

# Chatham News + Record

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‘RAINBOWS AND SUNSHINE AND SASS’

## Siler City girl honored by town, Chatham after fight with childhood cancer

BY MAYDHA DEVARAJAN  
News + Record Staff

of Siler City, where Kenzie lived, and Pittsboro, as well as Chatham County, will mark what would have been Kenzie’s 6th birthday with “Bushel & A Peck Day” — named after a song she would sing along with her mother, which has become emblematic of the love the child shared with those close to her.

In her absence, the Scogginses and Kenzie’s loved ones are continuing to honor her memory and carry on her legacy.

### ‘We were going to fight’

Between 200 to 400 children are diagnosed with DIPG every year in the United States. The rate of survival is low; there’s just a 10% chance of surviving beyond two years and a 2% chance of surviving beyond five years following a patient’s diagnosis.

For Kenzie’s mother, Meghan Scoggins, 32, hearing their doctor at UNC Children’s Hospital give a prognosis containing the words “inoperable” and “no cure” to her daughter, who had not yet started kindergarten, is something she says she’ll never forget.

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Staff photo by Matt Ramey

Meghan and Dusty Scoggins pose with a framed photo of their 5-year-old daughter Kenzie, who died from an aggressive brain tumor called diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma in September.



SILER CITY — Those who knew Kenzie Wrenn Scoggins knew her as unconditional, pure love.

At 4 years old, Kenzie was vibrant, cheeky and affectionate; she was known to reliably crack up at hearing a curse word just as easily as she would earnestly tell those around her that they looked beautiful on their worst days.

Almost a year ago today, Kenzie was diagnosed with an aggressive childhood brain tumor called diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma, or DIPG. DIPG spreads throughout a part of the brain stem called the pons, making it inoperable; most patients are given a survival range of eight to 11 months.

Kenzie died from the disease on Sept. 18, at the age of 5, following months of radiation therapy and treatments.

On Saturday, Dec. 17, the towns

‘IN GOD’S HANDS’

## Despite threats, Merry Oaks community persists

NCDOT plans have church being taken to make room for VinFast roadway improvements

BY BEN RAPPAPORT  
News + Record Staff

MERRY OAKS — On a recent Wednesday evening at Merry Oaks Baptist Church, a dozen church members gathered in the sanctuary to discuss the Old Testament story of King David.

Three men risked their lives in a march to Bethlehem to get water for their camp, Rev. Jim Brady describes from the pulpit. When the men returned, water in hand, they gave that water to David and he poured it out in front of them. “David did not drink of it,” Brady says. “He poured it out to the Lord.”

The story, he said, is a reminder that no matter how discouraged or tired one may become, the love of a higher power is always watching over — and that God has a will for the future.

No matter what the future holds, Merry Oaks Baptist Church will listen to His will.



Staff photo by Anna Connors

Six community members recalled generations of change in Merry Oaks through oral history interviews. Read about them inside, page A11.

See COMMUNITY, page A11

## VinFast, Wolfspeed projects hitting timelines

EDC’s Smith says planning, teamwork keep things ‘moving forward and on track’

BY BILL HORNER III  
News + Record Staff

In an age where landing even a \$50 million economic development project is considered a major win, Michael Smith sheepishly admits the numbers generated in Chatham County this year are almost “cartoonish” in scope.

It all got started last March with VinFast — at the time, with \$4 billion in investment and 7,500 new jobs, the biggest industrial announcement in N.C. history. The Vietnamese company is now more than a third finished with site preparation work on its land at Triangle Innovation Point, near Moncure, the future home of its massive electric vehicle (EV) manufacturing plant set to roll out EVs in the summer of 2024. (Plant construction will begin in early 2023.)

Add in semiconductor maker Wolfspeed’s \$5 billion, 1,700-job announcement for the Chatham-Siler City Advanced Manufacturing site in September, and FedEx’s April shipping hub launch near the VinFast site, and Smith — president of Chatham’s Economic Development Corporation, and the chief internal engineer of the county’s industrial development efforts — acknowl-



Smith

See PROJECT, page A3

CHANGING A RIVER’S COURSE

## A new movement for the Haw?

A new group wants to give the Haw River its own legal rights protecting it from polluters

BY BARRY YEOMAN  
The Assembly

As a child in the 1980s, Crystal Cavalier-Keck spent summer days inside her grandmother’s classroom at Haw River Elementary School. At lunch, they would ride in her Oldsmobile down to the river, which bisected Main Street in the epony-

mous town in Alamance County. Nearby stood Granite Mill, a 19th-century brick complex which at its peak a few years earlier finished more corduroy than any other factory in the world.

“Water is part of everything,” Cavalier-Keck’s grandmother would tell her. “Take care of what God has given you.” Then

the matriarch would point out the foul smell. “You can always look at the water,” she warned. “But you can’t get in it, because it’s very poisonous.”

The Haw, which rolls through many of the Piedmont’s historic manufacturing towns — including Pittsboro — and the Jordan Lake reservoir, faced a triple threat back then: toxic chem-

icals; harmful sediment from farms and construction sites; and nutrients from fertilizer and laundry detergent, which feed oxygen-depleting algae.

“Those pollution problems which the Haw is experiencing are, quite literally, carried forward into the Lake,” a 1984 Legislative Research Commission report reads. “Unless remedied

and reversed,” it warns, “the assured end result is the [lake’s] algal choked death.”

Almost four decades later, the Haw lures whitewater paddlers and the shuttered mills have become apartments with granite countertops and kayak storage. An annual festival draws crowds

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IN THE KNOW

Rep. Reives on leadership role, moving N.C. forward. PAGE A10

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# VIEWPOINTS

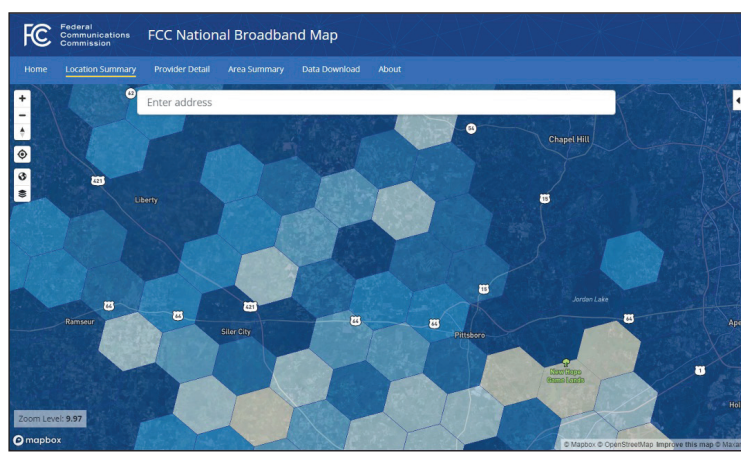
GUEST COLUMN | BURNEY WARING

## Poor internet or no internet? Now's the time to act.

About 16% of Chatham County residents said they did not have quality internet service, according to the Chatham County Community Assessment, and the internet was one of the two top issues in that survey. Primarily the internet service provider companies (Spectrum, CenturyLink, T-Mobile, etc.) decide who gets internet. Grants and other government programs can influence their decisions.

Federal Communications Commission has just issued the National Broadband Map. This map contains 110 million locations. All internet providers submitted the highest level of internet service available at each of the map locations that they service. It has been a massive effort. The FCC created the map because the Federal Government will allocate grants in the largest amount ever toward improving internet availability, the \$43 billion Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program.

The bad news is that if the new map has incorrect information about your address, and



Courtesy of the FCC

**The FCC's national broadband map showing coverage in Siler City.**

you have no internet or poor internet, you could miss out.

If you have poor internet or have no internet available at your residence, you should look up your address on the FCC map: [broadbandmap.fcc.gov](http://broadbandmap.fcc.gov)

The FCC is already in the process of allocating funds based on the initial version of the map, and they have given us only until Jan. 13 to correct information in the map before the allocations of the massive

BEAD program in summer 2023.

The FCC says that it will base all new grants on its new map. So, if your house is not on the map or in the wrong location, or your provider wants a big fee to run a wire to your house to get their advertised service, or other bad info, you can challenge your information through the FCC map website. You can also use it to challenge the availability of

mobile phone service.

Most challenges and complaints need documentation. Documentation about specific provider service needs things like the dates you called, who you spoke with, emails, screenshots, etc. The documentation has to be after June 2022 (the date the internet companies turned in their information). The FCC says it will be flexible in the sort of documentation it will accept. If you did not keep great documentation, it would be worth your effort to try again with your provider and collect everything. As you might expect, you have to state under penalty of perjury that your information is correct.

The FCC will aggregate all the challenge data and probably the areas with the most complaints will get the most attention, so it would be best to tell your neighborhood about this process.

Ironically, the FCC does not have any process for challenging or complaining about your lack of internet in this process other than using their map on the internet. The Chatham

Public Libraries have internet and computers available for those without them. The FCC map will work on a mobile phone, but it may be difficult to upload documentation that way. If you get stuck and need help with this process, you can email [help@innovatechatham.org](mailto:help@innovatechatham.org), and we will try to help.

If internet issues of all kinds in Chatham are of interest to you, we will be having two public events in January to provide information about getting, affording and learning to use the internet, as well as getting public input to Chatham's Digital Inclusion Plan intended to help Chatham residents:

- Jan. 12, 5 p.m., at 79°West, 367 Freedom Pkwy., Suite 130, Pittsboro
- Jan. 19, 5 p.m., at N.C. Arts Incubator, 223 N. Chatham Ave., Siler City

*Burney Waring is the president of Innovate Chatham, a nonprofit dedicated to helping Chatham County residents flourish through technology. He can be reached at [warnings@gmail.com](mailto:warnings@gmail.com)*

## Mother Nature's creatures full of valuable lessons



**BOB WACHS**  
Movin' Around

Years ago, a colleague wrote a sermon he entitled "Turtle on a Fencepost."

The thought behind that title and message was that since turtles don't fly or jump then someone had to have placed the creature in that position. While there wasn't likely any good reason for Mr. Turtle to be in such a state or that any good would come from it,

there was an application for us humans. It was that if or when we find ourselves in an unfamiliar or uncomfortable place in life it could be that God has placed us or allowed us to be so placed. And while we have more options for changing the location than the turtle did, it could be there was something good or helpful to come out of the whole thing.

Through the years, I've found myself in some situations that could be called "turtle on a fencepost" — no doubt, dear reader, so have you. I say all that to say that, like Yogi Berra said, you can learn a lot just by watching.

That thought crossed my mind the other day as I sat at the desk in my study, gazing out the window. That end of the house is 10 or 15 yards from the pasture fence that runs by our house. At that particular point, there is a metal gate, a few posts fairly close together and some cross braces.

As I sat fighting through writer's block and sipping my fourth cup of Joe, I noticed one of the many gray squirrels who call our place home scampering along the top of the fence. I'd seen this before, maybe even with the same little furry critter (although I'm not sure since they don't wear name tags).

On he came, in high gear, maybe looking for one more acorn or trying to avoid the dog who years ago would have given chase, but today has decided patience — or laziness — is a virtue and now doesn't even bother to give them a look.

The metal gate didn't slow him down as he zoomed across the top before hopping to the adjoining wooden post. He then scampered along the four feet or so of brace before hopping the short space to the next post and its brace.

At that point, I thought, his luck gave out because from then on for some distance it was only woven wire, not wide enough at the top for squirrel footies. Seeing he was intent on continuing his journey, I wondered how he would handle this unexpected obstacle. For only a split second did he hesitate before jumping down and continuing his expedition on the ground.

Pretty smart little fellow, I thought, and then — like the turtle on a fence post — a thought crossed my mind: we humans are like that squirrel. We set off on journeys through life, which itself is a journey. Sometimes our footing changes, maybe from wood to metal and then back again to familiar steps. But even then, if the surface is roughly the same width we can make it.

But sometimes things change; we run across small challenges or spaces. Some we can jump over and keep on going as life smooths out. But then, sooner or later, we come to a place where there's no footing and where it's too far or long or deep or wide or whatever to jump over. So, the question becomes: "What do we do then?"

At that point, I think, we have two choices: do nothing and quit or find another way to keep on keeping on. Mr. Squirrel did not favor the former; instead he opted for the latter and did what he could, namely, he jumped down and hit the ground running.



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## What is a Rhombicuboctahedron?



**ANDREW TAYLOR-TROUTMAN**  
Hope Matters

I know that my gentle readers await the answer with more anticipation than your typical 5-year-old counts down to Santa's arrival! Test yourself to see if you can select the correct definition among the following choices:

1. A rhombicuboctahedron is a popular Tik Tok challenge that involves slipping ice cubes down the back of an unsuspecting driver's shirt while that person is idling at a stop sign — "Yo, I rhombi-cubed you!"
2. The shape of the hairstyle of the latest Disney villain.
3. Known as Rhom for short, the newest AI technology that can make coffee and let the dog out to do her business while simultaneously writing a newspaper column so that a local pastor can stay in bed.
4. A yoga position with accompanying "Rh-Om" chant that has been scientifically proven to lower cholesterol levels and combat halitosis.
5. A medicinal resin derived from species of tree native to the Horn of Africa that, while medically proven to decrease inflammation of joints, has the unfortunate side effect of causing bad breath.
6. The contorted look of disgust and dismay on the face of UNC basketball coach Hubert Davis when his

pre-season, nationally top-ranked team loses its fourth consecutive game and falls out of the Top 25.

7. The shape of the typical Moravian Star — that 26-point illuminated object that your neighbor hangs from his porch this time of year. While symbolic of the Star of Bethlehem described in the Gospel of Matthew, the Moravian Star originated in the 1830s as a geometry lesson in a German school.

8. A rhombicuboctahedron is a technical term for the fallacy that confuses Moravians with Mennonites and therefore mistakenly believes that modern Moravian women wear homemade dresses and white bonnets.

