

Chatham News + Record

Chatham County, N.C. | DEC. 31, 2020 - JAN. 6, 2021 | www.chathamnewsrecord.com | \$1

Chatham's new Animal Resource Center? It's the cat's meow



Staff photo by Kim Hawks

Karen Rogers, director of the Chatham County Animal Resource Center since May, has worked in animal services for more than 17 years.

BY D. LARS DOLDER
News + Record Staff

PITTSBORO — Chatham County's Animal Resource Center will unveil a new addition to its facility in early 2021 as part of a larger effort to rebrand the department's management, mission and goals for the future, department leaders said.

The new building is under construction immediately adjacent to Chatham's current animal shelter on County Landfill Road in Pittsboro. Upon completion, it will nearly triple the ARC's room, increasing total space from 3,991 square feet to 11,643 and providing shelter for 88 dogs and 120 cats (up from 40 dogs and 70 cats in the current building).

With expanded capacity and modified amenities, the new building will help to



Staff photo by Kim Hawks

Karen Rogers, right, has a capable team at the Chatham County Animal Resource Center, but the department is still understaffed.

further distance Chatham's ARC from traditional animal shelter tropes.

"We are not the stereotypical, mean-spirited dogcatchers depicted in cartoons," said Chatham County Sheriff Mike Roberson, whose office annexed animal services from the county's health department in 2019. "And our facility is not a pound where animals are cramped in boxes and hardly sustained — they are loved and cherished during their time with us and we do all we can to heal,

rehabilitate and match them with loving homes or rescue organizations."

Karen Rogers, the ARC's director since May, is especially concerned with attending to the animals' well-being. She joined the sheriff's office staff to oversee the ARC building's design and construction and took great care to ensure that animals passing through would find a nurturing environment.

See **ANIMAL**, page A11

Smith named EDC president

Joins after posts in Sanford

BY BILL HORNER III
News + Record Staff

PITTSBORO — When Chatham's new Economic Development Corporation president drives to his office for the first time on Jan. 25, he won't have far to travel.

It's just 23 minutes



Smith

from his driveway in Lee County. Michael Smith, whose 20 years of economic development experience includes leadership positions at the Sanford Area Growth Alliance (SAGA), has been named by the Chatham County EDC board as the organization's new president. Smith currently serves as the economic development executive director with SAGA, and prior to that, CEO of the organization, which includes Sanford's Chamber of Commerce.

What does Michael Smith see for Chatham's future? See Q&A, Page A3.

He replaces Alyssa Byrd, who left the post in late August for a similar position in Fuquay-Varina.

"We are excited that Mike will be leading the economic development

See **SMITH**, page A3

Longtime Chatham teacher passes away, to be missed by "entire school community"

BY HANNAH MCCLELLAN
News + Record Staff

SILER CITY — Janet Brady Bridges, who was known for her kindness and beautiful smile, died Christmas Day at Chatham Hospital. She was 45 years old and in her 22nd year of teaching at Siler City

Elementary School.

Her niece, Amanda Brady, confirmed the news in a Facebook post early the next morning, ending her post with a heart-wrenching final request for her aunt: "Give Nanny a big hug for all of us."

"I've been trying to find the right words, but that's just not

possible ..." Brady wrote. "I will never forget how much love and compassion you always showed us. We love you so much and we miss you so even more."

Bridges, who was born in Chatham, was a lifelong member of Fall Creek Baptist Church in Bennett, where she was the pianist — known for

her solos, wedding music and love for Jesus. She also attended New Salem Baptist Church in Pittsboro. She loved to offer encouragement and "always had a kind word for everyone she met," her obituary said, and she loved her family deeply.

See **TEACHER**, page A11



A look back

In Chatham County, 2020 felt like a hundred years, but it was really two: before March 27, when N.C. Gov. Roy Cooper issued a stay-at-home order that went into effect a few days later, and after — when the COVID-19 pandemic really became the year's defining story. On pages A6-7, you'll find our look back at Chatham's major stories from a difficult year.

Staff photo illustration by Peyton Sickles

IN THE KNOW

What the school board's Seaforth enrollment clarification means. **PAGE A2**

Historic achievements, new normals headline 2020 Chatham sports. **PAGE B1**

Chatham Ch@t: Here's what we've learned from this year's elections. **PAGE B3**

Chatham author's memoir explores identity, hatred and reconciliation. **PAGE B7**



Loves Creek Watershed is not just a flood risk, it's an amenity

BY D. LARS DOLDER
News + Record Staff

SILER CITY — Loves Creek Watershed, an 8-square-mile water system that flows through Siler City, has often been coined a hazard. But representatives from the Loves Creek Watershed Stewards hope to redefine the town's perception of what they call a

valuable amenity.

The watershed — an area of land that ultimately drains into the Rocky River — nearly engulfs Siler City. All of downtown lies within its 400-acre girth, as well as several populous areas such as the Park Shopping Center.

"Loves Creek is an impaired watershed — an impaired and largely forgotten watershed,"

said Catherine Deininger, a member of the LCWS. "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.

"Its issues are pretty much a stormwater runoff problem," Deininger said. "And that has a lot to do with development and land practices, and what we all

individually do."

Deininger, a Chatham resident, is a co-founder of the environmental consulting firm Biocenosis. She has worked for more than 20 years in watershed protection and for six years with LCWS.

"All the water that falls within Siler City pretty much

See **WATERSHED**, page A11

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Events are subject to change based on closures due to coronavirus. Verify with organizers prior to events.

HOLIDAY REMINDER

The New Year's Day holiday means the closing of many businesses, government agencies and more. Please check special holiday hours for closings and changes in hours of operation.

CANCELLATIONS

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 Siler City Board of Commissioners will meet at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 4, at Siler City Town Hall.

Chatham Community Library's Virtual Winter Reading Program will offer its virtual Winter

Reading Program "Ten to Try" until Jan. 15. For more information, contact Youth Services Librarian Katy Henderson at cclkatyh@gmail.com.

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.

OTHER

The Chatham Historical Museum is open with regular hours Wednesday, Thursday, and Fridays from 11 a.m. until 4 p.m. We will be closed Dec. 31 and Jan. 1 for New Years. Masks required and groups will be distanced. Adult and kid friendly, with no admission fee. The 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 at Pittsboro. More info: <https://chathamhistory.org>.

The Second Bloom of Chatham Thrift Shop will move to Chatham Commons, with the Grand Opening on Tuesday, January 5. We will be located at 630 East St., Pittsboro in the Food Lion Shopping Center. All proceeds provide support of domestic violence and sexual assault victims 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.

Adult volunteers needed at Chatham Hospital in Siler City, a 25-bed Critical Access Hospital located in Siler City and part of the UNC Health Care System. All prospective volunteers must complete an on-line application, a criminal background check, an orientation and have documentation of required immunizations. To learn more go to: www.chathamhospital.org/ch/about-us/volunteer.

Volunteers needed: Nonprofit agencies in Chatham seek teen volunteers to help with many projects. Teens can help at food pantries, in gardens, fundraising projects, office work, and care for animals. Chatham Connecting website lists many volunteer opportunities for youth. See where you are needed to help in the community: www.chathamconnecting.org.

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.bstrop93.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.

SEAFORTH ATTENDANCE ZONE

What do the school board's enrollment clarifications mean?

BY HANNAH MCCLELLAN
News + Record Staff

PITTSBORO — The Chatham County Board of Education made several enrollment clarifications in December regarding the new Seaforth High School, deciding rising 10th grade students could remain at Northwood High School for the 2021-22 academic year if they were rezoned to Seaforth.

The board also voted that students living in areas affected by Seaforth's attendance zone could continue under previously approved reassignments to other schools, and that reassignment criteria and discretionary admission could take place during Seaforth's first year for employees only — impacting the children of employees who can attend CCS in the attendance zone their parents work in, even if their residency isn't in Chatham.

BOE Chairperson Gary Leonard told the News + Record that the board tried to use consistent criteria in making attendance zone decisions.

"What we try to do, each board member, is what we think is the right thing for our students," Leonard said. "And to keep our schools, of course, as balanced as we possibly could."

The clarifications, made during the board's Dec. 14 meeting, followed controversy surrounding the attendance zone for the new school. The board unanimously voted in August to approve Scenario 3, which zones

Briar Chapel to Seaforth and Chatham Park splits between Northwood and Seaforth. During months of public input sessions overwhelmingly supporting Scenario 2 — which zoned Briar Chapel to Northwood and all of Chatham Park to Seaforth — many citizens stated significant concern about other options that would "cluster affluence" at Seaforth. The new high school, located off of U.S. Hwy. 64 near Jordan Lake, configured its attendance zone from the existing Northwood High School attendance zone, due in no small part to significant overcrowding at Northwood.

Seaforth is set to open in fall 2021 to 9th and 10th graders, and is set to eventually support 1,200 students. Northwood currently has 1,400 students but according to district data projections, will have approximately 1,056 students in 2021-22 and 781 by 2025-26 under Scenario 3.

During the board's December discussion, it opted for referring to the discussion surrounding attendance zones as "enrollment continuation," to replace the term "grandfathering." The district cited a Dec. 4 report by the Raleigh News & Observer about Wake County School's decision to stop using that word because of its racist origins.

Grandfathering comes from the "grandfather clauses" used following the Civil War to keep Black people from voting. Wake County tweeted that it would discontinue the term next year.

"We are using it this year to avoid any confusion, as unfortunately we have been using this term for quite some time" the school system tweeted on Dec. 2.

CCS Chief Operations Officer Chris Blice acknowledged referring to the process as "enrollment continuation" instead of "grandfathering" had caused some confusion, but said the district had already stopped using that phrase.

In addition to the other clarifications made, the board also voted that rising 9th and 10th grade students who have older siblings who will remain at Northwood next year could also opt to remain if they are rezoned to Seaforth next year.

Blice told the News + Record that the district will send out letters including information for parents of students at schools near the Seaforth zone in January or February; those letters will include information on the new zone as well as how to apply for a specific exemption. The district also plans to create an address locator system in which families can see where their address falls in the new attendance zones.

"We'll roll all this information out to the students and families that will be affected," he said. "They'll have a window in which to request enrollment, consideration, continuation consideration. I would encourage people not to go too far at this point. Wait until they get the letter. Wait until they get

the information; it'll be really clear ... We'll have the information and we'll be able to give them good solid stuff."

Reporter Hannah McClellan can be reached at hannah@chathamnr.com.

READ IT ONLINE

Chatham County Council on Aging WEEKLY TRIVIA HUNT!

Q: What are the names of the Mt. Vernon springs?

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



NCDOT to Hold Virtual Presentation Regarding North Chatham Park Way in Chatham County

STIP Project R-5930

RALEIGH — The public is invited to a virtual presentation with the N.C. Department of Transportation, in partnership with the Town of Pittsboro and Chatham Park Investors, to discuss the proposed construction of a new north-south roadway east of Pittsboro called North Chatham Park Way.

The proposed project, State Transportation Improvement Program Project No. R-5930, begins at U.S. 64 Bypass just north of Suttles Road (S.R. 1809) and ends at the intersection of U.S. 15-501 near Russell Chapel Church Road (S.R. 1520), covering about 2.7 miles. It connects to the existing segment of Chatham Park Way (from U.S. 64 Business to U.S. 64 Bypass) that was recently built, which is now open to traffic. It is intended to provide an alternate route for traffic traveling through downtown Pittsboro while continuing to support the economic development of the region. It will increase mobility options for drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

The virtual presentation will begin at 5:45 p.m. on Jan. 7. Comments and questions on the project can be submitted by email, mail, or phone until Feb. 7. The R-5930 design maps and other information are available on the project web page at www.publicinput.com/North-Chatham-Park-Way, or contact the project team for a hard copy of the meeting materials. The presentation can be viewed or listened to using the following information and will also be available on the project website after the presentation.

Website: <https://tinyurl.com/R5930JAN2021>
Password: [hkU3eeeTv55](https://tinyurl.com/R5930JAN2021)
Phone: 1-415-655-0003
Access Code: 171 008 8268

Immediately following the NCDOT presentation, at 6 p.m. at the same website link, the N.C. Division of Water Resources will hold a separate public hearing for both the Chatham Park North Village Project and R-5930. Verbal comments will begin following the presentation and will be recorded. To speak at the hearing, you must register by noon on Jan. 7 at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/R5930REG>.

For more information, or to leave project comments, contact the project team at 984-205-6615, enter in code 8027; North-Chatham-Park-Way@publicinput.com; or 421 Fayetteville Street, Suite 600 in Raleigh.

NCDOT will provide auxiliary aids and services under the Americans with Disabilities Act for disabled people who wish to participate in this workshop. Anyone requiring special services should contact Lauren Putnam, Environmental Analysis Unit, at 1598 Mail Service Center in Raleigh; 919-707-6072; or Inputnam1@ncdot.gov as early as possible so that arrangements can be made.

Those who do not speak English, or have a limited availability to read, speak or understand English, may receive interpretive services upon request prior to the meeting by calling 1-800-481-6494.

Persons who do not speak English, or have a limited ability to read, speak or understand English, may receive interpretive services upon request prior to the meeting by calling 1-800-481-6494.

Aquellas personas que no hablan inglés, o tienen limitaciones para leer, hablar o entender inglés, podrían recibir servicios de interpretación si los solicitan antes de la reunión llamando al 1-800-481-6494.

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The Chatham News + Record (USPS #101-160) is published weekly, 52 weeks a year, by Chatham Media Group LLC, 303 West Raleigh Street, Siler City, N.C. 27344. Subscription rates: 1 year — \$45 in county, and \$50 out of county; 6 months — \$25 in county and \$30 out of county. Periodicals postage paid at the U.S. Post Office in Siler City.

N.C. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Chatham News + Record, PO Box 290, Siler City, N.C. 27344

Chatham athletes, artists win at Senior Games

From Chatham Council on Aging

In what has been a most unusual year due to COVID-19, we are so proud of our Chatham County athletes and artists who won medals in the 2020 North Carolina Senior Games Finals held in Raleigh.

Even though Chatham County was unable to hold in-person sporting events, athletes were still eligible to compete in the state finals. The state finals were conducted virtually with competitors reporting their scores in their respective age groups. Chatham County did hold a virtual SilverArts competition and those who placed were eligible to submit their entries virtually to the North Carolina Senior Games.

“We thank all of our competitors and sponsors for assuring that Chatham County was once again well represented in the state-wide competition,” said Liz Lahti, the Chatham County Senior Games Coordinator. “Everyone involved showed the spirit of Senior Games in overcoming the obstacles the pandemic presented.”

Local athletes and artists winning multiple state medals included:

- Keith Megginson won first place in the 50-yard Freestyle, 50-yard Breaststroke, 100-yard Breaststroke and 500-yard Freestyle, and second place 100-yard Freestyle.
- Stan Cox won first place in the 200-yard Individual Medley, 200-yard Breaststroke, 200-yard Butterfly, and 400-yard Individual Medley.
- David Schuman took



Submitted photo

This quilt, entitled ‘Coronavirus,’ was created by Nansi Greger-Holt. She placed third in the N.C. Senior Games competition.

second place in 200-yard Backstroke, 200-yard Individual Medley and the 400-yard Individual Medley, and third place in 200-yard Freestyle and 500-yard Freestyle.

- Michael Flanary won first place in the Basketball Shooting and Football Throw and second place in Bocce, Corn Hole and Mini Golf.
- Peter Brittenham took first place in the 1 mile Cycling and second place in the 5k Cycling.
- Ann Strickland placed first in the 5K Run and Horseshoes, and third place in Bowling Singles.
- Dan Tunstall won second place in the Cycling 1 Mile, Cycling 5K, and Cycling 10K.
- Charles Brown earned

second place in the 50 yard Breaststroke, and third place in the 50-yard Backstroke.

Other local athletes and artists earning state medals included:

First place

- Ronald Bousquet won first place in the Archery Conv-Recurve Barebow.
- Phyllis Blair won first place in Crocheting.
- Mark Herboth took first place in Woodturning.
- Ruth Slates won first place in Instrumental Solo.
- Dean Selleseth won first place in the Archery comp w/sight and Release Aid.



Submitted photo

This ‘Native Sphere’ quilt was created by Nansi Greger-Holt.



Submitted photo

This crochet piece, entitled ‘Spring Has Sprung,’ was created by Phyllis Blair and won first place in the 2020 N.C. Senior Games competition.

Rob Silbajoris took first place in the 50 Meter Dash.

Dennis Streets won first place in the Softball Throw.

Second place

Cindy Feld took second

place in the 5K Run.

Third place

Harvey Jones took third place in Golf.

Nansi Greger-Holt placed third in Needlework and Quilting (Machine Stitched).

SMITH

Continued from page A1

efforts of Chatham County,” EDC Chairman Jeff Wilson said in a statement last week. “Our community is poised to grow, and we believe he is the ideal person to facilitate that growth. His experience, leadership, and vision align with the goals of Chatham County.”

Smith, who’s also worked for the N.C. Dept. of Commerce, was part of a team which generated significant success in business recruitment and product development in Lee County — including landing Bharat Forge, part of India-based industrial giant Kalyani Group, which is investing \$170 million in an electric vehicle parts operation in Sanford.

That announcement alone means more than 450 new jobs in Lee County.

The move means that Smith is “changing teams,” as he says, and he’s excited about the prospect — particularly the fact that Chatham County has two megasites. The 2,500-acre Moncure Megasite and the Chatham-Siler City Advanced Manufacturing (CAM) Site, a 1,802-acre industrial site in western Chatham County, near Siler City, provide Smith and the EDC team with lots to show industrial prospects.

“We’re very well positioned,” Smith said. “Chatham County, with its available industrial real estate, is very well positioned. Having two sites in the 2,000-acre range is pretty dramatic. I mean, nobody else in the state has anything like that. And so I’m going to be really excited and talking to those two different ownership groups to get their ideas about the best way to move forward.”

Chatham County Manager Dan LaMontagne called the EDC a “key strategic partner of Chatham County and its municipalities.”

“We rely on the EDC to develop and implement a strategy for business attraction and retention as well as job creation in our community,” LaMontagne said. “We

look forward to working with Mike in carrying out that strategy.”

Smith has served as the President of the North Carolina Economic Development Association (NCEDA). He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and a Master’s Degree in Geography with a concentration in Urban/Regional Planning from East Carolina University.

He called his selection to the Chatham position an honor.

“This is an exciting opportunity to work in a fast-growing area that has an amazing group of assets in place, including the Chatham Park live/work/play community,” Smith said.

The Chatham County EDC is the lead economic development agency for Chatham County. Its mission is to build on Chatham County’s strategic location between the Triad and Triangle regions, positioning Chatham as the preferred location for emerging growth companies. The organization says its policy-driven approach leads it to focus on targeted attraction, retention, and entrepreneurship to improve the lives of County residents. The EDC supports infrastructure improvements and preservation of Chatham County’s strong quality of place.

Smith will start work at the Chatham EDC on Jan. 25.

He came to Sanford from his position as director of economic development in Stanly County. Prior to that he served in Davidson County economic development and led economic development in the Statesville Region for 10 years.

Before working in Iredell County, Smith worked with the N.C. Dept. of Commerce in Raleigh for seven years as a project manager and in marketing and business development.

“I am grateful to have held a leadership position in Sanford where our team had a record-setting year,” he said. “I look forward to building on this regional momentum in a location that’s a part of the Research Triangle Region and the center point of the Carolina Core.”

WHAT’S AHEAD FOR CHATHAM

Chatham’s incoming EDC president, Michael Smith, starts his work in the county on Jan. 25. He spoke with the News + Record about what he foresees.

On his familiarity with Chatham and its similarities to Iredell County, where he worked for 10 years:

It’s a large county, but almost two counties — Iredell is very, very rural, but southern Iredell was basically a suburb of Charlotte. The eastern part of Chatham is very aligned with Chapel Hill, and certainly western Chatham is much more rural. I’m excited about having that diversity within the county.

On Chatham’s two megasites: the 2,500-acre Moncure Megasite in Chatham County and the Chatham-Siler City Advanced Manufacturing (CAM) Site, a 1,802-acre industrial megasite in western Chatham County:

We’re very well positioned. Chatham County, with its available industrial real estate, is very well positioned. Having two sites in the 2,000-acre range is pretty dramatic. I mean, nobody else in the state has anything like that. And so I’m going to be really excited and talking to those two different ownership groups to get their ideas about the best way to move forward.

