

Chatham News + Record

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CHATHAM'S 2021 PROPERTY REAPPRAISAL

Valuation increases for 77% of county's parcels

Combined value of all properties in Chatham goes up by 18%

BY BILL HORNER III
News + Record Staff

PITTSBORO — More than three-fourths of the nearly 46,000 Chatham properties assessed in the county's state-mandated reappraisal process saw valuations increase, but so far officials say requests for appeals of those valuations has been "underwhelming."

Meanwhile, Chatham County's tax office is manning the phones and checking email to assuage concerns — and fight misinformation — arising from

the revaluation notices, which were mailed out on March 26.

The total overall valuation of parcels in Chatham County, when finalized, may show an increase by as much as 18%, according to Tax Administrator Jenny Williams, with 77% of parcels having gone up in value and 23% having gone down.

But those numbers can be slightly misleading. Consider:

- the 18% figure includes valuations of "exempt" properties — those such as county- and publicly-owned properties on which property taxes aren't assessed.

- based on anticipated appeals, Williams says she expects the final valuation increase of non-exempt properties

to be closer to 14%. Even at that lower amount, it would put Chatham's 2020 valuation of \$11.237 billion within striking distance of the \$13 billion mark.

- although more than three-fourths of parcels increased in value, the increases or decreases for some properties were negligible — maybe just a few hundred dollars.

Still, the increase in the total valuation of Chatham County properties was significant — something Williams says can be tied to, in part, the "high demand of people wanting to live in Chatham," with its proximity to economic centers in Greensboro, Durham, Raleigh and Chapel Hill — and new development built within Chatham in the past year.

By comparison, other N.C. counties' 2021 reappraisal increases ranged from lows of around 8% (Surry, Davie counties) to similar to Chatham's (Stanly and Orange at 16%, Buncombe at 18% and Jackson at 18.07%) to the high in Union County, adjacent to Charlotte, which saw a total valuation increase of 36%.

Some Chatham residents have complained about increases they're seeing or errors in appraisal notices on local social media platforms, while others have welcomed the higher valuations of their homes. At the tax office, the stream of telephone calls and inquiries has slowed a bit since the first few days of the mailing, says Ryan Vincent,

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Revaluation FAQ

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STUDY: Pittsboro's drinking water among worst in U.S.

BY D. LARS DOLDER
News + Record Staff

PITTSBORO — An expansive nationwide study has confirmed what Chathamites have long suspected: Pittsboro has some of the worst drinking water in the country.

Last month, Consumer Reports — a non-profit "dedicated to unbiased product testing, investigative journalism (and) consumer-oriented research," according to its website — concluded a nine-month investigation into water quality across America. The organization partnered with Guardian US, a branch of the British newspaper, to evaluate water quality from 120 locations around the country in a head-to-head comparison.

Almost every sample contained measurable levels of PFAS — per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, a dangerous carcinogen also known to elevate risk of thyroid disease, increase blood cholesterol levels and cause birth defects. But Pittsboro's PFAS concentration was in a league unto itself.

"I was surprised," James Rogers, director of food safety testing and research at Consumer Reports, told the News + Record.

"We had a couple other samples that

See WATER, page A7

Reives: give redistricting to the voters

BY D. LARS DOLDER
News + Record Staff

RALEIGH — Gerrymandering, the illegal practice of manipulating voting districts to favor a political party, has plagued North Carolina's constituency for decades. But a group of Democrats, led by House Minority Leader Rep. Robert Reives II of Goldston, is proposing an amendment to state law that would shift redistricting authority from the General Assembly to an independent commission.

"We need a better process," said Reives, whose district includes all of Chatham and parts of Durham County. "I feel that a commission is probably our best bet, but my position is that whatever ideas anybody has that will make this process a fairer process than it was 10 years ago, I'm game for ... I'm good for any idea that gives us criteria that's non-partisan."

Every 10 years, following receipt of new

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Chatham clergy reflect on second Easter amid pandemic

BY HANNAH MCCLELLAN
News + Record Staff

For the first time in more than a year, the Rev. Brent Levy gathered with his congregation to worship in-person three times to celebrate Easter last weekend.

His church met to observe the Christian commemoration of Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead four times total: 6:45 a.m. for a sunrise service at Bynum Bridge, 9 and 11 at The Parlour at Manns Chapel and online.

"It was so good to see people that I've only seen as disembodied heads for the last year through Zoom meetings, and heard their voices in phone calls," said Levy, who is the pastor at The Local Church in Pittsboro.

As the first foray into in-person worship, Levy said the church wanted to do so with "intentionality," providing multiple options to spread out capacity. On Sunday, there were about 150 people across the three in-person services, Levy estimated.

While gathering in-person was beautiful, he said it was also weird — weird because, in an effort to make protocol as safe as possible, they'd asked people not to sing.

"Gosh, to not be able to sing was strange on Easter Sunday when songs like 'Christ the Lord is Risen Today' are such a fixture of our Resurrection celebration," Levy said. "It gave us room to listen to how creation sang and rejoiced with us, and the ways that we're a part of that. When we were on the bridge, we heard the waves rushing, a bald eagle flew overhead, we heard birds singing to welcome the morning."

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Staff photo by Peyton Sickles

'It was so good to see people that I've only seen as disembodied heads for the last year through Zoom meetings, and heard their voices and phone calls,' said the Rev. Brent Levy, the pastor at The Local Church, which hosted three in-person services on Easter Sunday after more than a year online.



Reives

J-M's Tiana Brooks one of 35 students featured in statewide art exhibit

BY HANNAH MCCLELLAN
News + Record Staff

SILER CITY — The summer before her senior year at Jordan-Matthews High School, Tiana Brooks learned of George Floyd's death and decided to paint something to help her process yet another Black person killed by police officers.

The resulting mixed-media piece, "Say Their Names," features the names of Black women killed by police, to honor their lives and bring awareness to the issue.

Now, her piece is being featured in this year's virtual Emerging Artists Invitational — an annual exhibition

for high school artists sponsored by the Sechrest Gallery of Art and the High Point University School of Art and Design. Brooks is one of just 35 artists selected across the state for the exhibition.

"I always knew I wanted this piece in an art show or gallery, just to shine light on this piece and the meaning that it held," Brooks said. "When I saw that it was in the Emerging Artists (Invitational), I knew right there — now's a chance to shine a light on this art piece and to show the story behind it."

"I'm just grateful that I finally get

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Submitted photo

Brooks' piece, 'Say Their Names,' features the names of Black women killed by police officers to honor their lives and bring awareness to the issue.

IN THE KNOW

New organization hopes to address homelessness with shelter. **PAGE A7**

Sports: Hensley on UNC's Roy Williams and the end of an era. **PAGE B1**

CHAT: 'Goat Light' authors to be featured at Chatham Literacy event. **PAGE B7**

Chatham Health Alliance brings resources to Hispanic neighborhoods. **PAGE B8**



VIEWPOINTS

GUEST COLUMN | ALIRIO ESTEVEZ

SB101 = Putting a target on Latinos

Picture this, as Golden Girls' Sophia Petrillo used to say.



ALIRIO ESTEVEZ
Guest Column

Alamance County. May 2010. A Latina driver is stopped by a sheriff's deputy. She provides her valid North Carolina driver's license as commanded, but the deputy refuses to accept her license without any real justification. Then he threatens to take her to jail and deport her, even though she has all the proper documentation. She panics.

Unfortunately, this story, unlike the lovable '80s sitcom, was not a TV show. It was one among the long list of complaints leveled against the infamous Sheriff Terry Johnson from Alamance County by the Department of Justice in 2012.

Sadly, the Republican Party in our General Assembly seems to believe that the kind of behavior mentioned above should be imitated all around

our beloved state. The Republican-controlled Senate approved the discriminatory SB101 a few weeks ago, and it looks like the Republican-controlled House of Representatives will soon follow. This bill would force every sheriff's department in North Carolina to verify the immigration status of anybody detained even if it is a minor infraction. We know who those Republican politicians are really targeting — people like me, like my three children who happen to be Latinos.

Regrettably, these Republican politicians love to demonize a whole community to satisfy the irrational hatred of a few. They clearly know that we Latinos have a great work ethic. They truly know that we wake up every day ready to provide for our families and to benefit our society. They surely know that some of us work in construction, some in medicine, some in engineering, others in education. They must know we have contributed greatly to our state and to our country. However, it looks like they want the good people of

North Carolina to see us as the "others," as those who do not belong here.

You, dear reader, know who will be asked to show proof of their immigration status. It will not be the blond, blue-eyed Thom. No, siree. It will not be the fair, red-haired Phil. It will be somebody who speaks with a non-native American accent or who dares to speak Spanish. Those Republican politicians in Raleigh will deny this with poker faces. But they know the real consequences because they are smart; they just simply don't care.

Besides racial profiling, this bill would seed distrust between the Latino community and our law enforcement agencies. Latinos would hesitate to call 911 or cooperate with the police or sheriff's departments if they believe some of their relatives or friends may be detained and even deported for reporting a crime.

Take the case of a child who is a witness of domestic abuse. She may decide not to call the police out of fear that her mother could be arrested and deported, even though she is the victim.

Dear reader, put yourself in the child's shoes, and ask yourself, "What would I do?"

Another reason to oppose this ill-conceived bill is the waste of our local resources to enforce it. Our sheriff's department's resources are limited. Is it wise to spend a lot of manpower, time and money to comply with a law that would not make anybody safer and would distract them from their real duties? No.

I believe most of the sheriffs in our state are honorable and are concerned with the well-being and safety of all of their residents. Our county is honored to have a man like Mike Roberson as our sheriff. He has proven fair and just. He has built a great relationship with our Hispanic community, and I'm confident he wants to keep it that way.

However, some sheriffs in our state are not as honorable as ours in Chatham. Among those, one has never shied away from showing his disdain toward Latinos: Terry Johnson in Alamance County. Do we want to give him (or someone

like him) the power to detain any Hispanic he wants? In 2012, the Department of Justice filed a complaint against Johnson, alleging that he had repeatedly shown his aversion to us by instructing his deputies to "go out there and get me some of those taco eaters." Though the government lost that lawsuit, three former officers of the Alamance County Sheriff's Office testified that Johnson told them to arrest Latino drivers for traffic violations rather than write them citations. This SB101 would give him carte blanche to do as he pleases. That is wrong.

Dear Chathamites, I implore you to speak out against this bill, which will target your neighbors and friends, which will target me and my family for the sin of being born with a different skin color. I believe you will join us because you have shown me how compassionate, caring and humane you are. I can picture that.

Alirio Estevez is a Latino activist and member of Voto Latino Chatham.

GUEST COLUMN | DAVID G. DELANEY

The Indispensable Subject

I grew up learning that history is the indispensable subject. To paraphrase philosophers Edmund Burke and George Santayana, knowing history enables modern communities to avoid past mistakes. I am now sure that idea is wrong.

A chronological narrative of events is a good starting point for knowledge. But such records are only about 5,000 years old.

Archaeology enables us to learn from the fossil record that modern humans are at least 300,000 years old. While archaeology broadens our horizons beyond the limits of recorded history, the oral histories and traditions of those ancient people remain obscure to us. But those people still teach us.

Through genetics we know that our DNA links us with all humans across time and continents, beginning in Africa. Each of us is a kind of historical record of past people and events.

Of course, reading the human genome or DNA profiles of political leaders will not prevent war, genocide, economic catastrophe or pandemic. But DNA empowers modern society because it reveals how the brain develops and how we think and behave.

That knowledge is the starting point to understand behaviors and decisions that shape the course of humanity. After all, what is history but a sequence of highly consequential individual and group behaviors and decisions?

Psychology is today's indispensable subject because it enables deeper understanding of humankind's most important actions. To know how people make decisions about war, peace, economics, public health and security is to know, in rough terms, how the future can unfold.

In his 2011 book "The Better Angels of Our Nature," psychologist Steven Pinker provides a sneak-preview. He observes that war and death by unnatural causes have declined precipitously over the last several thousand years. Humans have become a more peaceful, prosperous and humane species. The trend is enabled through rule of law societies that promote common principles of humanity and commerce.

Enlightenment-age philosopher-statesmen like Burke were instrumental in this trend. So were James Madison and others at the Constitutional Convention. They knew from intuition and historical accounts, but not through science, that tyrannical, demagogic personalities would corrupt and undermine democracy. With this knowledge they divided federal and state roles, shared federal legislative-executive-judicial responsibilities, and created an electoral college with the power to overrule a frenzied or uninformed electorate.

The Constitution essentially tames actions by public officials and voters that would harm democracy. It is as much a tool of pre-psychology as it is the foundational U.S. law and a historical record of humanity's democratic interests.

The natural impulse is to ask how today's deeper, scientific knowledge of the mind and human behavior can improve democracy, advance political thought and perhaps drive violence and premature death to near extinction. How could the Constitution be improved as a tool of modern psychology? Can states create the conditions that eliminate poverty, hate crimes and racial disparities? Could nations improve international law and institutions to prevent climate catastrophe, mass starvation or war?

History answers these questions with pessimism. Psychology provides hopeful answers — to envision new goals is to begin making better decisions than our predecessors knew to be possible.

Humans are a storytelling species, and history will always be an essential subject. Without a sense of the past, we lose the sense of self and place that emerges from intertwined personal, family and political histories. If we want the best for future generations, weaving the lessons of psychology and other modern sciences into those stories is indispensable.

David G. Delaney is a N.C. attorney and Chatham County resident. He teaches in the UNC-Chapel Hill Curriculum in Peace, War, and Defense.

LETTERS

A way to defend our freedoms

TO THE EDITOR:

Beginning with Cain killing Abel men have always been in danger from other men and needed a way to protect themselves. There is danger from those who envy the possessions of others and would do whatever it takes to steal those possessions. Some men/women are born with a violent nature and enjoy inflicting pain on others.

Serial killers and those who kill because it gratifies their sexual desires are high on the list of those to fear. First on the list of most

dangerous are men/women with Narcissistic Personality Disorder who believe others should be in their servitude, for these people would eliminate Constitutional and Civil Rights plus disarm their victims.

Should anyone succeed in eliminating the U.S. Constitutional and Civil Rights and disarm Americans, I believe American Citizens, with all their power and might, will step forward and do whatever it takes to regain freedom — even if they have to use clubs and throw rocks.

Carol Gene Good
Conover

Are we looking at a test of MMT?

Although the main principles of economics were established decades ago, the discipline is constantly evolving. One of the most recent contributions has been a new field called "behavioral economics." Here, scholars have developed ideas explaining why — in some cases — individuals appear to go against their own self-interest in making choices. I have found the insights of behavioral economics exceedingly useful. Apparently, so too has the economics profession, as several leaders in the field have won Nobel Prizes in recent years.

There's been another new development in economics that focuses on decisions impacting the big — or "macro" — economy rather than the individual — or "micro" — economy. The new development is termed "modern monetary theory," or MMT. I'm sure the creators of MMT hope it will be as successful as behavioral economics. And they may not have to wait long because a big test of MMT could be approaching.

The main focus of MMT is on federal borrowing. Traditional economic theory states the federal government can pay for its spending in three ways. It can tax income away from households and businesses to fund the spending. Or, it can borrow money from private sources to pay for spending. Last, the federal government can borrow funds from the country's central bank, the Federal Reserve.

With the first method, the costs of the spending are immediately paid by taxpayers. When borrowing from private sources, there are two costs. The first is regular interest payments on the loans, and the second is payment of the principal (the

amount borrowed) when the term of the loan ends, unless the loan is refinanced.

With the third method — borrowing from the Federal Reserve — there is a unique aspect. When you or I pay taxes, we are sending money we've earned to the government. Similarly, if we willingly loan money to the federal government because we want to include federal investments, called Treasury securities, as part of our investment portfolio, we are again using money we've earned.

But when the Federal Reserve loans money to the federal government, it is not using money the central bank has earned. Instead, the Federal Reserve uses money it has created. That's right, the Federal Reserve has the unique ability to print money, although in today's economy the creation is done digitally.

In the past, the Federal Reserve was careful about how much money it created for fears of sparking faster increases in prices, that is, higher inflation. In fact, there's been substantial research from numerous countries showing a link between faster money creation and higher inflation.

But now enter MMT. MMT questions the assumption of an automatic link between money creation and inflation. Specifically, MMT says if the government spending financed by newly created money makes the economy more productive — thereby leading to faster economic growth and more jobs and income — then the inflation rate won't rise. In addition, a larger economy will make debt payments more affordable for the federal government.

In short, MMT supporters see government spending backed by newly created money from the Federal Reserve as a way to unleash the economy's potential by investing in projects like infrastructure, education and research.

Interestingly, MMT has the same goal as another macro-economic theory, "supply-side

economics" (SSE). Both ideas seek to increase the growth of the economy. But the ideas use opposite approaches. MMT uses increased government spending, debt and money creation to boost the economy, whereas SSE lowers tax rates to motivate more private spending and investments.

SSE was applied as recently as 2017 when federal tax rates were cut to jumpstart a sluggish economy. As you might expect, economists differ over whether the policy was successful.

Now we may be looking at a test of MMT. Over the past year the federal government has authorized \$6 trillion to be spent addressing COVID-19 and the resulting recession. Of the funds raised to date for this spending, the majority has come from the Federal Reserve. There will likely be more proposals forthcoming for additional federal spending, in areas like infrastructure, energy and climate, reductions of college student loans and a basic income for households. If these proposals become reality, and if most of the financing comes from the Federal Reserve, then this will be a big, big test of MMT.

One of the things I like about being a professional economist is there's never a dull moment. Economists are constantly developing and debating new ideas about how the economy works and can be improved. Modern monetary theory is the latest in these ideas. Will MMT work, or will it fail? Soon, we may have a test to help us decide!

Michael Walden is a William Neal Reynolds Distinguished Professor and Extension Economist in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at North Carolina State University who teaches and writes on personal finance, economic outlook and public policy. He'll be the featured speaker at the upcoming Chatham Chamber of Commerce Development Briefing.

VIEWPOINTS

Did a North Carolinian cause the Suez Canal back-up?

Who is responsible for last month's jam up in the Suez Canal?



D.G. MARTIN
One on One

Could it be a North Carolinian? The damages to the quarter-mile long container ship, Ever Given, which ran aground in the canal are just the beginning. Egypt lost millions in toll revenue from hundreds of ships backed up. Somebody has to pay for the earth moving equipment and tugboats that dislodged the Ever Given from the canal's banks where it was stuck for six days. Then there are damages that will accrue to owners of the cargo items for late delivery charges and for the spoilage of time sensitive agricultural products.

Could all this have been caused by a North Carolinian?

Yes, it is easy to argue that Malcom McLean, the son of a sharecropper tobacco farmer in Robeson County, shares responsibly.

McLean (1913-2001) is known as the Father of Containerization because he developed the modern intermodal shipping container that revolutionized freight transportation.

Prior to the 1950s most shipping cargos were loaded by longshoremen in a time consuming and costly operation.

McLean began the revolution that led to using strong truck trailer sized containers to load ocean ships.

How dirt farmer McLean came up with the idea and built businesses around it is a great American story of entrepreneurship and determined work.

Malcom, not Malcolm, spelled his name without the extra "l."