9. A word sung by choirs to loosen their lips and warm up their voices before launching into all the verses of "The Twelve Days of Christmas."

10. The design of the soon-to-be released iPhone with six square screens so that users can watch Tik Tok, Disney movies and college basketball while checking Facebook, Googling "rhombicuboctahedron" and reading the Chatham News + Record editorial section. Good luck fitting that into your pocket!

What is a rhombicuboctahedron? You can always look up the correct answer on the internet. However, readers might wish to consult a real-life Moravian or perhaps a newspaper columnist who grew up in that Protestant denomination. But please leave Hubert Davis alone. Lord knows, he has enough on his mind.

## After 10 years and hundreds of millions in spending, why can't Johnny read?



**TOM CAMPBELL**  
N.C. Spin

Legislative leaders are baffled. We all should be. After pouring more than \$200 million additional dollars into helping our children read at grade level, they (and we) want to know when we are going to see results.

Just before Thanksgiving, we learned that the 2021 test results showed only 47 percent of 3rd-grade students were proficient in grade-level reading. End-of-grade

tests further demonstrated that 53 percent of students in grades 3 through 8 were "not proficient" in grade-level reading.

Who is to blame? Is it the children, teachers, parents, educators, legislators or the public? The answer is YES. We all have a role to play in helping our children to read, but we are obviously failing. Senate President Pro Tem Phil Berger sounded the alarm in 2012, correctly assessing that in the first three grades students learn to read. After that, they read to learn. If they can't read, they can't learn. Berger led the "Read to Achieve" initiative

a decade ago, and since that time, North Carolina has implemented several new or revised initiatives when results didn't improve.

Our latest reading program comes from Mississippi. We've always thanked God for Mississippi since they traditionally kept North Carolina out of being last place among the states in educational achievement. But the Magnolia State implemented a program named LETRS, an acronym standing for "Language essentials for teachers of reading and spelling." Desperate for anything

See **SPENDING**, page A5



# HONORED

Continued from page A1

A few months prior, Meghan said she noticed her otherwise playful and outgoing child experiencing some unusual health issues — wobbliness, shifty eyes, headaches. She saw a pediatrician who she said dismissed her concerns at the time, and had made plans to take Kenzie to an ophthalmologist.

They never made it to that appointment.

Just 45 minutes after dropping Kenzie off at her daycare on Dec. 8, 2021, and asking staff to keep an eye on her, Meghan received a text from one of the preschool teachers. Something wasn't right, she was told. Meghan picked up Kenzie and quickly made her way to the emergency room at UNC Hospitals, where they were met by Dusty, Kenzie's father. An MRI eventually confirmed the worst.

In that moment, Meghan said her whole world stopped.

"I remember crying so hard I couldn't even stand up," she recalled.

"Your options are to do radiation and go home [or] to do radiation and to pick a trial," Meghan said doctors told her. "But there is currently no cure. And this is probably going to take your daughter."

The first three days after Kenzie's diagnosis, Meghan said she didn't eat or drink, and barely slept. In a search for answers and support, she started finding others in the DIPG community, connecting with parents and the ChadTough Defeat DIPG Foundation, a nonprofit that the Scoggins eventually became family partners with.

Finding that network of organizations and families of other DIPG patients was incredibly meaningful for the Scogginses. Shortly after Kenzie's 5th birthday, Meghan created a Facebook page to share updates about her daughter's journey and progress. The page — "Kenzie's Bushel & a Peck" — now has more than 5,000 followers, and a quick scroll through it reveals messages of support and faith from people across the world.

"By the end of this journey, we have people from California to Canada, Mexico, people in Ireland and Scotland, in Africa, who know about my child, and who have prayed for her, sent good vibes, sent mail," Meghan said.

The DIPG community is a tight-knit one.

"We all say that it's a group you don't want to be in, but you're so thankful to have it," Meghan said. "Because it is needed, sadly."

For DIPG patients, radiation therapy is the main form of treatment; patients often see a reduction in the size of the tumor and in the pressure applied on the brain stem. However, responses to the treatment are brief — in almost all cases, the tumor begins to grow back after six to 12 months, according to the DIPG Resource Network. Given the limited options for DIPG patients, patients may explore clinical trials in hopes of prolonging life.

After considering their options, Meghan and Dusty made the decision to enroll Kenzie in a CAR-T cell trial in California at Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford. The phase one clinical trial takes a patient's T cells — a type of white blood cell and a major component of the immune system — and engineers them to target an antigen called GD2 that is expressed on gliomas with the H3K27M mutation.

"We decided that we were going to fight,"



Dusty and Meghan Scoggins sit at a bench in Boling Lane Park in Siler City, where they would often bring their 5-year-old daughter Kenzie before her passing in September. Kenzie was diagnosed with an aggressive brain tumor called diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma (DIPG) almost a year ago today.

Staff photo by Matt Ramey

Meaghan said. "The best that we could for as long as we could, just to give her as much of a life and as much of a chance as she could."

## 'Rainbows and sunshine and sass'

Kenzie loved most things that preschoolers tend to love: all things Disney, giving other people makeovers, having tea parties, fart jokes. In March, the whole family was able to travel to Orlando to visit theme parks through the Make-A-Wish Foundation, an experience Meghan and Dusty say they're eternally grateful to have shared with Kenzie.

She enjoyed painting other people's nails and doing hair; her dad would often oblige her with both, lying on the ground on his stomach so she could sit up on his back to brush and style his hair. Meghan called Kenzie their "tie-dye hippie chick." At her funeral, attendees were encouraged to wear blue, her favorite color, and other bright hues.

"Kenzie was rainbows and sunshine and sass," Meghan said.

That sass and mischievous nature shone through in a number of ways. Sometimes, Kenzie would play tricks on her nurses and doctors at Stanford, rolling her eyes in the back of her head and falling over, scaring "the bejesus" out of everyone, Meghan said.

Dr. Jasia Mahdi is a child neurologist and neuro-oncologist who cared for Kenzie during her time at Stanford. For the several weeks Kenzie was in California receiving treatment in the early summer of 2022, Dr. Mahdi spent every day with her.

"I distinctly remember the day [she came in for her consent visit] because she just kind of walks in the room and brightens the whole place up," Dr. Mahdi said. "She was like a ball of energy and was very excited, and very warm. And you could tell how loving and effusive of a spirit she had, so within a couple of minutes she grabbed my hand and we were wandering around the clinic together."

Quickly, staff came to realize that Kenzie found curse words hilarious, and sometimes they'd let a curse word slip just to get her to laugh, Dr. Mahdi recalls. She'd giggle with her whole body, her belly shaking up and down with laughter.

By the time Kenzie had arrived at Stanford, her tumor had significantly grown, so she was treated on a compassionate basis. While she responded well initially to the therapy,

her tumor eventually grew to the point where it would no longer be effective or safe for her to continue receiving treatment. Shortly afterward, Meghan and Dusty brought Kenzie back to North Carolina, where she would remain on hospice care until her passing in September.

When it came time for Kenzie to leave Stanford to go home, it was an emotional departure. Everyone cried, including Kenzie, Meghan said. But that's just how people — medical staff, teachers, family and even strangers — tended to respond to her.

Christy Welch, her teacher at Write Beginnings Christian Preschool in Siler City, described Kenzie as a "livewire," with a sweet nature and tenacious spirit all in one.

"[She] definitely would make you feel like a million bucks whenever you came in and you were you were rushed from your morning travels, and she would say to you that you looked beautiful and that your hair was beautiful," Welch laughed. "And you're like, 'Well, I don't know what you're looking at.'"

After her diagnosis, Kenzie only went to her preschool three times. But her fellow classmates and teachers missed her dearly, Welch noted, with the preschool being like a family.

"She's definitely left that thumbprint upon all of us and changed us all," she said.

## DIPG research

In just one conversation, it's overwhelmingly evident the kind of love Meghan has for her child. She is both fiercely passionate about increasing awareness of DIPG and federal funding for childhood cancer, and incredibly transparent and vulnerable about the most traumatic event of her life, laughing and crying over memories of her little girl.

Now, Meghan sees it as part of her duty to continue to raise awareness of DIPG, posting frequently on Kenzie's Facebook page about her experiences of grief and sharing fundraisers for families experiencing DIPG and foundations like NoahBRAVE, ChadTough and Tough2gether Against DIPG.

"It is my real life, my everyday life that I have to live with," she said. "And so that's why I do it, so that one day, another mother won't have to bury their child. Another father, another grandmother, or grandfather, aunt, uncle, cousin, won't have to be where we are. Because, now, my daughter only got five years,



Courtesy of Meghan Scoggins

Kenzie Scoggins, 5, paints her father Dusty's nails. Kenzie died from an aggressive brain tumor earlier on Sept. 18. She loved doing makeovers and painting nails.

and look at how many people she's touched."

Dr. Mahdi notes that though DIPG research has seen significant development over the past decade — driven by pioneers like Stanford Medicine's Dr. Michelle Monje — there is still much work to be done to fine tune treatments and to better understand the tumor and its micro-environment.

In 2021, cancer research received around \$7,362,000,000 in funding from the National Institutes of Health, while pediatric cancer research received around \$664,000,000. To Meghan, the current federal funding dollars aren't enough.

Similarly, naming DIPG for what it is has been important to Meghan. Shortly after Kenzie's passing, Meghan pushed to have Kenzie's death certificate corrected from listing the cause as "malignant neoplasm brain" to "malignant diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma."

She says she doesn't like to refer to DIPG as a "rare" form of cancer because, the way she sees it, too many children have died for it to be rare. Brain tumors are the most common cause of cancer-related death in children under 15, according to the DIPG Resource Network, with DIPG being the most common brain stem

tumor in children.

"DIPG murdered my child," Meghan said. "And if you're a murderer, you are going to be held accountable, and I needed DIPG to be held accountable, because that is what took her."

## Kenzie's legacy

Technically, Kara Knight is Kenzie's cousin, but to the little girl, she was her "Aunt Kara." They shared a close relationship; Knight and Dusty grew up together, much like siblings. Knight has a son similar in age to Kenzie, and when Kenzie moved to at-home hospice, Knight stayed with Meghan and Dusty and helped to care for her.

As Kenzie's 6th birthday approaches, Knight said it's been especially challenging for the family.

To Kenzie, family was everything, whether it was making Valentine's cards for her relatives or crying on FaceTime when she was in California because she just wanted to be home with them in Siler City. Many of her loved ones gathered the day after Thanksgiving by her gravesite to decorate a Christmas tree with ornaments stuck with messages for Kenzie and photos of her.

One of the ways Knight hopes to now honor her niece's legacy is through

sharing stories and memories of her. When she learned that Siler City, Pittsboro and the county will be honoring Kenzie through a Bushel & a Peck Day, Knight was deeply touched.

"It means the world because a lot of bad things happen in this world, and you lose a lot of faith," Knight said. "And when something so horrible happens — and this has been the worst thing that's ever happened to me, and I'm sure most of our family, it's been terrible — so you lose a lot of faith and it's hard to see the positives."

"And so when these little things happen, they're [actually] big things — having someone interested and listening to your stories. And I talk about Kenzie all the time, and I keep waiting for someone to be like, 'Alright, enough,'" she said with a laugh.

Kenzie loved arts and crafts, and even once told her teacher that she wanted to be a painter when she grew up. The Scogginses tell Kenzie's cousins now that when they see a tie-dye sky full of pinks and blues and purples, Kenzie is painting the sky. The day that her family gathered to decorate her Christmas tree, the sky was rich with color and a heart-shaped cloud hung overhead.

See **HONORED**, page A10







**JULIA HART BEAL**

January 23, 1964 - November 25, 2022  
 Julia Hart Beal, 58, of Cape Carteret, formerly of Chatham County, passed away on Friday, November 25, 2022.  
 Ms. Beal was born in Chatham County, the daughter of Willie Madison Hart Jr. and Doris Buckner Hart. Julia graduated from Jordan-Matthews High School. She retired after many years as an FDA Inspector for Pilgrim's Pride in Sanford. After retiring, she accomplished her goal of moving to the beach. She was a member of Moon's Chapel Baptist Church. Julia loved spending time at the beach, her flowers and crafting. She was a diehard Tar Heel fan. Julia cherished her time with her family.  
 Julia is survived by her son, Dustin Beal of Bear Creek; sister, Sharon Baird and husband Dr. Bruce Baird of La-Grange; significant other, Steven Everwine of Cape Carteret; nephews Joshua Baird (Ruthanne) of Raleigh, Ethan Baird of Garner, Luke Baird (Anna) of Kinston, Caleb Baird (Janet Leighton) of Wilmington, and Jacob Baird (Peyton) of Snow Hill; great nieces Emma, Kinsley and Chloe Grace Baird. She is also survived by many aunts, uncles and cousins.  
 A funeral service was held at 2 p.m. on Wednesday, November 30, 2022, at Moon's Chapel Baptist Church, 175 Moon's Chapel Rd., Siler City, with Rev. Bruce Brown officiating. Burial followed in the church cemetery. The family received friends after the service in the Fellowship Hall.  
 In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to a charity of your choice.  
 Smith & Buckner Funeral Home assisted the Beal family.  
 Online condolences may be made at [www.smithbucknerfh.com](http://www.smithbucknerfh.com).

Memorials may be made to the North Carolina Down Syndrome Alliance, P.O. Box 99562, Raleigh, NC 27624.  
 Smith & Buckner Funeral Home is assisting the Seal family.  
 Online condolences may be made at [www.smithbucknerfh.com](http://www.smithbucknerfh.com).