On the need for a “spec” or shell building in Chatham County as a readily available site for an industry or manufacturer:

That would be something we want to work toward — getting a shell building in one or both of those (industrial) parks would be a huge positive. That really drives so much activity. A lot of businesses procrastinate for different reasons, in different situations. They tend to put things off, and put things off, and when they’re ready to go, they’re really ready to go. And they want a building out there. But there are so few available modern industrial

buildings really anywhere in North Carolina or South Carolina, for that matter. A shell building really helps from a competitive standpoint; it really acts as a model home. It gets somebody to come look at your park and look at your community that otherwise would say, “You know, they don’t have anything; we’re not going to be able to take a look.”

On the idea of “home runs” versus “singles” in economic development projects, and the objective of his office’s work:

Home runs are fantastic. And Chatham, with the two megasites that we have, we’re well-positioned for home runs. But one of the things that’s fascinating that has happened with the success we’ve had in Sanford is that your typical really good industrial project for Chatham County or Lee County is more in the lines of \$5 million, with 50 new jobs. And those are great projects. And we would like to get those every day in different advanced manufacturing sectors, so we’ll still be after those.

But I think another thing that will be key in Chatham is making sure we take care of our existing industries, and then also talking with our existing industries in terms of their supply chain. I think with this pandemic, one of the things that has really been top of mind for a lot of companies is trying to shorten their supply chains. And so again, that’s an opportunity with two mega-parks to try and help different existing companies in Chatham County, and in this region in general, shorten their supply chains with by attracting companies from other parts of the United States, and abroad, to come here.

On Sanford’s “Open for Business” model — a four-pronged focus on job creation, quality of place, community pride and establishing Sanford as a destination — created under the

leadership of Mayor Chet Mann when he entered office in 2013.

We had a study from 2008, where an out-of-state consultant came in and looked at about a dozen different matrices in Sanford and Lee County. Throughout, there were a lot of “C’s” in there. And it was amazing to me to look at that document now, 10 or so years later, and how much work has gone into changing a bunch of those C’s to B’s and A’s.

So I think one thing is to try and have a really good look at what’s working and what’s not working in Chatham County. In Sanford, it was an entire community pulling together and saying, “OK, what’s broken? What can we do to fix these things and move in a better direction?”

I think they’ve given the region a great blueprint of how to take a very close look at yourself, and then pull together and move in that direction. I’ve got a lot to learn about Chatham County in terms of politics, but I think that they’re trying to pull together to move some of those needles in a positive direction.

On what his first month on the job will look like:

Well, number one, it’s going to be extraordinarily busy. One of the parts of my interview process is that I put together a 90-day plan. And so I’m looking forward into diving into that. And certainly in that first 30 days I’ll be spending time with every single board member we have to get their take, one on one, on where we need to be going and how we can get there. I’ve certainly got a lot of people to meet, but at the same time, it’s exciting to be able to continue to build on the relationships I have here in the Triangle area, and just remind people that I’ve changed teams, and tell them there’s excitement here, too. And have them come to Chatham County and see what we’re all about, right?

Jean Templeton earned third place in Short Story.

Chatham County Senior Games is one of the 53 local programs sanctioned by North Carolina Senior Games. These programs cover all of North Carolina. NCSG is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing year-round health promotion and education for adults 50 years of age and better. Senior Games is sponsored by the North Carolina Division of Aging and Adult Services and other organizations and businesses.

In addition to the sporting events, NCSG offers Silver Arts (the state-wide heritage, visual, literary, and performing arts program), Silver Liners (the senior line dancing program), and Silver Striders, a national award winning walking program.

Qualifications for next year’s State Finals will be held in the Spring of 2021 at the Chatham County Senior Games.

“Our hope is that we can return to in-person competition, but be assured that the health and safety of participants is our top concern,” Lahti said. “Regardless of whether the Games are in-person or virtual, we will continue to promote fitness, fun, fellowship, and friendly competition.”

For more information on Chatham County Senior Games, please contact Liz Lahti at (919) 542-4512, or liz.lahti@chathamcoa.org.

VIEWPOINTS

THE CN+R EDITORIAL

The need for broadband access is well past the critical stage. Lawmakers need to act now.

Easy and affordable access to adequate broadband service was high on the wishlist for Chatham County, and many other rural areas of North Carolina, prior to COVID-19 and well before terms like “social distancing” entered the world’s vocabulary.

COVID’s impact has been crystal clear as the gap between life for the broadband “haves” and “have nots” has grown even wider. Now’s the time to stop wishing; it’s time for the N.C. General Assembly to deliver.

The pandemic has laid bare many egregious quality of life shortcomings we’d previously ignored, pushed to the back burner or wished away. It’s also blown to smithereens any remaining notions that having pockets of rural communities with inadequate broadband access is anywhere near ac-

ceptable.

Online learning, working from home and telemedicine — practices which grew exponentially as COVID-19 began to wear us down during 2020 — were easily done for those who already had solid internet connections. But as we’ve written here before, too many households (almost 15%, or about 4,300 homes in Chatham) lack good access. In 2020, this growing, critical need in the state reached the acute stage, “last ditch” stage. It’s been a year some education leaders are already writing off as a year lost because too many students had too little access and were failed by remote learning.

What once was considered a luxury is — if you work or learn from home — an absolute necessity. Counties and municipalities wouldn’t think of allowing builders or developers

to put up homes, apartments or public buildings without electricity and plumbing. So why are the providers of broadband services allowed a pass?

For a long time now, political leaders like Robert Reives II of Chatham County have been saying broadband should be considered a utility. It’s a logical next step.

A recent story from the Carolina Journal pointed out the dilemma: Communities have struggled with access to broadband for well over a decade, the report said. And while a private market for broadband has flourished, “connecting that final mile remains unprofitable. Frustrations have some customers turning to government to solve the problem. Cities have tried building and maintaining their own broadband systems and failed, costing taxpayers millions, harming other

services and still unable to offer a quality product.”

Money hasn’t solved the problem. A new round of GREAT (Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology) program funding, for example, is dispensing \$29.8 million in grant money between 11 internet providers across 18 different counties through the N.C. Dept. of Information Technology Broadband Infrastructure Office. Through the grant, some 16,000 households and about 700 businesses in rural North Carolina will receive high-speed internet.

It was needed assistance. But none of that will be coming to Chatham County.

With a new legislative session beginning in Raleigh in just a few days, lawmakers must find the political will in 2021 to solve the problem, address the shortcomings and

fix the inadequacies they’ve helped to create. That involves, as the Journal pointed out, streamlining permitting, removing obstacles to building wireless infrastructure on public property, offering consumer subsidies and truly — once and for all — focusing on unserved areas, like those in rural Chatham County.

Meanwhile, local governments need to keep the pressure on.

Chatham’s county government website even devotes time to the issue, calling the situation “not acceptable.”

“We have not given up!” an entry on the website says. “We remain committed to doing what we can to expand broadband coverage in Chatham.”

That commitment has to be matched at the legislative level. We can’t afford another lost year.

Predicting the unpredictable getting much more confusing

Beauty, the poet says, “is in the eye of the beholder.”

I think that saying probably got started by a guy whose buddy was ragging him about his girlfriend’s looks. Real beauty, we all know, is a deep, maybe even spiritual thing.

Of course, beauty isn’t the only thing that can lie beneath the surface. The late comedian Nipsey Russell said beauty “may be skin deep but ugly is clear to the bone.”

I say all that to note that so many things, including beauty or the lack thereof, are often just points of view. That’s especially true this time of year — nearing the new year — when folks are considering resolutions and making predictions.

Stories, books even, are written about resolutions. The experts tell us the reason we make resolutions is regret over not doing better up until now in whatever we’re talking about, and wanting to improve. Starting over is a basic human component; we all want to do better today than yesterday, I think, so what better place to start than our behavior.

Those same experts, however, tell us we must be specific. So, it’s not enough to say “I want to lose weight.” We’ve got to be specific ... and we’ve got to make our goals realistic or else the futility will drive us to drink shoe polish and we’ll just get all upset ... and instead of losing weight we’ll eat more and turn into someone the size of three elephants.

That means instead of saying “I resolve to lose weight in 2021,” we need to say “I resolve to lose 62 pounds by August 18.” That’s something specific and it’s also more realistic than saying, “I resolve to lose 62 pounds by the end of next week.”

Predictions are like resolutions in that they’re another thing that’s hard to put much faith into. (Especially in these trying times of what I call the “three P’s” — pandemic, politics and people, as in staying away from.) But that doesn’t keep them from being made, especially around the first of each new year. And the predictions most of the time are about as solid as a bowl of Jell-O and sometimes trying to figure out what the predictors mean is like trying to nail that Jell-O to a tree. That’s one reason why astrologers are as popular as they are with their predictions; who could argue with being told “Not playing in the street will go a long way toward keeping you healthy today” or some other bit of similar wisdom?

Some predictions are easy to understand ... not so easy to believe, but easy to understand what the folks making them mean. For instance, every new year someone comes along and says the world as we know it will end sometime within the next 365 days.

Maybe. Maybe not. I don’t know and don’t claim to know. But I do have a firm opinion on a prediction I saw some days ago when a renowned state economist made the prediction that by this summer, we’d be paying somewhere around \$3 to \$4 for a gallon of gas ... and that such a scenario would be a good thing because it would mean our U.S. economy is once again strong. I guess by this stage of life, I really am a dinosaur on the way to extinction because I actually thought the nation’s economy wasn’t all that bad and I don’t quite get how higher prices are good things. These days, I’m of the opinion — belief, even — that greed has overtaken the law of supply and demand I learned from Gene Brooks in his Pittsboro High School economics class in the Dark Ages.

So, I’ve already pretty much quit as much useless driving as I can, started combining as many errand trips as practical and generally staying put as much as possible, partly over the gas and partly over laying low right now. But not everyone can do that and somehow the logic of a notion that spending additional weaker dollars on a necessity that winds up putting more folks farther and farther in the hole is a good thing escapes me.

Perhaps I should make a resolution to study at the feet of folks who keep telling us they know what’s what. But then I remember one of the three biggest lies in the world — “I’m from the government, and I’m here to help you” — and, well, my resolve starts going out the window.

Here’s to a better 2021.

Please.

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.



GUEST COLUMN | PAUL MEYER

Taking the field: Finding a better tomorrow

Editor’s note: Paul Meyer is the executive director of the North Carolina League of Municipalities.



Meyer

When the history is finally written, those writing it are likely to conclude that this COVID-19 pandemic and its economic effects posed the greatest challenge to North Carolina municipalities since that created by the Great Depression.

Those living this crisis now have little time for such reflection, as the day-to-day decisions related to how life should proceed and how each community responds to the resulting financial problems ahead leave people focused on the moment.

If there is a silver lining to all this, it is that great leaders and great leadership are revealed and forged amid crisis. Lincoln and FDR did not lead through periods of calm and prosperity, but instead in times of upheaval and great challenge.

I am confident that our towns and cities can and will emerge through this period, despite the current pain, eventually stronger and more resilient. And that result will be because of strong local leadership.

And as you lead your communities through this time, I want you to know that the League is here, committed to helping in every step along the path.

Even as our staff has been forced to do more work remotely, we have connected in ways that further our advocacy and services to our members. A COVID-19 web page, nclm.org/coronavirus, provides a range of resources and updates designed for members to find advice and contacts that can help better navigate the different issues arising as a result of the crisis. These include answers to frequently asked legal- and human resource-related questions, as well as links to state agency programs and other resources created to help respond to COVID-19.

From mid-March into April and May, we have also arranged a number of virtual meetings — both series and one-off meetings, covering topics from our insurance programs to those involving newly arising personnel issues. A new weekly virtual meeting series, Advancing Advocacy, keeps members up to date on all of the state and federal COVID-19-related

The goal will be two-fold: secure new federal funding to going directly to municipal governments to address local revenue shortfalls; and free up previous funding provided by Congress so that it can go to that purpose, while pushing state legislators to make sure that municipalities are then treated equitably when those dollars are allocated by the state.

legislation and executive actions coming at us in waves, and has seen huge participation by League members.

Finally, speaking of advocacy, we know that making the case for cities and towns before state and federal policymakers has never been more important.

Revenue shortfalls — whether caused by declining sales tax, occupancy tax or utility payment revenue — will be significant, and the effects will not stop with reduced municipal services. Local economies depend on local governments, and their investments affect the health of private sector contractors and other employers.

The National League of Cities, where I sit on the board of directors, is working on a national campaign with a North Carolina focus that will make the case for federal dollars to help plug local revenue shortfalls. Here at NCLM, we will be working closely with our counterparts in D.C. to help them advocate for the necessity of that funding, while also working locally to influence both the North Carolina congressional delegation and state legislators and policymakers.

The goal will be two-fold: secure new federal funding to going directly to municipal governments to address local revenue shortfalls; and free up previous funding provided by Congress so that it can go to that purpose, while pushing state legislators to make sure that municipalities are then treated equitably when those dollars are allocated by the state.

Doing that, together, with your help, we can ensure the best outcome for North Carolina cities and towns, and allow you to lead your town or city to a better tomorrow.

VIEWPOINTS

Christmas gifts aren't wasteful

Among the pagan-inspired customs of the Christmas season, there has come to be the ritualistic burning of the straw man. Specifically, I refer to the traditional seasonal column by a sly journalist or political analyst asserting that the exchange of Christmas gifts is a major lose-lose for the economy.

I've read pretty much the same piece over and over for decades. The first version of the argument I saw was, I believe, in a New Republic column several years after I left the magazine. In brief, the argument is that gift-giving is a waste of economic resources. Because the giver cannot

crawl inside the mind of the receiver, the giver's selection of a present can't possibly be as satisfying as a good the receiver would purchase for himself with the same money.

If I spend \$20 on a book for you, and you spend \$20 on a DVD for me, we may each end up with goods that please us very little. I may have bought you a new history of the War of the Pacific, to which you may respond: "But I didn't know the Chilean Army fought in World War II." And you may have bought me the complete Mariah Carey film collection, to which I may respond: "What led you to believe I was a masochist?"

We are both worse off, the argument goes. Far better would be to exchange gift cards, or just straight cash. Indeed, some versions of the argument suggest that even this would be inefficient, given that we are exchanging the

same dollar value. Why not just forget the whole thing? The exchange does, after all, involve some transaction costs (cards, wrapping paper, getting together, etc.).

This is a good example of folks knowing just enough economics to get them over the river and into the woods but not quite enough to lead them out again.

A key error in this analysis lies in the definition of a good. It is not correct to say that the good in question is simply a book or DVD. It is a gift. It consists not only of the tangible item but also of the time invested by the giver in picking it out and the sentiment or message conveyed in the selection. The giver is demonstrating affection or consideration: something that can have real value to the receiver.

We all know this is true from everyday experience. Think of some of the gifts you've re-

ceived. Don't they mean more to you than simply the retail price because of who gave it and how, when and where it was given? Indeed, while a simplistic valuation of the good might start at the retail price and then go down due to depreciation, we often find that older items go up in value as we grow to appreciate more the circumstances in which we came to possess them.

Besides, individuals acting within the market process already figured out a way to address the problem of the truly awful or unsuitable gift. It's called a return.

Millions of Americans take back gifts to stores and purchase something else, a practice that fuels major retailer discounting in after-Christmas sales. Most people don't see this as a big waste of time. In order to receive the benefits of gift exchange, they accept the risk of the occasional return

— and often walk away with something else they didn't expect to buy but come to value.

That brings up another way gift-giving adds economic value: the pleasant surprise. You see, another flaw in the reasoning here is that we all know precisely what we want at all times. No serious defense of markets is predicated on this unrealistic proposition. In reality, we sometimes come to appreciate things we would never think to buy for ourselves, either because of sentimental value or just because it turns out our gift-giver knew something we didn't.

Which is not, by the way, an invitation for anyone to inflict Mariah Carey on me.

John Hood (@JohnHoodNC) is chairman of the John Locke Foundation and appears on "NC SPIN," broadcast statewide at 7:30 p.m. Fridays and at 12:30 p.m. Sundays on UNC-TV.



JOHN HOOD
John Locke Foundation

Rudolph's little brother

I know Rudolph's little brother. And now that Rudolph and the other reindeer are safely back at the North Pole, I can tell you the mostly unknown story of where the Rudolph tale came from and why that story may tug at your heartstrings more than other holiday stories.

I have known for years that Robert May, the father of my law school classmate, Chris, wrote the book about Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. But I did not know the details.

Last week, Chris gathered some details and shared them with me.

He wrote: "I grew up as the younger brother of Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, a character that my father, Robert L. May, created in 1939 in his children's book by that title. When I popped into the world in 1943, Rudolph was already 4 years old."

The storybook Rudolph was rejected by his peers because he looked different from them and didn't quite fit in. Chris explains: "One day he is blessed when Santa Claus realizes that Rudolph's apparent infirmity would be invaluable in helping to guide his sleigh on even the foggiest of nights. The odd little guy whose difference made him an outcast suddenly became a hero!"

Chris said that Rudolph was modeled on his father's life: "He grew up in New York as a smart little ethnic Jew who didn't quite fit in. Part of the problem was that he was, at least early on, quite small."

He weighed fewer than 100 pounds until he was a high school senior.

"Dad's life in some ways resembled Rudolph's in terms of his growing up as a sort of underdog, when and how did he finally get 'discovered' by Santa and suddenly become a much more accepted hero."

After graduating Phi Beta Kappa from Dartmouth in 1926, Robert worked in advertising for several large catalogue firms. At Montgomery Ward in 1939, he was asked to create a children's book to give to customers.

Chris explained that Robert's 4-year-old daughter, Barbara, helped: "Dad would read her passages and then gauge her reaction to different word selections."

Montgomery Ward published and gave away 2.4 million soft cover copies of the Rudolph book in 1939 and another 3.6 million in 1946.

The company held the copyright. So at first Robert got no money from the project. "But that didn't really matter to him," Chris said, "and this gets to the heart of what I want to say about my Dad, something that I deeply admire him for. His own childhood experiences, coupled with the then state of his life, made it easy for him to identify with the character he was bringing into the world."

Chris said his dad sought to convey a "message of hope," to tell the story of "an underdog" who was "yet triumphant in the end." He hoped that children who heard or read the story of Rudolph would, in his words, be inspired by "the little deer who started out life as a loser, just as I did."

If there is a message in Rudolph, Chris said, it is that "tolerance and perseverance can overcome adversity. It is a story of acceptance."

Rudolph's fame erased whatever doubts his dad may have had about himself. "In this way, what he got out of Rudolph was far more valuable than money, something that money could never buy."

"But for Dad, it was never about the money. What mattered was that every December, he could literally dress up and step out into the world again as the proud father of Rudolph. Rudolph's success never turned his head. He was and remained a humble man to the very end. I think he saw Rudolph as a blessing, rather than as something he could take full credit for."

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.



D.G. MARTIN
One on One

Some recommended New Year's resolutions

The other day, I listened to a late 2019 podcast episode on preparing for the new year. I wanted to warn the podcasters about how irrelevant their advice would play out in 2020.

Many of us spend the final few days reflecting on the past year and making resolutions for the next one. Then, we spend the first few days of the next year trying to carry out those resolutions before realizing that we're still the exact same people who left last year behind.

According to a survey of around 1,000 adults, three in 10 Americans planned to make New Year's resolutions for 2020. So with that knowledge in mind, here are five common New Year's resolutions from 2020 that I adapted for 2021. You can look back on this in a year or so and let me know if any of them worked out for you.

1. If you want to exercise more, try this: Remember that running app with audio of zombies chasing

you? Have a friend record themselves screaming your worst fears for the designated time that you want to exercise. The farther you run, the sooner it ends. Unless you didn't run in a loop and now you have to walk back to the soothing sounds of true crime podcasts.

2. If you want to make new friends, try this: Tie a note to a balloon and set it soaring into the air. Try not to think about the balloon getting caught in a tree or being swallowed by an unassuming animal. On second thought, maybe just stick the note on your new neighbor's door with a slightly passive aggressive hint to bag up their trash instead of leaving it all over your sidewalk. That should help you make friends.

3. If you want to save money, try this: One restaurant I worked at taunted new employees by freezing anything they left at work in a block of ice. For me, this was my extra work shirt that I desperately needed the next day. If you try this with a credit card, I guarantee that chopping it out of the ice will stop you from buying a second blender.

