing statutes that relate to damage to utility property (electric, gas, and telecommunications).

- Increase penalties for acts of damage to energy facilities.
- Increase the penalty for trespass to energy facilities, and add a specific prohibition on trespass to wastewater treatment facilities.

- Increase the penalty for willful injury to wires and other fixtures of telephone, broadband, or cable telecommunications.

– SB58 passed with a 106-0 vote. The bill now heads back to the Senate for consideration.

– HB6, Uniformed Heroes Voting Act, would provide that no voter who is a law enforcement officer, first responder, correctional officer, or member of the military may be refused entry into a voting place due to appearing at the voting place in a required uniform. I voted in favor and the bill passed, 105-1. It now heads to the Senate.

– HB140, Civilian Traffic Investigators, would allow the cities of Burlington, Greensboro, Greenville, and Winston-Salem to conduct a three-year pilot program to hire civilian traffic investigators to investigate car crashes involving only property damage. Civilian traffic investigators would have no power to arrest and would not replace current law enforcement officials. I voted in support and the bill passed, 100-6.

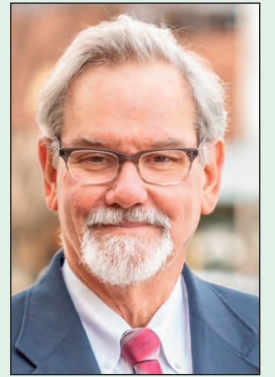
Upon session adjournment, the House concluded its legislative business for the week.

Let us know what you think

Concerned about a particular issue? Contact us and we will assist you in any way we can. E-mail: Andrew.Bailey@ncleg.gov or telephone: 919-733-5859.

What's new on the plateau

Patrick Taylor
Highlands Mayor



Patrick Taylor

Last Thursday night, the Highlands Town Board passed the budget for fiscal year 2023-24. The budget will be over \$29 million with about \$8 million in the general fund. The remaining portion reflects the cost of operating our enterprise funds, such as sanitation, water and sewer, and electricity.

While we have had some utility rate increases in the last decade, the town has not had a property tax increase in almost 10 years. And we are pleased to report that property taxes have not increased in this new budget.

The fire tax was increased several years ago to build the new fire station and to staff the fire department 24/7. The full-time staffing will go into effect around July 1. The projection is that the town can fund these full-time staff positions for about three years before a small increase in the fire tax may need to be reviewed. The new staffing will improve response times to accidents and fires and possibly improve fire insurance rates.

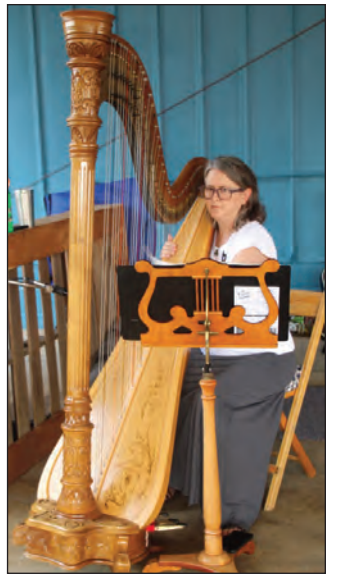
A major item in the new budget is the design phase for the replacement of the aging pre-clarifier tank at the water department. This engineering process will start at the beginning of July. The budget also has several road paving projects that will begin in the fall when traffic levels are low.

A major item at the board meeting last Thursday was the introduction of our new electrical consultants. The new consulting firm is Utility Technology Engineers-Consultants (UTEC). This company provides full services to area municipalities that operate electric utility departments. UTEC will be our representative for administering the current wholesale electricity contract that Highlands has with Duke Energy. In 2028 the town will have to enter a new wholesale contract with an energy provider. It could be that we continue with Duke Energy or go with another provider that offers a better contract. UTEC will broker proposals from potential providers such as Georgia Power, Santee Cooper, and others. They will analyze the proposed contracts and recommend the best one for Highlands. UTEC also provides expertise in other areas, such as green energy options, grid improvements, and cost-saving strategies. I am optimistic that our new consultant will help the town provide better and more reliable service to our residents and customers.

Now is the intense season of "Raleigh Watching." The North Carolina Legislature will approve a final state budget in the next week or so and send it to the governor for his signature. I meet with Josh Ward, our town manager, every morning to decipher the status of critical bills and budget items. We look at items like extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ), short-term rentals, accessory dwelling units, and changes in wastewater and stormwater regulations, just to name a few. To be honest, it is a mind-boggling process to try to monitor and track the fast flow of legislative initiatives. Like all municipalities, we rely on the NC League of Municipalities staff stationed in Raleigh to alert us to any problematic bills.

To paraphrase Forrest Gump, the conclusion of an NC legislative session is like a box of chocolates; you never know what you are going to get. I only hope it is all sweets for Highlands.

Franklin celebrates its heritage with 24th Annual Taste of Scotland





The 24th Annual Taste of Scotland was held last weekend with a downtown parade and an authentic Scottish Ceilidh. The festival continued on Saturday at the Macon County Fairgrounds with live music, Highland games, tartan information and all things Scottish.

Photos by Ellen Randall



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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 12 - 20. All suspects are innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.



Macon County Sheriff's Department

June 13

Rickie Lynn Antes II, 31, was charged with breaking and entering, larceny, possession of stolen goods/property and injury to real property. Caleb G. McConnell made the arrest.

June 14

Jeremy Thibideau, 44, was charged with purchase/sell/etc. of motor vehicle parts with altered ID. Sergeant Clay A. Saunders made the arrest.

Jonathan David Hunter, 52, was charged with public nuisance violation. Jordan C. Sutton made the arrest.

Kenneth Omar Matute-Matute, 30, was charged with statutory rape of a child under the age of 15, indecent liberties with children and failure to appear for speeding and reckless driving. Jonathan C. Bean made the arrest.

June 15

Richard Austin Dyer-Cook, 20, was charged with possession of synthetic cannabinoid and marijuana paraphernalia. Jason Ashe made the arrest.

Evan Jordan Jensen, 30, was charged with indecent liberties with children. Jordan C. Sutton made the arrest.

James Edward Hughes III, 45, was charged with warrant service for offense committed in jurisdiction. Caleb G. McConnell made the arrest.

Kisha Marie Mashburn, 30, was charged with possession of methamphetamine and possession of drug paraphernalia. Jordan C. Sutton made the arrest.

June 16

Jody Ray Allen, 51, was charged with larceny, possession of stolen goods/property. Tristan Howard made the arrest.

Michael Patrick Rockett, 52, was charged with injury to personal property. Jay Wright made the arrest.

June 17

Taylor Nicole Todd, 27, was charged with simple assault. Tristan Howard made the arrest.

Kevin Lee Swafford, 22, was charged with communicating threats. Gabe D. Bingham made the arrest.

Harlie Ronay Smith, 21, was charged with simple assault. Matthew D. Long made the arrest.