**ANDREW LOUIS RIPLEY JR.**

January 15, 1937 ~ December 3, 2022  
 Andrew Louis "Big Al" Ripley Jr., 85, passed away Saturday afternoon, December 3, 2022, at his home in Pittsboro.  
 A native of Durham County, Al was born January 15, 1937, to the late Andrew Louis Ripley Sr. and Essie Vickers Ripley. Al cherished his years at both Wrights Machinery and Nortel, where he retired as a supervisor in shipping and receiving. In addition to his parents, Mr. Ripley was preceded in death by his wife of 60 years, Shirley Marie Gooch, and son, Andrew Louis Ripley III.  
 He is survived by sons, Thomas R. Hayes of Winston-Salem, Ector P. "Pat" Hayes of Pittsboro and Dana M. Ripley of Durham; seven grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.  
 A graveside service was held 10 a.m. Tuesday, December 6, 2022, at Pleasant Hill Baptist Church in Pittsboro with Reverend Robert Elmore officiating.  
 In lieu of flowers, consider making a donation to Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, 1309 North Pea Ridge Road, Pittsboro, N.C. 27312.  
 Donaldson Funeral Home & Crematory is honored to have served the Ripley family.

Shaquita Evette McDougald, 37, of Broadway, passed away on Thursday, November 24, 2022, at Central Carolina Hospital in Sanford, NC.  
 The funeral service was held at 11 a.m., December 9, 2022 at Life Springs Church.

**IDA LEE COTTEN**

Ida Lee Cotten, 79 of Moncure, passed away on Tuesday, December 6, 2022, at Jim and Betsy SECU Bryan Hospice Home.  
 Funeral service was held at 2:30 Sunday, December 11, 2022, at Liberty Chapel Church, with burial following in the church cemetery.

**MILTON THOMAS 'TOM' BURCH**

Milton Thomas "Tom" Burch, 74, passed away on Sunday, December 4, 2022, at Central Carolina Hospital, Sanford.  
 The funeral service was held at 1 p.m. Sunday, December 11, 2022, at Works for Christ Christian Center, with burial in Lee Memory Garden.

**SHARON INEZ NEWBY**

Sharon Inez Newby 51, of Sanford, passed away on Friday, December 2, 2022.  
 The funeral service was held at 2 p.m., Saturday, December 10, 2022, at Works for Christ Christian Center with burial following in Lee Memory Garden.

**PAMELA ANN JONES**

Pamela Ann Jones, 59, of Sanford, passed away on Wednesday, December 7, 2022 at Sanford Health and Rehab.  
 Professional services entrusted to Knotts Funeral Home.

**TONY LAMONT MARTIN III**

Tony Lamont Martin III, 31 of Wendell, passed away on

Tuesday, November 29, 2022, at his residence.

Funeral service was held at 11 a.m., Saturday, December 10, 2022, at Works for Christ Christian Center.

**ALBERTO CASIMIRO BARRAGAN**

Alberto Casimiro Barragan, 24 of Sanford, passed away on Sunday, December 4, 2022.  
 Professional services entrusted to Knotts Funeral Home.

**BRENDA FAYE (SUTTON) PEMBERTON**

Brenda Faye (Sutton) Pemberton, age 67, of Sanford, passed away on Sunday, December 11, 2022, at UNC Hospital in Chapel Hill.  
 Services entrusted to Knotts Funeral Home.

**ADOLPHUS HEADEN**

Adolphus Headen, 81, of Goldston, passed away on Monday, December 5, 2022, in his home.  
 Arrangements are entrusted to McLeod Funeral Home in Sanford.

**ESTELLA THOMAS MCNAIR**

Estella Thomas McNair, 90, of Sanford, passed away on Monday, December 5, 2022, at Accorduis Health Care, Aberdeen.  
 Wake was held Sunday, December 11, 2022, from 3 to 5 p.m. at Knotts Funeral Home.

**RICARDO ESQUIVEL ESPARZA**

Ricardo Esquivel Esparza, 43, of Siler City, passed away on Thursday, December 8, 2022, at his residence.  
 Professional services entrusted to Knotts Funeral Home, Pittsboro.

**OBITS**

Continued from page A8

cy in Washington, D.C. After decades of venturing back and forth from the U.S., the family settled in Chalybeate Springs and Sanford and worked at Campbell University's Book Store.

Hazel is survived by her three children, Patricia Rivera, Kenneth Rivera, and Roland Rivera; three grandchildren, one step-grandchild, and three great-grandchildren. She is preceded in death by her husband, Ismael Rivera, mother and father, and siblings, Mildred Bowie, John "Junior" Welch and Harry Welch.

Condolences may be made at [www.bridgescameronfuneralhome.com](http://www.bridgescameronfuneralhome.com).

**JAMES DOUGLAS SEAL**

November 27, 1978 ~ December 11, 2022  
 James Douglas Seal, 44, of Bear Creek, passed away on Sunday, December 11, 2022.  
 A memorial service will be held at 2 p.m. on Friday, December 16, 2022, at Smith & Buckner Funeral Home, 230 N. Second Ave., Siler City with Pastor Tim Qualls officiating.  
 James was born in Forest County, Mississippi, the son of Ivan Seal and Marilyn Tucker. He was a member of Old Paths Baptist Church. James enjoyed participating in the Special Olympics. He is preceded in death by his mother, Marilyn Boone Tucker, and brother, Christopher Seal.  
 Survivors include his father, Ivan Seal of Bear Creek; brother, David M. Seal, of Mississippi; and stepfather, Gary Tucker of Bear Creeks.

**Chatham County athletes participate in N.C. Senior Games**

From the Chatham County Council on Aging

A total of 49 athletes representing Chatham County competed in the 2022 North Carolina Senior Games held August through November at various locations throughout the state.

Chatham athletes combined for 31 gold medals at the state competition in various disciplines.

Steve Barrett, 89, captured gold in the Men's Ages 85-89 100-yard backstroke in a time of 2:05.10. He added another first-place swim in the 200 breaststroke, touching the wall in 6:54.18.

In the Men's Ages 65-69 division for pickleball, Mike Briggs paired with Sandro Francioni to claim gold in Division 2.

Priya Chinnaswamy made it a clean sweep of first-place performances in Women's Ages 50-54 table tennis, winning singles gold and partnering with Arlene Green in doubles competition en route to a first-place showing.

Stan Cox, 67, led the way in the Men's Ages

65-69 200 breaststroke. He touched the wall roughly nine seconds ahead of his closest competitor, finishing in 3:55.97 in the finals. In addition, he added two silver medals in the 200 individual medley and 200 butterfly while placing fifth in the 100 IM.

Anne Granath conquered the grueling Women's Ages 85-89 500 freestyle to finish first in a time of 13:47.84. Specializing in distance events, the 88-year-old Granath added a silver medal in the 50 freestyle.

Mary Anne Kendall earned gold in the Women's Ages 80-84 tennis competition and moved to a smaller court for table tennis, teaming with Lillian Pruett for doubles gold in the Women's Ages 80-84 ranks. Kendall placed fourth in the singles ranks for the Women's Ages 80-84 division. Pruett found success on the singles circuit, as she claimed first place in table tennis for the Women's Ages 80-84 division.

Denise Lynch, 57, enjoyed a comfortable first-place run in the Women's

Ages 55-59 50-meter dash, finishing in 8.35 seconds. Lynch tacked on bronze in the 100.

In croquet, John May prevailed in the Men's Ages 80-84 division as did Mary Norgren in the Women's Ages 65-69 field. Competing in table tennis, Duane Millslagle claimed singles gold in the Men's Ages 70-74 ranks.

Raymond Philipps mastered sprint events during his time in the pool, winning gold in the Men's Ages 90-94 50 freestyle (52.73) and the 50 backstroke (1:14.45). At 91 years of age, Philipps was second in the 100 freestyle.

Bill Powers secured two first-place efforts, winning the Men's Ages 85-89 400 dash in 2:26.24 and the 5K run in 42:51.05. He was second in the Men's Ages 85-89 100 event.

Arguably the most dominant individual effort among Chatham athletes was turned in by David Schumann in the pool. The 76-year-old Schumann supplied six first-place swims in State Games competition, routing the Men's Ages

75-79 field in the 200 freestyle (3:19.50), the 100 IM (2:02.70), 200 backstroke (3:50.46), 200 IM (4:13.46), 500 freestyle (8:49.16) and the 400 IM (9:10.75).

In the softball throw, Don Weisz uncorked an effort of 144 feet, 2 inches to win gold in the Men's Ages 75-79 division. That cleared his next closest competitor by roughly 35 feet.

A new State Games record was set by Kevin Williams in the Men's Ages 55-59 division. Williams, 56, blistered the field to claim first place in the 50 dash in a time of 6.58 seconds — breaking the previous meet record of 6.96.

Silver-medal performances were turned in by Virginia Aldige and Maurice Brookhart (pickleball mixed doubles), Bill Bass and Adam Schoenfeld (tennis doubles), Ronald Bousquet (archery conv-recurve barebow), Tim Bryden and Jimmy Comer (pickleball doubles), Drew Carson and Betsy Fonke (pickleball doubles), Chester Hwang and Jerry Gevirtz (tennis

doubles), Hwang and Carmen Yee (tennis mixed doubles), Mel Reinhardt (horseshoes) and Dean Sellseht (archery comp w/sight and release aid).

Bronze medal efforts were logged by Baas and Eric Haake (pickleball doubles), Dan Burns (table tennis singles), Jan Cox (100 breaststroke), Frankie Jordan (archery conv-recurve barebow), Danny Rogers and Tiersa Tavana (pickleball mixed doubles), Baas and Pamela Schoenfeld (pickleball mixed doubles) and Anna Shearer (croquet). In addition to her third-place swim in the 100 breaststroke, Jan Cox was seventh in the 100 freestyle.

Other competing athletes in N.C. Senior Games from Chatham included Edward Beroset (5K run), Diane Potter (mixed doubles — Dan Burns), Richard Cordes (Cycling — 10K), Jenna Davis and Miriam De St Aubin (pickleball doubles), Wayne Eckert (400 dash, 800 run, 1,500 run), Richard Poole (50 dash, 100 dash) and Daniel Tunstall (Cycling 1 mile,

5K, 10K).

Chatham County Senior Games is part of a statewide network of 53 local programs sanctioned by North Carolina Senior Games Inc. NCSG is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing year-round health promotion and education for adults 50 years of age and better. NCSG is a statewide nonprofit organization sponsored by the North Carolina Division of Aging and Adult Services.

NCSG also offers SilverArts, the statewide heritage, visual, literary and performing arts program; SilverLiners senior line dancing program and SilverStriders national award-winning walking program. Qualification for next year's State Finals will be held in the spring of 2022 at local senior games across North Carolina. For more information on a Senior Games program in your area, please contact North Carolina Senior Games at 919-851-5456 or visit their website at [www.ncsenior-games.org](http://www.ncsenior-games.org).

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# Reives on leadership role, moving N.C. forward

CN+R Staff Report

Rep. Robert Reives II, who won re-election to his Dist. 54 N.C. House seat in November, was recently chosen by his fellow Democrats as House Minority Leader for the second time. Reives has served in the state General Assembly since 2014.

He spoke recently with the News + Record about his outlook for the coming two-year legislative term.

**Let's start with your re-election as House Minority Leader. What do you think that says about the confidence your colleagues have in you, and how are you feeling about this honor?**

I am extremely appreciative of my caucus for entrusting me with this position again. I think it is a testament to the hard work that we put in over the past two years and the major accomplishments we achieved working across the aisle. I look forward to continuing in this position and building upon the success we had in the previous session.

**From a practical standpoint, with some changes in House membership, how will your role as House Minority Leader change in the**

**coming legislative sessions?**

Practically speaking, this position will not change much. We have never failed to sustain a veto under Governor Cooper, and I do not anticipate that changing. It will be more difficult because our margin for error is nearly nonexistent, but I hope that this important check remains intact and that it encourages our friends across the aisle to work with us. Our state is made better when both parties have to negotiate. A supermajority — of either party — prevents the important voice of the Governor in those conversations.

**Looking back on this past fall, what did the election process and your campaigning teach you or leave you with — what did you gain from the work you did to get re-elected that will serve you well for another two years?**

Campaigning in the toughest race I have had since being appointed to this office has taught me a lot. Primarily, it reiterated my belief that we need to be listening to every constituent, not just the ones who vote for us. Having competitive races in every district would create a legislative body that is more open to compromise and



Courtesy of the N.C. General Assembly

**Rep. Robert Reives II**

working together. Entrenched partisanship is not the best way to run our state.

**You've talked a lot in the last couple of years about cross-aisle cooperation and working across party lines. In the next two years, what Democratic policies and goals will you work to advance?**

Workforce development remains a top priority for my caucus and for me. This requires fully funding public education, making meaningful steps in expanding broadband access — not just throwing money at the problem, promoting fair elections and finally reducing health care costs, which requires, among other things, expansion of coverage.

**Are there any Republican policies/goals that you're wary of?**

The majority ran on the promise of a heart-beat ban with no real exceptions. That has incredibly negative effects on women's health care and employment and is contrary to what the majority of North Carolinians favor. Free and fair elections are another. Gerrymandering has plagued our state for decades and unfortunately that will not go away. Redistricting does not have to be approved by the Governor so we will not be able to prevent districts that do not reflect the makeup of the state. Moore v. Harper, which is being considered by the US Supreme Court at this very moment, could have major implications for North Carolina and every state moving forward.

**And finally, in what ways can the two parties work together in the coming two-year term to move N.C. forward?**

Over the previous session we showed a real ability to work together on economic development issues. Increasing prosperity in North Carolina helps everyone, regardless of political party. We should also

keep in mind that these jobs locating in North Carolina do not have to stay here. When we veer toward legislating on divisive social issues rather than making lives better, we can easily lose the investments made. That is why it is important for us to actually come together and find workable solutions instead of focusing on scoring political points.

