



AROUND BURKE

THE MORGANTON COMBINED CHOIRS annual Christmas concert will be held on Sunday, Dec. 10. This will be the 68th Christmas concert by the Combined Choirs as they celebrate the Christmas season with a concert of choral arrangements of familiar carols.

The choir will be conducted by Robert K. Summerell, choral director of Freedom High School.

North Morganton United Methodist Church will host its **Annual Christmas Bazaar** today, Saturday, Dec. 2, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

This year's bazaar will feature a bake sale with candy, cookies, pies, and cakes, as well as canned goods (green beans, tomatoes, pickles, apple butter), homemade fudge, chicken salad, and pimento cheese.

A highlight each year is a "Christmas Store" that includes new and slightly used Christmas decorations, trees, lights, and wreaths.

A full breakfast is available for purchase from 8 to 10 a.m. and a hot dog lunch from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

A beautiful homemade quilt (made by Susan Daner) will be given away. The bazaar is the church's major fundraising event each year. The proceeds go toward missions and other needs in the community.

Past recipients include Options, Burke United

See **AROUND**, Page 2A

a&e

SOUNDS OF THE HOLIDAYS
Morganton prepares for its annual Christmas parade.

TASTE TEST

Read how Highlands Butchery scores in our restaurant review.

HOLIDAY ROAST

Cooking a rib roast is easier than you might think.

SEE SECTION D

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FOR THE PAPER

Nelle and H. Allen Smith, grandparents of The Paper's publisher, Allen VanNoppen, have been memorialized with the establishment of the Nelle and H. Allen Smith Endowment Fund which will support community journalism.

The Paper saluted in national report; Smith Endowment established

By **BILL POTEAT**
Editor

This year's "State of Local News Project," an exhaustive study on the health of local news nationally, listed The Paper among emerging news outlets deemed "shining examples of news organizations that are showing promise for the future."

The report states that these new media outlets are "Both for-profit and nonprofit leaders (who) emphasize the importance of listening to their communities, building and maintaining lo-

cal relationships, and providing excellent local customer service for advertisers, sponsors and donors as well as for readers, listeners, viewers, members or subscribers."

The Paper, locally-owned and locally-managed, covers Burke County stories from its newsroom in downtown Morganton. The weekly publication was one of 164 news startups nationally listed that are less than five years old.

The Paper was launched Saturday, Feb. 4, 2023, as a hybrid for-profit, non-

See **ENDOWMENT**, Page 6A

HIGH ENERGY... STRONG DEDICATION...WINNING SMILE

Clerk Renee Carswell brings life to City Hall



LISA PRICE / THE PAPER

Clerk Renee Carswell exudes energy, confidence, and a winning attitude at Morganton City Hall.

By **MARTY QUEEN**
Senior Reporter

Clerking for a city the size of Morganton is a job that requires a high energy level, a desire to work with the public, and — perhaps most importantly — a strong dedication to serving the citizens.

It doesn't hurt to have a remarkably engaging personality, a winning smile, and a healthy dose of classic, Southern charm.

Renee Carswell has all those bases covered.

Carswell, 60, who has been the city's clerk and executive assistant for almost two years, recently completed her International Institute for Municipal Clerks (IIMC) Certification Institute training and was recognized by city council for the accomplishment at its regular monthly meeting in November.

The certification wasn't a requirement for Carswell's job. She sought it because she's genuinely interested

in doing the best job she possibly can and enjoys serving the public.

"I'm really proud of her for doing the clerk certification," said City Manager Sally Sandy. "She did that not because it's a requirement, but because she wanted to do that. And that really speaks to Renee, because she's not a status-quo person. She's not really satisfied with just the minimum. She goes above and beyond to make sure that things are done correctly."

Above and beyond is Carswell's M.O. On a typical day, she might be answering the phone at the front desk, keeping up with contracts, agreements, resolutions,

and ordinances and filing all that info so folks can easily access it when they need it, or tying up the city council agenda.

Obtaining her clerk certification was just another example of Carswell's strong work ethic.

The challenging course required four weeks of class time in Chapel Hill, with one session each in the months of February, June, August, and October. The class covered everything from legal issues to open-meetings laws to government finance.

In typical fashion, Carswell said the training was worthwhile specifically because it will help her better serve the public.

"It helped me be able to serve with confidence and to be able to do what to me is important, which is helping Sally and the administrative people, and the com-

See **CARSWELL**, Page 7A

'It helps me to grow and be that person that council needs, the city employees need, and residents need. I serve all those people. It's important to me to be able to do it right.'

RENEE CARSWELL, MORGANTON CITY CLERK

Musgrove to listen and learn

New Foundation CEO will seek community input

By **SANDRA WILKERSON QUEEN**
Education and Business Reporter

JJ Musgrove is settling into his undecorated office at the Community Foundation of Burke County, but he is already thinking about the future of the organization under his leadership and the impact he would like to see it make.

Just a few days into his tenure as President/CEO of the foundation, Musgrove has already developed a plan for getting started.

"I'm not necessarily a vision- or an agenda-driven person," Musgrove said. "I'm much more about listening, asking questions and then taking direction from what I'm hearing in the community."

Although he served as the Director of Donor Services, and later, as a vice president of Columbus, Ga.'s Community Foundation of the Chattahoochee Valley, Musgrove is looking to the foundation board and the Burke County community itself to help him find footing in his new role.

"I don't know the culture here yet," he said, "and I don't know the community. It would be arrogant for me to come in

See **MUSGROVE**, Page 6A



LISA PRICE / THE PAPER

New Community Foundation of Burke County President and CEO JJ Musgrove in his Morganton office.

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HIGH: 62°
LOW: 50°



SUNDAY
Showers likely
HIGH: 67°
LOW: 39°



MONDAY
Mostly sunny
HIGH: 59°
LOW: 31°



TUESDAY
Sunny
HIGH: 58°
LOW: 33°



WEDNESDAY
Mostly sunny
HIGH: 51°
LOW: 28°



THURSDAY
Sunny
HIGH: 54°
LOW: 31°



FRIDAY
Partly cloudy
HIGH: 61°
LOW: 32°

AROUND

FROM PAGE 1A

Christian Ministries, The House of Refuge, Mimosas Christian Counseling, Habitat for Humanity, Hospice, Veterans, and UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief), which assists with natural disasters.

IT'S CHRISTMAS PARADE TIME IN BURKE COUNTY.

The Valdese Christmas Parade will be held today, Saturday, Dec. 2, at 10 a.m. on Main Street in downtown Valdese. Bruce Hawkins will serve as grand marshal.

Due to the threat of heavy afternoon rain, the Glen Alpine Christmas Parade has been canceled.

The Morganton Downtown Development Association will hold its annual Christmas Parade on Tuesday, Dec. 5. The parade route will be downtown on Green and Sterling streets.

The Burke County Board of Education will hold its regular monthly meeting on Monday, Dec. 4, at 6 p.m. at the Olive Hill Resource Center at 509 W. Concord Street in Morganton.

The Historic Burke Foundation is raffling off a live, 8-foot Fraser fir, with tree stand, tree skirt, 1,000 white lights, and gorgeous red and gold ornaments.

Tickets are \$10 each or 3 for \$25. Tickets are available online and at the Old Burke County Courthouse between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. Monday through Friday the week of Dec. 4 through Dec. 8, and between 12:30 and 4:30 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 9.

The winner will be announced at 5:30 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 9, and the winner does not have to be present to win.

The tree must be picked up by Friday, Dec. 15. Call 828-437-4104 if you have questions.

North Morganton United Methodist Church, 990 Sanford Drive, will host a Red Cross blood drive on Tuesday, Dec. 12, from 1 to 6 p.m.

The Burke County Chapter of the NAACP will hold its annual meeting on Thursday, Dec. 7, at 6 p.m. at the Mountain View Recreation Center, located at 645 First St. in Morganton. All members are encouraged to attend the meeting which is also open to prospective members.

The group Grow with Drexel will host "Christmas in Drexel" beginning Thursday, Dec. 7, from 5 to 7 p.m. in the Downtown Drexel Park. Face painting, food trucks, and a carousel are included.

FOCUS ON MUNICIPALITIES

Filing period for March 5 primary elections opens Monday, Dec. 5

By MARTY QUEEN
Senior Reporter

Three Burke County Commission seats, four seats on the Board of Education, and the county's Register of Deeds position will all be on the ballot for the Tuesday, March 5, primary election.

Filing for all of these local offices opens Monday, Dec. 4, at noon, and closes Friday, Dec. 15 at noon. The election is set for Tuesday, March 5. Early voting will take place from Thursday, Feb. 15, until Saturday, March 2.

COUNTY COMMISSION

County Commission incumbents whose seats are up for grabs are Chair Scott Mulwee, Vice-Chair Jeff Brittain, and Johnnie Carswell, newly elected President of the North Carolina Board of Commissioners.

Burke Commissioners serve four-year terms. Filing fees are estimated at \$155, according to Interim Board of Elections Director Kenny Rhyne, who is filling in for longtime director Debbie Mace while she is on sick leave.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Next year will mark the first time the county's board of education elections will be partisan in Burke, thus requiring a primary.

A local legislative bill in 2021 changed school-board elections to even-numbered years and si-



Jeff Brittain

multaneously made them partisan.

Board of Education seats that will be contested include those of incumbents Jane Sovich (Western District), Don Hemstreet (At-Large), Seth Hunt (At-Large), and Board Chair Wendy Craven (Eastern District).

Six candidates for board of education have already formed election committees, including a pair of incumbents.

Craven, a Republican, has formed a committee for re-election to her seat representing Eastern Burke. Jeffrey Beck has also formed a committee in search of that seat.

Hunt and challenger Jamie Wycoff have both formed committees.

Susan Jones and Bradley Camp, Republicans, have formed committees in Western Burke.

Board of Education members also serve four-year terms. There is a \$20 filing fee.



Johnnie Carswell

STATE OFFICES

A number of state offices will be on the ballot in March as well, including U.S. House District 14; Governor; Lt. Governor; N.C. Supreme Court Judge Seat 6; Treasurer; Attorney General; Auditor; the Commissioners of Agriculture, Insurance, and Labor; Secretary of State; Superintendent of Public Instruction; N.C. Court of Appeals Seats 12, 14, and 15; N.C. State Senate District 46; N.C. House District 86; and N.C. District Court Judges District 36, Seats 8, 9, and 10.

Under North Carolina election law, registered Democrats may vote in the Democratic primary and registered Republicans in the Republican primary, while unaffiliated voters may choose which primary they want to vote in.

LOCAL ELECTIONS WITH NO PRIMARY

There are three 2024 elections locally that will appear on the



Scott Mulwee

ballot next November but won't require primaries: Rutherford College Town Council (three seats), Hildebran Town Council (two seats), and Soil and Water Conservation District.

Filing for the Rutherford College and Hildebran elections will run from noon on Friday, July 5, to noon on Friday, July 19. Filing for the Soil and Water seat will run from noon on Monday, June 10 to Friday, July 19.

Of course, local and state offices won't be the only races on the ballot on March 5.

North Carolina will be one of 13 states participating in the Super Tuesday presidential primaries that day. Republican candidates for the presidency are expected to include former President Donald Trump, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, and former S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley.

Marty Queen is the senior reporter for The Paper. He may be reached at 828-445-8595 or at marty@thepaper.media.



Enthusiastic support shown for passenger rail service in Burke

By MARTY QUEEN
Senior Reporter

If the enthusiasm level of Burke County's passenger rail supporters is any indication, the train could be headed this way.

A crowd of several hundred braved a chilly, late-November, Tuesday evening and packed the Historic Morganton Depot for a "Drinks at the Depot" meeting and gala hosted by Waiting for the Train, a local group organized to drum up support for the return of passenger rail service to the area for the first time since 1975.

Elected officials from city, county, and state levels were

See TRAIN, Page 3A

Tuesday's "Drinks at the Depot" event in Morganton was well-attended despite chilly temperatures.

MARTY QUEEN / THE PAPER

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TRAIN: Enthusiastic support shown for passenger rail service

FROM PAGE 2A

on hand, including N.C. Rep. Hugh Blackwell and Senator Warren Daniel. North Carolina Speaker of the House Tim Moore spoke to the crowd via telephone, voicing his support for the effort.

Marion Mayor Steve Little and Ray Rapp, founders of the WNC Rails Committee, which has worked to bring passenger rail service to the area for the last two decades, were also in attendance, along with numerous civic and business leaders.

Barbara Lynam and Mimi Phifer, who founded Waiting for the Train and hosted the event, were energized by the solid turnout.

"We're on the track and we're moving forward, and we need to get this done, so let's get it done," said a smiling Lynam to the cheering crowd.

There is ample reason for her optimism.

The Federal Government's \$550 billion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, a bipartisan law passed by Congress in 2021, allocates \$66 billion for passenger and freight rail service in the United States.

A feasibility study by the N.C. Department of Transportation (DOT) listed a 139-mile route from Salisbury to Asheville — with stops in Burke County — as one possible line for Amtrak.

Jason Myers, a manager with the DOT's Rail Division, told the audience the department has submitted 12 different rail corridors in a grant application to the U.S. DOT (the Federal Rail Commission's Corridor Identification and Development program), and hopes to hear something nearer the end of the year or in January.

"I think the Salisbury to Asheville line, of those 12, is probably one of the ones that's most likely to be funded," said Myers.

Blackwell seconded that supposition.

"I'm very optimistic," he said. "The folks that I've talked to, who are sort of what I would call insiders, seem to be pretty confident that this route is going to be chosen by the Federal Government. And if it's chosen, then the money is there to come and do it, and the portion that the state and local governments would have to come up with between them is, I think, no more than 20%."

"It seems to me it's very do-



Claude Sitton, Executive Director of the History Museum of Burke County, speaks in support of passenger rail service.



Station locations and routing are shown. Light blue lines denote proposed new corridors and dark blue lines denote existing Amtrak service. The proposed route through Morganton is highlighted in yellow.

able. In the feasibility study and talking to folks, there doesn't seem much doubt that Morganton would be one of the stops."

Blackwell added Moore's endorsement would only help the effort.

"Another thing that gives me encouragement is Speaker Moore's endorsement tonight," Blackwell said. "We wouldn't have the School of Science and Mathematics here in Morganton if it hadn't been for his support, and if he's behind this and we get the Feds on board, I think it's going to happen."

If it does, Waiting for the Train will be a big reason why. Lynam and Phifer's grassroots cohort has picked up a head of steam in recent months. Each meeting has drawn more supporters than the last, and both the Morganton City Council and Burke County Board of Commissioners have issued proclamations in support of the effort.

Tuesday's frigid but lively gathering, complete with wine, craft beer, and hors d'oeuvres, was further evidence of the movement's popularity.

On this wintry evening, Burke County was all aboard for the cause.

Little was certainly impressed. "This is fantastic," he said with a grin. "What a great turnout."

His Morganton counterpart agreed.

"This is a great turnout," said Morganton Mayor Ronnie Thompson. "When Mimi and Barbara and I met, I said we've got to get the community behind this. It's got to be a community effort."

It certainly is that. Freedom High student Henry Beall formed a group called "Teens for the Train." Beall, manning a table at the event, said rail service is the wave of the future.

"I think that first of all, there's a national movement right now with trains," said Beall. "They're getting a lot more popular. There's all that money in the infrastructure bill, and we're really hoping to direct some of that money into Morganton and into Burke County. I think it's really important for the youth to



Waiting for the Train founders Mimi Phifer, left, and Barbara Lynam, right, speak to the crowd along with Morganton Mayor Ronnie Thompson during Tuesday night's "Drinks at the Depot" event in support of the return of passenger rail service to Burke County.

MARTY QUEEN PHOTOS / THE PAPER

get involved in something like that."

The throng of people milling around the depot — a satellite of the History Museum of Burke County — evoked memories of another time and place for some, including the museum's Executive Director, Judge Claude Sitton. He said the time has come to breathe new life into the old building.

"I'm interested now not in keeping this as a satellite of the museum, but as a passenger station so we can travel," said Sitton. "Please go to work and get it done."

That's exactly what Waiting for the Train has in mind, and Lynam is looking forward to the next step.

"We are hoping to do a town hall type event, where speakers can give more information about what are the next steps and expectations when we get accepted into the corridor identification program," she said.

Marty Queen is the senior reporter for The Paper. He may be reached at 828-445-8595 or at marty@thepaper.media.

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Extreme drought conditions now encompass most of Burke

By MARTY QUEEN
Senior Reporter

The bright red portion of the North Carolina Drought Management's map of the state started as a thin, crimson streak across the southern-most counties, but has steadily inched northward over the last few weeks.

It now encompasses most of Burke County.

Bright red indicates areas classified as D3 – Extreme Drought Conditions. Only one level, D4 — Exceptional Drought — is worse.

Since Sept. 1, the beginning of climatological fall, the county is experiencing the third driest autumn in 130 years, Assistant State Climatologist Corey Davis said recently.

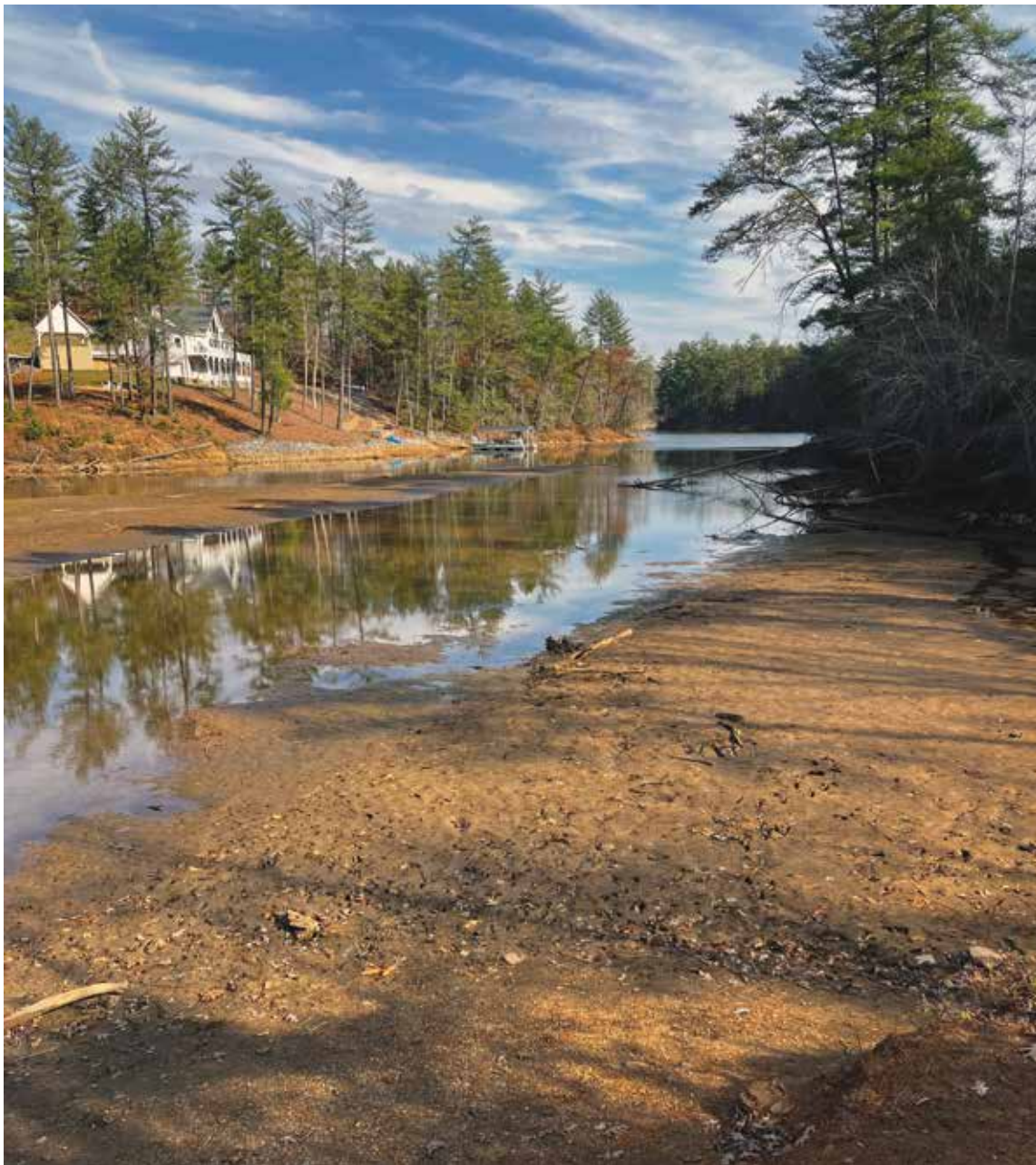
As a result, Duke Energy, which monitors stream flows and reservoir water levels along the Catawba-Watauga System, has asked residents to conserve water.

Since Nov. 2, Duke has designated the current drought at Stage 1 on a scale of 0-4. That means users were asked to voluntarily reduce consumption by 3-5%.

A new report from Duke was due out Friday, but had not been released at press time. City of Morganton Water Resources Director Brad Boris said earlier this week the city would look at that report and make adjustments accordingly.

If drought status is upgraded to Stage 2, mandatory restrictions would be in place. The protocol, which is followed by most municipalities along the chain, including the City of Morganton, would limit water users to two days per week or less of irrigation, and would ask them to reduce overall usage by 5-10%.

Even though the county received some rainfall last week, Burke still faces a significant precipitation deficit.



The cove along Lake Rhodhiss, where McGalliard Creek flows into the lake, is at least two-thirds dry now, unaffected by the rains which fell on Nov. 21-22.

BILL POTEAT / THE PAPER

"Morganton had a decent rainfall last week, with 1.78 inches total on Tuesday and Wednesday," Davis said. "That did cut into the seasonal rainfall deficit a bit, but it's still pretty sizable at this point."

"Since the beginning of climatological fall, Morganton is now 6.84 inches below their av-

erage rainfall. Prior to the rain, that deficit was exactly 8 inches, so it came down by a little over an inch.

"Even though that sounds like a pretty minimal improvement, that is still the type of event we'll be looking for more of this winter, because a long, soaking rainfall can be very

beneficial for soil moisture and stream levels, and certainly for wildfire containment as well. We just need to stack up more of those one- to two-inch events, ideally at least once per week, in order to keep chipping away at that deficit."

Last week's rainfall was enough to allow the N.C. Forest

Service and Burke County to cancel burn bans on Wednesday, Nov. 22. The bans had been in place since Nov. 5. Even with the restrictions in place, numerous woods fires flared up, taxing local fire departments and the Forest Service.

Davis said the rainfall totals for the month of November would end up being substantially below normal.

"It looks like Morganton will finish November with 1.93 inches of total precipitation, which would be 1.82 inches below the normal monthly total (3.75 inches)," he said. "That would rank as the 43rd-driest November on record there since 1893."

By comparison, last November saw the county receive 7.51 inches of rain, making it the sixth wettest November ever recorded locally.

Davis added this November is still not the driest in recent years. In 2016, when another severe drought led to an onslaught of forest fires, only 1.03 inches of rain fell.

The climatologist said there may be some relief on the way, however.

"Another round of rain is possible later in the weekend or early next week, and it could bring more substantial amounts of possibly an inch or greater," Davis said. "Although things could also change between now and then, it's certainly looking like December will start off wetter than November did, which should be an encouraging sign both for drought recovery and for the winter ahead."

NOTE: More info about the drought can be found online at North Carolina Drought Management Advisory Council (nc-drought.org).

Marty Queen is the senior reporter for The Paper. He may be reached at 828-445-8595 or at marty@thepaper.media.

OVER SIX MILLION AMERICANS have some form of Congestive Heart Failure (CHF), and it is the leading cause of hospitalization for people over 65. Advanced heart failure is generally defined as when the heart is pumping at 20% or less of total efficiency. CHF may also result in:

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Christmas Cheer annual distribution set Tuesday and Wednesday at Collett Street Rec

By SANDRA WILKERSON QUEEN
Education and Business Reporter

Burke County families who are feeling the pinch of a tight gift budget this Christmas can count on a little extra cheer that might make life easier, thanks to the county's oldest holiday charity.

Christmas Cheer will offer gift cards and bikes to parents and caregivers on Tuesday and Wednesday, Dec. 5 and 6.

The event will take place in the lower level of the Collett Street Recreation Center at 300 Collett St. in downtown Morganton.

There are requirements to receive a gift card or a bicycle (one per child). Only one bicycle is allowed per family.

Christmas Cheer is for Burke County residents only and for children who are ages birth through 17 years or seniors in high school.

According to organizers, there is no pre-application to turn in, but those who attend will fill out an application when they arrive. The parent

or guardian will be required to show their driver's license or an official form of identification for themselves and each child (such as social security card, insurance card, birth certificate, etc.) in order to receive the gifts.

Bikes are provided in conjunction with Bikes 4 Kids, sponsored by the Men's Club of Morganton. In 2022, Christmas Cheer distributed 275 bicycles/tricycles and helmets. Organizers expect to have a similar number to distribute this year.

Primary funding for the charity comes from the Beatrice Cobb Trust, which was established in 1969. In addition, Christmas Cheer receives funds from the Grace Episcopal Foundation. They also accept donations from the public.

According to organizers, many of the donations come from loyal community members who have included Christmas Cheer in their annual holiday giving.

Some churches and Sunday School classes or small groups send in special Christmas col-



lections as well. The leadership team of Christmas Cheer is transitioning this year. Retiring board members are Gary Leonhardt, Betty McCurry, Gene Willard, Angela Deal, Bill Branstetter, Carolyn Malcolm, and Bill McGough.

Former Christmas Cheer board member Scott Davis, who is also president of the Men's Club, will serve as the new Christmas Cheer president. Kelly Gessner is the new secretary/treasurer and Kathy Peters has also agreed to serve on the board of directors.

Organizers said the families who attend Christmas Cheer are appreciative and thankful to the Burke County community for the support they receive for their children during this

Christmas season. "We hope to be a blessing to families who are struggling to provide gifts to their children at Christmas time and to offer a spark of joy to all who attend," said Gessner. "I personally want families in our community to feel the love of Jesus and support from a community that cares."

Monetary donations for the charity can be mailed year-round to Christmas Cheer, P. O. Box 3745, Morganton, NC 28680 or you can drop a donation/check at Morganton Savings Bank, 100 S. King St., Morganton, N.C. 28655.

To donate toward the purchase of bikes, please send checks to: Bikes 4 Kids, The Men's Club of Morganton, P.O. Box 3825, Morganton, NC 28680. A donation of \$75 covers the cost of one bicycle or tricycle.

Sandra Wilkerson Queen is the education and business reporter for The Paper. She may be reached at 828-445-8595, Ext. 2002, or via email at sandra@thepaper.media.

Distribution Schedule

Christmas Cheer asks that parents and guardians use the following schedule when arriving to receive gift cards and bikes: If your last name begins with...

- U, V, W, X, Y, Z**
8 - 10 a.m. Tuesday, Dec. 5
- A, B**
10 a.m. - noon, Tuesday, Dec. 5
- C, D, E**
noon - 2 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 5
- F, G, H**
2 p.m. - 4 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 5
- I, J, K, L**
8 - 10 a.m. Wednesday, Dec. 6
- M, N**
10 a.m. - noon, Wednesday, Dec. 6
- O, P, Q, R**
noon - 2 p.m., Wednesday, Dec. 6
- S, T**
2 p.m. - 4 p.m., Wednesday, Dec. 6



WBTV / FOR THE PAPER

River Valley Baptist Church.

Father of critically injured 2-year-old charged with failing to secure firearm

By SAYDIE E. BEAN
Staff Writer

The Rev. Adam Nicholas Vines, father of 2-year-old Daniel Vines who was critically wounded from an accidental gunshot to the head, has been charged with failing to secure his firearm.

The shooting occurred in the parking lot of River Valley Baptist Church on Oct. 15 around 8:26 p.m.

Daniel's 3-year-old brother found the father's gun in the family vehicle and shot Daniel. The bullet entered the lower side of his head, behind one of his ears.

Daniel had been airlifted by MedCenter Air from the Glen Alpine area to Atrium Health Carolinas Main in Charlotte and was initially reported to be in critical condition.

On Nov. 13, his father told WSOC-TV that Daniel was undergoing therapy at Levine Children's Hospital and is recovering well.

Vines, 29, of Lenoir, voluntarily appeared at the Burke County Magistrate's office around 4 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 27, in response to a criminal summons that had been issued on Nov. 20.

"Essentially, they charged him with failure to secure a firearm with a minor," said Assistant District Attorney Mitch Walker. "It's a Class I misdemeanor. I don't believe he (the elder Vines) has a prior criminal history."

Walker said that he does not expect additional charges with this case since it is a straightforward offense.

Vine's first appearance in District Court will take place on Jan. 5 to state whether he will either be appointed an attorney, hire his own counsel, or represent himself.

Saydie Bean is a general assignment reporter for The Paper. She may be reached at 828-445-8595 or via email at saydie@thepaper.media.

Witherspoon family recognized at Rotary luncheon

CHRIS WITHERSPOON was Rotary Club of Morganton's 2022 Distinguished Person of the Year. The award honors individuals who contributed significantly to the betterment of the community. It is an honor that transcends politics and personalities, and is reserved for those individuals whose leadership and service extend far beyond the range of the average citizen, exemplifying the Rotary motto of Service Above Self.