June 18

Clarence James McCall, 30, was charged with child support enforcement contempt. Tristan Howard made the arrest.

June 19

Jose Delores Orozoco Zamora, 40, was charged with failure to appear. Costin Jigla made the arrest.

June 20

Antonio Miguel Mendoza-Ruiz, 22, was charged with driving while license revoked. Deputy Cody J. Howard made the arrest.

Franklin Police Department

June 14

Jeremiah John Jones, 31, was charged with assault on a female. J.M. Norman made the arrest.

June 15

Tina Marie Cairnes, 43, was charged with possession of methamphetamine, possession of stolen motor vehicle, identify theft, financial card theft, resist/obstruct/delay and injury to property. R.S. Dula made the arrest.

June 18

Michael Patrick Rockett, 52, was charged with second degree trespass. Jonathan M. Lauffer made the arrest.

Jackson County Sheriff's Department

June 12

Blaine Aaron Owens, 24, of Sylva, was charged with failure to appear for driving while license revoked. A secured bond of \$250 was set.

Sierra Salone Jenkins, 32, of Whittier, was charged with unauthorized use of a motor vehicle. No bond was set.

June 13

Michael Brandon Woodring, 31, of Cullowhee, was charged with injury to personal property, communicating threats and assault on a female. No bond was set.

John Paul Garcia, 60, of Asheville, was charged with failure to appear for second degree trespass. A secured bond of \$1,000 was set.

Michael Glanville, 52, of Sapphire, was charged with probation violation. A secured bond of \$25,000 was set.

Dalton Faron Taylor, 20, of Sylva, was charged with simple assault. A secured bond of \$2,000 was set.

June 14

David Joe Melton, 25, of Cullowhee, was charged with resisting a public officer. A secured bond of \$1,000 was set.

Brad Preston Hooks, 42, of Waynesville, was charged with warrant service for other jurisdiction. A secured bond of \$150,000 was set.

Paul Adam Price, 52, of Cherokee, was charged with failure to appear for allow motor vehicle with no registration, fictitious/altered title/registration card/tag, operate a vehicle with no insurance, driving while license revoked, possession of stolen goods/property and misdemeanor larceny. A secured bond of \$5,000 was set.

Jonathan Daniel Barker, 47, of Sylva, was charged with possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of marijuana and felony possession of cocaine. A secured bond of \$40,000 was set.

Mary Dalena Smith, 38, of Whittier, was charged with failure to appear for simple assault.

Sierra Astrid Blalock, 30, of Sylva, was charged with possession of drug paraphernalia, maintain a vehicle/dwelling/place for a controlled substance and possession with intent to manufacture/sell/deliver cocaine. A secured bond of \$20,000 was set.

Kent Donald Chmielewski, 58, of Dillsboro, was charged with possession with intent to sell/deliver a schedule VI controlled substance, possession of marijuana paraphernalia, possession of marijuana less than 1/2 to 1 1/2 oz and maintain a vehicle/dwelling/place for a controlled substance. A secured bond of \$10,000 was set.

June 15

Jerry Ray King, 49, of Sylva, was charged with nonviolent family offenses. A secured bond of \$3,108 was set.

Jerry Lee Lossiah, 43, of Cherokee, was charged with failure to appear for felony possession of a schedule II controlled substance. No bond was set.

Robert Larry Sawyer, 53, of Sylva, was charged with governor's warrant. No bond was set.

John Edward Lewis, 44, of Cullowhee, was charged with domestic violence protective order violation. No bond was set.

June 16

Milburn Harrison Caldwell, 50, of Whittier, was charged with warrant service for other jurisdiction. A secured bond of \$15,000 was set.

Jeremy Ian Reese, 39, of Cullowhee, was charged with resist/obstruct/delay and simple assault. No bond was set.

June 17

Wayne Dennis Gerba, 44, of Sylva, was charged with injury to personal property, destruction/damage/vandalism of property and assault on a female. A secured bond of \$5,000 was set.

Oscar Hernandez Diaz, 37, of Sylva, was charged with failure to appear for carrying a concealed weapon. A secured bond of \$1,500 was set.

Angel Marie Brown, 32, of Waynesville, was charged with extradition of fugitive. A secured bond of \$10,000 was set.

June 18

Reagan Elizabeth Parton, 30, of Whittier, was charged with failure to appear for out of county probation violation. A secured bond of \$30,000 was set.

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Highlands author pens #1 best seller on Amazon

Internationally bestselling author Marc Alan Edelheit has once again demonstrated his knack for captivating audiences with his latest epic fantasy novel "The Tiger's Fight." Released on June 1, the novel immediately climbed the ranks, becoming an Amazon #1 bestseller within 24 hours of its release.



Marc Alan Edelheit

"The Tiger's Fight" is the seventh installment in the award-winning The Stiger Chronicles series. It continues the compelling journey of Ben Stiger, an infamous nobleman and born fighter, who has risen from the ranks of an infantry captain to become emperor. The series, known for its historical accuracy and high-stakes adventure, has previously won multiple awards including the Best Fantasy Independent Publisher Book Award.



In this latest release, Stiger must navigate a host of challenges. He faces armies marching toward his capital, treachery within his own ranks, a missing High Priest and depleted treasury, not to mention dealing with invading enemies and tribes preparing to attack. Stiger must gather every available resource and ally if he hopes to save his empire and fulfill his destiny.

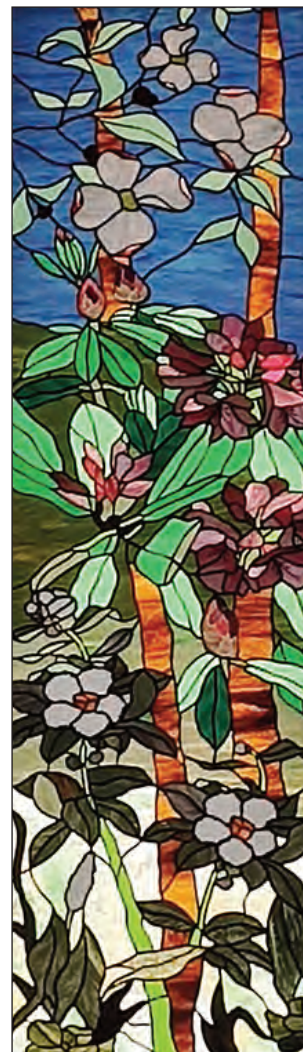
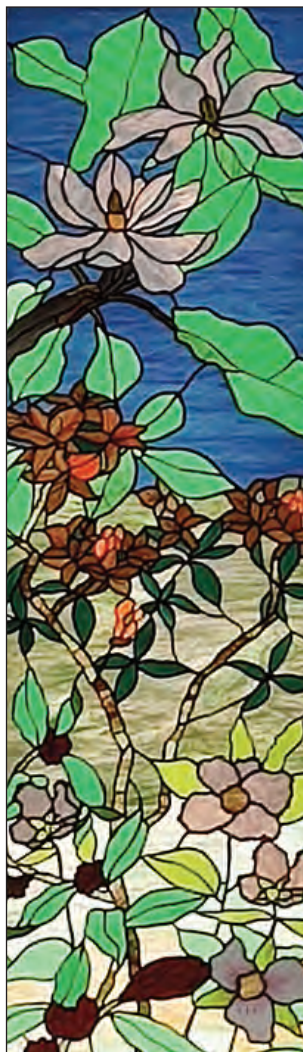
"The empire is surrounded by enemies, all vying for blood. The situation seems hopeless, but Stiger is not one to give up, not ever. The fight ahead is his fight...the Tiger's Fight," Edelheit

teases in the book's description.