**What specific challenges do you want the General Assembly to "fix" for North Carolinians in the next two years? What's on that list for you?**

Expanding health care coverage to more North Carolinians will improve so many lives. I know there is bipartisan interest in accomplishing that this session so that is at the top of our priority list. Education funding remains important, not just funding classrooms but making sure that our educators and support staff have competitive pay. And with the uncertainty we face with the economy, we should consider how we can make sure state employee salaries, and retirees, keep pace with inflation. I am less optimistic that we will fix fundamental issues with our elections, like fair maps, but I will

continue to advocate for that as well.

**And what are your specific goals to help Chatham County and your district (including that slice of Randolph County) in the coming term?**

Our district is a microcosm of the state. We have wealthy, quickly-growing parts of Chatham County and rural parts in the western part of the county that need more attention right now. I am excited that, within this district, we have the Toyota plant, VinFast and Wolfspeed all coming. Those are going to need thousands of workers, and we can provide them from within our community. To that end, we need to ensure Chatham County and Randolph County schools are the best they can be. We need to provide ample funding for CCCC to help train workers. We should continue targeting broadband investments to make high-speed internet available to every resident. And we should work with local and state leaders to find creative ways to make housing more affordable so that everyone can call Chatham home without struggling to pay their rent or mortgage.

## Chatham Sheriff's Office charges Moore man in 'death by distribution' case

CN+R Staff Report

The Chatham County Sheriff's Office has announced the arrest of Nathaniel Lynn Rush, 28, of 521 Fox Spring Drive, Robbins, in connection with a death by overdose which occurred in the Bear Creek area of Chatham County.

Authorities say an autopsy was performed on the victim and revealed the cause of death to be a fatal mixture of methamphetamine and fentanyl. According to Chatham County investigators, the victim obtained the controlled substance from Rush on the day he died.

The crime falls under North Carolina's "Death by Distribution" Act, which first took effect on Dec. 1, 2019. NC Governor Roy Cooper signed the Act (NCGS §14-18.4) into law in response to the increasing number of deaths related to the opioid epidemic. The law allows for the prosecution of individuals who sell drugs to buyers who later overdose as a result of using those controlled substances.

Rush was arrested in Moore County on Dec. 6 after Chatham County deputies charged him with felony death by distribution. He was assigned a \$100,000 secured bond and held in Moore

**The crime falls under North Carolina's "Death by Distribution" Act, which first took effect on Dec. 1, 2019. NC Governor Roy Cooper signed the Act (NCGS §14-18.4) into law in response to the increasing number of deaths related to the opioid epidemic. The law allows for the prosecution of individuals who sell drugs to buyers who later overdose as a result of using those controlled substances.**

County awaiting transfer to the Chatham County Detention Center. He is due to appear in Chatham County District Court in Pittsboro on Wednesday.

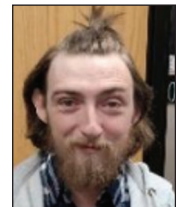
"Our staff members take public health and safety

seriously, and we recognize that drug abuse and addiction impacts us all," said Chatham County Sheriff Mike Roberson. "Law enforcement must continue working together with the community to create lasting change. As we unite, we must be willing to share resources, ideas, and experiences in order to make educated decisions on behalf of our families and shared community. We have to support one another."

Roberson also stressed that

arrests are only a small piece of a greater plan developed and implemented by the Sheriff's Prevention Partnership on Controlled Substances (SP-PCS). The SPPCS is a coalition of local authorities and first responders, medical and mental health professionals, educators, stakeholders, survivors and other service providers who joined forces to combat the opioid epidemic and its impacts locally. The group has directly contributed to increased education, training, programming, and life-saving efforts in Chatham County.

Anyone who suspects criminal activity in their area, including drug-related activity, should call 911 to speak with a deputy as soon as possible. Chatham County residents may also call 919-542-2911 for non-emergencies or to report tips.



Rush

## Siler City commissioners talk strategic plan

BY TAYLOR HEEDEN  
News + Record Staff

SILER CITY — Commissioners held a special session meeting on Monday evening to hear a presentation about the town's new strategic plan.

The board heard from Gary Jackson of McGill Associates — the firm contracted by the town to develop a draft strategic plan — and he laid out the groundwork to begin the drafting process. The plan will feature five strategic visions, with each vision having three to four goals.

Jackson met with town employees, elected officials, administrative staff, business owners and residents to evaluate what direction they wanted to see Siler City go. He said there seemed to be a lot of commonality between

what elected officials and staff want to see, but it seemed staff feels they aren't appreciated or compensated enough.

"When you ask employees to rate policy direction, almost entirely it's about resource decisions," Jackson said. "Is my program getting the funds needed? Am I being well compensated? Is there financial planning that's going to help me to reward for my work ethic? So those are different questions and attributes having a policy direction."

Commissioners will be given a draft strategic plan early in the new year for consideration.

Reporter Taylor Heeden can be reached at [theeden@chathamnr.com](mailto:theeden@chathamnr.com) or on Twitter at @HeedenTaylor.

## HONORED

Continued from page A6

For Meghan, the grief she's experienced since Kenzie's death has ebbed and flowed. She describes it like a train — it doesn't stop, no matter how hard one tries.

"Because if there's one thing about grief is it's going to come out, it's going to come out in one form or another," she said. "And if you hold it in for too long, it will leave you in a cemetery at 9 o'clock at night screaming at the top of your lungs because you are so angry and so tired of feeling sad all the time. So whatever way you can, get it out, whether it be talking, helping other people, crying, watching videos."

In many ways, Kenzie was a miracle, according to her family. She was born six weeks prematurely, spending a week in the NICU before coming

home on Christmas Eve. "She was our little miracle baby," Meghan said.

In her wake, the miracle of her existence is something that her loved ones continue to marvel in every day.

In her memory, Kenzie's preschool is holding a "Love Like Kenzie Day" fundraiser for her birthday, which they plan to make an annual tradition. This year, the preschool is raising donations for a child in need who was in Kenzie's class to celebrate Christmas. The Disney song, "Waiting on a Miracle," was played at her memorial service. And after her passing, the Scoggins donated Kenzie's brain to Stanford; her cultures are now growing, contributing to much-needed research for DIPG.

"I just feel like she gave the world the miracle that she didn't get," Meghan said.



Meghan and Dusty Scoggins hold beloved stuffed animals of their daughter Kenzie, 5, who died from an aggressive brain tumor on Sept. 18. Kenzie loved Disney movies, and her favorite character was Stitch from 'Lilo & Stitch.'

For those looking to support DIPG research, visit Kenzie's family partner page with ChadTough Defeat DIPG

Foundation at [www.chadtough.org/meet-the-kids/kenzie-scoggins/](http://www.chadtough.org/meet-the-kids/kenzie-scoggins/). Contributions to NoahBRAVE can be made at

[noahbrave.org/donate/](http://noahbrave.org/donate/) and to Tough2gether Against DIPG at [3ODEx. Contact Christy Welch at \(919\) 799-9615 to donate to the Write Beginnings Christian Preschool fundraiser.](http://www.flipcause.com/secure/cause_pdetails/MTA-</a></p>
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Staff photo by Matt Ramey

# COMMUNITY

Continued from page A1

## A devoted community

When Jerry Holden isn't attending services at Merry Oaks — located not far from the Sky Mart convenience store at the intersection of U.S. 1 and Old U.S. 1 — you can find him on its front lawn mowing the grass, cleaning the red pews of the sanctuary or tidying up the community space adjacent to the church. To him, like many in the congregation, Merry Oaks is a second home.

Holden, 70, has been attending the church since he was a child. It's where he met his wife, Karen, and where he's felt a sense of community.

But Merry Oaks isn't the same place as it was when he growing up, he says. And while he isn't exactly worried about the future, he fears what it could mean for the little town.

Holden has seen this play out before in other rural towns and churches nearby — a big entity makes big promises for the future, but with those promises comes the destruction of history.

"I've seen so many little communities like this one go down to nothing but a crossroads," he said. "You go by and you see what used to be seven or eight or 10 stores, and there's nothing. They're either rotten down or just a foundation and a crossroads."

He doesn't want his beloved community to meet the same fate. But as the Merry Oaks community ages, Holden said it seems more and more likely. People die off, their kids don't stay. Family farms get sold to developers for subdivisions, and with each purchase, the history goes with it.

"All they cared about was the money," he said. "That's what's taking this community: money. They say, 'Look how much money this thing's gonna bring in. Look what it's gonna do.' They don't care about us people. They just want money."

To Jerry Holden, Karen Holden and the more than a dozen members of Merry Oaks Baptist, preserving this space is about more than money — it's about preserving history.

In Merry Oaks, the past is part of the present. Few places in the rural South still exist where you can find a preacher whose grandfather grew up a quarter mile from the church. A place where one of the congregation members is the great-granddaughter of someone who built the town; where the church has one unofficial car mechanic; or where every congregation member is just a few degrees of separation from every grave in the nearby cemetery.

## Facing threat

The future of Merry Oaks, both the community and the church itself, is uncertain. The tall white steeple has stood on the border between Moncure and New Hill — on the corner of Old U.S. 1 and New Elam Church Rd. — since 1888. But under recent roadway plans from N.C. Dept. of Transportation (NCDOT), the church is set to be taken to make way for a highway into the new VinFast facility.

VinFast, the Vietnamese electric car manufacturer, has promised to invest \$4 billion and bring 7,500 jobs to Chatham County over the next decade in the second-largest economic development project in state history — surpassed only by Wolfspeed, which will build in western Chatham County near Siler City. VinFast is planning a 1,765-acre facility in nearby Moncure at the Triangle Innovation Point (TIP) site. The roadway plans from NCDOT into the facility include taking 27 homes, five businesses — and Merry Oaks Baptist Church.

Plans for the roadways have not been finalized by NCDOT. Updated designs may be available by next month, and the project team is still in the process of addressing public comments, according to NCDOT Communications Officer Harris Kay.

Kay said Phase 1 is estimated to relocate three businesses, 11 homes and Merry Oaks Baptist Church; Phase 2 is estimated to impact an additional two businesses and 16 homes.

Unless you're looking at a map alongside a traffic engineer, the maps for these roadway plans are confusing and difficult to interpret for the layman; the people of Merry Oaks certainly



Staff photo by Phillip Teasley

**The church is the last pillar of a community once touted as the next big thing in the state. A century ago, Merry Oaks was an up-and-coming small town, sporting a dance hall, a train station and the first school in the county.**

feel that.

Members of the congregation are frustrated and upset at the current NCDOT plans, but they also believe the future of the church is in God's hands. In nearly a century and a half, the tall white steeple atop Merry Oaks Baptist has been no stranger to trying times.

The NCDOT plans are only the latest to come its way. The red pews of the sanctuary hold more memories than the aging minds of its members can recall. It holds the beginnings of awkward relationships that later became marriages, the echoes of old choir practices and maybe even the hidden crumbs of cookies made by the preacher's wife every Sunday.

Beyond the walls of the sanctuary, the church is an important symbol because it is the last remaining pillar of the community that once was the town of Merry Oaks.

## 'Shredding the community'

Prior to the construction of "new" U.S. 1, the Merry Oaks community was touted as the next big thing in the state. A dance hall in nearby New Hill drew people in from as far as Raleigh. It was home of the first-ever school in the county opened in 1906, and dozens of families lived in rental housing along what is now Old U.S. 1. All of that is now gone. As the Raleigh News & Observer said in an article from 1966, "Merry Oaks is a town that was."

On the train between Maine and Key West, Florida, New Hill was once a prominent stop on the railway. The rental houses and inns once housed the likes of Babe Ruth and even the legendary Bonnie & Clyde.

And much like robberies perpetrated by the infamous criminals, the roadways to Chapel Hill, Durham and Raleigh ultimately stole families away from the rural town that once thrived. It became an afterthought in the pursuit of industrial progress and urbanization. It's a history, though, that isn't even a lifetime old. Merry Oaks Baptist Church and its congregation may be its last living memory.

"I call it 'shredding the community,'" Kay Hinsley said. "From Merry Oaks up to New Elam Church over to the Christian Chapel area and Corinth — that was our community. It's just going to be shredded. There's not going to be a whole lot left."

Katherine Holden Haynes, 86, is the older sister of Jerry Holden and one of the people that still has fond memories of what Merry Oaks used to be. She remembers the travelers coming through on their way south.

"Somebody would come up and ask if they could sit in on the service," Katherine said. "A family that was traveling, that

## Six community members recalled generations of change in Merry Oaks through oral history interviews. From top left:

**Katherine Holden, 86, was born in Merry Oaks and has lived all but 12 years of her life in the town. She is a regular at the church's services.**

**Kay Hinsley, 68, was born in Merry Oaks, has lived there her whole life and attended the church for many years. NCDOT plans show roads to VinFast will cut through her front yard.**

**Faye Crutchfield, 82, was born in Merry Oaks and lived the first 17 years of her life in the town. Her father was one of the town's main employers through his various business ventures. Faye moved back to the area a year ago.**

**Karen Holden, 60, was born down the road from Merry Oaks and has spent her whole life coming to the church. She met her husband, Jerry, in the church's youth group. Today, she plays piano and sings each week at the church's services.**

**Sharron Bouquin, 60, Katherine Holden's daughter, was born and grew up in Merry Oaks. Today, she regularly attends church services.**

**Jerry Holden, 70, was born in Merry Oaks and has attended the church his whole life. He met his wife Karen Holden through the church, and today has taken on the job of caring for the church's property.**

was here at church time. 'Of course, come on in,' [we'd say]."

But she also understands why people have been drawn away, because it's happened in her own family. While Katherine and her brother still live near Merry Oaks, her daughter Sharron Bouquin, 68, moved to Apex and her cousin Faye Obler Crutchfield, 82, moved to Chapel Hill. With limited job opportunities or attractions in the area, it's hard to keep people in a place with history alone.