Though born in Maxton, he finished high school in Win-

ston-Salem in 1935. His family did not have enough money to send him to college. They used the little money they could scrape up to buy a used truck. It was the beginning of McLean Trucking Co., which started operations in Red Springs.

In 1937, McLean drove a truck load of cotton to a port in Hoboken, N. J., where, as he remembered, "I had to wait most of the day to deliver the bales, sitting there in my truck, watching stevedores load other cargo. It struck me that I was looking at a lot of wasted time and money. I watched them take each crate off the truck and slip it into a sling, which would then lift the crate into the hold of the ship."

He put that thought about wasted time aside for almost 20 years while he built McLean Trucking, then headquartered in Winston-Salem, into the largest trucking fleet in the South. But he saw the possibility of a

container sized to fit on a truck bed or railcar, or stacked on a ship. He saw how to eliminate the wasted time he had experienced in Hoboken. He developed and patented a standard steel reinforced container that fit on a truck bed and was stackable on ships. He founded a new company, SeaLand, to exploit the opportunity.

As McLean's first container ship left Newark harbor in 1956, someone asked Freddy Fields, a top official of the International Longshoremen's Association, "What do you think of that new ship?" Fields replied, "I'd like to sink that sonofabitch." Fields knew that McLean's way of transferring freight would put longshoremen out of work.

The world found out that the new way of loading and transferring freight opened doors for increased world trade and for more and more container ships, larger and larger ones, carrying more and more

containers like those stacked to the sky on the Ever Given.

Malcom McLean's revolution in containerized shipping brought us cheaper products from other parts of the world. It gave us the opportunity to produce and sell our goods internationally without having to pay exorbitant shipping and handling costs.

And it made possible the gigantic Ever Given loaded with 18,300 containers that plowed into the Suez banks.

Give McLean the credit he is due for revolutionizing world trade. And then you can hold him partly accountable for the jam up of the monster container ship in the Suez.

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.

Our state has too much debt already

Thanks to the fiscally responsible policies of the North Carolina General Assembly, state government has some \$5 billion in unspent funds and unanticipated revenues in its General Fund. And thanks to the fiscally irresponsible policies of Congress and the Biden administration, North Carolina will receive another \$5.2 billion in "COVID-19 recovery" funds that will be borrowed from Chinese investors and other holders of federal treasuries.

Gov. Roy Cooper and his aides have looked up at that towering, tottering mountain of one-time cash and taken its measure. They think it's too small.

So in the 2021-23 budget proposal he just released, the governor is recommending that North Carolina borrow another \$4.6 billion for capital spending on schools, colleges, universities, museums and other government facilities. Some of these projects are clearly worthwhile. Others are pork-barrel giveaways. Still others are somewhere in the middle — nice-to-haves, let's say, though hardly must-haves.

I'll say two positive things about Cooper's debt scheme. First, it is true that, all other things being equal, it is better to borrow when interest rates are low than when they are high. Second, Cooper proposes that the new debt be issued as general-obligation bonds, meaning that North Carolina taxpayers will get to vote on the package in a bond referendum.

But even at low interest rates, borrowing is costlier than paying cash. And Cooper proposes to put his massive borrowing spree on the ballot in an off-year, low-turnout election. A better approach would be to be put state government's current surpluses to effective use, including a concerted effort to pay down the state's already burdensome debt load.

While the state currently has \$4.1 billion of General Fund debt on its books, that's not its only fiscal obligation. The state has also promised pension and health benefits to current and former public employees. North Carolina's pension fund is better funded than that of most states, but not yet fully funded. And the unfunded liability for retiree health benefits is staggering: about \$28 billion.

This big hole in North Carolina's financial position is hardly invisible. Governor Cooper sees it. His budget even included a \$150 million deposit into the reserve for health benefits. Given the current surplus, however, this is also pitifully inadequate.

With more than \$10 billion in cash to spend, we don't need to borrow another \$4.6 billion. Instead, the state legislature should convert that one-time surplus into ongoing benefits for North Carolinians.

First, I recommend that lawmakers put \$1 billion into the state's pension fund, \$2 billion into the state's retiree-health reserve, \$500 million into dedicated reserves for disaster relief and the state's turbulent Medicaid program, and \$2 billion into the state's rainy-day reserve.

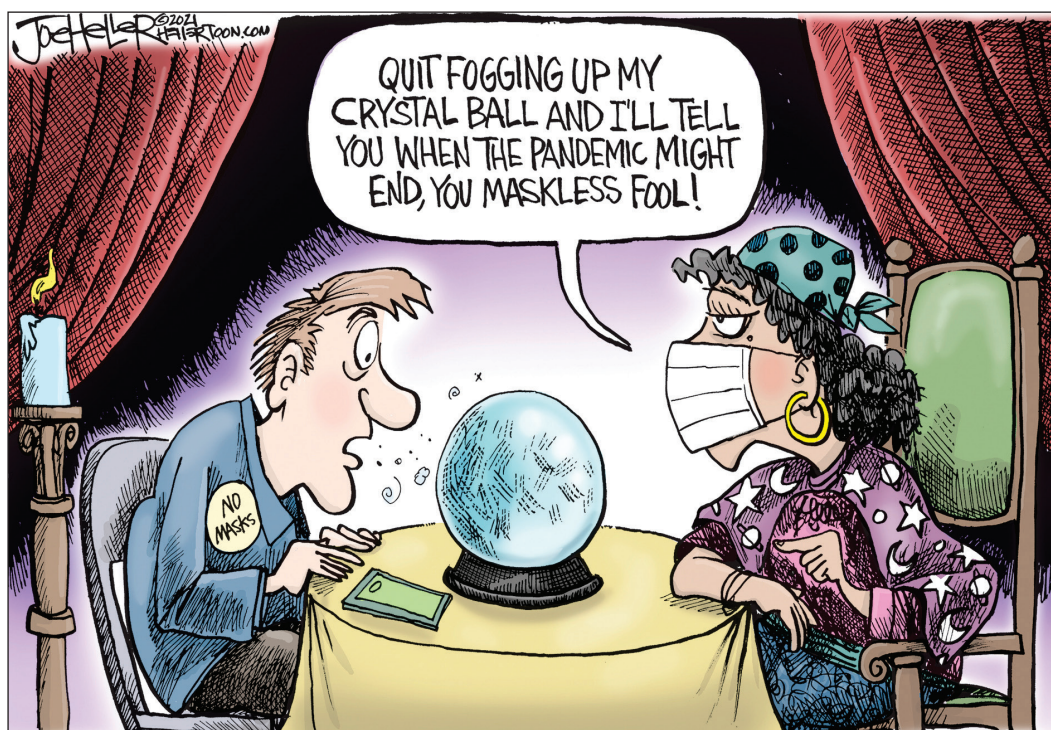
In the latter case, that would take the rainy-day fund to \$3.1 billion, which comes to about 12% of last year's General Fund budget. Most economists believe 2021 and 2022 will be banner years for economic recovery. I certainly hope so. But having a healthy cushion of operating expenses in the bank is a sensible precaution, and will keep North Carolina from having to raise taxes or cut programs with a meat cleaver if bad news comes.

As for the remaining cash, I think the General Assembly should do a combination of capital investment and debt reduction. We absolutely need to upgrade key state assets, from education and health institutions to prisons and courthouses. We can do that while also paying down some of our \$4.1 billion in bonded indebtedness, which consumes hundreds of millions of dollars a year that could be devoted to future operating expenses or tax relief.

Keep in mind that I'm only talking about North Carolina's one-time cash. The state is projecting robust revenue growth next year, which can fund essential services and pay raises for public employees.

Politicians make some of their worse decisions during the "best" of times. Fiscally speaking, that's where North Carolina is right now. The governor erred in proposing a new borrowing spree. Lawmakers should pursue a wiser course.

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



Back to life

Dr. Mandy Cohen, Secretary of our Department of Health and Human Services, is the respected face and voice most of us associate with North Carolina's pandemic fight.

In a recent interview with her on PBS NC, we talked about the numbers who had received the COVID vaccine and I asked when we might reach "herd immunity." She replied that she doesn't think so much about that metric. She equates the numbers who have shots with hugs, saying she hasn't seen her parents in 15 months and now that both she and they have been vaccinated, she can't wait to safely hug them. To Cohen, that's a sure sign we were coming back to life.

In that same interview, Dr. Cohen talked about the newly relaxed restrictions that allow us to gather in small groups without masks, if all have their shots. It was no surprise

that she quickly cautioned that we aren't out of the pandemic yet. In addition to the fact that one in five adults has had the full course of shots, what is allowing us more freedom is the mitigation efforts we have practiced thus far. We need to continue wearing our masks, keeping respectable social distances and washing our hands frequently.

Too many either didn't hear or chose to ignore the last admonition. Across the state young people gathered, unmasked and decidedly not distanced, to socialize, drink and dance. One such celebrant, among a crowd estimated at well over a thousand in Raleigh said, "We're like puppies out of the pound." Let us hope the puppies don't get COVID.

Over the past month our state has seen a marked decline from January's peak, however the numbers have stabilized the past couple of weeks and may be inching upward. Cohen is correct that we aren't out of the woods yet. Yes, we are weary of the restrictions over this past year. Right now, the question is whether we can

get enough people vaccinated fast enough to beat this pandemic down to a level where we feel totally comfortable returning to eat in restaurants, going to concerts, sporting, church and other events with crowds. However, the speed of that return may be determined by those who refuse to take the vaccine.

It is estimated that as many as 30 percent are either hesitant or unconditionally refuse to take the shot. We hate acknowledging they might have power to slow our returning to life as we knew it, but the unvaccinated may become a stumbling block.

In the meantime, we celebrate the new freedoms. Like spring, we may be slowly emerging and coming back to life.

Tom Campbell is a former assistant N.C. State Treasurer and was the creator/host of N.C. SPIN, a weekly statewide television discussion of N.C. issues that aired on UNC-TV until 2020. Contact him at tomcamp@carolinabroadcasting.com.

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What's on your mind?

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

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

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

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

CHATHAM HOMELESSNESS

New organization hopes to address homeless crisis with permanent shelter

BY D. LARS DOLDER
News + Record Staff

A burgeoning group of local philanthropists and religious leaders are working to establish accessible long-term resources for the county's homeless population, but they say they need more community support.

Chatham County NC Homeless Shelters is a nonprofit founded in January in response to the county's intensifying homelessness crisis. The state has officially recognized the group, but the IRS has not yet approved its application to fall under 501(c)(3) status.

"There is a growing issue in our county," the organization's website, chathamhomeless.org, says as part of its mission. "It's one that was present before, but has been exacerbated by COVID-19. It's a rising tide of homelessness unlike this area has seen in recent memory."

"We kind of formed last fall just by delivering meals to people staying in hotels," said Mack Neeves, the group's secretary and a founding member. "But we realized just how bad the situation was as far as these people struggling to get a place to stay."

Neeves spent most of his career in South Carolina as a postmaster. After retiring, he started residential and commercial real estate businesses before eventually settling in Chatham, where his wife had grown up. He's never worked in a community relief organization before, he said, but upon recognizing the extent of



Chatham's homeless crisis, he felt compelled to act.

The situation was grave. As Neeves made inquiries among local charities, he learned that many were running out of funds. The pandemic had dragged on longer than anyone expected, but few would suffer more than Chatham's homeless families.

"I mean, some of these people, they put them up in hotels, and they've been in hotels for months," Neeves said. "Some have been in there for five months, but it won't be affordable much longer."

There are at least 10 homeless families right now — about 22 individuals — staying in Siler City's AmeriVu Inn and Motor Lodge, Neeves says. Their stays are funded by organizations such as the Salvation Army and Central Piedmont Community Action. But Neeves knows of many unofficially identified homeless families in Chatham with appalling living conditions.

"I was talking with people at the Emergency Housing Fund, and they're not even sure exactly how many are out there," he said,

"but we know that there are some out there living in the woods."

So far, Chatham County NC Homeless Shelters has not secured space to house disadvantaged Chathamites — but that's its ultimate goal.

"We're still just trying to get this together," Neeves said, "So for now we've got a clothes closet where we hand out clothes to people every first and third Saturday, and we've got two rooms of food pantry."

The organization is operating out of Freedom Family Church on North Holly Avenue in Siler City. Neeves' stepson, Ben Suggs, is the pastor there and another founding member of the homeless shelter.

"We're also delivering meals to the folks in the hotels every week," Neeves said. "We realized it was hard for everybody to prepare hot meals, so we hooked up with CORA and we fix up a box and take it to each (family) at the hotels that we know of every week."

Church donations and partnerships with other charitable organizations have permitted the group to sustain its modest

operation, but to achieve more ambitious goals, the shelter will need widespread community support.

"We really want to get as many churches involved as we can," Neeves said. "And there's about 200 churches, we were told by the people over Chatham County."

The biggest problem in addressing Chatham's homeless crisis, as Neeves and his partners see it, is the absence of a central and easily identifiable resource. Many counties and cities have dedicated homeless shelters, but Chatham does not. Food delivery and hotel stays help with immediate need, but what about families who need more intensive long-term assistance?

"To stay in those hotels, it's like \$55 to \$60 a night, and that gets pretty expensive after a while for these organizations and they're running out of funds," Neeves said. "A well-run shelter can cut way down on those costs, though, and be a place where people know they can go. So, right now we're just trying to find land, or find a building we could renovate."

Neeves couldn't identify a specific timeline by which the organization hopes to establish its Chatham homeless shelter, but everything must be accomplished "ASAP."

"I mean, people need it yesterday, you know, so our timeline is as quick as we can try to get something put together," he said. "We're talking with as many local people as we can

trying to get help."

Eventually, when a primary shelter is operational, Neeves says the group will expand to include transitional housing — probably several tiny houses where families can stay for longer periods of time as they work toward financial independence.

"Then people can move from, say, a hotel room to a small house and then to their own place," he said. "So, that's kind of our long-range goal."

Before any big plans can reach fruition, though, Chatham County NC Homeless Shelters needs more residents to familiarize themselves with the organization and its plans, Neeves said. Neither Chatham's homeless population, nor potential backers are that familiar with the group, its resources or its future plans.

"We need people to find out that, hey, you can come right here and get food, or you can get clothes," Neeves said. "But also, the more people we can find, they can find out about what we're trying to do, and maybe help us to really get this thing off the ground — because there's definitely a need there and we want to offer a solution."

To learn more about Chatham County NC Homeless Shelters and to get involved, visit chathamhomeless.org, email help@chathamhomeless.org or call 919-799-7173.

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

WATER

Continued from page A1

were high, but that was the highest one we had," he said.

It takes a lot to surprise Rogers, who specializes in pathogenic microbiology and has studied water and food safety for decades. Before joining Consumer Reports four years ago, he worked 18 years as a microbiologist with the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture. His career also includes stints with the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy, and some time as a professor at Morgan State University in Baltimore. Still, he didn't expect to find such high PFAS concentrations in his latest study.

"I didn't know that you guys had those issues," he said, "and had been dealing with those issues for so long."

PFAS concentrations, even dangerous amounts, are undetectable without specialized equipment. Their levels are typically measured in parts per trillion. For context, the CR report points out, a single part per trillion is about the size of one sand grain in an Olympic-sized

pool. Albeit infinitesimal, just a few parts per trillion can be of severe detriment to the human body when consumed regularly over several years.

Pittsboro's water sample contained 80.2 ppt, a staggering concentration, Rogers said.

"Well, let's look at it this way," he said. "We're talking parts per trillion, but we can just talk about the number ... Health experts say the level should be all the way down to one. But basically, what we're seeing in Pittsboro is 80 times the level that health experts say we should be seeing for PFAS in water — 80 times. So that's really what the issue is."

The EPA recommends (but does not require) that water contain no more than 70 ppt of PFAS, but that standard is egregious and outmoded, Rogers says. It has endured from a time before much research discovered the seriousness of PFAS ingestion. In 2021, it's especially frightening given another of PFAS' grim side effects: they can mute the body's response to vaccine.

"If you're exposed to PFAS, your body may not respond

high enough to the vaccination to protect against the infection that you've actually been vaccinated against," Rogers said. "Especially now with COVID and people trying to get vaccinated, it'd be sad if you go through the trouble of getting the vaccine ... and you're still not protected, you still get sick."

While CR's investigation may turn nationwide attention to Pittsboro's plight, town residents and leaders have long known of their water quality quandary. Consumer Reports only corroborated what local scientists have discovered in years-long investigations.

In October, a Duke University research group led by Professor Heather Stapleton, presented its findings from a study born of incidental findings. In 2018, while researching water across the greater Triangle region, Stapleton found 95 ppt of PFAS in Pittsboro's drinking water and wanted to know more. What she found was worse than expected.

Out of 49 water samples from different Pittsboro water supplies, only a handful had fewer than 100 ppt of PFAS, as

the News + Record previously reported. The highest recorded level was 452 ppt.

Such findings and others from similar reports instigated a frenzy among Pittsboro's leaders and residents to address the problem. Stifling PFAS at its source — upriver manufacturing plants, the effluent of which is laden with PFAS — is likely impossible. That leaves Pittsboro with the burden of filtering its water, an expensive and time-consuming operation.

In recent meetings of the town's board of commissioners, the group has approved plans for updated water filtration systems at the municipal water plant that will filter as much as 90% of all PFAS from the drinking supply. But it will take at least a year for the system to be completed and operational, and it will cost millions in unexpected costs.

"It's a problem that we didn't create," Pittsboro Town Manager Chris Kennedy previously told the News + Record. "It's not right for our residents, especially as a small community, to be forced to spend millions of dollars because of others polluting the water we have to drink."

For a long-term, systemic solution, Rogers says, town residents — and water quality advocates nationwide — must petition leaders at the federal level.

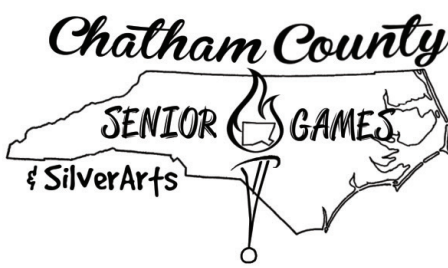
"Water is essential to life," he said. "... So become activists, become empowered and discover what you can do to try to correct this in your communities."

Without any government mandate limiting manufacturer introduction of PFAS into bodies of water, the root issue will persist despite local leaders' best efforts.

"It's going to take a top-to-bottom approach all the way from the White House and Congress down to the local communities becoming activists to try to fix this problem," Rogers said. "People have to write to their local leaders, their state leaders, write their congressmen and senators, and petition them to actually do something about this — to support any legislation that will result in clear, enforceable standards so we can start correcting and turning this around."