Marc Alan Edelheit, an accomplished author and passionate history fan with over 24 books under his belt, has made his name creating vivid fantasy and sci-fi worlds infused with historical accuracy. Since publishing his first fantasy novel in 2015, Edelheit has won multiple awards and cultivated a dedicated international fan base.

Marc Alan Edelheit is an avid reader and accomplished author that spends his days – and nights – dreaming and writing about all things fantasy and sci-fi. He has traveled the world, from Asia to Europe, and incorporates much of that passion into his work to bring greater realism to his books. In 2021, he moved his family back to a cabin in the mountains near Highlands, N.C., where he grew up in the 1980s.

Stained glass windows added to library decor



Last month the Macon County Public Library held a dedication ceremony unveiling new stained glass windows in the library's living room. Local stained-glass artist John Phillips of Fire & Light Studio designed and created the panels depicting native plant species. The design includes flowers and foliage identified by naturalist William Bartram during his travels in the area during the late 1700s, including flame azalea, mountain camellia, catawba rhododendron and dogwood.

Honored for making a significant contribution to the project were Gene and Nancy Cottrell. The Friends of the Macon County Public Library also contributed. The library is located at 149 Siler Farm Road in Franklin. Photos by Vickie Carpenter

Gotcha Groove playing at Concerts on the Creek

The 14th annual season of Concerts on the Creek continues with a performance by Gotcha Groove on Friday, June 23, from 7-9 p.m. at the Bridge Park stage in Sylva.

Gotcha Groove is a slamin' seven-member corporate/private event/party band based in the Carolinas and made up of an all-star lineup of exceptionally talented performers. This group is a well-oiled machine and their repertoire is massive and diverse, covering R&B, soul, funk, rock, oldies, beach, and dance tunes from the last seven decades.

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

through Labor Day.

Everyone is encouraged to bring a chair or blanket. These events are free but donations are encouraged. Dogs must be on a leash. No smoking, vaping, coolers or tents are allowed. Food and beverage vendors are on site.

These concerts are organized and produced by the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce, the Town of Sylva and the Jackson County Parks and Recreation Department.

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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CARS

YEAR	MAKE	MODEL	MILES
2022	VW	Taos AWD	29,618
2021	Cadillac	XT6 AWD	18,875
2021	Chevrolet	Corvette	5,792
2020	Chevrolet	Bolt	17,845
2020	Chevrolet	Equinox AWD	47,233
2019	Chevrolet	Camaro 2SS	14,162
2019	Chevrolet	Equinox LS AWD	64,233
2019	GMC	Acadia	17,045
2019	Dodge	Journey	80,887
2019	Toyota	Camry LE	54,312
2018	Hyundia	Elantra	51,067
2018	Toyota	Camry XSE	71,178
2017	GMC	Acadia	80,692
2016	Mini Cooper		57,659

SUVS

YEAR	MAKE	MODEL	MILES
2023	Chevrolet	Tahoe	257
2023	Chevrolet	Tahoe Z71	14,662
2023	Honda	CRV AWD	8,584
2023	Hyundia	Sante Fe	14,470
2023	Mazda	CX-50 AWD Premier	9,506
2023	Traverse	High Country AWD	831
2022	Chevrolet	Tahoe 4x4	16,410

2022	Ford	Bronco	1,315
2022	Ford	Explorer XLT	26,999
2022	Jeep	Wrangler Sahara Unlimited	10,539
2022	Kia	EV6 GT	3,251
2022	Tahoe	RST 4x4	24,134
2021	Ford	Bronco Badlands AWD	1,237
2021	Cadillac	XT6 AWD	23,121
2021	GMC	Yukon XL	53,356
2021	Hyudia	Palisade AWD	64,073
2021	Jeep	Cherokee Trailhawk	29,056
2021	Jeep	Wrangler Sport	8,094
2021	Subaru	Ascent AWD	28,045
2020	Acura	MDX AWD	46,606
2020	Ford	Explorer	31,399
2020	Jeep	Wrangler Rubicon Unlimited	24,249
2020	Kia	Telluride	19,480
2019	Chevrolet	Trax LT AWD	18,211
2019	Chrysler	Pacifica Touring L	91,992
2018	Chevrolet	Equinox LT	23,569
2017	Jeep	Cherokee	61,870
2017	Subaru	Crosstek	99,022
2014	Kia	Sorento SX-L	93,532

TRUCKS

YEAR	MAKE	MODEL	MILES
2023	Chevrolet	2500 LT Z-71	1,131
2022	Chevrolet	1500 Custom 4x4	289

2022	Chevrolet	2500 LTZ	4,635
2022	Chevrolet	2500 HD	5,114
2022	GMC	Sierra	11,577
2022	Hyundia	Sante Cruz Ltd	2,682
2022	Nissan	Frontier Pro 4x	7,859
2022	Nissan	Titan Pro 4x	1,729
2022	Toyota	Tacoma TRD	12,056
2021	Chevrolet	1500 4x4	10,243
2021	Chevrolet	1500 RST	34,026
2021	Chevrolet	Colorado ZR-2	10,842
2021	Chevrolet	LT Trailboss	34,069
2021	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500	5,822
2021	Chevrolet	Trailboss Crew	22,256
2021	Ford	F-150 SuperCrew Cab	32,251
2020	Chevrolet	1500 RST	90,498
2020	Chevrolet	Colorado ZR-2	36,463
2020	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500 High Country	22,601
2020	Chevrolet	Silverado 1500 RST	90,498
2020	GMC	Sierra SLT	21,064
2020	Toyota	Tacoma Predator	42,773
2020	Toyota	Tacoma SR	12,448
2019	Chevrolet	Trailboss LT	44,594
2018	GMC	Sierra Reg Cab	94,092
2017	Ram	2500 Reg Cab	47,650
2015	GMC	Canyon	89,008



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Zahner Lecture Series 'Native Plants for a Vegetable Garden'

The Highlands Biological Foundation's (HBF) Zahner Conservation Lecture series continues on Thursday, June 22, at 6 p.m. Horticulturist Adam Bigelow will take the stage to discuss "Native Plants for the Vegetable Garden." Following the lecture, attendees will have the opportunity to attend a small reception.