Chris passed away just weeks before the planned award ceremony. Of Chris, former Rotary President Kathy Smith said, "Many people are recognized publicly for great feats, acts of service, and devotion to the community. However, in the past 40 years, I have only witnessed and heard oth-



FOR THE PAPER

During its Nov. 28 luncheon, the Rotary Club recognized the Witherspoon family who attended the event. Attending were (left to right) Chris' parents Odell and Mary Ellen Witherspoon, wife Tanya, Morgan McGee (Carson's girlfriend), Carson Witherspoon, and Birch McMurray.

ers speak of Chris's kindness, giving heart, and willingness to serve and love his neighbors without seeking public recognition. His humbleness and

contribution to our community represents a true servant's heart, and I am proud to recognize him as Rotary's 2022 Distinguished Person of the Year."

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F08-088798-A AECS/PAO 2023/11/16

MUSGROVE: New Community Foundation head plans to listen to Burke ideas

FROM PAGE 1A

and say “This is what I’ve done before (in other places).”

“There’s an adage but it is so true. Once you’ve seen one community foundation, you’ve seen ONE community foundation because everyone is completely different. But the idea is the same – people want to use their resources to make a difference,” he added.

Musgrove’s professional experience includes business, leadership, and several jobs in the arts community. With undergraduate and masters degrees in theater and a masters in business in organizational leadership, Musgrove brings a rich and varied working background to Burke County.

But his personal story lends itself to a deeper connection with the strategic goals set forth by the Community Foundation of Burke County’s board. The foundation has named four primary focus areas for its funding: homelessness, childhood poverty, transportation, and affordable housing.

He has found himself particularly drawn to the work the community foundation does with scholarship funding. His background as a child of poverty makes him appreciate the opportunities afforded to local youth.

“There is a desire in this county to provide scholarships for students to go to college,”



LISA PRICE / THE PAPER

New Community Foundation of Burke County President and CEO JJ Musgrove plans to listen and learn as he joins the community.

he said. “That is a passion of mine, because certainly that’s why I got into college — because of scholarships.”

“The arts saved my life,” he continued. “My mother was a USO performer. I grew up “humble,” and when I found out I could sing and could do theater, I had the opportunity to get scholarships and grants.”

“I was able to go to college for that and it got me out of

that cycle of poverty,” he said. “What’s exciting to me is I’m a product of all those types of things, I lived through a lot of those things.”

Musgrove said he sees plenty of potential for growth for the Community Foundation.

“I think we are at the beginning of growing even more than we have in the past,” he said. “And our strategic plan issues are related to each other.”

The new President/CEO said he sees the Community Foundation as a “community convener.”

“We can get together with those stakeholders who are doing the good work, and get them all together in one room,” he stated. “There’s a lot of power in just getting people together in the same room.”

“We’re (the foundation) not

big enough or don’t have the capacity, at least at this point, to be an organization that is program-driven. We can’t really do a lot of programs.”

“But with our donors and fund-holders, we can help fund programs that experts in those fields are already doing,” he added. “I’m looking for us to get more involved in those particular areas.”

Musgrove would also like to grow the foundation’s staff. “Another thing we can do in the next few years is to expand our capacity as far as staff goes and see how much value we can add to the county,” he said. “I just see us growing at this point, more than anything else.”

Musgrove, 55, and his wife Kate have already found they love Burke County. Kate is retired and is now enjoying exploring Morganton and Burke County. Along with their dog Sophie and cat Milo, the Musgroves have settled into a local townhouse.

“I love the town, I love the area,” he said. “When the possibility came that this job was open, we looked at the county and knew this would be a really good fit for us.”

Sandra Wilkerson Queen is the education and business reporter for The Paper. She may be reached at 828-445-8595, Ext. 2002, or via email at sandra@thepaper.media

ENDOWMENT

FROM PAGE 1A

profit newspaper that relies on three revenue streams: advertising, subscriptions, and philanthropic contributions.

To preserve its financial footing, The Paper, at donors’ requests, recently expanded its philanthropic arm to include an endowment fund with the Community Foundation of Burke County.

The new fund is the Nelle and H. Allen Smith Endowment Fund. It supports The Paper.

The fund is named after the

late grandparents of The Paper’s publisher, Allen VanNoppen.

“They were both journalists,” VanNoppen said. “They met in 1925 when he was editor of the Sebring (Fl.) American and Nelle was society editor.”

They married in 1927. By 1929 Nelle and H. Allen moved to New York City where he was a feature writer with United Press International, and The New York World-Telegram. He became a bestselling humorist in 1941 and wrote 37 books.

Their daughter is the late Nancy Smith VanNoppen, of Morganton.

While setting up the fund,

former Community Foundation of Burke County CEO Nancy Taylor said, “What a wonderful tribute and what a perfect way to lift up journalism in the western part of North Carolina.”

The Nelle and H. Allen Smith Endowment Fund joins the Western North Carolina Journalism Foundation as philanthropic entities created to support The Paper.

Studies show the decline in local news everywhere is due in part to an outdated business model with newspapers as the primary source of news for readers and advertising for businesses.

Social media and related Internet outlets altered forever those revenue streams. Consequently, news organizations are closing at the rate of nearly three a week, according to a 2023 “State of Local News” report.

“Until the late 1990s, Burke County was served by a local newspaper with 13 reporters, two full-time photographers, three editors, comprehensive advertising and circulation staffs, a downtown Morganton newsroom and printing plant, and a circulation of about 12,000,” VanNoppen said.

“The Paper is returning to Burke County residents the depth, quality, and thoroughness of local news coverage that they enjoyed for generations,” he added.

The report, “State of Local News Project,” is published by the Medill School of Journalism, Media, and Integrated Marketing Communications at Northwestern University.

The prestigious report is part of a 15-year study of local news outlets across the country. It said the “local news cri-

sis has metastasized like a slow-moving cancer coursing through the bloodstream of enclaves from suburbia to rural America.”

Since 2005, the U.S. has lost nearly 2,900 newspapers. The nation is on pace to lose one-third of all its newspapers by the end of next year. About 6,000 newspapers remain — the vast majority of which are weeklies, according to the report.

The loss of local newspapers ticked higher in 2023 to an average of 2.5 per week, up from two per week last year. There were more than 130 confirmed newspaper closings or mergers this past year, according to the report.

There are now 204 counties with no local news outlet. Of the 3,143 counties in the U.S., more than half, or 1,766, have either no local news source or only one remaining outlet, typically a weekly newspaper.

Bill Potate is editor of The Paper. He may be reached at 828-445-8595 or via email at bill@thepaper.media.

Morganton’s Emergency Shelter Network seeks volunteers

Morganton’s Emergency Shelter Network is still accepting volunteers to help out with Warming Nights this winter – evenings when the temperature is expected to fall to 15 degrees or below.

Pastor Paul Carlson is opening up Calvary Lutheran Church to the area homeless on these frigid nights and volunteers are needed to assist with the effort.

For each night the shelter is open, volunteers are needed to staff three shifts and Pastor Carlson has spoken to area organizations and churches to field teams to help.

At Sunday’s introductory session, representatives from Burke United Christian Ministries, Calvary Lutheran, First Presbyterian, First United Methodist, Grace Episcopal, St. Mary’s - St. Stephen’s Episcopal, and St. Matthew’s Unit-

ed Methodist Churches, and the Morganton Rotary Club had a chance to see the shelter site set up as it will be for the warming nights.

Pastor Carlson began the shelter last year and this year the Rotary Club of Morganton donated cots and dividers so the up to 20 guests the space can accommodate don’t have to sleep on the floor.

The Rotary Club of Morganton applied for a Rotary District Grant to help pay for the shelter’s equipment and as a requirement of receiving the grant, will also field a warming night team.

Organizations interested in fielding a warming night team or individuals who’d like to help with the Emergency Shelter Network can go here for more information and to register: <https://www.clcmorganton.org/news/emergency-shelter-network>.



FOR THE PAPER

Shown above, from left, are Steve Collar, Kim Van Sickler, Ellen Settlemeyer, Greg Cairns, Patti Arasi, and Lou Arasi.



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FOCUS ON MUNICIPALITIES

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROUNDUP

Prayer at flagpole planned Monday evening before Valdese Town Council swearing in ceremony

By THE NEWS STAFF

Councilwoman-elect Heather Ward will host an impromptu prayer time at the flagpole at the Valdese Town Hall immediately prior to the council's regular meeting on Monday, Dec. 4.

Ward and her running mates, Glenn Harvey and Gary Ogle, will be officially sworn in at the regular meeting of the town council which begins at 6 p.m. at 102 Massel Ave. SW in Valdese.

"Since the day I announced my candidacy for town council, I've been reminded that Valdese's roots are deeply intertwined with a love for God and community, stemming from the Waldensians, who founded our town.

"Much like them, I hold the

belief that the Bible is the ultimate authority in matters of faith and practice. I believe God desires involvement in all aspects of our lives," said Ward.



Heather Ward

Ward plans to meet at the pole at 5:30 p.m. and would like for the time of prayer to become a regular event each month as the council prepares to meet and carry out town business.

"The inspiration for this prayer initiative came to me weeks ago, as I reflected on my desire for guidance and wisdom from God, as I serve the town in this role," said Ward.

Ward plans to lead the

prayer time on Dec. 4, but hopes that local pastors and community leaders will participate in the coming months.

"While I will be leading the prayer time, I am hopeful that local pastors and community members will join, fostering unity, and offering prayers for guidance and prosperity for Valdese.

"I desire to see the best for Valdese. I believe that our prayers for the town, and its leadership, will continue to play a crucial role," Ward said.

DREXEL BOARD OF ALDERMEN

On Tuesday, Dec. 5, Dennis Anthony will be sworn in as Mayor of Drexel. Newly elected Aldermen, Terry Yount, Scott Coe, and Allen Reed will

also be officially sworn in at the December meeting set for 6 p.m. at the Drexel Town Hall, 202 Church Street.

GLEN ALPINE BOARD OF ALDERMEN

Reid Scott and Luke Boone, newly elected to serve on Glen Alpine's Board of Aldermen, will be sworn in at the board's December meeting on Monday, Dec. 11, at 6 p.m. at the Glen Alpine Town Hall, 103 Pitt St.

BURKE BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Burke County Board of Education will meet Monday, Dec. 4, at 6 p.m. in the Olive Hill Room of the Olive Hill Resource Center at 509 W. Concord St., in Morganton.

The board is slated to elect a chairman and vice chairman for the upcoming year. Currently, Wendi Craven serves as chair and Aaron Johnson as vice chair.

RUTHERFORD COLLEGE TOWN COUNCIL

The Rutherford College Town Council will meet Monday, Dec. 4 at 7 p.m. at Town Hall, located at 980 Malcolm Blvd.

MORGANTON CITY COUNCIL

The Morganton City Council will meet Monday, Dec. 4, at 6 p.m. at City Hall, located at 305 E. Union St. Recently re-elected Mayor Ronnie Thompson and council members Chris Jernigan and Butch McSwain will take the oath of office.

School board work session sees updates from Supt. Swan

By SANDRA WILKERSON QUEEN
Education and Business Reporter

Burke County Schools' Teacher Cadets are sporting new shirts and Freedom's marching band competed in stylish new uniforms this fall, according to Superintendent Dr. Mike Swan, in his update to the Board of Education at their work session on Nov. 27.

The work sessions are held a week prior to the regular monthly school board meetings in the Olive Hill Room at the Olive Hill Resource Center on West Concord Street in Morganton.

Swan told the board the

teacher cadet shirts help identify students who are working in schools as part of the program designed to help high



Mike Swan

schoolers decide whether a teaching career may be a fit for them.

Swan also gave board members a report about the status of new uniforms for the county's high school marching bands.

New ensembles were ordered for all four schools, Draughn, Patton, East Burke, and Freedom, but so far, only

Freedom's uniforms have arrived. The others are due to be delivered in the spring.

IN OTHER WORK SESSION BUSINESS:

Swan told the board about the administration's Instructional Rounds program, where central office staff make short visits to classrooms, during which they observe lessons and offer feedback to teachers. Swan said administration considered feedback from teachers and now works with principals to ensure the visits are not perceived as punitive or threatening for classroom teachers.

Swan informed the board that staff members will be completing Protect Our Students training this year. The Protect Our Students law standardizes definitions and increases penalties for sexual misconduct committed by any educator, increasing penalties for those failing to report misconduct.

Countywide Athletic Director Casey Rogers gave the board a sports injury update for fall athletics. According to Rogers, 37 middle- and high-school athletes were treated for concussions, seven needed MRI scans, and 18 student-athlete injuries required x-rays.

Overall, Rogers said, athletic trainers and medical personnel had more than 1,700 interactions with student athletes during the fall semester.

Director of Elementary Education Dr. Brett Wilson, and Director of Secondary Education Debbie Jennings presented a report detailing the steps schools take to develop and implement school improvement plans.

Sandra Wilkerson Queen is the education and business reporter for The Paper. She may be reached at 828-445-8595, Ext. 2002, or via email at sandra@thepaper.media

CARSWELL: Clerk brings dedication and spirit to Morganton City Hall

FROM PAGE 1A

community," said Carswell. "That's how I see it. It's not me, it's a service to the community. Not only to the people that work here, but the people that live here.

"It helps me to grow and be that person that council needs, the city employees need, and residents need. I serve all those people. It's important to me to be able to do it right."

City Attorney Louis Vinay said that amplified sense of duty is obvious to Carswell's coworkers.

"We're very proud of her for getting her certification," Vinay said. "It wasn't an easy thing to do. But she very much wanted to do that since she became clerk. She's very conscientious about her job as a clerk and what she does here. She had some very big shoes to fill with her predecessor but she has done a terrific job and she's a great person."

Carswell's predecessor, Kelly Russell, was similarly enthusiastic and energetic in her work, Sandy said. The long-time city manager admitted she was worried about finding a worthy successor after Russell moved away. That concern turned out to be unfounded.

"I was super-nervous when Kelly left, and getting Renee was just comforting," Sandy said. "She's just one of those people who, when you have her



LISA PRICE / THE PAPER

City Clerk Renee Carswell interacts with City Manager Sally Sandy at Morganton City Hall.

around, everybody's mood is just better. She will do anything that she can to take care of issues, to get answers for people, and to make sure they are taken care of in a proper manner."

Assistant City Manager Sonja Marston agreed.

"The city is extremely fortunate to have Renee as an employee," Marston said. "She is invaluable in her role and we

are very proud of her accomplishment in receiving her clerk certification."

Carswell's varied work experience made her the perfect candidate for the job.

She has been with the city for the last decade, and spent seven years at Public Safety before coming to City Hall in 2021. Prior to her time at Public Safety, Carswell worked as an office manager for a nurs-

ing home corporation and spent 11 years as a surgical assistant at an ophthalmolo-

gist's office. Before that, she went through Basic Law Enforcement Training (BLE/T) at age 40 and worked for several years as an officer at the Burke County Sheriff's Department.

She said those jobs prepared her well for her current role.

"It's all very different, and everybody is a Jack of all trades, because you're doing everything," she said. "Whatever the council needs, whatever the city manager needs, or any of the directors, or a resident, you're basically that face and you're doing different things all the time."

Whatever the task, Carswell's seemingly boundless energy seems up to it.

"I hope I never lose that energy level," she said with a smile. "I don't want to sit down in a recliner. Ever. I always want to be learning and doing. I don't want to sit still."

Marty Queen is the senior reporter for The Paper. He may be reached at 828-445-8595 or at marty@thepaper.media.

OBITUARY



Joshua Lowman / Amanda Ferguson

Joshua Lee Lowman, age 38 and Amanda Mae Ferguson,

age 40 of Morganton passed away unexpectedly Monday November 27, 2023.

Josh was born on March 24, 1985 in Burke County to Reba Ann Carswell, and Amanda was born on September 10, 1983 in Kingfisher County, OK to Michael Ferguson and the late Sheila Sky-Eagle Ferguson.

Surviving in addition to their parents include three children: Samuel Ferguson, Logan Ferguson and Lillian Lowman; one grandchild, Carter Ferguson; Josh's brothers, Paul Lowman and Joseph Hardin; Amanda's siblings,

Douglas Ferguson, Christopher Ferguson, Tanis Ferguson Kistner, Melissa Ferguson Blue, Richard Ferguson and Kimberly Ferguson Hubbit. A Graveside Service will be held at 4:00 P.M. Friday December 1, 2023 at the Carswell Cemetery on Watershed Rd. Morganton, with Rev. Dean McCurry officiating.

An online guestbook and obituary is available at www.heritagefuneralservices.com.

Heritage Funeral Service & Crematory of Valdese is serving the family.



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Today's Valdese Christmas Parade requires months of preparation by Community Affairs and Public Works

By PAM WALKER
Central Burke Reporter

As Santa polishes up his sleigh and Mrs. Claus gives the reindeer last minute treats, the staff in Valdese is busier than ever preparing for Saturday morning's annual Christmas parade and other holiday events.

It is often said that it takes a village and in Valdese the village elves from Community Affairs and Public Works have all been hard at work for weeks, preparing for a holiday season filled with special events, concerts, and fun activities in downtown Valdese.

In anticipation of the busy holiday season, Morrissa Angi, Director of Community Affairs, and her staff put on their Santa's helper hats months in advance to make arrangements for the kickoff event of the holiday season — the annual Christmas parade to be held on Main Street today at 10 a.m., rain or shine.

"We begin promoting the parade and encouraging participation months before the actual event," said Angi. "We handle hundreds of applications, manage the contracts for professional floats for commercial participants, send out invitations, and coordinate the parade lineup."

"Santa's float is provided by the Town of Valdese and for us, there is one, and only one, Santa in the parade," said Angi.

After the town council has made its selection, the Community Affairs Department is also responsible for the arrangements for the grand marshal.

"We interview the grand marshal and create press releases showcasing their dedication to the community. We arrange a special ride for the grand marshal as he or she will lead the parade immediately following the police cars. And we put together a special gift basket as a thank you," she



The Draughn High School Marching Band makes its way down Main Street in front of the Old Rock School during a recent Christmas Parade.

said. This year's grand marshal is longtime Burke County leader Bruce Hawkins.

On parade day, Community Affairs will be working with the bands to get them into the lineup, handling arrangements and placement of horses, and coordinating specialty entries.

For the parade route to be at its best, the Public Works Department must have all the holiday decorations refreshed, repaired, and in place well in advance of parade day.

"We start in October with a few fall decorations but as soon as those are out, it's time to start with Christmas," said Allen Hudson, Public Works Director.

"Every year we start with making sure everything works. Fixing broken bulbs and checking the wiring. Our whole team works to get every-

thing ready. It is two months of effort to make the town look good but it makes us feel good to see how everyone enjoys it," said Hudson.

Hudson and his team are responsible for all the town's holiday decorations as well as putting up the Christmas tree at town hall and the commemorative tree on the Old Rock School lawn.

Getting the big tree ready for the tree lighting is something extra special to Hudson. "Seeing the kids' faces light up when the tree lights up makes us all happy," said Hudson.

On the day of the parade, Hudson and his team are on the streets by 6 a.m. The Public Works crews are responsible for blocking off the streets, handling the parade line up, and managing each group or vehicle to be sure it moves at the right time, safely.

"We typically work about 7.5 hours on parade day," said Hudson of his crew. "We're not finished until the town looks as good or better than it did at 6 a.m. when we started."

And of course no parade would be the same without fire trucks.

The Valdese Fire Department participates in the parade each year and each vehicle, polished to its best. Not only a children's favorite with their flashing lights and booming horns, the town council and mayor traditionally ride along in the 1932 Mack fire truck.

The Mack, an original apparatus purchased by the town in 1933, is only seen twice a year. It is driven in the Draughn High School Homecoming Parade and at the Valdese Christmas Parade.

On parade day, the Valdese Police Department closes Main Street and leads the parade. Officers are stationed along the route, reminding the crowd that they are there to serve, no matter what the occasion.

Angi is proud of the parade, the large turnout from the public each year, and the sheer joy of the event.

"The parade is a perfect example of a small-town, community-minded event," said Angi.

"It is free for anyone to participate, except for the commercial floats, and each year we welcome a host of different people, nonprofits, performers, and personalities. It is a wonderful opportunity for friends and neighbors to get together," said Angi.

Pam Walker is the Central Burke Reporter at The Paper. She may be reached at pam@thepaper.media or 828-443-6103.

"We usually have about 12 employees working the parade. We have to deal with the traffic and we strive to keep everyone safe, especially the kids. Seeing the happiness on the kids' faces makes it all worth it," said Hudson.

Following the parade, the Public Works team is tasked with cleaning up the town. From hauling away trash cans and picking up left behind candy, to removing signs and opening back up the streets to regular traffic, the clean up effort usually takes several hours and employs the entire crew.

'We begin promoting the parade and encouraging participation months before the actual event.'

MORRISSA ANGI, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

Under construction



LISA PRICE PHOTOS / THE PAPER

A new Dunkin' Donuts store, located at 909 N. Green Street in Morganton, is slated to open around the first of February, 2024, according to franchise owner Dennis Harvey. The store will be Morganton's second Dunkin' Donuts restaurant, along with the current business at 1248 Burkemont Ave. According to Harvey, the new store will employ approximately 20-25 people and will be open from 6 a.m. until 8 p.m.



A new Sheetz convenience store is under construction in west Morganton at the intersection of Freedom Boulevard and Hwy. 70. Sheetz officials have not responded to questions from The Paper about the size of the store, the number of expected employees, and the opening date.

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EDITOR: Bill Poteat | bill@thepaper.media | 828-445-8595, ext. 2004

EDITORIAL

December marks new beginning for Burke municipalities

TRADITIONALLY, DECEMBER IS CONSIDERED a month for celebration and contemplation, as the holidays are enjoyed, relationships are savored, and the ups and downs of the year coming to its close are pondered.

Not so with our local municipalities. Newly-elected councilmen and aldermen are sworn in at the first board meeting in December and although the new calendar year is weeks away, a new year in local government officially begins next week.

Nowhere is that sort of new beginning more evident than in Valdese, where just under a month ago three challengers running as a team swept three incumbents from office to gain control of the five-member council.

Those three challengers — Glenn Harvey, Gary Ogle, and Heather Ward — made change the focus of their campaign. And, a very important change occurred, even before their oaths of office, with the dismissal without cause of veteran Town Manager Seth Eckard by the sitting council.

That dismissal raised a lot of questions among town residents, many of which will never be answered because the action was taken as a personnel matter in an executive session — an action which means that under state law both parties are barred from discussing the particulars.

A reasonable premise is that Eckard, knowing he might well be fired with cause by the board's new majority, chose instead to ask the sitting board to dismiss him without cause so that he might receive his full severance and vacation pay package.

All eyes will be on Harvey, Ogle, and Ward in the first few months of their tenure as they move forward in hiring a new town manager, decide whether to halt plans to construct a new public safety building, and explore the feasibility of lowering the town's property tax rate.

Change is easier to promise than to deliver, of course, which is why the new majority's first few months in office will be so critical, both for them and for the town's residents who have grown used to "big city" services in their small municipality.

DECEMBER WILL ALSO BE A MONTH OF TRANSITION in Valdese's neighbor to the west, Drexel. Longtime Town Manager Sherri Bradshaw is retiring and turning over the reins of leadership to Burke County native Bill Carroll.

Bradshaw has endeared herself to the residents of Drexel with her positive attitude and the knowledge that they truly do have a friend in town hall who makes sure their garbage is picked up on time and their streets are plowed after a snowfall.

For Carroll, taking over as manager in Drexel is a homecoming of sorts as he is a Burke County native and a 2012 graduate of East Burke High School. The former Cavalier is also a graduate of Lenoir-Rhyne University with a bachelor's degree in political science and of UNC-Chapel Hill with a master's degree in public administration.

Carroll, who currently serves as public works director for the city of Belmont, will begin work in Drexel on Dec. 11 as assistant city manager and move up to the full manager's role on Jan. 1.

Bradshaw's grace and efficiency will most definitely be missed, but Carroll is a young man of demonstrated potential who should fit in nicely with the efforts to revitalize Drexel's downtown and bring new industry to the old Drexel Furniture site.

Carroll does have the luxury of coming on board

See EDITORIAL, Page 4B

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Huffman denounces juvenile behavior

TO THE EDITOR:

This letter is directed to the person or persons who stole my campaign signs and defaced them and to the person or persons who egged my house.

I hope you can read this. If not, I hope there is someone in your family who can read it to you.

You have not impressed me or any other citizen of the City of Morganton. As a matter of fact, Butch McSwain would be mortified if he knew about your actions and I know for a fact he would not condone such juvenile behavior.

Butch and I set the Gold Standard for how a cam-

paign should be run and you have made a mockery of this and of Butch. You haven't hurt me at all.

Butch won the election and he and I are both happy with the way it turned out. I am proud of the votes I got, considering I was a write-in candidate. I worked hard and Butch worked hard and the best man won, so why all the harassment for me?

I don't guess you saw the camera at my front door when you put the defaced sign in my yard. I'll find out who you are and I'm sure Butch will be embarrassed to call you "friend."

DOLORES HUFFMAN

Capt'm Dad and the big envelope reveal

MY DADDY, CAPT'M DAD, KNEW, just KNEW, in his bones, that I was on that precarious 18-year-old teenager tightrope, weaving and bobbing to not lose balance and vanish into a bottomless pit of trouble.

Nothing he could put on paper. Just a sequence of suspicious things that didn't add up in Capt'm Dad's organized, disciplined, Navy-trained brain.

Eighteen years old is a pivotal time for a red-blooded, howling-at-the-moon Wolf Man on the prowl. A wrong turn can be long-term disastrous.

Capt'm Dad wanted to keep me out of the ditches and make sure I was aware of the consequences of actions. He had been 18 himself once upon a time, and, as the saying goes, it takes one to know one.

Who has time for worrying about consequences when you are 18 and into all kinds of challenging and exciting things with all kinds of exciting and fearless people?

Consequences were for wusses.

So I didn't see it coming when I was called to lunch one

Saturday after maybe four hours of coma sleep having slipped through the back door into my basement bedroom at dawn.

I dressed, labored up the stairs into the kitchen. A table was readied with sandwich stuff.

It was a small oval table. I sat on one side. Capt'm Dad across. Capt'm was wearing his Saturday going-to-the-office clothes: Khakis, polo shirt, blazer, and loafers..

"Got any, ah, coffee?" I said.

"Late night?" Capt'm Dad said.

"No, no," I said. "I got in—"

"I heard you get in," Capt'm Dad said. "And now I know who the Allman Brothers are."

"What? Who are, ... what?"

"Your mother and I hear pretty much everything that goes on down there," he said.

"Everythi—" I said.

"— So when you turned on the stereo at, what, 5:30 this morning, and that guy yelled to the crowd, 'And now, the Allman Brothers Band'. We heard all that," Capt'm Dad said.

"Which brings me to..." he said. He reached into the inside blazer pocket and whooshed out a legal-sized envelope.

"...This," he said, eyeballing me.

He placed the thing on the table between us. It was addressed to me, c/o him, at our home address, and covered with official, government-looking stamps and stickers conveying Great Importance and requiring Immediate Attention.

It oozed Big Trouble. "You need to tell me what this is all about," Capt'm Dad said, and he snatched up the envelope and swooshed it back into the inside pocket. "I can't help you unless I know the details, because THEY know the details (he patted his blazer

See VANNOPPEN, Page 4B



ALLEN VANNOPPEN

Seven favorite Christmas songs to enrich the holiday season

LET THE RECORD SHOW I love Christmas music, but first, a couple of caveats.

The second of December is way too early to be listening to Christmas music. A 10- to 12-day period, ending promptly at about 8 p.m. on Christmas Day, is just the right amount of time for the holiday playlist.

In downtown Morganton, Christmas music has been playing since sometime in early July, making me want to fetch my shotgun and blow speakers off their poles whenever I step out the front door of The Paper onto Sterling Street and hear Dean Martin crooning "Silver Bells."

Second, Christmas music should never be forced on anyone. Just because you love Mariah Carey singing "All I Want for



BILL POTEAT

Christmas is You" for the 10,000th time doesn't mean a curmudgeonly old man shares your affection.

Play your Christmas music only in the privacy of your own home or through your own earbuds.

With that said, let the record show again that I love Christmas music, particularly when listened to over a leisurely weekend breakfast or on a cold and rainy December night, bathed in the combined soft light of the fire and the Christmas tree.

Here then are my seven most favorite Christmas songs and the artists who sing them. (Yes, the list was supposed to be "my five most favorite Christmas songs," but I just couldn't pare down the list to that length.)

'VENI, VENI (OH COME EMMANUEL)'

by Mannheim Steamroller

This song takes sadness to a new level. It conjures up images of a gray and desolate landscape and of people whose lives are likewise gray and desolate. Yet beneath the sadness is a longing for hope and for the coming of a Savior.

For me, the song serves as an annual reminder that the Christmas season is not a time of joy for everyone and that for many of our neighbors the merriment of the time only enforces their feelings of loneliness and isolation.

'BREATH OF HEAVEN (MARY'S SONG)'

by Amy Grant

Another piece almost mournful in its majesty, looking at the Christmas story through the eyes of a frightened and unsure teenager chosen to be the Mother of Christ. Amy Grant's vocal interpretation is absolutely spot on.

'LITTLE DRUMMER BOY'

by Bob Seger

As best I can determine, this is the only Christmas song Bullet Bob ever recorded. That's OK, because this one is spectacular — a real rocker.

'CHRISTMAS LIKE A LULLABY'

by John Denver

Call me un-cool, but I always loved Denver's voice and his heartfelt lyrics. This song was

recorded in 1990 when that voice had richened and deepened, and the lyrics are an expression of Denver's commitment to, and longing for, peace in the world. A classic.