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

2021



SAVE the DATE
MAY 1—JUNE 4, 2021

Early Bird Registration March 22-April 2, 2021

Registration Deadline: April 16, 2021

Register Online: <http://torch.ncseniorgames.org>

For More Information:

Liz Lahti, 919-542-4512 ext. 228

liz.lahti@chathamcoa.org



Tentative schedule - contingent on status of Covid-19

- | | | |
|------|----|--------------------------------------|
| May | 1 | Cycling |
| | 3 | SilverArts Entry Drop off |
| | 4 | Archery |
| | 21 | Tee shirt and Packet Pick-up |
| | 22 | Track/Field |
| | 22 | Football & Softball Throw |
| | 22 | Fun Walk |
| | 24 | Golf |
| | 24 | Croquet |
| | 25 | Disc Golf |
| | 25 | Swimming |
| | 25 | Tennis—Women's Singles/Men's Doubles |
| | 26 | Men's Bocce |
| | 26 | Tennis—Men's Singles/Women's Doubles |
| | 27 | Horseshoes |
| | 27 | Tennis—Mixed Doubles |
| | 28 | Women's Bocce |
| | 28 | Bowling |
| June | 1 | Basketball Shoot |
| | 1 | Corn Hole |
| | 2 | Pickleball |
| | 3 | Table Tennis |
| | 4 | Awards Ceremony |

I've gotten my revaluation notice. What's next?

A guide to Chatham County's reappraisal process

Why have parcels of property been appraised and revalued?
North Carolina law requires all counties to conduct a reappraisal at least once every eight years. Chatham County is on a four-year reappraisal cycle, as are most larger counties in the state. Reappraisals distribute the overall property tax burden equitably across the county based on updated fair market values. The new market values, based on a Jan. 1, 2021, date, will be used by Chatham's county commissioners to set a county-only tax rate (currently at 67 cents per \$100 valuation) and to calculate tax bills mailed each summer until the next reappraisal occurs.

How were the appraisals done?
Every parcel, whether it's residential, commercial, agricultural or industrial, and every other privately owned piece of land, was visited by one of the staff of appraisers from Vincent Valuations, a contractor hired by Chatham County to perform the revaluation. In most cases, measurements were taken and any improvements — from an added structure such as a home or outbuilding to a new deck or concrete pad — were noted. Data entry was input into the company's computer system within its temporary offices of the tax department, and then recent sales of properties in Chatham were analyzed and valuation models and schedules were built for the apprais-

als to make sure valuations reflected current market value. All appraisals were checked again before finalized; notices with new valuations were mailed March 26 to each Chatham parcel owner.

What is "market value"?
Market value is the most probable price a property would bring in an open and competitive market. There is evidence that market values around the county have changed in different ways since 2017, the last time that reappraisal occurred in Chatham County. Some areas of the county have seen an increase in market value, while others have experienced a decrease in value. Some areas are staying about the same.

What happens now?
The county has set aside the months of April through August to hear appeals from property owners who think the reappraisal of their property is too high or too low. Chatham has established a Board of Equalization and Review — made up of community members appointed to hear appeals — to provide a method for property owners to challenge revaluations. For residents who agree with the value, no response or action is needed. For those who disagree with their value, they may request an appeal after they have taken the opportunity to review and compare other properties using the tools and

methods as outlined below.

How do I appeal my assessed value?

The deadline to appeal is 5 p.m. on May 6. Residents who disagree with their reappraisal value may go to the Comparable Sales application (located at <https://gisservices.chathamcountync.gov/taxrequest/>) and review the information on file for their properties and report any outdated or incorrect information to the Chatham County Tax Office. On the county's website, homeowners can compare their property value with the sale prices of similar properties. If all information is up to date and there is still a disagreement with the assessed value, residents may file an appeal with the Board of Equalization and Review and schedule a hearing. Appeals may be filed at <https://gisservices.chathamcountync.gov/taxrequest/>. After the Board of Equalization and Review hears the appeal, the resident will receive written notification of his or her property value in the mail. Residents can support their appeal with the following: Comparable sales or comparable sales reports from the property owner, Chatham County's online sales database or a real estate professional; pictures showing the property's inner and outer features and condition, including any upgrades; a copy of a recent fee appraisal for the property,

such as one done in connection with the purchase or refinance of the property.

What will my tax bill be? Will it go up because my property value increased?
The amount of the final 2021 tax bill cannot be determined until the tax rate is established. The tax rate is determined annually by the Chatham County taxing jurisdictions based on their budget needs.

I'm curious about recent property sales. How can I check out property sales data?
The Chatham County Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Department has launched the Comparable Sales application, an interactive mapping application which can be used to explore recent property sales data within Chatham County. Residents may enhance understanding of their property's tax appraisal value by examining sales of properties that are similar to their own. The application provides several tools and accompanying documentation to simplify the task of real estate research within the county. This application features property sales data from January 1, 2019, to January 1, 2021. It also includes current tax parcel information, reference mapping layers and aerial photography. The application is available on the GIS website at <https://chathamncgis.maps.arcgis.com/home/index.html>. The GIS and Tax Departments are also collaborating to develop a few additional applications including a GIS Hub Site

that will centralize access to tax-related GIS applications. The direct link for the application is <https://gisservices.chathamcountync.gov/property-sales>. A demo video is available for more information on how the application works. The demonstration video direct link is <https://gisservices.chathamcountync.gov/property-sales/demo>.

Are there any tax relief programs available?
There are tax relief programs for the elderly or disabled: the disabled veteran exclusion, circuit breaker property tax deferral and the present use value tax deferral program. Residents may go to www.chathamcountync.gov/taxrelief and click on the property tax assistance evaluator to check qualifications for a tax relief program.

When will Chatham County's new tax rate be set?
Commissioners are scheduled to work on the county's 2021-22 budget in work sessions scheduled for May 20, 21 and 25. The county must adopt a budget — which includes establishing an ad valorem, or property, tax rate — before the new fiscal year begins July 1.

What if I still have questions?
Questions about the reappraisal process may be directed to the Tax Office at 919-542-8211 or tax.revaluation@chatham-countync.gov.

- CN+R Staff Reports, Chatham County Government

VALUATION

Continued from page A1

owner of Vincent Valuations, the company contracted to perform Chatham's revaluation.

"What we plan for, the first two weeks, is to have a large influx of questions and appeals," Vincent told the News + Record. "If you want my honest opinion, so far, it's been very overwhelming versus what we planned for. Right now we have approximately 300 or so appeals. But this is a lot less phone calls and a lot less appeals than what we planned for."

Vincent said he advises his client counties to plan for what he calls "a 10-10-10" reaction to a reappraisal — with 10% of parcel owners (in Chatham's case, about 4,600 of the nearly 46,000 parcels appraised) appealing initially on at least an informal basis. About 10 percent of those — which in Chatham's case would be 460, or 10% of the 4,600 expected informal or inquiries — would go the county's board of equalization and review. And of those cases, about 10% — fewer than 50 — would take a failed local appeal to the state tax commission.

Chatham may not follow that general rule of thumb, he said. But with the May 6 appeal deadline still four weeks away, Vincent, Williams and the county's tax staff are still answering questions and trying to educate property owners about the revaluation process. A detailed brochure — titled "Understanding the 2021 General Reappraisal" — was included (with both English and Spanish versions) with each notice and includes answers to

frequently-asked questions. Vincent and Williams are continuing to make presentations about the reappraisal to public and private groups, and, in Vincent's words, "getting out there with as much PR (public relations) as possible."

"The typical questions we hear are, 'Why did I get this notice?'" Vincent said. "'Are my taxes going to go up?'" "What happens if I don't agree with this?" Just general questions. And one of the first questions we ask is, 'Well, do you have the pamphlet in front of you that you received in your notices?' And what we'll do is we'll direct them to it because a lot of the questions we're getting asked are answered in that pamphlet."

For callers claiming their valuation is too high — and in the rare cases where a property owner thinks the valuation is too low — the staff is walking everyone through the same process: go to the "2021 Revaluation" portion of the county's website, review the comparables around your property, and if you still disagree with the value and the information on your valuation is correct, file an appeal with evidence to support your argument.

Vincent and Williams emphasized the "fair market value" goal of the reappraisal, and said different portions of the county saw valuation increases higher than others.

"Well, when we talk about that, we're bringing (all portions of) the county up to what their fair market value is," Vincent said. "So the change may not be consistent in (each of those) areas. But that's because the market value is changing at a different pace."

It's typical in a revaluation — and chatter on social media in Chatham

County confirms this — for someone whose property appraisal has increased significantly to think their own property would never sell for its new valuation. If you're one of those, Vincent says, review your property data contained in your reappraisal — such as the number of bedrooms and bathrooms, total square footage, etc. — to make sure it's correct. Then, go online to compare it to recent sales where you live.

"Some people don't necessarily follow the real estate market," he said. "So they might not know that their neighbor's house just sold for \$250,000. They think the market in their neighborhood is \$175,000. But the sales, the recent sales, are showing something different. So we would ask them to compare their property to similar properties in their area. And then if they still disagree with their value, we would ask them to go ahead and file an appeal."

But the appeal should include evidence to support the value — a recent fee appraisal, for example, that's fewer than two years old, or something about the property that appraisers from Vincent Valuations may not have seen during their visit, such as structural damage needing repairs.

"And in some of these rapidly changing areas, it's important to remember that if your fee appraisal is from the first quarter of 2019, your market may have changed, even since your fee appraisal was done two years ago," Vincent said. "So that's what we're seeing in that aspect. And that's what I would tell them, again ... just review, compare and appeal."

Countywide reappraisals "don't happen every single day," Vincent said, so some element of confusion is under-

standable.

"So there are always a lot of questions," he said. "And not everybody's going to be happy with their value. But we try to help them through the process, and help them understand the process the best that they can. And if someone does file an appeal, we will review all the information that's submitted. And there is a process for that. So we may agree with their appeal. We may disagree with their appeal. But there is a process, and we try to give everybody due process."

Chatham County Manager Dan LaMontagne said the reappraisal indicated the county continues to see rapid growth. And along with such growth, he said, comes the need for more services from local governments to support it.

"Estimates of revenue and expenses to bring a balanced budget to the board of commissioners are still being formulated," he said. "That being said, we already know of a number of expenses that are needed to support this growth. The new Seaforth High School will be opening next year with an estimated operating cost of approximately \$2.3 million. We have also limited the expansion of staffing over the last two years while the growth in the county has outpaced the addition of staff. Most departments have been handling the increased workload with limited resources. These and other expenses will be considered along with the projected revenues as we prepare the balanced budget."

LaMontagne and his staff are "still early" in the 2021-22 budget process, he said, and "far from discussion about the tax rate at this time."

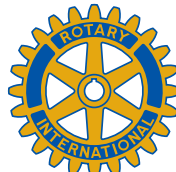


Staff photo by Kim Hawks

Boys & Girls Club groundbreaking

Pittsboro Boys & Girls Club and the Kiwanis Club will hold a groundbreaking ceremony at noon on Saturday at Kiwanis Park. 'Kiwanis will be hosting the Boys & Girls Club,' said Pittsboro Commissioner Kyle Shipp, 'so we want to celebrate the partnership and give everyone an update on our plans for the building and the club.' Hobbs Architects and their partners are completing plans for renovations to the facility and work is expected to begin soon. The event will be outdoors to permit social distancing and masks are encouraged.

Wednesday Spotlight



of Pittsboro

Looking to get involved? Meeting every Wednesday at noon, via Zoom, for those who want to engage in "Service above Self." Connect via Facebook for more info: [facebook.com/rotarypbo](https://www.facebook.com/rotarypbo)



Wrote and delivered cards to our local residents at assisted living homes for various holidays.

Donated around 70 turkeys and all the fixings to CORA food pantry at Thanksgiving.

Gave scholarships to local seniors from Northwood High to continue their education.



Brought to you by the CHR Land team, Lonnie, Julie, & Jennifer

Mobile: 919-619-0047 (Lonnie) • Mobile: 919-524-7476 (Julie)
Mobile: 919-799-1692 (Jennifer)

The taxman cometh

Back in 2017, I had just started working in the finance industry when then-President Donald Trump bushwhacked his way through a largely hostile Congress to push his landmark achievement — the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.



D. LARS DOLDER
Enterprising Chatham

Trump bragged that his law ushered in the biggest tax cuts America had ever seen. That wasn't quite true — in recent history, Reagan's monumental 1981 rollbacks were bigger, as were, ironically, Obama's extensions of Bush-era tax reductions. Still, the change in tax policy was substantial, and almost every American saved money as a result.

But the program came with a conspicuous asterisk. Not a single Democrat voted in support, forcing Republicans to settle for a diluted version of their reform. The tax cuts were necessarily temporary, set to expire at the end of 2025.

That sent tax planners and financial advisers into ferment. They'd been gifted a rare moment of prescience — taxes would likely remain at their lowest floor in decades until 2026, at which point they would almost surely spike.

It changed the investment game. For decades, most American workers have housed their retirement savings between two primary investment vehicles: 401(k)s and Individual Retirement Accounts, or IRAs. In many ways, they do the same thing. The big difference is that 401(k)s are offered by employers and IRAs, as the name suggests, are opened by individuals themselves.

But here's the key similarity — both are tax-deferred investment accounts. You don't pay taxes on any of the

money you invest until what time you decide to withdraw it.

"There are several different types of accounts that you can invest in that have different taxation related to them," Wealth Advisor Stephen M. Thomas, of Siler City's Valor Private Wealth LLC, told me. "... With the most popular, like 401(k)s, you pay the taxes later when you're pulling money out of them."

It's one of Uncle Sam's neatest tricks. For about 40 years, or however long you stay in the workforce, the arrangement feels like a steal. Set aside money, don't pay taxes, benefit from compounding interest. What could be better? But eventually, ol' Sam gets his, and it's often more than fresh retirees expect.

"I have a lot of clients come to me when they're already near retirement," Thomas said, "and they wish they'd come earlier because they didn't realize what they could have saved."

Investors don't have to defer taxation. Some investment accounts, notably Roth IRAs, house after-tax money. Choosing between a traditional tax-deferred account or something such as a Roth, then, has always been a gamble. Do you think taxes will be lower when you retire? Then deferral makes good sense.

But if taxes are going up, pay off now as much as you can.

"Generally speaking, in the short term," Thomas said, "with all the government spending that has taken place and is likely to continue taking place, I'm really worried about an uptick in taxation. It's already on the table."

Thomas was careful to emphasize that he is not authorized to give tax advice (three other CFPs wouldn't talk to me at all). But I've heard dozens of finance experts issue explicit warnings behind closed doors. The writing is on

the wall: taxes will go up.

We're seeing it play out on the Hill. President Biden, still in his first 100 days, has lambasted Trump's tax policy as reckless and short-sighted. The country's top earners will almost surely see their taxes go up in coming years. For now, it seems the middle- and lower-classes are spared the tax collector's ire, but it won't last. The national debt is soaring; it's on track to hit \$30 trillion before year's end.

"It seems logical that taxes would have to go higher to pay for our government's debt," Thomas said.

Already in 2017, when Republicans slashed taxes, Democrats and economists alike cried fiscal immaturity. Many have spent the last four years promising to repeal Trump's tax plan. It looks like Biden won't be the one to do it, but he's only delaying the inevitable.

The taxman cometh; ye be warned.

Other business news

The state treasurer of North Carolina, Dale Folwell, will be visiting Chatham's Chamber of Commerce on April 14 to discuss the pandemic's effect on fiscal health.

"Treasurer Folwell looks forward to updating the members of the Chatham Chamber of Commerce about the economic impact of COVID-19 in North Carolina and how the state is doing financially overall," Joah Bickley, intern to the treasurer, said in an announcement. "As chairman of the Local Government Commission, Treasurer Folwell is uniquely suited to talk to your members about the impact the slowdown will have on local governments and businesses across the state. After his brief message, he will open the floor to questions from participants to ensure open communication and

transparency from the Office of the State Treasurer."

If you'd like to attend, RSVP by email to CherylL@ccucc.net.

The Chatham Chamber of Commerce welcomed five new members last week. They are the Pinehurst Medical Clinic, a locally owned and managed healthcare provider serving Chatham and eight other counties across the Piedmont; Sentry Residential, a military-based real estate firm "serving the military first but helping all people;" M2Graphics LLC, a screen printing and embroidery store; Island Express LLC, a transportation company specializing in "the safe, efficient, and reliable remediation, transport, and disposal of various liquids, solids and sludge for manufacturing plants, industrial sites, landfills and spill/accident sites;" and Kinsey @ Donian Marketing, Inc, sales representatives for the automotive aftermarket collision repair industry.

The Modern Woodsmen of America, one of the country's largest fraternal benefits societies with more than \$15 billion in assets, recognized J.B. Griffith III of neighboring Randolph County last month as one of its top salesman. For his accomplishments, Griffith was named to the organization's president's cabinet.

"This distinction recognizes Griffith's high achievement in the sales of financial products to meet families' protection, savings and retirement needs," the society released in a statement. "Griffith ranks among the organization's top representatives nationwide."

The local Modern Woodmen office is located in Liberty. To enlist the group's services, contact Griffith at 336-622-6020.

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

EXHIBIT

Continued from page A1

to do that."

Brooks first discovered art when she was "very young," she said, and quickly started challenging herself to develop as an artist. She picked up painting her sophomore year, practicing almost every day.

While art is a hobby she enjoys and that keeps her busy, it's more than that, Brooks said. Art also helps her to escape reality, and to deal with reality when it's hard or when she's struggling with her mental health.

"When I'm sad or mad, to slow down, I pick up my paintbrush and my paints," she said. "And then I'm just in my own little world where I feel like I can do no wrong or harm to anything. I'm just myself, and I create anything that I put my mind to."



Submitted photo

'Symbol of strength,' Brooks' digital work commissioned by JMArts for the first-ever JMArts spring greetings cards.

push herself as an artist, Brooks said she hopes to be featured in in-person galleries and museums.

Last week, JMArts — the Jordan-Matthews Arts Foundation — an-

nounced Brooks was commissioned to create work for the first-ever JMArts spring greetings cards — now on sale at rb.gy/x1aj1a. Brooks is a JMArts Scholar, mean-

ing she was awarded a scholarship to continue art study over the summer.

Her digital work, "symbol of strength," will appear on greeting cards sold by JMArts to raise money for J-M artists, the organization said in an email. Brooks received \$100 for the rights to reproduce her work, and the back of each card lists her name along with a short artist statement.

"We wanted this project to be a learning experience for Tiana in the real world of commercial art, and the process of working with a client that has specific needs," said JMArts organizer Rose Pate, who is the school's media specialist. "I'm very pleased with how Tiana developed through that process, gaining experience in both its creative and technical aspects."

"She's not only a talented artist, but one of the nicest, most decent people I've had the privilege to work with," added Chip Pate, Rose's husband, who helped organize JMArts.

Ultimately, Brooks wants her art to continue to be seen by others so they can feel the emotions and hard work that goes into each and every piece.

"We often hear that life imitates art, but art also imitates life," said Brooks' art teacher Rahkie Ma-teen-Mason in another JMArts release announcing her exhibit feature. "In Tiana's piece, 'Say their Names,' Tiana tackled

Image commissioned by JMArts for \$100 as a result of Tiana's outstanding body of work as a JM student.

Size: Cards are 4 x 5.5 inches and have a blank inside for personal messages.

Cost: \$10 for a pack of ten cards with 12 envelopes, or \$13 if mailed.

When: The cards are expected to be available in late April.



Submitted photo

Jordan-Matthews Senior Tiana Brooks with her mixed-media piece, 'Say Their Names.' The piece was selected to be displayed at this year's virtual Emerging Artists Invitational — Brooks is one of 35 students in the state to be featured.

'That's all I can really hope for, is for people to feel the emotions I felt — whether its sadness, anger, disappointment, whatever it is, from this piece and just express those feelings the best way they can.'