Native plants hold the key to transforming a garden and preserve landscapes and ecosystems. Bigelow will delve into the numerous benefits of native flora while gaining insights into the detrimental impacts of invasive species. Discover how these indigenous wonders attract beneficial insects, add natural beauty to vegetable and flower gardens, and even contribute to a nutritious dinner plate. Explore the versatile roles that native plants play in enhancing both vegetable gardens and landscapes.

Adam Bigelow, a seasoned horticulturist and amateur botanist residing in Cullowhee, has dedicated more than 20 years to studying the diverse flora of Southern Appalachia. He is owner and operator of Bigelow's Botanical Excursions, an eco-tour business specializing in guided plant walks throughout Western North Carolina. Bigelow's passion for organic gardening led him to establish and manage the Cullowhee Community Garden for a decade. As a member of the planning committee for the Cullowhee Native Plant Conference, Bigelow has been a devoted attendee for many years, further deepening his knowledge and expertise.

All are invited to participate in HBF's free Zahner lectures which will be held at the Highlands Nature Center, 930 Horse Cove Road, on Thursdays at 6 p.m. through Aug. 10. To preview HBF's full Zahner lecture lineup, visit www.highlandsbiological.org. The Highlands Nature Center is part of the Highlands Biological Station, a multi-campus center of Western Carolina University.



Horticulturist Adam Bigelow is the guest speaker for the next installment of the Zahner Lecture Series on Thursday, June 22.

Deaths & Funerals



Wanda Lee Burchfield Cabe

Wanda Lee Burchfield Cabe, 88, of Franklin, N.C., passed away Sunday, June 18, 2023.

She was born in Bryson City, N.C., to the late William and Oma Cloer Burchfield. She was preceded in death by her parents; husband, Ted Cabe; sister, Marviline Clayton; and brother, William "Bill" Burchfield.

She was a member of Watauga Baptist Church and retired from CR Industries. She loved to sew, garden, can and freeze food, and do crafts. She loved most of all spending time with her grandchildren and great grandchildren.

She is survived by her four daughters, Yvonne Cabe Rogers of Franklin, Sherry Smith (Lewis) of Franklin, Eileen Dowdle of Otto, Gail Moyer of Franklin, Dempsey Birchfield of Plantation, Fla.; four grandchildren, Sabrina Bowers, Grady Smith, Trampis Dowdle, Grayson Smith; and three great grandchildren, Greg Smith, Dawson Bowers, and Arissa Bowers.

A funeral service will be held Thursday, June 22, at 2 p.m., in the Chapel of Macon Funeral Home. Rev. David Lee Williams and Rev. Lewis Smith will officiate. Burial will be in the Watauga Baptist Church Cemetery. The family will receive friends 1 to 2 p.m., one hour prior to the service.

Pallbearers will be Grady Smith, Grayson Smith, Greg Smith, Trampis Dowdle, Dawson Bowers, and Richard Bowers.

In lieu of flowers, memorials can be made to Samaritans Purse or St Jude's Childrens Hospital.

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



Wanda Lee Cabe

Brian David Dills

Brian David Dills, 43, of Franklin, N.C., passed away June 19, 2023.

He was born in Macon County to Leroy and Gail Hooper Dills. He attended Prentiss Church of God. He loved to paint, plant flowers, and craft making. He will be missed by all, especially his dogs, Hatchi and Ranger.

He is survived by his parents, Leroy and Gail Dills; brother, Greg Dills (Laura) of Franklin; niece, Kimmie Dills; nephews, David, Kwin, and Everett Dills; great nephew, Carter Dills; aunts, Barbara Redman of Asheville, Vickie Smith of Franklin, Janet Reed of Franklin, Peggy Hannah of Franklin; uncles, Johnny Dills of Sedro Wooley, Wash.; and numerous cousins.

A funeral service will be held Saturday, June 24, at 11 a.m., in the Chapel of Macon Funeral Home. Rev. Darian Cochran will officiate. Burial will be in the Woodlawn Cemetery. The family will receive friends from 10 to 11 a.m., one hour prior to the service.

Pallbearers will be David Ramey, Kevin Dills, Mike Gibbs, Kelly Teague, Ethan Teague, and Isaac Gibson.

In lieu of flowers, memorials can be made to 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.



Brian David Dills

Lieutenant Colonel Grace Phyllis Johnson

Lieutenant Colonel Grace Phyllis Johnson, USA, Retired, 82, of Franklin, N.C., went to the ultimate reunion with her Heavenly Father and the family of the Lord Jesus Christ on, June 13, 2023.

Born in Chicago, Ill., she was the daughter of the late Eric Valentine Johnson and Margaret Nelson Johnson. She was preceded in death by her parents; brother-in-law, Gene Lynn; and nephew-in-law, Justin Moe.

She began her career at Cook County School of Nursing in Chicago. After completing required scholarship student service at Cook County Hospital, she went on to work at a Chicago area VA [Veterans Administration] hospital while taking courses at the University of Illinois. Seeking new adventures, she moved to the research triangle of North Carolina where she worked in another VA hospital while continuing her education at University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. In the '60s she and her sister Beverly quit their jobs in order to travel in Europe and the Middle East, enabling them to visit former classmates in Germany, France and England.

After returning home on the Queen Mary, she furthered her education at Cedarville College in Ohio.

She then entered the U.S. Army which led to a 25-year career in the Army Nurse Corp, including tours of duty in Vietnam, Korea, Germany, Grenada, Iran and many stateside assignments. She began and ended her military career in Ft. Lewis, Wash.

She spent her retirement in beautiful Franklin, N.C., finally close to her family. She stayed very active with many community, nonprofit, military service and cultural organizations. Throughout her life she sang in church and area choirs, most recently where she attended First Alliance Church, as she sought to faithfully serve her Lord Jesus Christ.

She is survived by her sister, Beverly Lynn of Franklin; niece, Kristina Lynn Moe of Franklin; two nephews, Bruce David Lynn (Amy) of Clyde, N.C., and Timothy John Lynn (Jennifer) of Franklin; five great nieces and nephews, Summer, Randy, Eliza, Molly, and Brody.

A celebration of life will be held Sunday June 25, at 4 p.m., in the Chapel of Macon Funeral Home. Rev. Bradley Bennett will officiate. The family will receive friends 3 to 4 p.m.

Flowers or plants are welcome, but please consider memorial donations to organizations that remind you of Grace.

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

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.



Lt. Col. Grace Johnson

Buford Carl Smith Jr.

Buford Carl Smith Jr, 66, of Franklin, N.C., passed away June 13, 2023.