4. If you want to travel more, try this: Travel will stay wonky for at least the beginning of 2021. But did

you know that the Random Street View web page lets you view nearly any place in the world? I virtually traveled to the side of the road in Texas and a parking lot in Colorado. Who knows? Maybe you'll solve a mystery or see your spouse's secret lover walking outside your house.

5. If you want to learn a new skill, try this: Sure, you could figure out how to make a sourdough starter or repair a leaky faucet, but how about finishing a project from last year's resolutions? You could finish painting your bathroom. You could water your dead plants. You could hang up Christmas lights and conveniently forget what month it is. Anything is possible!

In all seriousness, New Year's resolutions are not all they're cracked up to be. And it's OK if just the thought of predicting 2021 seems overwhelming.

Just take it one day at a time, and have a Happy New Year!

Rachel Horowitz resides in Chatham County and works in Pittsboro. She is a graduate of UNC-Chapel Hill's Hussman School of Journalism and Media and can be reached at millennialmusings.nc@gmail.com.



RACHEL HOROWITZ
Millennial Musings

2020: Our Wilderness Year

As we popped the cork to toast the new decade, we anticipated that 2020 would be an exciting year, filled with interesting developments — some good and perhaps even rambunctious. Nobody could have predicted the four crises we would face.

We expected the elections would be the headliner for the year. State leaders had long lamented that our state had little voice in selecting presidential nominees, so they designated primary elections to be held March 3, instead of our traditional May date. In 2020, North Carolinians would vote for president, but also for a U.S. Senator, Congressional representatives, a governor, Council of State members, three Supreme Court justices, five Court of Appeals judges, 170 legislators and a host of local officials.

As it turned out, North Carolina's voice wasn't significant in naming the presidential nominees. But our state was in play, and it wasn't until December that all races were decided. The rancor and ugliness were exacerbated by huge advertising expenditures that underscored the hyper-partisanship, distrust and division within the state — feelings still evident at year's end.

When we voted March 3, few had heard of COVID-19, but within

weeks it was on everyone's lips. Gov. Roy Cooper halted in-class attendance of schools and initiated a lockdown of all but essential activities. Virtual learning, telecommuting, telemedicine and online ordering quickly became buzzwords. It wasn't surprising that a strong backlash surfaced, mostly from Republicans who believed Cooper was using the pandemic to further his re-election efforts. Others refused to acknowledge the seriousness of the virus and objected to having anyone tell them what to do. Cooper faced protests, lawsuits and legislation over using his emergency powers, but reinforced by Dr. Mandy Cohen — the secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services — his conservative approach kept hospitals from being overwhelmed and kept death rates low. As more businesses partially reopened and people became fatigued with restrictions, community spread ramped up in November and at year's end, we face shortages of ICU beds, large numbers with the virus and almost 7,000 deaths. The vaccines developed to help end this pandemic now are met by large numbers unwilling to take the shots.

The March 13 killing of Breonna Taylor and May 25 death of George Floyd added a third crisis. Protest demonstrations throughout our state, sometimes accompanied by looting, violence and counter-protests, stirred the flames of racial unrest. Confederate statues and named buildings became symbols of longstanding racial prejudice.

Racism moved from the front page, but not from the consciousness of those demanding equality and justice.

All three pointed to the most serious and dangerous crisis of all: the loss of trust. We have lost trust in just about every sector and most people. George Schultz, the former secretary of state, said, "Trust is the coin of the realm. When trust was in the room, whatever room that was — the family room, the schoolroom, the locker room, the office room, the government room or the military room — good things happened. When trust was not in the room, good things did not happen. Everything else is details." The breakdown of trust, if not restored, can lead to anarchy.

In summary, 2020 was the year we bumped along in the wilderness from one crisis to another. My Methodist pastor wife, Lib, said in a recent sermon, "Wilderness is a place where desolation and fatigue live, a place where emptiness and grief and fear meet hope. All the weariness of 2020 is like the wilderness was to all those wandering in Judea a long time ago."

Few will be sad to say goodbye to this year. Our prayer is that 2021 be the year we leave the wilderness and once again restore trust, hope, health and happiness.

Tom Campbell, a former assistant N.C. State Treasurer, is creator/host of NC SPIN, a weekly statewide television discussion of N.C. issues that airs on UNC-TV's main channel.



TOM CAMPBELL
N.C. Spin

OBITUARIES

BARBARA ALLEN (BOTELHO)



Barbara Allen was born on September 4, 1929, in Porterville, California, but she grew up on a farm in Meigs County, Tennessee. She was a brilliant child who started first grade at the age of four years old. Several years later, though she was the youngest and smallest member of the class, she negotiated a position on the school's basketball team. Because of a complete lack of athletic ability coupled by an intense fear of being hit by the ball, she was quickly

promoted to the team's mascot. Each team picture featured Barbara front and center, small and smiling, holding the winning ball. This ambition to live life to the fullest regardless of the circumstances characterized her life.

She graduated at the top of her class from a one room schoolhouse, all while smoking cigarettes, flirting with boys and dancing the night away. She wanted to go to college but was uncertain how to even apply. Instead, she went to Nashville to go to secretarial school. She loved the big city. She lived with her two best friends and joined a sorority set up to introduce young ladies to Vanderbilt men.

One New Year's Eve, she had a blind date with a Vanderbilt chemistry student, who turned out to be a dashing young Brazilian. "Henlyson," he said when Barbara asked him his name. After several repetitions at increasing volume and with exaggerated enunciation, Barbara told him that going forward his name would be Joe, which she felt was much more manageable. Within a year Barbara and Joe Botelho were married.

After marrying, they moved to Honolulu, where Joe started graduate school in organic chemistry at the University of Hawaii. Within the lofty university scene, Barbara felt under educated with her rural high school diploma. With a "How hard can it possibly be?" attitude, she decided to educate herself by reading books from the local library. This proved useful not only in keeping her own during conversations ranging from politics to literature but also in making her a champion trivia player and awe-inspiring in completing New York Times crossword puzzles.

After Joe earned his degree, they started what would be a lifelong trip around the world, moving first to Brazil, then Sweden, Colombia, Germany and Mexico as Joe's career within the international division of B.F. Goodrich soared. In Brazil, their two children were born. Their son Michael received Allen as his middle name, while their daughter became Barbara junior linked by both name and blood to their mother. To avoid confusion, Barbara the younger was called Bebe.

As the little family moved from one country to the next, learning foreign languages quickly became a requirement. In each new country, Barbara cheerfully substituted volume for accuracy, mixing several foreign languages together with sprinklings of English words spoken with a French accent. She had supreme confidence that she would be able to make her point and was undaunted by the quizzical faces around her. Ultimately, she always prevailed. She also was able to understand what was said to her though she attributed this mostly to ESP rather than actual language skills. Her daughter was skeptical about the ESP explanation, until she traveled to Beijing and her mother was seemingly translating Chinese flawlessly on day one.

When Joe retired, they moved to Camelot apartments in Akron, Ohio. Their life was filled with fancy parties, bridge games, fantastic vacations and gatherings with friends. In the evening they would sit on their balcony, sipping martinis and discussing the day. Joe was an accomplished whistler, and he would routinely whistle to and with the birds. Barbara would lovingly tend to her bright red geraniums. For years after Joe died, the trills he had taught the birds could be heard as the rest of the family sat on the balcony without him.

Barbara never truly recovered from losing Joe. She missed him terribly and spoke fondly of him at every opportunity. But she continued to have adventures. She traveled to China with Bebe to see Mike where they listened to jazz in the Old Peace Hotel and explored the city. She traveled to San Francisco to watch her grandson Hugh play soccer while giving side eye to the opposite team's parents and issuing what sounded like a hiss directed at another player. She watched her granddaughter Megan walk down the runway at her elementary school's fashion show. Ultimately, she helped her daughter through a painful divorce, saying, "Your marriage may be dead, but you are not." Simple yet profound wisdom.

Barbara Allen Botelho died at 4:46 a.m. on December 22, 2020, in Greensboro, North Carolina. She will be missed by her family and her friends but will be joined in heaven by her beloved Joe.

A memorial service was held Wednesday, December 30, 2020, at 4 p.m. at the Smith & Buckner Funeral Home Chapel.

There was a celebration of Barbara's life in Emeryville, California, on Sunday December 27, 2020 at 7 p.m., Black Tie. Martinis and chocolate were served. Dancing required.

JACQUELINE 'JACKIE' PRICE PICKARD

Jacqueline "Jackie" Price Pickard, 78, of 679 Charlie Cooper Road, Siler City died Monday, December 21, 2020, at Beacon Place Hospice, Greensboro, N.C.

She was preceded in death by her parents; sisters, Suzanne Price Hicks, Barbara Jean Price Hart, and brother Thomas Allen "Tadpole" Price.

Jackie is survived by her husband, Ronnie M. Pickard; daughter, Carolyn M. Kimes and husband Tom of Apex; son, James R. Marley and wife Anne of Naples, Florida; sisters, Nancy P. Dunn and Lucinda P. Pinnock of Siler City; step-daughter, Casey Pickard of Goldston; two grandchildren, two step-grandchildren, and three step-great-grandchildren.

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

JANET BRADY BRIDGES



Janet Brady Bridges, 45, of Siler City, N.C., passed away on December 25, 2020, at Chatham Hospital. A graveside celebration of life is tentatively scheduled for 2 p.m. on Wednesday, January 6, 2021, at Fall Creek Baptist Church, with Rev. Chris Gambos and Preacher George Townsend presiding. Attendees are asked to wear masks and practice social distancing.

Janet was born in Chatham County on February 16, 1975, to Leford and Virginia Caudle Brady. She loved the Lord and served him faithfully. She was a lifelong member of Fall Creek Baptist Church where she served as the pianist, prepared the weekly bulletins and was known for her solos and wedding music. She attended New Salem Baptist Church in Pittsboro. Janet received her Bachelor's Degree from Campbell University and her Master's Degree from UNC-CH. She was employed for 22½ years at Siler City Elementary School, most recently teaching ESL. Janet was an encourager and always had a kind word for everyone she met. She dearly loved her family and especially enjoyed spending time with her nieces and nephews.

In addition to her mother, Janet was preceded in death by her grandparents, Roland and Vaie Brady and Leroy and Sallie Caudle and her niece, Kendal Paige Brady.

She is survived by her husband, Justin Bridges, of the home; father, Leford Brady of Bennett; sister, Sandi Brady of Pittsboro; brother, Mike Brady (Lisa) of Bennett; sisters-in-law, Lisa Dunbar and Kimmy Morrison; nieces and nephews, Adam Brady (Amanda), Kristin Brady White (Shannon), Makenzi Brady, Landon Dunbar, Kinsley Dunbar, Kamryn Hammond and Kara Hammond; great-niece and nephews, Maddie Miller, Camden Brady, Cayden Brady, Hudson White and Harris White and a host of family and friends.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Janet Brady Bridges Memorial Student Assistance Fund, c/o Siler City Elementary School, 671 Ellington Rd., Siler City, NC 27344.

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

Joyce-Brady Chapel of Bennett is honored to serve the Bridges family.

WILLIAM FRANKLIN MILHOLEN



William (Bill) Franklin Milholen, devoted husband and father, peacefully joined his Lord and Master on December 28, 2020, after a brief battle with cancer. He was surrounded by his faithful wife of 60 years, Sallie, and his three children, Laurie, Jeff and Murphy, at his home. He is also survived by his son-in-law Bob Nunnery, daughters-in-law Ginger Milholen and Ashley Milholen, beloved grandchildren Will, Cole, Lilly, Oliver and Alex, and his sister, Mable (Walter) Miller of Matthews, as well as many nieces, nephews and cherished friends.

Bill was born in Cooleemee, N.C. on May 17, 1939, and treasured his memories of growing up in a small southern textile town. His family moved to Siler City, N.C. in 1951. He was among the first class to graduate from Jordan-Matthews High School in 1957, enjoyed many class reunions over the years, and was recognized as a distinguished alumnus in 2019. He later attended Guilford College.

He and his brother, Harold, founded Basic Machinery Company in 1975 which continues to serve customers around the world. Theirs was a dynamic partnership which resulted in numerous business ventures over the years.

Bill loved the Lord from childhood, walking faithfully to the First Methodist Church in Cooleemee and continuing his service to the Lord as a dedicated member of First United Methodist Church in Siler City, teaching Sunday School and serving on many church committees throughout his life.

Bill believed in being a good citizen and demonstrated this belief by participating and serving as a leader in many civic organizations in the community. He was a Jaycee, a Rotarian and a Mason.

He served on the Boards of the Chatham County EDC, Chatham Hospital, Central Carolina Community College Foundation and the Boys and Girls Club Wren Family Center. Always patriotic, he was proud of his service in the U.S. Army and was a member of the American Legion. He was awarded the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, a civilian honor bestowed by the State of North Carolina. He was an active member of the Siler City Country Club, Moose Lodge and Chatham County Wildlife Club.

Never one to sit idle, he was always pursuing new challenges and interests. He was a successful competitor on the Golf Channel AM Tour, winning many tournaments around the country and making friends along the way. He enjoyed researching his family's genealogy and writing his memoir of growing up a linthead in the 1940s. He was a gifted gardener, following in his father's footsteps and keeping Sallie busy canning the bounty from his garden. Most recently, he worked with Chatham Realty, enjoying the business of buying and selling real estate.

Bill will lie in Repose at Smith & Buckner Funeral Home on Wednesday, December 30, 2020, from 1:00-5:00 p.m. His life will be celebrated Thursday, December 31, at 2 p.m. at First United Methodist Church, Siler City. For those who are unable to attend, the service will be streamed live via the church's Facebook page (Siler City First United Methodist Church).

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to one of these organizations dear to Bill's heart: First United Methodist Church (PO Box 212, Siler City, NC 27344), True Community Church (112 Village Lake Road, Siler City, NC 27344) or the Boys and Girls Club (PO Box 963, Siler City, NC 27344).

TIMOTHY JAMES GRINNELL

Timothy James Grinnell, 28, of Pittsboro, passed away December 25, 2020, in Montgomery County.

A service to honor Timothy's life will be held at 10 a.m., Monday, January 4, 2021, at Donaldson Funeral Home and Crematory.

Please observe appropriate precautions for COVID19.

The family will receive guests and friends following the service.

SAMUEL GANDY SALES

Samuel Gandy Sales, 55, of Siler City, passed away Friday, December 25, 2020, at his home.

Services entrusted to Knotts and Son Funeral Home.

BETTY JOHNSON

Betty Johnson, 83, of Siler City, passed away on Saturday, December 26, 2020, at UNC Hospital in Chapel Hill.

Services entrusted to Knotts and Son Funeral Home.

DONALD EUGENE WOODY

Donald Eugene Woody, 78, of Goldston passed away on Thursday, December 24, 2020, in Siler City.

The funeral service was held on Sunday, December 27, 2020, at 3 p.m. at Antioch Baptist Church, with Rev. Mike Garner officiating. Burial followed in the church cemetery.

Mr. Woody was born February 10, 1942, a native of Chatham County and the son of Walter and Margaret Atkins Woody. Donald was a member of Antioch Baptist Church. He was an auto mechanic. In addition to his parents, Donald was preceded in death by his wife, Mollie Wilkie Woody, and sisters, Estelle Fields, Catherine Woody, and brothers, Ervin Woody, Jimmy Woody, and

ANGEL RENEE HARE

Angel Renee Hare, 47, of Robbins passed away on Wednesday, December 16, 2020.

A graveside memorial service was held at Bascom Chapel UMC, where she was a member, at 2 p.m. on Sunday, December 27, 2020, with Rev. Vick Hill and Rev. Rebecca Chapman presiding.

Angel was born in Randolph County on April 3, 1973, to Joy Marvin and Brenda Hunsucker Hare. She worked with her family in poultry farming.

In addition to her parents, she is survived by her son, Jake Richard Groce of Hamptonville; brothers, Michael Hare, Gabriel Hare, and Joel Hare, all of Robbins.

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

JOHN NATHAN WOMACK

John Nathan Womack, 76, of Sanford, formerly of Broadway, died Saturday, December 26, 2020, at Liberty Commons.

Graveside memorial services will be held at 2 p.m. Sunday, January 3, 2021, at Cool Springs United Methodist Church Cemetery with Rev. Jerry Parsons officiating.

Mr. Womack was born November 2, 1944, son of the late Nathan Edsel Womack and Mary Ann Fuquay Womack. He was preceded in death by his parents and his sister, Jean Womack Godfrey.

Surviving are his brother, Ben Atlas Womack and sister, Lora Ann Womack Kelley, both of Sanford. In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorials be made to a charity of one's choice.

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

Arrangements are by the Smith Funeral Home of Broadway.

See OBITUARIES, page A9

READ IT ONLINE

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OBITUARIES

Continued from page A8

GERALD ALAN PIKE



Gerald Alan Pike, 69, of Siler City passed Friday, December 25, 2020, at his home.

Mr. Pike was born January 5, 1951, the son of Phryne Phillippie Pike and Maxine (Fogleman) Pike. He graduated from Jordan-Matthews High School in 1969 and UNC Pembroke in 1975. He was a recorded Friends Minister. He loved running, gardening, fishing, looking for arrowheads, writing poetry and watching sports (especially his favorite team, Duke).

Gerald was preceded in death by his parents.

He is survived by his wife of 48 years, Lynn Pike; three daughters, Rebekkah Glass and husband Jason, Carla Pike, Joan Daniel and husband Arthur; one son, Jonathan Pike; grandchildren, Holly Glass, Christian Pike, Trinity Kimbler; great grandchildren, Maggie Staley, Aubrey Staley, Luke McCracken; and three sisters, Deborah Pike, Kay Pike, and Melva Pike Allen and husband Gary.

The memorial service was held Tuesday, December 29, 2020 at 3 p.m. at Rocky River Friends Meeting with David Hobson officiating. The received friends Tuesday, December 29, 2020, following the service.

In lieu of flowers memorials may be made to the Friends Disaster Relief or Rocky River Friends Meeting, 1795 Staley-Snow Camp Road, Siler City, N.C. 27344

NINA LENORA (STREET) VERBAL

Nina Lenora Verbal, 76, of Sanford, passed away Sunday, December 20, 2020, at Sanford Health and Rehabilitation Center.

Funeral service was held at 2 p.m. Wednesday, December 30, 2020, at Knotts Funeral Home.

BILLY RAY WOODY SR.

He is survived by his son, Donnie Woody of Siler City, brothers; J.B., Larry, Elmer, Wayne Woody; and three grandchildren.

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

KEVIN EUGENE WOOD

Kevin Eugene Wood, 54, of New Hill passed away on Thursday, December 24, 2020, at Central Carolina Hospital.

A private memorial service will be held at a later date.

Mr. Wood was born in Chatham County on May 8, 1966, son of Jimmy Eugene Wood and Gloria Holland Wood-Wise.

He is survived by his parents; daughter, Kimberly Ann Wood of New Hill; sons, Daniel L. Wood of Siler City, Braxton Batchelor of Bee Log, N.C., Kurtis Wood of Cameron; sister, Karen W. Gaster of Moncure; step-sisters, Angela Olive of Sanford, and Cynthia Harbin of Yadkinville.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggest that memorial donations be made to New Hill Baptist Church, P.O. Box 74, New Hill, N.C. 27562 c/o of Linda Barbour.

Online condolences may be made to www.smithfuneral-home.com.

Arrangements are by Smith Funeral Home of Moncure.

FRANCES (TINA) STUTTS BURNS SMITH

Frances (Tina) Stutts Burns Smith, 72, of Staley, N.C., passed away on December 18, 2020.

Graveside services were conducted at 2 p.m. on Monday, December 28, 2020, at Staley City Cemetery with Pastor Wayne Roark presiding.

She is survived by her husband of 46 years, Hughes William (Bill) Smith; daughters, Mary Wilson of Winston-Salem, Kayla Smith of Asheboro; sisters, Pat Lowman of Siler City, Karen Cooper of Carthage; brothers, Mike Burns of Bear Creek, Jackie Burns of Bennett, Ricky Stutts of Cameron, Tim Stutts of Carthage, Mike Stutts of Pittsboro; step-mother, Marie Stutts, of Carthage; two grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Frances was preceded in death by her father, Roy Stutts; step-father, Joe Burns, mother, Eula Burns, and sister, Sharon Duguay.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Hospice of Randolph County, 416 Vision Dr., Asheboro, N.C. 27203 or Bible Believers Fellowship Church, 288 N. Main St., Staley, N.C. 27355.