'CAROL OF THE BELLS'

by Mannheim Steamroller

The polar opposite of "Veni, Veni" this song will lift the spirits of even the most curmudgeonly Christmas grump. My bride Dinah discovered this powerfully positive piece of music before I did, but it is now a Christmas love we share.

'JOY TO THE WORLD'

by Neil Diamond

Yes, I love how a Jewish boy from Brooklyn interprets one of my favorite carols. Backed by a full orchestra and a Black children's choir, this performance is my favorite of the three dozen or so Christmas songs Diamond recorded over the years.

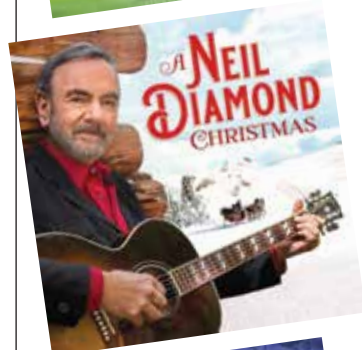
'COME DARKNESS, COME LIGHT'

by Mary Chapin Carpenter

I saved the best for last. If I could listen to only one Christmas song for only one time each holiday season, this would be it.

I've also considered Carpenter's voice to be the vocal equivalent of satin sheets, but it is her lyrics that make this song so especially meaningful to this aging grandfather who has endured his share of

See POTEAT, Page 4B



Balancing music from the hymnal and music ‘from the radio’

I have written a series of columns based on interviews with local pastors and senior ministers about the future of the church in our community. I would like to adapt this series to discussing with ministers of music and worship directors their perspectives on what dynamic and effective worship services will look like now and in the future.



FRED SCHUSZLER

Toward that end, I recently interviewed Brent Lawrence, Minister of Music and Worship, First United Methodist Church, Morganton.

BRENT LAWRENCE is brand new to Burke County! He moved here in June when he began his position as Minister of Music and Worship at First United Methodist Church.

He is originally from southwest Virginia, but spent a significant amount of time living in the Charlotte and Piedmont Triad areas, as well as a few years in Oregon. He says moving to Burke County has felt like “a return to his roots.”

Lawrence came to North Carolina in 2009 as a music major at Pfeiffer University and graduated in 2013. Interestingly, the Rev. Dana McKim, current pastor of First United Methodist Church of Morganton, happened to be Campus Minister at Phiffer at the time.

Brent then studied composition at UNC School of the Arts

in Winston-Salem, after which he completed a PhD in Music Composition at the University of Oregon in 2020.

Before coming to FUMC Morganton, he has been active in music ministry for nearly 15 years and has also done stints in higher education and as a guitar teacher.

Brent is a composer by training and has written for everything from solo guitar to symphony orchestra! He has had his work performed across the country from Atlanta, Ga., to Fairbanks, Alaska, and even in two national parks!

Although Brent says he is currently returning from a creative hiatus, he hopes to put together a recital of new works in early 2024.

PARTICIPATION WITHOUT EXCLUSION

When asked about the role of music in worship, Brent says, “Like a good United Methodist, I’m going to quote John Wesley who, in his directions for singing, gives the instruction, ‘Sing all. If singing is a cross to you, take it up, and you will find it a blessing.’”

Certainly, he hopes the music ministries at First United Methodist Church of Morganton can have an important role in transforming the congregation. He feels compelled to create programs that extend an



Brent Lawrence, the new Minister of Music and Worship at First United Methodist Church in Morganton, hopes to put together a recital of new works in early 2024.
FOR THE PAPER

open invitation to participate without exclusion. He says, “The strong, weak, faithful, and doubtful—anyone who desires fellowship through music — are all welcome to join us here.”

LIKE A VIBRANT TREE

Lawrence continues: “United Methodists will often refer to themselves as ‘a singing

people.’ Of course this isn’t unique, but our tradition of hymnody is a vital part of our worship practice. I like to think of our music as a vibrant tree with a complex system of roots. No matter what is happening above ground, no matter how we make music in the present, worship will be enhanced and nourished by the diverse traditions of our hymnody.”

A CREATIVE TENSION

Brent acknowledges there has been a tension between types of music in worship throughout churches in America for some time now.

He thinks there is a place for all types of music in worship and tries to approach worship planning from a position of

See **SCHUSZLER**, Page 5B

Why does no one warn you about the grief of growing older?

THROUGHOUT MY LIFE, I’ve learned to heed the many warnings I’ve encountered.

I slow down when an oncoming driver flashes his headlights. There’s either an accident or a state trooper just ahead. I find the closest gas station when my “low fuel” light comes on. I go to the basement on the rare occasion a tornado warning is issued for my area. I tend to err on the side of caution, especially when danger to life and limb are a factor.

But no one warned me about the things in life that really matter.

No one warned me about the pain of growing old. Sure, there’s the physical pain, the achy joints and stiff muscles. But the pain in my heart as I age is much worse. In the past 10 years, I’ve lost my mother, my daddy, several beloved aunts and uncles, a few cousins, and a couple of friends.

I’ll never forget the shock and pain I felt when I realized, at age 54, that I was an orphan. I suddenly felt like I was on a tightrope with no safety net below me.

When I realized the next generation whose time it was to pass on out of this world



SANDRA WILKERSON QUEEN

was my own, it shook me to my core. In my mind, I’m still young — OK, young-ish — and I am still not ready to be one of the older folks youngsters look to for advice and guidance.

I still need those things myself. I feel like the “sage wisdom” generation is disappearing before my eyes.

No one warned me how much and how often my heart would hurt when I needed to talk to my daddy. I was, am, and always will be my daddy’s girl. He was my hero, my confidant, my rescuer and my friend.

He left me more than 10 years ago for a better, pain-free life in Heaven, but I still miss him so much, it sometimes takes my breath. How do you say goodbye to your daddy when your heart longs to hold on tight?

The tears surprise me at the most random times. A couple of Saturdays ago, Marty and I drove by an outdoor tool auction at a local garage. It was early morning and the air was chilly. A large group of men were huddled around a table where an auctioneer was hawking used wrenches, hammers, car jacks, and pliers.

As we passed, I could see their hunched shoulders, their bodies bundled in jackets against the cold. Ball caps were pulled low over their brows and all hands were shoved into warm pockets.

If my daddy were alive, he would have been in the middle of that group, bidding on tools he didn’t need and would probably never use. That was his kind of crowd. No one warned me that sight would make me cry. But it did.

No one warned me that my most painful scars are the ones no one can see. I don’t have many scars on my skin. I have a few physical reminders of terrible falls and minor surgeries. A surgeon removed my gallbladder last year and left four tiny incision marks that are slowly fading to pale gray lines on my stomach.

But there are more pro-

nounced and much more severe scars in places no human eyes can see. My brother has criticized me on many occasions for being too sensitive and he is absolutely right.

I am far too emotional, too tender, too soft, when it comes to my feelings. Others’ words, attitudes, looks, and actions can sting, stab and scar me, and they do, on a fairly regular basis. I’m a pleaser and when I feel I’ve let someone, anyone, down, I beat myself up, so I’ve inflicted a few of those scars on my own heart as well.

Before you say, “Grow up! Get over it!” let me assure you I have tried. Even at 61, I know I’m a work in progress, and I try, every day, to toughen myself up. I’ve tried for years.

So now, when I’m hurt, or when I think (whether it’s true or just my imagination) I’ve let someone down, I tend to tuck myself away in silence, to turn within myself and self-soothe by just remaining mute.

My brother might call it sulking. I call it coping.

No one warned me that retiring from the profession that defined me for 30 years would shake me, rock my very foundation, cause me to question everything.

My doctor told me she usually sees the retirement reaction in men, not women, because men often meld their very identities into their work. I guess I’m in touch with my masculine side, because when I left teaching, I got sick.

My body rebelled. My heart started acting up. I couldn’t sleep. I felt useless and unsettled. But with my doctor’s and the good Lord’s help, I weathered that storm.

My job at The Paper has been a great comfort and has helped me ease back into the world of work. It has helped me realize there is more to me than “teacher.” I am also “writer.”

As 2023 slowly winds down and a fresh new year appears over the horizon, I hope to embrace more opportunities to stretch beyond my self-imposed limits, to force myself to speak up, or at least to look up, when I’m hurting.

There are a lot of people in my life that love me. And for that, I am truly grateful.

Sandra Wilkerson Queen is the education and business reporter for The Paper. She may be reached at 828-445-8595 or via email at sandra@thepaper.media.

Our enduring love affair with ‘Christmas Vacation’ and the Griswolds

JUST LIKE THE SONG SAYS, “Hip hip, hooray for Christmas Vacation.”

It’s rare to turn on the tube this time of year and not come across the holiday classic on at least one channel. Some show nothing but “National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation” for 24 hours at a time on select days during the Yuletide season.

It’s truly ubiquitous, and that makes me happy.

I could watch the adventures of Clark W. Griswold, Uncle Lewis, Snots, and all the rest on a loop this time of year, quoting every line of dialogue and joyously singing along with Bing Crosby’s “Mele Kimikimaka.”

Judging by the sheer number of times the movie is aired every December, I’m not the only one quoting and singing his way to holiday blissfulness.

In fact, I think it’s safe to say we, as a society, love “Christ-

mas Vacation,” so much that apparently, we can’t get enough of it.

But why?

I mean, it’s a solid offering with a wonderfully funny script by the great John Hughes, but it’s hardly what you’d call a masterpiece. Much of the humor could be classified as sophomoric at best.

Stereotypes are plentiful, especially ones related to redneck culture and the

elderly (NOTE: I am both a redneck and elderly and find nothing about Christmas Vacation offensive).

Critics have said it’s little more than a vehicle for the (considerable) comedic chops of Chevy Chase (ANOTHER NOTE: Who cares what critics think?).

Still, suffice to say it’s no “Citizen Kane.”

So, there’s got to be more than sheer cinematic merit that brings us back again and

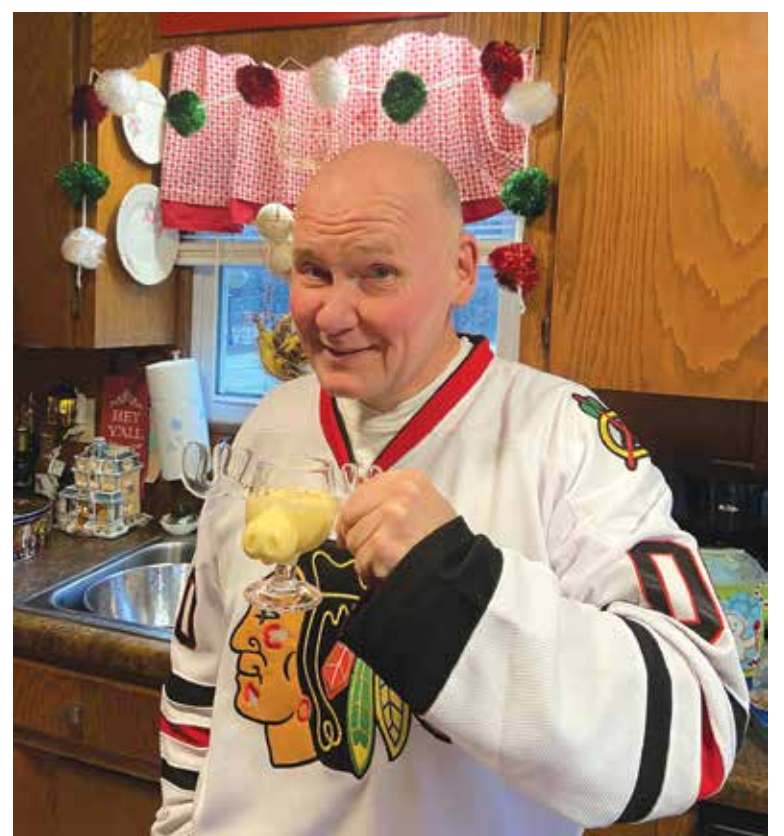
again, like Cousin Eddie stretching his plate across the table so Clark can load him up with a little more of that Jello mold (“It is gooo-oooooohh.”).

I’ve been thinking about it, and I’m pretty sure I know where the movie’s appeal lies. Whatever else it is, this is a film with a great-big heart.

At the core of the story is the quintessential everyman, whose sole desire is to give his family the kind of holiday he remembers from his childhood. We even get to see a few glimpses of those bygone days in the scene where Clark screens some long-lost home movies.

In keeping with the Clark Griswold character, which had been well-established in the first two installments of the Vacation series, he goes overboard with absolutely everything.

And despite the best of intentions, he’s rewarded with a seemingly endless string of disappointments that devolve



SANDRA QUEEN / THE PAPER

Senior Reporter Marty Queen is ready for yet another holiday screening of “Christmas Vacation.”

See **QUEEN**, Page 5B

FOCUS ON STORIES FROM STUDENTS

College application season begins for seniors at NCSSM-Morganton

NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL of Science and Mathematics-Morganton is proud to have its students go out into the world and achieve unimaginable heights in their academic and personal pursuits. As the first semester of NCSSM approaches its final weeks, so do college deadlines.

While as a junior my time has not yet come to begin applying to schools across the country, I was struck recently when I was having a conversation with fellow student correspondent Henry Beall.

He has been covering the college application process in recent columns, and noted that college applications for the class of 2025 will come due in about a year.

Recently I was studying in the library as I normally do and heard a plethora of high fives going around. Naturally I walked over to see what was going on, and a senior at NCSSM-Morganton let out a breath of relief telling me he had just submitted his early application to his dream school.

Along with my conversation with Henry, this moment hit me unexpectedly because I had

noticed many seniors looking more stressed than usual. When I approached a couple of them, they both said they were either working on their application or about to submit their application. If I had recorded stress levels every day of the year, Nov. 1 would probably have been the peak.

I had the opportunity to speak with three seniors who applied early to colleges across

the country to get an inside look into the college process. Lara Strande is one of the best chemistry teacher assistants at NCSSM-Morganton; Lucas Nagel is a star cross country runner; and Samuel Ramirez is captain of the Thunder Chickens robotics team.

LARA STRANDE AND LUCAS NAGEL

I spoke with both Lucas and Lara after a student senate meeting where Lucas serves as Treasurer and Lara as Secretary. Lucas is a student from Durham, and Lara is a student from Wake Forest. First, I asked them where they applied for early action. Lucas applied to N.C. State, University of Vir-



Samuel Ramirez

ginia, Northeastern, Virginia Tech, and Georgia Tech.

Lara applied early to UNC-Chapel Hill, Yale, Virginia Tech, and NC State.

Lucas intends to apply regular decision to Cornell, Carnegie Mellon, Brown, Notre Dame, Syracuse, and the Rhode Island School of Design.

Lara will be applying to Duke, Cornell, and Northwestern. When I heard this long list from both individuals, my jaw dropped. This is not a list I would usually see back at my home high school so seeing this took me by surprise.

For both students, and I would imagine for most students across the nation, stress levels have risen accordingly.

"I am under the same stress because I still have all the regular decision applications to do



Lara Strande

and I feel like it's getting worse as the application deadlines are approaching soon," said Lucas. For NCSSM residential students, the UNC System offers guaranteed admission to any System school complete with free tuition.

Lara said, "The UNC system wants to keep us in the state because often we are reaching for big schools — like my dream school is Yale, and Lucas' is Cornell. All of these are great schools, but they're out of state, so keeping us in-state and being able to educate ourselves in our home state is important and it shows that the state values us as students."

SAMUEL RAMIREZ

Samuel Ramirez has been a good friend of mine for quite



Lucas Nagel

some time now. The Pedro/Ramirez friendship began many years ago in Los Angeles when my father's family immigrated to this country, and his father's family immigrated to this country as well.

A couple decades later they settled in Morganton where Sam and I became friends. Sam applied early action to MIT and will be applying regular decision to Harvard, Princeton, Cal Tech, N.C. State, UNC-Chapel Hill, Georgia Tech, and the University of Tokyo.

He intends to major in astrophysics with a focus on aeronautical or mechanical engineering, and minor in a foreign language or history. He plans

See PEDRO, Page 4B

Reasons to be thankful as a Freedom High School student

YES, THANKSGIVING HAS COME and gone, but I still think Thanksgiving is a great holiday. Unfortunately, Thanksgiving is overlooked too often in favor of the much flashier Christmas.

I will not launch into a lengthy diatribe on the wholesomeness of Thanksgiving, because I am sure plenty of others will, but I will instead write a completely not clichéd list of things I am thankful for as a Freedom student.

- **This is the most obvious** one because it feels like I mention this in every column, but the teachers at Freedom. I am thankful for the effort they put into the school and their subjects. Teaching in any way is never easy, and it is especially difficult in a high school because high school students can be insane. Teaching at a high school is difficult, but teaching at a public high school is especially difficult because of inefficient, intrusive, state-wide policies, and because students at public high schools often have more to deal with than students at other high schools.



HENRY BEALL

Teaching at a public high school while being paid well would be tough, but teaching at a public high school while not being paid enough makes the job much more difficult. Teaching at a public high school as an underpaid teacher is especially difficult if the school you are teaching at has a student population that is over 40% economically disadvantaged. The teachers at Freedom deserve your thanks.

- **I am thankful for the active student spirit.** I am writing this column before two very important school events: The Powder Puff game, the annual flag football tournament in which the men cheer and the women play flag football, and the annual Freedom versus

Patton basketball game. As a side note, it also feels great as a Freedom student, that before these events have even happened, I can guarantee wins in both events. As a cheerleader during Powder Puff, and as a fan at the Freedom v. Patton basketball game, I am thankful that we have students and faculty so invested in the promotion of student involvement and student pride.

- **I am thankful that lunch and breakfast** are now free for all students. Even though this was never a necessity for me, it is clear to me that having lunches and breakfasts that are free for all students was a necessary step. Without this program providing food for kids, I feel certain that many would have to go hungry on certain days, and it is great that something like that can be avoided.

- **On that note as well,** I am thankful for the backpack programs across the county that are focused on putting food in kids' hands over long school breaks like Christmas or Thanksgiving. Whether it be

from outside charitable programs or the schools themselves, giving students food over the longer Thanksgiving break is an undeniably positive thing to be thankful for.

- **This is more me-centric,** but I am thankful for the math department at Freedom. Math has never been my thing, as you probably could have guessed, writing and English have always been my focus. However, I have loved my time in math classrooms at Freedom. I have had Mrs. Baker (twice), Mr. Thwing, Mr. Napier, and Mr. Baker. I have genuinely enjoyed my time in all of their classrooms, which was a new experience for me in math, that was a product of more confidence in the subject. I have always been relatively decent in the subject, but through their teaching of math, I have found myself looking forward to the classes and enjoying the new knowledge.

- **Finally, I am thankful** as a Freedom student for the other students. Not every student, obviously, but over the past three-ish years, I have met so many unique people. Free-

dom's diversity is where its strength lies. Not only in the diversity of ethnicity but in the diversity of ideas at the school. While many look at the size of the student population as a negative, I look at it as a positive; having 1,400 kids at your school gives you 1,399 chances to meet someone interesting. With these new ideas, cultures, and ways of thinking, come growth and learning, and for that I am thankful. The ability to grow is always a gift, and I am thankful that Freedom has given me the chance to broaden my horizons.

You will hear this phrase repeated perhaps too many times over the next couple of days, but there is so much to be thankful for. Sometimes looking around at Freedom, it can be hard to draw too many positives. However, there is always something positive to find at Freedom, whether it be special ideas, special journeys, or special people, and for that, I am thankful.

Henry Beall is a junior at Freedom High School.

Josiah Bartlett was among the foremost of the Founding Fathers

THIS VIGNETTE IS an educational moment in American history. It is about those who made a difference during the Revolutionary War era and how they served our country.

Josiah Bartlett was an uncommon person born into a typical colonial family. Josiah was born on Nov. 21, 1729, in Amesbury, Mass. He was Stephen and Hannah's fourth son and fifth child. As an ordinary family of the era, the Bartletts tended a farm while Stephen also worked as a cobbler.

Josiah attended the town's community school until he was 16. His common school education included Latin and Greek. Bartlett's language courses helped position him to study and learn medicine under his preceptor, Dr. Ordway.

Working and learning the practice of medicine, Barlett became accomplished at compounding drugs, delivering babies, treating injuries, and other medical treatments.

After several years of training, practical experience, and apprenticeship, Josiah was announced as Dr. Bartlett. As Kingston, N.H., needed a physician, Josiah moved and established medical and dental practices.

During his 45-year medical career, Dr. Bartlette developed



DR. DAVID STREATER

a "stellar reputation among his colleagues and patients as a man of independent thinking and keen understanding."

Bartlett was elected to the New Hampshire legislature early in his political life. During the Stamp Act uproar, "the Royal Governor [of New Hampshire] attempted to bribe Bartlett into siding with the Crown, but Bartlett 'rejected every overture.'"

During the next several years, Josiah was vital in several positions "as an active advocate against British oppression." He was a commander in the New Hampshire militia and a member of the Committee of Safety.

In the mid-1770s, as a state legislator, "he cast his lot with the Revolutionaries." Dr. Bartlett was elected to the first provisional Congress when the Royal Governor dissolved the

colonial assembly.

In 1775, Josiah was elected to the Continental Congress. As revenge, British terrorists burned his home to the ground, and he could not attend the Congressional sessions.

Josiah was again elected to Congress. This time, he was able to attend, and on July 2, 1776, he voted for independence. "Two days later, he cast the first vote to approve the Declaration."

Dr. Josiah Bartlett and John Hancock were the first to sign the document. During the Revolutionary War, Dr. Bartlett treated sick and wounded troops and was also a leading proponent of creating the United States Navy.

During his lifetime, Bartlett was a justice of the peace, associate chief judge, and chief justice of the superior court. He also promoted the use of science in agriculture, manufacturing, canal projects, and the expansion of roads.

Moreover, Bartlett was the president and then governor of New Hampshire. Along with being a signer of the Declaration of Independence, Josiah's other most cherished time was creating and being the first president of the New Hampshire Medical Society.

A year after leaving public



Josiah Bartlett

service, this endearing and principal Founding Father died at 65 on May 19, 1795. Bartlett, N.H., is named in his honor. Dr. Josiah Barlett was buried beside his wife, Mary, at the Universalist Church in Kingston.

Please visit your Charters of Freedom settings at the Historic Courthouse in Morganton and the Education Park, 227 Main Street W., Valdese.

A Charters of Freedom setting consists of the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Civil Rights Amendments. They are on permanent display analogous to the Charters of Freedom in the

National Archives, Washington, DC.

Visit our website (FoundationForward.com) to learn more about all existing settings. Vance and Mary Jo Patterson are the benefactors of Foundation Forward, 501(c)(3), a nonprofit educational organization, and sponsor every setting.

Teachers are encouraged to contact Dr. Streater for information and complementary student education materials to enhance experiential field trips to any Charter of Freedom settings.

In addition, everyone is welcome to obtain a personalized legacy paver for placement at their local Charters of Freedom display. Please contact Dr. Streater (david.streater@my-mail.barry.edu) for engraved legacy paver information and complementary educational materials.

Dr. David Streater is the director of education for Foundation Forward, 501(c)(3). He is a retired college instructor/administrator and parole officer/administrator. In addition, David is a criminologist with an acute interest in history, who served in the Navy, and is a resident of Burke County.

PEDRO

FROM PAGE 3B

to enroll in an MD-PhD program where he will get a doctorate and a medical degree all at the same time.

"I am going to get my EMT license when I turn 18, and I'm going to use that to get clinical hours in medical school, and I am planning to get my paramedic license and work all over the country," he said. When I asked him if NCSSM has prepared him for his future career, he responded "Has NCSSM prepared me? At Patton in those two years, while I was there I took 16 classes, at NCSSM I have taken forty classes over the past two years. I have done a lot of work, I learned how to write lab reports in every format of writing, I have coded so many physics programs, I've gotten my EMT license — all of these things I would not have done at Patton."

When I asked him about the UNC System policy for NCSSM students and how he felt about it, he said. "If I don't get into any of the top schools I can go to N.C. State which is a great school... for me I want to go to MIT because I know it's difficult. I know it's going to make me want to quit, and I know it's going to be very challenging. I think that if I can accomplish that, I can get through the rest of my academic career."

These three students have been working tirelessly during their entire academic careers and have undoubtedly put a lot of time and effort into their applications. In roughly 1-2 months they will hear back from their colleges and make life-changing decisions for themselves.

In the meantime, students at NCSSM will receive almost an entire month off for winter break where they will recharge their batteries and come back to finish the year strong. Come back in two months and we will hear about their decisions!

Chris Pedro is a junior at the N.C. School of Science and Mathematics in Morganton.

VANNOPPEN

FROM PAGE 1B

pocket) and we need to respond immediately."

"Look, ah, Dad, I, ah, look...", I said. "I have no idea what the hell that is, or who it is from, or what it is about, but that, whatever that was, or is, can't be right, you know, because—"

"That's not what THIS says," Capt'm Dad said as he whooshed the letter back out of his pocket and waved it in front of me.

And he swooshed it right back. "So I can help you ONLY IF you tell me what really happened," he said.

I felt sweat popping. The ticker skipped, and the DANGER DANGER DANGER antenna quivered.

"How do you even know it's ABOUT me?" I said. "Could be about—"

"BECAUSE," Capt'm Dad roared as he whooshed the envelope back out of his pocket and just DROPPED it on my plate, "it's ABOUT YOU! Look!" He jabbed the address.

He snatched it and swooshed back. "I can't help you navigate this unless—"

I felt the fear sap rise. It could be ANY NUMBER of

things:

- It could be the time me and (name withheld) got caught with...

- It could be when we outran the ...

- It might even be when we (all the names stricken) ... No. Couldn't possibly be...

Surely not THAT. Hardly anyone was even there, then. Shootfire, we were hardly there.

"Okay," I said. "Give me an hour or so to confirm a couple of things and we'll regroup." "You do that," Capt'm Dad said. "You CONFIRM whatever you have to confirm and we will, indeed, REGROUP and settle this matter."

He didn't believe me for a minute. I knew it. He knew I knew it. I knew he knew I knew it. But what are you going to do? There was no dodging this one.

I retreated to the basement bedroom. I paced. The ticker thumped away. It could be this. Maybe it was that. I wondered if (name withheld) is mentioned.

Most likely it was the other thing. That thing. Sure, just a few people could have known about THAT. The other things, well, they were covert. NOBODY knew (except us).

Capt'm Dad and I regrouped. I told him that, okay,

I thought it through, and, "Look, it didn't happen the way the letter said it happened. Hell, me and (name withheld) were only—" and I told him the deal.

"That's very interesting," Capt'm Dad said. "But that has nothing to do with...", and he whooshed the envelope out of his pocket, waved it around, said, "...this," and swooshed it right back.

The fear sap climbed. If it wasn't that, it had to be...

"Okay, Dad, look," I said. "It's not as bad as that. We were—" and I confessed that deed.

Capt'm Dad suddenly whooshed the envelope out of his pocket and roared, "according to THIS, it IS AS BAD AS THAT. But it is NOT about that."

He swooshed the envelope back.

This cycle repeated itself three more times. After the last confession, Capt'm Dad, slipped out of his pocket the worn envelope, bedecked with stickers and stamps signifying danger, danger, danger, and tossed it to me.

"Thank you," he said. "Now we are getting somewhere" "What's the letter say," I said. "Which one does it talk about?"

"See for yourself," Capt'm

Dad said. "Open it. It's addressed to you."

I opened it. It was....

.... EMPTY.

It was a ruse. A scam! Capt'm Dad had gone to the ol' post office to get into cahoots with his ol' buddy the Postmaster and pull a fast one.

He got five World Class confessions out of me. Damning accounts of who, where, when and what. Especially the what. And the who. Not so much the where.

What a play! You have to admire it.

Fast forward decades to when I was a father of 24/7 teenagers. I was determined to learn some Who's and What's.

I deployed the same strategy on my oldest daughter. Same set-up speech. Got the envelope and everything.

We sat at a table. I said something about wanting to help and then whooshed out a marked-up envelope.

Oldest Daughter looks at it, looks at me, her eyes reaching into mine, pauses cool as a cucumber, and says, "Nice try, Dad."

And she got up and left the room.

Allen VanNoppen is the publisher of The Paper. He may be reached at 828-445-8595 or via email at allen@thepaper.media.

EDITORIAL

FROM PAGE 1B

with a stable town board as Mayor Dennis Anthony, and Aldermen Terry Yount and Scott Coe were re-elected in November.

Meanwhile, across the county, the Glen Alpine Board of Aldermen will see the addition of two new members — Reid Scott and Jacob Luke Boone.

Scott and Boone are replacing incumbents Rodney Cox and Tommy Helms, both of whom chose not to seek re-election.

Scott has been very vocal in his criticisms of the current board and of Mayor Bob Benfield while Boone has taken a more conciliatory approach. Whether Scott will serve the role of a gadfly or will form alliances with other board members will bear watching over the next few months.

And finally, in Burke County's largest municipality — the City of Morganton —

the status quo will be maintained for another two years as Mayor Ronnie Thompson and Councilmen Chris Jernigan and Butch McSwain were overwhelmingly re-elected.

A veteran council combined with a seasoned leadership team at City Hall provides Morganton the secure foundation on which to make progress on key issues such as combatting homelessness, providing adequate housing for all income levels, and continuing to grow the local economy.

WHATEVER HAPPENS IN THE COMING MONTHS with the governments of Valdese and of Drexel, of Morganton and of Glen Alpine, and of Rutherford College, you'll read about it here.

Being at each meeting — live and in person, asking questions and providing needed background information — is part of our ongoing commitment to this community.

