

Chatham News + Record

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'MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE'

Chatham vaccine providers work to ensure vaccine equity for Hispanic residents

BY VICTORIA JOHNSON
News + Record Staff

When Chatham Hospital's Jesus Ruiz became the first person — and first Latino — in the county to get vaccinated on Dec. 16, UNC Health made its stance clear: vaccine equity and access would be top priority. "It's very important to get the coronavirus vaccines," Ruiz said in a Spanish-language video Chatham Hospital shared on

Facebook a week later. "In part it's another weapon against this virus that unfortunately has devastated our community, so I recommend that everyone get vaccinated when the vaccine becomes available to all of us."

But about two and a half months into its vaccination campaign, UNC's Chatham clinic hasn't quite vaccinated as many Latino residents in Chatham as staff had hoped — and neither have some other

Chatham-based vaccine providers, who have also made equity a key piece of their vaccination campaigns.

According to North Carolina's vaccination dashboard, just over 3% of all Chatham residents who received their first vaccine doses identified as Hispanic as of March 2, and not all received their shots inside Chatham. Statewide, about 2.64% of

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News + Record leads division with 28 awards

CN+R Staff Report

The Chatham News + Record captured a record-setting 28 news awards

Friday at the N.C. Press Association's annual news and editorial contest, winning more prizes than any newspaper in its division and earning prestigious "general excellence" recognition in the contest's two major overall categories.

The newspaper won 14 first-place news awards, along with eight second-place and six third-place prizes. Only two newspapers in the state had as many first-place finishes.

Reporter and Web Editor Hannah McClellan won six individual writing awards, former Sports Editor Chapel Fowler won five, while Photographer Kim Hawks and Publisher/Editor Bill Horner III won three awards each.

In all, 10 current and former members of the CN+R news team — along with graphic designer Jason Justice, who won first place in a separate contest for best ad design — were recognized with individual awards at the ceremony, which was held virtually as a part of the NC-PA's annual meeting.

The News + Record also won a number of staff awards, including first-place recognition for Best Use of Social Media for its work on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and Best Email Newsletter (for the

See **AWARDS**, page A3



McClellan



Fowler

'I'M EXCITED ABOUT WHAT IS TO COME'

Local geekchicfashion business opens Pittsboro studio after substantial growth

BY HANNAH MCCLELLAN
News + Record Staff

PITTSBORO — Following the killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers last summer, Lysandra Weber opened Instagram and saw a flood of black squares.

It was "Blackout Tuesday," an initial effort to pause business as usual in response to police brutality protests which went viral, and morphed into the incessant posting of black boxes across social media platforms.

Weber, a Black business owner of handmade clothing line geekchicfashion, thought to herself: "Posting a black square does not support my business."

She decided to post about it.

"I woke up to scroll through social media only to be bombarded with tiny black squares. That doesn't show me solidarity. It doesn't show me support," she posted from her Instagram account (@geekchicclothing) on June 2. "It's literally the void. The absence of anything of meaning. I'm just one person and this is just my opinion (shared by some other black influencers like @chefroble and @moemotivate), but white people have to do more than a square."

Her post quickly garnered shares and attention; she gained thousands of followers, contributing to a 400% increase in her social media following over the last year.

"The awareness around that really drove a lot of growth for my business," Weber said. "And it's horrible — it's like a



Staff photo by Peyton Sickles

Lysandra Weber stands at her cutting table in her recently purchased studio in downtown Pittsboro. Weber is the founder and owner of geekchicfashion, a clothing store featuring modern, comfortable and handmade designs.

weird double-edged sword, a horrible way to lead to really good business growth. But people are becoming more aware of supporting Black-owned businesses."

Weber launched geekchicfashion six years ago — a name meant to reclaim and embrace the term "geek" — after growing frustrated with the lack of

comfortable and fashionable clothing options, particularly for women working in STEM. She sold her handmade clothing lines primarily at pop-up markets across the Triangle, all the while working out of her home studio in Pittsboro. When the

See **GEEKCHICFASHION**, page A11

State board: Postpone municipal elections

BY D. LARS DOLDER
News + Record Staff

RALEIGH — State Board of Elections Executive Director Karen Brinson Bell recommended the General Assembly take action to delay the state's 2021 municipal elections in a presentation before the Election Law and Campaign Finance Reform Committee last week.

Bell asked the 21-person standing committee of the N.C. House of Representatives to consider a one-year postponement last Wednesday, affording the state and county boards of election time to adjust "because of the delay in the census data."

Census results are instrumental in decennial state and municipal redistricting processes, which are scheduled to occur this year, and must by law precede the election season if a town's demographics have changed substantially in the previous 10 years.

"Redistricting is, as most folks are aware, the

See **ELECTIONS**, page A11

Spring Chicken Festival to resume in 2021 — maybe virtually

BY D. LARS DOLDER
News + Record Staff

SILER CITY — The Spring Chicken Festival is coming back, but this year's iteration won't look like 2019's.

Two years ago, the town launched its "first annual" Spring Chicken Festival in partnership with Mountaire, the event's primary sponsor. It rehashed a bygone tradition — the yearly chicken festival which had died almost 20 years earlier when Siler City's poultry industry began its collapse.

After Mountaire began operations in 2019 at the old Townsend facility, the town revived its fallen festival with resounding success: 5,000 people flooded downtown's streets to enjoy the food trucks and entertainment and to peruse the many vendors featuring arts and crafts, gift items and more. Other

See **FESTIVAL**, page A12



CN+R file photo

2019's Spring Chicken Festival, pictured here, drew 5,000 attendees. In contrast, 2021's iteration may be virtual.

Committee proposes strategy to help Siler City rebuild

Town's low 'Esri index' signals economic weaknesses

BY D. LARS DOLDER
News + Record Staff

SILER CITY — An 11-person committee of local leaders has finalized its investigation into Siler City's economic obstructions and will propose a development strategy to the town's board of commissioners.

The group hopes to redirect Siler City's eco-

nomical trajectory and reestablish the town as a leading destination in Chatham County.

The Siler City Economic Development Strategic Five-year Plan Steering Committee includes members such as Siler City Commissioner Lewis Fadely, Economic Development Corporation Project Manager Sam Rauf and Chatham Advanced

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IN THE KNOW

In search of a vaccine: stalking my elusive COVID-19 shot. **PAGE A2**

The COA's changing state of services to Chatham's graying population. **PAGE B5**

Chatham's MIS director shares insights on cyber attack. **PAGE B7**

County libraries: book sale off; service to customers ongoing. **PAGE B9**



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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Events are subject to change based on closures related to the coronavirus pandemic. Verify with organizers prior to events.

• **The Friends of the Chatham Community Library** has cancelled its Spring Book Sale, due to the continued lockdown of government offices and businesses, ordered by federal, state, and local government. More information can be found on the website: friends-cl.org.

• **Chatham County Council on Aging:** Both centers are closed at this time until further notice. If you need to pick up supplies, call the Siler City or Pittsboro location or check our website at chathamcoa.org.

ON THE AGENDA

• The **Chatham County Board of Education** will meet at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, March 8, at Horton Middle School in Pittsboro.

• The **Pittsboro Board of Commissioners** will meet at 7 p.m. on Monday, March 8, via Zoom.

THURSDAY

• The **Pittsboro Farmers Market** is open with seasonable items year-round from 3 to 6 p.m. on Thursdays. It is located at 287 East St., Pittsboro.

• **St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church** provides a healthy, **meal at no cost** to those who come to us hungry at noon on Thursdays. We provide a place of hospitality and fellowship for everyone. All are welcome, regardless of race, sex, age, national origin, religious preference, handicap, or income.

UPCOMING:

• **Chatham Community Library** is offering free classes on Facebook, Microsoft Word, and Google Apps in March. While the library is closed, all classes will be offered online. Class descriptions and a registration link can be found at www.chathamnc.org/ComputerClasses, Intro to Facebook: March 9, Tuesday, 3 pm; Microsoft Word: Beyond Basics: March 17, Wednesday, 3 pm; and Google Apps: March 24, Wednesday, 3 pm

• Residents are invited to join the **Chatham Community Library** for a

virtual program with Michael Frank of the Museum of Bad Art (MOBA) as he presents “Tough Times — Having a Bad Day to Dystopian Apocalypse” on Saturday, March 13, from 1 to 2 p.m. Individuals interested in participating in the program may contact Library Branch Manager Rita Van Duinen at rita.vanduin-en@chathamlibraries.org for virtual meeting instructions and link. This program is free, open to the public and is made possible with the support of the Friends of the Chatham Community Library.

• The **Chatham Historical Museum** is open Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from 11 a.m. until 4 p.m. Masks required and groups will be distanced. Adult and kid friendly; no admission fee. Our current special exhibit is vintage toys. Don't miss it! Our permanent exhibits cover all aspects of Chatham's unique history. The Museum is located in the historic Chatham County Courthouse in the circle. More info: <https://chathamhistory.org>

• **Second Bloom of Chatham Thrift Shop** is now

located at Chatham Commons, at 630 E. St., Pittsboro, in the Food Lion shopping center. We will be accepting donations when we reopen. Our hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. All proceeds provide support for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault and promote community education in collaboration with Chatham County..

• With COVID-19 sweeping the country, artists' livelihoods are being challenged like never before. The Chatham Arts Council has put together a relief effort specifically for artists and arts-workers called **CAARE: Chatham Artist and Arts-Worker Relief Effort**. For more information on CAARE, or to donate, visit ChathamArtsCouncil.org.

• JMArts hosted a **JMACoronaConcert** via Twitter featuring performances submitted by JM students and faculty. Concerts can be viewed on its Twitter account @JMArts and by using the hashtags #JMACoronaConcert performances and #JMACoronaConcert program.

• **Foster and/or adoptive information:** Give children a safe place to grow. Interested in becoming a Foster and/or Adoptive parent? Call 919-642-6956 to learn more.

• **Alcoholics Anonymous** — North Carolina District 33, call the Help Line at 866-640-0180 for the meeting schedule for this area.

• **Motorcycle Association** — The Motorcycle Association for Chatham, Western Wake, Lee, Orange and Alamance counties meets in Pittsboro and is open to all riders. For information, call 919-392-3939 or visit www.chathamCBA.com.

• **Narcotics Anonymous** — For drug problems in the family, Narcotics Anonymous helps. Call 1-800-721-8225 for listing of local meetings.

• **Al-Anon Meeting**

— Pittsboro Serenity Seekers Al-Anon Family Group meets at 7 p.m. Mondays at Chatham Community Church, in the lower level of Chatham Mill, Pittsboro.

• **Scout News**

• Boy Scout Troop 93 in Pittsboro meets 7 p.m. Wednesdays at the Harold Boone Scout Park on Hwy 64W, just past CCCC. Open to boys, ages 11-17. Visit www.bstroop93.org for more information.

• Pack 924 of Siler City First U.M.C. meets on from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Tuesdays for boys, grades 1 through 5. Come join the Cub Scouts.

• Pack 900 in Bear Creek meets at 7 p.m. Tuesdays at Meroney's U.M.C., following the school calendar. See <http://pack900.com> for more information.

Chatham County Council on Aging

WEEKLY TRIVIA HUNT!

Q: What's the name of the traps that were used to catch the famous Chatham Rabbits?

Find the answer in this issue for your chance to win a \$25 Visa Gift Card!

IN SEARCH OF A VACCINE

Stalking my elusive COVID-19 shot

BY KIM HAWKS

News + Record Staff

I've been on a roller coaster lately, chasing a COVID-19 vaccination starting from here on Hawks Nest, my property in Chatham County.

I started by trying to register for a shot at every location I could find within a two-hour drive, including providers in Alamance, Durham, Wake, Lee, Moore, Orange and Sampson counties. Twice a day, I'd call my list of clinics — first, at 8 a.m., then again around 4 p.m. — in an attempt to get on someone's list.

A month passed. Nothing.

Friends called to say they were contacted to get their first dose, but otherwise my phone didn't ring. Over time the daily anticipation, followed by the let-down, wore on me. Work — going out in the public to take photos for the News + Record — was difficult to consider until I received a vaccination. I always masked-up and gloved-up, but given my own personal health journeys, I knew I wouldn't feel safe until I got my shot.

Then my phone began to ring, and in short order I received three calls informing me it was my turn for a first dose: from Piedmont Health in Siler City, from the Chatham County Public Health Department and from Walgreens Pharmacy in Carrboro.

The floodgates opened and the tide turned in my favor.

On a cold, rainy day, I drove up to the first small tent at the Ag Center in



In this self-portrait photo, CN+R photographer Kim Hawks receives her COVID-19 vaccination.

Pittsboro and was greeted and checked in by two smiling, bundled-up women. They could see anticipation and relief in my eyes. In the safety of my car, I went to the next station where they confirmed I was in the system.

The volunteers were so cheerful — you'd have thought it was a warm, spring day instead of a wet, blustery winter morning.

At the next tent, it was time to roll up my sleeve. My nurse greeted me with a smile and asked if I was ready.

“Yes!” I said. “And are selfies allowed?”

She smiled and said, “Yes, and I'll make sure to move my left arm away once I insert the needle so you can take the picture.”

And just like that, it was over.

At the next check point, I got my COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card with the lot number, name of the vaccine, the date and where I got the shot. On

the back of the card, a time, date and location was assigned for my second dose. Then to the final check point, where I parked for 20 minutes to make sure I suffered no adverse effects from the vaccine. (Thank you, volunteers!)

Today, I feel protected from the coronavirus, but I could unintentionally become a COVID-carrier for someone who has not been vaccinated. It brings up a different set of ethical concerns and responsibilities. My social behavior will remain the same as it was before I got a shot: I'll continue to wear a mask and social distance. I'll order groceries and other supplies online for curbside pick-up and isolate as much as possible.

But I'll also be more at ease with my camera in my hands, out taking pictures of the people and places I love in Chatham County.

Kim Hawks is a part-time photographer for the News + Record.

Put Tax-Smart Investing Moves to Work

We're now well into tax season. If your income in 2020 was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, your tax return will reflect it. However, if your earnings were fairly normal last year, you might look at your tax situation and wonder how you could improve it in 2021. One area to look at may be your investment-related taxes.

To help control these taxes, consider these moves:

• **Take full advantage of tax-deferred investments.** As an investor, one of the best moves you can make is to consider contributing as much as you can afford to your tax-deferred accounts — your traditional IRA and 401(k) or similar employer-sponsored plan — every year. If you don't touch these accounts while you're still contributing to them, you can defer taxes for decades, and when you do start taking money out, presumably during retirement, you may be in a lower tax bracket.

• **Look for tax-free opportunities.** Interest from municipal bonds typically is exempt from federal income tax, and, in some cases, from state and local income taxes, too. (Some municipal bonds, however, may be subject to the alternative minimum tax.) And if you qualify to contribute to a Roth IRA — eligibility is generally based on income — your earnings can be withdrawn tax-free, provided you've had your account for at least five years and you don't start taking withdrawals until you're at least 59½. Your employer may also offer a Roth 401(k), which can provide tax-free withdrawals. Keep in mind, though, that you contribute after-tax dollars to a Roth IRA and 401(k), unlike a traditional IRA and 401(k), in which your contributions are made with pre-tax dollars.

• **Be a “buy and hold” investor.** Your 401(k) and IRA are designed to be long-term investments, and you may face disincentives in the form of taxes and penalties if you tap into them before you reach 59½. So, just by investing in these retirement accounts, you are essentially pursuing a “buy and hold” strategy. But you can follow this same strategy for investments held outside your IRA and 401(k). You can own some investments — stocks in particular — for decades without paying taxes on gains. And when you do sell them, you'll only be taxed at the long-term capital gains rate, which may well be less than your ordinary income tax rate. But if you're frequently buying and selling investments you've held for one year or less, you could rack up some pretty big tax bills, because you'll likely be taxed at your ordinary income tax rate.

• **Be prepared for unexpected taxes.** Mutual fund managers are generally free to make whatever trades they choose. And when they do sell some investments, they can incur capital gains, which may be passed along to you. If this is a concern, you might look for funds that do less trading and bill themselves as tax efficient.

While taxes are one factor to consider when you invest, they should probably not be the driving force. You need to build a diversified portfolio that's appropriate for your risk tolerance and time horizon. Not all the investments you select, and the moves you make with them, will necessarily be the most tax efficient, but by working with your financial and tax professionals, you can make choices that can help you move toward your long-term goals.

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REBUILD

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Manufacturing (CAM) megasite owner Tim Booras. Advisors are Ann Bass and Bruce Naegelen, economic developers from the North Carolina Main Street & Rural Planning Center; MS&RP is a subset of the N.C. Dept. of Commerce. Town Planner Jack Meadows presides over the group’s meetings.

The group has met remotely for the last several months after a brief hiatus following the pandemic’s onset. Its original goal was to evaluate Siler City’s economic needs and develop a short-term plan of corrective action, but was revised to include plans for “coming out of the pandemic” with a stronger local economy and better poised for long-term growth and development, according to Bass.

“(We looked) at a lot of data on the general structure of the economy,” she said, “with the idea that we were looking toward building back in a more resilient kind of way.”

Resilience, Bass said, means the town will not suffer critical setbacks when future economic disruptions strike. And when they do come, the town “would recover more quickly” than it has in the past.

But hedging Siler City against future economic dips is only the first step in a more comprehensive plan for town

‘We all know about our poverty rates so there is definitely some work to be done on increasing the wealth of the individuals, and, of course, we know that when a family has enough money to be able to meet their basic needs in times of disruption, that makes it a lot easier for them to weather the storm, which means there aren’t strains on the rest of the system as well.’

ANN BASS, *economic developer from the North Carolina Main Street & Rural Planning Center*

improvement. Committee members hope to establish Siler City as a leading destination in Chatham County for new residents and prospective businesses.

To do that, town leaders — including Meadows, the Siler City board of commissioners and Town Manager Roy Lynch — along with local groups such as the EDC, must find ways to incentivize new commerce and address “retail leakage.”

Retail leakage is “a statistical tool to help understand the retail dynamics in a certain geography,” an MS&RP report says. It “identifies gaps in the retail market where demand for retail goods and services in a specific category is not being satisfied by the existing retail businesses in that geography.”

As a result, Siler City residents are forced to spend their money elsewhere, outside the town and the county, propagating a cycle of local economic decline.

“It gives an idea of how much money we’re losing by people going somewhere else to purchase a good or service or whatever,”

Bass said. “That then helps us to identify some opportunities for some new businesses or business expansions.”

The problem has worsened in recent years, especially as more residents leave town for employment.

In 2017, Siler City residents spent about \$80 million outside of town on retail goods plus food and drink; those numbers have risen incrementally since.

“What I noticed is that there was sort of an increase in leakage over the past two or three years,” Naegelen said in a previous committee meeting. Last year’s figures showed a retail gap in excess of \$81 million.

That money is spent beyond Siler City’s borders is not the only reason for the town’s economic doldrums. Its residents don’t have much money to spend compared to their neighbors in eastern Chatham County.

According to the Esri wealth index, Bass’ “new favorite statistic,” Siler City rates poorly next to surrounding micro-economies. The metric

“captures both income and the accumulation of substantial wealth or the abundance of possessions and resources in its identification of the wealthiest areas in the country,” according to a MS&RP report.

“It gives an idea of where the community fares,” Bass said. Average wealth nationwide is represented on the Esri index as a 100; bigger numbers suggest greater-than-normal wealth and lower numbers indicate degrees of poverty. Siler City was scored a 68.

“We all know about our poverty rates,” Bass said, “so there is definitely some work to be done on increasing the wealth of the individuals, and, of course, we know that when a family has enough money to be able to meet their basic needs in times of disruption, that makes it a lot easier for them to weather the storm, which means there aren’t strains on the rest of the system as well.”

To many members of the committee, Siler City’s poor showing on the Esri wealth index compared to other county locations proves what they’ve already known for years — Chatham has severe economic disparity and should not be evaluated as a single unit.

Taken as a whole, Chatham County gets about a 103 on the Esri index, Bass said. The number is skewed by pockets of above-average wealth in the county’s western communities, and therefore misrepresents the fiscal standing of Chatham’s

many low-income towns.

For years, a variety of circumstances have prevented Siler City from enhancing its attraction to developers and business owners even while eastern Chatham, notably Pittsboro and northern communities that abut Orange county, have flourished. In part, Siler City leaders have struggled to secure funding and support for revitalization measures because of North Carolina’s Tier system, which evaluates counties’ aggregate economic metrics without much regard for intra-county economic differences.

Calls to change the system have gone mostly unheard, but now, MS&RP’s investigation proves that N.C.’s Tier system hurts towns like Siler City and should be amended or abandoned, according to committee members such as Booras.

“We’re going to use this report to try to change the Tier system,” he said.

First, the committee must solicit commissioner approval, something it hopes to do this month. But Naegelen was pleased to hear of the group’s ambitious plans.

“Don’t think small,” he said. “Think big — even if you don’t make it to that mark, you’re going to get a larger result anyway.”

Reporter D. Lars Dolder can be reached at dldolder@chathamnewsrecord.com and on Twitter @dldolder.

AWARDS

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second consecutive year) for the Chatham Brew, a free thrice-weekly email newsletter with a weekly reach of more than 8,000 readers.

The newspaper also won second place for Best Community Coverage, a measure of overall coverage of the goings-on in the market it serves.

In addition, the News + Record’s website (chathamnewsrecord.com) won the first prize in the coveted “General Excellence for Websites” competition in the small community newspaper division.

“Winning more awards than any other newspaper in our division, and becoming one of the most-recognized newspapers in all of North Carolina, is a testament to the commitment our team has to Chatham County and community journalism,” Horner said. “It’s extremely gratifying. I’m so proud of our team,

especially our first-time award-winners. North Carolina’s annual news and editorial contest is known for being among the most vigorously contested in the country, and these results show that what we’re giving our readers — in print, online and through our other digital platforms — is recognized within the industry as outstanding work.”

Across seven divisions among all the state’s papers, only the Wilmington Star-News, the Raleigh News & Observer and the Winston-Salem Journal — each of which serves a metropolitan market — won more awards. And only the Star-News (17) and the News & Observer (15) won as many first-place news awards as the News + Record’s 14.

The News + Record took second place in the overall “General Excellence” category, finishing as runner-up to the perennial winner in the small community newspaper division, The State

Port Pilot, which won 24 news awards.

Hannah McClellan

McClellan’s two first-place writing awards were in the Education Reporting and Election/Political Reporting categories. She won second place for her contest entries in General News Reporting and for Ledes — newspaper terminology for “leads,” or the opening paragraphs in stories — and third place for City/County/Government Reporting. She also placed third-place in the Education Reporting category, which meant she took two of the three places in that contest.

“It’s remarkable for a new reporter to win six awards,” Horner said of McClellan, a 2020 graduate of UNC-Chapel Hill. “It’s even more remarkable when you realize Hannah didn’t start with us until last June. The contest year runs October through September, so she had less than half a year’s worth of work

to enter, compared to a full year for most of her competition. Hannah continues to do incredible work for us, and some of the stories and series she’s working on now will definitely be candidates for awards this time next year.”

Chapel Fowler

Fowler, who recently left the News + Record to take a position with the Fayetteville Observer, won first place for Sports Feature Writing and Sports Ledes, second and third places for Sports Enterprise Reporting and third place for Sports News Reporting.

Judges noted Fowler’s writing skill.

“The memorable post-season run lede made me want to read on about the basketball team’s turnaround,” one judge wrote. “The story lede on the death of a football coaching legend [Phil Senter] was the best, making you want to read about ‘the 6-foot-4 giant,’ with the ‘steady hand’ and the ‘penchant for the counter right run.’”

“Chapel is one of the most naturally-gifted writers I’ve worked with in 40 years of newspapering,” Horner said. “Had he been with us for a full year he would have won 10 awards, I’m sure. He took our sports pages to another level and the recognition was well-deserved.”

Kim Hawks

Hawks, a part-time photographer for the newspaper,



Hawks

won first place for General News Photography and

third place for Spot News Photography. The judge for the Feature Photography category noted that Hawks’ work told “a personal story.”

“(This category) was hard to judge, but the impact of this photo earned first place,” the judge wrote.

“We’re fortunate to have Kim working with us,” Horner said. “She’s an experienced photographer, but shooting for newspapers is new to her. Winning two first-place prizes means that she’s now among the best of the best.”

Bill Horner III

Horner won two first-place awards, capturing top honors in both of the contest’s column writing categories: Serious



Horner

Columns and Lighter Columns. In feedback from the judges, the judge of the Serious Columns category said his work was “very personal, emotional and relatable.” The judge of the Lighter Columns category said, “I like this columnist’s choice of subject matter that many of his readers can relate to. His creative thoughts and easygoing style make for great reading.”

Horner also won second place for Business Writing for his story about Chatham County’s residential real estate market, finishing runner up to staffers Victoria Johnson and Olivia Rojas.

Victoria Johnson

Johnson, who leads the CN+R’s La Voz de Chatham project, also won two first-place awards. She teamed with news intern Rojas in the Business Writing category for a story about the Small Business Administration’s Payroll Protection Program, and took top honors in Religion & Faith Reporting for a story she wrote entitled, “Chatham’s Hispanic churches maintain community, support congregations despite COVID-19.”

The judge in that category called that story “an informative piece, very well written, intimate interviews, excellent quotes. Well done.”

“Our La Voz project is an important part of our work,” Horner said. “The impact of Victoria’s work is growing and making a difference in Chatham County.”

La Voz de Chatham is the newspaper’s project devoted to coverage of COVID-19 and other issues in the county’s Latinx community. Originally funded with a grant from Facebook, the project is funded now with support from Chatham Hospital.

Jason Justice

Long-time News + Record designer Jason Justice won the newspaper’s sole advertising award, capturing first

place for best Retail Ad in a Niche Publication for an ad he designed for the newspaper’s Chatham Life magazine.

Other winners

Former Reporter Zachary Horner, who now works for the Chatham County Public Health Department, and former intern Adrienne Clevon won second place for Best Multimedia Project with their ground-breaking “Chatcast” podcast. The podcast, which featured 10 installments, addressed the subject of teen mental health in Chatham County.

The judge for this category wrote: “An important project, pulled together in a format more likely to reach the audience that might most benefit. Excellent job finding kids to open up in a format that will reach many groups.”

The podcast series can be heard at <https://www.chathamnewsrecord.com/chatcast/>.

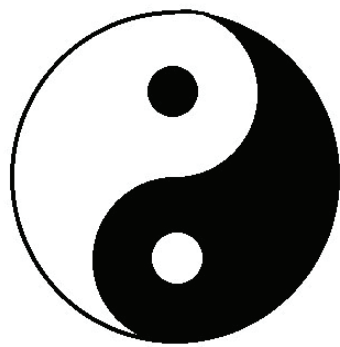
Reporter D. Lars Dolder, who had been working for the newspaper as a stringer before the contest deadline, won third place for Election/Political Reporting for his profile of the candidates in the N.C. House Dist. 54 race last September. He joined the newspaper full-time in October.

“Lars is our newest staff member and our only full-time reporter without a journalism degree,” Horner said, “but his innate ability to find stories and write in a compelling way is so valuable to us. He’ll be a regular in the awards column by this time next year.”

Former photographer David Bradley won a writing award, capturing second place in Religion & Faith Reporting for a story about a retiring Chapel Hill pastor from Chatham County.

The paper’s 28 awards this year are a single-year record for the former Chatham News and Chatham Record, which until 2018 was owned by the Resch family. The “new” News + Record won 18 awards in the NCPA’s 2019 contest, including third-place in General Excellence, in the newspaper’s first year under the ownership of Chatham Media Group LLC, a partnership between Horner and Chatham County developers Kirk Bradley and Chris Ehrenfeld.

Links to the award-winning stories can be found on the online edition of this article.



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VIEWPOINTS

I want Johnson & Johnson’s COVID-19 vaccine

Johnson & Johnson’s single-shot COVID-19 vaccine arrives in North Carolina this week, and some experts fear the public will reject it.

The problem is J&J’s efficacy rate. Compared to Pfizer and Moderna shots — coming in at 95% and 94% efficacy, respectively — Johnson & Johnson achieved a pedestrian 72% in its U.S. trials (66% worldwide).

But Pfizer and Moderna’s vaccine efficacy rates were unprecedented. Before any clinical trials concluded, the FDA hinted it would authorize emergency use for safe vaccines that achieved at least 50% efficacy. As vaccines go, that wouldn’t have been so bad.

For example, the polio vaccine — a game changer when it came out in 1955 — prevented polio in 60-70% of recipients. In 80-90%, it staved off paralytic polio. More doses improved those figures, though, hence the reason for our four polio shots within the first four years we’re alive.

The chickenpox vaccine, too, isn’t full-proof. It has a one-

shot efficacy rate of 82%.

In the greater context of vaccine development, then, Johnson & Johnson’s COVID-19 vaccine holds its own. But we’ve been spoiled. Pfizer and Moderna set ostensibly insurmountable benchmarks — why settle for anything else?