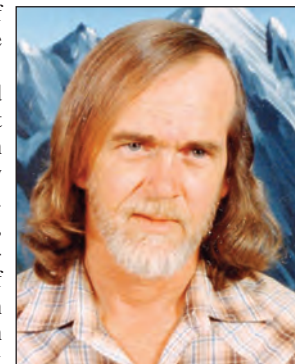
He was born to the late Buford Carl Smith Sr. and Martha Borst Smith. He was preceded in death by his father and brother, Randy Smith. He was a fork lift operator.

He is survived by his mother, Martha Smith of Franklin; long-time companion, Maggie Bettis of Otto; sons, Thomas William Smith (Jessica) and Timothy Carl Smith of Franklin; daughter, Kimberly Smith of Otto; and numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren.

A celebration of life was held Friday, June 16, in the Chapel of Macon Funeral Home. Rev. Steve Reeves officiated.

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

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.



Buford Carl Smith Jr.



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Deaths & Funerals

John Richard Hubsch

John Richard Hubsch, 71, passed away on June 9, 2023, at after a brief battle with cancer. Born in New York City in 1951 and raised in the Boston area, he attended Penn State University and graduated from Florida State University. He moved to Macon County in 2014 from Jacksonville, Fla., where he raised a family and lived for more than 30 years. He retired in 2011 after 36 years as a Special Agent with the U.S. Government with many of his later years spent working all over the United States and Europe.

He was a member of the Franklin Rotary Club, Memorial United Methodist Church, and a frequent visitor of the Franklin Health & Fitness Center. Always the avid sports fan, you could find him cheering on his beloved Florida State Seminoles every fall as well as supporting all things Boston sports. To no surprise, his last words were "Did the Noles win?" in regards to an FSU women's softball game. He also truly loved to travel, having visited more than 20 countries, and always seemed to have a next trip planned.

To those who knew him best, he was a kind and caring presence who could brighten any room with his quick wit and readily available "dad jokes."

He is survived by his wife, Sally Hubsch of Franklin, N.C.; three children and their spouses, Kelly and Scott Porter of Brentwood, Tenn., Jeremy and Autumn Hubsch of Jupiter, Fla., and Timothy and Molly Hubsch of Orlando, Fla.; his five beloved grandchildren, to whom he was known as "Big Papi" and was their biggest sideline fan — John Preston (JP) and Ella Kate Porter, Addison and Logan Hubsch, and Harrison Hubsch; brothers, Jeff and Allen Hubsch; sister, Joellen McCroan; stepchildren, Eric Ledbetter and Lauren Frick; and 10 nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Allen and Joan Hubsch, and his sister, Jerri Holman.

The family is planning a small private ceremony.

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

Bryant-Grant Funeral Home and Crematory is serving the Hubsch family.

Christopher Powell Long

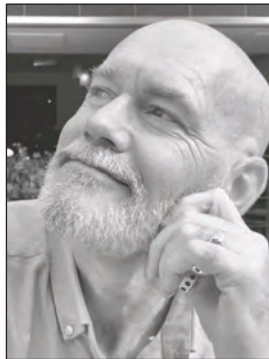
Christopher Powell Long, 57, of Craigeuk, Scotland, passed away on Monday, May 8, 2023, in Scotland, after a short period of declining health.

He was born in Knoxville, Tenn., to the late Leonard Long, formerly of Franklin and Judith Plowman Long Fry of Verwood, England.

In addition to his mother, he is survived by his stepfather, Michael Fry of Verwood, England; two brothers and their families, Ashley V. Long (Amanda) and their sons, Ryan and Alexander Long of Wimborne, England, and Nicholas A. Long (Leanne) and their daughters, Morgan and Tiereny Long of Ringwod, England; two stepbrothers, Stuart Fry and his family and Nick Fry and his family, all of Wimborne, England; aunts and uncles, Linda Long Turpin of Franklin, Glenda Long Hunsucker (Tim) of Charlotte, Diana Plowman of Peterborough, England and Michael Plowman of Peterborough, England; and many American and English cousins, who loved him dearly.

In addition to his father, he was predeceased by his grandparents, Paul and Gertrude Long of Franklin and George and Elsie Plowman of Kent, England, Grace Ledford (Tom), Kathryn Hyde (Herbert), Iris Wamsley (Ed) and James Turpin.

Private family services will be held in Verwood, England and Franklin, N.C., at a later date.



Christopher Long

Cecil Vannie Elders

Cecil Vannie Elders, 86, of Franklin, N.C., passed away Sunday, June 18, 2023.

He was born in Swain County to the late Thurman and Alta Davis Elders. He was a member of Watauga Baptist Church and the Macon County Coon Hunters Association. He liked to bear hunt.

He is preceded in death by his parents; daughter, Beverly Whittington; siblings, Emogene Dills, Macy Dills, Houston Elders; and a granddaughter, Danielle Dorsey.

He is survived by a son, Jerry Elders of Franklin; sisters, Joyce Berry and Barbara Anderson of Franklin; brothers, Ralph Elders of Dallas, N.C., Sylvester Elders of Franklin, Gary Elders of Franklin; three grandchildren, Heath Elders, Ryan Elders (Kelsey), and Mark Whittington; and two great grandchildren, Declan and Falon.

Services will be held Friday, June 23, at 3 p.m., in the Chapel of Macon Funeral Home. Rev. David Lee Williams, Rev. Dean Elders, and Rev. Roy Lowe will officiate. The family will receive friends on Thursday June 22, from 6 to 8 p.m. at Macon Funeral Home. American Legion Post #108 and VFW Post #7339 will conduct military honors. Burial will be in the Watauga Baptist Church Cemetery.

Pallbearers will be Heath Elders, Ryan Elders, Mark Berry, Randy Berry, Logan Berry, Landon Berry, and Terry Cabe. Honorary pallbearers will be the Macon County Coon Hunters Association.

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

Online condolences at www.maconfuneralhome.com.

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.



Cecil Vannie Elders

Pearl Viola Cook Nichols

Pearl Viola Cook Nichols, 86, formerly of Franklin, N.C., passed away May 22, 2023.

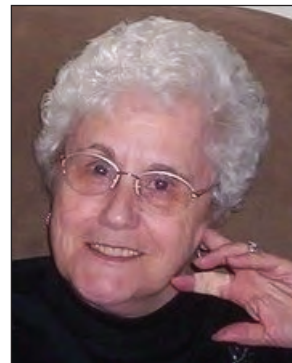
She was born to the late Harland and Goldia Jarrells Cook in Wyoming, West Virginia. She is preceded in death by her parents; husband, James "Jim" Nichols; and son, Donnie Plumb.

She is survived by her sons, Jerry Plumb of Findley, Ill., Eddie Plumb (Cindy) of Windsor, Ill., Mike Nichols (Vickie) of Fairview, N.C.; daughter, Susan Grandfield (Jim) of Decatur, Ill.; daughter-in-law, Okhie Plumb; siblings, Henry Jerrells, Brenda Holloway, Dixie Owen; 14 grandchildren; 25 great grandchildren; 9 great great grandchildren, and one great great great grandchild; and several nieces and nephews.