TIANA BROOKS, Jordan-Matthews High School senior

a really tough subject. I think what I admire most about Tiana is that her art is so personal that it often becomes universal."

Brooks hopes people who see the piece will feel the emotions in the painting, and spread awareness for the women of color who lost their lives to police brutality.

Some of the names reflected in her piece include Natasha McKenna, Alexia Christian, Shelly Frey, Yvette Smith, India Beaty, Sherida Davis, Breonna Taylor and Sandra Bland.

"That's all I can really hope for, is for people to feel the emotions I felt — whether its sadness, anger, disappointment, whatever it is, from this piece and just express those feelings

the best way they can," Brooks said. "I didn't expect my piece to make it into the show, but it was exciting ... And I couldn't help but feel blessed that I was able to make it."

In the past, the Emerging Artist exhibition took place in the art gallery and culminated with a special program for students, but because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the works are in a virtual exhibition through April 19.

You can view the online exhibit at: https://www.highpoint.edu/artdesign/2021/03/11/emerging-artists_2021/.

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

Chatham County Solid Waste & Recycling Earth Day Event



Saturday, April 17, 2021 9:00 am to 3:00 pm



FREE DOCUMENT SHREDDING

Residents can bring three boxes or bags of documents from their house. No businesses.



MEDICINE TAKE BACK

The Chatham County Sheriff's Office will be conducting a medicine take back for unwanted medications.



HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE

Residents can bring household hazardous waste items for proper disposal. New limit of 20 gallons of latex paint cans.



COMPOST BIN SALES

Backyard compost bins are available for purchase. \$45 each. \$5 for kitchen collector. Cash, check, debit, or credit.

Spring mulch sales are scheduled as usual from 7:30 am to Noon

We load, you haul. \$5 per small scoop (~1 cubic yard) and \$10 per large scoop.

All loads must be secured. Mulch sales are cash or check only.

Solid Waste & Recycling Main Facility 28 County Services Road, Pittsboro

For more details- www.chathamcountync.gov/recycle

Chatham 250 Founding Day: How the community can celebrate

From Chatham County Government

PITTSBORO — In honor of its 250th anniversary, Chatham County will host a series of interactive events for community members throughout the year. The first event, Founding Day, will be held from 2-5 p.m. Saturday in downtown Pittsboro.

People should follow the balloons from Hanks Street to 204 W. Salisbury St. (St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church) in Pittsboro. This drive-thru event will have nine stations that focus on history and community, with opportunities for individuals and families to share, learn and engage.

At the first drive-thru station, participants will be greeted by the Chatham 250 co-chairpersons — Dr. Carl E. Thompson Sr., Renee Paschal and Lendy Carias — and will receive the supplies they need to get the birthday party started.

Station Two will feature three reenactors of Chatham County's original founders where attendees will be greeted on their way in.

The reenactor station will have three reenactors portraying historic people: William Pitt, John Brooks and Lucy Worth Jackson, according to Pittsboro Business Association Membership Chairperson Cindy Schmidt. Chatham County was named for William Pitt, the first Earl of Chatham. John

Brooks was one of Chatham County's first settlers receiving a 640-acre grant on Tick Creek in 1755. Lucy Worth Jackson was the daughter of Jonathan Worth, Reconstruction Governor and War Treasurer of the State, and wife of Joseph John Jackson, an attorney.

Station Three will feature a drive-thru museum gallery where participants can learn about the life and legacy of Chatham County resident Lewis Freeman. This station will be hosted at Hobbs Architects located at 159 W. Salisbury St.

"Lewis Freeman was a most remarkable man to have survived and apparently thrived in Chatham County between 1773 and 1847," said Grim Hobbs, Vice President of Hobbs Architects. "As a free black man, he was able to purchase the freedom of his wife and family members and to acquire significant parcels of land near the center of Pittsboro and in Chatham County. While there is more we'd like to know about Lewis Freeman, all we do know makes his life a Chatham County and American story worth celebrating."

Station Four will feature a "Found It In Pittsboro" activity where community members will be able to find hidden rabbits around downtown Pittsboro from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Five embellished rabbit statues will be hidden on and near Hillsboro Street. The first 25 visitors to the Main Street Pittsboro

Welcome Center (37 Hillsboro St.) who show a photo of themselves with three of the five statues will receive a \$10 voucher to participating downtown businesses. All participants will be entered into a drawing to win one of the statues.

"The rabbit statues refer to a chapter in Chatham County's history when it was the source for the 'Chatham Rabbit,' a delicacy served in the finest hotels and rail cars all along the East Coast," said Main Street Pittsboro Chairman Maria Parker-Lewis. "With this symbol of spring, we can have fun and support downtown businesses at the same time."

In acknowledgment of Pittsboro's thriving creative culture, the rabbit statues will all be creatively embellished by local artists including Theresa Arico Mosaics, Lani Chaves, Sally Gregoire and Darcy Szeremi, many of whom are exhibiting artists at the Pittsboro Gallery of the Arts.

Station Five will feature the 250 Foundations public art project where Chathamites can participate by placing a rock, adding their piece, sharing their wish and being a founder of this county. Community members will be able to prepare for this station in advance.

"People can either decorate their rock before arriving, adding their name or the name of someone they might want to honor or a symbol that represents them," said Marcela Slade, executive director of Abundance

NC. "Since these rocks will be displayed outside, they should be decorated with something that will last, like acrylic paint or enamel. If people would rather not decorate they can wish upon the rock something they would like to see happen this year ... or give thanks for something that has already happened."

More information on the 250 Foundations public art project can be found at www.chatham250.com.

Station Six will feature an introduction to the Chatham 250 Time Capsule, where participants will be able to contribute their piece of 2021 history. As part of Founding Day and throughout the Chatham 250 celebration, volunteers will be collecting items for inclusion in the official Chatham 250 Time Capsule. The Time Capsule will include items representing current events and the way of life of Chatham County in its 250th year, 2021. The Time Capsule will be sealed at the conclusion of Chatham 250 in Fall 2021 and it is not to be opened again until Chatham County's 300th year, in the year 2071. Suggested items community members can contribute to the Time Capsule may be found at www.chatham250.com.

At the final stations, participants can look forward to a birthday party theme. There will be a goodie bag, piñata raffle and a sweet treat for people to take home. The piñatas, purchased from local tiendas in Siler City, Tienda El Centro and

La Guadalupana, will be raffled off for free. Each person to drive through will be allowed to enter their name into one of the two raffles. The piñatas will be filled with Hispanic candies traditionally used for piñatas.

As for the sweet treat, there will be chocolate and vanilla cake pops for the first 250 people to drive through. Chatham 250 is excited to be working with Pittsboro bakery, Carolina Cravings, to supply the cake pops. The cake pops are generously donated by Main Street Pittsboro. Lastly, participants can look forward to goodie bags with a coloring page, a miniature American Flag, bubbles, and more items inside.

In order to enjoy Founding Day to its full extent, residents can make an entire day out of it. The Pittsboro Business Association is encouraging businesses that are open to participate in the festivities. Participating businesses will have a balloon outside. Please note that road construction in downtown Pittsboro will not affect access to Founding Day events or businesses that are open.

The Chatham 250 planning committee would like to give a special thank you to Founding Day sponsor, the Town of Pittsboro. Check out the official Facebook event for Founding Day at <https://fb.me/e/1j2lXyZWr>. For more information on Founding Day, and other Chatham 250 activities, visit www.chatham250.com.

NEWS BRIEFS

Farmers: enroll in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

Are you a farmer interested in being paid to protect water quality? The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) works with landowners to convert low-yield cropland and marginal pastureland into riparian forests that protect water quality, create wildlife habitat, and provide an additional source of income for farmers.

Participating farmers enroll eligible fields into conservation easements — written agreements between the landowner and the state of North Carolina. The landowner agrees to carry out conservation practices (such as tree planting) and to restrict future cropping and development on the land but retains private ownership.

To compensate landowners for enrolling in the program, CREP pays landowners 15 years of per-acre payments, a one-time bonus (\$250 per acre for 30-year easements or \$1,000 per acre for permanent easements), and cost shares to reimburse the landowner for the cost of establishing conservation practices. Conservation easements last 30-years or permanently, depending on the landowner's choice.

CREP is accepting enrollments in Chatham County. To be eligible, the land must have been owned for one year, have been farmed for at least four years

between 2012 and 2018, and border a qualifying water body. Qualifying water bodies include agricultural ditches, streams, rivers, lakes, and wetlands. See if your land is eligible and contact CREP staff using our interactive map at https://www.ncmhtd.com/soilwater/crep_info/

Siler City Parks and Recreation Department reopening plans for indoor facilities

SILER CITY — While the Siler City Parks and Recreation Department's outdoor facilities have been open to the public, the department will begin accepting indoor reservations beginning this week for Ernest Ramsey Gym.

Users of town facilities must comply with gathering limits issued under North Carolina Executive Order 204: indoor gathering limit of 50 people with 6-foot social distancing and face mask are required.

Paul Braxton Gym and the Earl B. Fitts Community center will be available for indoor reservations at a later date due to scheduled maintenance.

For more information regarding indoor reservations, programs, athletic leagues, and events contact Siler City Parks and Recreation at 919-742-2699 or visit www.silercity.org

Chatham Artists Guild announces new member artists

The Chatham Artists Guild (CAG) is pleased to welcome 10 Chatham County artists as new members for 2021. A jury of peer artist members made their selections from submitted applications based on the quality, technical proficiency, consistency, originality and presentation of artworks.

New members include:

- Chris Campbell, Ceramics
- William "Buck" Dickgraber, Painting
- Timothy Dowdall, Photography
- Lynn Flyer, Ceramics
- Ric Harber, Leatherwork
- Anna Julian, Ceramics/Mixed Media
- Kathleen Millikan, Painting
- Steevie Parks, Painting

• Boots Quimby, Painting
• Hamidou Sissoko, Sculpture
The addition of these 10 artists brings CAG to a total of 63 talented members representing a wide variety of medium and style. View the work of all our members in their online galleries available in the CAG Artist Directory.

The Chatham Artists Guild (CAG) is an organization of artists whose purpose is to maintain artistic excellence among our members. Their mission is to raise awareness and appreciation for the visual arts, including the cultural and economic contribution it makes to the community, and connect member artists with art patrons. Visit CAGwww.chathamartistsguild.org to learn more.

— CN+R staff reports

NOTICE OF MEETING OF THE CHATHAM COUNTY BOARD OF EQUALIZATION AND REVIEW

Pursuant to N.C.G.S. 105-322 the Chatham County Board of Equalization and Review will meet as required by law.

PURPOSE OF MEETING

To hear upon request, any and all taxpayers who own or control taxable property assessed for taxation in Chatham County, with respect to the valuation of such property or the property of others, to schedule hearings, and to fulfill duties and responsibilities required by law.

TIME OF MEETINGS

The Board will convene Tuesday, April 6, 2021 at 10:00 AM. The meeting will be held at 1192 US Hwy 64 West Business, Pittsboro NC (Chatham County Agriculture & Conference Center). The Board will be open to receive appeals of value and will adjourn on May 6, 2021 at 5:00 PM. At that time the Board adjourns, no additional appeals can be accepted by the Board of Equalization and Review for tax year 2021.

Those individuals with written requests for hearings received prior to 5:00 PM on May 6, 2021, the advertised date for adjournment of the Board of Equalization and Review, will be notified when and where to appear for their individual hearings.

In the event of earlier or later adjournment, notice to that effect will be published in this newspaper.

The schedule for the hearing of appeals timely filed will be posted at the Office of the Assessor, serving as CLX to the Board of Equalization and Review.

All requests for hearings should be made in writing to:

**Tax Administrator
PO Box 908
Pittsboro, NC 27312
Telephone (919) 545-8404**

Arthritis Foundation

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ZOOM thru Chatham Council on Aging
10 am
Mondays & Thursdays
April 5—June 3 (no class on 5/31)

For best results, attend at least 13 of the 16 sessions

Register at: ChathamCOA.Org/COA-Virtual-Activities/
OR
(<https://tinyurl.com/COA-Arthritis>)

For more information:

Jackie.Green@ChathamCOA.Org or 919-542-4512, ext. 227

SILER CITY'S ECONOMIC STEERING COMMITTEE

Town leaders haggle over minority assistance agenda

BY D. LARS DOLDER
News + Record Staff

SILER CITY — In a recent meeting to discuss their economic development implementation strategy, Siler City's Economic Development Strategic 5-Year Plan Steering Committee members haggled over how best to address inequities in representation among the town's diverse minority populations.

The 11-person group — which includes such local leaders as Town Manager Roy Lynch, Town Planner Jack Meadows, Pastor Cecil Wilson and Siler City Realtor Cindy Dameron — has worked for months in partnership with Bruce Naegelen and Ann Bass, economic development planners from the NCDOC's Main Street & Rural Planning Center. Its goal is to craft a series of strategies by which the town can improve economic footing and enhance the quality of life for its residents.

Siler City's economic positioning statement, crafted by the five-year plan steering committee, emphasizes the town's desire for an "inclusive community," a "multi-cultural downtown of shops, makers and artisans" and "safe neighborhoods" which attract residents from around the greater Triangle and Triad regions.

Historically, the town has not matched the committee's vision. But with a comprehensive implementation plan, its members hope to change that.

Words into action

The group's first strategy is to promote an "inclusive, healthy community."

"Siler City is a 'minority

majority' community," Naegelen said. In other words, most of the town's population is comprised of minority peoples.

Almost half the town's residents — 47.1% — are Latino.

"While relationships are improving," Naegelen said, "there is still much to be done to gain understanding, trust and participation."

Another 18.7% of Siler City's population is Black, meaning two-thirds of the town's population is made up of minorities.

Besides racial and ethnic minorities, senior citizens, defined as ages 55-84 in the MS&RP report, make up a growing slice of the town's population.

"Which surprised me," Meadows said, "that the population's aging like that."

Last year's census data may reveal a different picture when it's released in coming months, Naegelen pointed out, but other metrics suggest that Siler City is trending older, especially as the job market fails to support young workers.

"It may be that youth exodus is making the numbers go up," Meadows said.

To retain younger residents and improve quality of life for minority groups which have often felt excluded, the committee's first goal is to "make all populations feel welcome and involved."

Step one in achieving its objective: match representation on town-appointed boards and committees to U.S. Census 2020 population percentages, the implementation plan says.

The town's board of commissioners is responsible for such appointments, Lynch said, but department heads "make recommendations ... and do have input."

"So, we'll put a five-year

timeline on that to kind of get to that point," Naegelen said.

Other suggested action items to promote a more inclusive community included:

- Creating "a pipeline of engaged knowledgeable local leaders from all populations of residents" (featuring members from such organizations as the Hispanic Liaison, the Siler City Merchants Association, the Chatham County Chamber of Commerce and others)
- Developing comprehensive profiles of town-appointed boards and committees outlining their purposes, meeting times and other information to enhance accessibility
- Creating and activating a Latino Community Advisory Committee to help the board of commissioners better serve Hispanic residents

Naegelen suggested the steering committee, in cooperation with other town leaders and the board of commissioners, enact the objectives within one year or less.

Internal resistance

Although Siler City's largest minority population is Hispanic, some on the committee pushed back against formation of a Latino-centric advisory committee and suggested expanding the focus to include more residents.

"Are we going to have to change that to just Minority Community Advisory Committee?" Dameron said. "The times they are a changing."

Naegelen advised against it, suggesting that a committee to serve all minority interests may not successfully address any of their needs completely.

"It's to have their voice in place, largely," he said of the Latino community. "This kind

of formalizes that voice."

But Wilson seconded Dameron's apprehension, citing what he said was widespread opinion among Black Siler City residents.

"The African American community feels like in Siler City there should be more attention given to that community," he said. "And so if you have a Latino Community Advisory Committee, then the African American community may feel like, 'OK, what about us?'"

Although Latinos outnumber Black residents, Wilson said the "perception to the African American community is they are the majority minority, because they were here first. Therefore, (African Americans) feel like if you're offering anything extra or any special attention it should start with them first."

To avoid controversy, Dameron modified her suggestion and asked to strike "Latino" from the committee's name, instituting instead an all-inclusive Community Advisory Committee.

Lynch, Meadows and others agreed it might be prudent to avoid the notion of exclusivity.

"They do not exercise their access to have a voice," Wilson said of Siler City's Latinos. "Yes, technically they don't have a voice, but it's not because no one has invited them to have a voice or not because no one has given them access to have a voice. They just choose not to."

Still, Naegelen and Bass maintained that Siler City's Hispanic population faces unique challenges and circumstances worthy of individualized attention.

"They do have other issues," Bass said. "We talked a little bit

about the language, but there are also the legality issues. The Dreamers (immigrants protected under the DREAM Act) got to the point where they were scared to death to go anywhere or show up for anything, and the same thing for their families. So there is that additional layer of fear that goes along with it."

Naegelen added that a Latino Community Advisory Committee was already suggested in the town's previously approved Building Integrated Communities Project, "a two-year collaboration between the Town of Siler City, The Hispanic Liaison/El Vínculo Hispano and the statewide Building Integrated Communities program at UNC-Chapel Hill," according to Siler City's website.

By way of compromise, Naegelen revised the committee's plan to call for implementation of the BIC Action Plan for Immigrant Integration in lieu of explicitly naming the Latino Community Advisory Committee.

The ultimate decision to proceed with a Latino Community Advisory Committee will fall to the Siler City board of commissioners. The Economic Development Strategic 5-Year Plan Steering Committee is still finalizing its implementation plan, but plans to present its recommendations to the commissioners in coming weeks.

"I'm glad all this came up here," Meadows said, "because if it came up here, you know it would come up with the board, so this is good."

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

Familiar arc of Godzilla vs. Kong brings dumb fun, just without the 'fun'

"Godzilla vs. Kong" is essentially a remake of



NEIL MORRIS
Film Critic

"Batman vs. Superman" if it was directed by Michael Bay. There

is a Lex Luthor, a Doomsday laced with the DNA of a former foe, a Lois Lane, a "kryptonite" armament, and even a blaring Junkie XL soundtrack (alas, Martha, err, Mothra was in the last Godzilla flick). And then there's the titular clash of fictional icons until contrivance convinces them that they oughta team up.

All that is crammed into a Bay-esque melange of harried subplots, hokey wisecracks, and half-baked humans. But like Bay's "Transformers" films, we are



Photo courtesy of Warner Bros.

Godzilla and King Kong battle it out in 'Godzilla vs. Kong.'

just here to see the terabytes tangle, and like Bay's "Transformers" films, even that gets old quickly.

Back on Skull Island, King Kong has been confined to an enormous man-made biosphere because, well, he might swim away? Oh, and Kong now knows sign language because, well, reasons. Meanwhile, Godzilla has left everyone alone for five years until he gets in his

feelings because a cybernetics tycoon (Demián Bichir) is constructing a metallic doppelgänger — yep, you guess it, Mecha-godzilla.