That reasoning has already provoked a movement in Europe where another “lesser” vaccine — Oxford-AstraZeneca’s 66-81% efficacy rate contender — rolled out early last month. The medical community in particular has decried government priority standards which reserve Pfizer and Moderna vaccines for other population groups.

“Medical staff need the most effective vaccine,” Jerome Marty, president of a French doctor’s union, said in an interview with The Wall Street Journal. And Forbes reported that 3,000 doctors in Italy wrote a letter to the Italian government demanding that “private doctors and dentists be inoculated with mRNA vaccines’ like those developed by Moderna and Pfizer and BioNTech, as opposed to AstraZeneca’s ‘since there is evidence they are more effective.’”

Some expect the same outcry to erupt in the U.S. when Johnson & Johnson’s vaccine hits distribution sites this week. And it

makes sense, right? Who wants 72% when you can have 95%?

I do. Here’s why. No fair comparison can be made between the Pfizer/Moderna vaccines and Johnson & Johnson’s. The latter arrives several months deeper into this protean pandemic and its clinical trials were conducted amid an especially severe strain of the virus.

Nirav Shah, director of the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, warned in an interview with The Washington Post that vaccine efficacy rates are not an “apples to apples” comparison. The first two vaccines were tested under narrow circumstances. Johnson & Johnson’s clinical trial spanned several continents and included subjects exposed to especially deadly coronavirus variants which had not emerged when the FDA authorized Pfizer and Moderna for emergency use.

“The Johnson & Johnson vaccine was tested in South America and South Africa ...” Rachel Roper, a virologist at East Carolina University told The News & Observer earlier this week. “The Moderna and Pfizer (vaccines) weren’t, and they were tested at a time when those variants didn’t exist.”

Especially in South Africa, coronavirus variants have

been more aggressive and life-threatening than previously known versions of the disease. Apparent efficacy rates, then, don’t completely reflect a vaccine’s ability to do its job.

“Don’t get caught up, necessarily, on the number game, because it’s a really good vaccine, and what we need is as many good vaccines as possible,” said Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, the U.S. government’s top infectious disease expert, in an interview with The New York Times. “Rather than parsing the difference between 94 and 72, accept the fact that now you have three highly effective vaccines. Period.”

Besides, 72% efficacy in preventing symptomatic infection does not mean that 28% might die of COVID-19. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine showed 85% efficacy against severe forms of COVID-19 and 100% efficacy — yes, *100%* — against hospitalization and death from the virus.

Isn’t that all that really matters? Lest anyone has forgotten, we did live with sickness before the pandemic began. We didn’t shut down during cold and flu season, not because we expected to entirely avoid illness, but because the chances of severe and lasting damage were slim.

That must be the goal with COVID-19. The virus proba-

bly isn’t going anywhere. But with effective vaccines that can prevent the most adverse consequences, normalcy might resume.

Johnson & Johnson’s vaccine can get us there. It’s the only one-shot option available in this country so far. That means, every shipment goes twice as far as corresponding allotments from Pfizer and Moderna.

And J&J doesn’t require storage in frigid temperatures. Pfizer’s vaccine needs special and expensive coolers to preserve potency. Moderna needs at least a freezer. Johnson & Johnson does just fine in a fridge — making it the strongest candidate for rural distribution.

On all counts, the Johnson & Johnson vaccine presents a propitious path toward resumption of regular life. So, please, if the first vaccine you can get is from J&J, take it.

I will. In fact, it’s my preferred choice. One shot instead of two? A 100% record in preventing hospitalization and death? And the most robust clinical trials of any vaccine so far? Sign me up.

Reporter D. Lars Dolder can be reached at lldolder@chathamnr.com and on Twitter @lldolder.

Which March will we get?

One of the better things about our location — the Piedmont in general, Chatham County in particular — is our location.



BOB WACHS
Movin’ Around

I don’t mean that as double-talk or silliness but as a significant benefit. Namely, that if the mountains or the beach or both qualify as a favorite place for you, then you’re not all that far away in miles or time from either.

Add to that the fact that our location is in a temperate zone where — most of the time — we’re neither too hot nor too cold, at least for extended periods of time. And now that the calendar has turned to March, we can expect examples of that as the spring season nears.

Every time we get to this place in the year, I’m reminded of several things about March — the grass is starting to grow and turn green, it’s usually pretty good kite-flying weather, soon the pollen will fly about and get behind the contacts in my eyes and we’ll have some warm days as well as some cool ones. For me, that means that wood-burning season isn’t over just yet.

It also means there’s living proof that the old nursery rhyme saying about March, that it comes in like a lion or a lamb and goes out like the other, is on full display. And that always reminds me of March 1960, when apparently a whole pack of lions was on the prowl, not just for the first part but for most all of the month.

In that long-ago and far-away day I was a mere child trying to navigate the details of the 5th grade. That particular month and year played havoc with part of that goal, however, for it was that month that we had snow each and every Wednesday.

In that day and age, “zoom” was what the Road Runner did to Wily Coyote every Saturday morning in the cartoons; “computer” was the fellow who could actually compute; and there was still such a thing as “snow days,” meaning we were out of school until the roads were passable.

Today, I’m told, that since classes can be offered by “Zooming” on the computer, there will be no more snow days, even if it gets as deep as an elephant’s belly. We learned this, of course, by being out of school for a year this year, more or less, another benefit of our friend, the coronavirus.

But in 1960? No way.

I can remember standing at the front door of my boyhood home during the first snow, watching the white stuff pile up several inches deep. So, there went Thursday and Friday school days. Eventually, it would warm up enough to melt during the day but would then refreeze Sunday and Monday nights.

You’ve got to remember that Chatham, with its 707 square miles, is a big land mass, and back then there were miles and miles of dirt roads in our county. So maybe — *maybe* — we’d go to school Tuesday, maybe, but come that night and Wednesday morning, Ol’ Man Winter would come calling again. And the process was repeated.

Again ... and again.

That month, as best as I can remember from the dusty pages of antiquity, we went to school maybe six or seven days, including a Saturday or two, which was a bummer since it made me miss the Road Runner and his zooming. Eventually, the state Department of Public Instruction simply forgave some of the missed days. (Maybe that’s why I struggle today with some things.)

Bad — or good, depending on your point of view — as those days were, however, they can’t and don’t compare with what those storm systems and some others did to places in the western part of our state.

In Boone, during late February and well into March, seven feet of snow fell. In Watauga County, some snow drifts were more than 10 feet high, blocking roads for days. Nearby areas reported the same conditions with Ashe County reporting snowdrifts 20 feet high. In some places in the mountains, snow covered the ground well into May.

So what are we in for this year? Stay tuned.

With a record like that one, though, it’s no wonder the riddle I asked one of my older granddaughters the other day makes sense.

“Why is the calendar tired on April 1?” I asked her.

She offered few guesses, finally giving up.

“Because,” I told her, “it just finished a March of 31 days.”

Bob Wachs is a native of Chatham County and retired long-time managing editor of the Chatham News/Chatham Record, having written a weekly column for more than 30 years. During most of his time with the newspapers, he was also a bi-vocational pastor and today serves Bear Creek Baptist Church for the second time as pastor.

Facing the COVID death count

It is almost spring. The signs are all around us. Nature is



ANDREW TAYLOR-TROUTMAN
Hope Matters

greening again. The chorus of birds has returned to the trees. The days grow longer, and just yesterday I saw my first daffodil offer its yellow smile.

For Christians, this is the liturgical season of Lent, a word derived from Old English that originally referred to spring. The paradox is, despite the signs of new life in nature that are all around us, Christians have traditionally used Lent as a time to focus on death.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday when worshippers receive the mark of the cross in ash on their foreheads. This is to remind us not only of the universal truth of mortality but also that it is personal. Everyone is mortal. I will die. Remembering my mortality can make me thankful for life today.

Even if they have never heard of ashes, people of different faiths may still be familiar with the popular Christian practice of “giving something up” during Lent. Maybe chocolate, wine or reality TV shows. This Lent, my 8-year-old son

wanted our family to give up eating meat. The point again relates to raising awareness. Giving something up can result in gratitude for what we have.

In addition to going vegetarian, I have added something I consider to be a spiritual practice. Every day I learn the story of a fellow North Carolinian who has died of COVID-19.

Over the past few days, I’ve read of Tar Heel state natives who traveled the globe and others who were born and died in the same county. I’ve read about decorated war heroes and accomplished professionals. Politicians, factory workers, preachers and teachers. Mountain mamas and country gentlemen. Folks who had lived through the Great Depression, Jim Crow and 9/11. An immigrant who became a sheriff’s deputy. A survivor of Hodgkin’s lymphoma who became a nurse.

Loved ones remembered their deceased with stories: He had witnessed the explosion of the first atomic bomb. She loved Cajun cooking, especially jambalaya. Another remembered her as “a fighter” and him as a “bright presence.” A son said his dad had never met a stranger, and even his bank teller cried at the news of his death.

These are just a few of the more than 11,000 dead from COVID-19 in North Carolina who are part of 500,000 people

in this country alone linked by cause of death. I cannot imagine 500,000 of anything, let alone the magnitude of such suffering and loss.

But these stories give life to the statistics. Stories inspire the living.

Despite the vastly different life experiences of their loved ones, I’ve noticed a common theme: Many relatives and friends wish to carry on the legacy of the person who died. Time and time again, people shared that they wanted to be as good a provider or as good a parent. To be as kind and loyal, generous and loving.

Receiving the cross on my forehead this Ash Wednesday was particularly poignant. This Lent has been marked by death as never before in my lifetime. Though I have not lost a loved one to the coronavirus, my daily Lenten practice has put faces on the death count. Not everyone believes the Christian claim that life springs from death. But I think we can agree that the memory of the dead can inspire the living.

Andrew Taylor-Troutman is the pastor of Chapel in the Pines Presbyterian Church and author of Gently Between the Words: Essays and Poems. He is currently working from home with his wife and three children.

LETTERS

For the People TO THE EDITOR:

American democracy is at a crossroads. For democracy to work we need to hear every voice and count every vote. Voter suppression, extreme partisan gerrymandering and dark money in politics threaten our system of government.

But we have an opportunity to bring about big, positive change to protect voting rights and civil rights. The For the People Act (H.R. 1) will help

insure that every voter in this country, no matter what color they are, where they live, or how much (or little) money they have, will have their voice heard and their vote counted.

Among the improvements to strengthen democracy: automatic voter registration; restoration of the protections of the Voting Rights Act; small donor public financing to empower ordinary Americans instead of big donors; independent, nonpartisan commissions to form congressional districts — so that no one

party has an advantage.

The vote on the For the People Act (H.R. 1) will be coming before the US House of Representatives in the next several days and a similar act (S.1) will go before the Senate soon. If American democracy matters to you, I urge you to contact your US Congressional Representative (David Price or Ted Budd) and tell him that you support American democracy and the For the People Act.

Vickie Atkinson

Chapel Hill

What’s on your mind?

The Chatham News + Record welcomes letters from its readers on topics of local and public interest, as well as thoughtful and informative guest columns.

At our discretion, we may edit letters for clarity. We reserve the right to refuse letters and other submissions that promote a commercial product, contain either libelous material, personal attacks on individuals or vulgar language. Consumer complaints and letters containing unverifiable factual claims are ineligible for publication.

Each letter must contain the writer’s full name, address and daytime telephone number for verification. Letters should be no more than 400 words in length. Letter-writers are limited to two published letters per month. Letters selected for publication may be edited and all letters become property of the Chatham News + Record.

To submit a letter: Mail it to the News + Record at P.O. Box 290, Siler City, N.C. 27344; or email to bhorner3@chathamnr.com; or drop by our office at 303 West Raleigh Street in Siler City.

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VIEWPOINTS

A change of schools led to a change in attitude

I received a letter a couple of weeks ago announcing the death of author and educator R.C. Smith at age 93. His widow, Kathryn, wrote to tell me he died peacefully, with family by his side; a virtual service was held last Sunday.

R.C. authored two books of note during his career. In 1996 he published “A Case About Amy,” which told the story of one family’s fight for the rights of their disabled child. This story struck a chord with me since my sister is handicapped, but it’s also book I recommend for anyone who has a child in the public school system.

Back when he was known as Bob Smith, he published “They Closed Their Schools” (1965, UNC Press; reprinted to benefit the R.R. Moton Museum, 1996). The book chronicled the history of Prince Edward County, Virginia, after the Brown vs. Board of Education Supreme Court decision called for the desegregation of public schools. That county made the decision to defund its public school system rather than integrate, and R.C. reported on the consequences of that decision for both its Black and its white populations.

I was 8 years old when my family relocated to Chatham County from Charlotte. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, where I had completed 1st and 2nd grades, were still segregated, but Chatham County Schools had been integrated for several years; I will never forget my 3rd grade class at Pittsboro Elementary because it was the first time I came face to face with Black children my age. To me they were nothing short of astonishing.

Mrs. Harwood was my 3rd grade teacher. She had gray hair pulled back in a bun so

tight that her wrinkled, well-scrubbed white skin seemed stretched along with it. She wore dresses like my grandmother’s and she let us know right away that good boys and girls sure as fire did NOT come from monkeys. She taught us that God made the Earth for us and that we were responsible for mastering it. She started her Master Class by making us memorize all the books of the Bible, Old Testament and New. I can still rattle them off in order like a good boy.

She taught us there were 12 inches in a foot, and three feet in a yard. We learned this by counting out loud the numbers stamped on her wooden rulers. If we did not know our lessons, she rapped our knuckles. Mrs. Harwood also taught us how to square dance. I learned how to bow to my partner, allemande left, do si do, promenade, pass through, separate, and go home — all to the sound of old-timey barn dance music blaring from one of the school’s blue plastic record players. I

reeled along with the rest of my 3rd grade class while the record went round and round. Our rows of desks were split down the middle with girls nearer the windows and boys nearer the door. After a few weeks my young mind was satisfied that Black boys were the same as me, only darker, but I had no way to cross the aisle to talk to the Black girls. My crafty solution was to always ask one of the Black girls to be my partner for square dances, but no matter which girl I picked, Mrs. Harwood would have none of it: I had to pick a white girl. Not that I disliked white girls, but I was used to them. Black girls were a mystery to be solved, so when it came time to partner up, I always ended up with sore knuckles.

After Pittsboro Primary came Horton Middle, where young soul brothers-to-be wore their hair in afros — the taller the better. White guys like me wanted to be cool like Fonzie on TV. We had our plastic

combs, but every Black guy’s back pocket had an afro pick with a clenched Black Power fist for a handle. After Horton I spent a couple of miserable years in a boarding school before returning home to graduate from Northwood High.

I made many friends in my decades away from peachy little Pittsboro, friends of all colors, and when I see them in my mind, I just see everyday people. I believe attending an integrated public school taught me this easy attitude toward race relations. I like to think R.C. Smith would have smiled and nodded at my theory of racial harmony.

I also like to think Mrs. Harwood would *not* have rapped my knuckles.

Dwayne Walls Jr. has previously written a story about his late father’s battle with Alzheimer’s disease and a first-person recollection of 9/11 for the newspaper. Walls is the author of the book “Backstage at the Lost Colony.” He and his wife

Reduce health cost, not just price

Too many North Carolinians lack access to the medical services they need. One possible response, as we have heard incessantly for more than a decade, would be to expand Medicaid under the terms of the Affordable Health Act, with most of the expense to be borne by the (already heavily indebted) federal government.

It’s hardly the only possible response, however. Through its own regulations, North Carolina restricts the availability of medical services and, as a result, inflates the cost of those services. Rather than

looking for ways to redistribute that inflated cost to taxpayers, state policymakers should try deflating it.

In a recent column that discussed higher education, I emphasized the distinction between price and cost. If we say the average university education costs too much, which it most assuredly does, you could propose that we do more to shield students and their families from that cost by increasing state appropriations to public universities, for example, or by transferring student-loan debt from private balance sheets to the (already heavily indebted) federal government.

Such a policy would reduce the price of education, not its cost. In fact, if we keep the price of a good or service artificially low by making third parties such as governments pay more of the bill, its actual cost may go up.

The same analysis applies to health care. The finance problem matters, of course. My own preference is to reform the tax treatment of health insurance by converting the current exclusion, inefficient and unfair as it is, into a set of risk-adjusted tax credits so even households of modest incomes can purchase private plans on a competitive market, as proposed by a variety of conservative reformers and institutions.

But focusing too much on how health care is financed distracts us from how health care is delivered. In North Carolina, we make it far too difficult for new providers to enter the marketplace. We squash competition and innovation. As a result, we make health-care costs unnecessarily high.

Consider the case of certificate-of-need (CON) laws. They force hospitals and other providers to obtain state permission to open new facilities or add new services. As a new report by the John Locke Foundation documents, North Carolina’s CON laws are egregiously out of step with current practice and common sense.

Of the 35 states that still have CON, our state’s rules are especially strict. We are one of only eight states that require state permission slips for all six major categories: hospital beds, beds outside hospitals, equipment, facilities, services, and emergency medical transport. When the American Planning Association counted up CON rules across 26 different services, facilities, and equipment purchases, only Vermont (all 26) and Hawaii (25) regulated more of them than North Carolina (23) did.

James Bailey, a Providence College professor and visiting scholar at the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, conducted a careful review of the empirical research on CON effects. Most studies showed that, not surprisingly, restricting supply makes health care costlier and harder to get.

In his new Locke report, Bailey wrote that CON laws reduce hospital beds by 13%, hospitals per capita by 30%, substance-abuse treatment centers by 42%, and neonatal intensive-care beds by 49%. CON states also have longer waits in emergency rooms. Prices are, not surprisingly, higher in CON states, as well, by about 14% on average, though the effect on overall health-care spending is tempered somewhat by the fact that fewer services get delivered.

Could North Carolina get rid of CON regulations entirely? Sure. Some did so decades ago. Others, such as New Hampshire and Florida, have fully or mostly eliminated their systems in recent years.

But even if we just made our CON laws more “normal,” reducing their breadth and streamlining the regulatory process, that would give North Carolinians more access to the medical services they need at a lower price — not by shifting the cost to taxpayers but by using competition and innovation to drive down the actual cost of delivering services.

John Hood (@JohnHoodNC) is chairman of the John Locke Foundation.

GUEST COLUMN | DAVID DELANEY

Leading from the center

According to some calculations, Chatham County (Goldston, specifically) is North Carolina’s geographic center. Of course, there is no intrinsic meaning or value in such a claim. But just as geography has shaped human evolution, it unquestionably impacts culture and society today.

It is exciting to think about ways that Chatham’s central location will shape the next generation of residents. Trends in technology, economic opportunity, and social equity that are getting national headlines are sure to play important roles.

Chatham is already home to many technology innovators, executives, and global companies. With the Research Triangle on one side and the U.S. Hwy. 421 Carolina Corridor on the other, tech job growth is certain. But for whom, and when?

Ironically, most of Chatham County struggles to get broadband internet while the county government recovers from a debilitating Russian cybercrime attack. This is the duality of the digital age — cyberspace is inherently insecure, but it is essential infrastructure for community growth and wellbeing.

Cyber insecurity and distribution disparity are technology and policy problems. To solve them, diverse teams with innovative, collaborative outlooks

are required. Tech solutions also require lab-intensive research, usually through universities, governments, and companies.

A major jumpstart in this area comes from UNC’s Innovate Carolina, which announced plans to expand to Mosaic in Pittsboro. More commitments of this type will be required to put Chatham residents at the heart of innovation that spurs the local economy and solves global digital-age problems.

However, as today’s economy emerges from a pandemic slough with forecasts of 4 - 6 percent growth, the county’s pre-pandemic east-west economic divide is likely to persist. Research-driven new knowledge is as critical to eliminating that divide as it is to developing new technology.

For example, mid-20th century thinking pointed to poverty as a driver of crime. New research in many fields reveals more complex relationships. It also shows that people of color — especially African-Americans — are disproportionately arrested and imprisoned even at the highest economic levels. The societal problems clearly run much deeper than one’s economic status.

To ignore this new knowledge is to disadvantage Chatham County’s children and potential to define new, better community goals. To embrace this new knowledge

is to intentionally improve public and private institutions — governments, companies, laws, policies — so they impact all community members equitably.

Living at the physical center of the state is less important than intentionally living at the center of the nation’s 21st-century identity and accomplishments. But geography is unquestionably vital to a community’s sense of self and place in the world.

The nation’s greatest heritage is, arguably, improving democracy, exploring, and innovating. Yet each of those comes with oppressive institutional and historical baggage, especially for Native communities, African-Americans, other people of color, women, immigrants, workers, and refugees.

It would be quite an accomplishment if the county can find its center among diverse communities, histories, political preferences, and ideals to lead and thrive together from that new center.

David G. Delaney served as acting associate general counsel for cybersecurity and infrastructure security at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security from 2004 to 2013. He is co-founder of Chatham Tech Talk, an association of tech enthusiasts that holds public discussions of technology and related issues.

That ye be not judged

Judge Knott, that ye be not judged. No, it’s not just a typo in a Biblical quote.



D.G. MARTIN
One on One

Instead, it is meant to be an insider’s signal to the fans of the popular North Carolina author Margaret Maron, to whom this column is a tribute.

Maron died last week following a stroke, leaving behind a group of admiring fellow authors, bookstore owners, and loyal readers.

She was best known for her 20-book mystery series featuring Judge Deborah Knott and Knott’s extended family in rural North Carolina. It all began 30 years ago with “Bootlegger’s Daughter.” Set in fictional Colleton County, it was obviously inspired by Johnston County, just east of Raleigh where Maron grew up.

After a few years living in Brooklyn, where her husband Joe grew up, she brought him home where they settled on part of her family’s former tobacco farm.

People sometimes ask me what is the best book to learn about North Carolina.

If the questioners like murder mysteries, I tell them to try one of the books in Maron’s Judge Knott series. Knott is a smart country woman lawyer who became a state district court judge in a typical North Carolina rural community.

Deborah Knott is smart and good, but not perfect. She lives amongst a large farm family led by her father, Kezzie Knott, the former bootlegger, and his 12 children from two marriages, plus spouses and numerous grandchildren.

Having a former bootlegger as Judge Knott’s daddy and a few other mischievous kinfolks whose lives sometimes intersect with the law add spice to Maron’s stories.

Knott’s many friends and work colleagues also enrich Maron’s books. Everybody in Colleton County seems to know everybody else. Rich and poor; Black, white and Hispanic; farmers and townspeople; old and young; good and bad. We meet them dealing with problems of the environment, migrant worker issues, hurricane damage, political shenanigans, real estate development, and other challenges in addition to the murder mysteries that move every book along.

Maron used Judge Knott not only to solve crimes, but also to make her readers aware of social issues and other local government challenges — always giving the viewpoints of society’s underdogs. At the same time she shared the rich and not always pretty family life in a North Carolina small town.

Every now and then, Maron moved the action to other North Carolina scenes. The furniture market. The Seagrove pottery community. Or the mountains and the coast. Along the way, Maron’s readers get a good look at

our state and its people.

Maron brought back many of the same characters in book after book. She makes them so real and compelling that some fans say they read the books just to keep up with the characters in Deborah’s family. Most important in recent books was a deputy sheriff named Dwight Bryant. First, he was just one of many characters. He worked his way up to boyfriend, then fiancée, and then husband. Maron stretched out that courtship over several books, reminding this reader of the courtship of Father Tim and Cynthia in the Mitford series of books written by another popular North Carolina author, Jan Karon.

Maron’s cousin and neighbor, former state poet laureate Shelby Stephenson, responded in poetry to my request for his thoughts about Margaret and her beloved husband Joe, a great artist who became a popular fixture on his wife’s family’s farmland.

Stephenson wrote, “And... Margaret...Brown...Maron. You know...Joe...Is a fine artist, painter, mainly, ...From...Brooklyn. What visits...Just to listen.”

Like Shelby Stephenson, we will remember Margaret Maron and promise her we will not forget to “Judge Knott.”

D.G. Martin hosts “North Carolina Bookwatch,” at 11 a.m. Sundays and 5 p.m. Tuesdays on UNC-TV. The program also airs on the North Carolina Channel at 8 p.m. Tuesdays and other times.

Here’s what you need to know about getting vaccinated in Chatham

BY VICTORIA JOHNSON
News + Record Staff

Editor’s note: As more COVID-19 vaccine doses become available and other information about access changes, it’s hard to stay current. The News + Record is offering this guide. It’ll be updated online as new information becomes available.

Since mid-December, five COVID-19 vaccine providers have emerged in Chatham County. Within the county, Chatham residents can get vaccinated with UNC Health’s Chatham clinic, the county’s public health department, Piedmont Health Services, Siler City Pharmacy and Walgreens.

Most Chatham providers receive the Moderna vaccine, as of Tuesday. As per state guidelines, all providers are administering vaccines to frontline health care workers, adults aged 65 and older as well as school personnel and day-care workers. Gov. Roy Cooper also announced Tuesday that all frontline essential workers, including grocery store workers, manufacturing employees and emergency personnel, will be eligible to get vaccinated Wednesday.

The News + Record spoke with representatives from all five about the vaccine scheduling process and appointments. Here’s what you can expect from each provider.

UNC Health’s Chatham Vaccination Clinic

UNC Health emerged as the county’s first vaccine provider in mid-December, when vaccines first became available. Since then, UNC’s Chatham clinic, located behind Chatham Hospital, has administered more than 6,250 vaccinations. According to Chief Medical Officer Andrew Hannapel, the UNC Chatham clinic has been averaging about between 200 to 300 vaccinations per day, Mondays through Fridays, plus an additional 400 first doses on Saturdays when allotment allows. Combined first and second doses, Hannapel said the clinic has been vaccinating between 1,200 and 1,700 people per week.

“These numbers fluctuate dependent upon vaccine allocation,” he added.

To get vaccinated at UNC’s Chatham clinic, you have three options: call 984-215-5485, schedule online via yourshot.health or schedule through your My UNC Chart account.

“If they have access to online, and then if they have the ability and know-how to do that, it’s much more efficient,” Hannapel said. “You can do it without talking to someone.”

To schedule online, visit yourshot.health, click on “Get Vaccinated” in the top right-hand corner and scroll down until you see “Schedule Your Appointment Online.” If any appointments are available, you will first need to answer several screening questions to verify your eligibility. These questions will also determine whether you have any COVID-19 symptoms and ensure you haven’t had a previous COVID-19 vaccine.

After answering these questions, you’ll attest that you’re eligible; from there, the website will take you to the available appointments, each divided by location.

“One of the other things that UNC is trying to do is if there are slots available at the Friday Center ... if you’re closer to there, is to get you over there,” Hannapel said, adding, “Now, if you say, ‘Siler City,’ they will get you into Siler City if there’s an available appointment. If they don’t have an appointment that’s available there, that’s when they try to look for other places.”

UNC Health doesn’t offer a waitlist, though Hannapel said that’s a possibility he’d like to explore. To boost your chances of snagging appointments, the UNC Health website advises that you check for appointments “mid-to-late afternoon” during the work week since that’s when they expect to release open appointments to the public.

While scheduling your appointment, you will need to provide your name and date of birth. Per the state’s guidelines, the Chatham clinic also asks for gender, race and eth-

nicity, but Hannapel said that’s optional. UNC Health doesn’t require you to present ID or health insurance to get vaccinated, but if you have health insurance, staff ask that you present your card so that they can bill your health insurance for the vaccine administration costs. The vaccine itself doesn’t cost anything.

Staff also ask that you print out the COVID-19 Vaccine Patient Questionnaire Form on UNC Health’s website, fill it out and bring it to the appointment. If you can’t print the form, you can simply fill it out once you arrive at your appointment.

UNC’s Chatham clinic is located in the Medical Office Building, behind Chatham Hospital at 163 Progress Blvd. Just outside, staff still hold drive-thru COVID-19 testing under a tent, while the vaccine clinic is indoors.

“We have parking,” Hannapel said. “We’ve cleared out, and all of our employees are now parking up at the hospital, so we have more parking for people coming through.”

After you arrive for your appointment, staff will have you wait in your car until five minutes before your appointment. Once that five-minute mark arrives, Hannapel said you’ll then “queue up.” Staff register you in the UNC Health system as well as the state’s coronavirus management system, or the CVMS, “so that (you) get recorded and (you) get on track for a ... second dose.” After that, you’ll get your shot.

“Then we have them wait, and we have physically distanced, six feet apart, both in the hallway as well as in our conference room, where they sit,” Hannapel added. “They can be observed for 15 minutes, and then they leave.”

During your appointment, staff will also schedule your second-dose appointment for four weeks later. For your second appointment, you will need to bring the slip of paper that recorded your first shot. You can’t receive your second dose with different providers or in different locations, Hannapel said.

“We say no because it’s too hard,” he added. “Clinics can go into the CVMS and see that you received it four weeks ago and therefore you are eligible to receive it, but what happens is there might not be a dose held for you.”

Generally, you shouldn’t wait long for your appointment, Hannapel said, unless you arrive early.