A celebration of life will be held Aug. 12, at 1 p.m., in the Chapel of Macon Funeral Home. The family will receive friends from 12 to 1 p.m., one hour prior to the service.

Online condolences at www.maconfuneralhome.com.

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.



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James Carl Doolin

James Carl Doolin, 70, passed away Tuesday, June 13, 2023.

He was born June 28, 1952, to the late Shirley Doolin and Jeanette Nique Doolin. He owned and operated a septic business. He was a loving father, grandfather, son, and brother. He was loved by his family very much. He like to fish and collect arrowheads. He was a U.S. Army veteran.

Survivors include his daughter, Candice Doolin Walker; six grandchildren; and two sisters, Cleadie Frantz and Cindy Webster.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by a son, James Doolin, Jr.

A military graveside service will be held Friday, June 23, at 12 p.m. at the WNC State Veterans Cemetery in Black Mountain, N.C.

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

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

Jess 'Alex' Corbin Jr.

Jess "Alex" Corbin Jr., 77, of Highlands, N.C., passed away on Wednesday, June 14, 2023.

He was born to the late Jess Alexander Corbin Sr. and Thelma Harris Corbin. He is preceded in death by his parents; and two brothers, Jim Corbin and Earl Corbin.

He retired as the chief building inspector for the town of Waynesville. He served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War. He loved to coon hunt, fish, and was an avid baseball and football fan. Most of all he loved spending time with the grandkids.

He is survived by his wife of 52 years, Paulette Icenhower Corbin; sons, Tony Corbin (Crystal) of Manteo, N.C., Paul Corbin (Melissa) of Highlands; mother-in-law, Floy Icenhower; siblings, Tex Corbin of Franklin, Lewis Corbin of Franklin, Judy Sluder of Asheville, N.C., Joanne Clark of Garner, N.C.; three grandchildren, Olivia, Bryson, and Alice.

A funeral service was held Saturday, June 17, at Buck Creek Baptist Church with Rev. Roy Lowe and Rev. Jamie Passmore officiating. Burial was in the Buck Creek Baptist Church Cemetery.

Pallbearers were Alan Corbin, Bryson Corbin, Matt Clark, Shannon Morgan, Nick Morgan, and Stacy Vinson.

In lieu of flowers, memorial can be made to Buck Creek Baptist Church.

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

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.

Donna Hull Tew

Donna Hull Tew, 67, of Highlands, N.C., passed away Monday, June 12, 2023.

She was born to the late Robert Hull and Mary Brittain Hull, in Burke County, North Carolina. She was a surgical nurse and worked for many years at Highlands Cashiers Hospital.

She is survived by her mother, Mary Hull of Hickory, N.C.; sisters, Melissa Rigsbee (Michael) of Cumming, Ga., Christa Huber (Jeff) of Raleigh, N.C.; niece, Camryn Huber; nephews, Ryan Huber, and Brennen Huber, of Raleigh; and her loving aunt, Ruby McMillin.

No services are planned at this time.

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

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.



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Nashville Superspeedway goes back to NASCAR's earliest glory days in '50s

Holly Cain – NASCAR Wire Service

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. - Offering both a rich history and a modern-day sparkle on the NASCAR calendar, Nashville Superspeedway holds a vital position in the sport – the track home to the popular Ally 400 NASCAR Cup Series race Sunday night (7 p.m. ET on NBC, PRN and SiriusXM NASCAR Radio) and the town host to the annual NASCAR Awards Ceremony each winter.

Not only is the track's locale – about a 20-minute drive from Nashville proper – a vibrant place full of both long-standing and newly-minted NASCAR fans, but the race weekend atmosphere also has a distinct duel feel of historic appreciation and hip place-to-be on the calendar.

Many of NASCAR's brightest stars claim Tennessee roots – from NASCAR Hall of Famer Darrell Waltrip and his two-time Daytona 500-winning younger brother Michael to another two-time Daytona 500 winner Sterling Marlin and the late, fan favorite and NASCAR CRAFTSMAN Truck Series champion Bobby Hamilton.

The Nashville area actually goes back to NASCAR's earliest glory days. NASCAR Hall of Famer Joe Weatherly won the sport's first premier series race (formerly called the Grand National Series) at the Nashville Fairgrounds across town in 1958 and Geoffrey Bodine won the last race there in 1984; the sport's King, seven-time NASCAR Cup Series champion Richard Petty is the all-time winningest at that former half-mile venue, hoisting nine trophies there.

Modern day NASCAR visits the neighboring 1.33-mile concrete Nashville Superspeedway in Lebanon, Tenn. Completed in 2001, it has picked up the race baton and is a top-tier event for both fan and competitor.

"I like Nashville," Wood Brothers Racing driver Harrison Burton said. "It's a cool city and the fans are always excited. It's been a fun racetrack for us with lots of lane choices."

The track's history is unique in that there were exciting key races at Nashville Superspeedway in the NASCAR Xfinity Series and NASCAR CRAFTSMAN Truck Series from 2001-2011, before a decade-long break on the competitive calendar and a purchase two years ago by Speedway Motors.

Greg Biffle won the very first NASCAR Xfinity Series race at Nashville Superspeedway in 2001 and Carl Edwards won the last during that time frame. In fact, Edwards is the all-time winningest Xfinity Series driver at the track with five victories – including three straight from 2006-07 and a series sweep in 2011.

Five active drivers – but only one fulltime championship contender – have wins at the track, which is hosting Saturday's Tennessee Lottery 250 (3:30 p.m. ET on USA Network, PRN and SiriusXM NASCAR Radio)

Kyle Busch and Justin Allgaier are the most recent win-



NASCAR racing continues this weekend at the Nashville SuperSpeedway with the NASCAR Cup Series on Sunday at 7:30; Xfinity Series Saturday at 3:30; and Craftsman Truck Series Friday at 8 p.m.

ners taking the coveted Gibson guitar trophies in 2021 and 2022, respectively.

Similarly, the NASCAR CRAFTSMAN Truck Series had a successful run of races from 2001-2011. Scott Riggs won the inaugural event, from the pole position in 2001, leading a dominating 131 of the 150 laps. Austin Dillon closed that decade with a win in the 2011 CRAFTSMAN Truck Series race.

There's been only one name to know since the series has been back. Ryan Preece won both the 2021 and 2022 Truck races and is going for his third consecutive in Friday night's Rackley Roofing 200 (8 p.m. ET on FS1, MRN and SiriusXM NASCAR Radio).

The NASCAR Cup Series marks only its third race at Nashville Superspeedway with a pair of past champions earning the previous two Gibson guitar trophies. Hendrick Motorsports driver Kyle Larson led a dominating 264 of 300 laps and held off runner-up Ross Chastain by more than 4-seconds to claim the 2021 victory en route to his first NASCAR Cup Series championship.