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

IRIS MARIE BOWMAN COOK KNIGHT

Iris Marie Bowman Cook Knight, 79, of Sanford died Sunday, Dec. 27, 2020, at her daughter's home.

A graveside service was held at 11 a.m. at Lee Memory Gardens on Wednesday, Dec. 30, 2020. Due to COVID restrictions no public visitation will be held and those attending the graveside please practice social distancing.

Marie was born in Surry County on May 11, 1941, to the late Hays Bowman and Miney Bowman. She was preceded in death by two husbands, Dean Cook and Wade Knight. Marie worked as a CNA and was a homemaker as well.

She is survived by sons, Phillip Cook of Sanford, Scott Cook of Denton; daughters, Claudia Cook of Sanford, Kelly Dehring of Sanford, Tracy Maddox of Cameron; sister, Wabie Bates of Dodson; six grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren.

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

BRIAN JOSHUA KINDLE

Brian Joshua Kindel, 31 of Broadway, passed away on Thursday, December 24, 2020, at his home.

Funeral services were held at 2 p.m. Monday at Baptist Chapel Church with Rev. Alex Smith officiating. Burial followed in the church cemetery.

Brian was born on April 4, 1989, son of Thomas Duane and Deborah Atkins Kindel. He was preceded in death by his grandmothers, Mae Lou Kindel and Betty Lou Dickens. Brian was a graduate of Lee County High School.

Survivors include his parents, Thomas Kindel of Southern Pines and Deborah A. Kindel of Broadway; brother, Adam Kindel of Broadway; and grandfather, David Kindel of Henderson, Kentucky.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Behavioral Health Innovators.

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

LOIS ANN TEDDER HENRY

Lois Ann Tedder Henry, 79, of Carthage, passed away on Sunday, December 27, 2020, at Tara Plantation.

No services are planned at this time.

She was born in Bladen County on October 20, 1941, to the late David James and Rosa Ann West Tedder. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband, John W. Henry; brothers, Jimmy E. Tedder, David L. Tedder and a sister, Mildred Tedder Hilburn Hamilton.

Lois is survived by a brother, James Walter Tedder of Shalotte; and a sister, Margaret

Tedder Barnes of Carthage.

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

THOMAS MONROE ALSTON

Thomas Monroe Alston, 90 of Sanford, passed away on Tuesday, December 22, 2020, at Central Carolina Hospital. He was born March 20, 1930, in Moore County, the son of Timothy Alston and Ida Chalmers Alston.

Graveside services were held at 2 p.m. Tuesday, December 29, 2020, at Lee Memory Gardens.

Services entrusted to Knotts Funeral Home, Sanford.

NEWS BRIEFS

Gov. Cooper extends N.C. eviction moratorium through at least Jan. 31

RALEIGH — Gov. Roy Cooper announced that he plans to extend the state's evictions moratorium on

residential evictions for non-payment of rent through at least Jan. 31, 2021.

"This holiday season, too many families are struggling to pay rent as the pandemic surges," Cooper said. "As the first of the month

approaches and rent becomes due, I wanted people to know that we plan to extend the moratorium on evictions."

The details and language of the moratorium are forthcoming and will be based on how or whether Congress extends the federal moratorium. More information on the state's extension will be shared as soon as possible.

DOT seeking input on North Chatham Park Way

RALEIGH — The N.C. Dept. of Transportation, in partnership with the Town of Pittsboro and Chatham Park investors, proposes to construct a new north-south roadway east of Pittsboro called North Chatham Park Way (STIP Project No. R-5930).

The proposed project begins at the U.S. 64 Bypass, just north of Suttles Road, and ends at the intersection of U.S. 15-501 near Russell Chapel Church Road, covering about 2.7 miles. It connects to the existing segment of Chatham Park Way (from U.S. 64 Business to U.S. 64 Bypass) that was recently built and is now open to traffic.

Currently, U.S. 15-501 is the only major north-south route through Pittsboro, funneling all traffic through the historic downtown area. NCDOT and the Town have identified an opportunity to partner with Chatham Park to accomplish the goal of providing an alternate route for traffic traveling through downtown Pittsboro while continuing to support the economic development of the region. It will increase mobility options for drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

Virtual Presentation

As part of NCDOT's design process, the project team is reaching out to adjacent property owners and the larger community to provide you an opportunity to share your comments and ask questions. In addition to a newsletter, a virtual presentation for R-5930 will be held at 5:45 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 7 prior to the beginning of the N.C. Division of Water Quality public hearing at 6 p.m. Comments and questions on the project can be submitted by email, mail, or phone until Feb. 7. The presentation materials can be found at this website or you can contact the project team for a hard copy of the meeting materials. The live presentation can be viewed or listened to using the information below and will be available on the project website after Jan. 7.

Immediately following the NCDOT presentation, at 6 p.m. at the same link, the N.C. Division of Environmental Quality will hold a separate public hearing for both Chatham Park North Village Project and Project R-5930. Verbal comments will begin following the presentation, and will

be recorded.

To speak at the hearing, you must register by noon on Jan. 7 at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/R5930REG>.

For more information, go to <https://publicinput.com/north-chatham-park-way>.

Chatham Libraries to host virtual visit with author Kelly Starling Lyons

PITTSBORO — Children and their families are invited to join Chatham County Public Libraries for a virtual visit with local children's book author Kelly Starling Lyons at 4 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 7.

Kelly Starling Lyons, of Raleigh, is the author of notable picture books, including "Going Down Home With Daddy" and "Tiara's Hat Parade."

Lyons is also the author of the Jada Jones chapter books, along with a new series for beginning readers, "Ty's Travels."

Children will virtually meet Lyons via Zoom, listen to her discuss her books and her life as an author, with the opportunity to engage in a Q&A session at the end of the presentation.

Those interested in participating in this event must register by Tuesday, Jan. 5, using the online form at this link: <https://forms.gle/wHxy6MAPBjodVVUX9>. Library Youth Services staff will contact registrants a day prior to the event with Zoom login information.

This author visit is sponsored by the Friends of the Chatham Community Library.

For more information about this event, contact Youth Services Librarian Katy Henderson at cclkatyh@gmail.com.

Lions Club seeks members for Pittsboro Club

Will you consider joining the oldest, the largest, most diverse community service organization in the world? Are you willing to team up with others in your local community to help fill the needs of families, friends, and neighbors who are experiencing challenges with sight, hearing, pediatric cancer, hunger, diabetes, and other issues?

If so, the Siler City Lions Club is interested in you. The club is assisting with an effort by the Association of Lions Clubs International to establish a club in the Pittsboro area. If you are interested in being a part of this effort, please respond to Lion Secretary Barbara Ernst of the Siler City Club with your contact information by calling (919) 545-4729. For additional information about Lions Clubs International check out our website at www.lions-clubs.org/en.

— CN+R staff reports

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CHURCH NEWS

HOLLAND CHAPEL A.M.E. ZION CHURCH
A joint New Year' Eve Prayer and Praise service is planned by Ebenezer AMEZ, Holland Chapel AMEZ, O'Bry-

ant Chapel AMEZ, and New Hope MBC for Thursday, December 31, from 6 to 7 p.m. via Zoom at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5944449000> or dial 1 (301) 715-8592 Meeting I: 594 444 9000.

Holiday chat with a pastry goddess, part 2

This week, Julie Jengali is our holiday dessert guru.



DEBBIE MATTHEWS
The Curious Cook

I gave her a list of common N.C. desserts and she, in turn, gave me some garnish ideas to turn the presentation up a few notches. She also shared a couple of those recipes; included as well is her roulade recipe, a treat she grew up making with her mom.

So let's go. Let's start with Julie's suggestions to dress up familiar holiday desserts:

Pecan Pie: "Cinnamon chantilly cream with bourbon caramel sauce," says Julie.

Sweet Potato Pie: "Nice fluffy meringue on top with a sprinkle of any sort of crumble of choice. I would say spiced pumpkin crumble."

Chess or Buttermilk Pie: "I would say fresh seasonal berries. You can even make a pumpkin caramel pecan compote for the holidays and serve it on the side. Maybe even a spiced pumpkin seed brittle on top."

Coconut Cake: "Try it filled with rum chocolate buttercream or even a bourbon chocolate sauce on the side."

Coca-Cola Cake: "I would say move it up a notch with some type of ice



Submitted photo

Strawberry roulade.

cream. Maybe a marshmallow pecan caramel ice cream?!"

Red Velvet Cake: "I love making cream cheese ice cream with a side of berries for my red velvet cake!"

Here are the recipes for Julie's whipped cream, caramel sauce, and crumble. Use these to garnish your desserts and fancy up your holiday table.

Cinnamon Chantilly Cream

Yield: 2 Cups
Ingredients: 1 cup heavy whipping cream, 3 tablespoons powdered sugar, 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Instructions:
1. Add heavy whipping cream in a chilled mixing bowl.
2. Add the cinnamon and powdered sugar to the whipping cream.
3. Whisk on medium until the cream reaches stiff peaks.

Caramel Bourbon Sauce

Yields: 2 Cups
Ingredients: 2 cups sugar, 1/2 cup water, 1 tablespoon light corn syrup, 1 cup heavy cream, 1/2 cup bourbon

Instructions:
In a medium saucepan, bring the sugar, water and corn syrup to a boil over high heat. Cook until the sugar is dissolved, washing down the side of the pan with a wet pastry brush. Continue cooking, without stirring, until an amber caramel forms, about 6 minutes. Remove from the heat and carefully stir in the cream. Let cool for 1 minute, then stir in the bourbon. Bring the mixture to a boil over moderate heat and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Let the caramel sauce cool slightly and serve warm or at room temperature.

Julie's Crumble

Ingredients: 1/2 cup butter, 10 oz. all-purpose flour, 5.5 oz. brown sugar, 2 teaspoons salt

Instructions:
Combine everything together, put on lined sheet tray with parchment. Bake at 300F for 15-20 minutes until golden brown. Sprinkle on top of your finished pie and enjoy!

Strawberry Mascarpone Cream Roulade with Strawberry Consommé

Ingredients: Vanilla Bean Roulade, 2 tsp baking powder, 200g eggs (room temperature), 140g all-purpose flour, 2.5 tsp vanilla extract, 120g powdered sugar, 1 tsp. vanilla bean

Instructions:
Preheat the oven to 375F and grease a 10" x 15" x 1" pan then line with parchment paper and lightly grease top of parchment. Combine eggs and sugar in mixing bowl attached with whisk and beat on high for 2-3 minutes until thick and pale in color. Add vanilla extract and vanilla bean to eggs and continue to whisk for another 4-5 minutes until the mixture has doubled in size. While the eggs are whisking, sift the all-purpose flour, powder sugar, salt and baking powder at least five times. (This will give you a light and fluffy cake). Reduce speed to mixer and gradually add your dry ingredients to your eggs. Mix until just combined (DO NOT OVERMIX or you will get a flat cake). Immediately pour the batter in your prepared pan, using a spatula, gently guide the batter to all four corners making sure the entire pan is covered evenly. Bake for 8-10 minutes in preheated oven. (Cake is done when top is light golden brown and the center springs back to light touch.) Remove baked cake from the oven. If necessary, carefully take a knife all around the pan to separate the cake from the sides. Dust the top of cake with powdered sugar and cover the cake completely with a clean cloth. Flip the cake over so that it is on top of the cloth and gently peel off parchment from cake. Starting at the shorter edge, roll up the cake (along with the cloth) and let cool.

Strawberry Mascarpone Cream

Ingredients: 170g mascarpone, 120g heavy cream, 2T granulated sugar, 1T lemon juice, 1/2tsp vanilla extract, pinch of salt, 200g diced strawberries (have extra strawberries on hand for garnishing)

Instructions:
Place the heavy cream and sugar in a mixing bowl attached with whisk and beat until stiff peaks form. Add the mascarpone cheese, lemon juice, vanilla extract and salt and beat until combined and smooth. (Reserve 1/3 of the mascarpone cream in a piping bag for plate-up garnishing.) Fold the diced strawberries into the remaining 2/3 of the mascarpone cream. Once the cake is cool, unroll gently and spread cake evenly with the filling. Starting at the shorter end, carefully roll up into a log shape with the seam side down. Wrap it up with a cling film and store in the refrigerator for 1-2 hours before slicing and serving.

Strawberry consommé

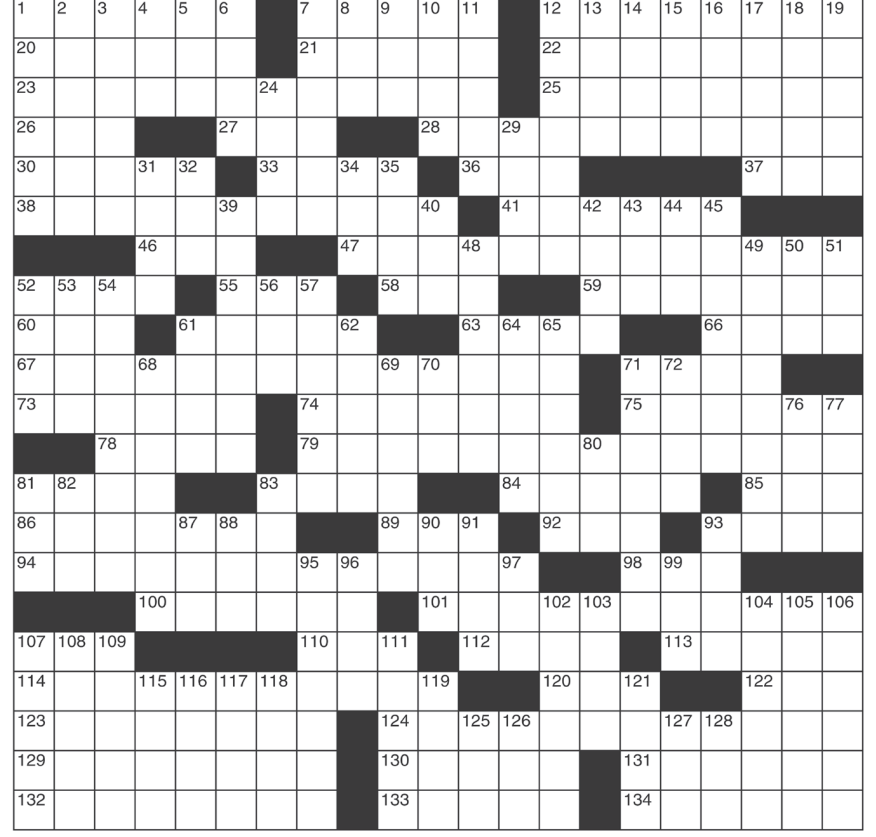
Ingredients: 250g strawberries, 100g granulated sugar

Instructions:
Cut out the green tops and slice strawberries in half. Place the strawberries into a saucepan with the sugar, cover with lid and simmer on low heat for 5 minutes. Take the pan off the heat and push the mixture through a fine sieve. Refrigerate until cake is ready to serve.
Plating instructions: Place a slice of roulade cake on its side onto your plate of choice. Cut fresh strawberries crosswise in thin slices and cover sides of the roulade with the strawberries. Using the reserved 1/3 mascarpone cream, pipe extra mascarpone cream on top and garnish with fresh strawberry halves or decoration of choice. Pour the strawberry consommé around the prepared strawberry mascarpone cream roulette right before serving. ENJOY!

PREMIER CROSSWORD/ By Frank A. Longo

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Solution for the puzzle in last week's edition.



READ IT ONLINE

Winter Solstice is upon us, and as the brisk air ushers in a sweet stillness & the deepening of dreams, we are encouraged to take a moment to reflect. We feel such gratitude to our Chatham community & patrons for keeping our candle lit through these challenging times. Your unwavering support, kindness, & fellowship warms our hearts to carry us through the winter. We are dreaming of the day we can gather again for Oakmoss's botanical classes. Until then, we continue to be OPEN with safe shopping options.

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ANIMAL

Continued from page A1

“I guess the knowledge many people have about shelters has been incorrect for many, many years,” she said. “The animals are very well treated. We pay close attention not only to their health, but to their stress levels, to their enrichment — meaning dogs get out and get exercise and cats get play time.”

Unlike how animal shelters are often depicted in media and entertainment, she said, Chatham’s ARC does not incarcerate pets to await potential adoption or eventual euthanasia.

“The animals are not just held and fed and watered,” Rogers said. “They’re actually cared for by people who have a genuine love for animals. And that’s the reason we are in the industry we’re in, because we honestly care about them.”

To achieve its mission — not just sustaining but enriching animals’ lives — the new ARC building will include several unique features.

“I’m really excited about the kennel area for the dogs,” Rogers said. “We’ve taken the time to control the sound level in those areas. The construction was done specifically so that the level of barking when all the animals go on alert is at a lower volume to keep the other animals from being so stressed.”

But dogs won’t get all the perks.

“I’m also very excited about what we are calling our community cat room,” Rogers said. “We’re actually going to have four different cat rooms that will be viewed from the front parking lot; there will be large windows. So, our adoptable cats will be put into groups in these community rooms so that they are experiencing their normal behavior instead of being in a kennel for a majority of the day.”

After the building is completed and operable, a second round of construction will follow to enhance the original animal shelter, with renovations expected to finish by July 2021.

“In a second phase, we’re actually going to not just remodel, but reconstruct the current shelter and continue to use that as well,” Rogers said.

Besides housing animals and



Staff photo by Kim Hawks

Chatham County’s new Animal Resource Center facility is under construction and set to open in early 2021

affording them play areas, the buildings will include medical facilities to address the full range of animal needs.

“When (animals) come into our facility, whether it be through stray or owner surrender, the process we put them through starts with a medical evaluation,” Rogers said. “Then we do initial vaccines and once these animals’ behavior and health has been assessed properly, they’re moved to what we call the adoption floor. Then once someone is interested in adopting a new pet from our facility, the animal is micro-chipped and spayed or neutered and when they go to their new home, they’re set for their initial six months of (veterinary care).”

While the new ARC building will afford the county more flexibility to house animals over longer terms, Rogers emphasized the redeveloped space will not alone solve the county’s animal overpopulation issues. In her 17 years working in the animal care industry — starting with Lee County Animal Control before stints in Holly Springs and Wake County — she has seen many facilities of varying quality and capacity. But she has never seen the bottleneck resolved.

“Pet overpopulation is always going to be an issue, not just for Chatham County but for all counties,” Rogers said. “There’s always going to be a need for more things to be offered because we want to go from being an animal-control type facility to an animal resource center that not only provides services for the animals that are in Chatham County, but for the residents

and pet owners in Chatham County as well.”

To further minimize the problem, Rogers said, more would-be pet owners must consider adoption before purchasing from traditional sources.

“We would rather have you adopt one of our homeless pets,” she said. “We have animals that already need good homes. And, you know, we have puppies, we have adults, we have different breeds, different sizes.”

Rogers is quick to point out that she holds no grievance toward pet stores and breeders. Contrary to common rhetoric, over-breeding is not the primary issue behind pet overpopulation.

“It’s the lack of spaying and neutering,” she said, “folks not having the ability or taking the time to have their own pets spayed and neutered, and then, of course, they end up with a litter of puppies or kittens without having the means to care for them, or they’re running at large and ending up in our custody.”

When animal reproduction goes unchecked, animal services must often make the hard decision to euthanize. But ARC leaders are determined to avoid that last-resort measure.

“We strive never to euthanize animals due to space and we are always looking for innovative solutions,” Roberson said. For example, the ARC partners “feral cats, which are historically unadoptable,” with farmers by “turning them into working barn cats.”

The new ARC building’s added space will also permit Rogers and her team to euthanize fewer animals, but a critical staffing shortage will make



Staff photo by Kim Hawks

Animal Resource Center Attendant Carolyn Stevens plays with a young cat.

it difficult for them to capitalize on the facility’s capacity.

“This new facility is only brick and mortar — it’s going to be beautiful, but it won’t solve our county’s animal problems,” Roberson said. “We must have appropriate staffing and manpower not only to function, but to make our care and education efforts a success.”

In January, during the county’s budget retreat, the sheriff’s office requested 10 new positions to accompany the new ARC building. They included one kennel manager, five animal caretakers, one program manager and one veterinary technician.

But none of the positions were granted.

“We are doing everything we can with the resources we have right now,” Roberson said, “but we absolutely must add additional staff and resources to keep adoption rates high and euthanasia rates low.”

He hopes the ARC can add necessary staff in coming months, but in the meantime, Rogers needs volunteers to pick up the slack.