“If your appointment is at 1:15, you’re getting your vaccination at 1:15 and then (after) 15 minutes of observation, you’re out of there by 1:30,” he said. “I mean it’s a maximum (of) 30 minutes, but it doesn’t take that long.”

UNC’s Chatham clinic, he added, isn’t wasting any doses; since Moderna vials have 10 doses in a vial, staff make sure that they have 10 people there “ready” before opening the last vial.

“So at this point, we have not had to waste nor have we had to go outside the appropriate phase to find somebody to give that dose to,” he said. “Very rarely did we need one or two more people, and we can find them within our healthcare workers that haven’t been vaccinated yet who are now considering to be vaccinated.”

The Chatham County Public Health Department

The Chatham County Public Health Department began vaccinating residents in early January and as of Monday has administered over 4,700 doses. Starting last week, they’ve begun to receive about 600 first doses from the state.

To schedule a vaccination appointment, you can call the CCPHD’s COVID info line call center at 919-545-8323 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Online, you can fill out the health department’s Vaccine Information Tool, which is available in English and Spanish at www.chathamnc.org/vaccinetoool.

You will be asked to provide your name, date of birth, contact information and type of employment, which helps identify your priority group, according to Public Health Director Mike Zelek. You don’t have to fill in all the informa-

tion the tool asks you.

“It is helpful that we have complete information, as this is used to determine eligibility and the information is required by NC DHHS during the vaccination process,” Zelek said, “so it speeds up the registration process.”

Registering online via the vaccine tool, Zelek said, is the most efficient way to register. Once you complete the form, you will be entered into the department’s database — the waitlist — under your priority group. To boost your chances of getting vaccinated quickly, Zelek said, you should register with multiple vaccine providers, both inside and outside the county.

Once you’re on the health department’s waitlist, staff will reach out to you via email or robocall once appointments become available.

“We typically reach out by email or robocall to more individuals on the list than there are appointments available when we are scheduling an event, and then schedule on a first-come, first-served basis,” Zelek said. “For example, the call will inform the individual that appointments are available on a certain date and to call the scheduling line to make an appointment (similar approach by email using an online scheduling platform).”

The health department holds drive-thru clinics, so once you arrive, you won’t need to leave your car. Staff will verify your appointment and give you a form to complete for the state’s CVMS system. After reviewing your information, they’ll administer the shot once you consent to receiving it.

At the end, you’ll receive a CDC vaccination card with your return appointment four weeks later, Zelek said. Before driving off, you’ll need to wait for 15 to 30 minutes in your car in case you have any allergic reaction.

“For CCPHD (Moderna vaccine), the (second) appointment will typically be the same time, same place, four weeks later,” Zelek said. “Because doses come in ten-dose vials, it is important that individuals show up for their second doses at the scheduled time, as we cannot accommodate rescheduling. Once we open the vial, we must use all doses within six hours.”

Piedmont Health Services

Piedmont Health Services has three Chatham clinics: the Siler City Community Health Center, the Moncure Community Health Center and the Piedmont Health SeniorCare center in Pittsboro. All three are administering Moderna vaccines to eligible residents.

Piedmont began vaccinating people in January, and according to CEO Brian Toomey, its vaccine supplies vary every week. He told the News + Record last Wednesday that Piedmont had been vaccinating between 1,300 and 1,500 people per week across all locations. Last Saturday, staff administered over 650 doses of vaccine in Burlington.

To schedule an appointment with Piedmont Health Services, you can go online to Piedmont Health’s website at piedmonthealth.org. There, you’ll find a red button labeled “COVID Testing and Vaccine Info.” Once you click on that, you’ll find a section for new patients and a link to the form you need to fill out. Existing patients only need to call their medical centers to schedule appointments.

According to spokesperson Debra Markley, Piedmont asks that new patients don’t call to schedule vaccine appointments. “People will call and they’ll find out it’s not answered as quickly as they want to because we’re getting approximately 3,000 calls a day,” Toomey added. “There can be a phone number, but people should understand that that’s probably going to be the least likely connection.”

Piedmont’s online form will ask you for your name, date of birth, cell phone number and the site in which you prefer to be vaccinated. Once you submit this form, you’ll get onto Piedmont’s waitlist.

“Those lists are really used,” Markley said. “Those lists are printed off and appointments are used. It’s not like you go into a black hole and you’re never seen, your name is never

called.”

After you get on Piedmont’s waitlist, staff will contact you once appointments become available and if you’re eligible. Last Wednesday, Toomey told the News + Record that Piedmont had vaccinated most people on its waiting list in Groups 1 and 2, and would be moving on to school personnel and daycare workers (Group 3).

“We’re actually working directly with the school systems,” he said, “so we’re coordinating with them to make sure that they’re putting together their lists of their staff, so that we could do it in an organized way.”

Once you’ve got your appointment with Piedmont scheduled, he said, you’ll drive up to your designated site wearing your mask. If the weather allows, Piedmont holds most vaccination clinics outside. You should arrive with some form of ID, he added, though it’s not required, and bring your health insurance card if you have it.

“If you have it, we will bill your health insurance,” he said. “If you don’t have insurance, you’re not gonna pay. Either your insurance is going to pay or the state will give us a fee to pay, but you personally will not pay.”

It helps, he added, to have your CVMS documentation already filled out as well.

Once you arrive, staff will approach your window and verify your appointment information. Then they’ll go through several screening questions; some questions will seek to verify your eligibility, make sure you have no COVID symptoms and ask whether you’ve already received a COVID vaccine.

“(Staff will) make sure they have the right documents in place, you know, your CVMS stuff,” he said. “If we haven’t entered it for you already, we will spend time entering it then. That’s why it saves a lot of time if it’s already been entered.”

After that’s taken care of, you’ll go through and get your shot. Afterward, you’ll pull over and wait in a designated area for 15 to 30 minutes to ensure you don’t have an allergic reaction.

“And then you’re on your way,” Toomey said. “You’ll be given a card that says, ‘Dose 1’ and/or ‘Dose 2.’ And if it’s Dose 1, you’ll leave with an appointment for Dose 2 (at the same place).”

Toomey estimated that appointments take between 30 to 60 minutes on average, but everything depends on how prepared you and other patients are. If you and patients in front of you have your documentation done ahead of time, he said, the wait shouldn’t be long. “If we have to enter a lot of stuff for (people) at the time, that’s going to add 10 minutes for each person,” he said, adding, “It’s not new information nobody knows they need. It’s information. Get it done, and everything will be faster, smoother and better.”

Siler City Pharmacy

Siler City Pharmacy is Chatham County’s newest vaccine provider. Last week, it received 100 first doses of Moderna vaccine, a week later than intended thanks to weather delays. According to Pharmacist Manager Angelynn Fox, the pharmacy held its first vaccine clinic last Saturday.

The pharmacy scheduled all of its doses, Fox said, and she’s not sure how many more will be coming their way in the future.

“There’s not a real way to know exactly what I’m going to receive,” she told the News + Record last Friday. “I’m going to get an email literally almost every Thursday that says whether or not I’m going to be receiving doses that have to be administered almost by the next Monday, or Tuesday of, I guess, it’ll be like a week and a half after.”

Though appointments are no longer available, you can still sign up for Siler City Pharmacy’s waitlist online by going to the pharmacy’s website and clicking on a red button labeled, “COVID-19 Vaccine Waitlist.” You’ll then be invited to fill out a form with your name, date of birth and eligibility criteria. The form also asks for demographic information.

“If you look at our website, there’s a red button that says,

‘COVID-19 Testing,’ and right next to it, there’ll be another red button that says, ‘COVID-19 Vaccine Appointments’ when we have appointments that are available,” Fox said. “You have to answer questions pertaining to eligibility, and if you are eligible based on your response to those questions, it will take you to an appointment scheduler that has all of the screening questions included.”

If you don’t have online access, you can call the pharmacy at 919-663-5541. After snagging an appointment with the pharmacy, you would receive an email confirming your appointment time.

“Then they’re just gonna show up to the pharmacy, bring their insurance card and receive a vaccine, hang out with me for 15 minutes, and all of course is going to go well, and they’ll be on their way,” she said. “They receive their the COVID-19 vaccination card that also has their subsequent appointment written on the back of it.”

No ID or health insurance is required, she added; patients won’t pay any fee for the vaccine. Since the pharmacy has Moderna doses, you would get your second shot at the same time and same place four weeks later.

The pharmacy will offer both indoor and drive-thru vaccinations, Fox said, especially for people who can’t go inside. Siler City Pharmacy doesn’t have you fill out the CVMS form; staff will do that for you during your appointment, which may take between 15 to 20 minutes per patient.

Walgreens

Walgreens began administering COVID-19 vaccinations in North Carolina less than a month ago. In early February, North Carolina announced Walgreens as its choice to participate in the Federal Retail Pharmacy Program for COVID-19 Vaccination, a program meant to speed up vaccinations by allotting vaccine doses to select pharmacies across the country.

As a part of the program, Walgreens receives more than 480,000 vaccine doses a week from the federal government across 28 jurisdictions, including North Carolina, according to Walgreens corporate spokesperson Campbell O’Connor.

If you’re eligible, you can schedule a vaccination appointment with Walgreens online at Walgreens.com/Schedule-Vaccine. You could also call 1-800-WALGREENS, which is available in English and Spanish. No walk-in appointments are available.

“The best way for people to schedule an appointment and find locations in their area is to use the scheduler, and customers can also sign up to receive alerts about available vaccine appointments here,” O’Connor said. “At this time, we do not provide a comprehensive list of store locations or individual store allocations.”

In Chatham County, Walgreens has two stores in Siler City and Pittsboro. On Feb. 5, several Walgreens employees in Chatham told the News + Record that the Siler City store, located on U.S Hwy. 64, had been selected to receive doses, but could not confirm whether the Pittsboro store had been as well.

Before you schedule your appointment, Walgreens’ scheduler will provide the current eligibility criteria and require you to attest your eligibility.

“Upon arriving at their vaccine appointment, patients must sign an affidavit confirming they meet their state’s eligibility requirement for the vaccine,” O’Connor added. “Patients also need to show a valid government ID to confirm their identity at the time of their vaccination appointment.”

You’ll also be able to schedule your second-dose appointment with Walgreens the same time you schedule your first.

“In this fluid situation during which vaccine inventory remains limited, our aim is to ensure eligible patients are able to receive vaccinations as soon as possible,” O’Connor said, “and we ask for patience as eligible individuals attempt to schedule appointments.”

Reporter Victoria Johnson can be reached at victoria@chathamnr.com.

OBITUARIES

HELEN CATHERINE GEORGE SILER



Helen Catherine George Siler passed away peacefully on February 22, 2021, in Chapel Hill, North Carolina at the age of 93.

Helen was born in Port-aux-Basques, Newfoundland, Canada, the youngest daughter — out of 10 children — of Arthur Lewis and Leah George. Her father worked for the Newfoundland Railway System (which became the Canadian National). Her summers were spent in a cabin in McDougalls, on the ocean

between Port-aux-Basques and Corner Brook. When she was 15, the family moved to Corner Brook where her father was the Station Agent for the railroad.

Helen graduated in 1949 from the Phillips School of Nursing in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, and worked in pediatrics at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Desiring a warmer climate — and husbands, Helen and two of her closest nursing friends, emigrated to the United States, first to Maryland — working at Baltimore General for two years, and then to Chapel Hill, when the University of North Carolina Hospital opened. Within a year, all three nurses had jobs and husbands. Helen met Robert Siler, a handsome graduate student on the GI bill, at her friends’ “stop and flop.” It was love at first sight, partly because Helen owned a car. They married shortly thereafter and had their three children in the next four years.

Moving around the South — Raleigh, Johnson City, Hickory, Frankfort, Atlanta — for Bob’s jobs for the first seven years, they ended up settling in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area until Bob’s retirement. Helen was involved in the kids’ activities, as well as being a substitute school nurse. Through the years, she took charge of the finances for several investments and rental properties. Helen developed a life-long love of golf, playing with Bob and other couples in travels around the world. Helen began the Junior Golf program at Reston Country Club, where all three of her children played. Helen won the Washington area Women’s Championship. When Bob retired, they moved to Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, where they played golf, traveled and entertained family and friends.

Helen is remembered fondly by all for being a gracious hostess and gourmet cook. She was known for her Black Forest Cake, her oatmeal cookies, and especially her carrot cake. In fact, she usually had a carrot cake in the refrigerator when special visitors arrived. She loved her grandchildren, and always provided craft supplies and spices for them to make their own creations.

After several hurricane evacuations in South Carolina, Helen and Bob returned to Chapel Hill where their love story started, residing first at the Governor’s Club, then at Carolina Meadows.

Helen is survived by her husband of 66 years, Robert W. Siler Jr.; children, Michael Siler (Pam), Peter Siler, and Linda Siler (Ralph); ten grandchildren, Grayson, Micah, Ben, Beth, Amy, Katharine, Matthew, Mary, Alexandra, Julia, and 10 great-grandchildren.

A celebration of life is to be held in the summer.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorial contributions be made to UNC Health Foundation — Pediatrics Department. Checks may be made payable to UNC Health Foundation with Helen George Siler in the memo line. Checks may be mailed to UNC Health Foundation, 123 West Franklin Street, Suite 510, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27516.

MOZELLE GILLILAND FIELDS



Mozelle Gilliland Fields passed away Saturday, February 27, 2021, at Hospice House in Pittsboro after a short illness.

Mozelle was born on September 3, 1929, the sixth child of nine born to T.J. (Budd) and Lila Dixon Gilliland. She graduated from Siler City High School. She met her future husband Grady Fields. Mozelle and Grady were the parents of two sons, Steve Fields, Tony Fields; and one grandchild; Brian Fields.

Mozelle was preceded in death by her husband Grady; son, Tony; daughter-in-law; Renee Gurley Fields; four sisters, Dorothy Marley, Allene Amos, Eunice Moore, Mary Dunn; and brothers, Bill, Howard and Ray Gilliland.

She is survived by her son, Steve Fields; her grandson, Brian Fields; and sister, Shirley Edmisten.

Mozelle moved to Greensboro after graduation and was employed in the bookkeeping department of Sears & Roebuck. She and Grady lived in Siler City, where she was “floor manager” with Sol Enterprises. They raised chickens for several years for Gold Kist Inc. as well as Townsend Farms. Mozelle later helped with the care of her aging mother-in-law, her parents, sisters and brothers. She was a giving person, trying to help others that seemed to be in need and several Christian organizations across the country. She was an industrious lady. She, up until the last few months, did her own work at and around her home. With the help of her son and a good friend and helper, Susan White, she lived a busy, productive life. Most of all, Mozelle would want everyone to know that Jesus Christ was the most important part of her life and as she would say, “I know, that I will meet him at my home-going.” Well today, February 27, 2021, was that home-going. We loved her dearly and will miss her beyond measure, but today is also the day she got to see Grady, Tony and all loved ones who know and accepted Jesus as Savior. With all our love, your family.

Mozelle Laid in Repose on Monday, March 1, 2021, from 1 to 5 p.m. at Smith & Buckner Funeral Home, 230 North Second Ave., Siler City. At other times, the family was at the home of her son, Steve Fields, 3004 U.S. Hwy. 421 S., Siler City, N.C. 27344.

The funeral will be held on Tuesday, March 2, 2021, at 11 a.m. at Oakley Baptist Church, 2300 Siler City-Glendon Road, with Rev. Jackie Franks and Dr. Jeff Johnson officiating. Burial will follow beside her husband in the Oakley Baptist Church cemetery.

Memorials may be made to West Chatham Relay for Life, C/O Ann McDaniel, PO Box 526, Siler City, N.C. 27344; or Alzheimer’s Association, Western Carolina Chapter, 4600 Park Road, Suite 250, Charlotte, N.C. 28209, www.alz.org/northcarolina.

Smith & Buckner is assisting the Fields family.

Online condolences may be made at www.pughfuneral-home.com.

THERESA JULIUS FONTENOT (ALSTON)



Theresa Julius Fontenot (Alston), 72, of Siler City passed away Wednesday, February 24, 2021, at UNC Hillsborough.

Mrs. Fontenot was born in Oakdale, Louisiana, on July 28, 1948, the daughter of Edmond Fontenot and Gladys Gradney. Theresa was a member of St. Julia Catholic Church. She was highly respected in the church and her community. Theresa had an amazing love of her family, especially her grandchildren. She

loved spending time tending to the flowers in her garden, as well as sewing and being an amazing cook. In addition to her parents, Theresa is preceded in death by her daughter, Vanessa Gladys Alston and brother, Joseph Fontenot.

She is survived by her son, Leon Steven Alston Jr. and wife Linda of Siler City; grandchildren, Adrian Alexander Alston, Lawrence Steven Alston (Brianna); sister, Thelma Martin of S.C.; brothers, D.L., Randolph and Alfred Fontenot, all of La., and ex-husband, Leon Steven Alston Sr. of Silk Hope.

Theresa Laid in Repose on Wednesday, March 3, 2021, from 12 to 5 p.m. at Smith & Buckner Funeral Home, 230 North Second Avenue, Siler City, N.C. The funeral mass will be held on Thursday, March 4, 2021, at 10 a.m. at St. Julia Catholic Parish, 210 Harold Hart Road, Siler City, with Friar Julio Martinez officiating. Burial will follow in Chatham Memorial Park.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the West Chatham Food Pantry, PO Box 254, 2535 Old US Hwy 421 N., Siler City, NC 27344.

Smith & Buckner is assisting the Alston family.

Online condolences may be made at www.pughfuneral-home.com.

GLENDA FERRELL JOHNSON



Glenda Ferrell Johnson, 71, of Siler City passed away on Saturday, February 27, 2021, at her home in Siler City.

Mrs. Johnson was born in Durham on September 11, 1949, the daughter of Carl Glenn and the late Etelka Frances Harris Ferrell. In addition to her parents, Glenda is preceded in death by her husband, Gary Lane Johnson; brother, Carl Glenn Ferrell, II; grandson, Hayden Blalock-Clews; and stepsons, Dean and Shannon

Johnson.

She is survived by her daughters, Michelle B. Mace and husband Scott of Siler City, Maura Blalock-Merurio and husband Michael of Wilmington; stepson, Derek Johnson of Randleman; sisters, Teresa Shearer of Santee, CA, Jane Tipsett and husband Brad of Rougemont, N.C.; brothers, David Ferrell and wife Brenda of Franklinton, Mark Ferrell and wife Louise of Pineville, N.C.; grandchildren, Christopher Carroll, Kimberly Wilson, Pandora Clews, Gavin Blalock, Asher Merurio; great grandchildren, Layla, Nevaeh, Kai and Aurora.

A memorial service will be held at a later date.

Smith & Buckner is assisting the Johnson family.

Online condolences may be made at www.pughfuneral-home.com.

JERRY LEE ‘PETE’ PERRY



Jerry Lee “Pete” Perry, 72, of Siler City passed away on Sunday, February 28, 2021, at UNC Hospice Home, Pittsboro.

Mr. Perry was born in Chatham County on October 11, 1948, the son of W. C. and Hazel Pickard Perry.

Pete was a member of Mt. Vernon United Methodist Church. He loved to play pool and enjoyed rounds of golf. You could often find him outside working in his yard. He retired from Brookwood Farms after 35 years. Pete is preceded in death by his parents.

He is survived by his wife of 42 years, Pat Collins Perry of Siler City; son, Joe Perry of Apex; brothers, Charles M. Perry and wife Sue of Bear Creek, William Earl Perry and wife Nancy of Siler City; and sister; Betty P. Price of Siler City; grandchildren, Matthew Drake and wife Allison, Emily Drake Cross and husband Ryan; nephews, Clint, Clark, Jackie and Chris Perry, Kenneth Ray and James Earl Price.

Pete will Lie in Repose on Friday, March 5, 2021, from 1 to 5 p.m. at Smith & Buckner Funeral Home, 230 North Second Ave., Siler City. A graveside service will be held at 2 p.m. on Saturday, March 6, 2021 at Mt. Vernon United Methodist Church Cemetery, 3631 Mt. Vernon Hickory Mountain Rd., Siler City with Rev. Jason Dickerson officiating.

Memorials may be made to the Alzheimer’s Association, Western Carolina Chapter, 4600 Park Rd., Suite 250, Charlotte, N.C. 28209, www.alz.org/northcarolina.

Smith & Buckner is assisting the Perry family.

MINNIE REGINA MINTER

Minnie Regina Minter, 60, of Sanford passed away on Sunday, February 28, 2021, at Duke University Hospital in Durham.

Services entrusted to Knotts Funeral Home.

SAMMY LEE CHATMAN

Sammy Chatman, 64, passed away Monday, February 22, 2021, at Central Carolina Hospital in Sanford.

Services entrusted to Knotts Funeral Home.

VIRGINIA (PUGH) DEGRAFFENREIDT

Mrs. Virginia Pugh Degraffenreidt, 88, of Siler City, passed away Wednesday, February 24, 2021, at UNC Hospitals in Chapel Hill.

Services entrusted to Knotts Funeral Home, Sanford.

GARFIELD MORRISON

Mr. Garfield Morrison, 93, of Sanford passed away on February 26, 2021 at his residence.

Services entrusted to Knotts Funeral Home.

HARMON COCHRANE

Harmon Cochrane, 66, of Sanford, passed away on Saturday, February 27, 2021, at First Health Moore Regional Hospital in Pinehurst.

Services entrusted to Knotts Funeral Home.

EDWARD ‘DICKEY’ LEVON HARRIS

Edward “Dickey” Levon Harris, 69, of Siler City, passed away on Sunday, February 28, 2021, at his home.

Services entrusted to Knotts Funeral Home.

JUANITA LAMM CRISSMAN

Juanita Lamm Crissman, 89, of Sanford, passed away at her home on Wednesday, February 24, 2021.

The funeral was held at 1 p.m. on Friday, February 26, 2021, at Swann Station Baptist Church with Rev. Russell Blackmon officiating. Burial followed in Cameron Grove Cemetery.

Mrs. Crissman was born in Lee County on June 11, 1931, to the late Nathaniel Lee Lamm and Leatha Godwin Lamm. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband of 62 years, “J.R.” John Robert Crissman. She was a member of Swann Station Baptist Church where she served as choir director. She was retired from GKN.

Juanita is survived by her son, John Robert Crissman Jr. of Sanford; brother, Wallie C. Lamm of Sanford; three grandchildren, one great-grandchild.

Condolences may be made at www.bridgescameronfuneral-home.com.

MARVIN WILEY HART

Marvin Wiley Hart, 88, of Goldston, passed away on Friday, February 26, 2021, at Coventry House of Siler City.

A graveside service was held at 2 p.m. on Tuesday, March 2, 2021, at Meroney United Methodist Church with Rev. Jim Whittaker officiating.

Mr. Hart was born in Chatham County on January 21, 1933, the son of William Donnie and Pauline Bright Hart. He was an Army Veteran who served during the Korean Conflict. He was a member of the Meroney U.M.C. Marvin was a past President of the Goldston Lions Club and was awarded the Jack Strickland Award. He retired from Collins & Aikman after 46 years of service, then spent his days as a poultry farmer. In addition to his parents, Marvin is preceded in death by his son, Duane Hart, brother, Kirby L. Hart and great granddaughter, Chloe Stevenson.

He is survived by his wife of 68 years, Shirley Brafford Hart; daughter, Phyllis Hart Pettit of Siler City; son, Gary Hart of Goldston; seven grandchildren, six great grandchildren; and sister, Ida H. Smart of Gibsonville.

Memorials may be made to the Goldston Lions Club, P.O. Box 455, Goldston, NC 27252 or the Meroney Church Cemetery Fund, 10568 NC Hwy 902, Bear Creek, NC 27207.

Online condolences may be made at www.pughfuneral-home.com.

RAYMOND HERBERT BRADY

Raymond Herbert Brady, 76, of Bennett, died Friday, February 26, 2021, at his son’s home.

At Mr. Brady’s request, services will be private.

Raymond was born in Randolph County, in 1944, son of the late Floyd Fields Brady and Dorothy Hammer Brady. He worked as a contractor in residential construction most of his life. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by all his siblings.

He is survived by his son, Raymond Mark Brady of Bennett; and two grandchildren.

It is requested that donations be made to Pleasant Grove Christian Church Cemetery Fund, 5946 Pleasant Grove Church Rd., Bennett, N.C. 27208, or a charity of one’s choice.

Condolences may be offered online at www.joycebrady-chapel.com.

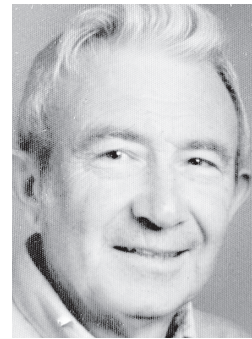
See **OBITUARIES**, page A8



OBITUARIES

Continued from page A8

ALLEUS HUGH STONE



Alleus Hugh Stone, age 91, of Chapel Hill, died Tuesday, February 23, 2021, at home.

Hugh was born in Chatham County, North Carolina on February 18, 1930, to the late Garland Stone and Mary Adams Stone. He was also preceded in death by one son, Gary Stone; one brother, Herman Stone; and two half-brothers, Wilson Wheeler and Warren Wheeler. Hugh graduated from Bells High School in 1948. Upon graduating high school, he attended UNC for two years and was in the ROTC. Hugh was the last living member of his high school graduating class of 1948.

Surviving relatives include his wife, Helen Bunker Stone of Chapel Hill; two sons, Alan Stone and wife Candice of Chapel Hill, Marlon Stone and wife Andrea of Concord, N.C.; and six grandchildren, Brittany Stone, Dalton Stone, Rodney Stone, Dylan Stone, Briana Stone, and Lauren Stone.

A graveside service was held Saturday, February 27, 2021, at 2 p.m. at Merritt's Chapel UMC with Rev. Ian Bailey and Rev. Ray Gooch presiding.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks for memorial contributions to be made in Hugh's memory to Merritt's Chapel UMC, 1090 Farrington Point Road, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27517.

Condolences may be made at www.donaldsonfunerals.com.

Donaldson Funeral Home & Crematory is honored to serve the Stone family.

KATHLEEN MADDOX DENNIS MCWATERS

Kathleen Maddox Dennis McWaters, 89, of Broadway, died Saturday, February 27, 2021, at her home.

Funeral services were held at 2 p.m. Tuesday, March 2, 2021, at Juniper Springs Baptist Church with Rev. Brad Marona officiating. Burial followed in the church Cemetery.

She was born in Harnett County, daughter of the late William J. and Nina Womack Maddox. She was preceded in death by her parents, brother, Watson Maddox, sister, Elizabeth Maddox McWaters, and her husband, Henry McWaters. Kathleen was a member of Juniper Springs Baptist Church.

Surviving are her daughters, Wanda Collins of Broadway, Deborah Messer of Cameron; son, Ronnie Dennis of High

Point; step-daughters, Sandra Castonguay of Broadway, and Vicky Castonguay of Sanford; sister, Sally Maddox Williams of Sanford; brother, Frank Maddox of Sanford; three grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren, five step-grandchildren, ten step-great grandchildren and two step-great-great-grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, the family request memorials may be made to Amedisys Hospice, 220 New Fidelity Ct., Garner, NC 27529.

Online condolences can be made at www.smithfuneral-homebroadway.com.

JAMES ANTHONY WEST

James Anthony West, 70, of Sanford, passed away on Wednesday, February 17, 2021, at his residence.

Funeral services was held Thursday, February 25, 2021, at

2 p.m. at Knotts Funeral Home. Burial followed in Minter Cemetery.

THOMAS 'TOMMY' LEWIS POINDEXTER

Thomas "Tommy" Lewis Poindexter, 82, of the Deep River Community, died Friday, February 26, 2021, at Transitions Life Care and Hospice Home in Raleigh.

A graveside service was held at 2 p.m. at Jones Chapel on Tuesday, March 2, 2021, with Rev. Mike Horton presiding. Burial followed in the church cemetery.

He was born in Lee County on March 24, 1938, to the late Thomas Eugene and Maggie Buchanan Poindexter. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his wife, Bertie Marie Riddle Poindexter; sisters, Virginia Crook and Alice Gainey. Tommy worked in the roofing business.

Survivors include his sons, Jeff Poindexter of Sanford, Randy Poindexter of Apex; brother, Philip Poindexter of Sanford; sister, Ruby Creed of Sanford; five grandchildren, and one step-grandchild.

In lieu of flowers, make donations to Transitions Life Care, 250 Hospice Circle, Raleigh, NC 27607.

Condolences may be made at www.bridgescameronfuneral-home.com.

ROSE MARY TIGAR

Rose Mary Tigar, 70, of Lillington, passed away at home on Saturday, February 27, 2021.

No services will be held at this time.

She was born on April 22, 1950, in New Jersey, daughter of the late Frank and Gladys Vindigni. She was preceded in death by her parents, and sister Theresa Whitehead.

Surviving is her husband, Brent Tigar of the home; children, Brent Tigar of Myrtle Beach, S.C., Jamie Tigar of Newburgh, N.Y. and Kristi Tigar of Fayetteville; sisters, Mary Fitzsimmons and Marisa Halm; brothers, Mario Giorgianni, Joe Vindigni and Kenneth Vindigni;

and five grandchildren.