Last year, Larson's teammate Chase Elliott held off Kurt Busch by .551-seconds to earn the 2022 race win. Denny Hamlin led the most laps (114) but finished sixth.

The drivers and teams have immediately taken to one of the newer venues but most traditional of locations on the NASCAR Cup Series schedule.

"It's an interesting place," said Team Penske driver Austin

Cindric. "It's an intermediate that drives like a short track or a short track that drives like an intermediate. It probably depends on how your car is handling, but it's a pretty involved racetrack with a lot of shifting and different lanes.

"It's a nice race again this year, so I'm looking forward to that. Obviously, I don't think there are too many better locations for a NASCAR race to be, so I think it definitely deserves a race on the schedule and I'm looking forward to going back."

Stewart-Haas Racing shuffles crew chief lineup

KANNAPOLIS, N.C. – Stewart-Haas Racing (SHR) has made select organizational changes to its crew chief lineup that will be in effect beginning with the upcoming Nashville (Tenn.) Superspeedway race weekend June 24-25.

Richard Boswell, the main steward of SHR's NASCAR Xfinity Series program since its inception in 2017, is now the crew chief for driver Chase Briscoe and the No. 14 team in the NASCAR Cup Series. Boswell had been the crew chief for SHR's No. 98 Xfinity Series team and driver Riley Herbst. Boswell won eight Xfinity Series races with Briscoe over a three-year span (2018-2020), including an impressive six-win campaign in 2020, before becoming the crew chief for Herbst in 2021.

John Klausmeier, the former crew chief for the No. 14 team, remains at SHR and has transitioned to the company's vehicle performance group.



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Replacing Boswell as crew chief for the No. 98 Xfinity Series team is Davin Restivo. Since 2022, Restivo has been the lead engineer for the No. 10 team and driver Aric Almirola in the Cup Series. Prior to his time with the No. 10 outfit, Restivo was the lead engineer for driver Cole Custer, first in the Xfinity Series (2019) and then moving up with Custer to the Cup Series (2020-2021). Before joining SHR in 2019, Restivo was an engineer at Chip Ganassi Racing.



Davin Restivo Replaces Boswell as Crew Chief for Riley Herbst and No. 98 Xfinity Series Team.

“We made these changes in the best interests of the entire organization,” said Greg Zipadelli, chief competition officer, SHR. “Different people in new positions brings new perspectives. There’s still a lot of racing left to do this year, which means there’s still a lot of opportunity. We need to seize these opportunities and make the most of them, and fresh perspectives from the top of the pit box to the preparation inside the shop will help us do that.”

Justin Marks Added to Kaulig Racing’s Xfinity Series Lineup

LEXINGTON, N.C. – Kaulig Racing has announced that Trackhouse Racing founder and owner Justin Marks will drive the No. 10 Jockey Chevrolet in the July 1 NASCAR Xfinity Series (NXS) race on the Chicago Street Course.

The quality of Kaulig Racing’s Chevrolets, along with the inaugural street race made for an easy decision for both Kaulig Racing and Marks to team up for this historic event. Marks will step away from his NASCAR Cup Series (NCS) owner duties to join forces with Kaulig Racing’s powerhouse road-course racing program and race in the NXS for the first time since 2018.

“It’s very difficult to retire as a racecar driver,” said the 41-year-old Marks. “I’ve got a lot of experience on street courses, so when NASCAR announced it was going to Chicago, I just felt like I really had to be a part of that experience. We have a great relationship with Kaulig Racing through our pit crew department and being a fellow Chevrolet team, so making my return to racing with the team just felt right. Jockey coming on board makes it even more enticing to run well in Chicago.”

Marks owns 35-career NXS starts including a victory at the Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course in 2016, along with three top five and seven top-10 finishes. Each start has come on road courses.

Marks, whose Trackhouse Racing team fields Cup Series entries for drivers Daniel Suárez and Ross Chastain, boasts an extensive sports-car racing resumé, earning multiple wins across the Rolex Grand-Am Sports Car Series and the WeatherTech SportsCar Championship Series. Most recently, he won the Trans-Am race at Lime Rock Park in Connecticut on May 29.

He is with the right organization to return to victory lane in Chicago.

Of Kaulig Racing’s 22-total Xfinity wins, nine have come



John Klausmeier transitions to SHR’s Vehicle Performance Group.

at road courses. The team also earned its first win in the NCS with its victory at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Road Course in 2021 with AJ Allmendinger.

“If you’re in a road-course car in the Xfinity Series, AJ [Allmendinger] demonstrates pretty consistently, that the Kaulig Racing cars are the ones you want to be sitting in,” said Marks. “It’s going to be a very unique event, and I know we will have a good racecar.”

Kaulig Racing’s No. 10 Chevrolet, which features an all-star roster, has earned two wins so far in the 2023 Xfinity season. The three-car NXS team has earned three-total wins in

2023, along with nine top fives, 22 top-10 finishes and 319 laps led.

“We’re excited to have Justin [Marks], another road-course rider, come out of retirement and compete for us in the Xfinity Series,” said Chris Rice, president of Kaulig Racing. “I think that says a lot about the



Trackhouse Racing founder and owner Justin Marks will drive the No. 10 Jockey Chevrolet in the July 1 NASCAR Xfinity Series race on the Chicago Street Course.

tremendous success Kaulig Racing has had in just a few short years, especially on road courses. Not only is Justin Marks a successful team owner in NASCAR, but he has a ton of experience on street courses, so having him come on board for this historic weekend in our industry just makes sense.”

The No. 10 Chevrolet will carry Jockey’s red, white and blue paint scheme in Chicago, a partnership that began last year with Trackhouse, the first such team sponsorship in the 147-year history of the apparel brand. At the core of the partnership was the launch of the brand’s Made in America* Col-



Richard Boswell Moves to Crew Chief for Chase Briscoe and No. 14 Cup Series Team.

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NASCAR will officially kick off its first-ever event weekend at the Chicago Street Course beginning with the Loop 121 Xfinity race on July 1 at 5 p.m. EST. The USA Network will televise the race at 5 p.m. EDT.

NASCAR announces Chevrolet, Ford, Toyota named Official Pace Cars for Chicago Street Race

CHICAGO, Ill. – NASCAR has announced a multi-year partnership on the official pace cars for the Chicago Street Race Weekend with the sport’s partner OEMs Chevrolet, Ford, and Toyota. As part of the partnership, each OEM will have an opportunity to lead the field to green in both the NASCAR Xfinity Series The Loop 121 and the NASCAR Cup Series Grant Park 220.

“As the industry unites to support an unprecedented NASCAR event weekend, we are proud to welcome Chevrolet, Ford and Toyota as our official pace cars for the Chicago Street Race,” said Julie Giese, Chicago Street Course President. “We look forward to showcasing the cars that will compete in the race through the streets of downtown Chicago prior to leading the field to green over race weekend.”