Scientist de jure (Alexander Skarsgård) is convinced that a McGuffin buried deep underground is the key to stopping Godzilla's pique. So he, the monkey's minder (Rebecca Hall), and a mute, pint-sized Kong whisperer (Kaylee Hottle) lead an

Antarctic expedition that segues into Hollow Earth. Meanwhile, a podcaster links up with college kid Madison Russell (Millie Bobby Brown) to kill some screen time. Both Brown and Kyle Chandler reprise their roles from "Godzilla: King of the Monsters," the previous entry in the Legendary Entertainment's "MonsterVerse" franchise, although Chandler's sum contribution comprises

GODZILLA vs. KONG

GRADE: C

DIRECTOR: Adam Wingard

STARRING: Alexander Skarsgård, Millie Bobby Brown, Rebecca Hall, Brian Tyree Henry, Eiza González, Julian Dennison, Demián Bichir, Kaylee Hottle and Kyle Chandler

MPPA RATING: PG-13

RUNNING TIME: 2 hr. 11 min.

popping up every half-hour or so to stare into space with a look of awe/befuddlement.

When I was 7 years old, I read a 1978 edition of "The Brave and the Bold" comic book series in which Batman fought Aquaman. Aquaman got the best of Batman when they battled in the ocean, and Batman came out on top once they reached dry land. That's basically the arc of Kong and Godzilla's tête-à-têtes, before they decide to just get along.

Look, I like giant Go-liaths banging into each other as much as the next guy. But Jordan Vogt-Roberts's "Kong: Skull Island" showed us how to marry an effects-driven spectacle with slick film making developed human characters, and a cheekiness to let us know that the filmmakers are in on the joke. "Godzilla vs. Kong" makes the oft-made mistake of taking itself too seriously. It aims to be dumb fun, but it forgot the second part.

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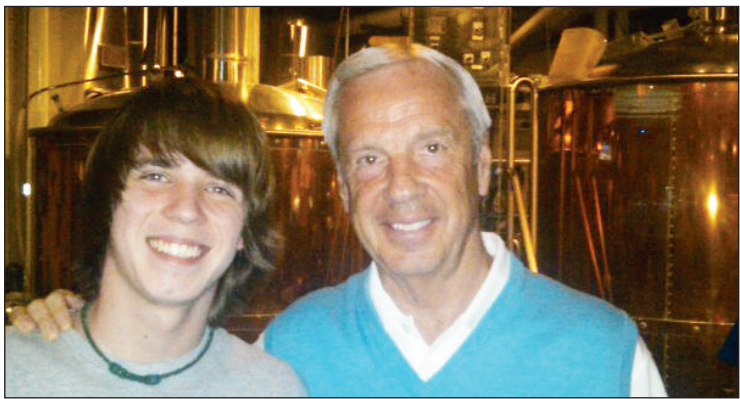
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Family photo

News + Record Sports Editor Victor Hensley (left), 14 years old at the time, poses with UNC men's basketball coach Roy Williams at Top of the Hill Restaurant & Brewery in Chapel Hill after a recording of Williams' radio show on March 26, 2012.

Banners and sport coats: The end of an era

When I was 14 years old, I remember sitting at the bar in one of Chapel Hill's most iconic restaurants, Top of the Hill, with my mom watching a live recording of a radio show. It was a packed house.



VICTOR HENSLEY
Sports Editor

After an hour or so, the two radio hosts at the front of the room put down their microphones, signaling the end of the show. One of them stood up, stepped down from the slightly elevated platform where the production had taken place and walked across the room, headed for the exit.

Now was our chance.

As the man, donning a Carolina blue sweater vest — a piece of clothing as synonymous with Carolina as the man himself — passed by us, my mom stopped him. There wasn't a nervous bone in her body. She can talk to anybody like she'd known them for years, even someone of his magnitude.

She asked him if he'd take a picture with my shy 8th-grade self and he seemed happy to oblige. His spirit was warm, his Southern twang acting as a perfect verbal embodiment of North Carolina itself. He put his arm around me and smiled as my mom snapped the photo, immortalizing the moment.

I still think about the time I was lucky enough to meet Roy Williams, Hall of Fame coach of the North Carolina men's basketball team. Sometimes, it doesn't feel real. Until I see that picture.

I was at a recording of his radio show, Roy Williams Live, on March 26, 2012, the day after he and his Tar Heels lost to the Kansas Jayhawks in the Elite Eight of the 2012 NCAA Tournament.

Even the day after a loss — when he must have been physically and emotionally drained not only from the game but speaking for well over an hour into a microphone — he took a minute out of his day to speak to me, to take a picture with me, to sign a Carolina pennant for me. That's just the type of man Roy Williams is.

Last Thursday, on April Fools' Day, Williams announced his retirement from coaching after 48 years, 18 of which were spent as the head man in Chapel Hill.

What most of us hoped was just an April Fools' joke gone too far turned out to be authentic. After 18 years of memorable moments, plenty of wins, championships, celebrations, tears, catchphrases, life lessons and fashionable sideline sport coats, the Roy Williams era in Chapel Hill had come to a close.

I'd be lying if I said tears weren't shed that day. By me, by everyone who bleeds Carolina blue, by all of us who grew up with him on our TVs for at least six months out of the year.

As everything changed around us over the last two decades, one of the few constants was Roy. We choked up when he cried, smiled when he did and felt anger when he was frustrated.

As a lifelong Carolina basketball fan — and eventual UNC-Chapel Hill journalism student — Roy gave me some of my best memories.

I remember the night I couldn't watch the Tar Heels' 2009 national championship victory because I was on an overnight field trip at a camp with my 5th-grade class. While the counselors were allowed to sneak away and watch it, the students were supposed to "immerse themselves in the outdoors." What a joke. (I watched the highlights the next day, excited as ever).

I remember Duke guard Gerald Henderson's (totally intentional) elbow to Tyler Hansbrough's nose in 2007, the game that truly made me realize the extent to which I hated the Blue Devils.

I remember sitting in my dorm's lounge during the national championship in 2017, watching the game on my laptop because I was swamped with homework due the next day — I know, assigning homework due the day after the national championship? What kind of monster does that? — and I remember rushing Franklin Street in celebration that same night.

I remember it all. I remember the heartbreakers — I'll never forgive you, Kris Jenkins — and the joyous triumphs. I remember his 18 wins against Duke, his three national titles, his senior night speeches and his quote-worthy press conferences.

I remember the times I screamed at my TV screen when he refused to call a timeout in a close game or put my head in my hands when his teams couldn't make free throws if their lives depended on it.

And through all of the good and the bad, I always remembered

See **ERA**, page B3

CHATHAM CENTRAL 12, NORTH ROWAN 0

Bears recover from walk-off loss, thrash North Rowan on senior night

BY VICTOR HENSLEY
News + Record Staff

BEAR CREEK — If you're going to bounce back from a tough loss, you might as well do it with a bang.

Chatham Central's softball team did just that in a 12-0, five-inning victory over the North Rowan Cavaliers (0-4) last Tuesday, a day after falling to the unbeaten South Stanly Rowdy Rebel Bulls and losing the Yadkin Valley 1A Conference lead.

Last Monday, the Bears carried a 1-0 lead into the bottom of the seventh inning, but South Stanly got two runners across the plate to earn a 2-1 walk-off victory, keeping their 48-game conference regular-season win streak alive. The Rowdy Rebel Bulls haven't lost a conference regular-season game since 2016.

A heartbreaking loss like



Staff photo by Simon Barbre

Chatham Central junior Gracie Gaines (8) celebrates with her head coach, Jerry Polston, at third base after a 2-RBI triple in the second inning of her team's 12-0 win over North Rowan on March 30.

that might have lasting effects on some teams. But not Chatham Central.

"We had a tough loss last night," said Jerry Polston,

Chatham Central's head softball coach. "The key tonight was to be able to come and

See **BEARS**, page B2

PANTHER CREEK 30, NORTHWOOD 10

Chargers' running game stalls in three-score loss to Panther Creek

BY VICTOR HENSLEY
News + Record Staff

PITTSBORO — Lined up in the backfield, Northwood's Hue Jacobs took the handoff and darted to his left, searching for even the smallest of gaps to slide through. One of the Chargers' most powerful runners, he was a perfect fit to run a play mere inches away from the first down marker.

But in a perfect embodiment of Northwood's offensive struggles, Jacobs had no shot at getting those last few inches as he was taken down in the backfield almost immediately by the Catamounts' defensive line, turning the ball over on downs.

One play later, Panther Creek's Amari Odom threw a beautiful pass down the right sideline to senior wide receiver Jonathan Streeter for a 43-yard touchdown.

The Chargers failed to get inches. The Catamounts had no problem getting yards.

Northwood (3-2) stuck to its guns in a lopsided 30-10 loss to the Panther Creek Catamounts (6-0) on Thursday, who created a few big plays to put the Chargers away in the second half, including Odom's 43-yard bomb that gave Panther Creek a 30-3 lead at the top of the fourth quarter.

The style of play that carried the Chargers to a smash-mouth win over Orange last week is the same style that put them at a late-game disadvantage on Thursday.

Running the ball works — until it doesn't.

Northwood has the feel of an old-school team from decades ago, one that's focused



Staff photo by Peyton Sickles

Northwood senior kicker Aidan Laros (33) attempts a field goal in his team's 30-10 loss to Panther Creek last Thursday. Laros was 1-for-3 on field goals for the night, making one from 35 yards and missing two from 53 and 54 yards, respectively.

on keeping the score low and rushing down their opponents' throats, wearing them down over the course of a 48-minute game.

Panther Creek is almost

the polar opposite, a team centered around throwing the ball deep and catching the defense sleeping. While it has an

See **FOOTBALL**, page B4

EAST CHAPEL HILL 2, NORTHWOOD 0

Chargers stumble late against East Chapel Hill in another close game



Staff photo by Peyton Sickles

Northwood senior forward Imogene Cook attempts to gain possession during the first half of her team's 2-0 loss to East Chapel Hill on March 30 in Pittsboro.

BY BRENNAN DOHERTY
News + Record Correspondent

PITTSBORO — On paper, Northwood women's soccer team's 2-0 loss to East Chapel Hill last Tuesday night was hardly a disappointing result for the Chargers.

East Chapel Hill — the leaders of the Big Eight Conference — entered with a perfect 5-0-0 record and a +28 goal differential (31 goals scored, three conceded), but needed an insurance goal in the 72nd minute to exhale before winning.

And yet, Northwood head coach Ascary Arias' postgame

speech to his team primarily focused on his concerns — namely the Chargers' Jekyll-and-Hyde nature from half to half — and unanswered questions, such as why they aren't communicating better on the field.

The loss dropped the Chargers to 1-3-1 on the season, a record that is perhaps a bit misleading if not illustrative of how fine the margins have been for Northwood.

Since winning by three goals in the season opener against Cedar Ridge, the Chargers have:

- played fairly well against — but lost to — conference

powers East Chapel Hill and Chapel Hill

- dropped a one-goal game to Orange, and
- saw a halftime lead turn into a 3-3 tie against Northern Durham.

The ingredients, Arias can tell, are there for Northwood to be successful. Having them present over the course of a game has eluded Northwood, though, which Tuesday's game was another reminder of.

Although they trailed 1-0 at the break after an unfortunate own goal, the Chargers could have easily entered halftime

See **CHARGERS**, page B2

CHARGERS

Continued from page B1
 tied or potentially in the lead. The second half provided far less ingenuity and confidence from Northwood, however. "I think we realized that they were better than us," Arias said. "(East Chapel Hill) is one of the top teams in the conference, so it got into some of the players' heads. You've got to understand that they're kids, they're high-schoolers. Sometimes it's hard for them to get past the mental aspect of the game."

After settling into the match, Northwood began to control possession midway through the first half. The Chargers earned three corner kicks from the 23rd minute to the 29th minute, a dominant stretch punctuated by a near-goal from senior captain Imogene Cook.

A powerful and speedy player who seemingly made up ground in five-yard increments atop the football numbering-filled field, Cook made a long run down the right flank before sending in a cross that drifted toward the

back post that clanked off the crossbar. Whether Cook meant for the effort to be a shot or a pass became irrelevant, as East Chapel Hill goalkeeper Nikki Blume was left stranded.

"That's my specialty," Cook said. "I'm really fast, so usually someone in the middle will try to find me wide, and I'll try to take it down as far as I can and look for a cross, if that's for Ava (Arias) or whoever's in the 18."

That strong stretch of play was quickly followed by the opening goal for East Chapel Hill in the 30th minute, however. The Wildcats took a long throw-in, a tactic meant to mimic the effects of a corner kick — and it worked. A miscommunication at the back led to Northwood goalkeeper Kennedy Oyan coming off of her line as the ball deflected off a defender in a crowded space and into the back of the net.

But on the whole, Arias was pleased with the first-half effort from his group. The second half, though, was a different story.

Marred by a lack of communication and tactical adjustments, Northwood failed to recreate the attacking prowess it

had at times early on and instead conceded more opportunities to East Chapel Hill. The visitors' second breakthrough finally came in the 72nd minute when junior midfielder Mia Bergin impressively finished from the left side of the box, putting her shot in the upper-right corner.

At this point, Arias is running out of ideas when it comes to getting his players to communicate better with one another.

"I think every team, no matter what sport, you have to have players who know each other really well and know each other well on and off the field," Arias said.

Cook understands Arias' frustration over the lack of communication and believes that it's something she and her teammates will have to become better at as the season progresses. She did point out that it's mostly a young group and the Chargers are still trying to gel following a season missed to the pandemic. Perhaps solving the communication problem could end up being what jumpstarts Northwood's campaign, one characterized so



Staff photo by Peyton Suckles

Northwood midfielder Sydney Cox takes a corner kick during the first half of her team's game against East Chapel Hill on March 30 in Pittsboro. The Chargers generated numerous first-half scoring chances but ultimately lost, 2-0.

far by flashes of good play but void of tangible results.

"I definitely think if you look at our record, you would assume we're not a good team," Cook said. "I mean, we've played great games. We've put up a lot of good fights. I think that maybe it's just early in the season, maybe it's from being a new team. We have a lot of talent on this team."

Chatham Central junior Lindsey Johnson (red and white) slides into second base in her team's 12-0 victory over North Rowan on March 30. She went 1-for-2 on the night.



Staff photo by Simon Barbre

BEARS

Continued from page B1

bounce back. We bounced back good, we swung the bat well and everybody stayed true to what they needed to."

The Bears shook off that loss and played their most dominant game of the season on senior night.

From their defense to their ability to make contact with the ball, Chatham Central controlled all facets of the game en route to a mercy-rule victory in the fifth inning.

After a mild first inning where the Bears gained an early 1-0 advantage, it was the second and third innings that were truly lopsided.

In those two innings alone, Chatham Central scored 11 runs on just four hits. That's because North Rowan's defense struggled to make routine plays, resulting in a combined seven errors.

After two quick outs to lead off the bottom of the second inning, the Bears managed to slice three straight hits, including a two-RBI triple by junior Gracie Gaines (2-for-4, 4 RBI), to take a 4-0 lead.

For the Cavaliers, it was all downhill from there.

An inning later, Chatham Central would capitalize off of a couple of walks, a hit-by-pitch with the bases loaded and multiple errors in the outfield, all leading to a six-run inning for the Bears. Just one of those runs counted as an RBI — a sacrifice fly by Gaines. The other five were scored off of errors or the lone HBP.

Pair the Cavaliers' disastrous defensive innings with the one-hit pitching performance by Chatham Central juniors Taylor Poe (W, 3.0 IP, 1 H, 0 ER, 5 Ks) and Ashley



Staff photo by Simon Barbre

Chatham Central senior Mary Grace Murchison is hugged by her teammate, Mary Gaines (14), during the senior night festivities before her team's 12-0 win over North Rowan on March 30. Murchison went 1-for-3 with an RBI in the victory.

Roberts (2.0 IP, 0 H, 0 ER, 1 K) and you have the perfect formula for a bounce-back blowout.

"I didn't pitch my starting pitcher tonight, so my other two pitchers came in, threw strikes and threw the ball well," Polston said. "They're pretty tough. They're a good group of girls and they work really, really hard."

The Bears totaled seven hits on the night despite scoring 12 runs, a testament to their ability to score in other ways. They reached base 19 times through various means, giving them a chance to showcase their textbook baserunning, taking advantage of North Rowan's lackadaisical defense to steal a whopping 10 bases and get into scoring position.

It was their most complete game of the season by far as the offense and defense worked in unison to put on a show in a comfortable victory that was essentially theirs from the first pitch.

However, the night meant a little more to

Polston than a simple 12-run victory.

Polston's daughter, Lindsay Polston, is one of three Bears seniors — along with infielders Mary Grace Murchison and Katie Sanders — that were celebrated during Tuesday's pre-game festivities.

"I've got three kids that have all played ball and Lindsay, she's the baby," Polston said. "She's had to fight through some health issues when she first got to high school. Just to see her battle and still play, and to come out and play at a high level, it's awesome."

Polston said that while it's bittersweet that she'll be graduating from Chatham Central this year, he's enjoyed watching her play with "heart and soul" on the field and growing into one of the team's senior leaders.

"It's great just being a dad, being able to watch her grow, but then being around all of these other girls too," Polston said. "The seniors, Mary Grace and Katie, I've been with them since they were

really small too, so just a great group of girls. Great family here. It's just an awesome thing."

After playing back-to-back games that featured a roller coaster of emotions — a heartbreaker and a blowout — Chatham Central won't play again until April 13 against the North Stanly Comets (1-1) because of CCS' spring break.

A win like this heading into the break might be exactly what the Bears' needed to fully recover from their loss on Monday.

"We've still got a few little things we need to work on, but we're getting better," Polston said. "Our motto is pretty simple: 'Let's get better every game.' We've got lofty goals. We want to do well. The top team in the conference is South Stanly right now. We're one game behind them, so we just want to keep doing our thing."

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

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CHATHAM COUNTY ATHLETICS RUNDOWN

This week's schedule and last week's results

BY VICTOR HENSLEY
News + Record Staff

With spring break hitting Chatham County Schools — including Jordan-Matthews, Chatham Central and Northwood — the athletic calendar this week is a little smaller than usual, though all three schools still have at least one game coming up. We've got women's soccer and softball, as well as men's tennis, football and golf happening all week long. This week also marks the end of the football regular season, with playoff bracketing set to take place on Saturday. Here are this week's schedules and last week's results.

THIS WEEK

Wednesday, April 7

Soccer: Woods Charter women vs. Cornerstone Charter Academy, 6 p.m.
Softball: Chatham Charter women vs. Carrboro, 4:30 p.m.
Tennis: Chatham Charter men vs. Raleigh Charter, 4 p.m.
Tennis: Northwood men vs. Cedar Ridge, 4:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 8

Football: Chatham Central at North Moore, 6:30 p.m.
Soccer: Northwood women at Cedar Ridge, 5 p.m.
Softball: Northwood women vs. East Chapel Hill, 5 p.m.

Friday, April 9

Football: Northwood vs. Northern Durham, 7 p.m.

Football: Jordan-Matthews at Providence Grove, 7 p.m.
Softball: Chatham Charter women at Carrboro, 4 p.m.
Softball: Northwood women at Cedar Ridge, 6:30 p.m.