Online condolences may be made at www.smithfuneral-homebroadway.com.

Arrangements are by the Smith Funeral Home of Broadway.

DONALD RAY DONATHAN

Donald Ray Donathan, 63, of Carthage, died Sunday, February 28, 2021, at UNC Hospital, Chapel Hill.

A graveside service will be held at 1 p.m. at White Hill Presbyterian Church Cemetery on Thursday, March 4, 2021, with Rev. Robert Thomas presiding.

He was born in Lee County, on November 11, 1957, to Paul Ray and Peggy Key Donathan. Donald worked on restoring old cars.

In addition to his parents, he is survived by his wife, Mary Ann Lemons Donathan of the home; a son, Donald Ray Donathan Jr. of Carthage; daughters, Patricia White of Virginia Beach, Stacy Donathan and Paula Donathan, both of Carthage; brothers, Tony Donathan and Timothy Paul Donathan of Carthage; sister, Glenda Nehls of Sanford; and eight grandchildren.

Arrangements are by Bridges-Cameron Funeral Home.

Condolences may be made at www.bridgescameronfuneral-home.com.

PAMELA ELLIOTT PATTON

Pamela Elliott Patton, 67, of Sanford, passed away on Saturday, February 27, 2021, at her home.

The family will receive friends on Thursday, March 4, 2021, from 1 to 3 p.m. at Bridges-Cameron Funeral Home. A funeral service will follow in the chapel at 3 p.m.

She was born in Lee County on July 20, 1953, to the late Jack and Eunice Womack Collins. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by siblings, Edna Dickens, Grace Bottema, Debbie Wofford, Pete Collins and Jack Collins Jr. Pam was retired from Magnetti Marelli.

Pam is survived by her sons, Brian Patton, Barry Patton, and Brandon Patton, all of Sanford and Jeremy Patton of Carthage; daughter, Rhonda Ayers of Sanford; siblings, Margie Hallman of Gulf, Joannie Collins and Roger Collins, both of Sanford, Cathy Foley of Spring Lake and Dixie Davis of Lillington; 16 grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

Arrangements are by Bridges-Cameron Funeral Home.

Condolences may be made at www.bridgescameronfuneral-home.com.

WILLIE MAE (PATTISALL) WILLIAMS

Mrs. Willie Mae (Pattisall) Williams, 90, of Pittsboro passed away on Friday, February 26, 2021.

Funeral service will be held at 12 noon on Thursday, March 4, 2021, at Knotts Funeral Home. Burial followed at Pittsboro Community Cemetery.

A native of Chatham County, she was a member of Staunton Memorial C.M.E. Church.

Survivors include her husband, Russell Williams of the home; a daughter, Willie Ann Pattisall of Pittsboro; three grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

CHARLES ANTHONY MCADEN

Charles Anthony McAden, 65, of Sanford passed away on Sturday, February 20, 2021, at Central Carolina Hospital.

The funeral service was held at 3 p.m. Saturday, February 27, 2021, at the First Calvary Baptist Church.

RODNEY LAVAUGHN (HEAVY) MARSH

Rodney Lavaughn Marsh, 52 of Pittsboro, passed away on Tuesday, February 23, 2021, at UNC Hospital in Chapel Hill.

A funeral service was held at 12:30 p.m. on Saturday, February 27, 2021, at Old Cooper Brothers General Store. Burial followed in Pittsboro Community Cemetery.

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No Plan A for Chatham County Schools’ K-5 students — for now

BY HANNAH MCCLELLAN
News + Record Staff

PITTSBORO — The Chatham County Schools Board of Education voted 3-2 against phasing in Plan A for EC and K-5 students during a specially called meeting on Feb. 23. Board members Jane Allen Wilson, Del Turner and Melissa Hlavac dissented, with David Hamm and Gary Leonard voting in favor of the motion.

Proposed by district administration and presented to the board at the Feb. 23 meeting, the potential plan suggested bringing Pre-K through 3rd grade back under Plan A March 22, and 4th-5th graders on March 29. The plan also proposed bringing EC and 504 students back under Plan A within the 15-calendar-window required by Senate Bill 37.

That bill was passed by the General Assembly two weeks ago and would require school systems to offer Plan A to special needs students and Plan A or Plan B to all other students. Ultimately, Gov. Roy Cooper vetoed the bill, writing in a statement on Monday that he’d continue working with legislators to “make sure all of our children and educators are in the classroom, in person and safe.” Previously, he’d criticized the bill for not following NCDHHS and CDC guidelines on social distancing, and for removing authority from state and local officials in cases of emergencies.

“I’m hesitant to go to Plan A at this time,” Wilson said at the meeting last Tuesday, “but it seems like we’re close. And if we get there, I think the administration has done a lot to make

sure we’re ready.”

She added she felt it made sense to honor the preference of teachers to remain in Plan B, given that they haven’t had the same level of choice as families have up to this point — citing February survey data presented by the district Tuesday which showed many teachers stated a preference for remaining in Plan B. That survey collected responses from 773 of the systems approximately 1,300 staff members.

Last Tuesday’s meeting was called at the board’s regular Feb. 8 meeting, following Gov. Roy Cooper “strongly urging” in-person instruction — recommending Plan A for elementary schools and Plan B for middle and high schools. According to state health guidance, the difference between the two plans is the requirement of six feet of social distancing under Plan B.

At the board’s Feb. 8 meeting, several members expressed concern with six feet of social distancing not being mandated under Plan A. At Tuesday’s meeting, the board grappled with what its members characterized as conflicting messaging from official health sources and their guidance on the importance of distancing.

Prior to the board’s Feb. 23 discussion on Plan A, Mike Smith with the ABC Science Collaborative and Chatham County Public Health Director Mike Zelek gave brief updates — sharing slightly conflicting messages regarding social distancing. While six feet of social distance is ideal, Smith said it’s not required to provide in-person instruction safely.

“There’s really no reason to think Plan A is less safe than Plan B,” he said, adding that the ABC Science Collaborative’s data from districts following Plan A did not show higher rates of transmission than among schools following Plan B.

Smith cited the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s Feb. 12 guidance as support for not mandating six feet distancing. That CDC guidance says schools offering in-person learning should prioritize two mitigation strategies: universal masking and “physical distancing (at least six feet) ... maximized to the greatest extent possible.”

“Dr. Smith and I may echo a different message here, but that’s fine,” Zelek began his presentation, adding that he was concerned about schools moving forward with a plan that doesn’t require six feet of distancing. “The messaging has been pretty consistent,” he said, in stating that “physical distancing is a pretty key component” in schools and beyond.

The district’s presentation regarding Plan A considerations said that “it will be possible to maintain a minimum of 4 feet of social distancing in all K-5 classrooms,” though many classrooms could maintain six feet. Presenting findings on transportation requirements and teacher workloads, the district said it felt prepared to open safely under Plan A.

CCS also reached out to district principals before the meeting, who conveyed concerns with physical spacing, contact tracing challenges, transitions between Virtual Academy and face-to-face

instruction and increased staff stress under Plan A. Assistant Supt. of Academic Services & Instructional Support Amanda Hartness said while workloads would often decrease for teachers under Plan A, the plan would still require more planning than normal.

Hartness advised the board to continue to keep the mid-week planning day in place for teachers under either plan, citing survey results which showed 92% of respondents said they’d prefer a 4-day in-person week with an at-home planning day under Plan A. Just 8% said they’d prefer a 5-day in-person week.

“I think right now the biggest way we can support our teachers is to continue to have that day for planning,” Hartness told the board.

In a response to a survey question about what to “include or take away to improve (CCS) COVID-19 safety protocols,” staff said they wanted to maintain six feet of distance, increase protocol enforcement and requested better hand

sanitizer and more masks, gloves and face shields.

Following a brief period of questions and discussion, Chairperson Gary Leonard made a motion to accept the district’s plan as presented; Hamm seconded the motion.

After Turner and Wilson expressed discomfort in moving to Plan A at this point, Hlavac agreed, adding that she wouldn’t feel comfortable making decisions about a plan she would feel uncomfortable making for her own children.

“I don’t want us to get too ahead of ourselves,” she said.

After the motion failed 3-2, Leonard called for a motion to adjourn. There

was no discussion on when another meeting about Plan A will take place, but the board’s next regular meeting is March 8. On social media, several CCS parents in support of moving to Plan A have shared posts encouraging others to “come show the BOE that our kids need School not Screens” at the March 8 meeting, calling on parents to arrive early at the meeting at Horton Middle School.

This story was originally posted on chathamnewsrecord.com and has been updated.

Reporter Hannah McClellan can be reached at hannah@chathamnr.com or on Twitter at @HannerMcClellan.

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Gov. Cooper ends N.C. curfew, moves up vaccine schedule

BY HANNAH MCCLELLAN
News + Record Staff

Citing the “significant and sustained improvements” of N.C. COVID-19 metrics, Gov. Roy Cooper announced at a news conference last Wednesday he’d lift the statewide modified stay-at-home 10 p.m. curfew order and ease several other restrictions, effective 5 p.m. last Friday.

Those restrictions include the expansion for many businesses to operate at 50% capacity, the opening of bars and taverns and increased mass gathering limits to 25 indoors and 50 outdoors.

“Easing these restrictions will only work if we keep protecting ourselves and others from this deadly virus,” Cooper said. “The order and our own common sense say that health and safety protocols must remain in place.”

At a press conference this Tuesday, Cooper announced that frontline essential workers would be eligible for vaccinations beginning Wednesday, March 3. This group includes first responders and emergency responders, grocery store workers, manufacturing personnel, government workers and clergy. He’d previously said these essential workers would be eligible March 10, when he said school staff would be eligible Feb. 24. On Tuesday, Cooper said Group 4 vaccinations would be moved up as well to March 24 — for people who have a medical condition that puts them at a higher risk or who live in “certain congregate settings.”

The expedited timeline follows an expected increase in state vaccine supply, Cooper said, as well as the approval of the Johnson & Johnson one-shot vaccine. “Our essential frontline workers have remained on the job throughout this pandemic and I am grateful for their work,” he said Tuesday.

At last week’s presser, Cooper said the statewide mask mandate will remain in place, but any businesses are now able to open at 50% capacity including gyms, museums, aquariums, barbers, pools, outdoor amusement parks, restaurants, breweries and wineries and more. The time for ending on-site service of alcohol moved to 11 p.m. — that time was previously 9 p.m.

Some businesses limited to operating outdoors at 30% capacity will stay at that capacity, last week’s order said, but will no longer have a 100-person cap. Removing the 100-person cap will allow higher attendance in places such as sports fields and venues, stadiums, outdoor bars, outdoor amusement parks and more. Bars and taverns will open at

30%, the first indoor opening since the beginning of the pandemic.

“There’s been a positive effect, and I think people deserve a pat on the back,” Cooper said in response to a media question about compliance with state protocol and restrictions.

The executive order is set to expire at 5 p.m. on March 26 unless the governor acts to extend it.

Cooper also spoke about schools at last week’s press conference, highlighting that last Wednesday was the first day state educators were able to get vaccinated. He spoke about the return to in-person K-12 instruction, citing his Feb. 2 recommendation that in-person learning can happen safely when state protocol is followed. Over the next few weeks, 96% of the state’s public schools will offer some form of in-person instruction, he said.

He also addressed Senate Bill 37, passed by the General Assembly last week, which requires school systems to offer Plan A to special needs students and Plan A or Plan B to all other students. At Wednesday’s press conference, he said he’s told legislators he’d sign a bill like Senate Bill 37 if they “fixed it” to require schools to follow DHHS guidance and preserve emergency authority for state and local officials.

“I’ll be glad to sign a bill if they send me one like that,” he said. Cooper vetoed the bill on Friday, and in a statement on Monday said he’d continue to work with legislators to make sure all students and teachers can safely attend in-person school.

As vaccine distribution continues and metrics improve, Cooper said last Wednesday that the state is still encouraging employers to offer remote working whenever possible. Citing the continued short supply of vaccines and new COVID-19 variants, he encouraged North Carolinians to “keep doing the things we know work” — practicing social distancing, washing of hands and wearing masks.

“Today’s action is a show of confidence and trust, but we must remain cautious,” Cooper said last week. “People are losing their loved ones each day. Many of us are weary, but we cannot let the weariness win. Now is the time to put our strength and resilience to work so we can continue to turn the corner.”

This story was originally posted on chathamnewsrecord.com and has been updated.

Reporter Hannah McClellan can be reached at hannah@chathamnr.com or on Twitter at @HannerMcClellan.

PREMIER CROSSWORD/ By Frank A. Longo

ACROSS

1 "Just a moment!"
7 Crusade
14 Changes gears
20 Debonair
21 Spiritedly, in music
22 Bull battler
23 Clinton drains material away by percolation?
25 Celebrity chef Lagasse
26 Deborah of "Separate Tables"
27 Coach Parseghian
28 Competent
30 "Red Book" chairman
31 Presley wears a disguise?
35 Rathbone jumps ship?
38 RSVP encl.
39 Ideologies
40 Kyo — (Darth Vader's grandson)
41 British peer
42 Prefix with angle
43 Liquidly lump
44 Keaton argues back in a debate?

49 Longhorn's gridiron rival
51 Anticipated
53 Downy quilt
54 Locke adds decorations?
57 Carders' demands
60 Nothing more than
61 Work for
62 "ER" roles
63 Up — (cornered)
65 Cobra variety
66 Romero competes in a relay?
70 Ford marks a word for omission?
72 "7 Faces of Dr. —" (Tony Randall film)
73 Matt of "Good Will Hunting"
74 Links org.
75 FBI guy, e.g.
76 Words clarifying a spelling
78 Osaka money
79 Heaney makes people smile?
84 Fiber for hose
86 Kept safe
88 Submit taxes paperlessly

89 Leroux does a ballroom dance?
92 Santa — (desert winds)
95 Zero
96 Engrave
97 Singer Janis
98 Baseball's Felipe or Moises
99 Scottish Celt
100 Thompson works as an usher?
104 Deane goes on a cruise?
106 Bush press secretary
107 Old British gun
108 Alternative to Yahoo
109 Russia's — -Tass
110 One of Janet Jackson's sisters
112 Wigg mends a sweater?
119 Precursor to web forums
120 Tartish brew
121 Peanut butter cup brand
122 Composed
123 Transition zone
between plant communities

124 Will subject
DOWN
1 Ogre of myth
2 "Uh-uh"
3 Scratch (out)
4 Chicken with long, soft plumage
5 Curvy letters
6 Herb of the parsley family
7 Actor Linden
8 Ryan and Tatum of film
9 Fib tellers
10 Family rec facility
11 Infant cry
12 Lunched, e.g.
13 Lovers' flowers, in Spain
14 Superb
15 Native
16 Wrath
17 Physicist Enrico
18 Case hearing
19 Goes it alone
24 "Am not!" comeback
29 Funeral stand
31 These, in Mexico
32 Slowly, musically
33 Winner's hand gesture

34 Tough dude's self-assertion
35 Surpasses
36 Cost of cards
37 Picture book
40 Devastates
43 Actor Depardieu
44 Poet-singers
45 Tweaks text
46 Of the middle eye layer
47 Concise
48 Footfalls
50 Mental flash
52 Part of NOW
55 Matrix
56 Jim Croce's "I Got —"
58 Wine barrel residue
59 Actress Blair
63 "There Is Nothin' Like —"
64 "Daniel Boone" actor
66 Trolley sound
67 Cushy course
68 Stains
69 Winding-line dance
70 "Yipes!"
71 Adequate, to
L'il Abner
74 Argentina's Juan or Eva
77 Lecture jottings
79 Long stories

80 Politico Mo
81 Exodus peak
82 Architect Saarinen
83 Peddles
85 "So far, no"
87 Army group
90 Univ. in Raleigh
91 Fare-well link
93 Condition in outer space
94 Morally strict
98 Actress Quinn
99 Precious red stone
100 Bone of the 103-Down
101 Scratch out
102 Located
103 Foot-leg joint
104 — voice (softly)
105 "— alive!"
108 At — time (prearranged)
111 Words before dare or diet
113 Rocker Ocasek
114 "I believe," to a texter
115 Scot's denial
116 "There — god!"
117 New Year in Vietnam
118 Mi-to-SC dir.

Solution for the puzzle in last week's edition.

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GEEKCHICFASHION

Continued from page A1

pandemic hit in March, she was forced to pivot, focusing on her online presence and using her Instagram account to advertise and sell products with a really personal approach.

As other small businesses struggled to stay afloat during the challenges presented by the pandemic, geekchic-fashion flourished — growing sales by 400 percent last year. As a result of this growth, Weber was able to move into a new studio on Main Street Pittsboro last month, and soon, she'll hire the company's first part-time employee.

"I'm at a point in my business where I'm the bottleneck, right? Like I can only sell as much as I can make, and I can only make as much as I have time to make," Weber said, adding that she didn't feel safe hiring and bringing someone into her former home studio. "Right now it's just me — it's a one-woman shop, Lysandra does everything. I'm really excited about hiring my first employee and being able to do that safely during the pandemic."

Weber's blanket scarves — made from colorful and soft 100% cotton fabric — are extremely popular among customers, along with the slippers she designed this year in an effort to sustainably use the scraps from her blanket scarves to make something new and comfy.

"I'm actually wearing a pair of them right now — I love them," she said with a laugh.

Another new product has been widely popular: her patterned masks. Weber started making masks at the beginning of the pandemic to donate to health facilities, but soon shifted to selling them once the CDC began advising everyone to mask in public. She's made masks featuring Ruth Bader Ginsburg, "Mad-



Staff photo by Peyton Sickles

A rack of the patterns Weber uses to create her geekchic clothing items. In recent months, her most popular products have been her handmade masks and blanket scarf slippers.

am Vice President" Kamala Harris and Georgia politician and activist Stacey Abrams — for children and for adults.

With all the growth of her business, "there have been long nights," Weber said. When she had the huge spike of customers in June, and in the holidays, she said she and her husband set up a shipping statement in his office. Still, managing a growing business while also homeschooling her 5- and 7-year-old children is a "special adventure."

"It was incredibly tricky," she said. "I think time management was the hardest part. Because I am trying to be present for my children ... not only was I trying to run this business that was growing by leaps and bounds, I'm also trying to teach my children at home."

Being unafraid to adjust has been crucial.

"I've made more facemasks than I can count, like so many," she laughed.

"If you'd asked me six years ago, when I started this business, if I thought that's what I would be making, I would've told you no — but being flexible in your business is really important."

So whether it's making unique masks, or "answering a million questions" over Instagram direct messaging, Weber will keep looking for ways to pivot to serve customers and grow her business. And in-between all of that — plus completing the move into her new studio — Weber also hopes to launch some additional collections this year, bringing her sketchbook of ideas to life after months of delay due to the pandemic.

Weber always knew she wanted to own a business. She's been to business school twice and always had high aspirations. In high school, she remembers being told to write her future job down on a name card for a class.

Hers read: "CEO of a major corporation."



Staff photo by Peyton Sickles

Weber's serger machines, which she uses most often, sit on one table with various spools of thread. Her sales went up 400% during the pandemic

"Maybe that corporation will be my own," Weber laughed.

"To be in my own studio now and in the process of hiring my first employee, it feels really amazing," she added. "It's a bizarre time to be doing that, because I do acknowledge that a lot of businesses, they have not survived last year. But I'm incredibly thankful for my customers and for my friends and family who stuck around and have supported my business and kept shopping small so that a lot of small businesses can stay around. And I'm excited about what is to come."

Reporter Hannah McClellan can be reached at hannah@chathamnr.com or on Twitter at @HannerMcClellan.

ELECTIONS

Continued from page A1

process of redrawing districts so that each district has roughly the same number of people," demographer Blake Esseltyn told Siler City's board of commissioners last month. "And in order to do that you need to have accurate numbers about the number of people in

each census block."

There are 62 municipalities statewide with 2021 elections scheduled that organize by districts or wards, according to NCSBE Election Communication Specialist Noah Grant. Of those, 35 — including Siler City and Cary (which has more than 3,000 Chatham voters) — elect town representatives from within each district. The other

27 "use districts or wards but don't elect people by them," Grant said. "They use them for filing purposes."

State law requires that people running for office in towns with districts or wards file for candidacy between July 26 and August 13.

"If they are redistricting," Grant said, "those municipalities must complete the process by July 21," accord-

ing to current statute.

Under normal circumstances, the U.S. Census Bureau would have delivered its latest data by March, affording towns and boards of election enough time to redistrict and revise voter classifications in advance of the July deadlines. Citing "COVID-19-related delays," however, the Census Bureau announced this month that it could not provide states with census results until September — well after 2021 filing should have taken place.

That creates an irreconcilable conundrum for municipal governments.

"We have identified that it is a two-month process for us to complete what's necessary once we receive district information," Bell said in the committee meeting. "... That two-month process is necessary for us to get the right filing done as well as the correct voting districts for voters and the correct ballot styles."

Given the timeline, "we cannot carry out those elections if we do not have the proper districts for them to do the filing in July," Bell added.

County boards of election need time, as well, to analyze redistricted

municipalities in advance of town elections.

"And we just wouldn't have enough," said Chance Mashburn, an elections specialist at the Chatham County Board of Elections.

Many North Carolina towns, such as Pittsboro, do not operate according to districts or wards, but Bell urged the legislators to postpone all 2021 elections to maintain uniformity and avoid voter confusion.

If the General Assembly chooses to delay municipal elections, it's unclear how successive abnormalities will be resolved.

"I'm very concerned about one point," said Rep. Frank Iler (R-Dist. 17) in response to Bell's presentation. Citing the two-year terms that are common for municipal officials, he worried that "we're talking about having a three-year term and a one-year term, or some confusing conglomeration if we push those back."

Bell did not offer recommendations for addressing such concerns in the meeting last Wednesday, but promised to further detail the NCSBE's plan before the General Assembly moves

to enact any changes.

If state legislators do not postpone them, 2021 elections will have to follow current district mapping, according to House Minority Leader Robert Reives II (D-Dist. 54).

"The two options that I've heard of," he told the News + Record, "are either pushing it back a year or to run on the old maps and then draw the districts and run a new election the very next year."

Both solutions have their merit, said Reives, whose district includes Chatham County, and neither seems to have gained more traction on the General Assembly floor than the other.

"I think it just hasn't gotten much attention yet," he said.

Legislators will have to act soon, though, to authorize a solution.

"With the census data not coming in until September, that's too late to make a decision," Reives said. "So, really, in my mind, you have to have a decision in by June or July."

Reporter D. Lars Dolder can be reached at dldolder@chathamnr.com and on Twitter @dldolder.

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FIRST PERSON

Rolling up the sleeves for our families

BY ALIRIO ESTEVEZ
Special to the
News + Record

Editor's note: Alirio Estevez is an ESL teacher at Siler City Elementary School. He received his first dose of the Moderna vaccine last Friday with the Chatham County Public Health Department in Pittsboro.

As he talked, I could picture my father struggling to supply oxygen to his lungs. He could hardly articulate two syllables together. I was worried. My father was trying to let me know he had COVID.

I felt impotent. There was nothing I could do to help him. He lives 2,000 miles away in a city in Colombia. Neither my siblings nor I could travel since every airport in Colombia was closed to the world. And even if I could, what would I do? I have no medical training and my presence would only create more inconveniences.

COVID had become personal. It became even more personal when last December a beloved friend of mine passed away due to this pandemic. My father survived. She did not.

As I was getting ready to get the first dose of the Moderna COVID vaccine last Friday, I thought of my friend and my father. If this marvel of modern science and technology had been available three months ago, she would have taken it and would be here with us and with her students. My father wouldn't have had to suffer alone in his house surrounded just by the TV and newspapers. I felt guilty because I would have the privilege to be inoculated against this deadly virus while they didn't. But also I felt excited because it would mean that normalcy was getting closer, so our students, my students, would go back to our schools every weekday and my own children wouldn't have to worry about my health. It would also give me the opportunity to show the community

how safe COVID vaccines are.

Sadly, misinformation has been prevalent in these pandemic times. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, WhatsApp, among others, have amplified falsehoods and lies that have decreased trust in science. For instance, my mother, who is 67 and had a part of her lung removed two years ago, was reluctant to take any vaccine since her friends and relatives have told her that it was unsafe, that it caused other diseases. Several of my students have told me that their parents will not get the vaccine because nobody knows what's in it. I've heard reports that some people believe that the vaccines will make people infertile. Even in California a group of anti-vaxxers disrupted a vaccination event claiming a number of dubious reasons. These falsehoods can lead to grave consequences in our communities, especially among minorities.

African Americans and Latinos have been disproportionately hurt by COVID-19. A high percentage have been ill, hospitalized and succumbed to this illness due to the

lack of health insurance, low income, high-risk jobs and structural racism. We must do everything we can to reach out to them and provide them with the vaccines that will allow them to go back to work, study and live safely.

As a Latino, I know that our community trusts teachers quite a lot. If they see that we teachers take the shot with confidence, they will feel safe. They will trust the vaccine and science. They will be more willing to receive the vaccine when it is their turn. They will leave their misgivings aside. That is what was on my mind when I took the shot. I wanted to show our families that the vaccines are safe and that they will lead us to a sense of normalcy.

I rolled up my sleeve for my students, for our families and for our community.



Staff photo by Peyton Sickles

Alirio Estevez, 51, receives his first dose of Moderna vaccine in Pittsboro. Denise Jones, the school nurse at Northwood and Chatham School of Science & Engineering, administers the shot.

NEWS BRIEFS

Nominations open for 2021 North Carolina Award

RALEIGH — Governor Roy Cooper is encouraging North Carolinians to nominate individuals for the 2021 North Carolina Award, the highest civilian honor bestowed by the state. The nomination period is open from now through April 15.

“This award is a great opportunity to celebrate the best of North Carolina and the resilient, generous spirit that defines our state,” Gov. Cooper said.

Created by the General Assembly in 1961 and administered by the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, the award recognizes “notable accomplishments by North Carolina citizens” in the fields of literature, science, fine arts and public service.

Award nominations may be submitted by anyone and must include a completed nomination form, cover letter, three letters of support and the nominee’s biography or resume. Additional letters of support and examples of the nominee’s work will also be accepted.

Applications may be submitted online or materials can be sent to the North Carolina Awards Committee, N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, 4601 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, N.C. 27699-4600.

The North Carolina Awards Committee will review the nominations and make its selections this summer. The recipients will be honored later this year. Past award recipients have included some of the country’s most distinguished artists, poets, writers, performers, journalists, scientists and public servants.

Previous awardees include Maya Angelou, Doc Watson, William Friday, Gertrude Elion, Branford Marsalis and other noteworthy North Carolinians.

Information on the award and the online nomination process are available here. To receive forms by mail or e-mail contact Jennifer Fontes at Jennifer.fontes@ncdcr.gov or (919) 814-6756.

Library presents ‘Museum of Bad Art: Tough Times – Having a Bad Day to Dystopian Apocalypse’

PITTSBORO — Residents are invited to join the Chatham Community Library for a virtual program with Michael Frank of the Museum of Bad Art (MOBA) as he presents “Tough Times — Having a Bad Day to Dystopian Apocalypse” from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, March 13. Art is known for helping get people through difficult times. In this presentation, MOBA explores some of the ways that artists react to both small and large, real and imagined, disasters.

Frank, the Curator in Chief of the Museum of Bad Art, is an acolyte who studied under the strict tutelage of the founding Esteemed Curator. Frank now heads the entire department. His appointment was due to his record of contributing more art to MOBA than anyone other than the Esteemed Curator, and because he already had a tuxedo. A professional musician and entertainer with enviable balloon-twisting skills, Frank lives in Boston, Massachusetts.

Individuals interested in participating in the program may contact Chatham Community Library Branch Manager Rita Van Duinen at rita.vanduin@chathamlibraries.org for virtual meeting instructions and link.

This program is free and open to the public and is made possible with the generous support of the Friends of the Chatham Community Library.

— Cn+R staff reports

FESTIVAL

Continued from page A1

attractions included a classic car show and a beer garden.

Town staff anticipated a yet grander event for 2020 — expanding the one-day event into a three-day palooza, scheduled April 30-May 2.

But then came COVID.

Big plans were derailed overnight. The festival would have featured a Ferris wheel, fair rides, a rock wall, rows of food vendors and live music groups. The Embers, featuring Craig Woolard — a feel-good music group listed in the South Carolina Beach Music Hall of Fame — were scheduled to headline the performances.

But statewide coronavirus restrictions prohibited any sort of in-person event, let alone a mass gathering such as the Spring Chicken Festival.

After 2020’s festival was canceled, town department leaders — notably Parks and Recreation Director Jack Clelland — and the Siler City board of commissioners hoped to make up for the lost year with a no-holds-barred “third annual” Spring Chicken Festival in 2021 (though it would more technically be the second biennial festival.)

Well, 2021 has arrived, and the pandemic is still here. So what can you expect of this year’s festival?