"When the new U.S. Hwy. 1 came through, they needed 25 acres of our land," Faye said. "That took all the stores and houses and things. There was not much left [afterward]. It was a thriving little community, at one time."

## Preserving a legacy

Merry Oaks got its name, according to Katherine Holden, because of the giant oak trees surrounding the property of Joe Mann, a once-renowned business owner who some say was Chatham County's first millionaire. Farmers would gather on his property after a long day, rest under the massive oaks and share their tall tales. It's a scene one could picture in modern day Merry Oaks, too.

Attending services at Merry Oaks nowadays, you'll still feel that sense of welcoming the stranger and embracing them with open arms. The regular attendees know intimate details of everyone's families and goes on. Any given Wednesday night service, stories of community members, mutual friends and family members are shared and everyone is prayed for. It's that deeply personal nature of the church that the congregation says you just can't get elsewhere.

"Here [at Merry Oaks] you pull in and it's like, 'Oh, I wonder if such and such is sick,

I wonder if something happened,'" Bouquin said. "In other places, especially urban areas, you don't have that."

While Bouquin no longer lives in the area, she still commutes to Merry Oaks every Wednesday and Sunday for services because of the value she finds in the community.

She's also been at the forefront of trying to preserve the historic church from being destroyed by NCDOT. She started a Facebook page called "Save Historic NC Church," which features 50-year-old photos from Easter egg hunts, weddings from the early 1900s and old photographs of some of the congregation members who still attend services there.

From contacting attorneys, examining NCDOT maps, pulling archival records and communicating with the press, it's not a stretch to say Bouquin is Merry Oaks' most vocal advocate. She says she continues to do this work because she sees it as living up to the legacy of her great uncle, Victor Obler.

Obler was, in many ways, the reason Merry Oaks was once a thriving community. A Russian-Jewish immigrant who started from nothing when he arrived in 1923, Obler decided to use his savvy to put Merry Oaks on the map. He owned pottery stores, and grocery stores and farms — all employing dozens of people throughout the town.

"Victor was one of the few in the area who would not have sat back and said, 'Well, government says they're doing this, so there's nothing I can do,'" Sharron said. "He would try to fight it, and most others would not."

Obler, along with Joe Mann, employed most of the town in the early 1930s, according to his daughter, Faye Obler Crutchfield. But in 1959, as U.S. Hwy. 1 was being built, many of Obler's properties were being taken by the state for construction. One of those properties included 11.7 acres and seven buildings. The N.C. Highway Commission offered him just \$23,000 for all of it. Obler sued the commission claiming it was worth at least \$78,000, equivalent to \$793,342 today according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Inflation Calculator.

According to an article in the Durham Morning Herald at the time, Obler equivocated his land being taken to Russian communist rule. In fact, he said the reason he came to the U.S. in the first place was because the Russian government took his home.

After fighting the settlement in court for four days, Obler was awarded \$27,250 on Sept. 3, 1959, for his property — equivalent to \$277,161 today. According to the Durham Sun, Obler said the settlement was "not satisfaction

to my heart."

"He knew there was no way we could keep what we had physically, but he thought he should be paid fairly," Faye said. "So he wasn't arguing about it. With the church, he would encourage the people to fight for it."

It's that spirit that Bouquin hopes to embody in her work to keep Merry Oaks alive.

In August, NCDOT held two public input sessions where the agency showed community members its roadway plans for the VinFast site. One was held in person at the Chatham Agriculture & Conference Center in Pittsboro and the other was held virtually. More than 250 Chatham residents attended these meetings, but Bouquin said they were inaccessible for many members of Merry Oaks because of the distance or limited internet capabilities.

"Some of [the congregation] has commented, 'We wouldn't know who to call, or what to say, and we couldn't fight or voice anything,'" she said.

So, as one of the youngest regular members of the church, Bouquin has taken on the task herself. She said, however, she isn't a community organizer — she isn't going to plan a protest or picket outside the Governor's Mansion. In her mind, that's not what Merry Oaks is about.

"That's not who we are," Sharron said. "Nobody is encouraging that."

She said the congregation urged her to continue investigating the situation and looking into the possibilities for the church's survival.

## No pickets, just fences

You may not see a protest, or mass community organizing from Merry Oaks; for the congregation, that's largely because of its Baptist faith. But make no mistake, that doesn't mean members are throwing in the towel on their sanctuary.

"If I'm going to listen to what the Bible says then I'm not going to protest," said Rev. Brady. "I'm going to live the life that would make Jesus proud."

Brady said the future of the church will always be in the hands of God, and when it comes time for God to take the church back, there's no fighting that will. To Brady, Merry Oaks is like King David pouring out the water despite the sacrifices of his men — standing at the mercy of a power beyond anyone's control.

"His will is not always clear," Brady said. "When the time comes, we will graciously give back to God what God gave to us. But in the meantime, the only thing I know how to do is stand."

If you had driven by Merry Oaks Baptist Church four months ago, you might have seen its historic white steeple protected by a dilapidated fence. Some pieces broken off, other portions fallen in the grass.

Following the August NCDOT meeting where the congregation discovered its beloved church was in jeopardy, they decided they weren't going anywhere anytime soon. To symbolize that, they decided to put up a new white vinyl fence in front of the church.

Brady said he had been planning to put up the fence for some time prior to that August meeting. But after it was held, fears among the community started growing. It was then that fence became a necessary symbol.

Soon after the fence went up, Brady said others started to follow suit. A neighbor who lived near the church, whose home was shrouded in overgrown bushes, cut his shrubbery a week after the fence went up. Brady said he also noticed some shorter lawns in the weeks that followed.

"If you honor what God has given you, you'll take care of it," Brady said. "If you don't, he'll take it away from you."

It's that same methodology that's motivated Jerry Holden to mow the grass and tidy up the space. Whether there is a physical Merry Oaks Baptist or not, he said there will always be a church. He said the congregation will still worship together, appreciate one another and engage the same way they always have.

"We're gonna act like we ain't going anywhere," Holden said. "I've had people in the community tell me — who have seen me down here cleaning up — 'You're wasting your time. It's gonna be torn down.' I say, 'Have they told you that?' 'Oh yeah, I know that,' they say. 'Well, they haven't told us that,' I say."



Staff photo by Anna Connors

**In October, Merry Oaks Baptist Church held its annual Homecoming service. Generations of members returned to worship together and share in fellowship after the service. Katherine recalls growing up that more than 50 people showed up to church every Sunday. 'The church would be packed,' Katherine said. 'You'd have Bible school, and the choir was filled and there were kids everywhere.' Today, the church's regular attendees have dwindled.**



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**COUNTY OF CHATHAM**  
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 2nd day of December, 2022, as Executor of the **ESTATE OF PATRICIA**

**B. LEARNED A/K/A PATRICIA LOU LEARNED**, Deceased, of Chatham County, North Carolina, does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to

the undersigned on or before the 16th day of March, 2023, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This, the 15th day of December, 2022.  
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Photo by Zachary Horner

**On Dec. 7, 23 employees from county governments and local nonprofits graduated from the Chatham County Leadership Academy, designed to give class members skills to be more effective and to assume leadership roles. The program helps prepare employees for greater responsibilities, including supervisory roles.**

# Chatham County's 2022 Leadership Academy class graduates

From Chatham County Government

**PITTSBORO** — Chatham County honored 23 graduates of its Leadership Academy Class of 2022 on Dec. 7. Since its inception in 2002, the leadership development program has produced 381 graduates.

The Leadership Academy was developed to help employees gain the skills necessary to effectively manage their jobs while preparing them for expanded responsibilities. It is the only such program in the state where all classes are taught by county employees, many of whom are graduates of the academy. In the past few years, the program was able to also include employees of the towns and nonprofit partners serving Chatham County.

"In its 20 years of existence, the Chatham Leadership Academy has consistently provided us an opportunity to improve our best asset — our people," County Manager Dan LaMontagne said. "I have no doubt these graduates will take the valuable skills they've honed back to their various departments within Chatham County, municipalities and non-profits to do great things. I appreciate the hard work and commitment of our instructors, coordinators and students to make this program a success."

Each year, the classmates and instructors



Photo by Zachary Horner

**Chatham County Manager Dan LaMontagne presented the Chatham Leadership Outstanding Student award to Mallory Peterson, who works for Chatham County's Parks and Recreation Department.**

select an outstanding student and this year's academy honored Mallory Peterson, who works for Chatham County's Parks and Recreation Department.

The 2022 graduates include  
• Lauren Brewer, Social Services  
• Theresa Buchanan, Public Health  
• Courtney Cooper-Lewter, Manager's Office

- William Curvin, Manager's Office
- Ashley Ellington, Sheriff's Office
- Kim Garrett, Social Services
- Hunter Glenn, Planning
- Chance Mashburn, Elections
- Lacey Monte, Aging Services
- Amy Moore, Management Information Systems
- Anthony Norton, Sheriff's Office
- Mallory Peterson, Parks and Recreation
- Caleb Phillips, Utilities & Water
- Joy Roberts, Boys and Girls Club of Central Carolina
- Luisa Rojas, Sheriff's Office
- Thomas Stanifer, Management Informa-

- tion Systems
  - Peter Stephan, Tax Office
  - Lucian Stewart, Management Information Systems
  - Kennedy Strowd, Fire Marshal's Office
  - Christopher Summerlin, Utilities & Water
  - Justin Taylor, Environmental Quality
  - Kaitlyn Warren, Court Services
  - Brittany York, Town of Siler City
- The Leadership Academy program must be completed over three years, but most graduates do so in two years. Those enrolled in the supervisory track must successfully complete 106 hours of classes, including 96 hours of mandatory classes and 10 hours of electives.

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# SPORTS NEWS & ENTERTAINMENT

DECEMBER 15 - 21, 2022 | chathamnewsrecord.com/sports | SECTION B

## BOYS BASKETBALL

# Putting Chatham County hoops on the map

BY EVAN ROGERS  
News + Record  
Correspondent

Four- and five-star recruits in high school basketball are hard to come by around the country.

But having multiple high-caliber players in one county? That's nearly impossible to find.

Jarin Stevenson and Drake Powell have been making waves in Chatham County ever since the two first stepped foot on a high school basketball court back in 2020. As freshmen teammates, they starred for Northwood and led the Chargers to a runner-up finish in the 3A state championship.

But when Seaforth High opened last year, the young duo was split up, with Northwood retaining the talents of Powell while Stevenson became a Hawk. Now in their junior seasons, Stevenson and Powell look to take their respective schools to uncharted heights this season.

### Powell lighting it up

Throughout his high school career, Powell has experienced success on the highest level.

After a runner-up finish his freshman year, Powell led the Chargers to the state quarterfinals last season. His plethora of success has earned him a four-star rating according to 247Sports, and the North Carolina commit currently ranks as the No. 50 prospect in the country in the Class of 2024.

In the Chargers' 76-65 win over Durham's C.E. Jordan last Tuesday, Powell's talents were on full display. He finished with a game-high 26 points and dished out seven assists, but even more impressive than that clinical display of offense was his defensive versatility.

Powell — who is committed to play collegiately at UNC — was all over the court against the Falcons, manning the back of the Chargers' full-court press and pressing opposing guards near half court when Northwood switched to a 1-2-2 zone. When the Chargers elect-

ed to run their man defense, the lanky guard matched up with Jordan sharp-shooter Walker Woodall, who Powell held to three points and a scoreless from beyond the 3-point arc.

"I've said it before, and I'll say it again — he's the best two-way player in the nation," Northwood head coach Matt Brown said. "He takes so much pride on the defensive end. I think that's what makes him so special."

On offense, Powell showed off his three-level scoring ability. The junior guard drilled a pair of 3-pointers, knocked down multiple mid-range shots and even grazed his head on the rim during his two-handed dunk. For the season, the junior is a county-high 23.3 points per game.

Yet, what really sets Powell apart is his willingness to feed his teammates. His selfless play — largely seen in transition — is something others noted as a rare attribute for a

See **HOOPS**, page B2



Staff photo by Simon Barbre

Northwood junior Drake Powell — a UNC commit — leads all county boys with 23.3 points per game so far this season.

# Chatham Charter seniors Walden, Harvey make mark in history books

BY JEREMY VERNON  
News + Record Sports  
Editor

Last week was one for the history books for the two Chatham Charter basketball programs.

Last Tuesday — in a 51-43 loss to Uwharrie Charter — senior Tamaya Walden scored 16 points to move into first place all-time in scoring among Chatham Charter girls players.

Through seven games this season, Walden is averaging 20.9 points, 5.6 assists and 3.6 steals per game. Heading into this Friday's game against Southern Alamance, Walden has a total of 1,285 points. In 77 career games with the Knights, the senior guard has totaled at least 20 points on 26 separate occasions.

"It's another goal accomplished," Walden said of her achievement. "Each season I come in setting goals for myself, and that was one of my goals coming into this year. Another one we have is going undefeated in conference play." Last season as a junior,

Walden averaged 22.0 points per game while leading the Knights to a 19-9 record and a 7-1 mark in conference play. Chatham Charter won its conference tournament, defeating Clover Garden in the championship game, but Clover Garden won the rematch between the two teams when they met in the second round of the 1A playoffs.

Playing her final season with the Knights, Walden is determined to make things different this time around.

"Losing to Clover Garden (in the playoffs) didn't sit well with me," Walden said. "I told my parents, after that game, I looked at the scoreboard and smiled, because I was never going to let that happen again."

But Walden wasn't the only Chatham Charter basketball player to etch their name in the record books last week. Last Friday, in a 68-43 win over Franklin Academy, senior Adam Harvey scored his 1,000th career point with the Knights' boys team.

See **MARK**, page B4

## INDOOR TRACK Northwood athletes, teams qualify for states

BY JEREMY VERNON  
News + Record Sports Editor

Competing at the COROS Explore Perfection Invitational in Winston-Salem on Saturday, the Northwood track and field teams had multiple individuals and a few relay teams qualify for February's state meet.