LAST WEEK

Monday, March 29

Soccer: The Northwood women tied against the Northern Knights, 3-3, after both teams scored one goal each in the overtime period. Leading the Chargers were freshman Ava Arias (2 goals) and junior Sydney Arnott (1 goal).
Softball: The Chatham Central women lost their first game of the season against the South Stanly Rowdy Rebel Bulls, 2-1, after having a one-run lead going into the bottom of the 7th inning.
Softball: The Jordan-Matthews women lost to the Eastern Randolph Wildcats, 10-0 in five innings, to remain winless on the season. Wildcats' pitchers Savannah Beaver (4.0 IP, 9 Ks) and Addie Flinchum (1.0 IP, 3 Ks) combined for the five-inning no-hitter.
Tennis: The Chatham Central men swept the North Rowan Cavaliers, 9-0, to remain perfect on the season. Winning their singles matches were senior Jayden Gilliland (6-0, 6-0), junior Colby Williamson (6-0, 6-0), freshman Jacob Gilliland (6-1, 6-2), senior Caleb Webster (6-0, 6-1), senior Pacen Dunn (6-0, 6-1) and senior Sidney Cheek (DNF). The Bears also won three doubles matches.
Tennis: The Chatham Charter men got swept by the Southern Wake Academy Lions, 9-0, for their sixth straight

loss. The Knights are still winless on the season at 0-6.

Tuesday, March 30

Soccer: The Northwood women fell victim to another close loss, this time against the undefeated East Chapel Hill Wildcats, 2-0, dropping the Chargers' record to 1-3-1 on the season. Northwood continued to knock on the door in the first half and had a couple of great chances to score, but could never quite put it together before a struggle-filled second half put them away. See report in this edition.
Soccer: The Jordan-Matthews women lost big in their battle with the Wheatmore Warriors, 11-2, off of the backs of Wheatmore freshman Ellie Garrison and sophomore Summer Bowman, who each scored 5 goals.
Softball: The Chatham Central women earned a blowout, shutout victory over the North Rowan Cavaliers, 12-0, in just five innings, improving their record to 3-1 on the season. After a modest first inning, the Bears blew the game wide open in the second and third, scoring 11 runs combined between them as their offense was too powerful for the Cavaliers' error-filled defense. By the middle of the fifth, down by 12 runs, North Rowan still hadn't scored and the mercy rule went into effect, ending the contest. Leading the Bears was junior Gracie Gaines (2-for-4, 4 RBI, 2 extra-base hits) and junior pitcher Taylor Poe (3.0 IP, 1 H, 0 ER, 5 Ks). See report in this edition.
Softball: The Northwood women fell to the unbeaten Northern Knights, 13-2,

to drop to 2-2 on the season.

Wednesday, March 31

All sporting events were postponed due to inclement weather.

Thursday, April 1

Football: Jordan-Matthews lost to the Wheatmore Warriors at home, 42-6, dropping the Jets' record to 0-6 on the season.
Football: Northwood fell to the undefeated Panther Creek Catamounts in a lopsided game, 30-10, as the Chargers struggled to move the ball down the field throughout the night. A few big plays by the Catamounts — TD passes of 43, 55 and 82 yards — were the deciding factors. With the loss, Northwood falls to 3-2 on the year. See full report in this edition.
Tennis: The Chatham Central men narrowly defeated the Northwood Chargers, 5-4, thanks to singles victories by senior Jayden Gilliland (7-5, 4-6, 10-6), senior Preston Cox (6-1, 6-1) and senior Caleb Webster (7-6 (10-8), 6-3). The Bears also earned doubles victories by the teams of Gilliland & Cox (8-4) and junior Colby Williamson & freshman Jacob Gilliland (8-1). Northwood's singles wins came from sophomore Matteus Butler (6-2, 4-6, 10-7), freshman Felton Burleigh (1-6, 7-6 (7-2), 10-4) and freshman Walker Magrinat (6-1, 7-5). The Bears improved their record to 5-0 on the year, while the Chargers fell to 3-3.

Reporter Victor Hensley can be reached at vhensley@chathamnr.com or on Twitter at [@Frezeal33](https://twitter.com/Frezeal33).

ERA

Continued from page B1

how lucky I was to have Roy Williams in my corner.
As a kid growing up in small-town North Carolina, Roy was as close to a modern-day religious figure as you could get. Right there with the legendary Dean Smith. Coach K was, too, but on the opposite side of the spectrum.
All of this is why it hurt so much to hear him speak in his farewell press conference last Thursday, just a few short hours after the news had broken. "So yes, I'm getting old and my body's

breaking down, mentally and physically," Williams said as he choked back tears. "Yes, I want to see my children and grandchildren more. I want to give Wanda more time. ... But the biggest reason we're having this meeting is I just don't feel that I'm the right man any longer."
Many of us, including myself, figured that his declining health — most notably his increasing instances of vertigo on the sideline — would be what caused him to hang it up eventually, but as that last line showed, it's not that at all. He doesn't feel like he's the right man to lead Carolina's program any longer. It broke my heart.
As a head coach, Williams has 903 total wins (third all-time among Division

I coaches), a winning percentage of .774 (14th all-time), three ACC Tournament championships (tied for fifth all-time), nine Final Four appearances (fourth all-time), three NCAA national championships (tied for third all-time) and plenty of other accolades that have been added to his 2007 Hall of Fame resume. Since he arrived in Chapel Hill in 2003, no team has won more titles than Carolina.
He's inspired an entire generation (or two) of basketball fans.
He'll always be the man for the job.
While the last couple of years of his tenure haven't been the most positive, Williams will forever be regarded as one of the greatest basketball coaches

in the history of the NCAA.
He'll be remembered as the perfect successor to the late great Dean Smith, the man who celebrates with his team harder than any other, the coach who saved Carolina basketball and the legend whose name will forever be etched on the floor of the Dean E. Smith Center.
We all knew this day would come eventually. I just didn't know it would hurt this badly.
Thank you for everything, Roy.
We'll miss you, dadgummit.
Reporter Victor Hensley can be reached at vhensley@chathamnr.com or on Twitter at [@Frezeal33](https://twitter.com/Frezeal33).

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Long road ahead to state budget deal

Unspent funds may make partisan differences on the budget easier to navigate than during other recent years in N.C.

BY KIRK ROSS
Carolina Public Press

RALEIGH — As North Carolina’s Democratic governor and Republican legislators prepare their differing budgetary agendas, the sides are expressing optimism that they can achieve some consensus this year, despite acknowledgement of the disagreements that have repeatedly derailed the state budget process in recent years.

Gov. Roy Cooper released his spending plan, and legislators wrapped up preliminary hearings last week, moving North Carolina’s two-year budget cycle into the drafting stage.

North Carolina failed to adopt a biennial budget in 2019 after talks between the governor and legislative leaders broke down. Cooper vetoed the legislature’s plan shortly after its passage that June, mainly over the failure to include Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act.

Since then, a series of consensus mini-budgets, supplemental bills and an automatic budget backstop that maintains funding at prior-year levels have funded the state agencies.

At his \$27.3 billion budget announcement last week in Raleigh, Cooper was cautiously optimistic that this year’s debate wouldn’t dissolve into disagreement, saying the dialogue, which dwindled to nil in 2019, was much better this year.

The pandemic and the urgency to move forward on infrastructure and reopening schools has changed the dynamics, he said, even as he acknowledged that last year’s election left all the key players in place.

“Unlike the last budget cycle we had,

I’ve had numerous conversations with both Republican and Democratic leadership,” Cooper said.

“And one thing we agreed on is that first, the people of North Carolina elected us again. So, we’re back in the same situation that we were, and we owe it to them to do the best that we can to find a path forward.”

House Speaker Tim Moore said while Cooper’s plan had some shared priorities, the General Assembly would stick to its own budget strategies.

“I look forward to reaching consensus on a state budget that works for all North Carolinians to avoid further vetoes by the governor of valuable funds that taxpayers earned and communities deserve,” Moore said in a statement.

Money left unspent

One consequence of the prior years’ stalemate may have made reaching a deal this year a little easier.

The budget standoff boosted the state’s bottom line by delaying expansions, raises and major spending initiatives. That, along with a stronger-than-anticipated economic recovery and substantial federal relief has resulted in a large, although temporary, fund balance.

Going into this year, budget writers will start with roughly \$4 billion in unspent funds.

Cooper’s budget plan includes a pay raise for teachers averaging 10%, a roughly 7.5% raise and bonuses for all school personnel, and a 5% raise for state employees. State retirees would receive a 2% cost-of-living adjustment.

Cooper also wants a \$4.7 billion bond referendum to go to the voters in



Frank Taylor / Carolina Public Press

The North Carolina General Assembly meets in the State Legislative Building in Raleigh.

November. It includes funds for K-12, university and community college construction and repair; water and sewer infrastructure; and parks, museums and aquariums.

Other major initiatives in Cooper’s proposed budget include restoration of the earned income tax credit, a new child and dependent care tax credit, and a major boost for the state’s parks, land conservation and water quality trust funds.

Meanwhile on Jones Street

House and Senate leaders are moving ahead with their own initiatives after two months of joint appropriations hearings that set the stage for this year’s plan

Senate budget committees will start putting together their plans next month. The rollout for some items in the plan has already started.

Last Monday, Senate Leader Phil Berger, R-Rockingham, and Sens. Deanna Ballard, R-Watauga, and Michael

Lee, R-New Hanover, announced a major effort to retool the state’s literacy and elementary reading programs.

A group of senators from Eastern North Carolina also recently announced that they’ll seek additional help with flood mitigation for inland counties hit by repeated flooding. Cooper has similar initiatives in his plan.

No matter what happens with the budget, it won’t be the only major spending plan this year. Cooper said he will also announce a proposal for how to spend a wave of federal funds coming to North Carolina from the American Rescue Plan.

In addition to relief for individuals and businesses, state government is expected to receive roughly \$5.3 billion along with \$277 million for capital projects. County, tribal and municipal governments will get another \$3.3 billion.

Also on the horizon is North Carolina’s share of a federal infrastructure plan, which is expected to be the Biden administration’s next major legislative push.

School of the Arts for Boys Academy golf fundraiser a ‘huge success’

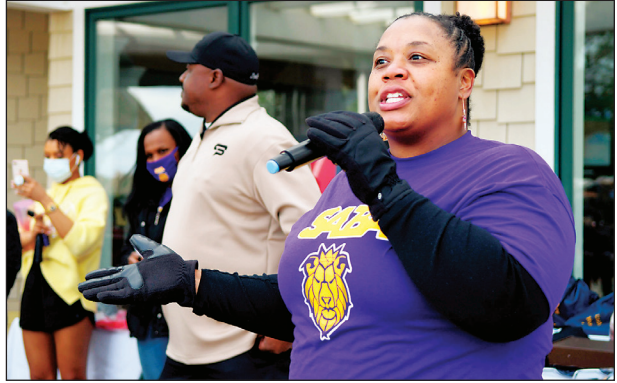
BY HANNAH MCCLELLAN
News + Record Staff

PITTSBORO — Schools of the Arts for Boys Academy hosted a golf tournament on March 20 to fundraise for its fall 2021 opening. With 70 golfers out of 72 registered participating — despite the cold temperatures — the tournament was “a huge success,” said SABA founder Valencia Toomer.

“Everyone had tons of fun and positive energy in the process,” Toomer said, adding that Chapel Ridge Golf Club said the SABA tournament was the largest it has hosted in more than three years.

SABA, which was officially approved to operate as a public charter school in February, focuses on using the arts and culturally responsive teaching to close the achievement gap and empower Black and brown boys.

Though the school will receive federal and district funds, it will also depend on grants



Staff photo by James Kiefer

School of the Arts for Boys Academy (SABA) founder Valencia Toomes addresses fundraiser attendees at the Golf Club at Chapel Ridge last Saturday. All of the money raised at the tournament went directly to SABA.

and donations to help provide creative learning and meet accessibility goals, such as providing free meals to all students during the school day. The Chapel Ridge golf tournament was its first official fundraising effort; there was a \$100 entry fee and all of the money earned went directly to SABA.

“The golfers were there to compete in a tournament,” Toomer said. “However, it was evi-

dent they had a greater mission; to support the vision of building SABA Kings. Their commitment was sincerely appreciated.”

Competitors traveled from far as Texas, Mississippi and Ohio to play, Toomer said, adding that she looks forward to working with Chapel Ridge as the fundraiser’s yearly host.

Cedric Price, SABA’s Development Officer, led much of the inaugural



Staff photo by James Kiefer

Theodore McCollum, front, drives a ball last Saturday during a SABA fundraiser.

tournament’s planning, including garnering support from the local community and surrounding colleges and universities, friends and family to provide raffle items — including a new Callaway Epic Driver, Cleveland RTX Zipcore 56 Wedge, Patrick Mahomes Super Bowl jersey and autographed Cowboys, Packers and Steelers helmets.

“The tournament was a great show of unity, di-

versity and comradery,” Toomer said.

The school’s enrollment began in January and will go through April, and uses a weighted lottery for admission — meaning students with various education disadvantages are given extra weight, or consideration, for acceptance. There are no fees to attend, and Toomer said the school anticipates about 60% of its population will qualify for free and reduced lunch. The lottery also gives extra weight to siblings of those accepted.

SABA is set to open in August with 116 boys in 3rd, 4th and 5th grade — with plans to add a grade level each subsequent year to eventually

reach the 12th grade. The school will host a live lottery for admission on May 3, with the time and location published on SABA’s website at least two weeks before the lottery.

The success evident at the tournament brings SABA one step closer to enrolling its first class of students, and then opening its doors next August.

“Overall, for our very first major fundraising effort,” Toomer said of the tournament, “we met our goals and are extremely pleased with the support and love that was shown to SABA.”

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

‘Overall, for our very first major fundraising effort we met our goals and are extremely pleased with the support and love that was shown to SABA.’

VALENCIA TOOMER, SABA founder



Staff photo by James Kiefer

Saundra Gardner fixes up a plate of food during the tournament lunch break.



This Community ROCKS!

Abundance NC is matching folks in need during this Covid-19 period with volunteers and locals that have time and resources. Here is a recap of what **YOU** have accomplished since the pandemic started:



To DONATE: For help or to help:

- Approximately 100 able + generous community members have bought & delivered groceries and paid utility bills directly for about 100 families in need, sometimes repeatedly. ~\$20,000
- Abundance NC has raised \$16,000 and paid \$11,000 worth of utility bills.
- You have avoided evictions several times by pooling in money to cover unpaid rent due to lack of work or reduced hours due to the pandemic.
- You have avoided disconnection of utilities and helped people get their utilities reinstated for about half a dozen families.
- We have connected approximately 50 families with other community resources available.
- We have been able to cover Abundance NC staff time to run this Neighbor2Neighbor program! !!

Thank YOU!

Much LOVE and BLESSINGS from the families YOU help! This is community resilience! !!

‘THE WOMEN GET THINGS DONE’

Chatham female leaders wrap up Women’s History Month by reflecting on issues impacting women

BY HANNAH MCCLELLAN
News + Record Staff



Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: A Woman’s Perspective on Chatham County

A roundtable discussion via Zoom in honor of Women’s History Month

Saturday, March 27
3:00-4:30 p.m.

email rita.vanduin@chathamlibraries.org for meeting info

The graphic for the Chatham County Women’s History panel event.

Humanity for its efforts to increase housing affordability. Siler City, she said, in the east, has a large immigrant community, and new and often unaffordable housing developments often leave this group behind in development efforts. On top of pre-existing inequity, Dubester said the pandemic only emphasized these issues.

For example, Mountaire — one of the largest employers in Chatham — did a “lousy job” protecting its workers from COVID-19, Dubester said, leading to a large outbreak in Siler City and for many Hispanic and immigrant residents. This is just one of many examples showing the need to address inequity “head on and early on,” she said.

Cindy Perry, former mayor of Pittsboro and co-chairperson of Second Bloom, spoke about Second Bloom’s efforts to support victims of domestic abuse and sexual assault. While these issues are not confined by gender or socioeconomic status, Perry said they impact low-income women at higher rates.

During the pandemic, Commissioner Howard emphasized that COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on women, who often bear the brunt of increased childcare or schooling responsibilities and caring for ill family members, in addition to often having less work flexibility to work remotely.

She also referenced the lack of consistent

broadband access — an issue plaguing rural areas of Chatham and other surrounding rural counties — and how this has been a challenge for women seeking to maintain connection, work remotely or help children learn.

“We have to treat this like a utility,” Howard said. “Until that happens we will continue to have pockets of Chatham that are suffering from lack of access.”

The county has invested in towers — primarily for Emergency Services, but which can co-host broadband internet services. “It’s beginning to chip away” at the broadband problem in Chatham, she said, though it won’t fix it for everyone, and won’t make it more affordable. Dubester said she’d like to see Chatham “lead the way” in subsidizing broadband access for residents.

“I agree,” Howard said. “We need to pivot to doing bold, brave things that make a difference for individuals.”

Howard also spoke about increasing “meaningful employment” for women — referencing her own experience in pivoting from a career as a lawyer to meet her lifestyle needs, particularly as a parent.

“If you make a difference for women in our community, you will

to name a few.

“Karen and I are serving because of their service,” Hales said. “They chartered the path.”

Howard heralded her fellow panelists — especially Board of Education member Del Turner — saying she was hearing their names and about their work before beginning to serve in her current role as her commissioner. Even before they had official titles or roles, Howard said they were dedicated leaders “making headway” in the community.

Dubester named several whom she characterized as “up and coming leaders” in Chatham — Policy Analyst Stephanie Watkins-Cruz, Community Partners Analyst Hilary Pollan and Management Analyst Courtney Cooper-Lewter, who led the county’s census efforts. She applauded the News + Record’s Victoria Johnson, lead reporter

for La Voz de Chatham project, for her coverage of the Chatham Latinx community. There has been more coverage of the Hispanic community during Johnson’s tenure, Dubester said, than in the previous 26 years of the Hispanic Liaison.

The panelists each praised several other women in Chatham, both those in official leadership and official positions, and those without credit or titles.

And while there’s still much work to be done — addressing broadband, affordable housing, healthcare, living wages and more — the panelists stressed that women were leading the way in many different fronts.

“The women get things done,” Hales said.

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

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CHATHAM LITERACY

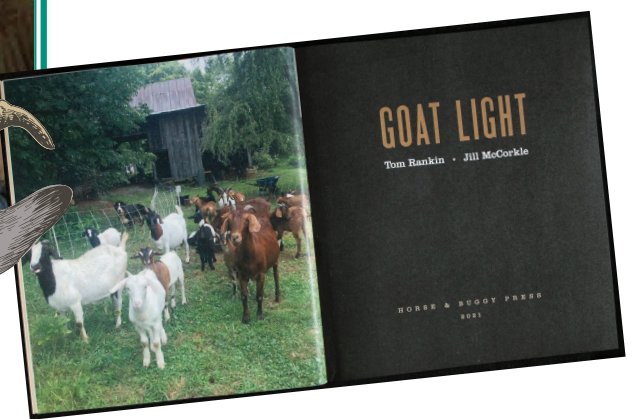
Please Join Us for Our Online Spring Author Event!

You won’t want to miss this live online presentation with local authors Jill McCorkle and Tom Rankin.

Tuesday, April 20 from 11:00am to 12:15pm Chatham Literacy presents a Virtual Spring Author Event with noted novelist and award-winning short story writer Jill McCorkle and Duke Professor, photographer, folklorist and author Tom Rankin.



This online event includes live discussions with the couple about their acclaimed book, *Goat Light*, showcasing vivid photography and reflective stories about their rural Piedmont life.