Probably a virtual event.

In the board of commissioners’ regular meeting on Monday, Clelland suggested the commissioners consider a remote festival to avoid suspending the tradition another year.

“To adhere to NCDHHS COVID-19 guidelines, mass-gathering man-

dates, and to avoid possible cancellation again this year,” he wrote in a memorandum included in the board’s agenda, “Parks and Recreation staff has explored the opportunity to offer the 2021 festival as a virtual event.”

The program — scheduled for May 1 — would include many of the same features planned for the live festival: musical performances, highlights of downtown Siler City and other entertainment. Instead of three days worth of activity, the program would last about three hours.

“Being able to offer something to the community is very important to us,” Clelland told the News + Record, “being able to engage and to get some eyes on Siler City.”

A virtual event would fall short of ideal, he said, but might offer some unique advantages over in-person gatherings.

“Perhaps we can bring some people in who wouldn’t be able to attend in person,” Clelland said. “So maybe we reach out further in the state or across state lines and some people learn some more about Siler City and might visit us next year for the live event.”

Recording the event in advance would also permit Siler City residents and any interested attendees from around the world to view the program at their leisure, whenever they want.

“It would be something that would be archived on our website, or saved so that people can revisit at another time,” Clelland said. “So maybe you couldn’t catch it that Saturday, but maybe that Sunday you and your family could sit down and watch it or go back and find your favorite parts of it.”

Clelland was careful to emphasize, though, that a virtual event has not

yet been approved. That decision falls to the town’s board of commissioners who could not arrive at a consensus in Monday’s meeting.

“I’m not trying to be critical about what you’re trying to do, but to me, if you’re going to have a chicken festival, it doesn’t need to be virtual,” said Mayor Pro Tem Cindy Bray. “... We need to have it when people can come. We need to do it downtown.”

Hopefully that vaccine distribution would permit the state to reopen fully before 2022, Bray suggested postponing the Spring Chicken Festival until summer.

“A virtual chicken festival just doesn’t seem right to me,” she said.

In contrast, Commissioner Bill Haiges suspected state restrictions will not permit mass gatherings by year’s end.

“My concern is that by moving it out to August, we may not even have the guidance from the governor to allow an in-person gathering that large.”

While he “would love to have an in-person chicken festival,” Haiges recommended proceeding with the virtual event in lieu of further delay.

The commissioners are expected to further deliberate in coming board meetings, but whatever their decision, Clelland says it will prioritize resident safety.

“We want everybody to stay safe,” he said. “We’re going to try to operate and provide what opportunities we can safely ... Hopefully once all this is over, we’ll be back to normal and get back to rocking and rolling.”

Reporter D. Lars Dolder can be reached at dldolder@chathamnr.com and on Twitter @dldolder.



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— Pop Quiz —

1 Which of the following cancers can be *prevented* with screening?

(a) Prostate (b) Breast (c) Colon

✓ *Colon Cancer*

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✓ *Age 50*

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Don't go toward the Shining Light

If there was ever a near-perfect embodiment of life pre-pandemic versus life mid-pandemic, my Saturday was just that.

I got the opportunity to cover two women's playoff basketball games within a four-hour time-frame — the NCHEAC state title game, featuring the Chatham Home School Thunder, and the NCHSAA 3A Elite 8 matchup between Northwood and Person.

Despite the short time in between, my experiences were drastically different.

Walking into the gym for one of the five home school state championship games being played that day at Shining Light Academy — a K-12 Christian school in Greensboro — was like entering a past life.

It felt like sporting events of old, long before Rudy Gobert's positive coronavirus test stopped sports in its tracks on March 11, 2020.

Or was it 1920? At this point, I'd believe either one.

If you've ever been to an AAU basketball tournament, it had that vibe. The stands were full of passionate fans sitting in massive clusters, yelling during the game and socializing during breaks, while other teams waited along the side of the bleachers for the buzzer to sound so they could start warming up for their game.

The Thunder's game was an overtime thriller, one that saw them come back from a seven-point deficit late in the game to ultimately win the state title.

The crowd was rowdy, loud and large. If you had been just listening, I wouldn't have blamed you if you mistook it for Game 7 of the NBA Finals in the Staples Center.

It was everything you want in an important, nail-biting championship game.

That is, if it wasn't March 2021 in North Carolina — a state still neck-deep in the same pandemic that Gobert became the face of (in the sports world, anyway) nearly 365 days ago.

If there were any restrictions in place or guidelines being followed, I wasn't privy to them. Aside from the emcee — who led the room in prayer and introduced starting lineups before the games — saying that everyone in attendance should be wearing face coverings, I saw or heard nothing related to the pandemic.

No signs, no markers, no seats blocked off, nothing.

Some of the players on the court and benches were wearing masks. Others weren't.

Some of the fans in the stands were wearing masks; many others either weren't or had them pulled down around their chin as they spoke to their friends.

See **LIGHT**, page B2

T.W. ANDREWS 34, JORDAN-MATTHEWS 26

Jets' comeback falls short against T.W. Andrews in 'crazy' season opener

BY VICTOR HENSLEY
News + Record Staff

SILER CITY — After a disappointing 2-9 season in 2019, Jordan-Matthews' main goal for this year was simply to be competitive.

It's clear they're taking that goal seriously.

Jordan-Matthews opened up its football season with a home loss to the T.W. Andrews Red Raiders, 34-26, on Thursday. But while this game's result is getting thrown into the loss column, there was plenty to be excited about for the Jets, who came back from a 14-point deficit in the fourth quarter to tie the game and were a play or two away from sending it to overtime.

"Just super proud of the kids, man," said Sam Spencer, the Jets' second-year head coach. "It's the best effort I've seen since I've been at Jordan-Matthews ... What a crazy game."

To set the stage, with 9:27 to play in the fourth quarter, T.W. Andrews scored a defensive touchdown after a snap sailed over the head of Jets' senior quarterback Xavier Woods at the J-M 21-yard-line, with



Staff photo by Simon Barbre

Jets' senior WR/DB Jayden Davis (blue) recovers a fumble in his team's loss to T.W. Andrews on Thursday. Davis also had two blocked punts on the night.

players on both teams fighting for it as it rolled into the end zone — where a Red Raiders defender hopped on it for six.

That play made it 26-12 in favor of T.W. Andrews, capping off the Red Raiders' 26-0 run and making it a two-touchdown ballgame after the Jets held a 12-0 lead in the first half. Jordan-Matthews appeared deflated.

Enter Eral Jones.

The senior — who plays both defensive end and tight end — made three massive plays on both sides of the ball to get his team back into it.

One: After the Red Raiders' second defensive touchdown, the Jets went three-and-out and punted to T.W. Andrews' 31-yard-line. Two plays later, Jones stripped the Red Raiders' quarterback on a pass attempt and J-M senior wide receiver/defensive back Jayden Davis recovered at the 22-yard-line.

Two: On the very next play, Woods rolled to his right and fired to the end zone, finding a wide-open Jones for a 22-yard score. The Jets couldn't get the two-point conversion, but it put them within one possession at 26-18 with 6:23 left to play.

Three: On the next T.W. Andrews drive,

See **JETS**, page B2

CHATHAM THUNDER 45, SOUTH WAKE SABRES 40

Thunder overcome 7-point deficit to down South Wake in NCHEAC state title game

BY VICTOR HENSLEY
News + Record Staff

GREENSBORO — It's easy to gloss over a league that gets little publicity; one that's often overshadowed by its public and private school counterparts.

That doesn't mean you should. While the North Carolinians for Home Education Athletic Commission (NCHEAC, for home-schoolers) isn't the NCHSAA (for public schools) or the NCISAA (for private schools), the competition is on par with the best of them.

Saturday's NCHEAC Basketball State Championships illustrated that, having everything you'd expect from a state title game: an electric atmosphere, an unexpected comeback, an overtime thriller, winning teams holding up banners at mid-court and family photo ops.

The Chatham Thunder varsity girls defeated the South Wake Sabres on Saturday, 45-40 in overtime, to capture their first-ever NCHEAC state basketball championship after a wild fourth-quarter comeback.

"(I'm) very emotional. I'm



Staff photo by Peyton Sickles

Chatham Thunder teammates and coaching staff pose with the championship banner after defeating South Wake, 45-40, to win the NCHEAC varsity girls state title on Saturday. This is the Thunder's first-ever varsity girls championship.

proud of my seniors," said Justin Brooks, head coach of the Chatham Thunder. "I've been coaching them for a long time. I started out with them in middle school and I've been coaching some of these girls for seven years. It was

a great team win and a great game for the fans to watch."

Hosted at Shining Light Academy in Greensboro, the gym was packed with hundreds of loud, passionate fans despite Gov. Cooper's Executive Order

195, which limits indoor sports venues to 30% capacity.

With 2:30 remaining in the contest, the Sabres held a seven-point lead, 35-28, after going

See **THUNDER**, page B3

NORTHWOOD 49, PERSON 37

Final Four bound: Chargers punch first-ever ticket to state semifinals

BY VICTOR HENSLEY
News + Record Staff

Note: This story was originally published online on Sunday. Tuesday's men's and women's playoff basketball games began after press time for this edition; check www.chathamnewsrecord.com or follow us @ChathamNRSports for the latest updates. State title games will be contested Saturday.

PITTSBORO — The Chargers continue to add to their historic resume.

Northwood punched its ticket to the NCHSAA Women's 3A Final

Four with a 49-37 victory over the 16th-seeded Person Rockets on Saturday, becoming the first women's sports team in school history to make it to a state semifinal.

While the victory gives the Northwood community plenty of reasons to celebrate, Chargers' head coach Cameron Vernon sounded unsatisfied after the game, upset with the way his team played despite the double-digit win.

"The team that deserved it and wanted it more didn't win tonight. It was Person High

See **CHARGERS**, page B2



Staff photo by Kim Hawks

The entire Northwood women's basketball team celebrates after punching their ticket to the NCHSAA Women's 3A Final Four. They're the first women's team at Northwood to advance to a state semifinal.

CONFERENCE REALIGNMENT

NCHSAA releases final draft of 2021-25 conference realignment plan

BY VICTOR HENSLEY
News + Record Staff

CHAPEL HILL — Opponents are going to look a lot different for Chatham-area schools later this year.

The NCHSAA recently released the final draft of its 2021-25 conference realignment plan, set to go into effect on Aug. 1.

The plan has Chatham Central (1A) and Jordan-Matthews (2A) in Conference 14, along with Seaforth (2A), Pittsboro's newest

high school opening in the fall of this year.

Jordan-Matthews, as a member of the PAC 7 2A conference, is used to playing an all-Randolph conference schedule, with the exception of Guilford's T.W. Andrews. Under this plan, J-M will face two Chatham opponents, including rival Chatham Central, with an entirely different conference schedule.

Aside from North Moore, which is presently in the Yadkin Valley 1A conference with the Bears, Chatham Central's conference opponents will also drastically shift.

Chatham Charter and Woods Charter, both 1A, are slated to remain together, just as they are in the Central Tar Heel 1A, though the plan has their new conference, Conference 13, shrinking from nine teams to six teams.

The plan will keep Clover Garden, River Mill and Southern Wake with the Knights and Wolves, while adding Triangle Math and Science as their only new conference opponent.

Northwood (3A) has been placed

in Conference 25, which looks much different with Chapel Hill, East Chapel Hill and Northern Durham all moving up to the 4A classification.

The Chargers' only similar opponents from the Big Eight 3A conference will be Cedar Ridge and Orange, the other four teams are new to Northwood's conference schedule.

The NCHSAA Board of Directors will

See **NCHSAA**, page B2

JETS

Continued from page B1

after a recovered onside kick and a few decent runs, the Red Raiders were in Jordan-Matthews' territory and knocking on the door of the red zone at the 24-yard-line. Then, T.W. Andrews' center snapped a low ball that rolled right under the quarterback's legs. Jones was there to scoop the ball up and run 76 yards for a touchdown. After a Thompson run to the right for a two-point conversion, the game was tied at 26.

"Eral Jones, man, that kid played a heck of a freaking game," said Spencer. "He looked like he was the best player on the field."

The Red Raiders scored on a 34-yard touchdown pass on the next drive after blown coverage by the Jets and got the two-point conversion to make it an eight-point game.

Down 34-26 with 59 seconds left and the Jets driving, Jordan-Matthews took a shot to the end zone from T.W. Andrews' 30-yard-line, but the pass went right off of the hands of an open Calvin Schwartz, a junior wide receiver/safety.

That pass would be the Jets' best remaining chance to tie the game, as Woods would be sacked on two of the next three plays, turning the ball over on downs and closing out the game.

Throughout the night, Jordan-Matthews' interior offensive line struggled against the size of T.W. Andrews' defensive line, causing major issues in the passing game and even leading to the huge hit on a carry by running back Jacques Thompson, which resulted in a fumble that the Red Raiders returned for a touchdown to give them a 14-12 lead in the third quarter.

"We've got to be better in the middle on the offensive line. Just

keep working our base stuff," said Spencer. "(Woods was) running for his life. Obviously, they were huge up front and we're not a big team up front."

Woods was in his first game back from a devastating left knee injury that he suffered in practice after the first game of last season where he dislocated his knee and tore his ACL, MCL and LCL. Spencer called it "the worst knee injury I've ever seen."

That scare from 17 months ago didn't seem to hinder Woods' movement, as he scrambled well all night, working to extend and create plays with his legs.

"(I thought about the injury) some, but once I took my first hit and I finally started running on it, I kind of felt like I was getting it out of my mind," he said. "I'm still getting it out of my mind a bit, but once I get my confidence back, I'll be just fine."

While he completed 50% of his passes (6-for-12), Woods and

Schwartz struggled to create any sort of connection. Most of the time, when Woods tried to get the ball down the field to Schwartz, the ball would be dropped, overthrown or knocked away by a defensive back.

Woods targeted his favorite receiver eight times on the night, but Schwartz was only able to reel in three of them (38%) for 23 yards.

"We've just got to make a connection and work on it in practice. And the more we keep working on it, it'll get better in the game," said Woods.

Defensively, the Jets allowed just three touchdowns, had four fumble recoveries, two blocked punts and a defensive touchdown of their own. Thompson, who also had a good night running the ball, led the defense with 10 tackles, including six tackles for loss.

"We did well getting to them in the backfield defensively and creating some havoc back there,"

said Spencer. "We covered well for the most part. We got lost in coverage down there on that end on that last score, but it's the first game with no scrimmage, so the biggest thing though is that we didn't quit. We kept fighting and gave ourselves a chance."

It may have been a loss for the Jets in the end, but this is the type of game they can build off of. And even though it felt like a heartbreaker, Spencer couldn't help but sound hopeful.

"Last year we had nine losses on the record, but every one of them ended in a running clock, it was a 42-point spread ... but it's fun to come out here and have a chance and be competitive," said Spencer. "Tonight was a big step for Jordan-Matthews football going forward."

Reporter Victor Hensley can be reached at vhensley@chathamnr.com or on Twitter at @Frezeal33.

LIGHT

Continued from page B1

Social distancing was nonexistent. Limiting the number of people who could enter the facility wasn't a priority. It was very nearly a packed house.

As a private school, Shining Light isn't necessarily bound to the same restrictions as public high schools may be, but it's still required to follow state guidelines, which it undoubtedly wasn't.

I'd be lying if I said I felt comfortable, even as a 23-year-old, as I sat alongside hundreds of others for nearly two hours with the sheer lack of care being taken to avoid the kind of super-spreader scenario we've all read about.

When I left the gym at Shining Light and began my hour-long trek to Northwood High School, it was almost like I re-entered whatever time-traveling machine I must have stumbled into.

Except this time, it took me back to the present day.

When it comes to strict

adherence to COVID-19 guidelines and the "three Ws" that we hear preached so often, Northwood and Shining Light seem to exist on two different planets, in two separate timelines or a part of two alternate dimensions.

For the Chargers' Elite 8 matchup with the 16th-seeded Person Rockets, there were just 25 fans in attendance to watch them clinch their first-ever trip to a state semifinal in any women's sport.

Everyone was spread out, with well over six feet in between.

Masks were worn by everyone in attendance, including fans, players, coaches and officials, as per state mandated protocols at NCHSAA events.

Northwood staff took temperatures at the door, kept up with sign-ins and screening question answers on a laptop in front of them and gave out tickers that had to be pre-purchased, all of which were absent with the NCHEAC.

In short, it was clear that Northwood was following protocols,

whereas Shining Light had none to follow.

Though there were just 25 fans in the stands, the crowd of primarily family members made sure to get loud, make their voices heard and attempt to replicate the packed house of a typical Northwood playoff game.

And it worked. The decibel level may not have been the same, but the passion and the energy were still there. Plus, the Chargers won, so that counts for something.

Last Thursday, Gov. Roy Cooper signed into place Executive Order 195, which among many other things, increased attendance at indoor and outdoor sporting events to 30% capacity, with a 250-person cap on indoor venues.

The order still requires face coverings in all indoor settings with non-household members, along with six feet of social distancing, and in all outdoor settings where six feet of social distance cannot be maintained.

This new guidance, which went into effect last Friday, could be the

reason why Shining Light felt comfortable to push forward with the NCHEAC tournament without limiting capacity or truly enforcing other guidelines.

However, it doesn't take much to tell that the number of people watching the NCHEAC title games was well above 30% of the gym's capacity — especially if social-distancing guidelines were to be maintained. And again, masks seemed overwhelmingly optional.

Moving forward, Chatham County Schools plans to operate between 10-15% capacity for fans at its high school outdoor stadiums, since "to maintain six feet of distance between individuals, we can't accommodate 30% capacity," John McCann, public relations coordinator for CCS, told me this week.

With indoor sports coming to a close after this weekend's NCHSAA state basketball championships on Saturday and not starting back up until the wrestling season begins in late April, there are no immediate plans for CCS

to change guidelines or increase attendance for indoor contests.

According to McCann, it's up to the individual school to decide how it wants to sell those limited number of tickets, whether it's first-come, first-serve or family members only.

As hard as it's been for student-athletes to play in front of limited fans, as well as some parents to miss out on seeing their children play in person, it's important that situations like Shining Light don't happen in Chatham or anywhere else.

I've been to numerous games at all five Chatham high schools since starting at the News + Record about a month ago, including soccer, basketball and football.

While it's been strange at times not having the stands full for playoff basketball games or season-opening football games, the atmosphere is still phenomenal. The competition is still at its peak and it truly doesn't hinder the experience.

Luckily, with NFHS Network — a \$10.99/month or \$69.99/year

subscription — parents, friends and other relatives who can't attend games in person can stream them online. While it can be a bit wonky at times, it's better than nothing.

Nearly a year ago, sports around the nation and world were shut down because of the coronavirus pandemic. The 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo were postponed. Every major U.S. sports league was either paused indefinitely or not in season. And high school sports were delayed, giving us abnormal seasons like football in late February.

Not being able to attend games in person with your entire family or group of friends is a bummer. I get it. But for now, the guidelines in place must be followed if we as a county and a state want to get back to the days where packed arenas are a normal occurrence, not an irresponsible outlier.

Reporter Victor Hensley can be reached at vhensley@chathamnr.com or on Twitter at @Frezeal33.

CHARGERS

Continued from page B1

School," said Vernon. "I think they came out and they were more aggressive, they were hungrier, they were getting up and down the court. We looked like we had weights on our feet ... To be one game away from the Final Four and give the kind of effort we (did), we're just very fortunate that we were a little taller, maybe a little more skilled."

Strictly looking at size and athleticism, this was a game Northwood should have run away with.

It was clear which team was more talented, yet, the first three quarters saw Person hanging around, taking a lead, 29-28, as late as halfway through the third period.

In the first half, the Chargers were forcing turnovers but were unable to capitalize on many of them as the Rockets continued to defend well, especially along the perimeter.

The energy that Northwood had for the previous two playoff games simply wasn't there to start the game. Offensive possessions were coming up empty. Players and coaches seemed frustrated.

While it felt like the Chargers were never in any real danger to lose, the score was close, with Person taking the lead four separate times in the first half.

With six minutes to go in the second quarter, Vernon called a timeout, visibly upset at his team — he could be heard yelling in the huddle throughout the mostly empty gym. The speech riled up the 25 fans in attendance, who truly got loud for the first time all night.

"The reason why I was upset is you can tell we weren't engaged in the game because Jilly (McNaught) fell on the floor and I had four girls that stood there and watched her sit on the ground," said Vernon. "When a girl goes down, we're supposed to

run and help her up. So that's when I knew we weren't engaged for this game and that was really disturbing for me to see out of my girls."

After that timeout, the energy in the building picked up a little bit, but it wasn't until the second half that the tide truly began turning in Northwood's favor.

The game's X-factor was Northwood sophomore forward Te'Keyah Bland, who held her team's Final Four hopes in the palm of her hand. And she made sure she didn't drop them.

Bland started to thrive after the break, using her size advantage inside to grab offensive rebounds and score around the basket, something she's done well all season long.

Chargers' guards Skylar Adams, Rae McClarty and Natalie Bell began doing a better job of feeding Bland the ball as she scored all but one of the Chargers' six field goals in the third quarter, along with hitting two shots to start the fourth. That gave Northwood its first double-digit lead, 41-31.

They'd finally pulled away.

Bland ended the night with a career-high 28 points, while Adams added 12 points of her own.

"Their coach, I thought he did a great job and he mentioned that he wanted to shut down the shooter," said Vernon. "And this is why in Northwood basketball, we stress a team game because, yeah, you can shut down (sophomore guard) McKenna (Snively) and that's fine, but we've still got five other girls who can really play basketball, so you can't shut them all down."

This is what makes Northwood dangerous.

It's not just Bland's presence inside, Snively's deadly outside shot, McClarty's veteran leadership, Adams' and Bell's defensive tenacity or any other single thing that the Chargers fully rely on. It's all of it.

And like the five senses, if one gets taken away, the others just get stronger.

The Chargers have been billed as a second-half team as of late and Saturday was no exception.

"I don't know what it is," said Vernon. "I don't know if we need to just tell them it's the second half at the start of the game, but we need to grow up, we need to mature in that aspect."

After an emotional 17-point comeback win on the road against Terry Sanford just two days earlier and playing its third game in five days, it's not a surprise that Northwood struggled to get amped up for Saturday's Elite 8 matchup.

However, that's not going to fly against everyone.

"I do think that there was a layover from the two games. I get it, but tomorrow's not guaranteed right now. And I hope that they have a sense of urgency moving on that we could very well wake up the next day without a game to play," said Vernon. "I want this more for them than I want it for me or our staff."

In addition to the women, the Northwood men's basketball team also managed to cement a spot in Tuesday's Final Four after a close win over top-seeded Terry Sanford on Saturday, 43-41.

As one of just two schools to have both men's and women's teams in the Final Four (Farmville Central, 2A) this season, all eyes are on Northwood to see if the Chargers can add themselves to the rare club of winning both championships in the same year.

"It's great for our school, it's great for our kids and we have a great following here in Pittsboro and in Chatham County," said Vernon. "I know there's going to be a lot of people down around the circle and in town tonight that are going to be hooting and hollering, as they should be, because these kids are making them proud."

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- Cedar Ridge
- Eastern Alamance
- Northwood
- Orange
- Person
- Western Alamance
- Williams

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Conference 14 (1A/2A)

- Chatham Central (1A)
- North Moore (1A)
- Bartlett Yancey (2A)
- Cummings (2A)
- Graham (2A)
- Jordan-Matthews (2A)
- Seaforth (2A)

Conference 25 (3A)

The full proposed conferences for the six Chatham schools are as follows:

Conference 13 (1A)

- Chatham Charter
- Clover Garden
- River Mill
- Southern Wake Academy
- Triangle Math and Science
- Woods Charter

NCHSAA

Continued from page B1

vote on the proposal's final draft sometime this month after hearing any final appeals "based on procedural errors," which will determine if anything changes between now and Aug. 1.



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MOUNTAIN ISLAND CHARTER 72, CHATHAM CHARTER 46

‘We weren’t consistent enough’: Chatham Charter gets bounced from playoffs by Mountain Island Charter

BY BRENNAN DOHERTY
News + Record
Correspondent

SILER CITY — Whether you were standing near the edge of the Chatham Charter bench like head coach Jason Messier, running up and down the court like senior power forward Trevor Golden or sitting in the stands, a noticeable pattern began to emerge and eventually became plain for everyone to see during Feb. 23’s first-round matchup in the NCHSAA Men’s 1A basketball playoffs.

Chatham Charter, time after time, would begin to dig itself out of a hole against a much more athletic and lengthy Mountain Island Charter team, only for the visitors to restore control, ultimately unscathed.

The result was a 72-46 season-ending loss for No. 7 seed Chatham Charter, which saw its 12-1 regular season cut short by a one-game stay in the postseason, just one year removed from a state semifinals appearance.

Following a mostly competitive 26 minutes of basketball, Mountain Island ended the game on a 21-3 run over six minutes that was

as nonchalant as it was crucial, leaving Chatham Charter with its largest defeat in over four years.

The suddenness and sadness of postseason elimination is something nearly all teams deal with every year. And for the Knights, that’s certainly true.

Coming off of a 32-win season, Messier’s team lost just once in an abbreviated regular season, winning by 10-plus points on 10 occasions and 30-plus on four. On paper, this was a team that could have gone far.

But following Feb. 23’s defeat to No. 10 seed Mountain Island, there was little talk about what-ifs or rumination on a postseason run denied. Instead, blunt admissions that the better team won.

“We got (the deficit) down, and then we let them build it right back up,” Messier said. “We weren’t consistent enough for 32 minutes of basketball to get the victory.”

After trailing 11-3 in the opening minutes, Chatham Charter got back into the game largely on the strength of Golden, whose aggressiveness in the paint often led to his team’s best looks, whether they were transition layups, crowded dribble drives or tough,

second-chance putbacks.

Golden finished as Chatham Charter’s leading scorer with 20 points, 12 of which came in the first half.

With both teams tied at 15 following the first quarter, Chatham Charter briefly took a three-point lead in the second period but trailed by eight, 33-25, at the break after a barrage of transition points from Mountain Island, including a buzzer-beating slam dunk by senior small forward Najee Steward, who scored 16 points and was one of four on Mountain Island to reach double-figures.

In a way, Steward’s dunk symbolized Chatham Charter’s struggles with Mountain Island’s athleticism.

“We had moments at the end of the half,” Messier said. “The first half, we had it down and next thing we know, in 40-something seconds they’re scoring 6-8 points.”

After Mountain Island extended its lead to 13 early in the third quarter, Chatham Charter sophomore guard/forward Adam Harvey (15 points) helped his team fight back with his outside shooting. The Knights made it 47-40, but a pivotal moment arrived when Harvey,

with a chance to make it a five-point game, had a transition layup blocked before Mountain Island turned right around and scored on two straight possessions to take a 51-40 lead into the fourth quarter.

“They had some athletes,” Golden said. “We don’t have football here; they have football. I’m pretty sure they have a kid going to Carolina to play football. We just don’t see competition like that, but we just have to set our minds for better preparation.”

The University of North Carolina commit referred to by Golden was small forward Gabe Stephens, who chipped in 14 points and was one of three Mountain Island starters listed as 6-foot-3 or taller. The springy, 6-foot-5 Marquis Williams led the visitors with 21.

A three-pointer by Chatham Charter guard Darrius Taylor brought the Knights within eight early in the fourth, but it marked the end of his team’s series of rallies.

Relying largely on trips to the free throw lines, second-chance opportunities and transition points, Mountain Island went on a 16-0 run that sealed the deal. Even when only minutes re-

moved from defeat, both Golden — one of two outgoing seniors, along with guard Clay Griffin — and Messier had time for reflection on the season as a whole.

For Golden, there are the memories made and accomplishments achieved over the past few years. From his sophomore year onward, Golden was a part of a program that went 71-9.

The wins, of course, are tangible and countable. Other memorable aspects of high school basketball are not.

“The bus rides,” Golden said with a smile that suggested countless stories to be told. “Definitely the bus rides.”

Messier, meanwhile, is most proud of how his team handled a season altered by a pandemic and is optimistic about the future, considering he started four sophomores this season.

“Last year, we made it to the regional finals,” Messier said. “We lost four of our five starters, and people didn’t feel these guys would accomplish — and they did. They stepped up and we won our conference and won some big games. I thought we had a great year.”

THUNDER

Continued from page B1

on an 8-0 run that featured steals leading to fast break layups, points in the paint due to their size advantage and mistakes by the Thunder on both sides of the ball.

By all accounts, it looked to be over. South Wake, which gave the Thunder their only two losses of the regular season, appeared to have them right where they wanted them.

But the Thunder didn’t quit. From that point forward, the Sabres would miss all three of its free throw attempts while the Thunder were slowly climbing back into the game via free throws and smart offensive possessions.

South Wake had a chance to ice it with 32 seconds left — up by three and freshman forward Mia Jones at the line — but Jones missed the

one-and-one. A teammate grabbed the offensive rebound — an issue for Chatham all night — and ... got called for traveling.