Northwood was one of 58 schools — which featured public schools at all four classifications and several private schools — to compete at the event Saturday.

"Overall, Saturday was exactly what I wanted it to be ..." said Northwood head coach Cameron Isenhour. "Now our kids can see the rankings and see what they need to do (to improve) the rest of the season."

The top performance of any Chargers' runners on the day was the race put on by the 4x800 boys relay team (sophomore Trey Hudson, junior Noah Nielson, seniors Christian Glick and Jackson Adams), which won in a time of 8:20.91. That time is faster than the 8:25.61 that won Northwood the 3A state title in the event last season and is currently the No. 2 time of any high school 4x800 team in the country this indoor season.

Two members of the 4x800 relay team also won individual events Saturday. Nielson took home first in the 1,000-meter race in a time of 2:38.34, less than half a second faster than the second-place finish-

See **STATES**, page B3



Staff photo by Lee Moody

Chatham Charter senior Tamaya Walden is now the all-time leading scorer in Chatham Charter girls history, sitting at 1,285 career points entering the week.

## GIRLS BASKETBALL

# Northwood girls getting back on track after 0-3 start

BY EVAN ROGERS  
News + Record  
Correspondent

PITTSBORO — A year removed from a 3A state title, the Northwood girls basketball team has gotten off to a rocky start to the 2022-23 season.

The Chargers lost three of their top four scorers from last year's championship squad, highlighted by the departure of Olivia Porter, who's now a freshman at Michigan State. With heaps of roster turnover, Northwood lost its first three games this season.

But in front of its home crowd — and the state championship banner — for the

first time this year, Northwood earned its second straight victory in commanding fashion, defeating Durham's C.E. Jordan 59-43, last Tuesday. The win featured a number of new faces stepping up throughout the game, a development head coach Kerri Snipes understands is part of her current team's process in defending its crown.

"We definitely had to make changes and get to figure out what everybody's role was, because we are a different team than last year," she said. "We had some really good senior leadership last year, so (we are) trying to fill those. And everybody's getting used to playing

with each other."

Entering last Tuesday's contest, the Chargers were challenged with slowing down one of the top scorers in the state, Sydney Barker.

The senior guard averages over 26 points per contest and is on pace to record her 1,000th career point this season. Barker's ability to create by herself was on display early, as her combination dribble moves created favorable mid-range and 3-point shot attempts, which she swished home with ease.

Midway through the first quarter, Barker accounted for

See **START**, page B4



Staff photo by Simon Barbre

Northwood senior Te'Keyah Bland (12) shakes hands with teammates between free-throws against C.E. Jordan last Tuesday.

**SCORES AND SCHEDULES**

**SCORES**

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6**

**Girls basketball**

Northwood 59, C.E. Jordan 43  
 Eastern Randolph 52, Chatham Central 29  
 Uwharrie Charter 51, Chatham Charter 43

**Boys basketball**

Northwood 76, C.E. Jordan 65  
 Eastern Randolph 92, Chatham Central 91  
 Chatham Charter 58, Uwharrie Charter 39

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7**

**Girls basketball**

Woods Charter 44, Cornertson Charter 35  
 Lee County 49, Jordan-Matthews 15

**Boys basketball**

Lee County 65, Jordan-Matthews 51  
 Cornerstone Charter 53, Woods Charter 16

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8**

**Girls basketball**

Southern Lee 41, Jordan-Matthews 35  
 Seaforth 61, Western Alamance 46

**Boys basketball**

Seaforth 46, Western Alamance 28  
 Southern Lee 51, Jordan-Matthews 40

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9**

**Girls basketball**

Chatham Charter 51, Franklin Academy 33

**Boys basketball**

Chatham Charter 68, Franklin Academy 43  
 Cannon Academy 74, Northwood 64

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10**

**Girls basketball**

Chatham Central 59, Ocracoke 14

**Boys basketball**

Corvian Community 68, Seaforth 62  
 Northwood 71, Carmel Christian 64

**MONDAY, DECEMBER 12**

**Girls basketball**

Union Pines 52, Jordan-Matthews 2

**SCHEDULES**

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13**

**Wrestling**

Chatham Central at Graham (6 p.m.)

**Girls basketball**

Seaforth at Cummings (6 p.m.)  
 Northwood vs. Williams (6 p.m.)  
 Chatham Central vs. Graham (6 p.m.)  
 Jordan-Matthews vs. North Moore (6 p.m.)

**Boys basketball**

Seaforth at Cummings (7:30 p.m.)  
 Northwood vs. Williams (7:30 p.m.)  
 Chatham Central vs. Graham (7:30 p.m.)  
 Jordan-Matthews vs. North Moore (7:30 p.m.)

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14**

**Swimming**

Jordan-Matthews at Ash YMCA (6 p.m.)

**Wrestling**

Seaforth vs. North Moore (6 p.m.)  
 Jordan-Matthews vs. Cummings (6 p.m.)

**Girls basketball**

Seaforth at Southwest Guilford ( 6 p.m.)  
 Northwood at Orange (6 p.m.)

**Boys basketball**

Northwood at Orange (7:30 p.m.)

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15**

**Swimming**

Seaforth vs. Cary Academy at Triangle Aquatics Center (11 a.m.)

**Girls basketball**

Chatham Central at Harnett Central (6 p.m.)

**Boys basketball**

Chatham Central at Harnett Central (7:30 p.m.)

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16**

**Wrestling**

Chatham Central at Eastern Alamance (6 p.m.)

**Girls basketball**

Seaforth vs. Bartlett Yancey (6 p.m.)  
 Northwood vs. Cedar Ridge (6 p.m.)  
 Jordan-Matthews at Cummings (6 p.m.)  
 Chatham Charter at Southern Alamance (6 p.m.)

**Boys basketball**

Seaforth vs. Bartlett Yancey (7:30 p.m.)  
 Northwood vs. Cedar Ridge (7:30 p.m.)  
 Jordan-Matthews at Cummings (7:30 p.m.)  
 Chatham Charter at Southern Alamance (7:30)

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17**

**Indoor track**

Northwood at COROS Holiday Classic in Winston-Salem (10 a.m.)

**HOOPS**

Continued from page B1  
 player of Powell’s caliber. Brown even went on to say that his willingness to pass, combined with his elite shooting-making ability, make Powell a player unique in the head coach’s tenure in Pittsboro.

“I’ve been trying to understand that getting to the next level is not all about scoring,” Powell said. “It’s what you can do other than score to impact the game. I have joy for my teammates’ success, as well as my own.”

With Powell leading the charge this year, Northwood looks to make its way back to the state championship game and this time come out victorious. At the time of the News + Record going to press, the Chargers were 5-1 heading into their conference opener Tuesday night.

**Stevenson doing it all**

As Stevenson goes, the Hawks tend to follow.

The heart and soul of Seaforth basketball is undoubtedly its star forward, and the top-ranked junior in North Carolina in the Class of 2024 already holds offers from some of the nation’s top programs, including UNC and Virginia.

In the Hawks’ 46-28 win over Western Alamance last Thursday, Seaforth faced the Warriors’ aggressive full-court press the entire night. Rather than dishing it off to a Hawk guard to maneuver through the pressure, Seaforth opted to use Stevenson as the lead ball-handler.

Despite his rangy stature at 6-foot-10, Stevenson’s skillset stretches well beyond your typical back-to-the-basket forward. The junior big man has a tight handle, to which he used to single-handedly break Western Alamance’s press numerous times Thursday night — a unique ability some of Stevenson’s teammates



Staff photo by Simon Barbre

**Seaforth junior Jarin Stevenson is considered the No. 1 player from North Carolina in the Class of 2024, according to 247Sports.**

**After winning just one of its first five games a season ago, the Hawks boasted a 4-2 record entering Tuesday’s game against Cummings.**

described as a “luxury.” “With this team we don’t have much ball-handling,” Stevenson said. “I know there’s a lot of pressure and responsibility for me. I know I’m confident in my ball-handling because I’ve put the work in.”  
 Aside from being the lone Hawk to finish in double figures — with 15 points — Stevenson’s presence was felt on the defense end. The five-star prospect held down the center of the Hawks’ zone defense and negated almost every paint touch the Warriors made. “(Jarin’s) very important, he does a lot for

us for defense,” Seaforth head coach Jarod Stevenson — Jarin’s father — said. “I think that guys trust that they can take gambles sometimes, because they know that he’s back there behind them and he’s going to protect the basket.”

After winning just one of its first five games a season ago, the Hawks boasted a 4-2 record entering Tuesday’s game against Cummings.

With Stevenson, who leads his team in points (23.0), rebounds (10.2) and blocks (3.2) per game, heading both ends of the floor, Seaforth is hoping to make noise around the county and state, despite the varsity program only being in its second year.

“People doubted us, and we turned it around,” sophomore guard Noah Lewis said. “We came back this year and starting off 4-2, hopefully we can keep it going.”

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The 2023 trip is June 17-23 and the deadline for all applications is Jan. 23. Visit [CEMCPower.com](http://CEMCPower.com) to apply or to find out more information on this incredible opportunity. Central Electric is an equal opportunity provider and employer.





# NCHSAA to vote in February on adding three classifications

BY JEREMY VERNON  
News + Record Sports Editor

Two weeks ago, the North Carolina High School Athletic Association

(NCHSAA) Board of Directors announced that they had been presented a proposal to increase the number of classifications for high school sports from the

current four to seven.

According to High School OT, the proposal would limit the number of schools in each classification to 64, meaning there would need to be

seven classifications with 432 current member schools.

As things stand, there are four classifications for NCHSAA member schools — 1A, 2A, 3A and 4A. The new proposal would introduce three new classifications, as well as limit the number of playoff teams in each sport for each classification down to 32. That said, some sports that do not have all 432 member schools participating might feature fewer classifications, and some schools might compete in different classifications in different sports.

High School OT reported that both the N.C. Football and Basketball Coaches Associations are supportive of the new proposal, which will be put to a vote in February. For the proposal to be approved, three-fourths of the current 432 member schools must vote for it.

The introduction of new classifications would make North Carolina's high school athletic landscape similar to some of country's athletic hot spots. Members of the Georgia High School Athletic Association are separated into seven classifications, with new 6A and 7A classifications being introduced in the past decade.

So, how could this affect Chatham County schools if the proposal is approved?

The answer is unclear at this point in time. As things stand, all six Chatham County high schools are NCHSAA members. Northwood — which has the highest student population of any county high school — competes at the 3A level in all sports. Seaforth and Jordan-Matthews are 2A schools, while Chatham Central, Chatham Charter and Woods Charter all compete at the 1A level.

The introduction of new classifications could help Chatham County schools become more competitive in football. This past fall, the four Chatham County football teams — Northwood, Seaforth, Jordan-Matthews and Chatham Central — combined to go 7-34 this past season. Adding more classifications could shake up the landscape, as some of the stronger programs that benefit from higher student populations would likely be placed in higher classifications than they are currently.

One issue that will need to be addressed if the proposal is approved is what to do with conferences. In a presentation to the board,

NCHSAA Assistant Commissioner of Sports Tra Waters said that the association would likely need to do away with conferences and instead adopt a district or regional model.

In Georgia, each athletic classification is separated into eight regions, with Region 1 being the southernmost region, and so on. In Georgia, region realignment happens every two years, and normally 10 schools belong to each region.

If the proposal is approved, there's a good chance the smaller schools in the county, namely Jordan-Matthews, Chatham Central and Chatham Charter, could compete against one another as part of the same region. As things stand, Jordan-Matthews and Chatham Central belong to the Mid-Carolina 1A/2A Conference with Seaforth, while Chatham Charter and Woods Charter are in the "1A Conference 13" which features other charter and academy schools from the surrounding counties.

Sports Editor Jeremy Vernon can be reached at [jeremy@chathamnr.com](mailto:jeremy@chathamnr.com) or on Twitter at @jbo\_ernon.



## Council on Aging Activities Calendar

December 19th through December 23rd

Monday, December 19

Eastern Chatham Senior Center

- 8:15 a.m. - **Body Conditioning w/Jackie**
- 9 a.m. - **Chair Yoga w/Liz (in-person and Zoom)**
- 10 a.m. - **Geri-Fit w/Jackie**
- 11 a.m. - **Cornhole & Shuffleboard**
- 2 p.m. - **Table Tennis**
- 3 p.m. - **Caregiver Support Group**

Western Chatham Senior Center

- 9 a.m. - **Strong & Fit w/Olivia**
- 10 a.m. - **Walking Through Grief Support Group; December Birthday Party**
- 10:30 a.m. - **Music w/Tom Hildebrand & Tom Kenlan**
- 2 p.m. - **Strength & Tone**

Tuesday, December 20

Eastern Chatham Senior Center

- 8:15 a.m. - **Body Conditioning w/Jackie**
- 9 a.m. - **3G's Men's Group**
- 10 a.m. - **Woodcarvers**
- 1 p.m. - **Rummikub**

Western Chatham Senior Center

- 9:45 a.m. - **Chair Exercises w/Olivia for Beginners (in-person and Zoom)**
- 1 p.m. - **Rook/Phase 10/Rummikub; Book Club; "Bring Your Own Project" Gathering**

Wednesday, December 21

Eastern Chatham Senior Center

- 8:15 a.m. - **Body Conditioning w/Jackie**
- 10 a.m. - **Chair Yoga w/Liz (in-person and Zoom); Coffee & Games w/Pittsboro Police Department**
- 11 a.m. - **Mind Games w/Alan**
- 1 p.m. - **Open Art Studio**

Western Chatham Senior Center

- 8 a.m. - **Veterans Benefit Assistance**
- 9 a.m. - **Strong & Fit w/Olivia**
- 10 a.m. - **Bible Study; Nutrition Education w/Ann Clark**
- 1 p.m. - **Cornhole**
- 2 p.m. - **Crafting w/Kathryn (Felt Ornaments)**

Thursday, December 22

Eastern Chatham Senior Center

- 8:15 a.m. - **Body Conditioning w/Jackie**
- 10 a.m. - **Crafts and Conversation; Let's Move w/Jackie**
- 11 a.m. - **Managing Holiday Stress w/Tammy from Therapeutic Alternatives**
- 1 p.m. - **Board Games & Cards**
- 3 p.m. - **Gentle Yoga w/Liz**

Western Chatham Senior Center

- 9:30 a.m. - **Men's Coffee & Conversations**
- 10 a.m. - **Music Jam Session**
- 2 p.m. - **Tai Chi**
- 3 p.m. - **Movie - It's A Wonderful Life**

Friday, December 23

Council on Aging Closed

Western Chatham Senior Center

- 7 p.m. - **Friday Night Dance (fee required to attend)**

For more information on these and other programs, call our centers Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Eastern Chatham Senior Center  
919-542-4512

Western Chatham Senior Center  
919-742-3975

Visit our website at [www.chathamcoa.org](http://www.chathamcoa.org)

## STATES

Continued from page B1

er. Nielson's time was a new personal record and would have been the third-fastest time in the event at last year's 3A indoor state meet.