Ticket sales: \$100/person, beginning February 15 at www.chathamliteracy.org and 919-742-0578.

Each ticket purchased includes one raffle ticket for the door prize drawings done throughout the event.

- 1) Golf for four at the Golf Course at Chapel Ridge, carts included
- 2) Two-night stay at the Inn at Celebrity Dairy
- 3) One-night stay at the Inn at Celebrity Dairy
- 4) Autographed copies of *Goat Light*
- 5) \$50 gift card to the Sycamore at Chatham Mills

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CHATHAM CHAT | CHATHAM LITERACY AUTHOR EVENT

Folklorist Rankin, author McCorkle to discuss 'Goat Light'

Duke University professor, photographer, folklorist and author Tom Rankin and his wife, novelist and award-winning short-story writer Jill McCorkle, will be featured in Chatham Literacy's "Virtual Spring Author Event" on April 20.

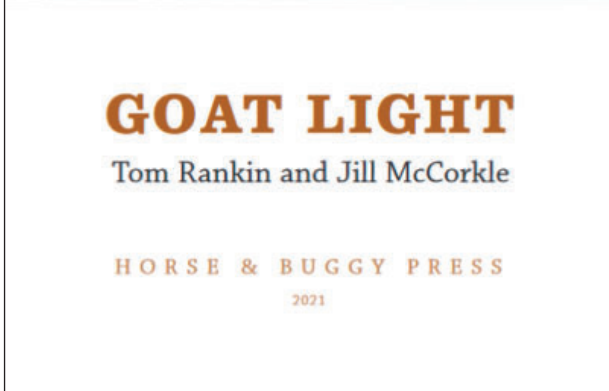
This online event includes live discussions with the couple about their acclaimed book, "Goat Light," which showcases vivid photography and reflective stories about their rural Piedmont lifestyle.

News + Record Publisher Bill Horner III interviewed the couple for a video posted on the Facebook pages of the newspaper and Chatham Literacy; that video can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQmsvKrQbnw>. A shortened version of the interview, which has been edited for clarity and brevity, appears below.

Registration for the fundraiser is \$100 and includes one door prize raffle ticket. The virtual event will be held on the Zoom videoconferencing platform from 11 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. Register at www.chathamliteracy.org or by calling 919-742-0578.

Goat Light, published by Horse & Buggy Press in Durham, is a folded-gathered-and-bound limited edition book. For more information, go to <https://www.horseandbuggypress.com/goat-light>.

Tom Rankin currently directs the MFA in Experimental and Documentary Art and is Professor of the Practice of Art at Duke University. His



writing has been published widely in magazines, journals and books, among them: Sacred Space: Photographs from the Mississippi Delta and Local Heroes Changing America: Indivisible. His award-winning photographs are in many private and museum collections — and appeared in such stellar exhibits as the Nasher's "Southern Accent: Seeking the South in Contemporary Art."

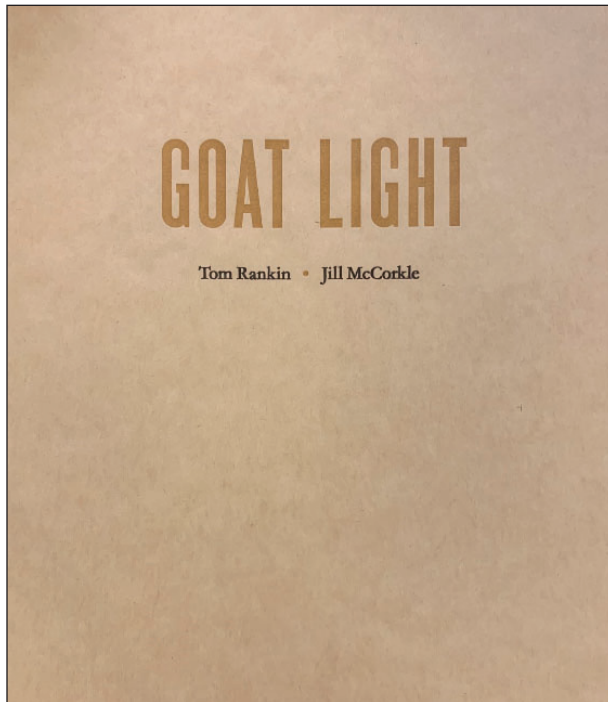
Jill McCorkle has published four short story collections and novels, all as critically acclaimed as "vibrant and engaging" — including the 2020 released Hieroglyphics. A New York Times reviewer, in writing about Hieroglyphics, said: "A good novel can

perform the same perception-bending trick as a lockdown: slowing time, throwing light on shadowed corners, reminding us of the interdependencies among us that we once took for granted."

The couple lives in Orange County.

You're both creators. What drives you in the writing and other creative work that you do?

JILL: I think the creative process is just so much a part of every ordinary day, both as a reader and as a writer, as someone observing, taking notes. And so even if I don't have time to sit down and formally write for x-number of hours, that creative process really is what guides



Goat Light is published in two limited editions — an edition of 750 sewn copies, offset printed in full color on 120-pound, uncoated text-weight, bright-white paper, and with covers printed on a hand-fed, hand-cranked letterpress. The heavyweight uncoated cover stock is a mottled color somewhere between that of burlap and a hay bale. A deluxe, limited edition of 26 copies, lettered A-Z, and signed by both Tom and Jill, includes an 8-by-10 inch selenium-toned, gelatin-silver contact print of an image not found in the book.

each and every day, and the notes that mark and distinguish that day from another.

TOM: I think I've always been fascinated by the creative process. I've been fascinated by the fact that it's universal. When I was a kid, I'd go in somebody's backyard, and some old man would be putting a new hoe handle on his hoe, and I would watch him, and watch him create this piece that would fit in this hoe, and attach it. And I feel like that I'm still doing the same thing. I'm wandering around the world looking for things that really engage me and really kind of enliven the day. And it's about listening. I mean, photography is about listening and looking. And yet, I also want to make work that will last — like the guy who makes the hoe handle, you know ... he wants it to last. That's really what it's about for me.

Let's talk about "Goat Light." This is such a unique project. And it's really interesting to me that this is your first project that you've collaborated on together. Is that correct?

TOM: Other than just living together? (Laughs.)

JILL: Well, I'm the sidekick on this one, because really, the focus of the book is so much on Tom's photography, and the documentation of the daily life of tending goats and animals, and various animals coming and going in life. And so much of what I have written for the book is just in conversation with the photographs that he's taken.

TOM: We enjoy a lot of the same things. And Jill likes nothing better than animals. We've always had altogether way too many animals. You know, if two is good then three must be better, and so on and so forth. And so I think some of the collaboration just grows naturally out of out of that.

And then I did find that so much really interesting, compelling art comes from close to home. And so I started very con-

sciously thinking, Well, how beautiful is it at 6:30 in the morning when I'm feeding goats? I should start photographing them. Why not? And one thing led to another ... and words and pictures have a long history together. And so it seemed sort of a natural, organic evolution to think, well, maybe we should do a book.

So why goats? Because you're not farmers, right? You're creative people and educators...

TOM: With me living out on land, I wanted animals, and I wanted fairly self-sufficient animals because, as you say, we've got regular jobs. And goats ... the joke is goats are the last of the self-sufficient breed in a way, and yet they're always getting out and they have challenges. So that's really 'why goats.' Cows are too big for one person. I didn't want anything that would require me hiring some help. You can pick up a goat by yourself. So then, I think, and this is in all seriousness ... there's a way in which goats teach you what you can and can't control. It became and it is a kind of really nice balance to me, the way most of us live day to day. It became almost like a therapeutic occupation on the side.

I joke that, you know, you go to a faculty meeting at any university, and nothing ever is resolved. You go out and check on your goats, and it's resolved. In all seriousness, I think that's really what the goats have given me. I don't know what I've given them, but that's what they've given me. And then I love to watch them ...

JILL: I'm more a dog person. But you know, I love the goats. And there's nothing cuter than a pasture full of kids.

"Goat Light" is a unique book in many respects, but also physically unique. Why did you choose this specific type of physicality for the book?

TOM: I really like photographs as objects. I like

books as objects. Here we are in a digital age, and there's great advantages to that, but I really do like the material of the photograph. And so the idea of making a book that we don't have to lose money on, but that's what we really want ... so that's how it came about. It has a letterpress cover, and the cover is handmade and has a lot of handwork involved in it. ... The intent was never to make a kind of coffee table, "home on the farm" book, but more of an artist's book.

Jill, for you, as a novelist, and someone who's had more traditional books published, was the writing experience for this book different than other types of writing you've done?

JILL: I focused on the personalities of various dogs and goats. And that was my way. I think my work as a fiction writer is a lot about projection, and exaggeration at times, and so it seemed an easy step to project a lot of emotion into the lives of the goats, whether it's really there or not. I think that's what I was always observing and seeing.

TOM: One of the things you learn, and Jill writes about, it is the mortality, the reality of mortality, that we're always facing. Animals have a relatively short life expectancy. If it can go wrong, if you farm, it will. And so Jill does write about that reality, about the loss, the wonder of having things and then the loss of those things. And, you know, we all know that, but we often don't get to, we don't reflect on it enough, maybe?

I'd like to hear from you about the role that literacy plays in your lives and why you think it's important, because without literacy, there wouldn't be consumers of the work that you do or we do. So share some thoughts about that as we wrap up...

JILL: I think that what literacy brings to an individual's life is, in itself, another life. And it's that other place I'm always so thrilled to go at the end of the day. Because I think we replenish ourselves, and our minds and imagination, through reading, and whatever we're reading, it's a little mini vacation. This year, more than ever, I see those books as tickets — tickets!

And why should people attend this event, on April 20? What will they get from you?

TOM: Well, I think we'll try to be as entertaining as possible. If you'll come on April 20, we'll show some images and we'll talk about what we do. But the bigger reason to come is obviously to support Chatham Literacy and to support the whole idea of literacy — not only for yourself, but for all the people who may not be there on April 20. And to support where we are — our book is about the uber-local, about the back yard. There's nothing more essential than to support the "local," whatever that word means to you.

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Chatham Health Alliance expands outreach directly to Spanish-speaking neighborhoods

BY VICTORIA JOHNSON
News + Record Staff

The Chatham Health Alliance has been connecting hundreds of Chatham residents to resources since the COVID-19 pandemic's early stages. In mid-March, however, the Alliance took its outreach to a whole new level.

On March 16, members brought their Community Resource Hub into a Spanish-speaking neighborhood for the first time — and it all began with a new partnership and an enduring drive to help.

“The high was about 38 degrees, and it was raining, but we had seven volunteers who were so happy to be there,” said the Alliance’s vice chairperson, Sara Martin. She’s also the Prevention Programming Specialist for Insight Human Services, one of the Alliance’s member agencies.

Last spring, the Chatham Health Alliance — a group of local agencies and community members working together to improve Chatham’s health outcomes — initiated several projects in response to COVID-19 to connect people and communities with crucial resources. One was the Chatham Community Resource Hub, a mobile effort among various partner agencies to provide free resources to those in need across the county.

“When we were talking through what sort of things we thought the community needed, we were hearing that community agencies were having a hard time getting their resources out safely,” said Julie Wilkerson, the Alliance’s coordinator. “... So that’s where we came up with the idea to drive-thru events and to make these hubs mobile. We’re actually going out into the community where the community lives.”

According to the Alliance’s website, the Hub has handed out more than 1,230 masks and provided resources for 225 families so far. Alliance partners have also given out free medical lock boxes, medication disposal kits and car seats.

They began last year by partnering with CORA — the Chatham Outreach Alliance — for monthly mobile markets in Siler City, where they served



Submitted photo

The Chatham Health Alliance’s Julie Wilkerson (left), the Alliance’s vice chair Sara Martin as well as the Chatham health department’s Alicia Doran and Ingrid Castro-Salinas (right) scheduled 55 people in Country Living Estates for vaccination appointments at the St. Julia clinic.

primarily Spanish-speaking residents. Since then, they’ve expanded to work with other agencies and various churches, including Cedar Grove UMC in Pittsboro.

“Then recently, when the health department was able to start giving out vaccines, we saw a need to do outreach to the community to get more of our community members equitably signed up for vaccine appointments,” Wilkerson said. “Those have been really amazing events that have actually on occasion turned into vaccine clinics.”

On March 16, the Alliance brought that outreach directly to Country Living Estates, a predominantly Spanish-speaking neighborhood in Siler City — but that decision wasn’t based on weeks’ worth of planning, Martin told the News + Record. Instead, it was all rather “last-minute.”

Earlier in March, Martin had been in a meeting with Josh Maple, a representative for the Inter-Faith Food Shuttle, while he had been talking about the services the Shuttle provides. He also mentioned the Shuttle was looking to make new partnerships, which prompted Martin to reach out and see if the Resource Hub could partner with the Food Shuttle.

“He responded to me, and basically, he told me he was doing an event and he had time in Siler City,” she said. “He had two hours, and did I know of a place they could go? I was like, ‘Well, not right now, but I’ll figure it out.’”

She ultimately figured

it out a few days later in a lunch meeting with Communities In Schools’ Maria Soto and Travis Patterson.

“I happened to mention it to them, and as soon as we were done with lunch, Maria was like, ‘Come on,’ and she drove me to Country Living Estates, through that neighborhood,” Martin said. “She introduced me to the property manager, and he said, ‘Absolutely! Bring the food truck, bring the Resource Hub here.’”

And just days later, that’s what they did.

In two hours, the Inter-Faith Food Shuttle handed out 127 hot meals of chicken and vegetable quesadillas, rice and beans — all free — while the Hub and the Chatham health department worked together to sign up residents for vaccination appointments. By the end of the event, Martin said they’d signed up enough people “to impress the health department.”

“I think it was one of my favorite experiences, and it was a great group of people,” Martin said, smiling. “We just really worked well together, figured out what everyone was going to do, and then we got it done.”

CIS’ Maria Soto volunteered at the March 16 event as well. She said she, too, was happy to partner with the Resource Hub and to continue to help bridge

information and resource gaps within minority communities.

“It is very rewarding to be able to get information out to families and for them to be so engaged,” she said, adding, “It is so important for us to build trust and to be able to bring information and services to those communities where they are at.”

Martin added that she was also impressed by how quickly the health department provided bilingual staff members.

“It was less than two weeks out, and I told the health department, ‘I’m sorry, I know this is last minute, but this is not going to work without Spanish speakers,’” she said, “and it was four hours later, and they came back and said, ‘We got four for you.’”

The Alliance returned to Country Living just a week later on March 24 — this time with the Hispanic Liaison — to schedule vaccine appointments for the mass vaccination clinic the health department held at St. Julia Catholic Church back on March 27. That day, Wilkerson said they scheduled 55 appointments — and all for Hispanic residents.

“Over the last two weeks through the outreach events we’ve done, including these hubs, they’ve had 400 people say they found out about getting signed up for the vaccine through those outreach events,” Wilk-



Chatham News + Record



Submitted photo

The Chatham Health Alliance, Communities In Schools, Inter-Faith Food Shuttle and the Chatham health department went out into Country Living Estates on March 16 to help residents schedule vaccine appointments and hand out free meals.

erson said. “We know that 30 people who got appointments specifically said the reason you know to call me is because of the Inter-Faith Food Shuttle Resource Hub event, but that’s just people who offered up that information, so it was probably more.”

According to Martin, the Alliance plans to continue these events and bring them to different Spanish-speaking neighborhoods across Chatham County in partnership with CIS, the health department and the Food Shuttle.

“The Food Shuttle was really pleased with how many people turned out and they were the ones that said, ‘Let’s keep doing more of this,’ and gave me some more dates,” she said. “So that’s turning into a real-

ly fruitful partnership, I think.”

The next Resource Hub/Food Shuttle event will be from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on April 13 at Love’s Creek in Siler City, Martin said. They’ll once again be handing out free hot meals, educating residents about the COVID-19 vaccine and perhaps scheduling people for appointments.

“We would love to partner with the Food Shuttle for those events as much as we can because we know that food brings people out and we can give them the resources we have,” added Wilkerson. “... We’ve been all around the county, and we’re looking to continue to locate everywhere we can.”

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

NEWS BRIEFS

Duke Energy and county officials to test sirens around Harris Nuclear Plant

NEW HILL — The outdoor warning sirens around Harris Nuclear Plant will be tested between 10 and 11 a.m. on Wednesday, April 14.

The 83 sirens within 10 miles of the Harris Nuclear Plant will sound for five to 30 seconds. To ensure they are functioning properly, it may be necessary to test some sirens more than once. Testing is performed in cooperation with emergency officials in Chatham, Harnett, Lee and Wake counties, who are responsible for sounding the sirens.

This information is reflected in the 2021 Harris Nuclear Emergency Preparedness booklets sent to residents living within the 10-mile Harris Nuclear Plant emergency planning zone.

Because this is a test, local broadcasting stations will not interrupt regular programming to broadcast Emergency Alert System (EAS) messages. If there were

ever a real emergency at the plant requiring the sirens to be sounded, local radio and television stations would broadcast information and instructions to the public.

For more information about the outdoor warning sirens, residents can refer to information available at duke-energy.com/NuclearEP.

Elections Board combats misinformation with new webpage

RALEIGH — Continuing its efforts against mis- and disinformation, the State Board of Elections has launched a special webpage to combat myths and falsehoods that spread quickly about elections.

The state board will use the webpage to debunk conspiracy theories and false claims about elections, provide facts, and explain how you can help slow the spread of mis- and disinformation.

The state board’s initiative against misinformation builds off the voter confidence campaign launched in late 2019. By combatting false claims, the board continues to ensure that #YourVo-

teCountsNC.

“Election officials across the United States agree that misinformation is a top threat to our elections today. It is harmful to the elections process, eroding public trust in the hard work election officials do every day,” said Karen Brinson Bell, executive director of the state board. “The webpage is another way we can provide voters the truth about elections.”

Along with the new webpage, the state board office is offering a new way for the public to report suspected mis- and disinformation. If you see something about elections that’s confusing or does not seem accurate, please email the state board at misinformation@ncsbe.gov. Board staff will research the claims or posts and respond accordingly.

The state board already responds to falsehoods about elections through press releases and social media. Each Monday, the board publishes a Mythbuster Monday post on Twitter that reveals the truth about one tidbit of election misinformation.

— CN+R staff reports

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The North Carolina Utilities Commission designated CenturyLink as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier within its service area for universal service purposes. CenturyLink’s basic local service rates for residential voice lines are \$25.50-\$27.50 per month and business services are \$37.00-\$40.00 per month. Specific rates will be provided upon request.

CenturyLink participates in a government benefit program (Lifeline) to make residential telephone or qualifying broadband service more affordable to eligible low-income individuals and families. Eligible customers are those that meet eligibility standards as defined by the FCC and state commissions. Residents who live on federally recognized Tribal Lands may qualify for additional Tribal benefits if they participate in certain federal eligibility programs. The Lifeline discount is available for only one telephone or qualifying broadband service per household, and can be on either wireline or wireless service. Broadband speeds must be 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload or faster to qualify.

A household is defined for the purposes of the Lifeline program as any individual or group of individuals who live together at the same address and share income and expenses. Lifeline service is not transferable, and only eligible consumers may enroll in the program. Consumers who willfully make false statements in order to obtain a Lifeline discount can be punished by fine or imprisonment and can be barred from the program.