The order for the official pace car will be determined by the NASCAR Cup Series qualifying results with the pole winning OEM leading the field to green to start each race. Future restarts will rotate with each OEM leading the race field. In subsequent years of the Chicago Street Race, the second OEM will lead first in 2024 and third OEM will lead first in 2025.

Leading up to the Chicago Street Race, Chevrolet Camaro, Ford Mustang and Toyota Camry promotional cars will be in-market to support the inaugural event. The promotional cars will make appearances at many regional events across the greater Chicagoland region to showcase the Chicago Street Race Weekend. The official pace cars for the weekend will include a 2023 Chevrolet Camaro ZL1, a 2024 Ford Mustang GT and a 2023 Toyota Camry TRD.

Chicago Street Race

As part of NASCAR’s 75th anniversary season, the first-ever Chicago Street Race Weekend will feature the NASCAR Cup Series’ Grant Park 220 and NASCAR Xfinity Series’ The Loop 121 competing on a 12-

turn, 2.2-mile street course that will take competitors past and through

many of Chicago’s most renowned downtown landmarks, along with full-length concerts by The Chainsmokers and Miranda Lambert with the support of The Black Crowes and Charley Crockett over Fourth of July Weekend on July 1-2.

General admission and reserved tickets are on sale for the Chicago Street Race. Two-day general admission ticket start at \$269 and reserved tickets that offer an array of opportunities including reserved seating and a wide variety of premium experiences start at \$465. To purchase tickets, fans can log onto NASCARChicago.com or call 1-888-629-7223.

The Grant Park 220 will be nationally broadcast on NBC on Sunday, July 2 at 5:30 p.m. ET/4:30 p.m. CT and The Loop 121 will be broadcast nationally on USA Network at 5:00 p.m. ET/4:00 p.m. CT.

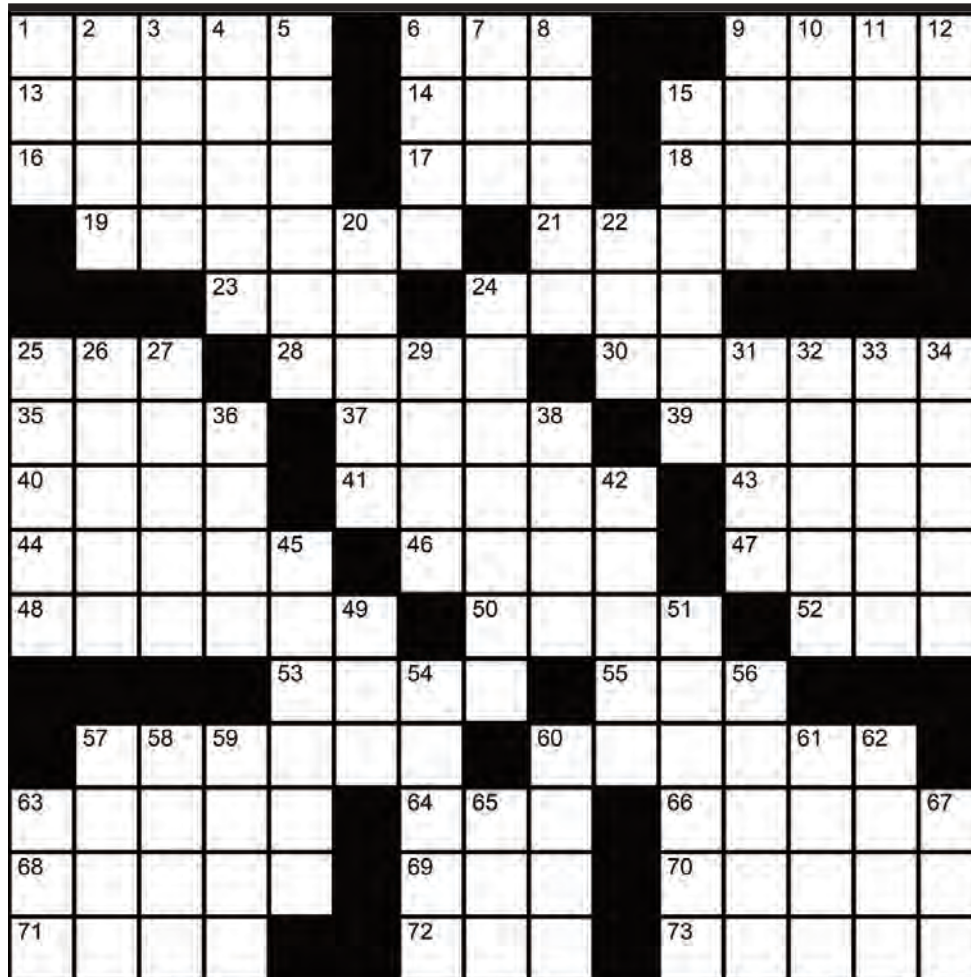
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ACROSS

1. Kind of illusion
6. Perched
9. Island near Java
13. Old West pack animal
14. False statement
15. Opposite of atonal
16. Hailing from the East
17. Supply with weapons
18. "___ death do us part"
19. *Frank
21. *Popular celebratory get-together
23. Many, many years
24. Scott Hamilton's "court"
25. Gross National Product
28. Abundant
30. Bantoid language
35. Bakery unit
37. Cutlass maker
39. Two in eighteen
40. Milk's favorite cookie
41. Muslim ruler honorific
43. Hyperbolic sine
44. Iranian money, pl.
46. Nancy Sinatra's boots
47. Fill to satisfaction
48. *Certain Doodle
50. Argo's propellers
52. Feather glue
53. Give temporarily
55. Porridge grain
57. *Roman firework
60. **The Star-Spangled Banner"
63. Opposite of neo-
64. Glass margin
66. Continental money, pl.
68. Opposite of #17 Across
69. Go for the gold
70. "Silas Marner" author





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71. Mexican money
72. Not yang
73. Down and out

DOWN

1. ___ constrictor, anagram
2. Word on a door
3. Duet plus one
4. Angry
5. Large California bird
6. Smelting waste
7. Stuff of inflation
8. Adagio and allegro, e.g.
9. German city on Rhine river
10. Con
11. Not of the cloth
12. Down with a bug
15. ___ someone ___ bed
20. Satirical publication, with The
22. Calligrapher's purchase
24. **From the ___ forest to the Gulf Stream waters"
25. *Old ___
26. Waterwheel
27. Hymn of praise
29. *Popular decoration
31. **'Rockin' in the USA" band
32. Certain church member
33. Yiddish busybody
34. Theater guide
36. Kind of rock

38. Heroic tale
42. B on Mendeleev's table
45. "Where ___ is heard a discouraging word..."
49. Sushi restaurant staple
51. Shiny cotton
54. High-strung
56. Car rack manufacturer
57. Charlie Chaplin's prop
58. "Oh, my!"
59. Agrippina's slayer
60. "I'll second that"
61. Great Lake
62. State of mind
63. One in a litter
65. *King George ___
67. Farm structure

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