POTEAT

FROM PAGE 1B

troubles and spent his share of time in the wilderness.

*Come darkness, come light
Come new star shining bright
Come love to this world tonight
Allelujah*

*Come broken, come whole
Come wounded in your soul
Come anyway that you know
Allelujah*

And that, to me, is the essential message of Christmas — that the gift of eternal love is given to us no matter who we are or what our circumstances.

Bill Poteat, whose list could have been much longer, is editor of The Paper. He may be reached at 828-445-8595 or via email at bill@thepaper.media.

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LIBRARY MATTERS

'Christmas Wonderland' set at Morganton Library

THE LATEST NEWS FROM the Children's Library:
If you missed the Holly Jolly Paint Party at the Valdese Public Library this weekend, you still have two chances for some holiday fun at your local libraries.

Saturday, Dec. 9: The Morganton Public Library invites you to **A Christmas Wonderland** from 2 to 4 p.m. Wander through our Wonderland for games, crafts, refreshments, caroling and visits with Santa and a special guest reader from Morganton Public Safety. All ages are welcome, but games and crafts are for children under 12.

Monday, Dec. 11: **Jingle Mingle** will be held from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the C.B. Hildebrand Public Library in Hildebran. Play games and make some crafts, and don't forget to take your picture with Santa and Mrs. Claus and in the photo booth with The Grinch and Max.

Bring your letter to put in **Santa's mailbox** or write one while you are here.

ADULT PROGRAMMING

Project Bumble Tree is back! This holiday season the Burke County Public Library is once again partnering with the community for Project Bumble Tree to benefit the residents of health and rehabilitation centers across Burke County.

The tree at the Morganton Public Library is up and you can register at the circulation desk. You will be given a "Bumble Bag" to fill, decorate, and return along with a list of suggested (but not required) items.

The program will run from Nov. 13 to Dec. 14. Be sure to bring your bag back by Dec. 14.

YOUNG ADULT PROGRAMMING

Happy December! YAS is gearing up for a month of fun, this week we'll start with **#YASBox Subscription boxes** available at all library locations while supplies last.

Be sure to join us Thursday, Dec. 7, at 6 p.m. at the C.B. Hildebrand Public Library for **Game Night!** No pre-registration is required and these programs are limited to middle and high school students only.

For more information con-

tact Lizzie at 828-764-9273 or by email at lizzie.whisnant@burkenc.org.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteers are needed at the Morganton Public Library to assist with **landscape maintenance**. We need some folks to help us keep our newly landscaped areas free of weeds and debris. If you would like to help call Library Director Jim Wilson at 764-9276 or email at jwilson@bcpls.org.

Patrick Livingston Murphy, M.D. (1848 – 1907) was born in Sampson County. He attended medical schools at the University of Virginia (1869-70) and the University of Maryland (1870-71). He married Bettie Bumgardner and they had four children. He worked at the Western Asylum in Staunton, Virginia. He was appointed the first Superintendent of the Western North Carolina Asylum for the Insane (later State Hospital; then Broughton Hospital) in 1882. There, he established a large farming operation of over 1000 acres. His life's work was to improve conditions for the mentally ill. On Sept. 11, 1907, he died in a room on the floor above where the Board of Directors was meeting and was buried at the State Hospital. When his wife died, his



remains were moved and buried beside hers in Staunton, Virginia. Susan Vernon Franklin provided this image to Picture Burke in the NC Room of the Burke County Public Library.

PATRICK LIVINGSTON MURPHY

EBOOKS @ YOUR LIBRARY

Four thousand six hundred and ninety-nine Burke County Public Library users have registered to use the library's digital collection available through the e-INC consortium and NC Kids Digital Library.

This digital collection includes **eBooks, audiobooks, and streaming video** available to Burke County Public Library cardholders. Apps are available for download for a variety of devices including Kindle, iPhone, and Android phones.

Go to <http://omc.overdrive.com> to see the apps. To access the collection and download items go to <http://e-inc.lib.overdrive.com> and follow the instructions to set up an account. You will need to know your library card number and your PIN. Please contact the library if you need any assistance.

FIND US ON THE WEB

Go to www.bcpls.org for a list of programs and events. Unless noted otherwise, all library programs are free. Some programs have pre-registration and age requirements.

MOST WANTED LIST

Donations of new or gently used copies of any of the Top Ten Titles are most appreciated. To date, the library has received 1,018 of the "most wanted" books.

CURRENT BCPL TOP TEN HOLDS

Alex Cross Must Die by James Patterson — 10 holds

Inheritance by Nora Roberts — 9 holds

Resurrection Walk by Michael Connelly — 6 holds

Unnatural Death by Patricia Cornwell — 6 holds

The Armor of Light by Ken Follett — 4 holds

Dirty Thirty by Janet Evanovich — 4 holds

The Exchange: After the Firm by John Grisham — 4 holds

Robert B. Parker's Broken Trust by Mike Lupica — 4 holds

The Secret Life of Sunflowers by Marta Molnar — 4 holds

The Edge by David Baldacci — 3 holds

CURRENT NEW YORK TIMES BEST SELLERS AND NC CARDINAL CONSORTIUM HOLDS

Iron Flame by Reneca Yarros — 185 holds

Fourth Wing by Rebecca Yarros — 328 holds

The Edge by David Baldacci — 420 holds

System Collapse by Martha Wells — 29 holds

The Little Liar by Mitch Albom — 57 holds

The Exchange by John Grisham — 657 holds

The Narrow Road Between Desires by Patrick Rothfuss — 11 holds

The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store by James McBride — 306 holds

Resurrection Walk by Michael Connelly — 423 holds

All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr — 69 holds

SCHUSZLER

FROM PAGE 2B

inclusivity. FUMC currently uses a blended worship format that draws from both "traditional" and "contemporary" sources.

He admits there is ongoing friction between folks who like music from the hymnal and those who like music "from the radio." However, he doesn't think this type of conflict is unique to the hymnal/radio standoff.

It is his observation that "there will always be tension between deeply rooted tradition and what speaks to a peoples' heart in a specific moment. I do have strong personal feelings about Contemporary Christian Music as an industry. I find many of the well-

known worship groups to be lacking in inspiration musically, poetically, and theologically. Which isn't to say I don't like "contemporary" music; I do! However, often what speaks to me isn't what's popular."

PLANNING WITH THE LITURGICAL YEAR

The "liturgical or ecclesiastical year" is a cycle (Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, etc.) that divides the year into a series of seasons focusing on different parts of Christ's life and then flowing into the life of the church itself after Pentecost Sunday.

Brent says that he follows the liturgical year for all of his music planning. He finds that there is so much good music to choose from that it can be overwhelming to select, so the liturgical calendar serves as

his "anchor" and guide for planning worship.

He thinks "you can stretch out a lot and be really creative by simply following that framework. Again, I suppose I like to ground my music in tradition. I think the traditional 'root system' gives us a lot of flexibility."

A GUITAR GUY

When asked about his instrument of choice, the guitar, Brent says he has eight functional guitars in his studio right now that range from the standard Gibson and Fender configurations to a 7 string metal guitar and an archtop jazz box.

He likes that they are all a little different and useful for various applications. For worship, he uses his Taylor 110e steel string acoustic electric.

He uses it during contemporary songs because he can sort of "direct" a band with his strumming patterns and indicate starts, stops, and keep the tempo in check because, he jokes, "we all know drummers can't!"

BURKE COUNTY FEELS LIKE HOME

Brent is enthusiastic about his new ministry and living in this area. He says, "So far I'm loving Burke County. It feels like home. I've been stunned

by the love for music in this community. I'm a big fan of the concerts on the Square in the summertime. And I've been impressed by the talent you see downtown on any weekend night. But additionally, I like that living here puts me closer to nature. Being outside among the trees and nature is where I like to be when I'm not making music."

Fred Schuszler is a regular columnist for The Paper. He may be reached at fredsuschuzler@gmail.com.

'There will always be tension between deeply rooted tradition and what speaks to a peoples' heart in a specific moment.'

BRENT LAWRENCE

QUEEN

FROM PAGE 2B

into utter, delirious chaos as the film reaches its zenith: Clark's trademark, profane, temporarily insane, linguistically challenging rant.

But through it all, Clark never turns bitter; never loses hope in his dream of building the kids a swimming pool with his Christmas bonus (more on that later); never stops loving his family — even the ultimate persona non grata, Eddie.

(SIDE NOTE: Who among us doesn't have a relative like Eddie? For us, it was my cousin Junior, God rest his soul, who once ate a handful of my maw's nerve pills he pilfered from the medicine cabinet and then push-mowed the yard with his shirt tied around his head. In December.)

Clark's most touching gesture is when he insists on buying presents for Eddie's kids. Even though Eddie has been out of work for seven years — holding out for a managerial position — Clark realizes that no matter how shiftless the parents might be, every child deserves some magic for Christmas.

(YET ANOTHER NOTE: Speaking of magic, there's an honest-to-goodness Christmas miracle in the film that rivals any ever committed to celluloid: A corporate executive realizes the error of his ways in

cutting out employee bonuses, and repents by reinstating them with an extra 20% over the previous year. I can tell you from experience, Frank Shirley's redemption is far less believable than Ebenezer Scrooge's decision to buy Bob Cratchett's family a goose or George Bailey's angelic revelation in "It's a Wonderful Life.")

Despite being plunged into the mouth of holiday madness (bickering in-laws, potentially deadly falls, possible electrocution, rottweilers chasing squirrels through the house, insufferable yuppie neighbors, etc.), Clark's motivation — to give his loved ones a truly priceless gift — is never in doubt, and his determination never wavers.

In the end, the movie's message settles on Clark — and the viewer — like a gentle, December snowfall: There's no such thing as a perfect family or a perfect holiday. What's important is that we find a way to revel in our imperfections, and in our love for one another.

So if you'll excuse me, I'm going to put on my Chicago Blackhawks hockey jersey (No.

00, of course) and fill my Marty Moose mug with egg-nog. The movie's starting.

You wanna load me up with a little more of that "Christmas Vacation," Clark? It is gooooo-ooooodd.

Marty Queen is the senior reporter for The Paper. He may be reached at 828-445-8595 or at marty@thepaper.media.

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How to avoid the holiday financial tailspin

By SEAN CUTCHENS
For The Paper

What a wonderful time of year! We are overwhelmed with beautiful lights, Christmas festivities, yummy goodies and gifts, loads and loads of gifts!

You know who else loves to see this time of year? Credit card companies and “buy now and pay later” plans!

These let the retailers spend January counting their money like Scrooge McDuck in his private vault, while we the consumers, if we are lucky, can recover financially by May or June!

In the meantime, by summer, most of those gifts have been long forgotten and are somewhere in the back of a closet!

I’ll never forget years ago when I was listening to my Sunday school class of high school students talk about all the things they wanted for Christmas, so I asked them all to name what they got the year before.

Of the 15 kids, only two could name more than a couple of the previous season’s presents. The gifts remembered were only the major ones they had received (some couldn’t remember any at all).

It really got me thinking — if I was going to spend money, why buy all the “stuff” when I could buy experiences for us to remember for a lifetime?

I have also found this to be overall way less expensive with a lot less of a “recovery period.” From Pigeon Forge weekends to concert tickets, I have so many memories that moths and rust will never be able to take from me. I truly believe I have personally lessened the greed factory that comes from the commercialization of so many of our holidays.

Just the same as I hope the only time I tell my wife that I love and appreciate her is not some made-up holiday in February, I sure hope that your holiday season extends so much further for you than a couple days in winter.

I’ll end with answering what some of you might be asking. “Why is a mortgage guy sharing his thoughts on the holidays and not mortgage rates?”

I see it every January, where home equity lines and debt consolidations get kicked into overdrive all so the retailer CEO’s can get themselves new yachts.

I think if we are going to utilize our assets for someone’s watercraft, then it should be for a pontoon or bass boat that creates memories for YOU and YOUR family for years to come!

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to you all!

Sean Cutchens is a senior loan originator with Next Gen Lending.

An eclectic selection and a Southwestern flair

Down Right Country



LISA PRICE PHOTOS / THE PAPER

Owners Tia Bowers and Laveda Brown began their dream of owning a shop in Morganton selling accessories and now have a two-room shop from which they can celebrate diversity, community, and small businesses while bringing new style to Morganton.

By SANDRA WILKERSON QUEEN
Education and Business Reporter

Looking for a different shopping experience in downtown Morganton?

Down Right Country, a new clothing, jewelry, and accessories shop, offers customers an eclectic selection of goods with a distinctive Southwestern flair.

The store opened on Sept. 1 at 305 E. Union St., Suite B115.

Owners Tia Bowers and Laveda Brown hope shoppers will drop in to browse their inventory of uncommon items, including unique clothing, Myra brand bags, and creative jewelry selections.

Brown describes their style as a “hippy” vibe. “It (the store) takes you back to a ’70s and ’80s kind of feel,” she said, “with bell bottoms and fringe.”

Both women said their goal is to provide a different option for buyers who want a slightly unique approach and an alternative to the things they can find in mainstream stores.

“We’re going to do something a little different here,” Brown said. “Our store has kind of a vintage look.”

Bowers agreed. “A lot of our stuff has sunflowers and cactuses,” she said. “We’ve got kind of a Western feel.”

In the future, the owners plan to offer cowboy boots, belts with Western buckles, and even Southwestern quilts.

Bowers says she always wanted to own a business. “My wife started dabbling in Paparazzi (jewelry) and I said, ‘Why don’t we expand it?’ We just want to help people have something different,” she said.

Bowers and Brown said it is important that their store projects a welcoming environment to all. “We are proud to be a Black and gay-owned business,” Bowers stated. “Everyone is welcome here.”

Down Right Country also sells body oils and a variety of products used in cleansing rituals, such as sage and palo santo sticks.

Property Manager Meagan Raab



Down Right Country boutique offers a wide range of jewelry that consists of pieces from ‘Paparazzi’ and from other local NC small businesses.



With western and country roots, the new boutique store, Down Right Country, presents a variety of styles and sizes for shoppers near downtown Morganton.

said she was glad to see the shop open its doors.

“It’s a unique boutique,” Raab said. “Having them as part of the Morganton family is great. We are always supportive of small businesses, especially new ones.”

The boutique owners hope to eventually grow their inventory to include men’s and children’s clothing. “Our hope is to expand, get a bigger place, and carry more than women’s attire,” Bowers said. “But we definitely want to stay with the Western look in the store.”

For now, they are ready to help all customers, including busy moms, have a pleasant shopping experience. “We are kid friendly,” said Brown. “Feel free to bring your kids in. We’ll keep them occupied while you’re trying on clothes. We’ll print out a coloring sheet if we need to and we usually have some snacks.”

Bowers and Brown plan to begin having live sales on their Facebook site soon. They also plan giveaways for customers.

Down Right Country is located in the same building as Buck’s Pizza. Their hours are 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Tuesday-Friday, and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday. They can be reached at 828-640-6067.

Sandra Wilkerson Queen is the education and business reporter for The Paper. She may be reached at 828-445-8595 or via email at sandra@thepaper.media.

Cancer Center wins construction award

By ANNA WILSON
For The Paper

UNC Health Blue Ridge’s Cancer Center in Valdese has won a top award for healthcare construction at the ABC Carolinas Chapter 2023 Excellence in Construction Awards gala, where over 70 awards were presented to members.

The Cancer Center won the first-place Eagle Award for Healthcare Construction Project (\$25 million to \$50 million) on Nov. 9 in Charlotte. The project also was a finalist in Project of the Year.

The Carolinas Chapter Excellence in Construction (EIC) Awards is a yearly competition in which general contractors and specialty contractors submit their projects for recognition.

The EIC program is the premier competition within the Carolinas construction community that recognizes outstanding projects ABC mem-

bers have built. ABC is a national construction industry trade association representing more than 22,000 members.

A panel of judges, “a cross-section of construction industry experts, including owners, architects, engineers, and other industry professionals,” evaluate project submissions and rank them for awards.

UNC Health Blue Ridge representatives at the ceremony were Deanne Avery, CHC, EDAC, Director of Capital Projects, Planning, Design & Construction, and Amanda Taylor, Executive Director of the Cancer Center (Oncology) and Pharmacy Services. Representatives from Brasfield & Gorrie, contractors for the project, and DLR Group, project architects, also attended.

“It was an incredible ceremony,” said Avery. “I’m so proud to be a part of this project.”

As part of a 34,272-square-foot addition and renovation, the

UNC Health Blue Ridge Cancer Center at Valdese includes an infusion therapy and treatment area; medical and radiation oncology exam, consultation, and treatment rooms; two new linear accelerators, a CT simulator, and superficial X-ray.

There is also a dedicated space for education, support, and group therapy to better serve the community through high-quality cancer care.

“This award recognizes the teams that spent countless hours designing and constructing a beautiful, welcoming space for our patients,” Taylor said. “The Cancer Center construction project was not just about building a state-of-the-art facility, but about providing hope, comfort, and support to those fighting cancer.”

Avery said she also felt the project was special because of input from the cancer care team members. Before construction began, the hospital held a reveal



WILL PAGE / FOR THE PAPER

Cliff Earle of Bosch presented the Eagle Award on behalf of ABC to (from left) Bud Flynn, project superintendent with Brasfield & Gorrie, Deanne Avery, CHC, EDAC, UNC Health Blue Ridge Director of Capital Projects, Planning, Design & Construction, and Eric Oplinger, project manager with Brasfield & Gorrie.

ceremony in 2021 where employees could review the plans and make changes. Teammates were provided stones at the reveal with messages of hope engraved on them.

“We also held a meaningful ‘Laying of the Stones’ ceremony in 2022 where stones saved by the Cancer Center teammates from that reveal event were placed in the ground once construction began. Those

stones now lie, embedded in the foundation of the new Cancer Center, beneath where our infusion area is,” she said. “I’m very proud that we had such an important connect-to-purpose for this construction project.”

The Cancer Center, which cost \$38.3 million, opened in August 2023. Brasfield & Gorrie worked with the program

FOCUS ON BUSINESS



TIFFANY SALAS / FOR THE PAPER

Alecia Arnold hopes for a big win as she scratches a golden ticket at Fonta Flora Brewery on Small Business Saturday in downtown Morganton.



Above: Czeslawa Junczewicz, visiting from Poland, won a \$100 golden ticket!

Left: A lucky shopper displays her winning golden ticket from Small Business Saturday in downtown Morganton.

PHOTOS FOR THE PAPER

Small Business Saturday loved by merchants and shoppers alike

By SANDRA WILKERSON QUEEN
Education and Business Reporter

Downtown Morganton was bustling with activity and filled with happy shoppers on Small Business Saturday, Nov. 25.

Mostly sunny skies and seasonally mild temperatures greeted shoppers as they walked along busy streets, surrounded by Christmas decorations, and serenaded by Christmas music over the downtown sound system.

Morganton's Downtown Development Association (DDA) teamed with businesses to offer shoppers a chance to win "Downtown Bucks" when they visited participating retailers and asked for a golden ticket, a nod to the coveted prizes in the movie "Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory."

The golden tickets featured a scratch-off symbol. If the scratch off revealed the words "shop local," that ticket was not a winner. However, if the scratch-off revealed \$100 or \$500, the ticket could be redeemed for downtown bucks, vouchers to be used like cash in participating businesses.

Winning tickets may be presented at the Main Street Office at 112B W. Union St., between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

According to Kasey Goodfellow, City of Morganton Community Coordinator, retailers said the promotion was a win for shoppers and businesses alike.

"From what I have gathered from downtown business owners thus far and happy people cashing in their golden tickets, I would say yes, absolutely," she replied, when asked if the day was a success.

"People were stoked about the possibility of receiving a gold ticket on top of already wanting to support small businesses," she added.

Goodfellow said many retailers ran out of tickets within a couple of hours of opening their doors. Business owners



FOR THE PAPER

Merrill Mischief co-owner Sarah Ishu (left) congratulates Michelle McClure on her \$500 Downtown Bucks win.

agreed the golden ticket event helped make Small Business Saturday a success.

Beth Hicks, co-owner of Morganton General Store said, "Small Business Saturday was a huge success. We had cars lining up out front to receive a gold ticket.

"The sales were the same as last year, however, the excitement was huge," she added. "We hope to continue the 'Who's got the golden ticket?' theme for years to come!"

"Small Business Saturday was definitely a success this year," said Brittane Garrison, co-owner of Alexander Brooke. "There was plenty of foot traffic and we saw several new faces in our store. Everyone seemed excited to shop local and support our business. No one left the shop empty handed!"

West Union Art Studio co-owner Adam Mackay said. "Small Business Saturday, the golden ticket theme, and downtown Morganton worked together to create a seamless, fun, and busy event that kicked off holiday shopping in Morganton."

"For West Union Art Studio, it was a huge success. Feedback was very positive and we're excited to see what's in store for next year's event!" he added.

Amy Brooks, owner of Paradise Glass agreed. "The Golden ticket promotion was a great way to bring shoppers into downtown Morganton," she said. "We saw lots of new faces in our shop, and people were really excited to see if they were the lucky winners.

"Since the Downtown Bucks have to be spent in downtown

Morganton, all the money that was won is going back into local businesses," she stated.

"We are looking forward to the increase in foot traffic continuing throughout the holidays."

Craig Merrill, co-owner of Merrill Mischief said, "We were absolutely thrilled with the turnout in Downtown Morganton on Small Business Saturday. A huge thank you to all the shoppers from Morganton and surrounding communities who came out in search of the lucky gold tickets! It was such a fun promotion for us and our customers."

Sandra Wilkerson Queen is the education and business reporter for The Paper. She may be reached at 828-445-8595 or via email at sandra@thepaper.media.

EJ Victor supports community in variety of ways

By SANDRA WILKERSON QUEEN
Education and Business Reporter

Locally-owned furniture manufacturer EJ Victor may be best known for the superior craftsmanship of their goods, but the company is also noted for their generous spirit in giving to the Burke County community.

According to EJ Victor Marketing Manager Melissa Bowman, the manufacturer seeks to contribute in several ways.

"EJ Victor is committed to supporting our local community," Bowman said. "EJ Victor originated in Burke County over 30 years ago. Many of our employees and their families live right here in Burke County. That is why it is important that our company gives back and supports our local community."

"This past year our focus has been on donating fabrics and leathers to our local Burke County art teachers," she stated. "These materials can then be used by students to create mixed media art, such as collages or sculptures."

This year, EJ Victor sponsored Christmas angels with Blue Ridge Community Action, and donated food, clothes, toys, and blankets to local charities. Employees supported several organizations' barbecue fundraisers.

Recently, EJ Victor donated and delivered an Acrosonic piano to Walter Johnson Middle School, which was a welcome addition to the music department.

"We appreciate EJ Victor's donation of a piano to the Walter Johnson Middle School music department," said chorus teacher Valerie Graybill. "This piano will be used on a daily basis as we expose students to different types of music and foster their love for music and their creativity."

Sandra Wilkerson Queen is the education and business reporter for The Paper. She may be reached at 828-445-8595, Ext. 2002, or via email at sandra@thepaper.media

CENTER

FROM PAGE 6B

manager, Stantec, and the design team, DLR Group.

"Our construction team has been outstanding throughout this process," said Jon Mercer, Chief Operating Officer at UNC Health Blue Ridge.

"Deanne Avery and our Cancer Center team did a remarkable job on this project. I am not surprised it won an Eagle Award. Everyone associated with this project deserves recognition. I am incredibly proud to be a part of this team."

ALFA honors Morganton's Leslie Cothren with 2023 Legacy Award

FOR THE PAPER

Each year the AIDS Leadership Foothills-area Alliance (ALFA) presents the Mitchell Gold and Bob Williams Legacy Award to an individual who has made outstanding contributions and support of HIV/AIDS services in our region.

This year ALFA is honoring Leslie Cothren. For more than a decade, Cothren has supported ALFA's mission. "Our community is a more welcoming and healthier place due to contributions by Leslie, and we are thrilled to recognize him this year!" said ALFA CEO Chris Kliesch.

Honorees are credited with providing vision, strategic planning and passion for ALFA that has ensured free HIV/AIDS services to the community. The award is presented at ALFA's annual winter gathering, the Red Ribbon Gala on Sunday, Dec. 3, at Cafe Rule. Tickets are available at www.spainfo.org.

Cothren has spent over 30 years in Information Technology, devoting his life to helping others with strategy, clarity, and a wide array of technical issues with more than 15 years in the healthcare industry.

His career has spanned a wide range of industries including furniture, mental health, finance, non-profits, and education. He is currently employed by Microsoft in the Health and Life Sciences Division working alongside strategic, enterprise customers moving workloads to the Cloud focusing on improving healthcare technology while making data more secure, accessible, and available.

Cothren has spent years sharpening his skills and holds a number of IT centric certifications, including Certified Information Systems Security Professional. He is currently the President for the Healthcare Information Management Systems Society (HIMSS) North Carolina Chapter where he works tirelessly advocating for healthcare organizations around our state while helping shape education and networking that drives improvement in technologies used in the healthcare setting.

In addition to his full-time employment, Leslie operates a successful IT Consulting business helping businesses in the area with their Information Technology needs.

Cothren is the father of twins, Lauren and Christian,



JONATHAN DALE CANSLER / FOR THE PAPER

Leslie Cothren has been awarded the Mitchell Gold and Bob Williams Legacy Award by ALFA.

who are both seniors at Western Carolina University and East Carolina University respectively.

He is married to Mark D. Patrick, who is Superintendent at the North Carolina School for the Deaf. He considers his family to be his crowning achievement. His stewardship, commitment to excellence and drive come from his parents and their "never give up" attitude.

Cothren has volunteered with several non-profit organizations, but ALFA has been a top priority and passion since 2009. Over that tenure with

ALFA, he spent a considerable amount of time working as advisor and chairperson for Hike for Hope, ALFA's own 5K and walk for HIV awareness centered around education and community outreach.

This event is responsible for the original High Heel Dash, where Leslie gave running in high heels his best shot. Helping plan this event, alongside runners, spurred Cothren's passion for running.

As a member of ALFA's Board of Directors, Cothren has served in various roles including board member, Vice President, President, and Past President. He took a 2-year hiatus from being on the board of ALFA from 2019 to 2021 but remained a staunch supporter of the organization.

In 2021, Cothren rejoined the board and has recently agreed to serve as Board Secretary. He has been actively involved in many of ALFA's signature events at some point during his volunteerism, including Winter Gala, Dining for Friends, Hike for Hope, World AIDS Day, ALFA's 0.5k and Uncorked.

Cothren led the committee for ALFA's newly introduced Strategic Plan. He, the staff, and

other board members worked tirelessly on ALFA's strategic plan to ensure ALFA's viability into the foreseeable future.

During his Board Presidency, ALFA was faced with unrivaled economic and strategic turmoil. During his tenure, ALFA was able to turn that turmoil around and secure its place as a forward-thinking organization with unlimited potential.

Cothren and his husband, Mark Patrick, have continued to be generous donors of both their time and finances to the organization.

In addition to ALFA, Cothren serves as a board member on the North Carolina School for the Deaf Foundation at Morganton, he spent 10 years as a trustee on the Burke County Public Library board of trustees, with most of those spent on the executive committee as Secretary, Vice-Chair, and ended his tenure as the Chair.

Cothren currently serves on the City of Morganton Cable Commission and is an advisory member to the new coworking facility in downtown Morganton. His appreciation for his community is shown through his hard work and dedication to giving back.

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HOLIDAY WELLNESS



Holiday Eating

7 WAYS TO NURTURE YOUR BODY AND BANISH GUILT

Are visions of sugar plums dancing in your head? Along with Christmas cookies, cheese spreads, eggnog, casseroles, hot chocolate, gingerbread, and peppermint candies?

How do you stay healthy—physically and mentally—during the holidays with so many delicious treats around, some of which feel downright naughty?

You can enjoy foods of all kinds while taking care of your body and mind when you deploy the tools of mindful eating, say **UNC Health Blue Ridge Certified Wellness Coach Stephanie Culp.**



Stephanie Culp

Mindful eating is about listening to your body and being in tune with its sensations, without judgment or “food rules” about what is OK to eat. Here’s how.

1 Allow yourself to enjoy treats.

Both experts say to enjoy that cookie or cup of cocoa this holiday season. Savor the taste and the feeling these foods give you. But between parties, holiday meals and special events, take good care of yourself by eating nutritious foods, getting enough rest and exercising.

“We eat for a lot of reasons,” Culp says, “and hunger is not necessarily at the top of the list.”

More often, we eat because of the feelings we attach to the food.

“The foods we have during the holidays are often associated with cultural or family traditions,” Culp says. “You should ask yourself what you want to focus on this holiday season: how ‘bad’ the food is for you, or getting together with family? And maybe you’re introducing your traditions to new family members or your kids.”

2 Think about how the food makes you feel.

“Everybody knows that uncomfortable feeling of being overstuffed after a holiday meal,” Culp says. “If you are practicing mindful eating, then you can have anything you want, but you listen to how it makes you feel and why you are eating it.”

She describes mindful eating as being aware of your thoughts, feelings, and senses to understand the “why” of eating and to guide your decisions about food.

“Try to move away from the all-or-nothing thinking,” Culp says. For example, maybe you want peppermint cheesecake, but you know that eating too much will cause stomach discomfort later. Grab a piece and share it with your spouse. Take one hors d’oeuvre at a time rather than loading up your plate, and then listen to your body. Maybe you’ll be satisfied after one, and maybe you won’t. “You can always go back and get more.”