Glick, meanwhile, won the 1,600-meter race Saturday in a time of 4:35.55, which was also a new personal record. That time would have ranked eighth at last season's 3A indoor state meet and is the current No. 1 time of any 3A runner in North Carolina this season.

Nielson and Glick also led the Northwood boys 4x400 team to a fourth-place finish in a time of 3:42.47. The other two members of the winning relay team were Adams

and senior Cabot Priddle.

On the girls side, the only Northwood athlete to qualify for states was senior Sophia Cremeans, who came in ninth in the pole vault with a height of 8.5 feet. The height was a new personal record for Cremeans, who cleared a height of eight feet the previous weekend at the Pole Vault Carolina 100th Invitational.

Northwood's indoor teams will next compete at the COROS Holiday Classic on Dec. 17 in Winston-Salem, the last event before the holiday break. The Chargers will return to the track on Jan. 7 at the Just Don't Lose HS Classic, also in Winston-Salem.

Isenhour said that while the three-week break from competition

isn't ideal, the Chargers figure to be among the top 3A teams, especially on the boys side, when they return to action.

"Our boys are trying to win the 3A state meet, led by a strong distance trio," Isenhour said. "On the girls side, we're just trying to qualify as many individuals as possible. The hope is these next few weeks (during the break), that they're getting out the door, working out and doing what they need to do to be successful, so when we come back in January, we can pick up where we left off."

Sports Editor Jeremy Vernon can be reached at [jeremy@chathamnr.com](mailto:jeremy@chathamnr.com) or on Twitter at @jbo\_ernon.

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# The World Cup won't be the same without Grant Wahl



**JEREMY VERNON**  
Sports Editor

This Saturday marks the finals of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, but it will be hard for me to focus on anything happening on the pitch once things kick off.

Last Friday night, as I was lying in bed scrolling through Twitter, I caught wind that something had happened to U.S. journalist Grant Wahl, arguably the nation's premier soccer journalist. Then I saw the Instagram post from his brother, Eric, announcing that Grant had died in Doha while covering the quarterfinal matchup between Argentina and the Netherlands.

I couldn't believe what I was seeing.

Wahl, 48, had complained of feeling ill earlier in the week, and he told people on his podcast that he had been treated at the media center with what he expected was bronchitis. But now he was gone, and the questions began to flood social media.

The shock and sadness over Wahl's death quickly turned to anger and speculation, as his brother Eric claimed in an Instagram story that he thought his brother had been murdered rather than dying of a mysterious illness.

That theory has been pushed across social media in the week since his death. Wahl was a vocal critic of Qatar's World Cup organizers. His final post on his Substack on Dec. 8 was about how Qatari officials seemingly "don't care" about the numerous deaths of migrant workers, including one that happened in the opening

few days of the tournament.

In another viral incident, Wahl was stopped by stadium security from entering the United States' first group stage game against Wales after showing up to the gate in a rainbow-colored shirt in support of the LGBTQ+ community. Wahl said he was briefly detained before being released and allowed to enter the stadium to cover the match.

The courage Wahl showed during his time in Doha was immense. He knew he would catch hell for wearing the rainbow shirt, which he did in part to support his brother, who is gay. He also challenged Qatari officials with tough questions and continued to try and hold them accountable.

I don't know how exactly Wahl died, and I'd like not to speculate until a full autopsy is performed. That said, we should find out soon, as Wahl's body was returned to the U.S.

on Monday morning. For what it's worth, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said that the U.S. had no reason to expect foul play.

From here, I would like to remember Grant Wahl for his years of journalistic service, not his shocking final moments. He was the person who first introduced the masses to LeBron James with a 2002 Sports Illustrated feature on the then-high school junior. He was an all-star college basketball reporter in the earlier stages of his career, and I still remember the story he wrote about UNC's Tyler Hansbrough — titled "March Madman" — ahead of the 2008 NCAA Tournament.

Wahl eventually transitioned into full-time soccer writing, and he was the authoritative voice on the sport for millions of Americans who have discovered the global game over the

past decade.

His contributions to the sport, especially his support of the National Women's Soccer League and women's soccer in general, was commendable. When the news of his death broke, a flood of support came in from some of the sport's best female athletes, including U.S. legends Julie Foudu, Abby Wambach and Carli Lloyd.

This World Cup final, or any in the future, won't feel the same without Wahl covering it. It's especially disheartening knowing the next tournament is being hosted by the U.S., Canada and Mexico.

Wahl's insight will be missed, but his impact on the game will not be forgotten.

We can't let it.

*Sports Editor Jeremy Vernon can be reached at [jeremy@chathamnr.com](mailto:jeremy@chathamnr.com) or on Twitter at [@jbo\\_ernon](https://twitter.com/jbo_ernon).*

## Thinking of a pet as a Christmas gift? Animal activists urge caution

BY TAYLOR HEEDEN  
News + Record Staff

SILER CITY — With the holidays rapidly approaching, one Chatham resident is urging residents to think carefully about gifting their loved ones a new, furry best friend.

Rev. Terry Dorsey — one of the founding members of Guardians of Angels (now Team GOA) — said as an animal activist in Chatham County, he warns his fellow Chathamites not to gift their family or friends a pet this holiday season, as a lot of them will most likely end up back at the shelter.

"I cringe when I think of Christmas because a lot of people are going to just get puppies and kittens, and they have no idea of the chewing and the pooping that goes on," Dorsey said. "They don't think that through unless they've had pets themselves."

Those animals who often become the stars of viral Christmas present reveals are often surrendered to shelters after the holiday season. Shelters across the U.S. have reported that one in 10 animals surrendered in the first half of the year were "present pets," which takes a toll on resources.

"Puppies and kittens are cute, but very often kids and families don't know what the full mount of responsibility is," Dorsey said. "So after a few weeks, they just take them to the shelter, and now, the shelters are pretty full already."

Dorsey — who in the past has rescued dumped stray cats and had them spayed or neutered — said with the work he's done, he has already seen an increase in abandoned animals leading up to the holiday season.

One of the reasons some people

surrender their beloved pets is due to the costs of healthcare, specifically the cost of spaying or neutering an animal. Dorsey said the county has a solution to that — a low-cost spay/neuter voucher.

If the low-cost spay/neuter vouchers are still not enough for an individual to afford their pet, Dorsey said it's best to return the animal to a shelter, instead of leaving the pet behind.

"Abandoning an animal is a Class B misdemeanor — it's against the law to do it, but people are doing it all over the county, especially in Siler City," Dorsey said. "Until towns work with the county to start addressing that issue, it's going to continue to be one."

He said when parents are considering giving their children a cat or dog this holiday season, they should consider offering to have a conversation about responsibility first.

"They can consider [placing] a card under the tree saying they're going to go to the shelter and get a puppy, but first they're going to talk about what that means, making sure that the kid is ready," Dorsey said.

Pet ownership is one of the largest forms of responsibility for a child, according to Dorsey, so having a conversation about the chores that come with a pet is crucial before one is brought home.

"One thing is just to prepare kids for what pet ownership means, and then the other is to have a family go to the shelter, maybe even together to pick out an animal," Dorsey said. "Make sure that the kid is ready because every kid says they'll take care of them but never does so."

*Reporter Taylor Heeden can be reached at [theeden@chathamnr.com](mailto:theeden@chathamnr.com).*

### CHURCH

**MITCHELL CHAPEL A.M.E. ZION**

Mitchell Chapel A.M.E. Zion's Missionary Department will light luminaries for our second annual Luminaries Lighting Event. Please come out and join us at 5 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 18.

The church is located at 1085 Mitchell Chapel Road, Pittsboro.

**LOVES CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH**

The adult choir of Loves Creek Baptist Church will present

its annual Christmas Cantata during the Sunday morning worship service at 10 a.m. on Sunday, Dec. 18.

Invite a friend and join us for this service with worship in song.

The church is located at 1745 East 11th Street, Siler City.

### MARK

Continued from page B1

Harvey totaled 23 points in the victory and now has 1,011 for his career entering Friday's game against Southern Alamance. He is now the third Chatham Charter boys player to enter the 1,000-point club, joining 2020 grad Jordan Hamilton (1,628) and 2018 grad Jason Foulk (1,483).

"I was a bit nervous before the game," Harvey said. "I didn't know what was going to happen, or how it was going to come, or what was going to happen when I got it, but when I did, everybody was really excited for me. They all celebrated me and showed a lot of support. All the support from them, my coaches, all my friends and family — it was amazing."

For the season, the Chatham Charter boys are a perfect 11-0. The Knights are trying to reach the summit of the 1A classification this season after

falling in the state final to Hayesville in overtime.

The Knights figure to go as far as Harvey can lead them, but they have gotten big contributions from some of their younger players this season.

One of those happens to be Adam's younger brother, Beau, who is a sophomore on the team. Through Chatham Charter's first 11 games, Beau is one of three players averaging double-digit points (10.8) while leading the Knights in both assists (5.3) and steals (5.0) per game.

"I love playing with him," Adam said of his younger brother. "We've been playing together ever since I was in the fourth grade. It's just a crazy experience to get to play with him at this level of basketball, go to the state championship with him and see his improvement. His 3-point shot has improved drastically. It's fun to see."

*Sports Editor Jeremy Vernon can be reached at [jeremy@chathamnr.com](mailto:jeremy@chathamnr.com) or on Twitter at [@jbo\\_ernon](https://twitter.com/jbo_ernon).*

### START

Continued from page B1

a 7-0 run by herself, as a contested 3-pointer from the wing gave Jordan an 11-4 lead.

"(Barker) was really shift," junior guard Skylar Adams said. "I knew I had to play up on her but I didn't want to get beat."

But it wasn't just the Falcons' isolation offense that gave Northwood troubles.

Jordan ran a 2-2-1 full court press for most of the night. In the first half, the visitors found success with the added pressure, turning the Chargers over on numerous occasions and even causing a five-second inbound violation.

Each turnover led to more opportunities for Barker to create in the half court, and Jordan entered the half ahead by three points, in large part due to 15 first-half points from their lead guard.

"We came out a little slow," Snipes said. "After we got into the second half we started moving to the open spots to where you're supposed to be."

Out of the break, Northwood devised a new strategy to not only dismantle the Falcons' press, but slow down Barker.

The Chargers began to flash someone in the heart of the zone pressure, usually planting senior forward Te'Keyah Bland near half court. From there, Northwood would usually find Bland, who was then responsible for either passing to a Charger on the opposite end cutting toward the basket or creating a play by herself.

The senior's experience and decision-making paid dividends. In



Staff photo by Simon Barbre

**Northwood girls basketball coach Kerri Snipes speaks with her team during a timeout in a win over C.E. Jordan last Tuesday.**

a third quarter that saw Northwood take a 13-point advantage, Bland led the charge by canning a shot from distance and displaying her array of post moves.

"We've got a couple of young ones on the team," Bland said. "So one thing I learned is really I have to set the tone for them — really make everyone comfortable."

With their offense returning to form, the Chargers began to defend Barker and the Falcons with more success. Adams — who was tabbed the primary defender on Jordan's leading scorer — began to press up higher on Barker. The intensified attack was coupled

with immediate help by Northwood teammates on any driving attempts by Barker, forcing her into tougher shot attempts.

After scoring 11 points in the first quarter, Barker only managed four buckets across the game's final three periods.

Snipes hopes the efficient display of togetherness on both ends is a sign that Northwood has put its early struggles in the rear-view and have returned to their all-state level of play.

"It's taken us a few games to kind of get settled in," she said. "I was really impressed with the way we came out in the second half of this game."



As Rotarians, we are proud of our community & do all we can to showcase it's beauty. We recognize it takes an ongoing effort to maintain the best living space for current & future generations, as such, we gather regularly to clean our section of the local highway, build planter boxes for pollinator gardens, and seek out multiple other opportunities

to build upon the strengths of Pittsboro. You are cordially invited to pull up a chair at an upcoming weekly meeting (Wednesdays at noon @ Postal Fish) to learn more about us & our mission.



Chatham Land Team: Rotarians  
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THE SHOW MUST GO ON

# North Chatham Performing Arts Center gives update on efforts

CN+R Staff Report

PITTSBORO — Pittsboro Youth Theater's final production of 2022 — "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever" on stage Dec. 16 to 18 — is also the last production ever in Sweet Bee Theater's downtown Pittsboro location.

their lease unexpectedly fell through in August, said PYT co-founder Craig Witter, so the family of performance arts organizations at CFTA, including local actors, dancers and musicians, had to find a new home in a hurry.