On the other end, the ball found Thunder senior forward Rachel Davis, who was wide open in the right corner, as she drained the triple to tie the game with 8.4 seconds left. It was perfect timing for her to hit her first three-pointer of the day in five attempts.

In overtime, the Thunder’s star players — sophomore guard Kimberley Cunningham and senior guard Jenna Brooks — shined.

Cunningham scored the first two buckets for Chatham in the extra period, including an and-one layup (although she missed the free throw), while Jenna Brooks — the coach’s daughter — had ice in her veins, hitting four straight free throws after her team was down 40-39 to give them a three-point lead.

Those free throws essentially ended the game, clinching the Thunder’s first-ever state title in varsity girls basketball.

“I’m pretty tired, but I’m really excited,” Cunningham said after the game. “We just put our heart to it and pushed through ... we just wanted it.”

Cunningham was the team’s leading scorer with 13 points, and along with Brooks, led the team with four steals.

Calling this game a defensive battle would be an understatement.

Both teams — South Wake at 59.6 and Chatham at 62.9 — average around 60 points per game, but it took overtime for either of them to cross the 40-point mark on Saturday.

The defense was suffocating on both ends of the court and the game was overwhelmingly physical as the officials swallowed their whistles on a plethora of plays. At

times, it felt like backyard basketball — just without the high-flying dunks.

“(Defense) been the identity of our team over the years, these girls have always played hard,” Coach Brooks said. “Defense has been their specialty. I told them it would be all about defense today. Sometimes we struggle with our shooting and that’s improved some, but our defense has been our bread and butter.”

Cunningham, Davis and Jenna Brooks were three Chatham players named to the NCHSAA All-Tournament team, with Davis and Brooks being named co-MVPs for their late-game heroics on Saturday.

“I think they are amazing with what they did,” said Cunningham. “They just wanted to get it done, so they got it done.”

Winning the state title as a senior made the championship a little

more special for the coach and his daughter.

“As a dad, I’m proud,” Coach Brooks said. “She’s worked all summer, all offseason. She was prepared for that moment. And that’s why you put the time in. She’s really busted her tail.”

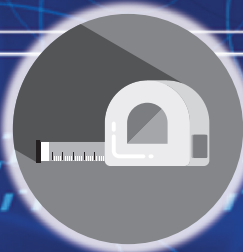
The Chatham Thunder finish the season with a 25-2 record, again with both losses coming in the regular season against the team they conquered to win the title.

In the ultimate act of revenge, they beat South Wake in both the regional tournament and the state tournament, finishing strong.

“Our team defense and our heart and our integrity (won us the game),” said Coach Brooks. “These girls never give up. They never quit.”

Reporter Victor Hensley can be reached at vhensley@chathamnr.com or on Twitter at @Frezeal33.

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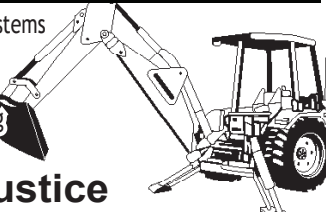


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COUNCIL ON AGING

The changing state of services to Chatham’s graying population

BY JAMES KIEFER
News + Record
Correspondent

Editor’s note: This is a follow-up story to last week’s look at how Chatham Council on Aging Executive Director Dennis Streets and his staff have shifted their focus during the pandemic. This week: high-priority deliverables.

One of the constant refrains from health officials throughout the pandemic is that older adults are more at risk of severe illness if infected with the coronavirus.

For the Chatham Council on Aging — a non-profit focused on supporting people aged 60 and older — that means it has had to reshape how it serves some of Chatham’s most vulnerable residents. Dennis Streets, the organization’s executive director, outlined three things that have bubbled to the top in recent months: nutrition assistance, home care and social connectivity.

Meals on ‘wheels’

Prior to the COA centers in Siler City and Pittsboro closing their doors to the public in March to prevent the spread of the virus, Streets said one of the agency’s more popular programs was the serving of daily meals that would coincide with educational or recreational programming. Now, the centers partner with the Chatham Transit Network to distribute meals to homes across the county.

In addition to that, the COA freezes leftover meals and keeps some shelf stable options on tap. These are available for seniors who live in remote parts of Chatham County typically out of the way for the main meal delivery



Staff photo by James Kiefer

COA meal site manager Alan Russo organizes supplies for delivery to homes across Chatham County.

routes and are picked up by either family members or friends of the person in need, Streets said.

It’s been a bit of a piecemeal and evolving process just getting the meals where they need to go. Streets said the COA was previously relying on UNC nursing students whose studies had been disrupted by the pandemic, along with deputies from the sheriff’s office and Chatham County Public Health Department staff.

But as the demand on public health workers and county officials started to increase, it became clear to Streets the COA couldn’t rely on its usual crop of volunteers.

“Because most of our volunteers are seniors themselves, and we were reluctant to put them in harm’s way,” Streets said. “We also wanted to protect recipients of the meals, so we used community partners.”

Streets said the pivot to Chatham Transit also allows for seniors to use the transport service to do things like visit grocery stores, go to hair appointments and complete other

activities deemed safe by health officials.

And food isn’t the only thing on the delivery list. Streets said the COA is dropping off items like reading materials, pet food and incontinence supplies. He also mentioned that meal deliveries were part of the COA’s outreach program before the pandemic, but have just become one of the primary models it’s using to reach seniors now. He ballparked that the non-profit is reaching more than 400 people on a weekly basis with its services.

Home care

Another challenge seniors are facing is how to best approach services that offer home care, especially homebound members of the community who struggle with daily activities within their own residence. The COA acts as a bridge for home care services and contracts with seven state licensed home care agencies, Streets said, which can provide things like baths and food preparation.

But the pandemic has also changed the flow of

who can enter the home.

“What we were seeing early on (in the pandemic) is some of the people who were needing the care became reluctant,” he said. “They said, ‘I’m not comfortable having somebody from the outside come in who’s not sure what their exposure has been to COVID-19.’”

He added that reluctance may have been shared with family members, some of whom now find themselves caring for loved ones.

So the COA decided to take a different approach to the respite services it already provided. The council gave the Triangle J Council of Governments funding to administer a consumer directed program that pays family members or a trusted source to provide home care. It gives those who need care more options to choose what it looks like.

Bridging the social divide

The feeling of isolation is another thing the COA is combating among seniors. Streets said he sees a lot of things creating a digital

divide among older adults.

“It’s because of where people live and whether or not they have internet access,” Streets said. “But even more than that, a lot of folks do not have a cell phone. They do not have a tablet, they do not have a laptop or they do not have experience using them. They may not be able to afford these things.”

Something that has been keeping the COA in touch with seniors is the Friendly Phone Caller Program, which the non-profit uses to check in on seniors, promote resource services and collect information. Streets said one thing the COA found is that many participants don’t have email access, so as social programming shifted from in-person to virtual it became critical to have an option for those without a screen in their hands.

“There’s a divide among those who have where-withal and means to participate in those (events) and those that do not,” Streets said. “So we really try to make sure that when we’ve set something up for Zoom or YouTube, we’ve also provided a way for them to participate — even if it’s not as rich visually — as much as they could by phone.”

Phone calls have also been instrumental in getting isolated seniors information about eligibility for the COVID-19 vaccine. The COA created a form through Google that once filled out provides contact information for a vaccine candidate to Chatham public health, Streets said. He added the COA is committed to making sure connections are legitimately being made for whoever calls the non-profit with questions, and people aren’t just being given a phone number for another service without any follow-up.

That data is proving to

be a valuable tool in crafting an equitable response to the pandemic.

Streets said sharing COA data with the Chatham health department is helping make connections to historically underserved communities.

“We serve a proportionally large population in a lot of our services who are minorities,” Streets said. “So we wanted to have that direct, real time engagement with public health to provide the contact information, and then checking back frequently with public health and say ‘Do you need us to reach out?’”

For nearly a year, Streets has held conference calls every Friday morning to address community concerns regarding the pandemic; last week happened to be his 51st call. The featured speaker on that call was Chatham County Public Health Director Mike Zelek, who laid out part of North Carolina’s plans to reach communities who have historically been left out of satisfactory healthcare.

“It’s about speed and equity,” Zelek said during the phone conference. “So it’s about giving out the vaccine, but it’s not just about giving out the vaccine. It’s about getting out the vaccine to the full Chatham community, including historically marginalized populations.”

For Streets, he sees that commitment to the community as holding more weight than ever.

“As a Council on Aging in our 46th year, our mission has essentially been the same since our beginning, which is keeping people living safely in the community for as long as possible,” Streets said. “There’s never been a more important time for that than now.”

SILER CITY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioners approve sweeping ordinance changes to improve town aesthetic

BY D. LARS DOLDER
News + Record Staff

SILER CITY — In a bid to enact frequent calls for the town’s revitalization, Siler City’s board of commissioners authorized several ordinance amendments during its regular meeting Monday to promote and enforce building maintenance and minimum aesthetic standards.

Town Planner Jack Meadows spearheaded the effort to establish a “tool” whereby town staff, with commissioner guidance, could launch an improvement program to enhance the town’s appearance. Plans for ordinance adjustments that would empower the town to improve commercial real estate have been in development for years, he said.

“We hired a contractor to do ordinance enforcement about two years ago and he started sharing new tools and ideas with us,” Meadows said. “... So, I put it in my brief(case) and held on to it.”

The recommendations from State Code Enforcement Inc. — led by contractors Dennis Pinnix and George McDuffie — sat idle for a short time until the Siler City Downtown Advisory Committee started exploring options to enhance the downtown aesthetic.

“The Downtown Advisory Committee started talking about the appearance and structure of some of our downtown buildings when they were meeting,” Meadows said, “and I said ‘Well, we’ve got a potential tool, I’ll just share it with you.’”

Committee members were thrilled with what they saw. They have since recommended the board adopt the ordinance changes more than once, most recently in January, but Monday was the first time the board took action.

The amendments are to Chapter 8 of Siler City’s code of ordinances which establishes building standards. About 20 revisions fall under Article VI: “Minimum Nonresidential Code.” The updated language will permit an ordinance enforcement officer to work with commercial property owners to address ordinance

violations such as broken windows, loose wires from junction boxes, flaking paint, damaged and dirty awnings, broken curbs and pothole-ridden parking lots — all of which have been routinely observed around town. The ordinance changes do not require any budgetary adjustments from the board of commissioners.

While the Downtown Advisory Committee initiated ordinance change recommendations, Meadows suggested the board include all of Siler City within the new enforceable standards.

“I get complaints from folks around town,” Meadows said, “Folks aren’t happy with the structure and look of some of our commercial buildings. There are no tools in our tool box in Siler City to address those concerns and complaints.”

He thus advised the board to extend the Downtown Advisory Committee’s plan to encompass all commercial real estate in Siler City.

“Our recommendation would be not to — if you choose to adopt this ordinance — not to just do it for downtown, but citywide,” Meadows said.

The commissioners were quick to second his admonition.

“I completely agree; I think we need to go within the entire corporate limits,” said Commissioner Bill Haiges. “I’m always a person who wants to make it for everyone instead of just targeting a group. Let’s include everyone in it.”

Dennis Pinnix, the contractor who suggested Siler City revise its ordinance, has overseen similar programs in other North Carolina towns. The results, he said, have been only beneficial.

“Their tax values have gone up dramatically because of this ordinance,” he said in Monday’s meeting.

Property owners, too — though behooved to perform building work they may not have done otherwise — appreciated their town’s direction, Pinnix said. In Mooresville, where his company helped enforce similar measures three years ago, only two out of 65 affected property owners pushed back on the new regulation, according to Pinnix.

“We went around and we talked to each merchant and we told them, ‘Look, in 90 days this is what we’re going to be looking for,’” he said. “And we gave them all a list of things that we would be looking for that we would be enforcing with this ordinance ... Once merchants started fixing up their buildings, they got enthusiastic about it, and the town of Mooresville never looked as good as it does today.”

Meadows emphasized that Siler City staff will similarly work with property owners.

“The way we designed this is not to go in and start tearing down buildings right away,” he said. “... It’s not a quick turnaround process. I think we can probably start with just communicating and talking with folks. It wouldn’t be right out of the door coming through with ordinances for demolition.”

Commissioners were enthused by the prospect of imminent town improvement.

“I think we need a draw downtown, and I think we’re starting to get that with people revitalizing,” said Commissioner Cindy Bray. “This ordinance, I think it’s going to help people.”

The board voted unanimously in support of a motion to adopt the proposed ordinance amendments as of July 1. Commercial property owners will have until then to familiarize themselves with the changes and begin necessary renovations.

With the same goal of townwide aesthetic improvement, the commissioners also gave consensus for Meadows and other town staff to launch an ordinance enforcement program prohibiting motor vehicles from “being parked on grass/dirt and more than four motor vehicles located in the front yards of single-family and two-family residential dwellings.”

Other news

- Impending demolition

The house at 1411 Martin Luther King Blvd. will be demolished soon. Last year, town staff evaluated the building’s integrity and deemed it unfit for human habitation and in violation

of the town’s housing ordinance.

A complaint notice was served upon the building’s owner in December. In January, 2021, the notice was published in the News + Record. Following an administrative hearing later that month, town staff filed a notice of lis pendens, or formal notice.

On Monday, the board of commissioners approved a demolition ordinance for the property and committed to hiring KBS Earthworks to perform demolition within five days of notice, weather pending.

- Calls to commemorate Black-owned businesses

Commissioner Tony Siler asked the board’s permission to introduce Donald Matthews, a member of the public, to discuss the idea of a town-sponsored commemoration of historically Black-owned businesses in Siler City.

“I don’t know how many of you are aware of this,” Matthews said, “but there used to be Black-owned businesses in downtown Siler City.”

The stores included a jewelry store, a shoe store, a TV repair shop and a cafe according to Matthews.

“These businesses ran for several years during the segregation period,” he said, “It was really the only place downtown that we had available to us. Subsequently what has happened over the years during my research, I find that that particular set of buildings was not included in the registry when some of these buildings were designated historical.”

Matthews, therefore, proposed a “plan to honor those business owners and that particular district” with a mural to be painted on one side of the formerly Black-owned building and a complementary Juneteenth celebration commemorating the contributions of Black Siler City residents to the town’s history.

“When we do things in this city, we have to be inclusive,” he said.

Reporter D. Lars Dolder can be reached at [added to the page](mailto: added to the page) dldolder@chathamnr.com and on Twitter @ added to the page

POLICE REPORTS

Loves Creek Watershed Stewards to launch new community program

BY D. LARS DOLDER
News + Record Staff

The Loves Creek Watershed Stewards — a group of local environmentalists committed to improving water quality and drainage issues in Siler City’s Loves Creek watershed — have worked for years collecting data and sponsoring improvement projects. Soon, their entire body of work, including a comprehensive map of the water system, will be online for interested residents to explore and modify.

If all goes according to plan, the LCWS team will have created an interactive online platform — hosted on the state’s domain — by the summer of 2022. The editable story map format will chronicle the team’s years-long work and detail areas of future activity.

The new project, called the “Loves Creek Watershed action plan,” will be funded by a \$75,000 grant from the North Carolina Land and Water trust fund.

“The ultimate, the big picture, goal of the project is to give us an opportunity to gather the data information that’s already out there,” said Grace Messenger, a member of LCWS and a project manager at Piedmont Conservation Council.

But the website will do more than just showcase complete work. It will afford environmentally conscious Siler City residents the chance to engage with LCWS and

contribute to the town’s watershed revitalization.

“So, the cool thing is it’s not just gonna be a static document,” said Catherine Deininger, another LCWS member and co-founder of the environmental consulting firm Biocenosis. “People will be able to identify and collect, in one place, the potential for future projects or potential projects or areas of concern that deal with water quality issues.”

Loves Creek Watershed is an 8-square-mile water system that flows through Siler City and the surrounding area before draining into the Rocky River. All of downtown lies within its 400-acre girth, as well as several populous areas such as the Park Shopping Center.

The watershed’s expanse is largely unknown, LCWS members say, but it heavily affects local ecology.

“Loves Creek is an impaired watershed — an impaired and largely forgotten watershed,” Deininger previously told the News + Record. “Most people don’t know where it is.”

What little Siler City residents do know, however, usually comes from the watershed’s propensity to induce flooding.

But Deininger and Messenger hope the action plan will change public perception. It will dispel common misunderstandings about the watershed’s local impact and encourage more

people to contribute to the town’s environmental cleanup.

“No matter if you’re part of our projects or not,” Messenger said, “we’re gonna be able to take all this information that occurred over the years and have it be in a one stop shopping type of area that you can access.”

The online story map, “which will be an application you can use,” Deininger said, will feature a complete view of the watershed’s intricate network. There will be icons showing areas of past and current LCWS projects, what was accomplished and where funding was sourced. A custom built survey tool will “eventually be made available to the public for them to be able to add stuff to this map,” she added.

“So, we’ll be able to get more information and education out to the public where it’s not just coming through us,” Messenger said. “I think that’s probably one of the bigger the bigger accomplishments of this process.”

Recently, LCWS acquired an intern through the UNC EcoStudio — a program that pairs Environment and Ecology undergraduate students from UNC-Chapel Hill with environmental organizations — to test an early version of the action plan and compile data.

“She actually has gone and started using some of the tools that are part of this online map to collect information that we plan

to highlight in this story map, this action plan,” Deininger said. “So she’s doing some of the field work for us.”

So far, the action plan is functioning well, but with some kinks that need rectification before the program can go live.

“We’re still working through a few little bugs,” Deininger said. “We’ve run into issues, things like one of the issues we ran into the other day was you can only put one photo per project ... So, things like that, that’s why it hasn’t launched yet.”

The LCWS team hopes to compile most of its watershed data into the action plan before opening the application for public use. But once it goes live, LCWS thinks the action plan could be a game changer for Siler City residents eager to improve the town’s watershed impairment.

“So before we really launch, or work with the state to actually put something up on the website that would be the story map, we’re going to be probably 75% of the way through,” Messenger said. “But the neat thing will be that even once our grant is done, the beauty of it is that it’s going to live on where we can then add to it and then we can share with other people how they can add information to it, as well.”

Reporter D. Lars Dolder can be reached at dldolder@chathamnr.com and on Twitter @[dldolder](https://twitter.com/dldolder).

CHATHAM COUNTY SHERIFF’S OFFICE

On Feb. 22, Genita Cagle Sprouse, 48, of 3006 Silk Hope Gum Springs Road, Pittsboro, was arrested by Deputy Jonathan Frazier for possession with intention to manufacture/sell/deliver a controlled substance, felony possession of a schedule II controlled substance, possession of drug paraphernalia and maintaining a vehicle/dwelling/place for a controlled substance. Sprouse was issued a written promise to appear in Chatham County District Court in Pittsboro on March 1.

On Feb. 22, Marques Valntae Johnson, 36, of 500 Falkner Quarter Road, Warrenton, was arrested by Deputy Matthew Mitchell for true bill of indictment on charges of criminal possession of a financial transaction card/forgery device. Johnson was issued a written promise to appear in person County District Court in Roxboro on March 4.

On Feb. 22, Abilio Rames Abelardes, 44, of 10645 US Hwy 64 East, Staley, was arrested by Deputy Johnny Griffin for assault on a female. Abelardes was issued a 48-hour hold and is scheduled to appear in Randolph County District Court in Asheboro on Feb. 24.

On Feb. 22, Mitchell Jermaine Percell, 39, of 224 Kathleen Terrace, Sanford, was arrested by Deputy Phillip Hanson, for 3 counts each for breaking and entering, larceny after break/enter, and injury to real property. Percell was

issued a \$10,000 secured bond and is scheduled to appear in Chatham County District Court in Pittsboro on March 22.

On Feb. 24, Polly Mea McRae, 52, of 240 Doc Brown Road, Raeford, was arrested by Deputy Brandal Harrington for true bill of indictment on charges of forgery of Instrument and uttering forged instrument. McRae was issued a written promise to appear in Hoke County District Court in Raeford on March 8.

On Feb. 25, James Alverkus Brown, 57, of 483 Lee Emerson Road, Bear Creek, was arrested by Deputy Brandal Harrington for two counts of breaking and entering, two counts of larceny after breaking and entering, possession of stolen goods/property, and five counts of Injury to real property. Brown was issued a \$10,000 secured bond and is scheduled to appear in Chatham County District Court in Pittsboro on March 22.

On Feb. 25, Eugene Cleve Staley, Jr., 31, of 4781 Huntingwood Road, Ramseur, was arrested by Deputy Brandal Harrington for second degree trespassing. Staley was issued a written promise to appear in Chatham County District Court in Pittsboro on March 23.

On Feb. 25, Howard Leonard Hensdill, 44, of 534 Deer Run, Pittsboro, was arrested by Deputy John Beach for assault on a female. Hensdill was issued a 48-hour domestic violence hold and is scheduled to appear in Chatham County District Court in Pittsboro on March 3.

CHATHAM ARTS COUNCIL

7 local artists receive support grants

Funds especially critical to help artists pursue creative projects during a pandemic

From the Chatham Arts Council

PITTSBORO — Is there a profession that can help elicit joy, help us express ourselves, and strengthen the very community in which we live, work, and play? Quite simply, yes. Artists can. Which is why supporting artists is critical — especially during a pandemic. Artists are part of the fabric that holds a community together. In an effort to continue to lift local artists, the Chatham Arts Council is pleased to announce the seven local recipients of the Artist Support Grants: JR Butler, Britt Flood, Marjorie Hudson, Tony Peacock, Wendy Spitzer (AKA Felix Obelix), Christian Tamburr and Will Ridenour.

The Artist Support Grants are given to support a range of professional and artistic development for emerging and established artists. This year’s recipients cover a wide array of artistic areas including 2D visual art, literary art, media arts, and music. Led by The United Arts Council of Raleigh and Wake County, and in partnership with the North Carolina Arts Council, Raleigh Arts, and other local arts councils, the Chatham Arts Council (CAC) had the honor of awarding the Artist Support Grants to these local artists.

“When lockdown started, I lost my art gigs,” explained JR Butler, visual artist and grant recipient. “I have not been able to receive unemployment. Without any income, it was impossible for me to keep my studio, so I moved everything to my tiny house. This grant will provide me the funds necessary to cover some of my living expenses to make it easier for me to get by while I transform part of my living space into a better functioning home studio. Having a suitable studio will make it much easier to make and promote my work during these challenging times.”

The Artist Support Grants program was open to ALL artists living in Chatham, Harnett, Johnston, Lee and Wake counties. The criteria included overall excellence of the applicant’s artwork as demonstrated by work samples; feasibility of the proposed project; and contribution of the proposed project to the advancement of the applicant’s professional artistic development and practice.

“The Chatham Arts Council is committed to supporting our community through service, solace and hope this year,” said Cheryl Chamblee, Executive Director of the CAC. “Through their amazing work, these talented artists are offering all of us service, solace,

and hope — an endeavor that is incredibly difficult with the closures the arts community has been witness to.”

More than \$82,000 in grants are being distributed among five counties in this region to deserving applicants. This grant is essential in helping offset the negative impact of the pandemic, ensuring artists have the resources they need to continue in their profession. Individual grants are being

awarded up to \$1,500.

The Chatham Arts Council nurtures creative thinkers in Chatham County. We do this in two ways: we invest in artists and we educate kids through the arts. In its thirty-seventh year as a nonprofit arts agency, Chatham Arts Council’s flagship programs include Meet This Artist, Go See This, artist grants and the Chatham Artists-in-Schools Initiative — serving more than 3,500 children this year. Chatham Arts Council is proud to partner with the North Carolina Arts Council,



the Durham Arts Council, Chatham County Schools and numerous Chatham arts organizations, human resource nonprofits and local businesses. For more information, visit www.ChathamArtsCouncil.org.



Submitted photo
Musician Will Ridenour is one of the local artists who received grants from the Chatham Arts Council.



This Community ROCKS!

Abundance NC is matching folks in need during this Covid-19 period with volunteers and locals that have time and resources. Here is a recap of what **YOU** have accomplished since the pandemic started:



To DONATE:



For help or to help:



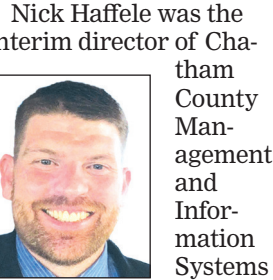
- Approximately 100 able + generous community members have bought & delivered groceries and paid utility bills directly for about 100 families in need, sometimes repeatedly. ~\$20,000
- Abundance NC has raised \$16,000 and paid \$11,000 worth of utility bills.
- You have avoided evictions several times by pooling in money to cover unpaid rent due to lack of work or reduced hours due to the pandemic.
- You have avoided disconnection of utilities and helped people get their utilities reinstated for about half a dozen families.
- We have connected approximately 50 families with other community resources available.
- We have been able to cover Abundance NC staff time to run this Neighbor2Neighbor program! !!

Thank YOU!

Much LOVE and BLESSINGS from the families YOU help! This is community resilience! !!

THE CN+R Q&A | NICK HAFFELE

Chatham’s MIS director shares insights on cyber attack



Haffele

when the ransomware attack which crippled the county’s system on Oct. 28 of last year occurred. Haffele and his team helped direct and lead the recovery efforts, earning the praise of County Manager Dan LaMontagne and county commissioners for their tireless role in keeping county functions and services as uninterrupted as possible.

Though county officials have released no new statements about the incident in the last week — which ultimately led to the public uploading of some county data files after a ransom of 50 bitcoin (about \$708,000) wasn’t paid to the threat actor making the demand — Haffele responded to questions from the News + Record via email.

Haffele was named MIS director in December 2020 after being appointed to serve in the interim role in June 2020. He also serves Chatham County as the Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

manager, a role he has served in since February 2015. Haffele has held GIS roles in both the public and private sector including time with GeoComm, Branch County, MI (911), and Atos North America.

How was the breach discovered?
Chatham County Management and Information Systems staff found ransomware notes on encrypted servers when reporting to work on October 28, 2020.

Can you describe how you felt and what it was like for you after you were made aware of the breach? What was your immediate reaction, and how did you transition from that to a recovery game plan?

It was definitely a shock to the system at first, but we quickly transitioned to containment and mitigation of further propagation across Chatham County’s network. Our staff did a tremendous job to react quickly once the breach was discovered. We identified a recovery road map within 48 hours and worked towards prioritizing restoration of our most critical business systems.

What was your messaging like to your staff – what objectives did you communicate?

Our staff knew that we had a difficult road ahead, so my main focus was to remain positive and keep our recovery plan moving forward every single day. I cannot emphasize enough how professionally our staff handled the situation. They got to work immediately, supported one another and have kept a positive attitude the entire time.

How did you communicate, given that phones and email were down?
Thankfully we live in a time where multiple communication options are available. We utilized cell phones, temporary hot spots, Gmail accounts, etc., to keep lines of communication open between staff. We also held daily briefings with stakeholders to keep staff up to speed on the recovery plan and progress.

What in your training/previous experience prepared you for this?
Responding to an event like this is a team effort. It wasn’t going to be one person or department that would facilitate a successful recovery. MIS had developed a plan for response prior to the incident. Chatham County has also undergone multiple threat assessments in the past few years that

helped guide our response plan and security measures. Additionally, my previous athletic experience helped me with responding to this event. We faced a lot of adversity and having the experience of working together as a team for a single objective helped keep things in focus.

Can you talk about those first days and weeks ... how did you maintain your composure, your focus?
The most important things for myself and staff were to keep making progress, focusing on our priorities and remaining positive every day. It would have been easy to look at the totality of what we were facing and get frustrated, but my staff did a great job of moving ahead regardless of how much work there was to be done.

Can you discuss the process of wiping the county’s 500+ computers clean — how did you prioritize this work? And was all of it done by you and your staff? What was that like?
Our technical services support staff was able to complete the work of wiping and reimaging county computers without outside assistance. Our technical services supervisor prioritized this work based on guid-

ance from our Emergency Operations staff on what departments needed computers back first.

Can you talk generally about what new safeties are in place to prevent this from happening again?
I can’t speak to specific technology, but I can say that mitigation of future events has been a main focus along with recovery post incident. No network is 100% secure, but we have implemented additional security measures to build a stronger network security architecture and will continue to do so moving forward.

What do you know, and what can you tell us, about how DoppelPaymer got in?
As noted in our February 15th news release it was a Phishing email that resulted in the breach. I can’t provide any more detail than that.

And how would you characterize what happened?
Some counties and entities have experienced attacks (an attempted breach that was ultimately not fully successful), while others have experienced breaches (where data was stolen). Our network was breached and most of our servers were encrypted. As noted in the previously mentioned

news release, we are aware of data released by the threat actors and are working diligently with state agencies and legal counsel to notify all impacted individuals.

What was in place within the county’s system to stop attacks and attempted breaches as the threat actor made it through layers of security?
I cannot speak specifically to what types of security were in place prior to the attack, but I can say that we had technology in place to protect our network. As I stated in a response to a previous question, no network is 100% secure, and it will be a constant fight to protect our network moving forward.