If you are mindful of how foods make you feel, you might be less likely to overeat red meat, fried food, and sugar.

3 Stop when you are satisfied.

“Eat slowly and savor every bite,” Culp says. “If you do that, you may find it doesn’t take as much to satisfy you as you first thought it would.”

Don’t be afraid to leave food on your plate. Often, you can wrap it up and enjoy it later.

If there are more delicious options than you can taste at one time, save some choices for the next meal.

“Eat a few things now and have something else later rather than making yourself ill by trying to eat it all at once,” Culp says. “The anticipation can be fun. Tell yourself, ‘I’m going to have that dessert for breakfast tomorrow because I can’t fit it in right now.’ There’s nothing wrong with that.”

4 Develop a strategy for parties.

One way to keep from becoming overstuffed is to use smaller plates. If you are at a party with a wide variety of appetizers, using a smaller plate will help you remember to choose the ones that look best to you. Using smaller plates for meals is helpful, too. You won’t tend to heap as much on your plate, then feel obligated to eat it all.

If you are drinking alcohol, remember that it is dehydrating. Drink water while you’re drinking alcohol, and consider adding nonalcoholic options such as seltzer water to your party repertoire.

If you are hosting a party, make sure to offer nutrient-dense foods, such as fruits and vegetables, alongside

the cookies and other treats. Have nonalcoholic drink options for guests.

If you’re cooking for a smaller group, don’t feel like you need to prepare enough food for an army. Match the portion size to the crowd.

“When we see a huge dish of something, we tend to take more than if it’s a smaller dish,” Culp says. “Make a half recipe of macaroni and cheese so there aren’t as many leftovers to be consumed. Or make an apple tart instead of a whole pie. Think about it—do you really need 10 pounds of potatoes for four people?”

5 Plan ahead.

Keep a calendar of all the celebrations you plan to attend during the holidays, Culp suggests. That way, you can plan nutrient-dense meals and snacks when you’re not traveling or at a party. Keep trying to eat food that makes you feel good, no matter where you are. But planning for “fun eating” and more nutritious eating can help you strike a balance.

Keep in mind that there’s often stress associated with holidays. Stress depletes your body of many needed vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients. Be careful to replenish those nutrients as often as you can by eating whole grains, fruits, vegetables, lean meats, and other foods that make you feel healthy.

“It comes down to how do you take care of yourself and fuel your body so you can do the things you want to do?” Culp says.

6 Watch out for emotional traps.

Now is the time to stop viewing food as “good” or “bad,” or judging yourself for eating any of it, Culp says. “Holidays can be tough because you have access to food that society has labeled ‘bad,’ and you are being indulgent. But food doesn’t have any moral value.”

Wellness means taking care of yourself as a whole person, and not feeling bad about yourself at the end of the day, she says.

Focus on things that make your body feel good and opt out of conversations about body size and diets.

“People will make comments about your appearance, maybe saying you look great since you lost weight,” Culp says. “This kind of ‘compliment’ reinforces the idea that what’s

important about us is our weight or how we look.”

And some loved ones try to demonstrate their affection with food.

“If you know you come from a family that forces food on you, be ready to set boundaries,” she says. “You don’t want to hurt their feelings. Instead, let them know you appreciate the effort they’ve gone to. Eat a little bit—whatever feels good to you—then let them know you’re going to take the rest of the cookies or casserole or whatever home so you can enjoy it for several days.”

Keep in mind that there’s often stress associated with holidays. Stress depletes your body of many needed vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients. Be careful to replenish those nutrients as often as you can by eating whole grains, fruits, vegetables, lean meats, and other foods that make you feel healthy.

“It comes down to how do you take care of yourself and fuel your body so you can do the things you want to do?” Culp says.

7 Know that taking care of yourself sets an example for others.

When others see you giving yourself permission to choose when, what and how much to eat, they are more likely to feel empowered to be more mindful about what they are eating and take time to really savor the treats, too, Culp says.

Setting a positive example for our children is especially important. Let your children hear you delight in your aunt’s gingerbread cookies or your friend’s veggie dip. Avoid criticizing your body or fretting over your eating habits in their presence.

“When it comes to the holidays, just be in the moment,” Culp says. “It’s so easy to get caught up in the to-do list of cleaning, cooking or pleasing other people. Try to appreciate the time you get to spend with family and friends. That way, a holiday break can really be a break and be restorative.”

If you want to learn more about mindful approaches to health and wellness, talk to your doctor, or find one near you.

Need a doctor?
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OUTDOORS

Honeycutt pleased with feedback after writing book

Burke County resident encourages children to spend time outside

By **JOSH MCKINNEY**
Assistant Sports Editor

Burke County resident Rhodney Honeycutt was introduced to the outdoors at a young age, and he has spent his entire life hunting, fishing, and participating in various other outdoor adventures.

In November 2022, the Hickory native's memoir, "Long Guns and Great Fishing Runs," was published by Redhawk

Publications. Within the 342-page book are many of the 70-year-old's tales, along with a plethora of photos depicting his experiences.

Honeycutt started putting together his memoir at the behest of his wife, Sharon, after he had a health scare when he was 65. Three years later, the manuscript was completed, and now the finished product can be purchased online at <https://tinyurl.com/Rhodney-Honeycutt>.

At first, Honeycutt told Sharon that no one would want to read about his adventures. But she encouraged him to write a book anyway, and he "realized once I started writing that I

had lived a very blessed life."

The response to the book has been positive, with Honeycutt pointing out that he has "had all kinds of different feedback because it's a diverse book."

"It's not just about hunting, but various types of hunting," he said. "It's not just about fishing, but it covers coldwater fishing, warmwater, saltwater, so there's a little something in it for most outdoors people."

There are numerous testimonials from others included as well, along with a synopsis from Sharon and introduction letters written by Ray Scott and Bob Cobb. Scott, who died in May



FOR THE PAPER

Burke County resident Rhodney Honeycutt (far right), who published his outdoor memoir in November 2022, is pictured with (from left) Forrest Wood, Ray Scott, Bill Schroeder, and Bob Cobb. Collectively, the five-man fishing group was known as the "Cinco Amigos."

See **HONEYCUTT**, Page 4C

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Johnson helped Charleston upset UNC 25 years ago

Despite all his success, Morganton native hasn't forgotten where he came from

By **JOSH MCKINNEY**
Assistant Sports Editor

Time flies when you're having fun, and Danny Johnson has had a lot of fun in his life, particularly when it comes to the game of basketball.

Twenty-five years ago this Wednesday, Dec. 6, the Morganton native made one of the biggest shots of his life, recording a tip-in with



Johnson

one-tenth of a second remaining to lift unranked College of Charleston to a 66-64 victory over third-ranked North Carolina on the second and final day of the Food Lion MVP Classic at the Charlotte Coliseum. The Cougars also won their next 24 games before falling to Tulsa in the opening round of the NCAA Tournament as they finished with a 28-3 record.

"I guess the best part about it was just the setup of it," said Johnson of his last-second heroics against the Tar Heels. "We had a pretty tough schedule to start the season, we dropped a bad loss down at Georgia and then we came back and beat UMass and that was a good win, and then we went into that tournament in Charlotte and the first night we played against South Carolina and lost again ... so I think it was kind of a culmination of the buildup to it that was great and then me being back home so close. A lot of my family members, some of my old teammates were at the game, I got to see some of them there."

"... Back then you didn't hear about mid-majors knocking off top-five teams like that. So I think it was just the whole buildup to the scenario and just to be able to make the shot to solidify the deal at home in front of everybody, of course there's a lot of Chapel Hill fans in Morganton and me having a cousin who's one of the better running backs there ever (Freedom High School graduate Leon Johnson, who played at UNC and for seven years in the NFL), it was just all great. The whole moment was great, especially looking back."

A senior guard on the 1998-99 Charleston men's basketball team, Danny Johnson was also successful at the high school level. He helped lead Freedom to a 4A state title in 1994 before playing at Clemson under Hickory native Rick Barnes during his freshman and sophomore years, while the remainder of his college career was spent at Charleston.

After playing his final game for the Cougars, Johnson spent over a decade as a professional player, including stints in such leagues as the United States Basketball League, the International Basketball League, and the Continental Basketball Association. He also played for the NBA's Milwaukee Bucks, New York Knicks, and Charlotte Bobcats in summer, preseason, and developmental league games, although he never appeared in a regular-season contest.

Nonetheless, basketball remains an impor-

See **JOHNSON**, Page 2C

HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL

Bartlett, Ramsey the faces of East Burke's programs



PAUL SCHENKEL / THE PAPER

Crystal Bartlett is in her ninth season as East Burke's girls basketball coach, having led the Lady Cavaliers to a program-record 27 wins on four separate occasions and to the NCHSAA 2A West Regional final twice.

By **PAUL SCHENKEL**
Sports Editor

East Burke may not have the nine high school basketball state titles that Freedom does, but it has a tradition of its own that is still growing in the sport.

And that's thanks in large part to current head coaches Jerome Ramsey and Crystal Bartlett, who recently entered their 11th and ninth seasons, respectively, in those roles, and who have invested a combined 42 years in Cavaliers' hoops spanning their involvement as players and assistant coaches as well.

BARTLETT'S COACHING DREAM

Bartlett, a 1996 EBHS graduate, played under East Burke's longest-tenured coach in the sport, Judy Keever, who retired the same season that Bartlett graduated after 21 seasons. Keever took over as Lady Cavs head coach in 1976 after Linda Poston coached EB's first two teams in the sport.

"(Keever) still comes to a lot

of games, and I love seeing her here. Ella Rae Matthews was our middle school coach, and she still comes to games, so that's special too," Bartlett said. "I got to play for Judy her last

MORE TO COME

This is the second story in a series on Burke County's current high school basketball coaches. See more in next week's edition.

year, and we made a nice run in the playoffs which was unexpected for us. To end her career like that was kind of nice.

"And I learned a lot from her and her coaching style. The big thing was adjusting our defense to who we were playing, not just keeping it straight man-to-man. We would always adjust to the strengths of other teams in our defense and how we approached games."

After being named a college conference coach of the year in softball, Bartlett returned to EBHS in 2008-09 and was on staff for the start of the Lady Cavs' spectacular run of the last 15 seasons or so under Katie Gravel Stilwell (then Katie Bollinger), another EB alum and former standout player.

Following seven years in that role, Bartlett was elevated to head coach, something that

See **COACHES**, Page 7C

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JOHNSON

FROM PAGE 1C

tant part of Johnson's life. He has been a radio and TV color analyst for Charleston men's hoops games since 2011, pointing out that such a gig "keeps me connected to the program."

"I don't have a role where I necessarily have the pressure of winning and losing like the players and coaches have, I don't have to go through that, but I still get to emotionally be involved," said Johnson. "So for me it's just one of those blessings that I've been granted in life, and I'm fortunate because I get to watch them continue to grow and I'm familiar with all the players. ... I'm just very fortunate, lucky to be a part of it even to this day."

In addition to his broadcasting duties, Johnson also works for the Town of Mount Pleasant (S.C.) as a recreation sponsorship coordinator. Furthermore, he is the owner and CEO of EcoHarmony Distribution, a disinfectant business that is based in North Charleston.

"I'm on the move quite a bit," said Johnson, who is married with four children. His oldest child, 17-year-old Jayden Maurice, just completed his final high school football season in Pennsylvania, while 16-year-old Isaiah Johnson is a wide receiver at Kentucky's Cooper High School who recently won the DeVante Parker Award as the best WR in the state and will play for a 5A state title tonight (Saturday, Dec. 2) against Bowling Green at the University of Kentucky's Kroger Field.

Jaidon Daley, 15, is a standout soccer player at Academic Magnet High School (S.C.), which Danny Johnson called "one of the best schools in the country." Meanwhile, his youngest child, daughter Vivienne Maurice, is "just doing 9-year-old stuff."

"We are all involved (in sports) in some type of way and some are more serious than others, but I believe sports are just a good thing, a good tool to prepare for your life," said Johnson. "It doesn't necessarily have to be what you do, not a lot of people get to do it, but it has great lessons in it that I'd like my kids to take with them through life."

Johnson believes that getting an education is one of the most important things a person can do. After finishing his pro basketball career, he returned to Charleston to complete his bachelor's degree, which he attained in 2011. He also earned his master's degree from Charleston in 2021.

"That started all the way back from childhood, I mean my family, while we love sports and they put a lot into it, it was very clear that furthering my education was the number one goal," said Johnson. "And so my mother and father, I promised them no matter what I did in sports, no matter how far or short I landed, even whatever my financial situation looked like, the one thing that we have as a family is we finish what we start."

"I'm just very fortunate and that's why I've had a lot of the successes and things to happen in my life is because I've just had an unbelievable support system to keep me on track. ... Education is a big part of who we are as a family and group, and I never want that to get lost within the sports context. It's important to always keep education as the main thing that goes right parallel with all our sporting things that we do."

Johnson has been all around the world during his lifetime, particularly when he was a pro hoopster. However, he will always consider Burke County to be his home.

"Charleston, South Carolina is one of the most beautiful cities in the world," he stated. "... I live in a town that takes care of me, is really great to me, they've embraced me here for a lot of different reasons in my career, life, everything, but there is a sense of calm when I come back there (to Morganton). I seem to sleep a little better, the air's a little thinner, the food tastes a little better."

"My relationship with Morganton is not over, it's just on pause. I suspect that they'll see me around there more and more as I'm getting older. I think possibly establishing some type of residence there is not off the table."

Josh McKinney can be reached at 828-445-8595 or josh@thepaper.media.

STANDINGS

HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL Conference Glance

BOYS

NWC 3A/4A

| | Conf. | All |
|-------------------|------------|------------|
| | W-L | W-L |
| Watauga | 0-0 | 1-0 |
| South Caldwell | 0-0 | 3-1 |
| Freedom | 0-0 | 2-1 |
| Alexander Central | 0-0 | 2-3 |
| Ashe Co. | 0-0 | 1-2 |
| Hibriten | 0-0 | 0-2 |

TUESDAY, NOV. 28
Freedom 70, Draughn 58
Maiden 62, South Caldwell 60
Newton-Con. 66, Alex. Ctrl. 42
N. Surry 67, Ashe County 37
Patton 76, Hibriten 56

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 29
Watauga 70, North Wilkes 38
S. Caldwell 64, Bunker Hill 55

THURSDAY, NOV. 30
N. Davidson 65, Alex. Ctrl. 52

FRIDAY, DEC. 1
Ashe Cty. at Mtn. Heritage, late
Hibriten at West Caldwell, late
South Caldwell at Bandys, late
Watauga at Avery County, late

TUESDAY, DEC. 5
Alexander Central at S. Iredell
Ashe County at New.-C.
Bunker Hill at South Caldwell
Hibriten at Wilkes Central
Hickory at Freedom
West Caldwell at Watauga

MF7 1A/2A

| | Conf. | All |
|-----------------|------------|------------|
| | W-L | W-L |
| Patton | 0-0 | 5-0 |
| East Rutherford | 0-0 | 1-0 |
| Hendersonville | 0-0 | 1-0 |
| Brevard | 0-0 | 2-1 |
| R-S Central | 0-0 | 1-2 |
| Chase | 0-0 | 0-2 |
| Polk Co. | 0-0 | 0-3 |

MONDAY, NOV. 27
Chesnee (S.C.) 93, R-S Ctrl. 58

TUESDAY, NOV. 28
Burns 73, Chase 31
Patton 76, Hibriten 56
W. Henderson 70, Brevard 57

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 29
Pisgah 72, Polk County 66
Brevard 69, Smoky Mtn. 55

THURSDAY, NOV. 30
Patton 70, NCSSM-M 24

FRIDAY, DEC. 1
Chase at East Henderson, late
Chesnee (S.C.) at E. Ruth., late
H'ville at West Henderson, late
Rosman at Brevard, late
R-S Central at Owen, late

MONDAY, DEC. 4
Bessemer City at Chase

TUESDAY, DEC. 5
Cherryville at Chase
H'ville at East Henderson
Patton at Maiden
R-S Central at T.C. Roberson

CVAC 2A

| | Conf. | All |
|-------------------|------------|------------|
| | W-L | W-L |
| Bandys | 0-0 | 3-0 |
| Lincolnton | 0-0 | 2-0 |
| West Caldwell | 0-0 | 2-0 |
| Maiden | 0-0 | 1-0 |
| Newton-Conover | 0-0 | 1-2 |
| West Lincoln | 0-0 | 1-2 |
| Bunker Hill | 0-0 | 0-1 |
| East Burke | 0-0 | 0-4 |

TUESDAY, NOV. 28
Bandys 68, South Iredell 44
Foard 59, West Lincoln 49
Lincolnton 58, Cramer 48
Maiden 62, South Caldwell 60
New.-Con. 66, Alex. Central 42
St. Stephens 59, East Burke 35

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 29
W. Caldwell 87, Comm. School of Davidson 65
S. Caldwell 64, Bunker Hill 55

THURSDAY, NOV. 30
Hickory 78, New.-Con. 76

FRIDAY, DEC. 1
Cherryville at W. Lincoln, late
Draughn at East Burke, late
Hibriten at West Caldwell, late
Lincolnton at East Lincoln, late
Maiden at Foard, late
South Caldwell at Bandys, late
St. Steph. at Bunker Hill, late

TUESDAY, DEC. 5
Ashe County at New.-Con.
Avery County at Lincolnton
Bunker Hill at South Caldwell
Patton at Maiden
St. Stephens at Bandys
West Caldwell at Watauga
West Lincoln at North Lincoln

WHC 1A/2A

| | Conf. | All |
|-------------------|------------|------------|
| | W-L | W-L |
| Avery Co. | 0-0 | 2-1 |
| NCSSM-M | 0-0 | 3-2 |
| Madison | 0-0 | 1-2 |
| Rosman | 0-0 | 1-3 |
| Mitchell | 0-0 | 0-0 |
| Mountain Heritage | 0-0 | 0-1 |
| Draughn | 0-0 | 0-3 |
| Owen | 0-0 | 0-3 |

MONDAY, NOV. 27
Walhalla (S.C.) 76, Rosman 33

TUESDAY, NOV. 28
Asheville 56, Mtn. Heritage 50
Cherryville 59, NCSSM-M 50
E. Henderson 69, Madison 20
Erwin 86, Avery County 60
Freedom 70, Draughn 58
Rosman 56, BR Early Coll. 52
Thomas Jefferson 75, Owen 69

THURSDAY, NOV. 30
Patton 70, NCSSM-M 24
Mitchell at N. Buncombe, N/A

FRIDAY, DEC. 1
Ashe County at Mtn. Her., late
Draughn at East Burke, late
N. Buncombe at Madison, late
R-S Central at Owen, late
Watauga at Avery County, late

MONDAY, DEC. 4
Highlands at Rosman
NCSSM-M at Mtn. Her.

TUESDAY, DEC. 5
Avery County at Lincolnton
Madison at Tuscola
Mitchell at Cloudland (Tenn.)
Mountain Heritage at Pisgah
North Henderson at Owen

GIRLS

NWC 3A/4A

| | Conf. | All |
|-------------------|------------|------------|
| | W-L | W-L |
| Alexander Central | 0-0 | 5-0 |
| Hibriten | 0-0 | 2-0 |
| Freedom | 0-0 | 2-1 |
| Ashe Co. | 0-0 | 2-2 |
| South Caldwell | 0-0 | 2-2 |
| Watauga | 0-0 | 1-1 |

TUESDAY, NOV. 28
Alex. Ctrl. 57, New.-Con. 33
Freedom 70, Draughn 41
Hibriten 72, Patton 10
N. Surry 47, Ashe County 42
South Caldwell 49, Maiden 30

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 29
S. Caldwell 60, Bunker Hill 24
Watauga 71, North Wilkes 36

THURSDAY, NOV. 30
Alex. Ctrl. 73, N. Davidson 38

FRIDAY, DEC. 1
Ashe County at Mtn. Her., late
Hibriten at West Caldwell, late
South Caldwell at Bandys, late
Watauga at Avery County, late

TUESDAY, DEC. 5
Alex. Ctrl. at South Iredell
Ashe County at New.-Con.
Bunker Hill at South Caldwell
Hibriten at Wilkes Central
Hickory at Freedom
Watauga at D. Boone (Tenn.)

MF7 1A/2A

| | Conf. | All |
|-----------------|------------|------------|
| | W-L | W-L |
| East Rutherford | 0-0 | 1-0 |
| Hendersonville | 0-0 | 1-0 |
| R-S Central | 0-0 | 2-1 |
| Polk Co. | 0-0 | 1-2 |
| Patton | 0-0 | 1-4 |
| Chase | 0-0 | 0-2 |
| Brevard | 0-0 | 0-3 |

MONDAY, NOV. 27
R-S Cent. 36, Chesnee (S.C.) 34

TUESDAY, NOV. 28
Burns 57, Chase 13
Hibriten 72, Patton 10
W. Henderson 59, Brevard 16

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 29
Pisgah 71, Polk County 43
Smoky Mtn. 59, Brevard 39

THURSDAY, NOV. 30
Patton 60, NCSSM-M 16

FRIDAY, DEC. 1
Chase at East Henderson, late
Chesnee (S.C.) at E. Ruth., late
H'ville at W. Henderson, late
Rosman at Brevard, late
R-S Central at Owen, late

MONDAY, DEC. 4
Bessemer City at Chase

TUESDAY, DEC. 5
Cherryville at Chase
H'ville at E. Henderson
Patton at Maiden
R-S Central at T.C. Roberson

CVAC 2A

| | Conf. | All |
|-------------------|------------|------------|
| | W-L | W-L |
| East Burke | 0-0 | 4-0 |
| Bunker Hill | 0-0 | 1-1 |
| Lincolnton | 0-0 | 1-1 |
| Maiden | 0-0 | 0-1 |
| West Caldwell | 0-0 | 0-2 |
| Bandys | 0-0 | 0-3 |
| Newton-Conover | 0-0 | 0-3 |
| West Lincoln | 0-0 | 0-3 |

TUESDAY, NOV. 28
Alex. Ctrl. 57, New.-Con. 33
Cramer 67, Lincolnton 30
East Burke 62, St. Stephens 53
Foard 60, West Lincoln 43
South Caldwell 49, Maiden 30
South Iredell 54, Bandys 51

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 29
Comm. School of Davidson 50,
W. Caldwell 27
S. Caldwell 60, Bunker Hill 24

THURSDAY, NOV. 30
Hickory 57, New.-Con. 29

FRIDAY, DEC. 1
Cherryville at W. Lincoln, late
Draughn at East Burke, late
Hibriten at West Caldwell, late
Lincolnton at East Lincoln, late
Maiden at Foard, late
South Caldwell at Bandys, late
St. Steph. at Bunker Hill, late

TUESDAY, DEC. 5
Ashe County at New.-Con.
Avery County at Lincolnton
Bunker Hill at South Caldwell
Patton at Maiden
St. Stephens at Bandys
West Lincoln at North Lincoln

WHC 1A/2A

| | Conf. | All |
|-------------------|------------|------------|
| | W-L | W-L |
| Mountain Heritage | 0-0 | 1-0 |
| Rosman | 0-0 | 3-1 |
| Avery Co. | 0-0 | 2-1 |
| Draughn | 0-0 | 1-2 |
| Madison | 0-0 | 1-2 |
| NCSSM-M | 0-0 | 1-4 |
| Mitchell | 0-0 | 0-0 |
| Owen | 0-0 | 0-3 |

MONDAY, NOV. 27
Walhalla (S.C.) 68, Rosman 50

TUESDAY, NOV. 28
Avery County 53, Erwin 41
Cherryville 66, NCSSM-M 12
E. Henderson 43, Madison 31
Freedom 70, Draughn 41
Mtn. Her. 76, Asheville 28
Rosman 57, BR Early Coll. 14
Thomas Jefferson 72, Owen 37

THURSDAY, NOV. 30
Patton 60, NCSSM-M 16
Mitchell at N. Buncombe, N/A

FRIDAY, DEC. 1
Ashe County at Mtn. Her., late
Draughn at East Burke, late
N. Buncombe at Madison, late
Rosman at Brevard, late
R-S Central at Owen, late
Watauga at Avery County, late

MONDAY, DEC. 4
Highlands at Rosman
NCSSM-M at Mtn. Her.

TUESDAY, DEC. 5
Avery County at Lincolnton
Madison at Tuscola
Mitchell at Cloudland (Tenn.)
Mountain Heritage at Pisgah
North Henderson at Owen



Flag Football Champs

The Bengals defeated the Packers, 32-27, on Nov. 13 to win the flag football ages 11-13 age division. Pictured are players Thomas Bartlett, Harrison Bell, Aiken Shade, Jace Crawley, Harper Robison, Walter Farris, Jack Jandrew, and Peyton Obermeyer, and coaches William Bell and Adam Shade.

PHOTOS FOR THE PAPER



The Bills won the Morganton Recreation Department's youth flag football league ages 5-7 championship game on Nov. 13 at the Catawba River Soccer Complex. Pictured are players Zayden Thomas, Shiloh Thomas, Jeremiah Davis, Luke Cramer, Brantley Connor, and Jeremiah Connor, as well as coach Brandon Thomas.



The Packers won on Nov. 13 to earn the flag football ages 8-10 championship. Pictured are (front row) Noah Ramsey, Luke Kiser, Patch Fisher, and Noah Beamish; (back row) Coach Neil Ramsey, Oz Strong, Jace Ramsey, and Coach Jerome Ramsey.

WEEKLY SPORTS CALENDAR

SATURDAY, DEC. 2

HIGH SCHOOLS

WRESTLING

East Burke at Hibriten tournament (time TBA)

Patton at Burns tournament (9 a.m.)

NCSD at E. Henderson tournament (girls only, time TBA)

BURKE CO. REC DEPT

Youth basketball games (9 a.m. to 7 p.m. starts; at Salem, Oak Hill, East Burke, R.O. Huffman, Mountain View, George Hildebrand, Hallyburton, Freedom, Liberty)

MORGANTON REC DEPT

Petanque (1 p.m., at Catawba River Soccer Complex courts)

Pickleball (9 a.m., at Collett St. Rec Center and Mountain View Rec Center)

VALDESE REC DEPT

Cosmic bowling (6 p.m., at Valdese Community Center)

Masters swimming (8:30 a.m., at Valdese Community Center)

SUNDAY, DEC. 3

No events scheduled

MONDAY, DEC. 4

HIGH SCHOOLS

BASKETBALL

NCSSM-Morganton at Mountain Heritage (6 p.m. girls start)

South Carolina School for the Deaf at NCSD (6 p.m. girls start)

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

BASKETBALL

East Burke at East McDowell (4 p.m. girls start)

Walter Johnson at Table Rock (4 p.m. girls start)

West McDowell at Heritage (4 p.m. girls start)

WRESTLING

East McDowell at E. Burke (4 p.m.)

Heritage at West McDowell (4 p.m.)

Table Rock at Walter Johnson (4 p.m.)

MORGANTON REC DEPT

Pickleball (9 a.m., at Collett St. Rec Center)

TUESDAY, DEC. 5

HIGH SCHOOLS

BASKETBALL

Hickory at Freedom (4 p.m. JV girls start)

Patton at Maiden (4 p.m. JV girls start)

NCSD at Tennessee School for the Deaf (4 p.m. girls start)

WRESTLING

Freedom at Hickory (5 p.m.)

Patton at Statesville (5:30 p.m.)

MORGANTON REC DEPT

Pickleball (9:30 a.m., at Mountain View Rec Center)

Tae Kwon Do (6:30 p.m., at Collett St. Rec Center, Ages 8 and up)

VALDESE REC DEPT

Masters swimming (9 a.m., at Valdese Community Center)

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 6

HIGH SCHOOLS

WRESTLING

NCSD at Mountain Island Charter tri (5:30 p.m.)

SWIMMING

Draughn hosts tri meet, with East Burke (6 p.m.)

Freedom hosts tri meet, with Patton (6 p.m.)

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

BASKETBALL

Heritage at East Burke (4 p.m. girls start)

WRESTLING

East Burke at Heritage (4 p.m.)

MORGANTON REC DEPT

Fencing (6 p.m. beginners, 7 p.m. advanced; Ages 8 and up; at Mtn. View Rec Center)

Pickleball (1 p.m., at Collett St. Rec Center)

VALDESE REC DEPT

Senior bowling (10 a.m., at Valdese Community Center)

THURSDAY, DEC. 7

HIGH SCHOOLS

BASKETBALL

East Burke at Freedom (4 p.m. JV girls start)

WRESTLING

Draughn hosts tri (5:30 p.m.)

Patton at Lincolnton (5:30 p.m.)

INDOOR TRACK

Freedom at Bunker Hill (time TBA)

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

BASKETBALL

Heritage at Walter Johnson (4 p.m. girls start)

Table Rock at Liberty (4 p.m. girls start)

WRESTLING

Liberty at Table Rock (4 p.m.)

Walter Johnson at Heritage (4 p.m.)

MORGANTON REC DEPT

Petanque (1 p.m., at Catawba River Soccer Complex courts)

Pickleball (9:30 a.m., at Mountain View Rec Center)

Tae Kwon Do (6:30 p.m., at Collett St. Rec Center; Ages 8 and up)

VALDESE REC DEPT

Masters swimming (7 p.m., at Valdese Community Center)

FRIDAY, DEC. 8

HIGH SCHOOLS

BASKETBALL

Patton at Draughn (4 p.m. JV girls start)

NCSD at Hackney Classic, Alabama School for the Deaf (girls only, time TBA)

WRESTLING

Draughn at Newton-Conover tournament (5 p.m.)