If you live in a CenturyLink service area, please call 1-800-201-4099 or visit centurylink.com/lifeline with questions or to request an application for the Lifeline program.

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Superb bowls

Superb Bowls

Farro or Brown Rice 4 1/2 cups water 1/2 teaspoon pepper
 1 1/2 cup farro or brown rice 2 tablespoons butter
 1 teaspoon salt & 1/2

Add all ingredients into a heavy pot with a lid. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Cover and lower heat to medium-low. Cook until the water is cooked off and farro is chewy/tender (38-43 minutes).

Butt

2 pounds pork butt cut into 1-inch chunks 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
 1 teaspoon dry thyme 4 crushed juniper berries 2 onions, roughly cut
 1/2 teaspoon dried rosemary 1/2 teaspoon ground caraway seed Zest of 1 orange
 15 gratings fresh nutmeg 1 1/2 teaspoons salt

Put all the ingredients into a large bowl and toss to coat. Cut out a very large piece of foil and cover with a piece of parchment the same size. Place on the coated pork and onions. Cover with parchment and then foil pieces. Close and tightly seal all around. Place on a rimmed baking sheet and cook at 275° for 5 hours or until falling apart tender.

Remove from oven, slit to release steam and cool a bit.

German Scented Chicken Thighs

2 pounds boneless skinless chicken thighs 1/4 teaspoon dried rosemary 1/4 teaspoon ground caraway seed
 2 tablespoons butter 10 gratings fresh Salt
 1/2 teaspoon dry thyme 3 crushed juniper berries Freshly ground black pepper
 1/2 teaspoon dried rosemary 1/2 teaspoon ground caraway seed Zest of 1/2 orange

Stir together all ingredients into a pre-heated large heavy skillet. Cook on medium until the meat is cooked through and internal temp is 165°.

*You can also do this with cubes of tofu in case of vegetarianism.

Melted Red Cabbage

1 small or 1/2 a large head of red cabbage, cored and sliced extremely thin 1/2 teaspoon caraway seed 1 tablespoon water
 3 tablespoons butter 10 gratings of nutmeg Salt and pepper
 1 teaspoon apple cider 1 teaspoon sugar

Put cabbage, butter, caraway, nutmeg, a big pinch of salt and pepper along with water into a skillet. Cover and cook on medium until the cabbage is wilted and has released its liquid (8-ish minutes).

Remove lid and let cook until skillet is mostly dry. Then add sugar and vinegar. Cook, stirring often until there is the smallest bit of browning around the edges. Taste for seasoning and re-season if necessary.

Melted Kale

1 large bunch of kale, stemmed and cut into ribbons 2 tablespoons butter 1 teaspoon sugar
 1 yellow onion, chopped 2 tablespoons water Juice of 1 lemon
 15 gratings nutmeg Salt and pepper

Into a large skillet add kale, onion, butter, water, nutmeg, sugar, and a big pinch of salt & pepper. Cover and cook for 8 minutes. Uncover and cook until the onion begins to brown. Remove from heat, add lemon juice. Taste for seasoning and adjust if needed.

Sugar Snaps

1 pound of sugar snap peas with strings removed Salt and pepper
 2 tablespoons butter 1 tablespoon of water

Place everything into a skillet and cook on medium-high until the liquid has cooked out and veg are tender (6-8 minutes).

Asparagus

1 pound very thick (as thick as your thumb) asparagus with about 1 inch cut off bottom and discarded then cut into 1 1/2 inch pieces. Salt and pepper
 1 tablespoon butter 1 tablespoon of water

Put everything into skillet and cook, uncovered for about 4 minutes or until the water's gone and the veg just begins to brown.

Assemble bowls: place about 3/4 cup of grain into bottom of bowl. On top arrange meat, leafy veg, and asparagus or snap peas. Sprinkle on chopped fresh chives or parsley if desired.

Football bowl games: Orange Bowl, Sugar



DEBBIE MATTHEWS

The Curious Cook

bowl, cereal bowl, crystal bowl, mixing bowl.

Nope. Not even that oh-so-refined lawn game played by gentle folk dressed in white or the unfortunate haircut made by placing one of the aforementioned bowls on the unlucky victim's head.

I'm talking about the current dish du jour:

bowls.

On the surface it's one more tiresome culinary trend which began on social media and then spread to hipster restaurant. Influencers artfully placed colorful food into bowls and put them on the "Insta." Buzz ensued, and variations sprung up.

For breakfast there are the acai and smoothie bowls. Although why anyone would want to eat a bowl of smoothie is curious. For the athletic types there is the protein bowl. Yoga fanciers have Buddha bowls and carb lovers have grain bowls.

Not to be left out, I made what would be a plate of food and draped it into a bowl in an aesthetically pleasing way. (Spoiler alert: it doesn't

taste any different than it would on that plate). I've given you that recipe along with a few variations.

These social media mavens think that they invented "the bowl." But folks have been eating food in bowls forever.

Stew, spaghetti and meatballs, chili, and the beloved macaroni and cheese. While they may not be as pretty, they've always been prized for ease of use, tastiness, and portability. There is nothing better than sitting on the couch, in your pajamas and eating supper (or breakfast) in front of the TV.

Bowls are pure, 100% comfort dining.

Thanks for your time. Contact me at dm@bullcity.mom.

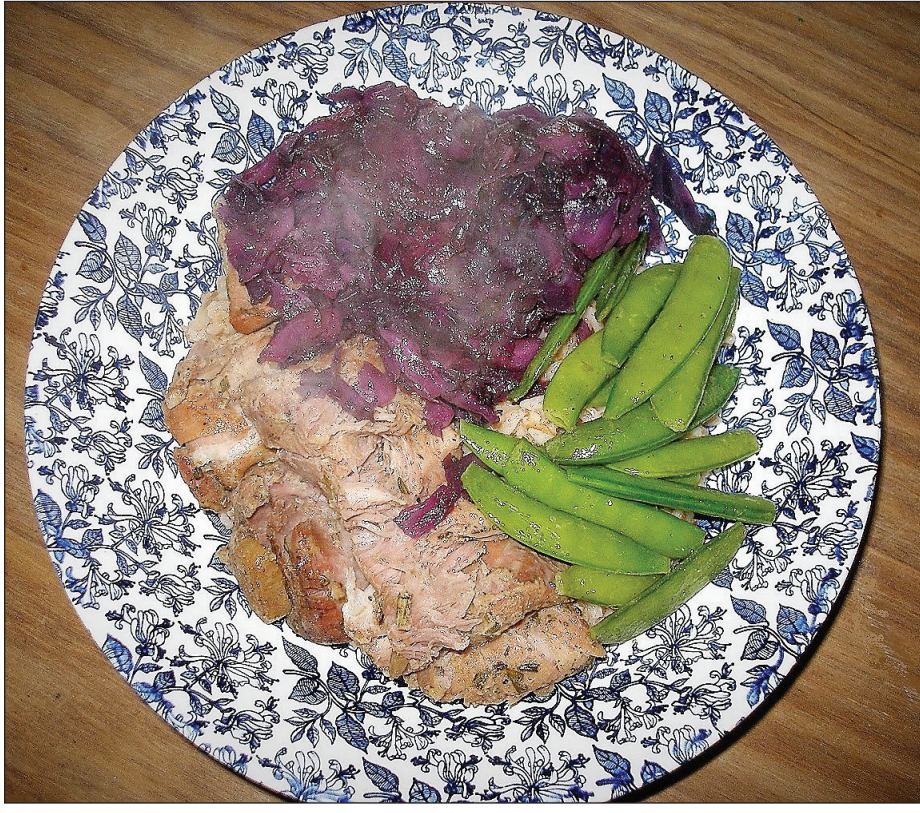


Photo courtesy of Debbie Matthews

A prepared 'farro butt bowl.'

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NEWS BRIEFS

Soil and Water Conservation District announces new no-till drill available for rent

PITTSBORO — Spring planting season is here, and the Chatham Soil and Water Conservation District is excited to announce that its new no-till drill is available for rent. The new Haybuster 77C is available for rent by Chatham County residents at a cost of \$10 per acre with a minimum \$75 charge. There are many benefits to using the no-till drill including:

- reduces soil erosion by establishing living ground cover
- improves germination of seed compared to broadcasting
- reduces labor required per acre
- decreases soil disturbance, which means healthier soil and has additional benefits:

- increases water infiltration
 - decreases soil moisture evaporation
 - conserves and improves organic matter
 - improves soil structure
 - promotes biological activity
 - reduces nutrient losses
- What to know before renting:
- 35 horsepower minimum is needed to operate the drill.
 - Rear hydraulic hook-up is needed on the tractor.
 - The drill is small enough (7.6 feet wide) to access smaller acreage but can still handle the big jobs.
 - The drill can be used to seed cool and warm season grasses, legumes, small grains, wildflowers, soybeans and more.
- The Chatham Soil and Water Conservation District's older TruAx no-till drill is still available for rent as well. Those who are interested may reach out to the Chatham Soil and

Water Conservation District Office to schedule a rental.

Chatham Community Library to host N.C. Poet Laureate Jaki Shelton Green

PITTSBORO — Chatham Community Library will commemorate National Poetry Month in April with a presentation by NC Poet Laureate, Jaki Shelton Green. The virtual event entitled "An Evening with the North Carolina Poet Laureate," will take place at 6 p.m. on Saturday, April 24. Jaki Shelton Green is the first African American and third woman to be appointed as the North Carolina Poet Laureate. She is a 2019 Academy of American Poets Laureate Fellow, 2014 N.C. Literary Hall

of Fame Inductee, 2009 N.C. Piedmont Laureate appointee, and 2003 recipient of the North Carolina Award for Literature. Green, a professor of Documentary Poetry at Duke University Center for Documentary Studies, has been named the 2021 Frank B. Hanes Writer in Residence at UNC Chapel Hill. Her publications include *Dead on Arrival*, *Masks*, *Dead on Arrival and New Poems*, *Conjure Blues*, singing a tree into dance, breath of the song, *Feeding the Light*, and *i want to undie you*. On Juneteenth 2020, she released her first LP, poetry album, *The River Speaks of Thirst*. Owner of SistaWRITE, Green provides retreats for women writers in Sedona, Arizona; Martha's Vineyard; Ocracoke; Northern Morocco; and Tullamore, Ireland. National Poetry Month was

introduced in 1996 and was inspired by the success of Black History Month, held each February, and Women's History Month, held in March. In 1995, the Academy of American Poets convened a group of publishers, booksellers, librarians, literary organizations, poets, and teachers to discuss the need and usefulness of a similar month-long holiday to celebrate poetry. To register for this event and to receive virtual meeting instructions, individuals may contact Chatham Community Library Branch Manager Rita Van Duinen at rita.vanduin-en@chathamlibraries.org. This event is free and open to the public and made possible with the generous support of the Friends of the Chatham Community Library.

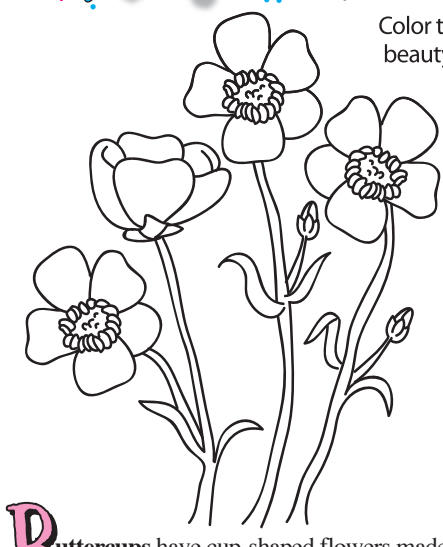
— CN+R staff reports

Kid Scoop THE AWARD-WINNING PRINT & ONLINE FAMILY FEATURE

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April showers bring... **WILDFLOWERS**



Color these drawings and enjoy the beauty of some of North America's wildflowers!

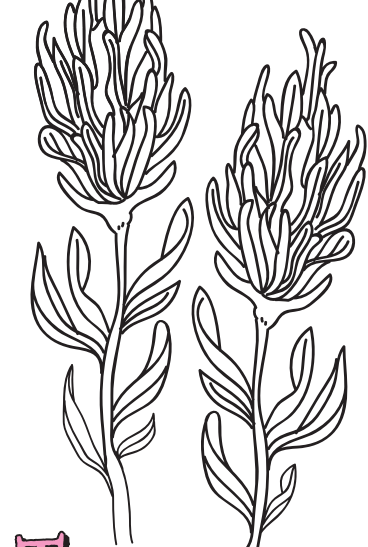
Buttercups have cup-shaped flowers made up of five petals. People used to believe that the rich yellow color of butter originated from a high content of buttercups in the cows' diet. This belief is false. Cows avoid buttercups because they are poisonous!

FLOWER: **YELLOW**
STEM AND LEAVES: **GREEN**



Bluebonnets are the Texas state flower. Some grow to be three feet high! The bluebonnet comes from the legume (bean) family.

FLOWER: **PURPLE/DARK BLUE**
STEM AND LEAVES: **GRAY-GREEN**



The Indian Paint Brush is Wyoming's state flower. It has been used to make dyes. The main pollinators of this wildflower are hummingbirds.

FLOWER: **RED-ORANGE**
STEM AND LEAVES: **GREEN**

Look closely: Can you find the two identical bouquets of flowers?



Poppies are the California state flower. They can be found blooming throughout the state in spring.

FLOWER: **ORANGE**
STEM AND LEAVES: **GREEN**

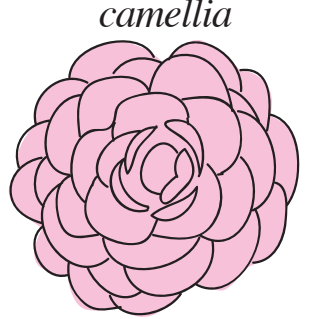
Extra! Extra! Circle It!

On one page of the newspaper, find and circle the letters that spell each of the flowers on this page. Connect the circled letters to spell each word.

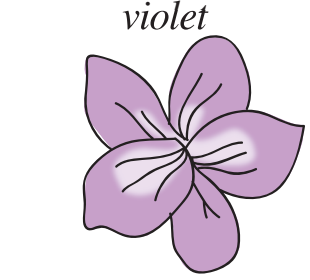
Standards Link: Language Arts: Follow simple written directions.

Kid Scoop Together: State Flower Scramble

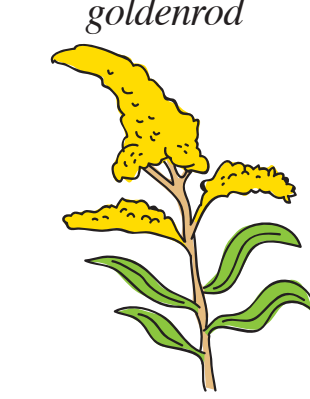
Which flower belongs to which state? Unscramble the letters underneath each flower to find out!



camellia
ABAALAM



violet
NOSILILI



goldenrod
EKBRANAS



sunflower
SASANK

Kid Scoop Puzzler

How many flowers do you see here?

Standards Link: Reading Comprehension: Follow simple written directions.

Double Double Word Search

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

BLUEBONNET
BUTTERCUP
LEGUME
INDIAN
FAMILY
TEXAS
BLOOM
BRUSH
SEEDS
AVOID
PODS
DYES
STEM
COWS
RICH

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

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

Write On!

Spring Poems

Write a poem that describes spring in your community.

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POWELL SPRINGS APTS. Evergreen Construction introduces its newest independent living community for adults 55 years or older, 1 and 2 bedroom applications now being accepted. Office hours: Mon, Tues & Thurs, 8:30 - 4:30. Call 919-533-6319 for more information, TDD # 1-800-735-2962, Equal housing opportunity, Handicapped accessible, A2,tfnc

ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS now for one bedroom apartments, adults 55 years or older. Water included, appliances furnished, on-site laundry, elevator, keyless entry. Section 8 accepted. \$486/mo., no security deposit. Application fee \$25 per adult. Call Braxton Manor, 919-663-1877. Handicap accessible. Equal Housing Opportunity. A2,tfnc

YARD SALE

CARBONTON COMMUNITY CENTER - April 9, 7a.m. to 6p.m.; April 10, 7a.m. to 12p.m.; Clothing, household items, couches, chairs, beds, Home-made Baked Goods - (Saturday Clearance Sale), A8,1tp

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TOWN OF PITTSBORO, SENIOR PLANNER
HIRING SALARY: \$55,000 - \$65,000 Annually; OPENING DATE: March 11, 2021; CLOSING DATE: Open Until Filled; POSITION TYPE: Full-Time (Monday - Friday, 8:30am - 5:00pm); DEPARTMENT: Planning SUMMARY: The Senior

Planner performs complex, professional level work in the field of community planning, zoning, and development services. - **ESSENTIAL JOB FUNCTIONS:** Coordinates with and provides technical assistance to developers, engineers, architects, contractors, citizens and elected and appointed officials to interpret Town plans and land use regulations. Prepares and presents staff reports, analyses, and recommendations for a variety of complex zoning land use approvals including rezonings, special use permits, subdivisions, variances, and appeals. Reviews complex, large-scale development proposals for compliance with applicable land use, environmental, zoning, and design regulations, issues correction requests, approves plans, certifies compliance, and conducts follow-up inspections. Prepares ordinances or revisions to ordinances related to land use and development issues in compliance with and to implement the Land Use Plan and other policy direction. Provides guidance to junior staff, serves as liaison to assigned boards and organizations, oversees commercial development review team consisting of various departments and agencies to facilitate and coordinate

plan review and adjudicate conflicts between various agency regulations. Assists with complex problems and situations, providing technical expertise in long-range planning, code development, zoning administration, site plan review, or other special projects as assigned. Participates in and oversees public outreach efforts and public information projects related to departmental activities and performs customer service and provides information and answers questions regarding Department activities, projects, proposals, processes, and procedures. Performs other related duties as assigned. - **KNOWLEDGE AND QUALIFICATIONS:** Thorough knowledge of principles and practice of urban planning, zoning, and land use. Ability to present the results of research effectively in oral, written, and graphic form. Ability to respond to effectively to the most sensitive inquiries or complaints. Ability to identify problems and review related information to develop and evaluate options and implement solutions that are in accordance with laws, ordinances, and established principles. Ability to establish and maintain effective, professional working relationships. Ability to act independently

in carrying out specific tasks, while at the same time being able to participate in or coordinate team-oriented projects. - **EDUCATION, EXPERIENCE, AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS:** Graduation from an accredited school with a Bachelor's Degree in Planning or closely related field and two (2) years of related experience, or Equivalent combination of education and experience, Valid North Carolina driver's license. - **PHYSICAL DEMANDS AND WORK ENVIRONMENT:** Work is performed primarily in a standard office environment and occasionally outdoor. May be required to lift and carry items weighing up to 10 pounds. A qualified applicant or employee with a disability may be afforded reasonable modifications to perform the essential job functions of a position in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. - **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** Interested applicants must submit a completed online application to be considered. This is a continuous recruitment; review of applications will begin immediately. Prompt application is highly encouraged. Recruitment will close without notice when a sufficient number of qualified applications are received or all hiring decisions have been

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