“We are building our volunteer program currently, so that we have volunteers coming in that can improve the enrichment of the animals,” Rogers said. “If a dog can be walked three times a day instead of one, that’s great. If you can go in and cuddle with a cat that

would just like to sit in someone’s lap, we need volunteers for that as well.”

Donations can also make a big difference, and not just the monetary sort.

“Treats, food, things like that, if you think the animals would enjoy, we really appreciate that ...” Rogers said. “We constantly request cat toys, dog chew toys, as well as wet cat food. Also, Clorox, rubbing alcohol, things like that we use on a daily basis to care for and treat the animals, as well as blankets and beds for dogs or cats.”

All such gifts make a tangible improvement in the quality of life for animals in the ARC.

“There is a difference between animal storage and animal care,” Roberson said. “Our office believes in cultivating an environment where animals are socialized, enriched, and can feel comfortable, safe and loved.”

To make a no-contact donation of supplies, visit the ARC Pet Supply Wishlist at bit.ly/arcwishes. Financial contributions can be made at bit.ly/supportarc. Chatham residents can also call (919) 542-7203 to schedule a visit to the ARC or make an appointment to adopt or donate supplies.

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TEACHER

Continued from page A1

The News + Record received several reports from friends and co-workers that Bridges



Bridges

had died due to COVID-19 complications and had tested positive earlier in the week. On Dec. 19, Fall Creek’s Facebook page announced in-person services would be canceled due to a few COVID-19 cases; a livestream video from earlier this week stating Bridges had contracted the virus was later removed to “guard the privacy of our church family,” the church said in a Dec. 29 post, which did not mention the specific content of the removed videos.

Chatham County Schools

Public Relations Coordinator John McCann told the News + Record the district could not confirm or comment on any employee’s cause of death — but if the unconfirmed reports are true, Bridges is the first known employee to die from COVID-19. The Chatham County Public Health Department’s COVID-19 Dashboard does not reflect any COVID-19 deaths since Nov. 6, though that dashboard only includes confirmed cases and deaths. At the time of publication, Bridges’ family members had neither posted nor confirmed the cause of her death for the News + Record.

It’s evident from comments from co-workers and other friends just how many people loved and will miss Bridges — including her husband, father, sister, brother, sisters-in-law, nieces and nephews and many other family and friends, her obituary said. Alirio Estevez,

who met Bridges five years ago when he joined Siler City Elementary’s ESL team, said learning of his friend’s death on Christmas was a terrible shock.

“I was floored. I mean I had talked to her before the winter break, that Friday,” he said. “I know people say you’re not supposed to talk evil of dead people, but I couldn’t find anything evil in her even if I wanted to. I mean, she was sweet. She was smiling. She helped everybody.”

What he’ll miss most — as many others wrote in Facebook posts over the weekend — is her smile.

“It was the most beautiful smile,” he said, “even with a mask on.”

Siler City Elementary Principal Tania Poston emailed her school community on Saturday to alert them of Bridges’ death and said counseling support would be available to students,

even during the rest of winter break. Teaching for over 22 years at the school, Bridges most recently worked at the ESL teacher with 1st and 2nd grade students.

“She not only taught our children but also — as someone extremely gifted musically — shared her special talents with the adults and students in our school,” Poston wrote. “Ms. Bridges will be greatly missed by our entire school community.”

For Estevez, though his grief is great now, he expects it will be worse when he returns to school after the break, this time without Bridges. He worries especially about how to comfort students when he cannot safely hug them or hold their hand.

“When I go back to school, I don’t know how I will tell my students that she’s not coming back,” he said. “And I know next week when I go back to

school I will feel the void.”

Other co-workers expressed similar sentiments on social media, with many describing her as “an angel” and “the most beautiful person.”

A graveside celebration of life is tentatively scheduled for 2 p.m. on Jan. 6 at Fall Creek Baptist Church. Her obituary on Joyce-Brady Chapel’s website says attendees will be asked to wear masks and social distance.

As Estevez reflects on his friend’s life, and prepares to continue teaching without her, he wishes that more people would take COVID-19 seriously — honoring his friend’s life by doing their part to slow the spread of the virus.

“She shouldn’t be a statistic,” he said. “She shouldn’t be another number.”

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WATERSHED

Continued from page A1

goes to Loves Creek ...” she said. “So, anything that we can do to kind of stop that flow of stormwater and capture it so that it can be cleaned up before it goes into the creek improves that water quality.”

Clean and unobstructed water flows more easily than polluted water, thereby reducing flood proclivity.

To promote cleaner water, LCWS — which includes stakeholders from federal, state and local agencies as well as local businesses, residents and non-profit groups — launched several projects in recent years.

At Boiling Lane Park, near downtown Siler City, the group installed two stormwater wetlands (human-made systems designed to mimic natural wetlands) and a creek buffer to stifle flooding and provide habitat for native plants and animals.

They also began a stormwater infrastructure assessment to compile comprehensive mapping of Siler City’s intricate water system.

And, at the Park Shopping Center, LCWS undertook a restoration study

to evaluate water quality in a nearby headwater stream and propose improvement measures.

“The town recognizes that there needs to be a bigger understanding of maybe what needs to be done in the future,” said Grace Messinger, another LCWS member, “because from what we uncovered, (flooding) has been a concern at that Park Shopping Center since the ’70s. So, it’s one of those things like, everybody’s there with their heads in the sand for many, many years, and it hasn’t gone away. But something needs to start to be done.”

Messinger is an environmental scientist with the Piedmont Conservation Council, a 10-county nonprofit environmental organization which includes Chatham in its purview. While the efforts of groups like LCWS can make substantial change in the watershed’s health and impact, she said, all Siler City residents must learn about Loves Creek and how to protect it if the initiative is to be sustainable. Even small measures can make tangible contributions to the larger effort.

“People don’t really realize that all the storm drains in the town go directly to little creeks, which all end up in Loves Creek,” Messinger said. “And so,

what you can do is keep from putting anything down the storm drains. And that could include — well, I mean, the obvious ones are putting chemicals from washing your car or dumping things directly down the storm drains — but also just not putting your leaves right on top of the storm drains, which end up adding a lot of nutrients and clogging things up.”

If enough town residents take steps to minimize their footprint on the town’s watershed, water quality will improve, optimizing conditions for local aquatic life and preventing stoppages that lead to severe flooding.

But Messinger and Deininger emphasize that while flood prevention is an important outgrowth of their work, it is not the organization’s primary enterprise.

“I think it’s really important to note that Loves Creek Watershed Stewards, we’re not about solving flooding problems. We’re just about improving water quality,” Deininger said. “... It is not our goal to reduce flooding in town. It is to basically restore the ecological function of the creek and to deal with that aquatic life impairment.”

Often, that objective indirectly

promotes flood minimization, but not always. More important to the Stewards is that Siler City residents recognize that Loves Creek is a unique hydrological feature and a valuable amenity, not just a latent hazard.

“One thing that the town of Siler City is really interested in right now is economic growth,” Deininger said. “And to have economic growth these days, often that involves having green space and connection to the natural world within our urban areas.”

To that end, the town has started development of Loves Creek Greenway, with plans to extend the trail, Deininger said. She hopes that other projects will follow to capitalize on the town’s overlooked natural beauty.

“That kind of amenity, where you actually can connect with nature while being in your urban area is really important for our future and our sanity,” Deininger said. “So, really, (Siler City) is very lucky to have this creek ... We need to re-envision how we bring the importance of waterways back into our lives.”

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A TUMULTUOUS SEASON

A historic year for Chatham County elections, politics

BY D. LARS DOLDER
News + Record Staff

Chatham County, which has traditionally straddled party lines, took a hard stance in 2020's election season and voted for Democratic candidates in every major political contest.

From the start, 2020 promised to feature an eventful election. President Donald Trump's administration evinced wide ideological disparity over the past four years and many Americans' strong feelings about Trump's leadership — either undying loyalty or significant disdain — foreshadowed raucous political discourse. But the onset of global pandemic only reinforced the expansive polarization.

Back in mid-summer, expecting many voters to capitalize on the long-standing option to vote by mail, the North Carolina State Board of Elections approved a request to extend the deadline by which county boards could receive absentee ballots.

So began a contentious and ongoing political brouhaha that has inspired cries of election fraud and undermined voter confidence in the integrity of the state's and country's voting processes.

To be clear, the state modification did not permit votes to be cast after Election Day on Nov. 3. Rather, the NCSBE stipulated that mailed-in ballots had to have their postmarks verified before they were counted.

Still, the pandemic measure, which extended the deadline to Nov. 12 — six days beyond the limit traditionally imposed by state legislature — was met with heavy opposition, mostly from Republicans.

Similar adjustments in election process were approved in other states around the country, notably Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin and Georgia — all swing states in which President-elect Joe Biden won. Republican groups contended that such pandemic-related adjustments were illegal and that results in the presidential election should be overturned.



Staff photo by Peyton Sickles

Pictured here on the first day of early voting, Chatham residents line up with six feet of distance between them to cast their ballots.

In N.C., where Trump won the state's 15 electoral college votes, those cries were muted. But the same arguments appeared frequently with respect to state and local elections, especially in counties such as Chatham where Democratic candidates won thanks to absentee-by-mail votes.

Breaking from the state at large, Chatham's voters favored Biden for president instead of Trump, and the trend continued down ballot. Gov. Roy Cooper was the county's top vote-getter, and incumbent state legislators Robert Reives II and Valerie Foushee, also Democrats, maintained their seats with comfortable margins.

The closest race, however, was for the Dist. 5 county commissioner seat. Chatham native Andy Wilkie was appointed to the seat in May 2019 and served as the board's only Republican member. He hoped to win a full four-year term in this year's election but narrowly lost to young contender Franklin Gomez Flores, 26, of Siler City.

In his bid for election, Wilkie led a shared platform with fellow party-members Jimmy Pharr and Jay Stobbs, hoping to oust incumbents Karen Howard and Mike Dasher and claim a Republican majority. The Wilkie/Pharr/Stobbs campaign promised to



Staff photo by Peyton Sickles

Early voting (shown here) and absentee-by-mail voting represented an unprecedented proportion of votes in 2020's election and highly favored Democrat support.

introduce more conservative fiscal policy and to restore the confederate monument in Pittsboro.

Ultimately, voters preferred Gomez Flores, who ran unaffiliated but favors Democratic policy and whose experience includes a recent stint on the county's planning board. He beat Wilkie by just 307 votes out of 25,000 ballots cast, a margin he retained even after a recount.

Coupled with Howard and Dasher's successful reelections, Gomez Flores' victory has ushered in a new era of county politics in which Democrats hold total control.

The Democratic bastion extended also to the Chatham County Schools Board of Education. While the BOE is technically non-partisan, challengers to the two seats open for



Staff photo by Peyton Sickles

Chatham County swung left in 2020's elections, voting for Democrats in every major race.

re-election ran on the county's Republican campaign ticket. Neither won. Incumbent Melissa Hlavac (Dist. 1), the associate dean of MBA programs at UNC's Kenan-Flagler Business School, maintained her seat along with longtime Chatham educator David Hamm (Dist. 2). Chatham's municipi-

pal governments, too, experienced some change in 2020. No town commissioner seats appeared on the ballot in November's elections, but in Siler City, two unexpected deaths shifted town leadership.

First, in May, Dist. 2 commissioner and Mayor Pro Tem Larry Cheek passed away just

six months following his re-election to the non-partisan board. Four months later, Siler City's board of commissioners unanimously elected to appoint Norma Boone, a lifelong Siler City resident, to fill the vacancy. Boone previously served as the principal of Jordan-Matthews and is now the executive director for teacher induction at Chatham County Schools.

Not long after Cheek's death, Siler City lost a second leader — beloved Mayor John Grimes, who served the county in many capacities over the course of several decades. While town ordinance behooves the board to fill empty commissioner seats, the mayor's position may remain unfilled until another election season. So far, the town's commissioners have not opted to appoint Grimes' successor, instead allowing Commissioner-at-large Cindy Bray to preside over the board as mayor pro tem.

Homogeneity is not unity

Democrats now hold nearly every seat of power in Chatham County. But uniform leadership should not be confused with countywide political unity. Much like the country as a whole, Chatham remains divided. Its rural precincts overwhelmingly supported Republican candidates, but support for Democrats in pockets of higher population density and from absentee-by-mail votes was enough to tip the scales.

President Trump may be leaving office, but the effects of his term will endure. Two opposing movements have emerged that transcend politics: his detractors call for nationwide reform and his supporters entrench themselves in the country's historical ideals. The same division has taken root in Chatham, and while a politically uniform board of commissioners cites unity as a major goal, it remains to be seen whether reconciliation is possible.

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GONE — BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Removed Confederate monument still source of contention in 2020

BY HANNAH MCCLELLAN
News + Record Staff

PITTSBORO — Though the Confederate monument that stood in front of the Chatham County Historic Courthouse since 1907 was removed in November 2019, the monument continued to be a source of contention — and a lightning rod for protests — well into 2020.

The Chatham County Board of Commissioners voted 4-1 in August 2019 to remove the monument and return it to the Winnie Davis Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. But the group filed a lawsuit, first seeking a temporary restraining order and later a preliminary injunction against the removal of the monument. While the temporary restraining order was granted, the group was later denied the preliminary injunction and the statue and its pedestal were removed from the night of Nov. 19 into the next morning to an “undisclosed location” for storage.

On Dec. 30, 2019, the Winnie Davis Chapter of the UDC filed a notice to appeal the Dec. 4 dismissal of the case it filed against the Chatham County Board of Commissioners, Chatham for All and the West Chatham Branch 5378 of the

NAACP in the removal of the monument.

In that case, dismissed by Judge Susan Bray, the UDC argued the statue should not be removed as it was a “gift” to the county, referencing a 2015 state law that restricts some monument removals. The county argued that a license housed in the N.C. Archives from the time of the installation of the monument in 1907 notes that it was an agreement for the county to house the statue, but it would remain the property of the UDC.

“The County looks forward to putting this difficult time behind us as we continue to move forward as a community,” a Chatham County statement at the time read. “The components of the monument were transported to a warehouse where they will be preserved and stored until such time as the UDC finds a more appropriate location to place them.”

In March of this year, the News + Record reported on the monument's role in Chatham, emphasizing the belief by many community members that the monument represented racism.

That article pointed out that protesters on both sides of the monument issue — even months after its removal — still gathered in Pittsboro with

opposing signs and sentiments. Commissioner Karen Howard told the News + Record at the time that Chatham was “too early in” to completely assess the monument issue and its impacts.

“I think aside from the initial passion that rose up around the removal of the monument, most people are still where they were,” she said. “I do think it opened a crack, and the conversation has to continue. But I don't even think we've really begun it.”

Confederate monument supporters, many from outside Chatham, have maintained a recurring presence in Pittsboro, often taunting opponents with misogynistic and homophobic slurs. The Pittsboro courthouse became a lightning rod for protests in May 2019, when county commissioners initiated monument discussions. Since then, Confederate supporters and counter-protesting, self-proclaimed “anti-racists,” have squared off repeatedly, oftentimes ending with brawls and assault charges.

In June, one such protest took place, with a widely-circulated Facebook video capturing a Confederate supporter striking a woman with a Confederate flag. The video, taken by Raleigh activist Kerwin Pittman, showed Tommy Par-

nell of Surry County hitting a woman with a Confederate flag attached to a hockey stick. Following the event, a warrant for Parnell was issued with multiple charges.

At the end of July, Chathamites learned the 24-foot Black Lives Matter billboard — crowd-sourced with a GoFundMe that raised nearly \$11,000 — next to the large Confederate flag on U.S. Hwy. 64, would likely be removed.

That's because Pittsboro resident Sam White — the owner of the property both the sign and flag sit on — decided not to renew his lease for the billboard, according to Lamar Advertising Company, which owns and updates the board. White has been charged with crimes at multiple protests over the Confederate monument.

In early 2019, when the BOC began discussions on the possible removal of the Confederate monument, White was the first in Pittsboro to lease a small portion of his land there to the Virginia Flaggers — a known neo-Confederate group that has erected Confederate flags throughout Virginia and North Carolina — to erect a flagpole and Confederate flag.

In an interview with the News + Record in Oct. 2019, White said, “I really don't

want to bother anybody,” but decided to have the flag erected as “a direct response” to the commissioners' consideration of removing the monument he said demonstrated “pride in southern heritage.”

The monument also played a role in this year's Board of Commissioners' races — with Republican commissioner candidates Jay Stobbs, Jimmy Pharr and then-commissioner Andy Wilkie prioritizing restoring what they coined as “the Veterans Memorial” on their campaign flyers. Wilkie, who lost to current commissioner Franklin Gomez Flores, was the only commissioner to vote against removing the monument in 2019.

It is still unknown where the monument is being stored, or when the UDC will take over responsibility of the statue.

“The last several months have been a painful time for Chatham County,” Commissioner Mike Dasher said in a news release following the monument's removal. “We've experienced high emotions, division and even violence which have impacted residents, businesses and the overall feel of our community.”

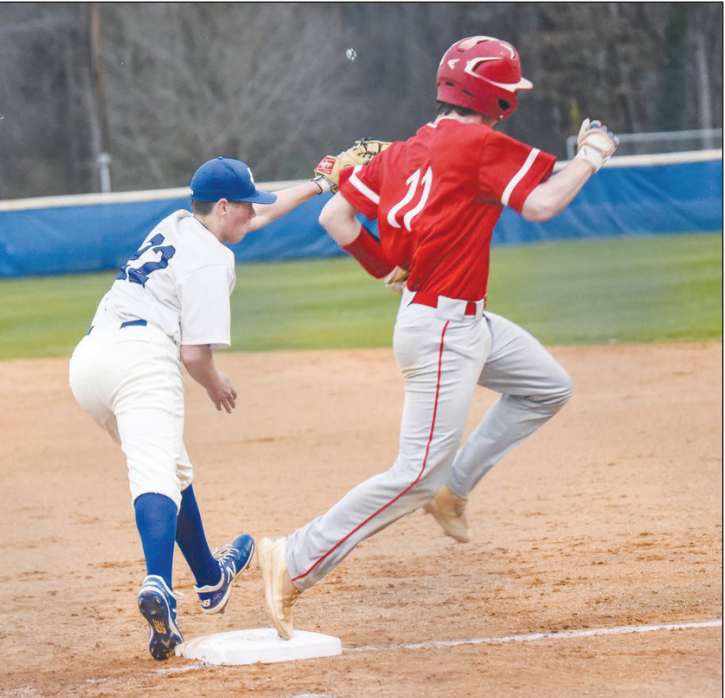
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2020 SPORTS YEAR IN REVIEW

Historic achievements, new normals headline year in Chatham athletics

BY CHAPEL FOWLER
 News + Record Staff

Months of athletic dead periods. Football in February. A gym full of masked volleyball players. This was a year like no other for Chatham County, and sports — most notably at the preps level, where Chatham has five high schools competing within the NCHSAA — were very much a part of the shift. From historic achievements to new normals, see the News + Record's 2020 Sports Year in Review on the next page.



Staff file photo

Jordan-Matthews' Carson Whitehead stretches to tag first base as Chatham Central's Colin Lagenor speeds down the line on March 12 in Siler City. The Jets' 2-0 win was one of the few baseball games held across the county in 2020 before COVID-19.



Staff file photo

Chatham Charter senior Morgan Lineberry (30) hits a serve against Woods Charter in a Dec. 10 home match in Siler City. All athletes, regardless of if they're on or off the court, must wear masks during volleyball matches.



Staff file photo

Northwood senior Aaron Ross (0), pictured here in a March 3 playoff game against Southern Durham, helped lead the Chargers men's basketball team to the 2020 NCHSAA 3A semifinals.



Staff file photo

Northwood's Rae McClarty (2), pictured here in a January game, was one of three Big 8 all-conference selections for the Northwood women's basketball team, which advanced to the NCHSAA 3A round of 16.



CN+R file photo

Behind Central Tar Heel Conference player of the year Jordan Hamilton (42), the Chatham Charter men's basketball made it all the way to the 2020 NCHSAA 1A semifinals, where they lost to Winston-Salem Prep.



Staff file photo

Woods Charter men's basketball head coach Taj Cotten, pictured here in October, held offseason workouts at the school's Chapel Hill gym under coronavirus safety protocols (and in a Wolves-branded mask).



Staff file photo

Chatham Central football head coach Sherman Howze, masked up and socially distanced, supervises his players during a contactless offseason 'skill session' in July.