What are the main tasks left on yours and the county’s to-do lists in regards to recovery?
We expect our recovery to continue into the second quarter of 2021. While our critical business systems are operational, there are a lot of ancillary business processes that have not yet been fully restored. MIS staff continues to work diligently to respond to the needs of our county staff to provide excellent service delivery to the residents of Chatham County.

Inter-Faith Food Shuttle launches food distribution and health program for Chatham’s minority seniors

BY VICTORIA JOHNSON
News + Record Staff

This year, like every year, February was designated in Chatham as “We Love Seniors” Month — and though the Inter-Faith Food Shuttle didn’t know that, the organization managed to show some love to several Chatham seniors anyway.

In February, the Raleigh-based nonprofit launched a free program

designed to feed and educate some of the county’s most vulnerable seniors, according to Piniel Tadesse, the organization’s community health education programs coordinator. Per its website, the Inter-Faith Food Shuttle seeks to “create a hunger-free and healthy community,” and serves seven counties across North Carolina, including Chatham.

This program — called the Food Access and Education for Rural Seniors

Living with Type 2 Diabetes (FAERS) — targets low-income Hispanic and Black seniors over age 60 with Type 2 Diabetes in Chatham and Johnston counties. It began last month, Tadesse said, “but we will be enrolling participants until we reach our capacity.”

It’ll operate through October and has space for 100 seniors — ideally, Tadesse said, 50 from each county. So far, eight Chatham seniors have enrolled, and they’re still looking for 42 more to participate. According to a Food Shuttle press release, a \$100,000 grant from Feeding America network donors, including Enterprise Rent-A-Car Foundation, funds the FAERS program.

Among other things, participants will receive bi-monthly supplemental food bags, including boxes of fresh produce and grocery bags with various non-perishable items. The most recent produce box, Tadesse said, included potatoes, carrots and apples, among other things, while their grocery bags have included whole wheat tortillas, brown rice and green beans.

“We made sure that we have food items from every group to include,” she added. “In fact, all items are low sugar, low sodium and low fat, so it’s also healthy.”

The Food Shuttle also sends out grocery gift cards and monthly booklets with shopping lists, healthy recipes and other materials. To educate participants about healthy living and nutrition, program organizers hold monthly bilingual “classes” via Zoom phone calls. The program’s ultimate goal, according to Tadesse, is to provide participating seniors with the tools to improve their health and eating habits.

FAERS resembles another program the Food Shuttle first began in Wake and later implemented in Johnston, where they’d send seniors monthly grocery bags. COVID-19, as always, forced them to end that program in Johnston — and that’s part of why they launched the FAERS program this year.

“It’s also because of COVID-19,” Tadesse said. “A lot of seniors have been affected by it, and the rate of food insecurity has increased because of that, so we wanted to come up with a creative way to address hunger-related issues in those counties.”

They chose to start in Chatham and Johnston counties because both have the highest concentration of minority seniors in their seven-county service area across central North Carolina, and minority seniors, Tadesse said, have an increased rate of food insecurity and COVID-related deaths.

“We wanted to focus our resources on groups that need it the most,” she said, adding, “We just thought it would be a good idea to start with those counties to see how the pilot program goes and then we definitely have plans to expand into other counties after the pilot pro-

gram is over.”

The entire program, she added, has been designed to preempt as many barriers as possible. They distribute food via drive-thrus, and so ask that participants have reliable transportation. Yet, Tadesse said, even if some seniors don’t, the Food Shuttle has partnered with local organizations that can deliver door-to-door.

Since many participants may not have internet access or digital know-how, FAERS conducts monthly classes over the phone, providing participants a phone number and meeting ID that enable them to attend the class “in a teleconference manner.”

Spanish-speaking interns translate all documents and materials, like shopping lists, into Spanish for those who don’t speak English. Classes, too, are held in both languages. To overcome any financial barriers, the program supplies participants with monthly \$30 Food Lion gift cards and ensures that items on suggested shopping lists are under \$30.

“Even though our program does not completely replace their food budget, we supplement it,” Tadesse said. “So that’s lifting that financial burden, with some seniors having to choose between paying their bills or paying for their medication over buying healthy food for themselves and their families.”

To sign up, interested seniors can email piniel@foodshuttle.org or call 919-390-1978. If seniors register via email, they’ll receive a link to the application form. The Inter-Faith Food Shuttle has also been printing out application forms and mailing them with return envelopes to seniors who’ve signaled their interest.

“For some seniors who maybe cannot read as well any more, or things like that, we can fill it out over the phone with them,” Tadesse said. “So we just read the questions from the application form, and they just tell (us) the answer, and we just fill it out over the phone, which we have done more of I think than any other way.”

The application form itself, Tadesse added, is “very simple and short.” Applicants only need to provide some basic personal information so that the Inter-Faith Food Shuttle can ensure they qualify for the program. No documentation necessary, Tadesse added.

Generally, she said Tuesdays and Thursdays would be the best times to call for those who only speak Spanish; otherwise, if Spanish speakers call, the Food Shuttle will have their Spanish-speaking interns call them back.

For more information, visit the Inter-Faith Food Shuttle’s website at www.foodshuttle.org.

Reporter Victoria Johnson can be reached at victoria@chathamnr.com.

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THE CREATIVE GOAT



SANCTUARY
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www.chathamnewsrecord.com



Submitted photo

Northwood's Ella Sullivan honored

The North Carolina Scholastic Media Association announced last week that Northwood High School's Ella Sullivan was one of three alternates for the Rachel Rivers-Coffey North Carolina High School Journalist of the Year award. Sullivan is the co-editor-in-chief at her school's news magazine, the Northwood Omniscient. The N.C. Press Foundation awarded each alternate \$1,000, as well as \$250 to their journalism programs.



Staff photo by Kim Hawks

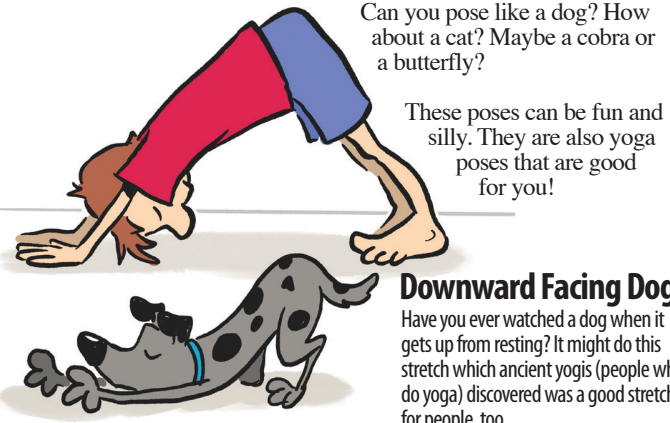
Lunches delivered to post office

Members of the Siler City Community Meal group delivered lunches last week to the staff at the Siler City Post Office. Here, from left, Gwen Overturf, postal clerk Octavio Rodriguez, Siler City Postmaster Darin Shamberger and Maggie Zwilling pose with meals. The Siler City Fire Department, Siler City Police Department, Siler City Pharmacy, and the Community Pharmacy have been among the recipients of these free lunches. Those who are working as a team to deliver meals are hopeful they can carry on with their free lunch mission until the Covid danger has passed. This depends totally on their funding. The Siler City Community Meal is so grateful to those who have donated to the effort and continue to invite donations for continued recognition of front line workers and local food services.



Yoga Animals

In many parts of the country, team sports have been cancelled because of the pandemic. In some places it is hard to play outside because of COVID and/or the weather. But there is one sport you can do in your own home. It's yoga!



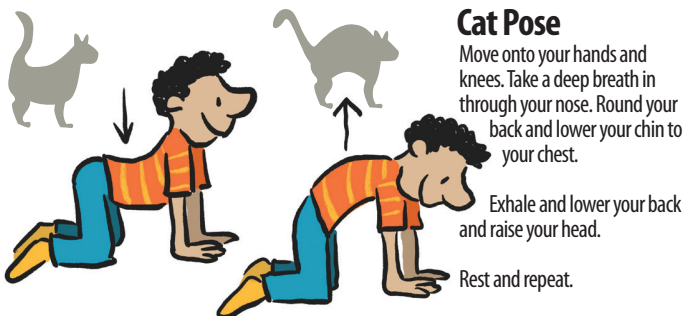
Can you pose like a dog? How about a cat? Maybe a cobra or a butterfly?

These poses can be fun and silly. They are also yoga poses that are good for you!

Downward Facing Dog

Have you ever watched a dog when it gets up from resting? It might do this stretch which ancient yogis (people who do yoga) discovered was a good stretch for people, too.

1. Go to your hands and knees and breathe in deeply through your nose.
2. Exhale and stretch your legs and arms so that your bottom is up in the air.
3. Push the ground firmly with your hands. Stretch your legs, bending and straightening your knees very carefully. Stop if you feel any pain!
4. Return to your hands and knees. Relax and repeat.

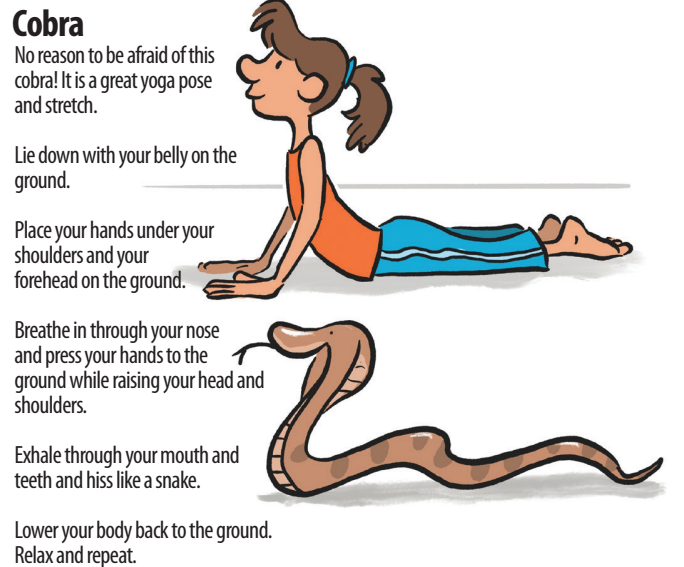


Cat Pose

Move onto your hands and knees. Take a deep breath in through your nose. Round your back and lower your chin to your chest.

Exhale and lower your back and raise your head.

Rest and repeat.



Cobra

No reason to be afraid of this cobra! It is a great yoga pose and stretch.

Lie down with your belly on the ground.

Place your hands under your shoulders and your forehead on the ground.

Breathe in through your nose and press your hands to the ground while raising your head and shoulders.

Exhale through your mouth and teeth and hiss like a snake.

Lower your body back to the ground. Relax and repeat.

What is Yoga?

Yoga is an ancient form of fitness with poses that help you stretch, relax and get stronger.

The Benefits of Yoga

Research shows yoga has many benefits. Use the code to find out what these are.

| | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| ■ = A | ■ = F | ★ = O | ■ = T |
| ■ = C | ■ = L | ■ = R | ■ = U |
| ■ = E | ■ = M | ■ = S | ■ = Y |

Yoga can improve



Yoga can improve



Yoga can reduce



Pigeon

Bring one leg in front of you so your shin is parallel to the top edge of a wall, draw the other leg behind so your knee is on the ground.

Your back foot can be flat on the ground, or your toes can be tucked under.

Yoga began in India long ago. Ancient statues show figures in various yoga poses.

No one knows exactly when yoga began. It's been around for thousands of years. How yoga is practiced has changed over time as different people in different places started doing it. But one thing that people who practice different kinds of yoga agree on is that yoga can improve health and well-being for people of all ages.



Butterfly

Sit on the floor and bring the soles of your feet together. Let your knees fall outward so your legs look like butterfly wings.

Extra! Extra! Hold That Pose!

Look through the newspaper for a photograph or drawing of an animal or person. Copy the pose and see how long you can hold it. The sports pages have great challenging poses.

Standards Link: Research: Use the newspaper to locate information.

Kid Scoop Together:

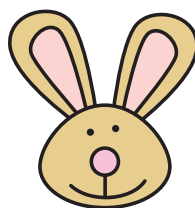
Breathing Exercises for Calm

Sometimes we feel some really big emotions. Anger, sadness or even happiness make it hard to calm down. Here are some fun breathing games that help calm those big emotions.



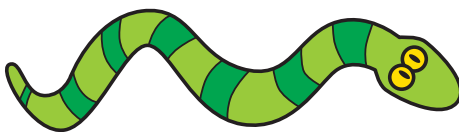
Smelling Flowers

Imagine you are smelling a flower, breathing in deeply through your nose and out through your mouth.



Bunny Breath

Just like a little bunny in the garden, take three quick sniffs in through your nose, and one long exhale out through the mouth.



Snake Breath

Pretend to be a snake and hiss. Inhale deeply through your nose and blow out through your mouth with a soft and low hissing sound.



Bumblebee Breath

Sit comfortably and inhale through your nose, keeping your mouth closed. Next, with your mouth still closed, make a humming or buzzing noise (like a bumblebee) as you exhale.



Dragon Fire Breath

Place your fingers under your chin, and as you inhale, raise your elbows as high as you can around your neck and face. On the exhale, lower your elbows back down.

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Friends of the Library hits pause, stays above water after losing annual book sales

BY JAMES KIEFER
News + Record
Correspondent



Staff photo by Kim Hawks

The Chatham Community Library in Pittsboro.

If you were to ask Rhoda Berkowitz what she does, she might tell you she works in mysteries.

That’s technically true, considering she’s the person who organizes the mysteries sections of the biannual Friends of the Chatham Community Library book sales.

She said she got involved with the FCCL around 17 years ago when she first moved to Chatham County, and soon turned volunteering with the group into a priority.

“As soon as we moved I got involved with the book sale,” she said. “I also got on the board of the Friends. Then I was president of the board for two years and I’m still on the board.”

These days, that includes serving on committees within the nonprofit, and in a normal year helping out every Tuesday morning to organize books for one of the biannual book sales.

But Berkowitz could also tell you work has been slow as of late. The FCCL announced in February the cancellation of its Spring Book Sale — originally planned for late March — citing health concerns stemming from COVID-19. This marks the third book sale upended by the pandemic, and it’s leaving the organization in a bit of a holding pattern.

The FCCL is a nonprofit volunteer group that aims to support the Chatham Community Library in Pittsboro. Besides serving as an advocate for the library, the FCCL contributes

supplemental funds for expenditures that fall outside of the county’s allotted budget for the reading center.

Karen Hengeveld, the president of the Friend’s board of directors, estimates each book sale raises between \$17,000-20,000 in gross revenue. A portion of that money goes back to the nonprofit to handle operating costs, but Hengeveld said much of it is funneled to the library.

“Those two book sales a year are probably approximately 60% of the revenue we provide to the library each year,” she said. “We’re a 501(c)3, so we keep track of how the money is spent of course, but we give the library almost all of that money back directly for programs and services.”

In addition to that, the FCCL also holds grant money intended for the library. A grant may stipulate it has to be administered by a 501(c)3, according to Hengeveld,

so the FCCL distributes the money as the library meets the goals laid out by the grant.

But Hengeveld also said grant funding is typically much less money than what is raised via book sales. And some of that book sale money has been the backbone for a few crucial library services during the pandemic.

“Our OverDrive content e-books, e-audio, e-magazines — the Friends pay for all of that and our demand for that service has more than doubled since we closed last year,” said Rita Van Duinen, Chatham Community Library’s branch manager. “So if we didn’t have (that funding), we’d have a lot of unhappy people out there.”

Van Duinen said contributions from the FCCL underwrite other things like programming services, library collections and some staff development. Besides the odd contribution that comes in from a family or

friend of the library, Van Duinen said the nonprofit is also the library’s biggest fundraiser.

One thing to note is that even if the book sale doesn’t happen, it doesn’t mean the library won’t see similar financial support from the FCCL as it has in years past.

Don Knowles is the former president of the FCCL and serves on the Library Advisory Committee. He mentioned the nonprofit has been able to build up reserve funds over the years.

“We have been able to maintain our financial support for the last year and a half, but we can’t do that indefinitely,” he said.

Knowles projected those reserves could likely continue a sustained rate of giving for another year or so, but he said keeping up similar contributions in the future would likely require a book sale to take place by the spring of 2022. Van Duinen also mentioned the library had

actually decreased budget requests from the FCCL over the last three years because of a smaller membership base and revenue loss from sales.

And when another book sale will happen is just one of a few questions on the FCCL’s plate.

“We’re just on a huge pause until we see how things go with vaccines and herd immunity and safety,” Hengeveld said. “Everyone’s going to be wearing masks for a long time down the road until we’re sure, but the book sale team has not talked about a fall book sale yet and we won’t for quite a while, frankly, until sometime this summer.”

The FCCL lost its March 2020 book sale when the library closed its doors to the public last year during the early stages of the pandemic. Hengeveld said volunteers can’t even get to the 17,000 books and other items that were being staged for that sale, but the lack of sales meant lost opportunities to build up another critical resource: people.

Besides books, another thing sold at these book sales are memberships to the nonprofit. These start at \$15, and Hengeveld estimated the current membership base at more than 600. In response to cancellations, the FCCL has sent out letters to the community asking for donations. Still, Hengeveld said revenue from memberships and donations can’t compete with the cash flow of the spring and fall book sales.

Also being lost with the book sales is social opportunity. Berkowitz said besides just getting books into people’s hands at reasonable prices, one

of her favorite things to see during the sales are moments of community.

“It’s a real community event,” she said. “People help each other at this sale; it’s not just looking for themselves. If they hear somebody wants a book, they’ll look for that person as well.”

There have been several times when a book made its way back into the sale after being sold at a previous FCCL fundraiser, Hengevald said. She mentioned the opening hours of each sale always seem to have a lot of high energy chatter and excitement.

Knowles called the book sale something that reminds people of the FCCL’s footprint in the community and continued support of the library.

“The book sale is a tangible thing members get back for their money,” he said.

And it’s that social capital Hengeveld hopes to capitalize on once it’s safe to do so again. She said other ideas she’s had for income generation that could rival the book sale are all tied to being out in the community, something the nonprofit’s volunteers can’t risk right now. Her priorities for the moment are to keep the organization above water as it waits for the library doors to reopen to the public.

“Some of the things that would be nice to have in an expansive, non-pandemic world are just going to have to wait awhile,” she said. “We can sort of breathe and see when the library opens. Until it makes sense to start ramping up the Friends activities, I’m not sure what we can do.”

CHATHAM CHAT | RITA VAN DUINEN

The pandemic closed its doors. The cyber attack knocked its systems offline. But the Chatham Community Library is still providing good reading.

Nearly a year into a pandemic that has turned operations at Chatham County’s public libraries upside down, Rita Van Duinen is part of a team continuing to work to keep the services available and useful. This week, Van Duinen, the branch manager for Pittsboro’s Chatham Community Library,

talks about how the library has ramped up services — despite doors still being closed and digital access interrupted by Chatham’s cyber attack.

A native of Greensboro, Van Duinen has been a Chatham County resident for more than 20 years. She began working in libraries while pursuing a degree in Russian Language and Literature at the University of Oregon in the 1980s. Van Duinen returned to North Carolina and in the early 1990s began a 17-year career at the UNC University Library system, during which she earned a Master of Science in Library Science from the school. Following a stint as lead instructor for CCCC’s Library and Information Technology program and time spent as a consultant to the Washington, D.C.-based Council on Library and Information Resources, she became branch manager of the Chatham Community Library in 2017.

All Chatham County libraries are still closed. Between the pandemic and the county’s cyber incident, which also affected the library, you’ve had a difficult last few months. But let’s talk about the good news first: curbside pickup and digital resources are still available. How does curbside pickup of physical materials from the library work for patrons?

Chatham County Public Libraries’ curbside service began on June 22, 2020, and it continues to be a successful program even while the county recovers from the cyber incident.

As a result of losing access to our library systems, we had to revert to a manual checkout process which produced a 120+ page document tracking items that went out of the building (~3,000 for the Pittsboro branch). Now that our systems are back online, we were able to reconcile our manual

transactions with our database and are currently performing a full inventory. This will ensure that the online catalog provides the most accurate data on our holdings.

Curbside service is available Monday-Friday (10 a.m. – 4 p.m.) at all three branches (Pittsboro, Siler City and Goldston). Patrons are now able to search the online catalog (www.chathamcountync.gov/library-online-resources) and place holds for items located at a specific branch. Once processed, library staff will contact you to schedule a pickup date and time. Staff wear face coverings and gloves and bring requests out to the patron’s vehicle for contactless delivery to the trunk or back seat. All requests are packaged up in a sealed bag.

Digital resources (including access to Libby and OverDrive) were affected by the county’s network issues. What’s the update here — what’s available and working, and what’s not?

Access to electronic content via Libby/OverDrive was temporarily disrupted due to the cyber incident. Because some of our library systems were offline for about six weeks, patron account information could not be verified in OverDrive. Working with Chatham County Management and Information Systems staff and our vendor, we were able to bring this service back online on Dec. 14. This was a real milestone for us since the demand for access to OverDrive content has more than doubled since closing for the pandemic. Because the demand is so high, we were able to secure some supplemental funding from the county to purchase additional content from OverDrive.

What other services are available even though the library is closed?

Once Chatham County Public Libraries closed last March, we knew immediately that we needed to pivot traditional services to a virtual environment as well as recognize our limitations in certain areas.

We held our first virtual summer reading program using a specialty software called Beanstack and will do the same this coming summer. We have also developed some new offerings for children and adults, all virtual, that have been successful. These include

the newly formed Kids’ Club for Social Justice, Digital Citizenship for Kids, our monthly virtual open mic program for adults as well as community-based events like the one we held in October on American poet Langston Hughes. The silver lining in all of this is that we have learned to adapt and navigate through these difficult times while also recognizing opportunity and re-envisioning our services.

Among the Chatham Community Library’s most popular elements have been the in-person classes and programs. Subscribers to your e-newsletter know there’s still a lot of activity here, even though your doors are locked. What can you share?

As we recover from the cyber incident and prepare for a post-pandemic environment, we are working under the auspices that aside from curbside service, all programming and instruction will currently remain virtual. We are taking this opportunity to work with County MIS to upgrade the public computer lab equipment and to get safety precautions in place for the day when we can reopen.

Check out our website (www.chathamcountync.gov/library) and online events calendar to see all of our current services and programs.

You’re closed, but your specialists are still working, including reference librarians. We’re all online so much these days...what kind of help can they provide with online resources?

Our Reference Librarians provide a whole host of services — everything from local history and genealogical research, conducting online instruction, answering general reference questions ... while also supporting Central Carolina Community College (CCCC) students, faculty, and staff. For the first quarter of the current fiscal year, reference staff offered over 20 online classes, created online tutorials and answered over 700 reference questions. They have been very busy!

What are you hearing about the situation from your regular patrons?

Of course, everyone wants to know when we will reopen, when the online catalog and patron account access will be restored (now resolved), and how to get a library card to access electronic

content. Our community members have been more than supportive and gracious as we make every effort to provide our best customer service in lieu of the challenges. Lovingly prepared trays and baskets of goodies to eat have been dropped off on numerous occasions and emails have been sent wishing us well while also thanking us for persevering.

The library’s offerings for children of all ages is pretty robust. What has the participation level been like during the pandemic?

Our Youth Services programming efforts have actually increased since closing including the new programming I have already mentioned. There are online story times, a series of poetry for young people, online craft making as well as take-and-make crafts we offer as part of curbside service. There is an online teen time, a kids’ coding group and virtual LEGO meetups. Staff have also partnered with other county departments such as Parks & Recreation’s “Holiday in the Park” event where they distributed 200 free books and holiday treat bags to children.

And finally...of course, every time we speak to you, we ask you 1) what you’re reading that you’ve enjoyed, and 2) what recommendations you have for others. What can you share?

In celebration of Black History Month, I am reading “The Souls of Black Folk,” written by W.E.B. DuBois in 1903. I had not read any of his works before and regret not doing so sooner. It is one of the most influential works in African American literature and an American classic. DuBois writes that “the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line”; a problem in 1903 and still one today, in my opinion.

As for recommendations, our inability to order, receive and process new titles these last several months has put us behind in getting the latest popular fiction and nonfiction on the shelves, but we are working to catch up. I have purchased all of The New York Times best sellers from October to February through OverDrive so they are available electronically. As always, if you have a purchase suggestion there is a form on our website that can be submitted for consideration.

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LEGALS

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY OF CHATHAM EXECUTOR'S NOTICE

The undersigned having qualified as Executor of the Estate of WILLIAM J. BUSBY, M.D., deceased, late of Chatham County, this is to notify all persons having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 31st day of May, 2021 or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned. This the 3rd day of February, 2021. Charles T. Busby, Executor of the Estate of William J. Busby P.O. Box 88 Maple, N.C. 27956 F11,F18,F25,M4,4tp

NOTICE TO CREDITORS NORTH CAROLINA CHATHAM COUNTY

20-E-167 All persons having claims against BARBARA J. LOTT, deceased, late of Chatham County, North Carolina, are notified to exhibit the same to the undersigned on or before the 12TH day of May, 2021, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of recovery. Debtors of the decedent are asked to make immediate payment. This the 11th day of February, 2021. Charity Alston, Executrix PO Box 1093 860 East Alston Rd Pittsboro, N.C. 27312 F11,F18,F25,M4,4tp

NOTICE TO CREDITORS NORTH CAROLINA CHATHAM COUNTY

21-E-64 All persons having claims against DAVID K. LOVINGS, deceased, late of Chatham County, North Carolina, are notified to exhibit the same to the undersigned on or before the 12TH day of May, 2021, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of recovery. Debtors of the decedent are asked to make immediate payment. This the 11th day of February, 2021. Julia Dowdy, Administrator 300 So. Evergreen Ave Siler City, NC 27344 c/o Lewis Fadely, PLLC 119 West Fir Avenue Siler City, NC 27344 F11,F18,F25,M4,4tp

NOTICE TO CREDITORS NORTH CAROLINA CHATHAM COUNTY

Having qualified as Administrator of the Estate of DOROTHY LOUISE TILLEY A/K/A DOROTHY G. TILLEY, late of Chatham County, North Carolina, the undersigned does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against the estate of said decedent to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 13th day of May, 2021, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons, firms and corporations indebted to the said estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned. This the 29th day of January, 2021. Michael Ray Tilley, Administrator of the Estate of

Dorothy Louise Tilley a/k/a Dorothy G. Tilley c/o Linda Funke Johnson, Attorney at Law P.O. Box 446 114 Raleigh Street Fuquay Varina, NC 27526 F11,F18,F25,M4,4tc

NOTICE TO CREDITORS NORTH CAROLINA CHATHAM COUNTY

Having qualified as Administrator of the Estate of RAY JACK TILLEY, late of Chatham County, North Carolina, the undersigned does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against the estate of said decedent to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 13th day of May, 2021 or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons, firms and corporations indebted to the said estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned. This the 29th day of January, 2021. Michael Ray Tilley, Administrator of the Estate of Ray Jack Tilley c/o Linda Funke Johnson Attorney at Law P.O. Box 446 114 Raleigh Street Fuquay Varina, NC 27526 F11,F18,F25,M4,4tc

NOTICE TO CREDITORS NORTH CAROLINA CHATHAM COUNTY

Having qualified as co-Executrices of the Estate of GEORGE MCLEAN STOCKSTILL of Chatham County, North Carolina, the undersigned do hereby notify all persons, firms, and corporations having claims against the estate of said decedent to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 11th day of May, 2021, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons, firms, corporations indebted to the said estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned. This is the 11th day of February, 2021. Marie Elizabeth Stockstill and Barbara Layne Stockstill Weller, co-Executrices c/o Richard F. Prentis, Jr. Stubbs, Cole, Breedlove, Prentis & Biggs 4 Consultant Place Durham, NC 27707 F11,F18,F25,M4,4tc

NOTICE TO CREDITORS NORTH CAROLINA CHATHAM COUNTY

21-E-52 All persons having claims against TIMOTHY JAMES GRINNELL, deceased, late of Chatham County, North Carolina, are notified to exhibit the same to the undersigned on or before the 12th day of May, 2021, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of recovery. Debtors of the decedent are asked to make immediate payment. This the 11th day of February, 2021. William James Grinnell, Affiant #1 149 Charlie Perkins Rd Pittsboro, NC 27312 F11,F18,F25,M4,4tp

NOTICE TO CREDITORS NORTH CAROLINA CHATHAM COUNTY

Having qualified as Executor of the Estate of JAMES WILLIAM HAYS, late of 303 Hoot Owl Ln., Siler City, NC 27344 in Chatham County, North Carolina, the undersigned does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against the estate of said decedent to exhibit them to the undersigned at the address given below, on or before the 12th day of May, 2021, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their

recovery. All persons, firms and corporations indebted to the said estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned. This the 11th day of February, 2021. Patricia H. Hays, Executor of the Estate of James William Hays c/o Jason R. Jones, Attorney 880 MLK Jr. Blvd. Ste. 105 Chapel Hill, NC 27514 F11,F18,F25,M4,4tp