MORGANTON REC DEPT

Pickleball (9:30 a.m., at Mountain View Rec Center)

SATURDAY, DEC. 9

HIGH SCHOOLS

BASKETBALL

Shelby at Freedom (6 p.m. girls only)

Hopewell at Freedom (7:30 p.m. boys only)

NCSD at Hackney Classic, Alabama School for the Deaf (girls only, time TBA)

NCSD at Eastern N.C. School for the Deaf (2 p.m. boys only)

WRESTLING

Patton hosts Big Cat Invitational, with Freedom (9 a.m.)

Draughn at Newton-Conover tournament (10 a.m.)

East Burke at West Caldwell tournament (time TBA)

NCSD at West Henderson tournament (girls only, time TBA)

INDOOR TRACK

Freedom at JDL Fast Track, Winston-Salem (time TBA)

BURKE CO. REC DEPT

Youth basketball games (9 a.m. to 7 p.m. starts; at Salem, Hildebran, Oak Hill, East Burke, R.O. Huffman, Mtn. View, Valdese, George Hildebrand, Hallyburton, Freedom, Glen Alpine, Liberty)

MORGANTON REC DEPT

Petanque (1 p.m., at Catawba River Soccer Complex courts)

Pickleball (9 a.m., at Collett St. Rec Center and Mountain View Rec Center)

VALDESE REC DEPT

Cosmic bowling (6 p.m., at Valdese Community Center)

Masters swimming (8:30 a.m., at Valdese Community Center)

SIGNUPS

VALDESE REC DEPT

Youth winter bowling league (Ages 5-18; Call 828-879-2132 for more details)

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Heritage wrestling opens season with 72-25 win

By **JOSH MCKINNEY**
Assistant Sports Editor

The Heritage Middle School wrestling team rolled to a 72-25 road victory over East McDowell in both teams' Foothills Athletic Conference opener on Wednesday.

The Eagles (1-0) earned 10 wins via pinfall. **Paxton Brown** pinned his opponent at 90 pounds, while **Wade Garrison** (98), **Jason Yang** (106), **Carson Murdock** (120), **Elijah Morgan** (126), **Van Teague** (132), **Kenny Morrison** (138), **Lucas Caldwell** (144), **Christian Ugalde** (157), and **Sawyer White** (165) did the same in their respective weight classes.

Other victorious grapplers for Heritage included **Nolan Russ** at 78 pounds (forfeit), **Joseph Yang** at 83 (forfeit), and **Isaac Yang** at 113 (decision).

Table Rock's wrestling team was also in action this week, falling 52-45 at the hands of West McDowell on Tuesday at home. Despite dropping the match, the Falcons (0-1) won eight weight classes.

Pinfall victories for Table Rock came from **Zenen Sigmon** (83 pounds), **Ethan Yang** (98), **Christian Lawhon** (126), **Christian Chapman** (138), **Kayden Bowman** (144), **Hunter Powell** (150), and **Luke Kota** (250), while **Clayton Chapman** (106) won by decision.

BOYS BASKETBALL

Liberty, TR notch season-opening victories

Liberty (1-0) started the 2023-24 FAC season with a 44-34 road win over Walter Johnson on Tuesday.

The Knights' **Mason Abernathy** was the game's leading scorer with 18 points, and he also pulled down 11 rebounds. **Nate Coffey** added 12 points and sev-

en boards, while **Beckham Buchanan** had eight points.

The Yellow Jackets were led by 15 points from **Jusian Perkins**, who also scored a team-high 17 points in Wednesday's 55-51 road loss to West McDowell, which dropped Walter Johnson to 0-2 on the season.

Also on Tuesday, Table Rock (1-0) defeated host West McDowell by a 47-35 final behind 13 points from **Noah Francis**, 10 from **Micah Phasiname**, and nine from **Kaison Clark**.

And on Wednesday, Heritage (0-1) suffered a 48-21 home defeat at the hands of East McDowell. **Henry Cooper** and **Titus Dodd** scored nine and eight points, respectively, for the Eagles.

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Lady Knights top WJ in crosstown tilt

Liberty (1-0) made the trip to crosstown rival Walter Johnson on Tuesday and came away with a 25-12 win.

The Lady Knights were led in scoring by **Presley McCoy**, who had seven points. They also received six points and five rebounds from **Piper Ellis**.

The Lady Yellow Jackets got a game-high eight points from **Allison Portillo**, while **Paris Conley** led Walter Johnson (0-2) with seven points in Wednesday's 45-9 loss at West McDowell.

In other action this week, Table Rock (0-1) lost 38-11 at West McDowell on Tuesday and Heritage (0-1) fell 30-13 to visiting East McDowell on Wednesday. No further details were available from those contests.

Josh McKinney can be reached at 828-445-8595 or josh@thepaper.media.

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LOCAL

Three Morganton runners post top-10 overall finishes in Turkey Trot

By JOSH MCKINNEY
Assistant Sports Editor

The fourth annual Turkey Trot 5K walk/run was held on Nov. 23 at Silver Creek Golf Club, with a record 164 participants attending and three Morganton runners finishing in the top 10 of the overall standings.

Morganton's **Caleb Kingery** came in fourth overall with a time of 22:53.9, which was also good enough to win the ages 30-39 men's division. **Liam Chap-**

man of Morganton added a seventh-place overall time of 24:06.9 to win the ages 14 and under men's division, while Morganton's **Will Singley** finished 10th overall and second in the ages 30-39 men's division with a time of 24:18.3.

The top female finisher from Burke County was Morganton's **Mary Katherine Mull**, who came in 16th overall and third among females with a time of 25:24.6. She also posted the second-best time among participants in the ages 30-39 wom-

en's division.

Other local age group winners were as follows: Valdese's **Presley Powell** in the ages 14 and under women's division, Morganton's **Emily Elder** in the ages 50-59 women's division, and Morganton's **Amy Brooks** in the ages 60 and up women's division.

The overall winner was Connor James of Bonaire, Ga., who competed in the ages 15-19 men's division. Additionally, Raleigh's **Brianna Hodges** (ages 30-39 division) was the

top female finisher.

More than \$4,800 was raised during the Turkey Trot 5K to benefit the Meeting Place Mission.

RUDOLPH FROM THE REDS GOLF TOURNAMENT

Silver Creek Golf Club will host the Rudolph from the Reds golf tournament on Dec. 9 at 11 a.m.

The format will be four-person captain's choice (scramble) and all participants will play

from the red tees. The tournament is open to the first 22 teams.

The cost is \$85 per person or \$45 plus an applicable cart fee for club members, and \$20 from each entry will go straight to Burke United Christian Ministries. To sign up, call the pro shop at 828-584-6911, ext. 2.

Josh McKinney can be reached at 828-445-8595 or josh@thepaper.media.

East Burke wins County Powderpuff title



Above: Freedom's **Caroline McRacken** (left) eludes Patton's **Joelie Pinto** during the teams' morning semifinal matchup in the annual Burke County Powderpuff Palooza football event hosted by Draughn on Nov. 18. Freedom won, 8-6, to advance to the finals. The event serves as a fundraiser for Burke United Christian Ministries and East Burke Christian Ministries.

Right: The Freedom cheerleaders show some impressive synchronization as they support the school's anchor club girls players.

PHOTOS BY JAMES LYNCH JR. / THE PAPER



East Burke's **Braelyn Stilwell** (left) tries to grab the flag to stop Freedom's **Leah Kirksey** (right) during the title game matchup. East Burke won, 20-14, to claim this year's title.



East Burke's **Grace Hammack** (left) looks to slip to the outside around Draughn's **Trinity McDaniel** (right) in the teams' semifinal matchup. East Burke won, 12-8.

HONEYCUTT: He's rubbed elbows with outdoor legends

FROM PAGE 1C

2022, founded the Bass Anglers Sportsman Society (B.A.S.S) in 1967 and was inducted into the Bass Fishing Hall of Fame in 2001, while Cobb is the former editor of Bassmaster Magazine — which was created by Scott — and a 2002 Bass Fishing HOF inductee.

"One of the things that I'm most proud of in my testimonials is there's one from a kindergarten through third grade teacher in Port Heiden, Alaska," said Honeycutt. "I went and visited their school and they didn't have a computer, so I bought them a computer and I sent them some Halloween bags for trick or treat. They're an Inuit Indian tribe with very little other than what the government gives them, and I got a letter from her and a piece of that letter is in the book."

In her testimonial, the teacher, **Donna Eldridge**, states that "Of the many hundreds of sportsmen who have passed through the villages that I have lived in, you (Honeycutt) are the first to consider our students," something that Honeycutt says "has always been a priority" for him. In fact, 25% of the net proceeds of his book sales are donated to the youth and conservation programs of both the Bass Fishing Hall of Fame and the Catawba Valley Wildlife Club.

"I had the good fortune of having two sets of grandpar-



Rhodney Honeycutt exposed his four children, all of whom are now adults, to the outdoors from a young age.

ents that loved me dearly," said Honeycutt. "I was the firstborn grandchild on both sides and my maternal grandparents did not fish or hunt, but they were passionate about camping. ... My paternal grandfather and grandmother were very passionate about hunting and fishing and farming, so not only did I pick up hunting and fishing skills, but I learned to butcher a hog, milk a cow, tend a garden, all that kind of stuff that carries me today. But I re-

alize that there are a number of kids out there that don't get that opportunity."

According to Honeycutt, who has been a member of the Catawba Valley Wildlife Club since he was a child, the organization "may have caused me to stay on the right path."

"That club sponsored what they called an explorer scout group ... and there was always something to do on the weekends with that group," said Honeycutt. "I'm real convinced

that children deserve an opportunity to do something besides play video games.

"All four of my kids ... as far as I know, they have no bad habits. They all four have career type jobs, they've never been in trouble, and I'm 100% convinced that the time in the outdoors with me and my wife had a lot to do with that. So I believe in kids being exposed to something besides what a lot of them are exposed to today."

Not only has Honeycutt's love of the outdoors given him something to do and helped him stay out of trouble, but it has also allowed him to spend time with his father, **Blake**, a 2014 Bass Fishing Hall of Fame inductee who died in 2022, and meet such notable individuals as the aforementioned **Scott** and **Cobb**, Ranger Boats founder **Forrest**

Wood, Bass Pro Shops founder **Johnny Morris**, NASCAR legends **Dale Earnhardt Sr.** and **Richard Childress**, Carolina Panthers founder **Jerry Richardson**, and many others.

Scott started his bass fishing tournament circuit in 1967, with the first tournament taking place on Arkansas' **Beaver Lake**. A few years later, a teenage Honeycutt posted a pair of top-10 finishes, including a third-place finish on **Lake Norman** in the first tournament ever held in the Carolinas.

"I graduated from high school when I was 17, not because I was smart, but because I was younger than my classmates," said Honeycutt, who told his mother that he was going to become a professional fisherman rather than attend college. However, "she won the argument and I went to college, and then I won the draft lottery after that and that took me down an entirely different path."

After completing his time in the United States military — he was stationed in Morganton as part of the North Carolina National Guard during the Vietnam War — Honeycutt found his way back to Burke County years later, becoming a full-time resident in 2012. And to this day, he is fond of the area.

"To me, it's God's country," said Honeycutt. "... Burke County is so diverse. You've got good fishing, you've got good hunting — not world class in some ways, but the deer hunting is better than average and there's a lot of deer hunters in Burke County. The small game is better than average, and you've got beautiful scenery, you've got beautiful places to go hike."

Josh McKinney can be reached at 828-445-8595 or josh@thepaper.media.

'All four of my kids ... as far as I know, they have no bad habits. They all four have career type jobs, they've never been in trouble, and I'm 100% convinced that the time in the outdoors with me and my wife had a lot to do with that.'

RHODNEY HONEYCUTT, OUTDOOR ENTHUSIAST

High school swimming team capsules



DRAUGHN WILDCATS

LAST YEAR'S CONFERENCE FINISH: Boys second, girls third in WHC 1A/2A
TOTAL NUMBER OF SWIMMERS ON ROSTER: 21 (12 boys, 9 girls)
KEY RETURNERS: Ally Auton, Ava Aldridge, Griffin Stephens, William Abernathy
NEWCOMERS TO WATCH: Lilah Johnson, Macy Auton, Addison Lowman, Tate Jensen, Jacob Mull, Abdiel Gonzalez-Tomas
FROM THE COACH: "We have a great team that has goals of winning conference and sending swimmers to regionals and states this year. Our goal is to help each swimmer better themselves, whether it's improving stroke technique, beating personal best times, or breaking school records. (Assistant coach) Marianne (Burris) and I hope to grow the swim program in the next few years, so that more students at Draughn will come to love the sport." — **Stephanie Mull**



EAST BURKE CAVALIERS

LAST YEAR'S CONFERENCE FINISH: Boys first, girls first in CVAC 2A
TOTAL NUMBER OF SWIMMERS ON ROSTER: 24 (13 boys, 11 girls)
KEY RETURNERS: Tristen Carswell, Haiden Dale, Mason Davis, Jacob Gersch, Taylor Lennex, Noah Ramsey, Emma Curtis, Grace Hammack, Freyja Lemaire, Ella Beth Oxentine, Gracie Stamey
NEWCOMERS TO WATCH: Raegan Carter, Amanda McLean, Angelo Grippi, Gage Allen
FROM THE COACH: "Our goals are to make regionals with all of our swimmers and to hopefully take some of them to states. We are very excited about our new swimmers and the potential each of them have to become excellent swimmers." — **Haley Oxentine** (girls coach). Note: Nikki Stamey is East Burke's boys coach.



FREEDOM PATRIOTS

LAST YEAR'S CONFERENCE FINISH: Boys third, girls third in NWC 3A/4A
TOTAL NUMBER OF SWIMMERS ON ROSTER: 20 (10 boys, 10 girls)
KEY RETURNERS: Caelan Houpe, Lucy Yelton, Nate Carswell
NEWCOMERS TO WATCH: Rex Jones, Brayden Cullen
FROM THE COACH: "Even though we lost a lot of our key swimmers to graduation, we are a young team in the rebuilding process. Several of our swimmers are newcomers as well as former members of the Morganton Swim Team. We are excited to see what happens. Our motto for this season is 'Put the hammer down!'" — **Drew Laningham**



NCSSM-MORGANTON DRAGONS

LAST YEAR'S CONFERENCE FINISH: N/A (joined WHC 1A/2A this season)
TOTAL NUMBER OF SWIMMERS ON ROSTER: 30 (14 boys, 16 girls)
KEY RETURNERS: Anneliese Pinnell, Bobby McAdams, Lucas Nagel, Theryn Miller, Sofia Poingue, Ellis Waitz, Logan Reich, Naydelin Lopez-Rodriguez, Christo Papainannou
NEWCOMERS TO WATCH: Ava Gruber, Eva Lachapelle, Willa Briggs, Anil Chintapalli, Krishay Annadi
FROM THE COACH: "Our student-athletes are early in the stages of learning what it takes to become a team. When this happens, success will follow. I avoid putting expectations on the team, but I expect to be prepared for each practice, I expect to teach them as much as possible, and I expect to have fun." — **Keith Corbeil**



PATTON PANTHERS

LAST YEAR'S CONFERENCE FINISH: Boys fifth, girls fifth in MF7 1A/2A
TOTAL NUMBER OF SWIMMERS ON ROSTER: 22 (10 boys, 12 girls)
KEY RETURNERS: Evan Vaughn, Gabrielle King, Allie Parris, Dominick Curtis, Miranda Alvarado
NEWCOMERS TO WATCH: Zoey Gregory, Mateo Alvarado, Jolann Buff, Ana Sic, Ely Ledford
FROM THE COACH: "With the increased number of swimmers, we're looking forward to better placements in the meets. All of the swimmers are showing considerable enthusiasm, so we're expecting great times and continued improvements as the season progresses." — **Sean Alexander** (boys coach). Note: Kristan Erwin is Patton's girls coach.

— Compiled by Josh McKinney

HIGH SCHOOLS

Freedom, EB boys finish 1st in respective swim meets

By **JOSH MCKINNEY**
Assistant Sports Editor

A pair of swim meets were held in Burke County on Wednesday, with the Freedom boys finishing first in a four-team meet hosted by Patton at the Morganton Aquatic Center and the East Burke boys coming in first in a six-team meet at the Cavaliers hosted at the Valdese Aquatic Center.

The Freedom girls came in second behind Hendersonville, while the Patton boys and girls both finished third in a meet that also included R-S Central. As for the EB girls, they finished second behind Newton-Conover in a meet that also included Owen, Lincoln, West Lincoln, and McDowell.

Individually, Freedom won seven events. **Maria Perez-Rodriguez** was victorious in the girls 200 freestyle (2:37.22) and 100 backstroke (1:28.54), while **Sonia Hallman** won the girls 100 free (1:20.37) and 500 free (8:12.98). **Caelan Houpe** won the boys 50 free (26.59 seconds), **Nate Carswell** finished first in the boys 100 butterfly (1:15.81), and **Rex Jones, Carswell, Brayden Cullen**, and **Houpe** won the boys 200 free relay (1:52.85).

Patton captured two wins, with **Blake Peahuff** finishing first in the boys 500 free (7:00.01) and **Alvarado Gamborino** taking the top spot in the girls

100 breaststroke (1:25.53).

And EB won four events at its meet, with **Jacob Gersch** playing a part in three of the victories. He teamed with **Taylor Lennex, Noah Ramsey**, and **Tristen Carswell** to take first in the boys 200 medley relay (2:02.39), and he also came in first in the 200 individual medley (2:33.72) and 100 breast (1:16.78).

In addition, **Haiden Dale** won the boys 200 free (2:19.69).

INDOOR TRACK

Freedom wins three events at South Caldwell

Freedom participated in an 11-team meet at South Caldwell on Thursday, and Patriot athletes ultimately won three events.

Nathan Lindsay posted two victories for Freedom, posting a time of 8.76 seconds to win the boys 55-meter hurdles while winning the 300 meters with a time of 39.55 seconds.

The Patriots' remaining victory came from **Christopher Uren** in the boys 500 meters (1:16.20).

WRESTLING

Freedom splits tri-match with McDowell, Owen

Freedom (3-5) visited McDowell on Tuesday for a tri-match that also involved

Owen, losing to the host Titans by a 45-33 score while defeating the Warhorses by a 36-34 final.

The Patriots received two pins from **Alan Vicente Perez** (165 pounds), while **Yaleen Khang** (106) and **Xander Vue** (113) each recorded a pin and a forfeit victory. **Carson Hackett** (120), **Hank Hall** (132), **Olives Simon** (138), **Enrique Gonzalez** (144), and **Briar George** (285) registered one pin apiece, while **Kaleb Pearson** (126) also collected one win.

Draughn (1-7) lost three times at Maiden on Tuesday, suffering a 66-14 loss to East Lincoln, a 33-23 defeat at the hands of Hickory, and a 75-6 loss to the host Blue Devils. Nonetheless, the Wildcats got three wins from Hampton Blackwell (190; pin, technical fall, forfeit), two from Gaston Garrison (126; pin, decision), and one apiece from **Isaac Kirk** (132; pin), **Connor Brinkley** (215; pin), and **Crystal Tallent** (120; forfeit).

In a tri-match at Alexander Central on Tuesday, Patton (1-7) lost to Bandys by a 60-21 final and to the host Cougars by a 48-30 score. But **Burke Wilson** (157) tallied two pins to go with a pin and a forfeit victory from **Peyton Owens** (106), two wins including a pin from **Luke Parker** (138), two forfeit victories from **Dawson Smith** (120), and a pin from **Isaiah Greene** (285).

Finally, NCSM (0-7) remained winless during a home tri-match against Corvian Community

School and Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy on Thursday, dropping both matches by identical scores of 72-12. **Jaidon Johnson** (157) was the only member of the Bears to earn multiple wins as he recorded a pin

and a forfeit victory, while **Christian Villafior** (126) and **Sean Moran** (165) each notched one pin.

Josh McKinney can be reached at 828-445-8595 or josh@thepaper.media.

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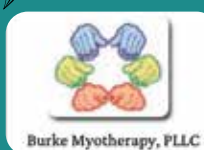
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HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL

Lady Patriots use big 2nd quarter to pull away from Draughn

Patton sweeps NCSSM-Morganton to cap special night

By **JOSH MCKINNEY**
Assistant Sports Editor

After a road loss to East Burke a week earlier, the Freedom girls basketball team got back in the win column on Tuesday, defeating Draughn 70-41 in Valdese to improve to 2-1 on the young season.

The Lady Patriots held a 9-8 advantage after the opening quarter before outscoring the Lady Wildcats (1-2) 24-4 in the second. Freedom led 52-25 through three periods before also winning the final frame.

Freedom's **Peyton Caldwell** led all scorers with 24 points, while **Ava Whitaker** had 13 and **Haven Gladden** was also in double figures with 11. Meanwhile, **Jenna Abernathy** was Draughn's lone double-digit scorer with 14.

"I was very pleased with our effort on the defensive end tonight," Freedom coach Amber Reddick said. "We also had some great contributions from our bench. Peyton finished well tonight and Ava Whitaker gave us great minutes in the post. Haven Gladden did a great job of getting us into our offense. We also got great minutes out of Cheryllana Cunningham, who pulled down 10 boards."

In the nightcap, the Freedom boys overcame deficits at the end of each of the first two quarters, outscoring Draughn 31-18 in the third and 15-14 in the fourth en route to a 70-58 win.

Amore Connelly scored all of his game-high 24 points in the second half for the Patriots (2-1), while **Braxton King** finished with five 3-pointers for 15 points and **Elijah Davidson** scored eight. On the other side, the Wildcats (0-3) got 20 points from **D'Andre Moore**, 13 from **Eli Tillery**, and 11 apiece from **Blake McElyea** and **Ethan Miller**.

PATTON GIRLS NAB FIRST WIN; PANTHER BOYS REMAIN PERFECT

The Lady Panthers knocked off visiting NCSSM-Morganton 60-16 on Thursday for their first victory of the season. Patton was up 15-4 at the end of the first quarter and 32-4 at the half before also outscoring the Dragons in each of the final

MORE COVERAGE

East Burke hosted Draughn late Friday. See next week's edition or visit thepaper.media for coverage of that game and other upcoming local contests.



JAMES LYNCH JR. PHOTOS / THE PAPER

Freedom's Peyton Caldwell (30) looks for a way past Draughn's Jenna Abernathy (21) during Tuesday's game in Valdese.

two periods.

Abigail Carpenter and **Karson Pinkerton** each finished with 13 points to lead Patton (1-4), with **Laya Bolds** chipping in seven. As for NCSSM-Morganton (1-4), it was led by seven points from **Zu Mikolajec**.

Patton called up several players from its JV squad for Thursday's contest, which came on the heels of a 72-10 road loss to Hibriten on Tuesday and a 64-16 home defeat at the hands of East Burke on Nov. 22. According to Panthers coach Autumn Helms, it was important to get those girls some experience at the varsity level.

"It's awesome," she said. "We are a very young team. We have two seniors in our program, so being able to pull up four from our JV team, it's nice to get them on the court to play with the varsity girls and show them that they can produce and they're just as important as the next person on our team. It's exciting to see where the program's gonna go."

Helms added that "you can't beat the feeling of winning," acknowledging that the players "come into practice every day and work hard, and for them to see some success on the scoreboard, they needed it."

In the later contest, the Pat-



Patton's Karson Pinkerton (22) dribbles around NCSSM-Morganton's Hannah Woodward (14) during Thursday's game in Morganton.

ton boys cruised to a 70-24 victory over NCSSM-Morganton in a game that saw all 15 players on the Panthers' roster score. Patton started the game

on a 21-0 run and led 25-3 after the opening quarter, 39-14 at halftime, and 59-23 entering the fourth before winning by a 46-point final margin.

Bryson Handley and **Brady Chamberlain** had 15 and 10 points, respectively, for the Panthers (5-0), who also received seven from **Chandler Rutherford**. **Lawson Taylor** finished with 12 points to lead the Dragons (3-2).

Prior to Thursday's victory over NCSSM-Morganton, Patton earned a 76-56 road win over Hibriten on Tuesday behind 16 points from Chamberlain, 12 from **Jake Perry**, and 10 from **Nathan Waters**. The Panthers also protected home court with a 52-42 victory over East Burke on Nov. 22 behind four double-digit scorers — Chamberlain (15), Perry (13), Waters (12), and Rutherford (11).

Making Thursday even more special was the fact that Patton welcomed members of the Ryan Blaney Family Foundation to the school to raise awareness for Alzheimer's Disease, brain injuries, and concussions. It also marked the final night that 50/50 raffle tickets were sold to benefit the Ryan Blaney Family Foundation, and players and coaches from both teams wore purple shirts emblazoned with the foundation's logo as they posed for photos together in between games.

NCSSM-Morganton's girls previously lost 66-12 at Cheryville on Tuesday — Mikolajec led them with six points — while the boys suffered a 59-50 defeat at the hands of the Ironmen despite getting 17 points from Taylor, 12 from **Rahul Soletti**, and nine from **Davin Hyche**.

EB GIRLS CONTINUE WINNING WAYS

After the East Burke girls defeated Patton on Nov. 22 behind 23 points from **Braelyn Stilwell**, 10 from **Kamiah Lawing**, and nine from **Kassie Turner**, they improved to 4-0 on Tuesday at St. Stephens.

Stilwell poured in 24 points against the Lady Indians to go with 17 from **Kara Brinkley** and eight from Turner as the Lady Cavaliers handed their non-conference foes a 62-53 loss.

As for the Cavalier boys, they entered Friday's late home game against Draughn at 0-4 after losing at Patton on Nov. 22 and at St. Stephens on Tuesday. East Burke's **Owen Hartmann** finished with a game-high 20 points against the Panthers, while **Sylas Coleman** had 11 to pace the Cavs against the Indians.

EB's **Barger Shook** and **Zack Crawford** added nine and eight points, respectively, during Tuesday's contest.

Josh McKinney can be reached at 828-445-8595 or josh@thepaper.media.

HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL | Box scores

BOYS

THURSDAY, NOV. 30

PATTON 70, NCSSM-MORGANTON 24
N 3 11 9 1-24
P 25 14 20 11-70
NCSSM-MORGANTON (3-2)
Lawson Taylor 12, Chanshetty 3, Spruill 3, Huang 2, Ohmstead 2, Tzendzalian 2
PATTON (5-0)
Bryson Handley 15, Brady Chamberlain 10, Rutherford 7, Michaux 6, Waters 5, Barrier 4, Sexton 4, Whisnant 4, Davis 3, Goodman 3, Bollinger 2, Griffin 2, Hall 2, Perry 2, Roscoe 1

TUESDAY, NOV. 28

CHERRYVILLE 59, NCSSM-MORGANTON 50
N 11 18 10 11-50
C 10 13 22 14-59
NCSSM-MORGANTON
Lawson Taylor 17, Rahul Soletti 12, Hyche 9, Chanshetty 4, Huang 4, Ohmstead 2, Spruill 2
CHERRYVILLE (2-0)
Rayshawn Sewell 17, Darrien Floyd 13, Andron Patterson 12, Hunt 8, Bookout 6, Pullen 3
FREEDOM 70, DRAUGHN 58
F 10 14 31 15-70
D 17 9 18 14-58
FREEDOM (2-1)
Amore Connelly 24, Braxton King 15, Davidson 8, Ko. Johnson 7, Lytle 5, Taylor 5, McNaughton 4, Ki. Johnson 2
DRAUGHN (0-3)
D'Andre Moore 20, Eli Tillery 13, Blake McElyea 11, Ethan Miller 11, Cooper 2, Houston 1

PATTON 76, HIBRITEN 56

P 24 23 20 9-76
H 15 17 12 12-56
PATTON
Brady Chamberlain 16, Jake Perry 12, Nathan Waters 10, Bollinger 7, Handley 6, Sexton 6, Goodman 5, Hall 5, Rutherford 5, Barrier 2, Michaux 2
HIBRITEN (0-2)
Holden Woodward 23, Daysen Tugman 12, Jones 6, Baker 5, Dahn 4, Foddrell 3, Horton 2, Hawkins 1
ST. STEPHENS 59, EAST BURKE 35
EB 3 7 18 7-35
SS 9 28 11 11-59
EAST BURKE (0-4)
Sylas Coleman 11, Shook 9, Crawford 8, Coble 2, Demiter 2, Franklin 2, Robison 1
ST. STEPHENS (2-1)
Hayden Hillman 21, Jordan Twitty 12, White 9, VanBeurden 8, Long 5, McGhinnis 2, Osborne 2

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 22

PATTON 52, EAST BURKE 42
EB 15 4 12 11-42
P 12 7 11 22-52
EAST BURKE
Owen Hartmann 20, Crawford 9, Shook 6, Franklin 4, Coleman 3
PATTON
Brady Chamberlain 15, Jake Perry 13, Nathan Waters 12, Chandler Rutherford 11, Handley 1

GIRLS

THURSDAY, NOV. 30

PATTON 60, NCSSM-MORGANTON 16
N 4 0 5 7-16
P 15 17 14 14-60
NCSSM-MORGANTON (1-4)
Mikolajec 7, Levine 6, Verling 3
PATTON (1-4)
Abigail Carpenter 13, Karson Pinkerton 13, La. Bolds 7, Chapman 6, Bernabe 5, Beckmann 4, Williams 4, Lo. Bolds 2, Civitello 2, Gibby 2, Rolland 2

TUESDAY, NOV. 28

CHERRYVILLE 66, NCSSM-MORGANTON 12
N 6 4 2 0-12
C 18 19 23 6-66
NCSSM-MORGANTON
Mikolajec 6, Levine 2, Moore 2, Shuta 2
CHERRYVILLE (2-0)
Krista Davis 19, Evionna McDowell 11, Raylei Gidney 10, L. Davis 8, F. McDowell 7, Allen 4, Digh 3, Gibson 2, Powell 2
FREEDOM 70, DRAUGHN 41
F 9 24 19 18-70
D 8 4 13 16-41
FREEDOM (2-1)
Peyton Caldwell 24, Ava Whitaker 13, Haven Gladden 11, Cooke 7, Cunningham 6, Demiter 6, Whisnant 3
DRAUGHN (1-2)
Jenna Abernathy 14, Cook 8, Rector 7, Blalock 3, Woody 3, Berry 2, Davis 2, Holder 2

HIBRITEN 72, PATTON 10

P 0 9 0 1-10
H 22 24 16 10-72
PATTON
Pinkerton 4, Lo. Bolds 2, Carpenter 2, Shuping 2
HIBRITEN (2-0)
Emma Poarch 24, Aamori Patterson 15, Jada Brown 14, Starnes 7, Suddreth 6, Connor 3, Boggs 1
EAST BURKE 62, ST. STEPHENS 53
EB 11 7 16 28-62
SS 11 12 8 22-53
EAST BURKE (4-0)
Braelyn Stilwell 24, Kara Brinkley 17, Turner 8, Coble 5, Lawing 4, McDowell 2, Moore 2
ST. STEPHENS (2-1)
Kennedy Blevins 29, Molli Harris 12, Aubrey Gibbs 10, Barkley 2

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 22

EAST BURKE 64, PATTON 16
EB 13 28 19 4-64
P 8 2 2 4-16
EAST BURKE
Braelyn Stilwell 23, Kamiah Lawing 10, Turner 9, Brinkley 7, McNeil 7, Moore 4, Coble 2, McDowell 2
PATTON
Individual Stats Unavailable

HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL

Pairings announced for Freedom Christmas hoops tournament

By JOSH MCKINNEY
Assistant Sports Editor

The 49th edition of the Freedom Christmas Invitational high school basketball tournament is scheduled for Dec. 26-28 at Crump-Rogers Gymnasium, and first-round pairings for the event were revealed this week.