CHATHAM COUNTY ATHLETICS RUNDOWN

This week's schedule and last week's results

BY CHAPEL FOWLER
 News + Record Staff

LAST WEEK

Monday, Dec. 21

Cross country: Chatham Charter's Brandon McKoy and Woods Charter's Ellie Poitras placed first in the men's and women's five-kilometer races in a three-team meet alongside Chatham Central in Siler City. The Knights won the

men's race on team points; the Wolves won the women's race.

Volleyball: Cornerstone Charter swept Woods Charter, 3-0, in Chapel Hill (25-12, 25-9, 25-10).

Volleyball: In an in-county matchup, Chatham Central beat Jordan-Matthews, 3-1, in Siler City (25-15, 25-20, 14-25, 25-9). Senior Tanner Little had nine aces,

and senior Savannah Stilwell and junior Taylor Poe tied for a team-high eight kills apiece.

Tuesday, Dec. 22

Volleyball: Undefeated Wheatmore swept Jordan-Matthews, 3-0, in a Siler City matinee match.

Volleyball: Chatham Charter swept Woods Charter, 3-0, in Chapel Hill (25-13, 25-16, 25-6).

Standouts for the Knights, who moved to 5-2, included senior Morgan Lineberry (13 kills, five blocks) Breanna Spinks (12 kills, 16 digs) and junior Molly Wilson (12 assists).

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REVIEW

Continued from page B1

Impact of coronavirus

As you read this, volleyball, cross country and swimming and diving teams across the state are deep into regular-season competition. And men's and women's basketball teams tip off their season next Monday.

Considering where the NCHSAA was in March, that's a major accomplishment.

After commissioner Que Tucker and her office made the tough call to cancel athletics for the 2019-20 season — that included all spring sports and eight basketball state championship games — they started a phased, months-long approach with the end goal of getting student-athletes safely back into action.

The NCHSAA laid the groundwork for socially distanced "skill sessions" through the summer and the fall, but it always deferred to individual schools and school districts when it came to actual implementation.

In Chatham, that painted a stark contrast between public and charter schools.

Chatham Charter and Woods Charter carried on with workouts almost immediately. Meanwhile, Northwood, Jordan-Matthews and Chatham Central suspended workouts after two weeks in July and didn't resume them until Oct. 7 after approval from the Chatham County Schools Board of Education.

Eventually, though, all five high schools ended up in the same place: starting official volleyball and cross country competitions the week of Nov. 16 with COVID-19 safety precautions — including a mask mandate for all indoor activities, temperature checks and capacity limits — in place.

Those adjustments will continue into 2021, as men's and women's basketball teams resume play Jan. 4 and football teams — high school sports' undisputed money-makers — kick off in late February.

It wasn't just high school sports, either. Central Carolina Community College cross country runners and local Siler City and Pittsboro youth football players saw their seasons canceled, while local staples such as the Chatham County Senior Games and the Reindeer Run had to pivot to virtual events.

Historic basketball season

Eight teams qualified for the playoffs. Four coaches were named the



Staff file photo

Chatham Central's Taylor Hughes (20) takes a fastbreak layup against two North Moore defenders in a Feb. 14 home game in Bear Creek. The Bears were one of eight local teams to qualify for the 2020 NCHSAA playoffs.

best in their conference. And two teams were a combined 10 points away from appearing in state championship games.

It's safe to say 2019-20 was a watershed year for Chatham County basketball.

The Northwood men's team, coached by Matt Brown and led by seniors Deuce Powell, Aaron Ross and Jalen McAfee-Marion, went 27-3, won their conference regular-season and tournament titles and advanced to the 3A semifinals, where the Chargers lost to undefeated Westover, 54-49.

The Chatham Charter men's team, coached by Jason Messier and led by seniors Jordan Hamilton, Connor Murphy and Cole Milholen, went 32-2, also won their conference regular-season and tournament titles and advanced to the 1A semifinals, where they lost to Winston-Salem Prep, 65-60.

And those were just the headliners.

The Northwood women, led by Te'Keyah Bland, Rae McClarty and McKenna Snively, swept their conference regular-season and tournament titles and advanced to the 3A round of 16. The Chatham Charter women, led by Morgan Lineberry, Tamaya Walden and Rebecca McGaughnea, went 27-4, won their conference regular-season title and advanced to the 1A round of 16.

Chatham Central got in on the fun, too, sending both its men's and women's teams to the 1A playoffs behind Michael Moore and Lucas Skertich and Mary Grace Murchison and Danielle Vaughn, respectively. The women's team advanced to the round of 16; the men's team advanced to the round of 32.

Chatham's other two playoff squads — the Jordan-Matthews men and Woods Charter women — lost in the opening round of 64 but, when put in context, were still success stories.

senior facilities near her home in Pittsboro.

Brendan Harrington, a former Northwood linebacker, had a team-high four interceptions and was an all-conference honorable mention for the Appalachian State football team, which went 9-3 in 2020.

Joe Glasson, an 81-year-old resident of Governors Club, continued his distinguished career in senior softball leagues when his Carolina Blazers won an 80-and-above national championship in October.

Jason Gibson, a 17-year-old Chatham County native, used his appearance in a national bass fishing championship in October to raise over \$10,000 for ALS research. He did it in honor of his longtime

friend Chris Smith, who was diagnosed with the disease last summer.

Northwood senior long snapper Jake Mann committed to Florida State as a preferred walk-on, while former Northwood wide receiver Chris Lawson Jr. (now playing at Hough) got scholarship offers from South Carolina, N.C. State and Pittsburgh after a standout freshman year

with the Chargers.

Partially inspired by Forrest Gump, 23-year-old Pittsboro resident Jesse Greenlee spent his summer biking cross country from Charlotte to Portland, Oregon. It took him 73 days.

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- 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! !!

CHATHAM CHAT | MIKE RUSHER ON THE 2020 ELECTIONS

Here's what we've learned from this year's elections

This week, we speak with Mike Rusher, who's been analyzing elections data since 2010, about perspective on North Carolina's 2020 elections.

Rusher is the vice president for public affairs at The Results Company, a communications and strategic consulting firm in Raleigh. During his career, he's worked with nonprofit organizations, political campaigns, state government and governmental affairs. Rusher, the North Carolina Republican Party's former chief of staff, began packaging election data tracking and analysis to his clients in 2010. He earned a degree in political science and concentration in state government from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

As the proverbial dust settles from the 2020 election, it's worth spending some time reflecting on things like the big (N.C. voter turnout), the small (the razor-thin margin of the Newby-Beasley race for Chief Justice of the N.C. Supreme Court) and how we might look at elections differently looking ahead. Let's start with voter turnout: N.C.'s was a record 75% — but only 16% of voters cast ballots on election day. As Nov. 3 came and went, what major reflections did you have as you watched and observed what was happening in N.C.?

While there was a noticeable shift in the way people voted this year — generally earlier than in years past — North Carolina as a state continued to generally prefer Republican candidates over Democratic candidates.

In 2020 there were 20 statewide contests; Republicans managed to



Submitted photo

Mike Rusher

win 16 of them, Democratic candidates won only four. To do this, Republicans managed to sweep all contested judicial seats and each of the open seat Council of State races. Governor Cooper's visibility for pandemic coverage assisted his 4% margin of victory, though it is notable that Commissioner of Agriculture Steve Troxler received the most raw votes of any statewide candidate. Though he was at the top of the ticket and won the state by a point and a half, there were seven other statewide candidates — six Republicans and Roy Cooper — who finished with more raw votes than President Trump.

You've written some analysis about the Paul Newby-Cheri Beasley race, which Beasley conceded two weeks ago. Newby, a sitting justice, was declared the winner over Beasley (who was seeking re-election as chief justice) by

401 votes out of more than 5.5 million cast — but not before lots of legal wrangling on her campaign's part. How do you reflect on that race?

Not only was this one of the closest races in state history, it was also one of the most bizarre recounts from a legal standpoint. Chief Justice Beasley launched an unprecedented recount scheme that sought to add a list of more than 3,000 votes to the final election totals — a list that recount observers discovered was purged of all but a handful of Republican voters.

This led to embarrassing headlines from her campaign's hometown Raleigh News & Observer. "N.C. Supreme Court candidate pushes to count more votes — if they're from Democrats," where the Beasley campaign declined to respond to such surprising conduct. After widespread criticism of this effort, nearly all county

election boards tossed out these requests from the Beasley campaign and she later conceded before the final recount concluded. I think we can expect many future State Supreme Court races to be very close, but I think we can all agree that padding vote totals, post-election, is not something that should be repeated ever again.

When we think about — and talk about — elections, there's typically not a lot of discussion, relatively, about the state Supreme Court races. Many voters don't have a lot of familiarity with the candidates or the judicial issues involved. What impact will the Newby-Beasley race have on future races in the state's high court?

Due to changes in election law, this was the first year since roughly 2002 that N.C. State Supreme Court candidates were listed on the ballot with their party of registration. While some criticized this move, it actually led to an all-time high for voter participation in judicial races.

Most folks tend to think an increase in voter participation is a good thing. To demonstrate this, we calculated judicial drop-off by counting up all votes in the Presidential contest, then compare that total to the number of voters in the N.C. Supreme Court contests — and there is historically a noticeable decline. For example, in 2004, there was a drop-off of 22.6% from Presidential to N.C. Supreme Court. In 2008, the drop-off was 28.3%. In 2012, 22.1%, and in 2016 the drop-off was 16.5%. Fast forward to 2020 — there was a drop-off of just

2.4% from the top of the ticket to N.C. Supreme Court. This is a win for Democracy.

This year, 65% of N.C. voters cast ballots in one-stop early voting and another 18% did so via absentee ballots. The COVID-19 pandemic and high interest in the presidential race each played an important role, of course. But what are your thoughts about how those numbers will look in future elections?

COVID really intensified North Carolinian's continued biennial shift towards early voting, which really began back in 2008. The increase percentage of ballots cast early in 2020 was largely due to the increased participation of mail-in absentees.

To demonstrate this, in 2016 more than 65% of all ballots were cast before election day, while in 2020, more than 83% of all ballots were cast before election day. Mail-in ballots were just 4% of all ballots in 2016, that increased to 18% in 2020, a shift of more than 800,000 voters. People began voting by mail in September and as long as they were postmarked by election day, mail-in ballots were allowed to be counted all the way up to Nov. 12. COVID was the driving factor for the increase in voting by mail this cycle, and we should expect voting by mail to continue to be a large block of our method of voting. That means candidates will need to reach their potential constituents as early as possible.

What would you like to see change about the way we "do" elections in North Carolina — from campaigning to election spending

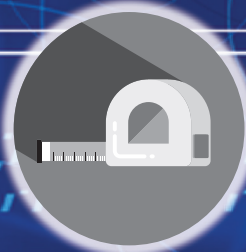
to terms and term limits (should General Assembly terms be more than two years) to the actual voting process?

One of the first things that must be addressed in 2021 is the gubernatorial-appointed, highly partisan design of the State Board of Elections. Our election operators are selected, appointed and replaced solely by the governor. The elections board has become more partisan, and less transparent over the last four years and that's bad for democracy. Most recently, the elections board changed the absentee ballot rules after hundreds of thousands of ballots had been cast through the mail. They negotiated a private settlement with a group led by Gov. Cooper's 2016 election recount lawyer, and courts could offer little relief due to the tight time frame.

The bottom line is that the partisan state board overstepped its authority and rewrote election law, and lawmakers should address this.

I believe professionalizing elected state legislative jobs would also benefit North Carolinians. If a legislator is chosen to serve by their community, they are immediately expected to be on call essentially 24/7 but the paycheck is only \$14,000 a year. This results in our public officials having to juggle their normal jobs with the daunting task of legislating and often causes well qualified citizens to forego running for office. This effort could be complimented with term limits, though we've seen pretty high turnover rates in the General Assembly over the last decade.

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Blundering 'Wonder Woman 1984' is a long, hacky, joyless sequel



Late in "Wonder Woman 1984," during a climactic scene in which

NEIL MORRIS
Film Critic

the titular Amazon warrior princess confronts the baddie de jour with the consequences of his diabolical actions, the soundtrack suddenly cuts to composer Han Zimmer's "A Beautiful Lie," a track Zimmer wrote for "Batman v. Superman" that plays when Bruce Wayne's parents are gunned down.

It is a conspicuous choice by Zimmer and director Patty Jenkins that does not make it any less startling and incongruous — for a moment I half-wondered if the Caped Crusader was about to show up near the end of this Wonder Woman sequel.

If only this oddity was the worst thing about "Wonder Woman 1984." Unfortunately, this follow-up to arguably the best entry in the DC Extended Universe canon is now its worst. The film aspires to marry the retro, off-beat charm of "Thor: Ragnarok" with a "Watchmen"-esque Cold War alt-reality, including the worst impression of Ronald Reagan committed to celluloid. Throw in a nod to Superman surrendering his super powers for the sake of love in "Superman II" and you have a ham-fisted, tone-deaf, borderline offensive offering that jettisons everything that made Jenkins's 2017 original so compelling for the sake of an homage to comic book kitsch.

"WW84" immediately abandons the declaration by Wonder Woman (Gal Gadot), aka Diana Prince, in "Batman v. Superman" that "a hundred years ago I walked away from mankind" after the death of her boyfriend, World War I pilot Steve Trevor (Chris Pine). Now, just six decades removed from the Great War, Diana's gone from dueling mythological gods to the death to lassoing thieves in a shopping mall. The Wonder Woman of 1984 is ubiquitous yet somehow still mysterious — this Diana Prince doesn't wear her trademark spectacles or any sort of disguise, yet nobody manages to connect the two.

When not fighting crime, Diana works as an anthropologist at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. She is half-pals with gemologist Barbara Minerva, played by SNL alum Kristen Wiig, who plays Barbara with her same overdone sketch comedy shtick. The dowdy Barbara, often the butt of jokes but not the object of many men, envies Diana's confidence, charm and beauty. That changes when Barbara happens upon a stolen artifact, a stone with an inscription that promises to grant its holder with one wish. Barbara wants to be just like Diana, and soon Barbara is wearing skimpy clothes and lifting heavy weights. It seems the stone also somehow bestows Diana's super powers onto Barbara even though Barbara doesn't even know Diana is Wonder Woman. Barbara's transformation from nebbish friend to feline foe aims to ape Michelle Pfeiffer from "Batman Returns," but instead Wiig's inane interpretation ends up



channeling the specter of Uma Thurman from "Batman and Robin."

The ersatz monkey's paw also curses its users with the unintended results of their wishes — a man who wishes for a farm receives a herd of cows where he stands in the middle of D.C.; Reagan's wish for more nukes triggers DEFCON 1. A Middle Eastern man who wishes for the return of his homeland and the expulsion of foreign colonizers prompts dangerous geopolitical fallout, a peculiarly on-the-nose subplot considering the Israeli-born Gadot (who gets a producer's credit for this sequel) and her former membership in and outspoken support for the IDF.

Along the way, struggling oilman/Trump doppelganger Max Lord (Pedro Pascal) pilfers the genie stone and asks to become the stone itself. Lord absorbs the ability to grant wishes, a power he parlays into the megalomaniacal means to expand his own fortunes, with cataclysmic consequences.

In truth, the entire premise is really an elaborate concoction to shoehorn Pine into the movie. After Diana muses for the return of her beloved Steve, Trevor reappears but not entirely as himself (for some reason). Instead, his spirit (?) hijacks the body of another flesh-and-blood man (played by Hallmark regular Kristoffer Polaha). Diana is aware of this switcheroo, but the film seems oblivious to its immoral implications. Since Diana only sees and hears Steve, she goes along with this shockingly unethical artifice as the two spend the rest of the film cavorting around, rekindling their romance while trying to thwart Lord's plans.

A certain suspension of disbelief is expected for superhero flicks, but "WW84" cannot remain faithful to its own internal logic. The stone (and later Lord) can only grant one wish per person, until the storyline requires otherwise. The price the stone exacts for granting a wish is an offshoot of the wish itself, until Lord contrives a way to conscript people into parting with something specific and incidental. Wonder Woman has her invisible jet, but its translucence is now caused by Diana

WONDER WOMAN 1984
Grade: D
Director: Patty Jenkins
Starring: Gal Gadot, Chris Pine, Kristen Wiig and Pedro Pascal
MPPAA Rating: PG-13
Running Time: 2 hr. 31 min.

touching it and summoning heretofore unseen demigoddess powers — "In 50 years I've only done it once ... it was just a coffee cup" is all the exposition you'll get from this plot-by-numbers.

There is a rather pleasant end credits scene, and I suppose it's worth something that the villains here are not destroyed, as usually happens in this genre, but instead reasoned into recognizing the error of their ways. But that is cold comfort for a joyless film whose length is ridiculously excessive, whose execution is hacky and whose overarching lesson is that only the elite, not the unwashed masses, are well-suited to wielding fortune, beauty, power, whatever — it's the anti-"Incredibles." And its heroine is a strong,

independent feminine paragon whose entire raison d'être is distilled down to "pining" for a man she knew for a few weeks a half-century ago.

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Chatham COA
Upcoming Events
December 31st - January 6th

Thursday, December 31st

- [Chair Yoga with Liz](#) at 10:00 AM 📶
- [Trivia with Faye](#) at 11:15 AM 📶

Friday, January 1st - Offices Closed for New Year's Day

Monday, January 4th

- [Tai Chi for Arthritis](#) at 8:45 AM 📶
- [Chair Yoga with Liz](#) at 10:00 AM 📶
- [Bingo with Joe](#) at 11:15 AM 📶

Tuesday, January 5th

- [Eating for Healthy Weight](#) at 11:15 AM 📶

Wednesday, January 6th

- [Wood Turning with Alan](#) at 11:15 AM 📶
- [Short Stories with Chris](#) at 12:30 PM 📞

📶 **On Zoom** 📞 **On Conference Line: 727-731-8717**

For more information or to register for these programs, visit our website:
<https://chathamcouncilonaging.org/coa-virtual-activities/>

We Wish You a Safe & Healthy New Year!

#ShareLoveNotCOVID

For your health and the health of your friends, family, and neighbors, avoid holiday travel and limit physical contact with people who do not live with you.

Join the Trivia Hunt & Win!

Each week the COA will offer a trivia question in the *Chatham News + Record*. Find the correct answer in the paper and enter to win a \$25 VISA gift card in the COA's monthly trivia hunt contest drawing. Look in **Section A** for this week's question.

The Chatham COA is Here for You!

For more information on our ongoing programs & services visit our website at chathamcoa.org or call our centers, Monday-Friday, 8 am - 5 pm.

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'I SEE MINI-MIRACLES EVERY DAY'

Holiday hope in Chatham County

BY SHELLEY SMITH
Outreach Coordinator,
United Way of Chatham
County

Army.

For several years Smith has been using United Way grant funds to support her work with a homeless family — a couple we'll call Mark and Maria — and they recently contacted her again needing a place to stay. Because of a special grant from the United Way COVID-19 Relief Fund, Smith was able to get an extended hotel stay for the family. Several weeks later and just before Thanksgiving, Smith received the best news yet — a Siler City apartment had become available, and Mark and Maria and their children would be able to take over the lease and move in.

"I see mini miracles every day," Smith said. "I speak it and it seems to come."

A few days after Smith received the news about the apartment, another miracle was in the works for the family — a call from Helene, a Chatham resident, offering a Christmas tree to a family in need.

"I told her we had a family that just moved into an apartment, and they would love a tree," Smith said.

Helene asked if the family needed anything else, and Smith let her know the family had no furniture, only a mattress the last tenant left

behind.

Helene jumped off the phone and got to work — she posted to NextDoor, a social media platform for neighborhoods and communities, asking if anyone had a bunk bed for the children or other household items to donate.

"By the time I went to bed Friday evening, I had 50 responses," Helene said. "And when I got up the next morning, I had 100. I thought, what do I do with this?"

Helene spent the weekend creating a spreadsheet and following up with everyone who wanted to help.

"Stuff started showing up on my porch Sunday, and people dropped things off all day Monday," she said. "One guy handed me a check for \$250. It was just amazing."

Anything a family could need or want in their home was gifted by neighbors and complete strangers: couches, bunk beds and desks for the children, kitchenware, bedding, televisions, a vacuum, and the list went on. A much-needed repair to the family's car was also no longer a worry — more than \$700 in cash and gift cards were donated, and Helene called around getting car repair quotes and coordinated everything for the family. Less than one



week after moving into their new home, the family had five truckloads of donations unloaded into their apartment, including a Thanksgiving meal, holiday decorations and a Nintendo game for the kids. And it all began with a phone call about a Christmas tree.