EXECUTOR'S NOTICE NORTH CAROLINA CHATHAM COUNTY

Having qualified on the 5th day of February, 2021, as Executor of the Estate of JOSEPH J. BEAL, deceased, late of Chatham County, North Carolina, this is to notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against the decedent to exhibit the same to the undersigned Executor on or before the 14th day of May, 2021, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons, firms and corporations indebted to the estate should make immediate payment. This the 11th day of February, 2021. Estate of Joseph J. Beal, Shawn Beal, Executor 1522 Grantville Lane Asheboro, North Carolina 27205 Attorney for Estate: William H Flowe, Jr. PO Box 1315 Liberty, NC 27298 Phone: (336) 622-2278 F11,F18,F25,M4,4tp

NOTICE TO CREDITORS NORTH CAROLINA CHATHAM COUNTY

All persons having claims against IRIS MAY SIMMONDS, deceased, late of Chatham County, North Carolina, are notified to exhibit the same to the undersigned on or before the 12th day of May, 2021, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of recovery. Debtors of the decedent are asked to make immediate payment. This the 11th day of February, 2021. Leslie A. Simmonds, Personal Representative 528 Legacy Falls Chapel Hill, NC 27517 c/o Hopler Wilms & Hanna, PLLC 2314 S Miami Blvd, Ste. 151 Durham, NC 27703 F11,F18,F25,M4,4tp

NOTICE TO CREDITORS NORTH CAROLINA CHATHAM COUNTY

20-E-647 All persons having claims against EFROSENE JUFFRAS, deceased, late of Chatham County, North Carolina, are notified to exhibit the same to the undersigned on or before the 12th day of May, 2021, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of recovery. Debtors of the decedent are asked to make immediate payment. This the 11th day of February, 2021. Diane M. Juffras, Executrix 203 Rosburn Way Chapel Hill, NC 27516 F11,F18,F25,M4,4tp

NOTICE TO CREDITORS NORTH CAROLINA CHATHAM COUNTY

HAVING QUALIFIED as Executrix of the Estate of RONALD L. TEAGUE, late of Chatham 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 on or before the 19th day of May, 2021, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. This the 9th day of February, 2021. Deborah Sue Y. Teague,

Executrix of The Estate of Ronald L. Teague Post Office Box 1806 Pittsboro, North Carolina 27312 MOODY, WILLIAMS & LEE, LLP Attorneys at Law Box 1806 Pittsboro, North Carolina 27312 (919) 542-5605 F18,F25,M4,M11,4tc

NOTICE TO CREDITORS NORTH CAROLINA CHATHAM COUNTY

21-E-78 All persons having claims against JOHN DOUGLAS WILSON, deceased, late of Chatham County, North Carolina, are notified to exhibit the same to the undersigned on or before the 19th day of May, 2021, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of recovery. Debtors of the decedent are asked to make immediate payment. This the 18th day of February, 2021. Nancy Pritchard Wilson, Administrator 813 Sheffield Drive, Apt 3 Siler City, NC 27344 F18,F25,M4,M11,4tp

NOTICE TO CREDITORS NORTH CAROLINA CHATHAM COUNTY

The undersigned, having qualified on the 9th day of February, 2021, as Co-Executors of the Estate of HEDRICK MITCHELL PHILLIPS AKA HEDRICK M PHILLIPS, deceased, of Chatham County, North Carolina, does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 23rd day of May, 2021, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned. This 18th day of February, 2021. Tracey E. Parker and Scott R. Phillips, Co-Executors Estate of Hedrick Mitchell Phillips aka Hedrick M Phillips c/o J Alan Campbell Law PO Box 850 Hillsborough, NC 27278 J Alan Campbell 919-451-5441 F18,F25,M4,M11,4tp

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NOTICE TO CREDITORS NORTH CAROLINA CHATHAM COUNTY

Having qualified as Executor of the Estate of JANICE RUTH HUSSEY COX, late of Chatham County, North Carolina, the undersigned does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against the estate of the decedent to exhibit them to the undersigned at the office of Ivey & Eggleston, Attorneys at Law, 111 Worth Street, Asheboro, North Carolina 27203, on or before May 21, 2021, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons, firms or corporations indebted to said estate should make immediate payment to the undersigned. This 18th day of February, 2021 Beatrice Sue Kennedy a/k/a Beatrice C. Kenney Executor of the Estate of Janice Ruth Hussey Cox, Deceased S. Scott Eggleston, Attorney IVEY & EGGLESTON, Attorneys at Law 111 Worth Street Asheboro, NC 27203

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F18,F25,M4,M11,4tp

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS
NORTH CAROLINA
CHATHAM COUNTY**
21-E-84
All persons having claims against LUTHER ISAAC LOTT, JR., deceased, late of Chatham County, North Carolina, are notified to exhibit the same to the undersigned on or before the 19th day of May, 2021, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of recovery. Debtors of the decedent are asked to make immediate payment. This the 18th day of February, 2021.
Nathan Lott, Administrator
120 Lillie Lane
Sanford, NC 27332
F18,F25,M4,M11,4tp

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS
NORTH CAROLINA
CHATHAM COUNTY**
21 E 88
The undersigned, having qualified as Executrix of the Estate of STEVEN EUGENE OLDHAM, deceased, late of Chatham County, North Carolina, notifies all persons,

firms and corporations having claims against the estate of said deceased to present them to the undersigned at her address, 3951 US Highway 15-501 N, Pittsboro, North Carolina, 27312, on or before the 19th day of May, 2021, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate will please make immediate payment. This 15th day of February, 2021.
Vicky T. Oldham, Executrix
3951 US Highway 15-501 N
Pittsboro, North Carolina 27312
GUNN & MESSICK, PLLC
P. O. Box 880
Pittsboro, North Carolina 27312-0880
F18,F25,M4,M11,4tc

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS
NORTH CAROLINA
CHATHAM COUNTY**
21-E-91
All persons having claims against ANNE MARIE ANTOINETTE RIETHER, deceased, late of Chatham County, North Carolina, are notified to exhibit the same to the undersigned on or before the 19th day of

May, 2021, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of recovery. Debtors of the decedent are asked to make immediate payment. This the 18th day of February, 2021.
Francine Marie Cracker, Executrix
C/O Bagwell Holt Smith P.A.
111 Cloister Ct, STE 200
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
F18,F25,M4,M11,4tp

NORTH CAROLINA – GUILFORD COUNTY
IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE
DISTRICT COURT DIVISION
18 JT 333
IN THE MATTER OF: Baby boy Thomas, a minor child born on February 1, 2018 in Greensboro, Guilford County, North Carolina
TO: DONALD RAY ALSTON, JR., FATHER.
TAKE NOTICE that a Petition seeking to terminate your parental rights for the juvenile referenced above, was filed on April 24, 2020 with the Clerk of Superior Court, Juvenile Division, Greensboro, Guilford County, NC.
You must answer this Petition within 40 days of February 18, 2021, exclusive of that date. You are entitled to attend any hearing affecting your rights. If you cannot afford to hire an attorney, you are entitled to a court appointed attorney. Your parental rights as to the juvenile will be terminated upon your failure to answer the Petition within the time specified. If you fail to attend any hearing in this matter, the Court may release your court appointed attorney without further notice to you. This the 18th day of February, 2021.
Shannon Peterson (#20805)
Deputy County Attorney
PO Box 3427
Greensboro, NC 27402
F18,F25,M4,3tc

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS
NORTH CAROLINA
CHATHAM COUNTY**
I, MARK L. AYER, have qualified as Executor of the Estate of JEAN M. AYER, deceased, formerly of Chatham County. This is to notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against the decedent to present them to me at the address shown below on or before May 27, 2021, or your claim will be barred pursuant to North Carolina General Statute 28A-19-3. I hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations indebted to the decedent to make immediate payment to me. This the 19th day of February, 2021.
Mark L. Ayer, Executor
Estate of JEAN M. AYER
Post Office Box 2608
High Point, North Carolina 27261
Steven H. Bouldin
KEZIAH GATES LLP
Post Office Box 2608, Suite 400
300 North Marin Street
High Point, North Carolina 27261
(336) 889-6900
F25,M4,M11,M18,4tc

**PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE
TOWN OF PITTSBORO**
The Pittsboro Town Board of Commissioners will hold the following Public Hearing on Monday, March 8, 2021 at 7:00 pm. The Public Hearing will be conducted remotely via Zoom, a teleconference software, for the following items: Planning Staff is requesting text amendments to the Pittsboro Zoning Ordinance concerning nightclubs, bars, and taverns:
1. Amend Section 5.2.1 Table of Permitted Uses, to change “Nightclubs (except adult

entertainment clubs), bars, taverns” from a special use to a permitted use in the C2 and C4 Zoning Districts.
2. Remove Section 5.3.3.35 Night clubs, Bars, and Taverns, (Regulations for Special Use Permits) in its entirety.
The purpose of the legislative public hearings is to provide interested parties with an opportunity to comment on the request. SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES IN THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT MAY BE MADE FOLLOWING THE PUBLIC HEARING. The complete records are on file at the Town Planning Department located at 480 Hillsboro Street, Suite 400, and are available for inspection through e-mail. The meeting will be held via Zoom, a teleconference software. Instructions on how to join the Zoom Meeting can be found on the Town’s website under the BOC Agenda, Minutes, and Audio tab (pittsboronc.gov). If you wish to make written comments, please send them to the Town Clerk, Cassie Bullock, PO Box 759, Pittsboro, NC 27312 or via email at Cbullock@pittsboronc.gov by 4 p.m. on March 8, 2021. The Clerk will receive written comments to be included in the minutes for 24 hours after the meeting. Please sign up with the Clerk by 4:00 p.m. on March 8, 2021 if you wish to participate.
F25,M4,2tc

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS
NORTH CAROLINA
CHATHAM COUNTY**
21-E-104
All persons having claims against CLYDE EDWARD CLARK, deceased, late of Chatham County, North Carolina, are notified to exhibit the same to the undersigned on or before the 26th day of May, 2021, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of recovery. Debtors of the decedent are asked to make immediate payment. This the 25th day of February, 2021.
Mark Allen Clark, Executor
321 Clyde Clark Rd
Siler City, NC 27344
F25,M4,M11,M18,4tp

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS
NORTH CAROLINA
CHATHAM COUNTY**
21-E-50
All persons having claims against MARCUS FREDRICK EDWARDS JR., deceased, late of Chatham County, North Carolina, are notified to exhibit the same to the undersigned on or before the 26th day of May, 2021, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of recovery. Debtors of the decedent are asked to make immediate payment. This the 25th day of February, 2021.
Martha Jean Brown, Executrix
1884 Andrews Store Road
Pittsboro, NC 27312
F25,M4,M11,M18,4tp

IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE
DISTRICT COURT DIVISION
FILE NO. 20 CVD 336
NORTH CAROLINA
CHATHAM COUNTY
MARINE FEDERAL CREDIT UNION,
Plaintiff vs
AUBREY BURNETTE,
DEFENDANT
NOTICE OF SERVICE OF PROCESS BY PUBLICATION
TO: AUBREY BURNETTE
Take notice that a pleading seeking relief against you has been filed in the above-entitled action.
The nature of the relief being sought is as follows: Money owed, which is more completely described in the Complaint for Chatham County File

Number 20 CVD 336, to collect the money owed.
You are required to make a defense to such pleading no later than April 13, 2021 which is forty (40) days from the first date of publication. Upon your failure to do so, the party seeking service against you will apply to the Court for the relief sought.
This the 4th day of March, 2021.
MEWBORN & DESELMs, AT-TORNEYS AT LAW
By: Brett J. DeSelms, Jonathan Eure,
Attorney for Plaintiff
829 Gum Branch Road, Suite C
Jacksonville, NC 28540
Telephone: (910) 455-9755
M4,M11,M18,3tc

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS
NORTH CAROLINA
CHATHAM COUNTY**
The undersigned, having qualified on the 23rd day of February, 2021, as Co-Executors of the Estate of BETTY JEAN PHILLIPS AKA BETTY J. PHILLIPS, deceased, of Chatham County, North Carolina, does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 7th day of June, 2021, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned. This 4th day of March, 2021.
Tracey E. Parker and Scott R. Phillips, Co-Executors
Estate of Betty Jean Phillips aka Betty J. Phillips
c/o J Alan Campbell Law
PO Box 850
Hillsborough, NC 27278
M4,M11,M18,M25,4tc

TOWN OF SILER CITY PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE
The Board of Commissioners will conduct a PUBLIC HEARING ON MAR. 15, 2021, AT 6:30 PM IN THE CITY HALL COURTROOM LOCATED AT 311 N. 2ND AVE. Public hearing and Board discussion will be conducted on the following requests: Town of Siler City proposes text amendments to the following sections of the UDO: §147 Table of Permissible Uses (primary residence with accessory apartment, R-20), §148(e) Primary Residence With Accessory Apartment, §168 Residential Density (primary residence with accessory apartment), §286 Satellite Parking (600 feet, exceptions, exclusions, C-C). The proposed items are available for review by contacting the Planning and Community Development Director at jmeadows@silercity.org or 919-742-2323. All persons interested in the outcome of the application are invited to attend the public hearing and present comments, testimony, and exhibits on the above referenced items. The Planning Board will meet on Mar. 8 @ 6:30 pm to consider a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners. If you are interested in attending the meetings via Zoom, then contact jbridges@silercity.org for the Planning Board meeting and jjohnson@silercity.org for the Board of Commissioner meeting. The Town of Siler City as an Equal Opportunity Employer, invites the submission of proposals from minority and women-owned firms and certified Section 3 business concerns if the contract is over \$100,000 for non-construction contracts. The Town of Siler City will make appropriate arrangements to ensure that

disabled persons are provided other accommodations, such arrangements may include, but are not limited to, providing interpreters for the deaf, providing taped cassettes of materials for the blind, or assuring a barrier-free location for the proceedings. This information is available in Spanish or any other language upon request. Please contact Nancy Hannah at 919-726-8625, 311 North Second Avenue, Siler City, North Carolina 27344, or nhannah@silercity.org for accommodations for this request. Esta información está disponible en español o en cualquier otro idioma bajo petición. Por favor, póngase en contacto con Nancy Hannah al nhannah@silercity.org o 919-726-8625 o en 311 North Second Avenue, Siler City, North Carolina 27344 de alojamiento para esta solicitud.
M4,M11,2tc

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS
NORTH CAROLINA
CHATHAM COUNTY**
21-E-122
All persons having claims against MARGIE MARTIN KIVETT, deceased, late of Chatham County, North Carolina, are notified to exhibit the same to the undersigned on or before the 4th day of June, 2021, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of recovery. Debtors of the decedent are asked to make immediate payment. This the 4th day of March, 2021.
Diane K. Saylor, Limited Personal Representative
220 North Tenth Avenue
Siler City, NC 27344
M4,M11,M18,M25,4tp

**CREDITOR'S NOTICE
NORTH CAROLINA
CHATHAM COUNTY**
Having qualified on the 23rd of February 2021, as Co-Administrators of the Estate of CHARLES NEWELL HANCOCK, JR., deceased, late of Chatham County, North Carolina, this is to notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against the decedent to exhibit the same to the undersigned on or before the 4th day of June, 2021, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons, firms and corporations indebted to the estate should make immediate payment. This the 1st day of March 2021
Daune Honeycutt and Shara Bunker, Co-Administrators of The Estate of Charles Newell Hancock, Jr.
213 Sugar Mill Road
Sanford, NC 27332 and
1940 Chris Cole Road
Sanford, NC 27332
Attorneys: Law Offices of W. Woods Doster, P.A.
115 Chatham Street, Suite 302
Sanford, NC 27330
M4,M11,M18,M25,4tc

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS
NORTH CAROLINA
CHATHAM COUNTY**
ALL PERSONS, firms and corporations having claims against GARY DEAN JACKSON, deceased, of Chatham County, N.C., are notified to exhibit the same to the undersigned on or before Friday, June 4, 2021, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of recovery. Debtors of the decedent are asked to make immediate payment. This day, Thursday, March 4, 2021.
Rachel Jackson, Executor of the Estate of Gary Dean Jackson
278 Woodfield Court,
Fuquay Varina, NC 27526
M4,M11,M18,M25,4tp

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Photo courtesy of the Chatham Sheriff's Office

Pet of the Week: PRETTY GIRL

The Chatham County Sheriff's Office would like you to meet Pretty Girl, a 5-year-old, spayed, calico domestic shorthair. Pretty Girl loves to be snuggled and will lick your hand affectionately when you pet her. She is unique in appearance and temperament and would do well with a patient family who will help her acclimate to a new environment. Pretty Girl is also a bit on the curvy side, so her ideal owner would be supportive of her current weight loss efforts. Pretty Girl is seeking a loving, calm household, preferably with no dogs or small children to startle her from her catnaps. She gets along well with other felines, but would also be content as a solo companion to her new human. For more information about how to meet or adopt Pretty Girl or another pet, please contact the Sheriff's Office Animal Resource Center at 919-542-7203 to schedule an appointment for a visit at 725 Renaissance Dr., Pittsboro.

Engrossing ‘The Mauritanian’ forgets things that make good movies great

There is a running thread of self-evidence that runs throughout



NEIL MORRIS
Film Critic

many of the films chronicling American intelligence gathering in the post-9/11 era. Their principle preassumption — that rendition and torture are both immoral and counterproductive to their supposed aims — is well-founded.

However, that air of presumption often bleeds over into other basic elements of storytelling and filmmaking. Such is the case in “The Mauritanian,” a generally engrossing true story about a national stain that forgets, or glosses over, the things that make good movies great.

The titular protagonist is Mohamedou Ould Salahi (played terrifically by Tahar Rahim), and the film opens with Salahi being abducted from his Mauritania home by American agents in 2002. The narrative oscillates between Salahi’s Kafka-esque odyssey, which culminates with his 14-year imprisonment in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, and the years-long efforts to free Salahi from custody. The story is told from three overlapping perspectives. Alongside Salahi’s hellish life at Gitmo, there is the work of his defense counsel, Nancy Hollander (Jodie Foster), and the epiphany experienced by Salahi’s lead prosecutor, Lt. Colonel Stuart Couch (Benedict Cumberbatch).

[Disclaimer: I graduated with the same law school class as Couch from Campbell University, and it was admittedly a tad jarring, during a scene late in the film, to

see the Oscar-nominated Cumberbatch wearing a Campbell Law School polo shirt.]

The film’s most intriguing components relay Salahi’s life at Gitmo, a prison erected along a Caribbean shoreline that is anything but an island paradise. Director Kevin Macdonald (“The Last King of Scotland”; “State of Play”) delves into the security levels of the facility, from the inmates’ carefully choreographed daily movements to the constrained access of people and papers flowing in and out of the prison. Meetings between detainees and their attorneys are time-limited. Letters sent in or out, even the handwritten notes taken by the lawyers, are screened by government officials to excise any allegedly classified or sensitive information.

When Salahi refuses to confess any involvement with planning the 9/11 attacks, the initial derogatory, heavy-handed interrogation by FBI agents takes a far darker turn when he is turned over to military authorities. An extended montage captures the physical and psychological torture that Salahi suffers, including acts of sexual humiliation and being taken out on a boat for a mock drowning execution.

Still, that segment occupies 5-10 minutes of screen time. The remainder of “The Mauritanian” depicts the actions of its principal characters without explicating their background or underlying motivations. Hollander, a high-powered civil attorney, is driven to take a sabbatical from her law firm and volunteer to represent Salahi, in the face of blowback from corporate clients and the public, well, just because. Hollander’s young associate (played

The Mauritanian
GRADE: B –
DIRECTOR: Kevin Macdonald
STARRING: Tahar Rahim, Jodie Foster, Benedict Cumberbatch and Shailene Woodley
MPAA RATING: R
RUNNING TIME: 2 hr. 9 min.

Shailene Woodley), initially eager to help represent Salahi, gets cold feet after she reads Salahi’s tainted confessions, well, apparently because in her world lawyers never represent guilty clients. Couch, who lost a close friend during the 9/11 attacks, undergoes a crisis of conscience — one decidedly not shared by his military superiors — as he delves deeper into the government’s case, well, just because. The filmmakers, who correctly posit the horrors Salahi suffers and his overarching innocence of the allegations against him, do not effectively resolve why Salahi furiously deletes his mobile phone contacts when apprehended, previously traveled abroad to train with Al-Qaeda, and was evidently connected enough that he once received a call from a telephone associated with Osama bin Laden.

These are deficits of character and plot development, and while these shortcomings do not detract from the film’s main thrust, they do undercut the film’s thematic breadth and effectiveness. “The Mauritanian” features a top-shelf performance by Rahim, but the reminder is a humanitarian procedural that does not inject itself with enough humanity.

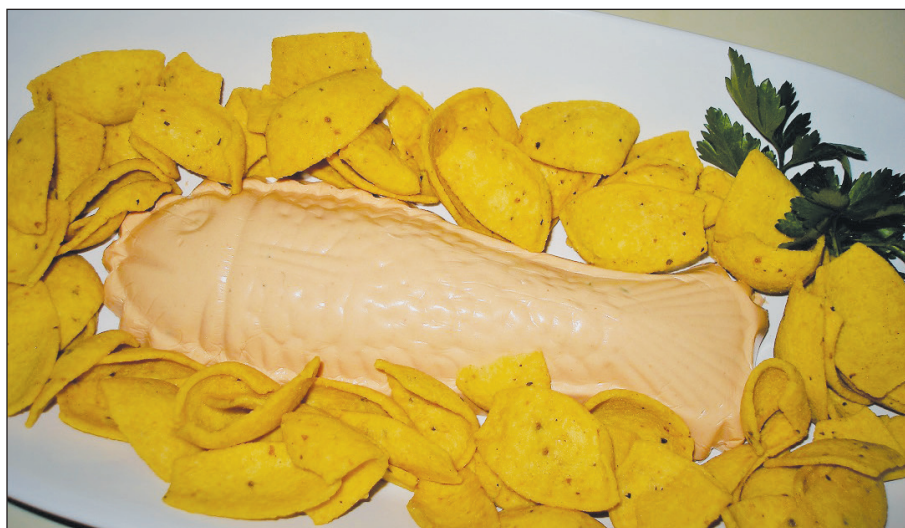


Photo courtesy of Debbie Matthews

Tuna mousse, a favorite.

The secret’s out

Retail is a tough job. It’s not just that it’s hard, physical work, and long



DEBBIE MATTHEWS
The Curious Cook

hours. The folks that staff your favorite store don’t really have Christmas.

It’s the busiest time of the year, and it doesn’t stop until well after the big day. It’s difficult to even run and grab some take-out for lunch. (And supper, and breakfast. I told you the hours were brutal.)

Thanksgiving weekend is the ultimate insanity. With only 30 minutes for a meal, there is no way to go to the food court, stand in line, order, wait for it, and eat.

When I managed a store, I would have everyone bring food that weekend, and we would have a potluck kind of thing in the back. One year, I had a young woman named Sherry working for me. On Black Friday, she brought a dish I had never seen before. She called it tuna mousse. I know, it sounds a little fishy (sorry for the bad pun).

It was pinkish and molded into a fish shape. Truthfully, it kinda scared me. But I bravely tried a bite. The moment it passed my lips, the heavens opened and I swear, I heard angels singing. It was amazing. I was in love.

At the time, I was most definitely not a cook. For dinner, I could make reservations, and make Petey take me out. That was pretty much it. But this stuff was so good, I was ready to try.

There was one small problem. Sherry wouldn’t share with me. I asked her for the recipe. Nope. I begged for it. Nope. I even half-seriously threatened her (I’m not exactly intimidating). Nope. It was a family secret, and not to be shared. She did offer to make it when I wanted it, but I wanted that darn recipe. No dice.

I figured that was that. And when Sherry changed jobs, we lost touch. But I still remembered that mousse

with longing.

Before I was banned by Petey, I was a cookbook junkie. I was constantly picking up cookbooks at bookstores, grocery stores, and yard sales. But eventually, I had so many that we would soon need an addition on the house to store them all. Thus, the ban.

In my collection, I had a Sunset appetizer book (the book is now lost; this recipe is my rendition). Leafing through it one day, I came upon a recipe for salmon mousse. I had flipped past it many times, but because I would rather eat dry dog food than salmon, I had never really read the recipe. One day, for some reason, though, I did.

The ingredients niggled at me. They seemed familiar. Then I had a realization. The ingredients and procedure looked something like what I imagined was the long yearned-for tuna mousse. I decided to give it a whirl, substituting tuna for the despised salmon.

I guess the tuna gods were smiling on me that day because I decrypted the recipe. It tasted exactly like Sherry’s secret family dish. It’s easy to put together. And I finally had my recipe.

Crostini or crackers are the classy route, but I just love it on “Fritos Scoops.” Something in the combination of the salty, corny, crunchy, Fritos, and the mousse is ambrosia to me.

I’ve recently discovered that I don’t need to spend \$3-5 dollars on Fritos at the mega-mart. The dollar store has a version of “scoop-like corn chips” that are indistinguishable from the name-brand version.

What do we do with all the money we save by buying dollar store chips?

Say it with me now...

“We buy shoes!”

Finally, I’ve got a confession to make. As much as I love this stuff, the fact that I’ve figured out the forbidden recipe gives me an extra, evil thrill each time I make it. And it’s an even bigger thrill to share it with you all.

Thanks for your time.
Contact me at dm@bullcity.mom.

NEWS BRIEFS

Chapel Hill nonprofit offers free FAFSA help to Hispanic high schoolers

Hispanic high school seniors in Chatham who haven’t yet completed the FAFSA form can seek help from LatinxEd, a Chapel Hill nonprofit dedicated to advancing educational equity for first-generation Hispanic college students.

Through March 7, college advisers with LatinxEd’s College y Consejos program will offer Hispanic seniors and their families free 30-minute sessions in which they’ll help them complete the FAFSA form (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). All sessions are online. Interested students and families can schedule appointments in bit.ly/cycFAFSA.

This FAFSA initiative — created in partnership with MyFutureNC’s First in FAFSA initiative — seeks to “ensure that Latinx students & families have the resources they need to complete their FAFSA,” per LatinxEd’s January newsletter. The First in FAFSA initiative aims to increase the number of high school seniors overall who complete the FAFSA.

In North Carolina, just over 40% of seniors have completed the form so far. By completing the FAFSA, eligible students can access Pell Grants,

federal work-study and state financial aid, according to the January newsletter about the FAFSA initiative. Parents’ immigration status doesn’t hurt their students’ eligibility for financial aid.

LatinxEd’s daytime weekday appointments only offer assistance in English, while bilingual coaches will be available on weeknights and Sundays to assist families and students in Spanish. Once students and families make their appointments, they’ll receive a confirmation email with a list of documents they’ll need to bring to complete the FAFSA. The list will be in English and Spanish.

Appointments are open to high school counselors as well, and students and families don’t need to be associated with the organization to receive help. For more information, visit latinxed.org.

Gee named regional sales manager for Chore-Time

Brad Gee, a native of Siler City, has been named Regional Sales Manager for Chore-Time, according to Kevin Alger, Sales Manager, U.S. and Canada, for the CTB Inc. business unit.

Gee will cover Chore-Time’s northeast U.S. territory in this position.

Prior to his employment with CTB, Gee

gained 17 years of experience working for one of the world’s largest poultry producers. He most recently held the position



Gee

of broiler manager, in which his duties included managing overall grow-out across 10 counties, fostering relationships with contract growers and overseeing employees at the contract farms, among other responsibilities.

Gee attended N.C. State in Raleigh where he earned a degree in poultry science and swine technology.

Chore-Time (www.choretime.com) continues its tradition established in 1952 of leadership in the design, manufacture and marketing of equipment for poultry and egg production. With complete end-to-end systems for feeding, feed handling, drinking, egg handling, climate control and house management, Chore-Time is a market leader known for product performance, tailored solutions and a proven independent distribution network. Part of the CTB, Inc. family of companies, Chore-Time operates globally from facilities in Indiana, Alabama, the Netherlands and Poland.

— Cn+R staff reports

Secret Tuna Mousse

1 large and 1 small can albacore tuna
1 large and 1 small block cream cheese
1 can tomato soup
1 cup mayo

1/2 small white onion
2 envelopes unflavored gelatin
1/4 cup cold water
salt and pepper (if you use white pepper, the finished mousse won’t show and dark flecks)

Put drained tuna and onion in food processor. Run until the tuna and onion are finely chopped and thoroughly mixed. Add mayo and pulse until it’s all combined.

Meanwhile, mix water with gelatin and allow to bloom, or gel a bit (it will get a little stiff, but that’s OK).

In a saucepan, warm soup, and melt cream cheese into it. Just warm it, don’t let it boil, or even simmer. When the cheese has all melted, fold in gelatin and allow to melt.

Mix tuna mixture and soup mixture together. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Pour into lightly greased mold, and place into fridge for at least four hours to set.

Unmold, and serve with crostini or crackers.

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