The host Lady Patriots will take on RS Prep Academy (Statesville) in the opening round of the girls bracket on Dec. 26 at 7 p.m., with Draughn facing Asheville School at 4 p.m. Other first-round matchups in the girls bracket include East Rutherford-Concord Academy (10 a.m.) and T.C. Roberson-Hibriten (11:30 a.m.).

The Freedom boys face Chase in the 8:30 p.m. contest on Dec. 26, while Draughn is scheduled to do battle with North Cross (Va.) at 5:30 p.m. Other first-round matchups in the boys bracket include T.C. Roberson-Hibriten (1 p.m.) and West Caldwell-Hickory Christian Academy (2:30 p.m.).

The girls semifinals will be held on Dec. 27 at 4 and 7 p.m., while the boys semifinals are slated for 5:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. the same day. The winners of those games will meet in the championship games on Dec. 28 at 7 p.m. (girls) and 8:30 p.m. (boys).

Prior to the Freedom Christmas Invitational, the Freedom 828 Phenom Hoops Showcase will be held on Dec. 9 at Crump-Rogers Gym. Action begins at noon with a matchup between the Maiden



and Asheville Christian Academy boys, while the Moravian Prep boys take on Carmel Christian School at 1:30 p.m., the Hickory boys face South Caldwell at 3 p.m., the Kings Mountain boys battle East Lincoln at 4:30 p.m., the Freedom girls face Shelby at 6

p.m., and the Freedom boys take on Hopewell at 7:30 p.m.

CAVALIERS, PANTHERS SET FOR MCDOWELL CHRISTMAS INVITATIONAL

First-round pairings for the McDowell Christmas Invita-

Freedom Christmas Invitational

All games at Freedom

BOYS

DEC. 26

T.C. Roberson vs. Hibriten, 1 p.m.
W. Caldwell vs. Hickory Christian, 2:30 p.m.
Draughn vs. North Cross (Va.), 5:30 p.m.
Freedom vs. Chase, 8:30 p.m.

DEC. 27

Consolation games at 1, 2:30 p.m.
Semifinal games at 5:30, 8:30 p.m.

DEC. 28

Consolation games at 1, 2:30 p.m.
Third-place game at 5:30 p.m.
Championship game at 8:30 p.m.

Left: Draughn's D'Andre Moore (5) attacks the basket at home Tuesday as Freedom's Elijah Davidson (33) defends. The Wildcats and Patriots will both participate in the 49th installment of the Freedom Christmas Invitational Dec. 26-28 in Morganton.

JAMES LYNCH JR. / THE PAPER

ional, which will be hosted by the Titans Dec. 28-29, were also announced this week.

East Burke and Patton will face off in the opening round of both the girls and boys bracket, with the girls playing at 2 p.m. on Dec. 28 and the boys playing at 3:30 p.m. Those games will be followed by a 5 p.m. girls game between McDowell and Avery County and a 6:30 p.m. boys game also featuring those two schools.

The winning teams will battle in the Dec. 29 title games (5 p.m. for the girls, 6:30 p.m. for the boys), while the losing squads will take part in the

GIRLS

DEC. 26

East Rutherford vs. Concord Academy, 10 a.m.
T.C. Roberson vs. Hibriten, 11:30 a.m.
Draughn vs. Asheville School, 4 p.m.
Freedom vs. RS Prep, 7 p.m.

DEC. 27

Consolation games at 10, 11:30 a.m.
Semifinal games at 4, 7 p.m.

DEC. 28

Consolation games at 10, 11:30 a.m.
Third-place game at 4 p.m.
Championship game at 7 p.m.

McDowell Christmas Invitational

All games at McDowell

BOYS

DEC. 28

E. Burke vs. Patton, 3:30 p.m.
McDowell vs. Avery County, 6:30 p.m.

DEC. 29

Third-place game at 3:30 p.m.
Championship game at 6:30 p.m.

GIRLS

DEC. 28

East Burke vs. Patton, 2 p.m.
McDowell vs. Avery Cty, 5 p.m.

DEC. 29

Third-place game at 2 p.m.
Championship game at 5 p.m.

third-place contests earlier in the day (2 p.m. for the girls, 3:30 p.m. for the boys).

Josh McKinney can be reached at 828-445-8595 or josh@thepaper.media.

COACHES: Cavaliers are led by former players

FROM PAGE 1C

she had started dreaming about from a young age.

"Growing up, I always felt like I'd end up coming back to East Burke to coach," she said. "It's what I wanted to do for a while. I can remember back as a kid thinking that. I was probably 10, 11.

"My dad was a coach growing up, and it was just rec league, but everybody loved him because he was really good in how he treated people. He's probably the one person I looked up to more than anybody. I just wanted to be like him. And then I just remember always wanting to coach at East Burke."

In living out her dream, Bartlett has taken EB to unprecedented heights. The Lady Cavs set a program-record with 27 wins in her second season, and they've tied that mark on three more occasions since, including last year when the team made a second West Regional final appearance under Bartlett.

All but three of Bartlett's EB squads have both won 20-plus games and won at least three playoff games.

And many of the players on those teams have stayed with the sport of basketball here in Burke County. Kieran Smith and Ashlyn Stilwell have returned to coach under Bartlett at different times, and Stilwell is now helping in the sport on East Burke Middle School's staff. Former EBHS players Sydney Haas (Liberty) and Makenzie Crump (Table Rock) are middle school head coaches this winter, and Kelsey Houser has served on the girls hoops staff at Draughn for the last several seasons.

"They evolve as they get older, and I love to see them come back to help," Bartlett said. "We've definitely got a lot of alumni here in the county coaching."

Bartlett said she does feel like basketball just means a little bit more in Burke County because of its storied past here.

"When I played, in our conference, I remember my senior year we had three girls teams in the top 10 in the state in 4A," she said. "And the boys teams were awesome too. You had Casey Rogers (at Freedom), Jenis Grindstaff (at McDowell), Brandon Hawkins here. It was some fun basketball to watch. We had some really good teams.



JAMES LYNCH JR. / THE PAPER

After playing at East Burke, from where he graduated in 2000, Jerome Ramsey has spent his entire coaching career with the Cavaliers, and he's currently in his 11th year at the helm of the boys basketball program.

"We ended up playing Freedom here in 1996 in the third round of the playoffs, and there was not even standing room. My grandma didn't even get in to watch us. It's really big here, and the fan base is really huge I feel like for basketball. ... And it's because of the teams, and the coaches, and the players. Everybody that's come through Burke County, it's just really special. We're fortunate to have that, and it's really fun to be a part of."

RAMSEY BLEEDS BLUE

There are perhaps different levels of alumni who are now local head coaches. EB boys coach Jerome Ramsey, for example, played for an EBHS alum himself, Rob Bliss, who he later returned to coach under.

Bliss' father, Bob, was EB's first-ever coach in the sport, and Ramsey built a relationship with him as well. And af-

ter the younger Bliss left, Ramsey eventually coached under Jon Hancock during EBHS' heyday in boys hoops from 2007-2013.

Ramsey, a 2000 EBHS graduate, was an assistant coach at his alma mater for so long (nine seasons) that his eventual move to head coach was basically assumed.

"Coach Hancock had told me that summer that he was going to be leaving for Mallard Creek, but he said he was pretty sure I'd be the next guy," Ramsey said. "He said he felt like I would hear something in the next couple weeks, but a couple weeks go by and I had not.

"So I called up our principal here (Phil Smith), and told him I was just wondering when they were going to open up interviews. And he said, 'I just figured it'd be you.' I said, 'Yeah, no problem.' It was almost funny to be honest."

Ramsey is currently in his 11th season as coach, having

led EB to four playoff appearances and one 20-win season. But even before he had spent 24 of his 41 total years on earth associated in some form with Cavalier hoops, Ramsey already bled blue and used the rival school in red as a measuring stick.

"I grew up coming here watching them. My dad would bring me as a middle schooler," he said. "A lot of kids now, if they're a good player and the program's not very good, they want to try to go somewhere else and join their buddies. Coming here, at times, we weren't the best program especially in the county with Freedom. But it was always my goal to try to be competitive with them at some point before I left as a player. We played them close a lot of times, but we only beat Freedom one time, my senior year in the conference tournament championship. Which was pretty awesome because we were hosting."

The wins have been harder to come by over the last five seasons or so for Ramsey, but he has no plans to leave the place he calls home.

"Coming up through the (coaching) ranks, I had opportunities to go other places. But loyalty is a big thing in my life. A lot of people here invested a lot in me, and I feel like I'm going to try to give back as best as possible. It's like a family here."

The family includes current EB assistant coaches Tommy Blanton, Matt Childers, and Fred Brown, all of whom are EBHS alums. Ramsey has also had former Cavaliers players Dustin Beck and Justin Lail on coaching staffs in the past.

"There are more guys than even that that offer their time every year too, just want to stay connected, and that's what we hope for," Ramsey said. "We have that brotherhood or family atmosphere where once you're in the program, we're always going to view you as a brother. I think that's held mutually across the board.

"And the cool part about coaching where you played is you can tell your players, 'I've been here exactly where you're sitting, exactly where you're running, playing, sweating' and all that. It's not like they can say you don't understand."

Ramsey views basketball as a teaching tool, and he hopes his players will learn things they can use for the rest of their life rather than just for a few winters on the hardwood.

"Early on I think a lot of coaches (think) you're going to get every good player that comes through a scholarship. You feel like you're going to get them to that next level, and there's nothing wrong with that mindset," he said. "I look at that now and think if that's a byproduct of what happens here, that's great if the kid wants that.

"But to steal a quote from Dean Smith, he said you don't want to just coach a kid for three or four years, you want to give them something for the next 30 or 40. So that's kind of our mindset. Hopefully they'll not only experience some success on the court, but also at some point grab a hold of something that years down the road really helps them."

Paul Schenkel can be reached at 828-445-8595 or paul@thepaper.media.

HIGH SCHOOLS | ALL-CONFERENCE

Willis named CVAC XC girls runner of year

By PAUL SCHENKEL
Sports Editor

An additional seven fall sports all-conference teams were recently announced spanning the four leagues of which Burke County high schools are members, and another local student-athlete has won top honors, bringing the total to a half-dozen county players or coaches to win league superlative awards.



Willis

East Burke junior **Cadence Willis** was named the Catawba Valley 2A Conference girls cross country runner of the year. The award was only a formality after Willis won the

CVAC girls championship meet at Southside Park in Newton with a time of 20:47.7 to outdistance her nearest competition by nearly 33 seconds.

Willis was also the county champion with a time of 20:53 at Freedom Park in late September, and she went on to finish 11th (21:27.10) at the NCHSAA 2A West Regional at Asheville Christian Academy before a county-best 20th-place effort (21:19.18) at state in the 2A girls race held earlier this month at the Ivey Redmon Complex in Kernersville.

Willis was joined on the All-CVAC cross country team by East Burke teammates **Lacie Forino, Elijah Baker, Ethan Bishop, Calvin Curtis, Marc Denton, and Kilyn Burnett.**

Also in cross country, third- and fifth-place runners **Everett**

Tucker and Lucas Nagel of NC-SM-Morganton were named to the All-Western Highlands 1A/2A Conference squad. (Draughn's All-WHC runners were announced last week.)

FOOTBALL

The Northwestern 3A/4A and Mountain Foothills 7 1A/2A conferences recently announced their all-conference football teams after the last league teams were eliminated from the state playoffs, and 12 total county players were selected.

Freedom's All-NWC list included skill position players **Kaden Davis** (sophomore quarterback), **Jaylen Barnett** (senior running back), **Julian Castro** (senior defensive back), **Kobe Johnson** (sophomore wide re-

ceiver/defensive back), **Kayden Lytle** (junior wide receiver), and **Tiras Walker** (junior wide receiver/defensive back), plus senior linemen **Kenton Gupton** and **Briar George**. Patriots linemen **Julius Reid-Surratt** (senior) and **Noah Nile** (sophomore) were named honorable-mention selections.

Senior skill position players **Desmond Sexton** and **Sam Huffman** were Patton's only All-MF7 players.

NOTE: The final two local all-conference squads for this fall — for WHC and CVAC football — will be announced as they are released by leagues.

SOCCER, VOLLEYBALL

Nine other local all-conference selections were recently announced spanning boys soc-

cer and volleyball.

In soccer, Freedom's **Ashton Alva** and **George Jimenez** were named All-NWC performers, and **Samuel Quinonez** and **Frankly Velasquez** received honorable-mention accolades. NC-SM-Morganton's **James Ross, Ayden Jarrell, and Andrew Lord** (conference leader in assists) and Draughn's **Andres Garcia** were named to the All-WHC squad.

In volleyball, East Burke's **Katherine Greene** and **Addy Fortenberry** were named All-CVAC, while teammate **Hermione Garro** was on the honorable-mention squad. And Freedom's **Caroline McRacken** was named to the All-NWC team.

Paul Schenkel can be reached at 828-445-8595 or paul@thepaper.media.

Three more Hildebran diamond squads win titles



In addition to the 10U baseball team (featured in the Nov. 4 edition), three other Hildebran youth baseball or softball teams recently claimed their fall league championships as the 8U and 12U baseball teams and 8U softball team also finished their seasons with hardware. The Hildebran-Icard Little League organization fielded 21 total youth squads this fall on the diamond. For more information about the group or to get involved, visit hildebranicardlittleleague.com, search "Hildebran-Icard Little League" on Facebook, or email hildebranicardlittleleague@gmail.com.

FOR THE PAPER

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A&E EDITOR: Angela Copeland, angela@thepaper.media, 828-445-8595, ext. 2003

PICKS OF THE WEEK



SATURDAY, DEC. 2

Pair of Parades

First on the schedule is Valdese where the parade will begin at 10 a.m. The parade route begins at the corner of Church and Main Street and continues to Morgan Street. Hildebran's parade begins at 1 p.m. with a starting point at 219 1st St. SW. Arrive at noon if you would like to be in the parade. Glen Alpine did have a parade scheduled for this date but canceled it due to the rain forecast.



SUNDAY, DEC. 3

Make an ornament

DeAnna Steiner of Fig & Owl Studio will help you create a personalized embellished ornament at Craft'd NC. Supplies provided, but bring your own special cookie cutters or stamps if you like. Children over 10 are welcome with an accompanying adult. Registration is required, and seating is limited. 2 - 3:30 p.m. 108 W. Union St., Morganton.



THURSDAY, DEC. 7

Tree Lighting

Celebrate the spirit of the season at the Hatley Memorial Tree Lighting. Students will gather on the Old Rock School staircase to perform Christmas carols, and the Hatley Memorial Christmas Tree will be lit with help from a special guest dressed in red. Hot chocolate will be served. The lighting is at 6 p.m. at 400 Main St. W.



FRIDAY, DEC. 8

A Holiday Classic

The Old Colony Players present "It's a Wonderful Life" at 7:30 p.m. at the Old Rock School, 400 Main St. W. Other performances are Dec. 9, 14, 15, and 16 at 7:30 p.m. and Dec. 10 and 17 at 3 p.m. Tickets range from \$10 to \$16 (kindergarten and younger are free). For more information or to purchase tickets, go to oldcolonyplayers.com.



CITY OF MORGANTON PHOTOS / FOR THE PAPER

Santa Claus will make an appearance at the DDA Morganton Christmas Parade.

sounds of the HOLIDAYS

THE COMMUNITY GOES 'ALL OUT' FOR ANNUAL PARADE TRADITION



The parade will begin at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 5, at the intersection of East Meeting and South Green streets in downtown Morganton. More than 100 floats/entries are participating.

By ANGELA KUPER COPELAND
Arts & Entertainment Editor

If you have been struggling to get into the holiday spirit, the annual Morganton Downtown Development Association Christmas Parade will help you sing a different tune.

The jam-packed parade, beginning at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 5, will feature more than 100 local businesses, fire trucks, costumed characters, real estate companies, high school marching bands, gymnasts, singers, churches, nonprofits, elected officials, and, of course, Saint Nick. From Hannah's Wash Dry Fold to Grand Marshal WPCC Small Business Center, everyone

PARADE ROUTE MAP
PAGE 7D

will do their best to embody the theme, Sounds of the Holidays.

"It's amazing how everyone goes all out each year and we encourage that," said Kasey Goodfellow, community events coordinator for the City of Morganton, Main Street Department.

Parade watchers will line up along the eight-block route, which will begin at the intersection of East Meeting and South Green streets and end at South Sterling and West Concord streets.

"People will start coming out an hour or so

See HOLIDAYS, Page 7D



Andy Thompson

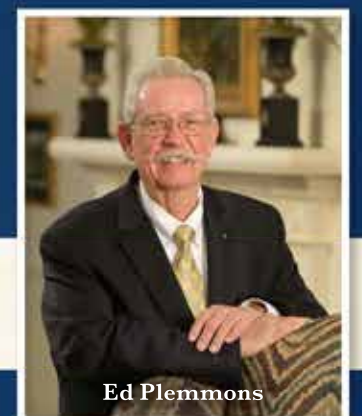
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Ed Plemmons



Students recognized for art excellence in RSAF competition

By **ANGELA KUPER COPELAND**
Arts & Entertainment Editor

To be publicly recognized for excellence is a highlight of any artist's career and some Burke County students are certainly feeling that sense of accomplishment.

The Rock School Arts Foundation (RSAF) awarded ribbons to nearly 80 Burke County Public Schools' middle- and high-school art students in the organization's first countywide student art exhibition and competition.

The show opened on Nov. 17 and will close on Dec. 22.

"The show gives students an opportunity to have a taste of what it is like to put themselves out there, getting their work out for the public to see," said Sharon Bowman, executive director of RSAF.

Parents, grandparents, teachers, principals, and student artists attended the awards reception on Tuesday, Nov. 29. The teachers selected the two- and three-dimensional artworks.

Layton Brittain, a freshman at Freedom High School, explained how he created the mask that was selected for the exhibition.

"We were given the prompt to create a mask where the outside reflected how others view us, but the inside of the mask is how we see ourselves," he said.

He began the self-character study by asking others for words, ideas, and landscapes that described him. He incor-

porated their thoughts artfully on the outside of the mask and incorporated cracks, with each representing a different outside opinion.

"Illustrating how I see myself was more difficult," he said. He loves nature but also likes to be in the comfort of his home. In the end, he painted a television with a scene of the outdoors on its screen.

Donny Palmgren, one of Freedom's two art teachers, said that technical expertise is good but that meaningful art goes beyond technique.

"I want there to be a story they are telling me," he said. He added that when selecting pieces for the show, he picked works with "wall power," something that would grab attention from across the room. Beginning to more advanced art students are included in the show.

School art programs are an important part of education. Palmgren has taught at Freedom since 2000.

"For a lot of kids, this (art) is their thing," Palmgren said. "Every student needs to find their place somewhere, otherwise it impoverishes the whole educational experience."

Heritage Middle School art teacher (and East Burke High School graduate) Summer Thompson knows firsthand that school art programs aren't plentiful. After earning her college degree, four years passed before she was able to find her first art teaching job. This is her first year teaching at Heritage. She was at Walter

Johnson Middle for nine years prior.

Thompson and the other art teachers often collaborate during the school year.

"We talk about how we can grow art in Burke County," said Alison Willard, an art teacher of 19 years, who is in her third year at East Burke High School.

When Willard selected which student works to include in the show, she took into consideration their process.

"Did they work through the process or just jump to the end? I want the work to show the importance of the process," she said.

Today's students are part of the social media generation and there are a multitude of online platforms in which to showcase one's work. But shows like this are different, Palmgren said. The works are curated, adding a level of professionalism.

Whether a student's work was recognized with an award, everyone agreed with Thompson:

"I am proud of these students."

RSAF is located in the Old Rock School, 400 Main St. W, and is open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Learn more about RSAF online at rockschoolartgalleries.com.

Angela Kuper Copeland is the arts & entertainment editor at The Paper. She may be reached at angela@thepaper.media or 828-445-8595.



ABOVE: Kasharity Hardy of Freedom holds her three-dimensional book art in the Student Art Exhibit.



LEFT: Layton Brittain, a student at Freedom, talks with his grandmother, Kathy Meyers, about his artwork in the exhibition.

ANGELA KUPER COPELAND PHOTOS / THE PAPER

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN BURKE

SATURDAY, DEC. 2

Adventure Bound Books Holiday Make and Take: Our ornament Make & Take was so popular last year that we're bringing it back again this year! Join us for an afternoon of crafting. We'll provide the book pages and ornaments. Bring a friend or two and enjoy a crafty bookish afternoon! (This is a donation-based event. The suggested donation is \$5 for two ornaments.) This is a kid-friendly event and can be successfully completed by young children as long as they are able to push strips of paper into a plastic ornament. 1 - 3 p.m. 117 W. Union St., Morganton.

Breakfast with Santa: Families can join us at 8:30 or 10 a.m. and enjoy a delicious pancake breakfast and crafts alongside a few of Santa's Helpers. After breakfast a reading of *The Night Before Christmas* will occur by the fire before Santa Claus makes his grand entrance! Get your tickets at the UPS Store. Tickets are \$8 for adults and \$6 for children under 12. Cash or check only. Please make checks payable to the City of Morganton. 104 N. Green St., Morganton.

Cookies and Carols: Children and their families are invited to join the Hickory Choral Society, instrumentalists and special guests Santa and the Grinch for an interactive concert called "Cookies and Carols" in the Drendel Auditorium at the SALT Block. After the concert, take a photo with our special guests. 11 a.m. Free. Drendel Auditorium 243 3rd Ave. NE, Hickory.

Hamilton Williams 26th Annual Seconds Sale: Our annual sale of cosmetic seconds has become the gallery's most popular event by far. We'll open at 9 a.m. to showcase our scratch & dent pieces, steeply discounted to make room for all of NEXT year's seconds. Local ceramic artists Courtney Long and Maria Avila will bring their studio seconds. We'll have hot chocolate and home-baked cookies for your enjoyment while you shop. 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. 403 E. Union St., Morganton.

Hildebran Christmas Parade: Hildebran's parade also begins at



FEATURED EVENT: THURSDAY, DEC. 7

American Pride — Remembering the Music of the Legendary Statler Brothers: Relive the musical memories of The Statler Brothers through American Pride. They have captured the true authenticity of The Statler Brothers sound, keeping the legacy alive and promoting traditional country music. 7:30 p.m. \$23-\$38 CoMMA 401 S. College St., Morganton.

1 p.m. with a starting point at 219 1st St. SW. Arrive at noon if you would like to be in the parade. Free. Town of Hildebran.

Jingle Jam! Food, games, fun, FREE! 2 p.m. Morganton First United Methodist Church, 200 N. Green St., Morganton.

Live Music with The Happy Enchiladas at Hillman Beer: 6 - 9 p.m. 301 S. Sterling St., Morganton.

Santa lands at Foothills Regional Airport: The celebration begins at noon, with the Jolly Man scheduled to arrive at about 12:30 p.m. There will be free hot cocoa and popcorn. A balloon artist and face-painter will be on hand and aircraft will also be on display. Bring your camera for pictures with Santa. The event is free. 12 - 2 p.m. Foothills Regional Airport 3566 Morganton Lenoir Airport Ave., Morganton.

Valdese Christmas Parade: The parade begins at 10 a.m. at the corner of Church and Main Street and will continue to Morgan Street. Santa will be part of the grand finale. Free.

SUNDAY, DEC. 3

Brunch and Mimosas at Sidetracked: Come on our for our very first brunch and mimosas with Cactus Rainbow. Cactus Rainbow will be out slinging their brand new Brunch Menu, complete with french toast breakfast sammies, dessert sammies, eggs, bacon, livermush, and more. We'll be slinging' lots of different flavors for mimosas and mimosa flights! Also, this is the first day of our new Sunday schedule — we will open at noon. 609 S. Green St., Morganton.

Holiday Ornament Workshop at Craft'd NC: DeAnna Steiner of Fig & Owl Studio will help you create a personalized ornament. She will demonstrate techniques and then guide us through the process. We'll embellish ornaments with textures, stamps, and sparkle. Supplies such as air-dry clay, cookie cutters, stamps, ink, ribbon, beads and doilies will be provided, but bring your own special cookie cutters, or stamps if you like. Children over 10 are welcome with an

accompanying adult. Registration is required, and seating is limited. The bar will be open. 2 - 3:30 p.m. 108 W. Union St., Morganton.

Sunday Breakfast at The Grind: Enjoy breakfast all day. Check out www.thegrind.cafe for more information. 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. 136 W. Union St., Morganton.

Sundays at Swede's Cafe: Swede's Cafe is located on the mezzanine level of Morganton General Store. We serve breakfast, lunch, and supper in a casual atmosphere. We offer a full line of hot and cold coffee drinks and other beverages. Fresh-baked scones, other breakfast must-haves, and a yummy assortment of sandwiches, wraps, soups, salads, combos, and daily specials will satisfy every appetite. 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. 116 W. Union St., Morganton.

The Road Grill Food Truck at Hillman Beer: 12 - 8 p.m. 301 S. Sterling St., Morganton.

MONDAY, DEC. 4

\$10 Day Pass at Bigfoot Climbing Gym: Come climb with the community at Bigfoot. 212 Avery Ave., Morganton.

Dynamic Movement with Breathe Yoga & Pilates: This class is a sweet spot between Pilates, functional movement, and yoga. Join Larisa as she guides you through a free-weight, body-weight, and ground-based workout, focusing on maximum stability, mobility, and balance. 8:15 - 9 a.m. Classes vary; book classes online at breatheyogawellness.com. Breathe Yoga and Wellness 115 W. Union St., Morganton.

Trivia Night at Hillman Beer: Join us for trivia. 7 - 9 p.m. 301 S. Sterling St., Morganton.

TUESDAY, DEC. 5

Morganton Christmas Parade: This year's theme is "Sounds of the Holidays." Which sounds remind you of the Holidays? Sleigh bells? Freshly fallen snow? Carolers singing door to door? Fire crackling? Just wait to see how this year's theme will be interpreted in more than 100 floats. The parade begins at 6 p.m. and will travel North Green, Collett Street,

North Sterling, and South Sterling streets. 6 p.m.

Tap Tuesday at Magnolia Room: Come join us for \$2 off select beers. 5 - 10:30 p.m. 400 N. Green St., Morganton.

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 6

Ladies Climb Wednesday at Bigfoot Climbing Gym: \$10 after 5 p.m. Grab some friends and come try something new. 5 - 9 p.m. \$10. Bigfoot Climbing Gym 212 Avery Ave., Morganton.

THURSDAY, DEC. 7

Brown Mountain Brainiacs Trivia: Join us for trivia every Thursday at 7 p.m. Free. 609 S. Green St., Morganton.

Christmas Trivia at Sidetracked featuring Gift Wrapping Contest: If it wasn't obvious what December's themed trivia night was going to be, it's Christmas Trivia with a Gift Wrapping Contest during grading. Dress up in pajamas, ugly Christmas sweaters, as Santa, or in a hoodie and jeans. But get your group together, study up on all things Christmas, and get your hands steady for gift wrapping! 7 p.m. 609 S. Green St., Morganton.

Hatley Memorial Tree Lighting: Celebrate the spirit of the season at the Hatley Memorial Tree Lighting. Valdese Elementary School students will gather on the Old Rock School staircase to perform Christmas carols, and the Hatley Memorial Christmas Tree will be lit with help from a special guest dressed in red. Hot chocolate will be served. The lighting is at 6 p.m. Old Rock School, 400 Main St. W, Valdese.