"It restored my faith in humanity after a tough year," Helene said. She has experience coordinating critical needs for others — most of her professional career was spent working overseas in disaster and emergency response, working with refugees or displaced people in war zones and natural disaster areas. She coordinated immediate and long-term assistance.

"I was a good person for this to happen to, I guess," Helene said.

Since Thanksgiving she's kept in touch with Smith and the family, and she wants to do more.

"Donna and I are discussing where the gaps are in the system and where the needs are," she said. "Whether it's volunteering with an existing organization to meet that need, or starting a new organization, I'm open to both. This has pointed me in a direction I've been looking for."

She will also be

contacting everyone on NextDoor who offered donations that weren't used, and coordinating temporary storage for the items so that newly housed families will have what they need to start a new home.

"I worked for years overseas helping people displaced from their homes by war and disaster," Helene said. "It's even more rewarding to be able to help people in my own neighborhood."

United Way is a long-time funder of the Salvation Army Emergency Assistance Program, which provides funds for things like utility payments and hotel rooms for residents in crisis. However, in response to the extreme hardships brought on by COVID-19, our United Way raised an additional \$100,000 this year to meet the immediate basic needs of Chatham residents. Using money from United Way's COVID-19 Relief Fund, Salvation Army was also able to temporarily house several homeless families in hotels just before Thanksgiving.

"United Way is one of our main funding sources," Smith said. "United Way funds have changed lives for many in Chatham County, especially the homeless."

It is no secret the Cha-

tham community and its nonprofits have taken a hit during the pandemic. However, the need is greater now than ever before. If you are looking for a way to help others like Mark and Maria, please consider a year-end gift to United Way. The cost of a one-week stay in a Siler City hotel is \$350, which means a single gift can be the spark that changes a family forever. By making a donation to United Way you are supporting Salvation Army and all of our member agencies. Donate now and help us change even more lives in 2021.

The 2020-2021 United Way of Chatham County campaign is well underway, raising funds to help one in three Chatham residents with services like daycare, assistance with utility bills, transportation, support for the needs of the growing Hispanic community, senior services and emergency food, clothing and housing. United Way of Chatham County supports 22 programs of 15 agencies. To learn more about United Way, the programs it funds and the impact they make in the community, visit www.unitedwayofchatham.org.

CHATHAM COUNTY COVID-19 DASHBOARD

Updated as of TUESDAY, Dec. 29

IN CHATHAM

Cases: 2,855
Deaths: 65

Trendline: Chatham is "orange," meaning "substantial," but not critical, spread. In N.C., 13% of recent tests have been positive.

Chatham County Schools:
42 staff, 27 students.

Overall hospital impact: LOW

NORTH CAROLINA

Cases: 524,279
Deaths: 6,574

Trendline: The rolling 7-day average for cases has trended downward 13%.

UNITED STATES

Cases: 19,232,843
Deaths: 334,029

The 7-day rolling average of cases has trended up 8.1% in the last two weeks.

SOURCES: N.C. DEPT. OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, CHATHAM COUNTY GOVERNMENT, CHATHAM COUNTY SCHOOLS, COVID TRACKING PROJECT, NEWS + RECORD RESEARCH. BECAUSE OF DATA RELEASE TIMES, SOME AGENCY UPDATES MAY PROVIDE SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT NUMBERS.

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NEWS BRIEFS

Governor's School Supply Drive extended through Jan. 16

RALEIGH — The 4th annual Governor's School Supply Drive is being extended to encourage more donations for supplies to support North Carolina students and teachers.

Public health precautions have required the drive to go fully online with donations collected through the North Carolina Parent Teacher Association, a new partner for this year's drive. Visit ncsupplies.ncpta.org to make a donation now through Jan. 16.

"Supporting students and schools in these challenging times takes just a few clicks and a few minutes," N.C. Gov. Roy Cooper said. "Kristin and I have made our personal contribution and we hope you can too."

"Our children are remarkably resourceful and resilient, but they need your support during

this difficult time. North Carolina PTA is proud to partner on this effort to make sure our children have the necessary school supplies," said Harold Dixon, president of North Carolina PTA. "Let's rally together to defeat COVID-19 and lift up our students and schools."

Free Christmas tree recycling offered

PITTSBORO — Chatham County Solid Waste & Recycling is offering free Christmas tree recycling at the Main Facility through Jan. 15. Trees can be accepted from 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday at 28 County Services Road, Pittsboro. Please note: the office will be closed Friday, Jan. 1 for New Year's Day.

Only real trees can be accepted. All decorations, stands, and pots must be removed. After these dates, we will accept trees for our normal yard debris charge of \$20 per ton, with a \$2

minimum.

Artificial trees can be placed in the scrap metal recycling bin, but all decorations and lights must be removed. Pre-lit trees cannot be recycled, so throw those in with the regular trash.

Chatham County property listing forms due by Feb. 1

PITTSBORO — The Chatham County Tax Office reminds those owning real estate that personal and business property as of Jan. 1, 2021, must be listed with the county's tax office no later than Feb. 1, 2021. Listings received after this date will be subject to a late listing penalty equal to ten percent of taxes owed.

Forms will be mailed out, but property owners also can pick up forms at the tax office in Pittsboro or download a 2021 Listing Form at chathamnc.org/TaxForms. Property owners

who do not receive their listing form by Jan. 20, should call 919-542-8250 to make arrangements to list property by the deadline.

This year online listing is available for personal property and business personal property at chathamnc.org/TaxListingDivision. Individuals can also mail their completed listing forms, and they must be postmarked by the U.S. Postal Service no later than Feb. 1, to avoid penalties. Property also may be listed in person at the tax office, located at 12 East St. in Pittsboro. Owners must bring all detailed information necessary to identify their property and its value, including forms that were mailed.

Note that personal property listing forms are not used to list real estate property and any registered motor vehicles with tags. Registered motor vehicles are handled by the N.C. Division of Motor Vehicles.

— CN+R staff reports

POLICE REPORTS

SILER CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

Xavier Walden, 24, of Siler City was charged Dec. 27 for assault on a female. Walden has a Jan. 26 court date in Pittsboro.

Deja Durant, 21, of Siler City was charged Dec. 27 for assault. Durant has a Jan. 26 court date in Pittsboro.

CHATHAM SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Local partnership spreads holiday cheer

From the Chatham Sheriff's Office



Submitted photo
Lesley Matthews helping to direct gift pickups at the Sheriff's Office.



Submitted photo
Gifts ranged from small snack items to bikes, games and clothing.



Submitted photo
Sergeant Ronnie Miller prepares to deliver toys.

On the Tuesday before Christmas, nearly 100 children and their families received surprise holiday gifts thanks to the generosity of anonymous donors from across Chatham County.

The event was a joint effort between the Chatham County Sheriff's Office and Lesley Matthews, who leads an annual "Stuff A Stocking" toy drive in Chatham County.

"I'm not a non-profit. I'm just a neighbor and a networker who believes in helping local children and families in need," says Matthews, who lives in Bynum and connected with the Sheriff's Office at a community blood drive in November. "I wish I had someone looking out for me when I was growing up — that's why I do it. I want to be that person for someone else who needs it."

Approximately 200 donors contributed toys, clothing, gift cards, and basic care supplies for the event. Others pitched in to help transport supplies or spread the word. In total, the gifts were enough to fill more than 15 truck beds. Special effort went into providing recipients with gifts they wanted as well as items they desperately needed, like shoes or coats.

"Our goal is not just to provide recipients with one or two gifts," says Matthews. "We want to provide them with as many gifts as possible. To heap love on them as much as possible so they can have a really special Christmas and know they are not alone or forgotten."

Matthews says she began the program when her own daughter was 4 years old and has watched it grow over the last 12 years. During that time, she has partnered with other agencies, like the Chatham County Department of Social Services, to obtain names of families who may be in need around the holidays. This is the first time she has partnered with the Sheriff's Office. Together, they more than doubled the number of gift recipients, shattering previous donation records.

"I couldn't do what I do without the Bynum community, Galloway Ridge residents, and so many anonymous donors," says Matthews. "I call them my 'Secret Elves' because they are the ones working behind the scenes to make dreams come true. I'm just the organizer!"

Matthews was surprised to receive gift packages from all over the United States as word spread of her efforts. One anonymous donor sent gifts from an address in

New York. Other local donors simply left boxes of toys on her doorstep without a word. These presents were eventually transported to the Sheriff's Office for sorting and distribution.

"It was an incredible feeling to walk into work and see the walls lined with gifts," says Lieutenant Sara Pack. "It actually felt like Santa had visited the Sheriff's Office. It's impossible to see something like that and not get into a festive mood. It was an honor to share in the excitement, especially when families started to arrive and deputies started carrying out presents. There wasn't a dry eye."

"Many of the recipients were victims of crime, trauma, or hardship over the last couple of years," said Chatham Sheriff Mike Roberson. "Although these presents may not restore what they have lost, it sends a message to these children and their families that they are loved and seen and have the support of this community."

"I felt like an angel had walked into my office," says Sheriff's Office Victim Services Coordinator Lora Rinaldi, describing the first time she met Matthews. Rinaldi spearheaded the project alongside Matthews, reaching out to other agencies to gather names for children and families in need of a little extra cheer.

"[Matthews] wanted to know more about the work we do at the Sheriff's Office and how she could help. By the time we finished talking, we had a plan—the whole

thing fell into place in only a matter of weeks. It felt like perfect timing," Rinaldi explains. "Chatham County has such an amazing 'pay it forward' mentality. The community is so giving and helpful, and the families who received gifts were so incredibly appreciative."

However, not all families who were contacted accepted the invitation. Although they were eligible, many offered to give up their space for families in even greater need. In one particularly moving exchange, a single mother with young children declined the offer to receive gifts, but instead asked how she could get involved as a donor.

"I've already been given so much and helped by so many," explained the mother. "Now I have a chance to give back, too."

For families who were unable to travel to the Sheriff's Office, Sheriff Roberson established the Sheriff's Sleigh initiative, which involved arranging transport or delivering toys to gift recipients. He says he hopes the Sheriff's Office can continue to cultivate the program in years to come, but it can only grow with community support.

"We can only achieve success as a community by pulling together and taking care of one another. In times like these, we don't want to see any family go without," says Sheriff Roberson. "If they can't come to us, we will go to them. What's important is the reminder that there is still hope and goodness in the world — and here in Chatham most of all."

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REVIEW: MIRINDA KOSSOFF'S 'THE ROPE OF LIFE'

Chatham author's memoir explores identity, diversity, hatred and reconciliation

BY D. LARS DOLDER
News + Record Staff

"The Rope of Life: A Memoir" is the product of Chatham author Mirinda Kossoff's lifetime mission to reconcile two versions of her father: the adventurous, gentle and "fun guy" of her memory, and the profoundly broken man who would take his own life when she was 31.

But in recounting her eventful life and the moments that in retrospect seem to portend her

father's tragic demise, Kossoff tells a larger story of America's ugly character — of a nation doggedly fixated on its people's differences and blind to its enduring injustice.

A father escaping his identity

Hugh Kossoff was the consummate American hero. The World War II army air corpsman from New York served valiantly overseas. He was bold and confident and dashing.

After coming home, he won himself a southern bride and set to building a new life in the American dream. In every endeavor, it seemed, Kossoff succeeded and prospered.

Despite his service and talent, however, Hugh was never afforded the praise and respect he deserved. Even when "he embraced the fundamentalist Baptist faith with fervor" and dismissed his nose job as a deviated septum surgery to cure incessant snoring, Hugh could nev-

er shirk the fact "that he would always be a foreigner in his adopted town, that he would always be considered a Jew."

He was one of just 225 Jews in Danville, Virginia, when Mirinda was growing up. It was a "minuscule" sum, she writes, "but considered enough of a threat to warrant neighborhood covenants ... barring blacks and Jews." His background nearly derailed Hugh's career in dentistry when the governing board tried to prevent his licensure, and it would remain the life-long asterisk that stifled the acceptance he craved.

"I discovered early on," Kossoff writes, "that Southerner's place a high value on a person's roots and sense of place." She learned eventually — no doubt as her father had learned in his dealings with discriminatory peers — to sidestep the inevitable questions about background and heritage, the ever polite but duplicitous inquiries. "The effect of these questions on me was a feeling of being different" she writes, "of not being good enough."

As her father worked tirelessly to elevate their status, growing his practice and moving the family every few years into successively larger homes, the feelings of being an outsider only worsened. The higher they ostensibly climbed amid Danville's social circles, the less inclined its generational members were to extend hospitality.

In school, "the other kids ignored me as if I were the gum on the bottoms of their shoes," Kossoff writes. She retreated always into the background, desperate to go unnoticed lest her presence inspire retribution. When teachers would call on her to participate, "my heart thrummed, my knees knocked, and my hands shook. I sweated and I could barely rasp out the words that felt like hot pokers in my mouth. I was humiliated. All I wanted was to disappear."

In her alienation, Kossoff took refuge in reading. "For relief from my profound shyness," she writes, "I found consolation in books."

Eventually her childhood escape spawned a booming career as a journalist, reporting for several outlets and serving as the News & Observer's assistant managing



Chatham author Mirinda Kossoff's project to understand her father and the circumstances that led to his suicide resulted in a moving memoir with broader implications about life and diversity in southern America.

Submitted photo

editor, and teaching essay writing at Duke University Continuing Studies.

Her father, while successful in his practice, could not create the same positives from constant exclusion.

The once cool-headed, confident gentleman became an irritable curmudgeon. Then his brusque impatience turned aggressive. Twice he ran for positions of public office and twice he lost. His detractors bristled at the Jew's audacity in presuming to lead a southern town in which he never belonged.

It crushed him. Hugh Kossoff spent regular and extended stints in the hospital as he progressed through middle age. He cited chronic back pain and issues with his feet, but his erratic behavior betrayed problems extending beyond just physical ailment. Eventually, the man Mirinda had known and loved ceased to exist. Now her father was cruel, abusive, conniving.

In their final exchange, Mirinda took a stand. "I love you dad," she told him. "But I can't let you manipulate me anymore." She left then, unceremoniously.

A week later, Hugh Kossoff subverted 24-hour suicide watch and hanged himself in the bathroom of a hospital room.

A daughter seeking answers

Discrimination is a central theme in "The Rope of Life" — from people of one color against those of another; from people of one religion against believers of another; from some members of a family against others of their own kin.

Her upbringing as daughter of a northern Jew attuned Kossoff's perception to recognize the plight of America's minority groups and to empathize with those worse off than her. As a child, she identified with her family's house maid, a Black girl named Cora, just a few years Mirinda's senior. The Kossoffs treated Cora well — better, as Mirinda would come to learn only years later — than most white families treated their Black help. In fact, Hugh Kossoff always treated Black people with dignity. He was the only dentist in town who would treat them, and usually he did it for free.

But his decency was not unqualified. While he harbored no malcontent toward Danville's Black residents, he would not be seen with them by other whites. If they needed dental care, it had to be early in the morning before his practice opened, or in the evening after business hours.

Likewise, when Danville's Civil Rights Movement erupted in the 1960s, the Kossoff family stayed out of it. Mirinda wouldn't come to learn the realities of what had happened until adulthood. Her family, and most other whites — whether they condoned the injustice or not — feigned ignorance and remained silent.

"Looking back, it's ironic, that while Danville's blacks were deep in a struggle for basic human rights, nothing about the civil rights movement was mentioned in my civics class," Kossoff writes. "I was in Latin class learning about the lives of the Roman emperors whose rule was absolute and who understood slavery as the natural order of things. Centuries later, we hadn't come very far."

Now, another half-century removed, the United States is again undergoing social upheaval. People are again fighting for equality and human rights, and Kossoff hopes her experience might serve as a warning.

"Since learning what really happened in the 1960s, I have carried the guilt of my obliviousness, and not having done anything to help," she writes. "It doesn't matter that I was only a teenager at the time. I should have known."

The story of Kossoff's quest to expand her cultural lens takes her from small-town southern America to a U.S. naval hospital in Japan, through the hippie era and a stint in England and finally to her father's death and its tragic aftermath.

But "The Rope of Life" serves to accomplish more than just chronicle one person's maturation and self-discovery. Rather, it demonstrates with vivid imagery and refreshing prose the powerful effects of inaction, and the troubling consequences of apathy. Her experience informs a world-view that challenges the United States to reckon with its history and to plot a different course moving forward.

In a chilling final chapter, Kossoff illustrates with gut-wrenching imagery the boundless human capacity for hatred, but the beauty and restoration that is possible when people take time to learn about each other.

Kossoff's writing is unaffected, without agenda. As she admits in the afterword: "My goal was to understand my father, why he was sometimes cruel, what drove him to suicide. Did he love me? Who was he?"

She didn't find the answers to her questions. But her efforts were not for naught. "The Rope of Life" is not a comfortable read; honest examinations rarely are. But it deserves wide exposure. I recommend and will be reading it again.

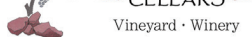
"The Rope of Life: A Memoir" book launch will be held at 2 p.m. on Feb. 21, hosted virtually by FRANK Gallery in Chapel Hill. Mirinda will be in conversation about her book with N.C. mystery writer and author of "The Worst Thing," Nora Gaskin. Details on how to tune into this event will be shared on Mirinda's website, www.mirindakossoff.com.

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

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Chatham Charter School

Chatham Charter School is now accepting applications for openings in kindergarten and limited openings in first through twelfth grade for the 2021-2022 school year. Kindergarten applicants must be five years of age on or before August 31, 2021. The application period ends on January 29, 2021. Applications may be submitted online (www.chathamcharter.org) under the "Admissions" link, at the school (2200 Hamp Stone Road, Siler City) or by calling (919) 742-4550.

Chatham Charter School is a nonprofit, nondenominational public school providing quality education for children of all races, creeds, handicaps, and national origins.

La Escuela de Chatham Charter

La Escuela de Chatham Charter ahora está tomando aplicaciones para espacios del primer grado hasta el grado doce para el año escolar 2021-2022. Los niños que asistan al kinder deben tener cinco años de edad antes del 31 de agosto, 2021. El periodo de aplicación termina el 29 de enero, 2021. Puede obtener una aplicación al Internet (www.chathamcharter.org) al enlace admissions, a la escuela (2200 Hamp Stone Road, Siler City) o por una llamada (919.742.4550).

La Escuela de Chatham Charter es una escuela pública, multidenominacional, y no lucrativa que provee una educación de la calidad para los niños de todas las razas, los credos, una condición de discapacidad, y los orígenes nacionales.

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NEWS BRIEFS

Chatham County Seeks Applicants for Planning Board Vacancies

PITTSBORO — Chatham County seeks applicants for two vacant seats on the Chatham County Planning Board. Interested residents should apply by 5 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 8.

The Planning Board advises the Chatham County Board of Commissioners on planning, zoning and subdivision issues. One vacant seat is assigned to County Commissioner District 4, which is in the northwestern part of the county. One vacant seat is assigned to County Commissioner District 5, which is in the southwestern part of the county. Both appointment terms expire December 31, 2022. Residents from other parts of the county may apply also.

The duties of Planning Board members include monitoring trends related to land use; proposing needed amend-

ments to the comprehensive plan; establishing development principles and guidelines; proposing ordinances for orderly development in accordance with the comprehensive plan; determining whether proposed developments conform to the comprehensive plan and development principles; keeping the board of commissioners and the public informed on planning issues and reasons for board recommendations; and conducting meetings to receive public input.

The Planning Board typically meets the first Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m., usually in Pittsboro. During the COVID-19 pandemic, board meetings are conducted virtually. The county can provide space for members to attend the virtual meeting should they not have adequate broadband access.

To submit an online application to serve and to view a map of the districts of the board of commissioners,

visit www.chathamnc.org/Committee-Appointments. Applicants may also contact clerk to the board Lindsay Ray at 919-545-8302 or lindsay.ray@chathamcountync.gov to get a printed or emailed copy of the application form. Individuals with questions about the Planning Board's duties may contact the Planning Department at 919-548-3896 or Planning Director Jason Sullivan at jason.sullivan@chathamcountync.gov.

NCDOT halts construction for holidays

RALEIGH — NCDOT is suspending most construction activity along its major highways to keep lanes open for those traveling through the holidays.

The work along interstates, as well as U.S. and key N.C. routes is expected to shut down from the morning of Dec. 31 through the evening of Jan. 5.