Stitch Club: Stitching Chicks Needlepoint invites you to its weekly drop-in Stitch Club. Bring in your projects or start something new. No experience is required and supplies can be purchased onsite. 2 - 4 p.m. Stitching Chicks Needlepoint, 134 W. Union St., Morganton.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8

It's a Wonderful Life: The Old Colony Players present "It's a Wonderful Life" at the Old Rock School, 400 Main. St. W. Tickets range from \$10 to \$16 (kindergarten and younger are free). 7:30 p.m.



FOR THE PAPER

The CAESAR Color Guard presents the colors at a Veterans Day program on Nov. 9 at Oak Hill Elementary School.

CAESAR, Oak Hill Elementary celebrate Veterans Day

By DAVID R. DOWDY
For The Paper

On Thursday, Nov. 9, Oak Hill Elementary School thanked local veterans for their service by presenting a Veterans Day Celebration in the school's gymnasium with the support of the Col. Alexander Erwin Chapter Sons of the American Revolution (CAESAR) color guard, which presented colors.

After Oak Hill Elementary Principal James Cole opened the program, the Wednesday Church Fifth Grade performed "Tolling Eleven," a song for Veterans Day celebrations at 11 a.m. on the 11th day of the 11th month, using tone chimes guided by Dr. Amalie Hinson, music director.

CAESAR presented the United States, North Caroli-

na, and the Cowpens Battle flags before local Boy Scout Troop 199 leading the Pledge of Allegiance. Dr. Hinson led the Oak Hill Elementary Bulldogs Chorus who sang the "Star-Spangled Banner." Next, the scouts read "How Does a Veteran Follow the Bark?" and the chorus sang "Count on Me."

Guest speaker William Brown, III, past president of CAESAR, spoke of the proud tradition of United States military veterans from the U.S. War for Independence to those who presently serve. Principal Cole recognized 29 local veterans who were seated as special guests of the program. CAESAR color guard retired the colors to end the program.

David Dowdy is a local author.

DANCING WITH THE BURKE STARS

Cassidy Gerace dances to benefit Hope House Ministries

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The Paper is running a series of stories about the local celebrities performing in Dancing with the Burke Stars. Each Burke Star will dance to benefit a charity. The event is Saturday, Feb. 10, at 7 p.m. at CoMMA Performing Arts Center. Tickets for the event are not sold through CoMMA, but rather through the individual dancers. This show typically sells out, so act soon. Learn more about the event and how you can donate to support the dancers' charities at dance4acause.com. You can also email individual dancers about ticket availability through the website.*

Today, the series focuses on Cassidy Gerace.

ABOUT CASSIDY GERACE

Cassidy Gerace is a Long Island native who now resides in Burke County. She is choosing to fundraise for Hope House Ministries based in Port Jefferson, N.Y. This nonprofit organization aims to help support young individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

This organization is important to Cassidy because many of her family members work alongside Hope House Ministries. The mission of Hope House aligns with the spirit of St. Louis de Montfort, who had a commitment to the poor and the courage to do what no one else wanted to do.

ABOUT HOPE HOUSE MINISTRIES

Hope House Ministries offers services through multiple outreach programs that focus on restoring hope to the lives of those less fortunate, while all services remain free of charge. An important part of the success of the ministry has been the generosity of individuals and businesses who have selflessly offered their volun-



FOR THE PAPER

Cassidy Gerace

teer and monetary assistance.

For 40 years, this community-based ministry has dedicated itself to providing comprehensive and competent residential and counseling assistance to thousands of adolescents, individuals, and families

in crisis. Schools throughout New York have benefited from a Wellness Seminar that educates students, teachers, school administrators, and parents in understanding peer pressure, drug and alcohol abuse, and teenage suicide.

DOWNTOWN MORGANTON

Holiday Farmers Markets

Sat., Nov. 18th & Sat., Dec. 9th | 10am-2pm | 111 North Green Street

Winter Carnival & Memorial Tree Lighting on the Courthouse Square

Sat., Nov. 18th @ 2:30-6pm | **FREE EVENT** | Santa Visits, Free Carriage Rides, Face Painting, Ice Slide & Throne, Live Ice Carving Demo, Hot Chocolate and More!

Santa Claus Visits on the Courthouse Square

Every Fri. & Sat. Evening from Sat., Nov. 18th - Sat., Dec. 23rd @ 5-8pm | **FREE EVENT**

Downtown Carriage Rides

Every Fri. & Sat. Evening from Sat., Nov. 18th - Sat., Dec. 23rd | Sat., Nov. 18th Operating 2:30-6pm
All Other Evenings 5:30-9pm | Adults \$5 & Children \$3 | No Reservations | **FREE EVENT**

Small Business Saturday, "Who has the Golden Ticket?"

Sat., Nov. 25th Starting @ 10am - 5pm | Shop downtown Morganton for a chance to win! Up to \$3,000 in downtown bucks given away for one day only! | **FREE EVENT**

DOWNTOWN MORGANTON CHRISTMAS & PARADE

Tues., Dec. 5th @ 6pm | This year's theme is The Sounds of the Holidays | **FREE EVENT**

SCAN HERE TO GET THE FULL DETAILS ON EVERYTHING DOWNTOWN MORGANTON!

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THE PAPER PLATE



Cooking a rib roast for the holidays is easier than you might think

ROAST PERFECTION



JOHN SETZLER

RIB ROASTS ARE BECOMING more and more popular as Christmas dinner table centerpieces. The fear of a cook failure on such an expensive piece of meat may scare some folks away, but I am here to show you how easy it is to cook this amazing cut of beef.

This cut is typically called by several different names. Prime rib, standing rib roast, and rib roast are just the popular ones. Technically, each of these names refers to something a little different.

Prime rib refers to a cut that has been graded by the USDA as prime-grade beef. The standing rib roast will have bones attached. A simple rib roast is typically boneless. No matter what you call it, for those of you who love ribeye steaks, this is the roast from which ribeye steaks are cut.

When you are ready to buy your roast, I recommend trying to get it seven to 10 days ahead of your meal. The longer you wait, the fewer size options you are going to find in the meat cases. The weeks leading up to Christmas are good times to find sales on this cut. Ribeye steaks and rib roasts are normally in the range of \$15-\$20 per pound in our area. Sale prices will give you opportunities at less than \$10 per pound. The roast I cooked for this presentation was \$7.99 per pound. I would suggest buying half to three-quarters of a pound per person at least when choosing your size.

If the cost of prime grade is not a burden, I highly recommend it. The quality and quantity of the intramuscular fat marbling in the prime-grade beef is worth the extra price. They weren't kidding when they told you the flavor is in the fat. This cut, like your turkey at Thanksgiving, is the centerpiece of your meal. Don't cut corners!

DAY-BEFORE PREP

You will start prepping this roast the day before you plan to cook. I like to salt my roast up to 24 hours before cooking. The general rule of thumb for salting a rib roast is to use 1 teaspoon of kosher or sea salt per pound of beef. Spread that salt as evenly as possible on the outside of the roast. Wrap the meat tightly in plastic wrap and toss it back in the fridge until you are ready to cook. This process of dry brining gives the salt an opportunity to work its way into the meat and not just run off the sides as the meat cooks.

You have two simple options for seasoning your roast. In the previous step, we simply salted the meat. You can choose to use a seasoning blend that contains other herbs and spices during this process if you like. My favorite method is to make a compound butter to spread on the outside of the meat before cooking it. After I salt my roast and toss it back in the fridge, I will set out two sticks of butter to soften overnight. On cooking day, I'll put those softened sticks of butter in a mixing bowl. I like to add about a teaspoon of garlic powder and a tablespoon or two of Italian seasoning blend to the butter before using a fork to mix it together.

When I remove my roast



JOHN SETZLER PHOTOS / FOR THE PAPER

Smoke the rib roast at 250 degrees for about three hours for medium-rare. Let the roast rest on the counter for at least 15 minutes before serving.



Buy a rib roast that provides about half to three-quarters of a pound per guest.



Prime Rib Horseradish Dip

INGREDIENTS

½ cup heavy cream
½ cup sour cream
½ cup prepared horseradish
2 tablespoons dried chives
1 tablespoon lemon juice
Kosher salt to taste
Freshly ground black pepper to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

Place your heavy cream in a small mixing bowl and whisk until the cream thickens. Add the rest of the ingredients and mix thoroughly. Transfer to an airtight container and store in the refrigerator until ready to use. Make this 24 hours in advance if possible.



Rib roast and horseradish dip pair perfectly together.

from the fridge, I smear this seasoned butter all over the outside of the roast. If the butter is difficult to spread, I simply place it in a slightly warm oven for a minute or two.

TIME TO COOK

Next comes the fun part. It's time to cook. I preheat my smoker or oven to 250 degrees. Since smoke is my favorite seasoning, I choose a bold smoke for beef. I like to use hickory or oak. Once my smoker is up to

temperature and I have a nice bit of smoke rolling, I like to place the rib roast on the center of the grill rack to let the cook begin. Now, all you must do is wait. The heat and the smoke will do the rest of the work.

Cooking times on these rib roasts are quite consistent, no matter what size roast you buy. At 250 degrees, you can count on it taking three hours, give or take 20 minutes, to finish the roast to a perfect medium-rare internal temperature.

With your trusty and ever-so-important meat thermometer, you are going to cook the roast in the oven until the internal temperature of the meat reaches 125 degrees. When the meat reaches that temperature, take it out of the oven, double-wrap it in aluminum foil, and let it rest on the counter for at least 15 minutes and up to 45 minutes before serving.

If you have a warming oven, place the wrapped roast in that oven at 130 degrees and hold it

until you are ready to serve. If you want your roast cooked more than medium-rare, use these temperatures as targets for removing it from the oven: 135 for medium, 145 for medium-well, and 155 for well done.

When serving time arrives, slice it to your desired thickness and serve it on preheated plates. Preheating your plates in a 170-degree oven will ensure that your beautiful prime rib stays warm on the plate for the duration of your meal. In fact, that is a great hack for serving any meal.

John Setzler is a regular columnist for The Paper. He enjoys practicing his cooking skills over live fire with various grills and smokers. Smoke is his favorite seasoning. You can follow his cooking shenanigans on [facebook.com/mancavemeals](https://www.facebook.com/mancavemeals).

taste



test

THE PAPER PLATE

TASTE TEST

FROM PAGE 5D

room Swiss (HHF 6-ounce burger with Swiss cheese and sauteed mushroom gravy served on a potato roll, \$12). Both burgers came with one side. He got the fries. I ordered the onion rings (OK, another guilty pleasure).

For those eschewing red meat, pork barbecue and grilled or fried chicken are also on the menu.

THE FOOD

The tots arrived within about 5 to 7 minutes of ordering. The appetizer was covered with all-meat chili (featuring HFF meat) and melted cheese. The tots were hot and crispy when the dish first arrived at our table. The chili was tasty, but those who like a little more kick might find it lacking zing. When I read “melted cheese” on the menu, I pictured grated cheddar that had been melted. Instead, the melted cheese was a cheese sauce. The sauce was a step above the cheese you get

with nachos at Hickory Crawdads ballgames, but overall was the average part of the dish. The ratio of tots to toppings is important, and it was perfect for my tastes. The portion was big and appropriate for two. If I had eaten lunch, we might not have finished it, but we did on this day.

The burgers came out shortly after we finished our appetizer. First impression: Promising. Marshall was the first to dive into his burger and signaled with two thumbs up. I lifted mine off the tin basket in which it was served and took a breath before taking a bite. I was waiting for a mushroom or two to fall out. That’s what usually happens when I order a mushroom Swiss burger. Not this time.

I took my first bite, tasting the familiar grass-fed beef that I prefer. The potato bun was warm and had been toasted on the griddle. Everything was what I had hoped except that it took a second bite before I tasted evidence of mushrooms. I put the burger back down, took off the top bun, took a peek, and eyed only a small amount of fungi. Hmmm. My first disappointment. The thick-cut onion rings were piping hot and above average in taste with a slight sweetness. They weren’t beer-battered or the tempura style that I enjoy most, but



ANGELA KUPER COPELAND PHOTOS / THE PAPER

The butcher shop, which has slightly different hours from the restaurant, offers a wide variety of Highlands Family Farm meats and specialty cuts.



The banana pudding is a combination of pudding, sliced bananas, Nilla wafers, and whipped cream.

they were pretty good. Of course, I also had to sample Marshall’s meal, too. His

fries were extra crispy and I liked his burger better than mine. His smash patties were seasoned in a way that made the meat’s flavor shine.

Knowing we would order dessert, I stopped eating my burger and onion rings at the halfway point. I asked for a box and we ordered the cheesecake to share. Unfortunately, they were out of cheesecake. We took our second choice, the Banana Pudding (\$6). The description of the dessert said, “like momma made it.” Lindsey quickly brought one out with two spoons. It was love at first bite. The layers of pudding, banana, Nilla wafers, and

whipped cream were a spot-on recreation of my mom’s.

WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID

I have read mostly positive reviews online of the restaurant. A couple of posts said the prices were too high. Yes, Highlands Butchery is more than some other places. However, I think the prices are in line with what you get – which is local, grass-fed meat. I’ve also been to restaurants where the burger is cheaper but fries are an additional charge.

On our way out, we stopped by the butcher shop to see what they had. The refrigerated cases were well stocked. We made a mental list of what we would purchase next time.

We walked out to the small parking lot beside the business. As the 6 p.m. hour approached, the Highlands Butchery parking lot and restaurant were getting packed.

As soon as we opened our car doors, someone was waiting, blinker on, to take our spot.

“I’m glad we came when we did,” I told Marshall as we drove back home with my box of leftovers, a meal for another day.

Angela Kuper Copeland is the arts & entertainment editor at The Paper. She may be reached at angela@thepaper.media or 828-445-8595.

November Restaurant Inspections Report

THE BURKE COUNTY HEALTH Department’s Environmental Health division regularly inspects restaurants, food trucks, food stands, school cafeterias, and other food establishments. The frequency of inspections varies. All food-service establishments are inspected at least annually.

Risk Category I establishments are inspected once per year, do not serve potentially hazardous foods, and are most often bars or coffee shops that use reusable cups or drinking glasses.

Risk Category II establishments are inspected twice per year, have limited menus with

simple food preparation procedures, and are primarily cook-and-serve type establishments.

Risk Category III establishments are inspected three times per year, have a more complex menu, and cook some foods in advance, then refrigerate the foods to be reheated and served at a later time.

Risk Category IV establishments are inspected four times per year, have the most complex menus that involve cooking, cooling, and reheating of several foods or they serve a highly susceptible population such as children, elderly persons, or those who may be immunocompromised.

Scores of 90 or higher receive a grade A; at least 80 but less than 90 receive a grade B; at least 70 but less than 80 receive a grade C. Permits shall be revoked for food establishments receiving a score of less than 70%. All establishments must post their graded scorecards. The posted grade card shall be black on a white background. The alphabetical and numerical rating shall be 1.5 inches in height. No other public displays representing the sanitation level of the establishment may be posted by the regulatory authority, except for sanitation awards issued by the local health department.

The Paper will run a list monthly of inspections conducted by the health department. You may also look up specific restaurants and see the full reports online at

burkenc.org/2286/Environmental-Health. Click on Restaurant Scores in the left-side menu to begin your search.

— Staff Reports

RESTAURANTS/INSTITUTIONAL FACILITIES

EL PATRON MEXICAN RESTAURANT

905 S. Main St., Drexel
INSPECTED: Nov. 7
SCORE: 94.5

KFC #E320094

927 W. Union St., Morganton
INSPECTED: Nov. 1
SCORE: 98.5

SWEDE’S CAFE

116 W. Union St., Morganton
INSPECTED: Nov. 8
SCORE: 98

WENDY’S

1015 N. Green St., Morganton
INSPECTED: Nov. 1
SCORE: 99

KING'S CHRISTMAS TREES

OUR FAMILY SERVING YOURS, FOR 42 YEARS!

OPEN DAILY TIL CHRISTMAS!
SUN-WED 9 AM - 8 PM | THURS -SAT 9 AM- 9 PM

833 N GREEN STREET, MORGANTON NC
(828) 432-8212 | KINGSCHRISTMASTREESNC.COM

Fonta Flora presents the 8th annual

Yuletide Art Markets

featuring different local artists and makers each date

Sunday, December 10th & Sunday, December 17th

12 to 4PM

317 N Green St. Morganton, NC

WHILE YOU DECK YOUR HALLS, DONATE THOSE UNUSED ITEMS TO HABITAT RESTORE!

Habitat for Humanity ReStore

DONATE • SHOP • VOLUNTEER

Bring US Your Donations OR Schedule a pick up!

(828) 437-7844 | Burkehabitat.org

111 Independence Blvd, Morganton NC

Monday-Saturday 10 AM - 4 PM

Habitat for Humanity Building in Burke for over 35 years!

The Nutcracker comes to CoMMA

FOR THE PAPER

The beloved holiday classic “The Nutcracker” comes to CoMMA Performing Arts Center for a one-night-only performance on Sunday, Dec. 17, as part of World Ballet Series’ 2023-24 U.S. tour.

The family-friendly production is brought to life by an international cast of 40 professional dancers from the world’s premier ballet institutions, with beautiful sets and costumes and Tchaikovsky’s unforgettable music. “World Ballet Series’ The Nutcracker” is produced by Gorskaya-Hartwick Productions. Tickets are on sale now at <https://ci.ovationtix.com/36112/production/1161326>. Choose between the 2 p.m. or 6 p.m. performance. Tickets start at \$60.

One of the most beloved holiday family traditions, “The Nutcracker” tells the tale of a young girl who receives the gift of a nutcracker doll at her family’s Christmas party. In her dreams that night, the nutcracker doll comes to life as a handsome prince who joins her on a magical journey. Together, they travel to lands filled with dancing snowflakes, waltzing flowers, a mouse army, and other exotic characters, all brought to vivid life on stage in this magical production.

“The Nutcracker” features Lev Ivanov’s original, beloved choreography, with additional staging by George Birkadze and Marina Kessler. Sergey Novikov is the scenic and costume designer, and Mark Stavtsev is the lighting designer.

In conjunction with the production, Gorskaya-Hartwick



WORLD BALLET SERIES / FOR THE PAPER

‘The Nutcracker’ comes to the CoMMA stage on Sunday, Dec. 17.

Productions will offer a free, fun, and entertaining Ballet for All Masterclass for the local community on Dec. 17 at noon. Taught by World Ballet Series cast members, Ballet for All is specifically developed for participants with no previous ballet experience. Participants will meet cast members, learn some ballet basics including commonly used gestures, and thrill to demonstrations by the cast. More information can be found online at WorldBalletSeries.com/Masterclass.

Based in Los Angeles, Gorskaya-Hartwick Productions is led by Sasha Gorskaya and Gulya Hartwick, who have created, produced, and toured original productions of some of ballet’s most cherished ballets as part of World Ballet Series. Through their work, Gorskaya and Hartwick aim to foster the development of new audiences for ballet and ensure that all have access to the art form. To date, World Ballet Series has traveled to more than 280 cities reaching an audience of more than 250,000, many of whom are first-time attendees to a ballet.

HOLIDAYS

FROM PAGE 1D

before the parade starts to get the best spot,” Goodfellow said. Watchers can expect to spend between 90 minutes and two hours to see all the entries as they pass by. Between 8,000 and 10,000 spectators are expected.

The Grand Stand will be located at Wells Fargo at the intersection of Union and Sterling streets. The parade hosts/announcers are Bryan Black, Tom Peeler, and Sara Moses.

Most parade participants create their own festive floats but about 14 professional floats are available to rent from Cline Floats, said Abby Nelson, Main Street manager.

“They (Cline Floats) have been great to work with through the years,” she said.

Everyone who applied and was accepted to participate in the parade (a process that closed a few weeks ago) will begin lining up on four blocks of Bouchelle Street several hours before go-time. Those blocks of Bouchelle will be closed beginning at 10 a.m. the day of the parade, although the cross streets with Bouchelle will remain open.

A panel of judges composed of DDA members and board members will review each entry during the lineup. Scheduled judges are Suzy Fitzgerald, Charlotte Eidson, Jamie Hall, Julia Mode, and Polly Leadbetter. They will select the four entries they believe best exemplify the theme. The four winning floats will be given a special reindeer, Frosty, Santa, or stars-themed wreath to proudly display during the parade.

Unlike the Morganton Festival, which occupies a larger footprint than the parade, street closures won’t occur much in advance of the parade itself. The blocks impacted by

the parade route will close at about 5:45 p.m. Anyone parked in a legal spot along the route will not have to move their cars; however, they cannot drive away until the conclusion of the procession, Goodfellow said.

“A shout out to Public Safety for doing such an amazing job,” Goodfellow said.

Speaking of the Morganton Festival, the Nelson-Goodfellow duo agreed that the parade is second only to the festival in logistical challenges.

“It’s working everything out like a puzzle,” Nelson said. “It’s like you are the maestro.”

There is a method to the madness. They take great care when deciding how to order the floats.

“For example, you don’t want the marching band near animals. And there is usually a group on horses that we put at the back of the parade ... for obvious reasons,” Goodfellow said with a smile.

For those who can’t make it out, the parade will be broad-

cast on CoMPAS X-Stream. Want to see the parade a second time?

CoMPAS will air the parade throughout the season.

This year’s Morganton Christmas Parade is bitter-sweet for Nelson. She loves the parade and the Christmas season, but she is also preparing to leave her role in mid-December to become project director with Cottonwood Development Company of Morganton.

“Abby is the perfect combination of machine and heart,” said Goodfellow, the emotion present in the lilt of her voice.

Nelson smiled humbly and glanced down. Their bond is clear. Perhaps how Goodfellow described the parade equally reflects this upcoming change.

“This is a celebration of the end of the year and also a celebration of a new beginning.”

Angela Kuper Copeland is the arts & entertainment editor at The Paper. She may be reached at angela@thepaper.media or 828-445-8595.



CITY OF MORGANTON / FOR THE PAPER

The parade route covers eight blocks in downtown Morganton. Streets will close to traffic 15 minutes before the parade begins at 6 p.m. Anyone parked along the route should move their cars before then or will have to wait until after the conclusion of the event to leave.

LEGAL NOTICES

**NORTH CAROLINA
BURKE COUNTY
File No: 2023 E 000938**

NOTICE

Having qualified as Executor of the **Estate of Nelda Hildebrand Lambert** this is to notify all persons having claims against said estate to present them to the undersigned on or before Mar 2, 2024, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This 21 day of November, 2023.

Debra Simmons Pasco,
Executor
1295 Enola Rd
Morganton, NC 28655
2721-255779
12/02/23, 12/09/23, 12/16/23, 12/23/23

**NORTH CAROLINA
BURKE COUNTY
File No: 23 E 905**

NOTICE

Having qualified as Executor of the **Estate of Kevin Lee Carter** this is to notify all persons having claims against said estate to present them to the undersigned on or before Mar 2, 2024, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This 28 day of November, 2023.

Caren Suzanne Surber,
Administrator
4375 DR Prestwood MHP,
Trailer 16, Clover Valley Ct
Hudson, NC 28638
2721-255777
12/02/23, 12/09/23, 12/16/23, 12/23/23

**North Carolina
Burke County**

**Estate of Bounkong Xayavong
File No. 22 E 832**

Notice to Creditors and Debtors

The undersigned, as attorney for the **Estate of Bounkong Xayavong**, deceased of Burke County, NC, is notifying all persons, firms and corporations having claims against the said estate to present them, duly verified, to the undersigned on or before February 23, 2023, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons, firms and corporations indebted to said estate are notified to make immediate payment.

This the 25th day of November, 2023.

Roderick H. Willcox, Jr.,
Attorney
Estate of Bounkong Xayavong
Willcox Law Firm, PLLC
P.O. Box 442
Morganton NC 28680
2721-255105
11/25/23, 12/02/23, 12/09/23, 12/16/23

**North Carolina
Burke County**

**Estate of Larry Charles Seagle
File No. 23 E 728**

Notice to Creditors and Debtors

The undersigned, as attorney for the **Estate of Larry Charles Seagle**, deceased of Burke County, NC, is notifying all persons, firms and corporations having claims against the said estate to present them, duly verified, to the undersigned on or before February 23, 2023, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons, firms and corporations indebted to said estate are notified to make immediate payment.

This the 25th day of November, 2023.

Roderick H. Willcox, Jr.,
Attorney
Estate of Larry Charles Seagle
Willcox Law Firm, PLLC
P.O. Box 442
Morganton NC 28680
2721-255104
11/25/23, 12/02/23, 12/09/23, 12/16/23

**NORTH CAROLINA
BURKE COUNTY
File No: 23 E 880**

NOTICE

Having qualified as Executor of the **Estate of Sherrill Haney** this is to notify all persons having claims against said estate to present them to the undersigned on or before Feb 25, 2024, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This 9 day of November, 2023.

Jennifer Haney Price, Executor
1285 Creekwood Dr.
Morganton, NC 28655
2721-255123
11/25/23, 12/02/23, 12/09/23, 12/16/23

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS
23-E-917**

Having qualified as Executor of the **Estate of Ruth Ellen Laughridge aka Ruth Culler Laughridge**, deceased, late of Burke County, North Carolina,

this is to notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against the estate of said decedent to present them to the undersigned, in care of the attorneys for the estate at their address shown below, on or before the 17th day of February, 2023, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons and entities indebted to said estate will please make immediate payment.

This the 18th day of November, 2023.

Millard Eugene Johnston,
Executor of the Estate of
Ruth Ellen Laughridge
aka Ruth Culler Laughridge

Byrd, Byrd, McMahon &
Denton, PA
PO Box 1269
Morganton, NC 28680
2721-254658
11/18/23, 11/25/23, 12/02/23, 12/09/23

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS
23-E-918**

Having qualified as Administrator of the **Estate of Michael Chad Buckner**, deceased, late of Burke County, North Carolina, this is to notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against the estate of said decedent to present them to the undersigned, in care of the attorneys for the estate at their address shown below, on or before the 17th day of February, 2024, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons and entities indebted to said estate will please make immediate payment.

This the 18th day of November, 2023.

Stacie Buckner as the
Administrator of the Estate of
Michael Chad Buckner

Byrd, Byrd, McMahon &
Denton, PA
PO Box 1269
Morganton, NC 28680
2721-254702
11/18/23, 11/25/23, 12/02/23, 12/09/23

**NORTH CAROLINA
BURKE COUNTY
NOTICE**

Having qualified as Executrix of the **Estate of Donald Wayne Blanton** this is to notify all persons having claims against said estate to present them to the undersigned on or before the 18th day of February, 2024, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This the 18th day of November, 2023.

Rita Binczek Blanton
c/o McMurray and Belvin Law
Office
P. O. Box 753
Morganton, NC 28680
2721-254647
11/18/23, 11/25/23, 12/02/23, 12/09/23

**NORTH CAROLINA
BURKE COUNTY
NOTICE**

Having qualified as Administrator of the **Estate of Cecilia Evelyn Shiels Getz** this is to notify all persons having claims against said estate to present them to the undersigned on or before the 18th day of February, 2024, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This the 18th day of November, 2023.

David Getz
c/o McMurray and Belvin Law
Office
P. O. Box 753
Morganton, NC 28680
2721-254648
11/18/23, 11/25/23, 12/02/23, 12/09/23

**NORTH CAROLINA
BURKE COUNTY
NOTICE**

Having qualified as Administrator of the **Estate of Steve Ronder Crawford** this is to notify all persons having claims against said estate to present them to the undersigned on or before the 18th day of February, 2024, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This the 18th day of November, 2023.

Marcella Ollis Crawford
c/o McMurray and Belvin Law
Office
P. O. Box 753
Morganton, NC 28680
2721-254652
11/18/23, 11/25/23, 12/02/23, 12/09/23

**North Carolina
Burke County**

**Estate of James L. Taylor
File No. 23 E 845**

Notice to Creditors and Debtors

The undersigned, as attorney for the **Estate of James L. Taylor**, deceased of Burke County,

NC, is notifying all persons, firms and corporations having claims against the said estate to present them, duly verified, to the undersigned on or before February 9, 2024, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons, firms and corporations indebted to said estate are notified to make immediate payment.

This the 11th day of November, 2023.

Roderick H. Willcox, Jr.,
Attorney
Estate of James L. Taylor
Willcox Law Firm, PLLC
P.O. Box 442
Morganton NC 28680
2721-253789
11/11/23, 11/18/23, 11/25/23, 12/02/23

**NORTH CAROLINA
BURKE COUNTY
File No: 23-E-00818**

NOTICE

Having qualified as Executor of the **Estate of Richard Eugene Rutherford** this is to notify all persons having claims against said estate to present them to the undersigned on or before Feb 11, 2024, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This 7 day of November, 2023.

Janet Rutherford, Executor
211 Grand View Avenue
Morganton, NC 28680
2721-254023
11/11/23, 11/18/23, 11/25/23, 12/02/23

**NORTH CAROLINA
BURKE COUNTY
NOTICE**

Having qualified as Executrix of the **Estate of Charles M. Cooper** this is to notify all persons having claims against said estate to present them to the undersigned on or before the 11th day of February, 2024, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This the 11th day of November, 2023.

Lisa A. Amrhein
c/o McMurray and Belvin Law
Office
P. O. Box 753
Morganton, NC 28680
2721-253662
11/11/23, 11/18/23, 11/25/23, 12/02/23

To submit a legal ad, email it to thepaper@legalnoticeservice.com