There are some exceptions where construction conditions make it unsafe to open all lanes. This includes some locations where lanes are under construction or where a bridge is being replaced. Work that does not impact travel lanes can continue for some projects.

Before you head out, go to driveNC.gov for the most up-to-date traffic information.

- Holiday Booze It & Lose It program underway

It's always important that if you plan to drink, you don't drive. As part of the Governor's Highway Safety Program, more state and local law enforcement officers will patrol day and night to catch impaired drivers behind the wheel throughout the holidays. The annual holiday 'Booze It & Lose It' campaign runs now through Jan. 5.

— CN+R staff reports

Kid Scoop THE AWARD-WINNING PRINT & ONLINE FAMILY FEATURE

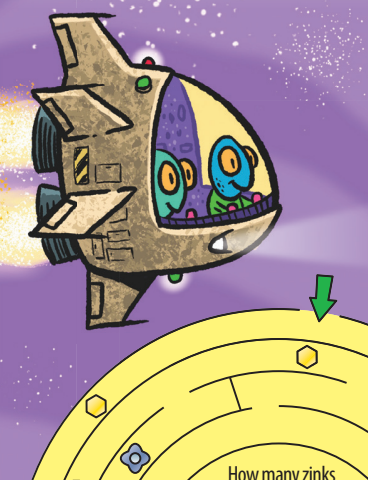
Find Kid Scoop on Facebook

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A VISIT TO PLANET MOOLAH

On the Planet Moolah, the money doesn't look like ours. But the inhabitants have their own money and they use it the same way we do to pay for stuff.

Zeekor and Stasko are traveling to the Supply Station to do some shopping. They'll need your help to figure out what things they can afford to buy. They'll also need your help counting out the money to pay.



Here is what money looks like on Planet Moolah. They don't have paper money. Instead, Moolahians use metal coins in different shapes. Below each coin, its value is shown.

5 ZINKS	10 ZINKS	25 ZINKS	50 ZINKS	100 ZINKS	500 ZINKS	1,000 ZINKS

PET PROJECT

Stasko gets paid 130 zinks each day for feeding her neighbor's pet, Fralpar. While she is carefully feeding Fralpar, can you circle some Planet Moolah coins that add up to 130 zinks? Have a family member check your math.

There's got to be easier ways to make money!

FANCY FOOTWORK

Zeekor and Stasko need new boots. Add up all the money they have saved and circle the two pairs of boots that cost exactly that much.

How many zinks will it cost to refuel Stasko and Zeekor's ship for the journey home? Add up the coins along the correct path. Fill in the bubble next to the correct answer.

○ 120 ○ 105 ○ 145
○ 135 ○ 115 ○ 160

Do you have a piggy bank? Kids on Planet Moolah save their money in schneekflet banks. Find the two that are the same.

SNACK ATTACK

Zeekor is ready for a tasty snack. But he needs your help sorting his money before he decides which of these out-of-this-world Supply Station snacks to buy!

SNACKS

55, 125, 95, 250, 35, 165

Draw a line from each snack in the vending machine to the circle that contains that exact amount of Planet Moolah coins needed to buy it.

Extra! Extra! Wants and Needs

Look through the newspaper to find examples of things people NEED to survive. Then find examples of things you WANT but don't need. Cut them out and glue them onto a poster showing Needs and Wants.

Standards Link: Social Science: Students understand basic economic concepts.

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Kid Scoop opens the doors of discovery for elementary school children by providing interactive, engaging and relevant age-appropriate materials designed to awaken the magic of reading at school, at home, and throughout their lives.

For more information about our literacy non-profit, visit kidscoopnews.org

Kid Scoop Together: Shopping List

Zeekor made a list of things his mom asked him to buy. She gave him 1,000 zinks. Add up the cost of the items on the list. Then write a new list to spend as close to 1,000 zinks as possible without going over that amount.

- Communicator 450 zinks
- Helmet 220 zinks
- Socks 10 zinks per pair
- Power Cell 100 zinks
- Vision Shader 185 zinks

4 VISION SHADERS _____
8 POWER CELLS _____
1 COMMUNICATOR _____
10 SOCKS _____
2 HELMETS _____
TOTAL: _____

— VISION SHADERS _____
— POWER CELLS _____
— COMMUNICATOR _____
— SOCKS _____
— HELMETS _____
TOTAL: _____

Kid Scoop Puzzler

Stasko would love to buy a new Supernova Ultra ship. It costs 12,000 zinks. After giving the dealership 2,000 zinks, she has to pay it off in monthly payments.

- How much would she have to pay per month to completely pay for the ship in 50 months?
- Or, if Stasko gave the dealership 5,000 zinks for the first month's payment, and made payments of 500 zinks per month, how many months would it take to pay for the ship?

Double Double Word Search

CAREFULLY MOOLAH VENDING MONEY SNACK COINS BANKS PAID FIGURE KIDS BOOTS BUY PATH VALUE OUT

Find the words in the puzzle. How many of them can you find on this page?

S	V	W	B	H	T	A	P	G	C
T	D	P	A	I	D	G	N	S	A
K	U	I	N	S	N	I	O	C	R
M	C	O	K	F	D	B	K	E	E
B	O	Y	S	N	V	C	V	R	F
O	L	O	E	J	A	W	A	U	U
O	B	V	L	N	T	Y	L	G	L
T	A	U	S	A	O	S	U	I	L
S	V	B	Y	P	H	M	E	F	Y

Standards Link: Letter sequencing. Recognized identical words. Skim and scan reading. Recall spelling patterns.

Write On!

Why have a piggy bank?

Do you have a piggy bank? If so, why? If not, why not?

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- YMCA DAY CAMP: PERRY HARRISON SCHOOL

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2021: A LOOK AHEAD

What are you looking forward to in the new year?

2020 has been a difficult year, full of twists, turns and missed opportunities. What's the one thing you missed most in 2020 that you hope to be able to return to in 2021?

2020 had so many silver linings and I believe is setting us up for a beautiful 2021. That being said, I missed the spontaneous ability to just go. I miss being able to run to people's homes, grab dinner at a new restaurant, the hugs and kisses and touches. I didn't like the way we all had to be trained to keep our distance as if everyone has leprosy or is a zombie. There is now an unconscious bubble around us all. I now put on my mask by habit even if I'm alone sometimes. I keep my distance without even thinking about it. I miss big concerts. I miss closeness.

We miss seeing all of our friends/customers and being able to celebrate with them. Or being able to sit down with them and chat over a glass of mead.

BECKY STARR, *Starlight Mead*

The one thing I missed the most that I hope returns in 2021 is being able to spend time with my family in person and not just through a computer screen. Also, in-person sporting events.

SUSAN MAGROGAN, *UNC Hospitals*

I think we have all missed face-to-face interaction and a basic sense of security in 2020. There is no substitute for the feeling you get when you are able to shake someone's hand or hug a loved one for no other reason than to show that you love and care for them. I look forward to seeing those around me radiating confidence, optimism and good health in 2021!

MIKE ROBERSON, *Chatham County Sheriff*

One of the main things I have missed is 2020 is not being

graders discover what a button hook is, who Lewis Freeman was, the fame of Chatham rabbits, how old stone artifacts really are and meet the Earl of Chatham re-enactor. We wish we could see all those students again!

I missed casual interaction with strangers the most in 2020. Whether it's belting out lyrics dancing next to someone at a concert or a friendly conversation downtown, I'm eager to see warm, unfamiliar faces in 2021.

ALLISON DEJONG, *Abundance NC*

CINDY SCHMIDT, *Chatham County Museum*

I miss taking my trip to Hawaii in 2020 so I am looking forward to traveling again in 2021. I feel a person should travel at least once a year if not more out of state or country just to see how the others live and broaden your horizons.

MARY NETTLES, *Chatham Community Branch NAACP*

In-person collaboration with planning and building partners and being able to respond as

quickly as the market was demanding.

VANESSA JENKINS, *Chatham Park*

UNC home football and basketball games, and sharing with fellow fans with whom we have suffered and elated together for 60-plus seasons. Thursday evening suppers with Nancy, Tyndall, Cyndi, Andrew, and a rotations of friends and staff at City Tap, Hwy. 55, Lam Buffet.

DR. JOHN DYKERS

Impromptu gatherings with family and friends and hugs. I have especially missed the casual lunches and glasses of wine with my girlfriends during the pandemic and although I am blessed with a relatively big family, the past several months have highlighted the importance of connection with my circle of female friends. I also never realized how

The one thing I sorely missed jointly were hugs and family gatherings. Cindy and I have always enjoyed in large family gatherings on all sides of our family and hosting them and we have missed this terribly.

ROBERT REIVES II, *N.C. House of Representative*

Probably like most of the rest of the folks, I would group all that I missed most into the in-person interactions with friends, extended family, and colleagues. There is a lot we can accomplish, virtually, but the energy and joy of face-to-face gatherings can't be replaced. I look forward to once again enjoying informal gatherings of family and friends, enjoying in-person worship with our church family, seeing more students and colleagues on campus and acknowledging student

successes in larger gathering celebrations.

DR. LISA CHAPMAN, *Central Carolina Community College*

I hope to reconnect with myself by doing things I loved doing before

really two: before March 12, and after, when the COVID-19 pandemic thrust ...

the pandemic shut everything down. I look forward to returning to the gym, get-

Extended work family. We all have an extended family and you become so close to everyone. The people you work with, your customers, your business partners, sales associates, etc. You see everyone daily or weekly and then one day it stops.

JACQUELINNE MARROQUIN TOBAR, *Jordan-Matthews senior*

ting my nails and hair done, and discovering new restaurants. I just miss doing things that make me happy. Hopefully by the end of 2021, I can say that I reconnected with everyone, including myself.

MARIA GOMEZ FLORES, *Hispanic Liaison*

What I miss most (and hope to return in 2021) is the interaction with my students and their families. I'd like to add that I will miss my dear friend and colleague Janet Brady, who I will not see again due to COVID-19.

ALIRIO ESTEVEZ, *Chatham ESL teacher*

For 2020, we missed most not being with friends and family, talking, sharing, catching up, trading tall tales — the simple joy of easy conversation. Yet we also loved the solitude for reading, more trips to Jordan Lake and the White Pine Re-

I'm really missing face-to-face meetings not only because I think that virtual meetings aren't as effective, but because I miss being with all the people in Chatham who make this a great place to live and work.

GEORGE GREGER-HOLT, *Chatham Drug Free*

Seeing friends individually is great. However, there's another dynamic when you are altogether, the strong feeling of comradeship. It's interesting to watch how each interacts and how different personalities ignite each other.

MAGGIE ZWILLING

this past summer. I look forward to face to face meetings with the kids I tutor and most of all backyard barbecues with my friends and family!

MAYME BOYD

One of the main things I have missed is 2020 is not being able to connect with our Chamber members in person and have them gather for social interaction and networking.

CINDY POINDEXTER, *Chatham Chamber of Commerce*

John Howie Jr. and the Rosewood Bluff playing outside at the City Tap!

MARK BARROSO, *Chatham County board of elections member*

HUGS!

VALERIE FOUSHEE, *N.C. Senate*

Assembly and sharing a meal with interesting people.

FRANK DUNPHY, *Chatham County board of elections member*

One of the things I missed most in 2020 was traveling. Whether visiting friends and family or experiencing new places and cultures, I look forward and hope to enjoy more travel experiences in 2021.

CHRIS KENNEDY, *Pittsboro Town Manager*

The thing we miss the most in 2020 is gatherings and events.

Invasive plants in forest pose challenge for nearby NC farmers

BY JACK IGELMAN
Carolina Public Press

Sandy Mush landowner Vance Garrett has been fighting the advancement of nonnative invasive plant species on his property in the rural northwest corner of Buncombe County for more than three decades at considerable expense.

“I’ve been in the business for a long time just trying to keep them beat back,” said the 84-year-old, who owns roughly 200 acres of mostly forested land in the Newfound Mountains that hem the western boundary of the Sandy Mush community.

“Bittersweet is the worst, and the garlic mustard is about as bad,” Garrett said. “I’ve had some success, but the outlook, long range, is not good.”

Garrett soon may get help soon in containing the nonnative plants.

Forest advocates, conservationists, state agencies and property owners, including Garrett, are joining an ambitious effort to restore thousands of forest acres surrounding the farming community, which is 30 minutes from downtown Asheville.

Andy Tait of EcoForesters, a nonprofit professional forest organization based in Asheville, said the Sandy Mush Forest Restoration Coalition was launched in 2019 in partnership with the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy, based in Asheville, and the Forest Stewards Guild, a national nonprofit focused on forest conservation and management.

The coalition’s goal is to improve forest stewardship in a project area that encompasses a landscape of over 50,000 acres of farmland and timberland, the majority of which is privately owned. The group’s hope is to build a network of community members and stakeholders that will drive the project goals and strategies to rehabilitate the forests of Sandy Mush.

While thousands of acres of private land in Sandy Mush have been protected through conservation easements, Tait said, “The future of the forests is not bright in Sandy Mush without some forest stewardship.”

Much of the timber acreage in Sandy Mush was once pasture, but as the economics of farming has transformed over decades, a significant number of acres of farmland have been abandoned and reforested by pioneering tree species and invasive plants.

Nick Biemiller, the Southeast region director of the Forest Stewards Guild, said exotic species often take hold in fields and creep into forest land.

“Sandy Mush happens to have really rich soil,” he said. “That’s what makes it such productive farmland.”

What’s more, the mountain slopes around Sandy Mush are dominated by rich cove forests, hardwood stands that are shady and lush and are an ideal habitat for invasive plants.

Kudzu is the poster child for invasive plants since it grows rapidly, Tait said. However, oriental bittersweet, a woody

vine that scales trees and smothers them, may be a more insidious intruder in Western North Carolina.

“Areas of forest in Sandy Mush (are) being slowly destroyed by bittersweet,” he said.

Other lethal culprits are tree-of-heaven, multiflora rose and privet, which can ruthlessly take over the understory of a forest, kill mature trees and prevent new ones from taking root.

“It’s a slow-moving ecological nightmare,” Tait said, and one that began years ago.

It may take decades, but without controlling the invasive plants, the forests will eventually be ransacked by exotics.

Engaging the community around conservation

Back in January in the Sandy Mush community center gymnasium, EcoForesters, SAHC and the Forest Stewards Guild hosted a daylong event to share information about forest stewardship with landowners in the valley. In attendance were 20 family forest landowners and community members who attended a coalition meeting in the afternoon.

The objective of the project, said Land Hornthal, the communications director of EcoForesters, is to initially engage landowners in the community, build trust and share information about stewarding their forest land for the long term.

“There’s a range of what people want to get out of their property,” Hornthal said. “Some landowners who might be interested in short-term gains to generate revenue. Some are interested in ecotourism or forest products.

“One of the things we are mindful of is not telling people what they need to do with their forest and their land. We realized, to be a true community project and to get genuine buy-in, we need to be transparent and invite them to tell us their needs and concerns and why Sandy Mush is important to them.”

The scope of the undertaking is unique, Hornthal said. To his knowledge, the scale of the project and the group’s approach has not been attempted elsewhere.

Plenty of examples of community-based forestry exist in the U.S. and in other nations, but a typical approach views landowners as “happy recipients of information,” Biemiller said.

“We’re trying to flip that,” he said. “Rather than viewing community members as passive recipients of information about best practices in forestry, our model is to view them as active participants in a collaborative process,” he said. “That’s what gets me excited about this project.”

Private side to forest management effort

While the effort to restore forests may be unique on private land, this month the U.S. Forest Service is expected to release a draft management plan that oversees a million acres in Pisgah and Nantahala national forests.

Among the many issues addressed in the plan, the need to restore

the ecology of the forest has emerged as a primary challenge. An aging forest, lack of natural fire, threats from climate change and other management challenges have moved the current condition of the forest far from its desired condition.

Hornthal, who is a leader in a collaborative effort helping direct the creation of the federal forest plan, said he’s hopeful the draft management plan will be successful in increasing the level of forest restoration on national forest land.

However, public lands are only part of the equation in restoring Western North Carolina’s forests.

Sarah Sheeran, stewardship director of the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy, based in Asheville, said, “We are blessed in our region with large blocks of contiguous public lands, but most land ownership is private.

“Considering the suite of environmental threats we all are currently facing, practicing good stewardship and forest management on private land is more critical than ever.”

Her organization has prioritized land conservation in Sandy Mush.

“Sandy Mush is a hold-out farming community,” she said. “It’s one of the few places to see open spaces and farmland in Buncombe County.”

In addition to owning more than 2,000 acres, her organization has, in all, protected roughly 12,500 acres through purchases or conservation easements in Sandy Mush.

“We want to follow best practices and be good stewards of our properties and want to be a good model in the community, but it’s challenging with limited resources,” she said.

“Our interest is to take a more sustainable and strategic approach to restoration.”

Farmer interest in adjacent forests

That means engaging with private landowners who are also invested in the future of the area’s forests.

One of them is the director of Buncombe County’s Cooperative Extension office, Steve Duckett, whose family had farmed in Sandy Mush for several generations.

“Traditionally, forests were utilized for grazing cattle, sheep, goats and hogs,” Duckett said. “That had the benefit of keeping invasives down before anyone knew it was a practice.”

But over the last several decades, families in Sandy Mush and other rural portions of WNC have transitioned from farming as a primary occupation.

“Farms and livestock have become secondary income, supplemented by full-time jobs in Asheville,” he said. “The farm economy is under a lot of pressure.”

As a result, corralling livestock and maintaining fences on steep slopes is troublesome. Most landowners can’t afford to keep up with fencing.

“It costs maybe \$15,000 per mile to build fences in these mountains,” Garrett said. “There’s not that much money in the cattle business. It’s been

in decline around here all my life, and it’s still going down.”

Without livestock roaming the forest munching multiflora rose and blackberry briars, invasive plants have blanketed abandoned pastures and overrun forest access roads.

Implications for wildlife

The lack of relatively open forests has affected wildlife, such as quail, ruffed grouse and songbirds, that require a diversity of habitat types, such as open fields and new stands of forest.

Chris Henline of the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission said his agency manages the 2,767-acre, state-owned Sandy Mush Game Land.

The property includes several hundred acres previously used to raise cattle, tobacco and other crops. As the fields become abandoned over time, white pine, poplar and other pioneering tree species – along with nonnative plants – took advantage of the open conditions.

Henline said the commission engages in intensive land management techniques to restore native habitat and vegetation. The commission’s primary tool is prescribed fire.

The payback of the commission’s comprehensive management is one of the state’s healthiest populations of

bobwhite quail on public land and dozens of songbirds that are particularly sensitive to habitat.

“Quail can’t just get up and move,” Henline said.

“They have to have suitable habitat to keep bumping out. The problem is that the game land is an island. Hopefully, other landowners can see our results, and we can demonstrate what they can do on their land.”

Fighting invasive plants can be costly

While removing invasives and improving forest stands may provide a significant public benefit, such as more abundant game and scenic beauty, finding the right economic incentives for cash-strapped landowners to manage invasives and engage in other forest restoration practices is a high hurdle.

Since invasive plants have no regard for obeying fence lines, one owner’s meticulous removal of exotic plants will be undone if his neighbors determine that invasive removal is too costly and the benefits too sparse.

Hornthal said managing invasives has a price tag of roughly \$250 per acre plus future maintenance costs. And depending on the level of infestation, the costs of treatment can soar.

The return on investment? Well, that’s the rub.

“We haven’t found that silver bullet yet,” he said.

“The present financial incentives are not enough.”

He hopes the coalition will bring more dollars to the table, potentially through grants or by pooling funds.

The short-term goal, however, is to begin to engage landowners and highlight the connection that there are plenty of tangible benefits derived from a healthy, sustainable forest, such as diverse habitat, scenic beauty, resilience to climate change and quality of life.

Ultimately, Biemiller said, “We have to find a way to live with invasive plants. They’re not leaving.”

But if there’s anyplace where a community forestry project has a chance of success, it’s here.

“Not only is there already a large conservation footprint, but more importantly, Sandy Mush has a vibrant social fabric,” he said of the mix of landowners in Sandy Mush, which includes New Agers, retirees, back-to-earthers and families who have farmed for generations. “People here really care about the land.”

Garrett, whose family settled in Sandy Mush 150 years ago, agrees.

“I’m not in it for my personal interest,” he said.

“These forests are a very valuable natural resource. There’s a moral obligation to try to preserve them.”

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