Witter, along with Pittsboro Youth Theater's

other co-founder, Tammy Matthews, say they've poured their hearts and emptied their pockets into their community arts organizations since 2012. The couple searched and found a new location for their performing arts center in Bynum. Matthews and Witter quickly saw the vision and de-

cided the new space — to be called NCPAC (North Chatham Performing Arts Center) — would be a perfect centerpiece for patrons and theater audiences from Chatham and the Triangle.

"Our new Sweet Bee Theater will provide a much more rewarding theater experience for actors and audiences," Matthews said. In addition, to greatly enhance theater, NCPAC will provide expanded music instruction facilities and the finest dance floor and education space in Chatham.

Matthews and Witter say they cannot do all

this themselves: they need the community's help to continue and expand the only performing arts center in Chatham. Tax-deductible donations are needed to build-out NCPAC — now an empty building shell. Every small donation will make a positive difference in the lives of countless children, families and the Chatham community for decades to come.

"Tammy and I love to look back at all the children we've seen blossom as they've worked with us, and worked together in creative teams," Witter said. "Everybody

knows 'it takes a village.' What folks need to know right now is that the village has to step up and put a little something under the Christmas tree for Pittsboro Youth Theater."

"Sing. Dance. Act. It's the trifecta that makes Pittsboro Youth Theater such an asset to the Chatham community," he said.

To ensure the only performing arts center in Chatham continues to thrive with their patrons, please consider making a tax-deductible donation online, at [www.pittsboroyouththeater.com](http://www.pittsboroyouththeater.com).

## Protect Financial Accounts from "Cyberthieves"

Cybercrime is booming. In 2021, the FBI reported that cybercriminals scammed nearly \$7 billion from Americans — a figure slightly higher than the gross domestic product (GDP) of Switzerland for that year, according to research organization World Economics. How can you protect yourself from cyberthieves?

Here are some suggestions that can help:

- **Watch out for "phishing" attempts.** You may receive emails that appear to be from a legitimate firm, requesting information your financial institution would never request online — confirmation of an account number, password, Social Security number, credit card number and so on. These notes can look official, often incorporating a firm's logo, so pay close attention to what's being asked of you.

- **Think twice before clicking or downloading.** If you are suspicious about a communication, don't click on a link or download an attachment — instead, go to your financial firm's website or use their app to verify they sent the information or request.

- **Become adept with passwords.** Use a different password for each of your accounts and change your passwords regularly. Of course, maintaining multiple passwords can be confusing, so you might want to consider using password management software, which generates passwords, stores them in an encrypted database and locks them behind a master password — which is the only one you'll need to remember.

- **Use your own devices.** Try to avoid using public computers or devices that aren't yours to access your financial accounts. If you do use another computer, clear your browsing history after you log out of your account.

- **Be cautious about using Wi-Fi when traveling.** When you're on the road, you may want to use public hotspots, such as wireless networks in airports and hotels.

But many people don't realize that these hotspots reduce their security settings to make access easier, which, in turn, makes it easier for cyberthieves to intercept your information. In fact, some hackers even build their own public hotspots to draw in internet-seekers in an effort to commit theft. So, if at all possible, wait until you can access a trusted, encrypted network before engaging in any communications or activity involving your financial accounts.

- **Don't give up control of your computer.** Under no circumstances should you provide remote access to your computer to a stranger who contacts you, possibly with an offer to help "disinfect" your computer. If you do think your device has an issue with malicious software, contact a legitimate technician for assistance.

- **Know whom you're calling for help.** If you need assistance from, say, a customer service area of a financial institution, make sure you know the phone number is accurate and legitimate — possibly one from a billing or confirmation statement. Some people have been scammed by Googling "support" numbers that belonged to fraudsters who asked for sensitive information.

- **Review all correspondence with your financial services provider.** Keep a close eye on your account activity and statements. If you see mistakes or unauthorized activity in your account, contact your financial institution immediately.

Advanced technology has brought many benefits, but also many more opportunities for financial crimes. By taking the above steps, and others that may be needed, you can go a long way toward defending yourself against persistent and clever cyberthieves.

*This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor.*

Edward Jones, Member SIPC



Courtesy of CCCC

Indira Everett (front left), Duke Energy's director for the east region, presents a \$50,000 check for workforce development training to Dr. Lisa M. Chapman (front right), Central Carolina Community College's president. Standing behind are, from left: Lynda Turbeville, chairperson of the CCCC Foundation Board of Directors; Dr. Emily C. Hare, CCCC Foundation executive director; Dr. Mark Hall, CCCC Chatham County Provost; Margaret Roberton, CCCC vice president for workforce development; Julian Philpott, chairperson of the CCCC Board of Trustees; and Kelly Klug, CCCC director of grants development.

## Duke Energy gives CCCC Foundation \$50,000 grant

From Central Carolina Community College

SANFORD — Duke Energy has provided a \$50,000 grant to the Central Carolina Community College Foundation to support workforce and economic development efforts.

Funding will be used to develop and provide workforce training in support of area employers, including VinFast and Wolfspeed.

"Duke Energy is committed to creating access to education and workforce development

for people in the communities where we live and work," Indira Everett, director for Duke Energy's east region, said. "Skilled workers allow our communities to thrive. Equipping individuals with critical skills and knowledge is an important part of meeting the state's evolving workforce needs."

CCCC officials are appreciative of the grant.

"Our friends at Duke Energy and the Duke Energy Foundation have always been so supportive of the work of all of our 58 community colleges,"

CCCC President Dr. Lisa M. Chapman said. "We are especially appreciative of this community investment and thankful for our partners continuing to help us take care of our residents and our employers."

"Central Carolina Community College is thankful to Duke Energy, one of our outstanding community partners, for providing funding to support workforce training," Julian Philpott, chair of the CCCC Board of Trustees, said. "Thank you Duke Energy for your support and for being a great partner in helping our communities thrive and succeed."

"CCCC appreciates Duke Energy's continued support of the college and our efforts to ensure that the individuals in our communities have the training needed to access amazing career opportunities in manufacturing throughout the region," Margaret Roberton, CCCC vice president for workforce development, said. "Duke Energy's investment in workforce training is a great example of partnership with community colleges and commitment to the residents of North Carolina."

The CCCC Foundation is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization affiliated with, but independent of, the college. It receives donations of money and equipment on behalf of CCCC and uses them to promote the educational mission of the college and assist students through scholarships and grants.

For information on giving to the CCCC Foundation, contact Dr. Emily C. Hare, executive director of the CCCC Foundation, 919-718-7230, or [ehare@cccc.edu](mailto:ehare@cccc.edu).

<p><b>Pittsboro</b> Chad Virgil, CFP®, ChFC®, CLU® 630 East St Suite 2 919-545-5669</p>	<p><b>Governors Club</b> Sharon A Dickens, AAMS® 50101 Governors Dr Suite 118 919-967-9968</p>	<p><b>Pittsboro</b> Lee Shanklin, AAMS® 120 Lowes Drive Suite 107 919-545-0125</p>
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# POLICE REPORTS

## ARREST BLOTTER

On Nov. 29, Tommy Shain Guthrie, 46, of 1124 Van Thomas Road, Pittsboro, was arrested by Deputy Conner Lee for failure to appear. He was issued a \$500 secured bond and is scheduled to appear in Surry County District Court on Dec. 13.

On Nov. 30, Ieesha Nichole Alston, 31, of 902 Driftwood Drive, Siler City, was arrested by Deputy Reggie Griffin for other offenses and driving left of center. She was issued a \$2,000 secured bond and is scheduled to appear in Lee County District Court on Jan. 9.

On Dec. 2, Carlos Junior Mendoza, 25, of 2389 Bear Creek Church Road, Bear Creek, was arrested by Deputy Joseph Scott for failure to appear. He was issued a \$100,000 secured bond and is scheduled to appear in Chatham County Superior Court on Dec. 15. Mendoza was also arrested by Deputy Scott for failure to appear. He was issued a \$10,000 secured bond and is scheduled to appear in Chatham County District Court on Dec. 14.

On Dec. 3, Codie Nicole Johnson, 27, of 7721 Lanes Mill Road, Bennett, was arrested by Deputy Alberto Estrada for resisting public officer and injury to personal property. She was

issued a \$500 secured bond and is scheduled to appear in Chatham County District Court on Dec. 13.

On Dec. 3, John Monroy-Pulido, 31, of 23 Glendale Drive, Pittsboro, was arrested by Deputy Reid Allshouse for assault on a female. He was issued no bond and is scheduled to appear in Chatham County District Court on Dec. 14.

On Dec. 4, Teddy Leon Martin, 34, of 181 Alex Watson Road, Pittsboro, was arrested by Deputy Rami Amer for robbery with a dangerous weapon, financial card theft, identity theft, felony conspiracy and misdemeanor larceny. He was issued a \$25,000 secured bond and is scheduled to appear in Chatham County District Court on Dec. 14.

On Dec. 4, Tiffany Leigh Kearns, 31, of 181 Alex Watson Road, Siler City, was arrested by Cpl. Michael Cox for robbery with a dangerous weapon, identity theft, financial card theft, felony conspiracy, communicating threats and larceny. She was issued a \$25,000 secured bond and is scheduled to appear in Chatham County District Court on Jan. 30.

On Dec. 5, Codie Nicole Johnson, 27, of 1012 Bacon St., Durham, was arrested by Deputy Amer for misdemeanor probation violation. She was

issued a \$5,000 secured bond and is scheduled to appear in Wake County District Court on Dec. 29.

On Dec. 5, Charles Raymond Hart Jr., 54, of 8238 Pittsboro Goldston Road, Goldston, was arrested by Cpl. Brandal Harrington for Domestic Violence Protection Order violation. He was issued a Chatham County District Court on Dec. 14.

On Dec. 6, William Dennis Riker Jr., 46, of 310 West Philadelphia Ave., Pine Bluff, was arrested by Deputy Tyler Welch for injury to personal property. He was issued a written promise to appear in Chatham County District Court on Dec. 14.

On Dec. 7, Tiffany Leigh Kearns, 31, of 181 Alex Watson Road, Siler City, was arrested by Deputy Reid Kirkman for magistrate's order for fugitive. She was issued a \$50,000 secured bond and is scheduled to appear in Chatham County District Court on Jan. 30.

On Dec. 8, Dwayne Lenard Bland, 44, of 434 Dowd Hill Road, Siler City, was arrested by Deputy Andrew Gray for failure to appear regarding child support. He was issued a \$25,000 secured bond and is scheduled to appear in Hillsborough District Court on Dec. 9.

On Dec. 10, Trent Alexander Phillips, 36, of 207 Delphus Stinson Road, Goldston, was arrested by Cpl. Brandal Harrington for probation violation. He was issued a \$5,000 secured bond and is scheduled to appear in Chatham County District Court on Dec. 14.

Phillips was also arrested by Cpl. Harrington for failure to appear. He was issued a \$10,000 secured bond and is scheduled to appear in Chatham County District Court on Dec. 14. On Dec. 10, Fernando Exau Hernandez, 32, of 3212 Hamp Stone Road, Siler City, was arrested by Cpl. Harrington for child support. He was issued a \$1,200 secured bond and is scheduled to appear in Durham County District Court on Jan. 13.

## GROUP ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH ARMED ROBBERY

A series of arrests have been made in connection with an armed robbery which occurred in Chatham County in early November. The victim in the case reported being threatened, robbed and held against her will in the home of Peter John Mein, 62, of 311 Piney Grove Church Road, Siler City. Mein, an acquaintance of

the victim, was subsequently charged with felony robbery with a dangerous weapon, felony financial card theft, two counts of felony obtaining property by false pretense, felony identity theft, felony conspiracy and larceny. Mein was arrested on Nov. 27 and held under a \$15,000 secured bond.

In addition to Mein, investigators have charged Teddy Martin, 34, and Tiffany Kearns, 31, with felony robbery with a dangerous weapon, felony financial card theft, felony identity theft, felony conspiracy and larceny. Kearns was also individually charged with communicating threats. Both were arrested and assigned \$25,000 secured bonds for their roles in the crime.

Juan Beiza Rebollar, 30, Codie Nicole Johnson, 27, and Missy Jo Riddle, 46, were also charged with felony robbery with a dangerous weapon and false imprisonment in connection with the incident. Rebollar and Riddle were taken into custody and assigned \$10,000 secured bonds while Johnson was held under a \$11,000 secured bond. Riddle, Mein, Johnson, Kearns and Rebollar are all due to appear in Chatham County District Court in Pittsboro on Jan. 30, 2023. Martin is scheduled to appear on Dec. 14, 2022.

## TOWN OF PITTSBORO

# Commissioners approve funding contribution project for Chatham Park Way

BY MAYDHA DEVARAJAN

News + Record Staff

PITTSBORO — Discussions over Chatham Park's influence on development continued at Pittsboro's commissioners meeting Monday night.

During the commissioners' last meeting, on Nov. 28, board members spent more than an hour debating the approval of a local government funding contribution project with Chatham Park Investors in a conversation that, at times, bordered on tensy. Specifically, commissioners hoped for more time to understand the specifications in the agreement.

The proposed bonus allocation agreement focuses on Chatham Park Way, a state road that serves the transportation needs of residents and businesses in the 7,100-acre development.

Under the agreement, Chatham Park Investors (CPI) would pay \$9 million on behalf of the town as the "local contribution." The Town of Pittsboro would serve as a conduit for the funds paid to the NCDOT and to convey the right of way for the portion of the road on behalf of CPI.

The value of the right of way would qualify as a bonus allocation of \$4.5

million, which has to be spent within five years and would allow CPI to draw on a credit for the construction of additional roads that belong to Chatham Park.

The board and CPI ultimately decided to revisit the proposed agreement at this Dec. 12 meeting, once CPI had made the changes requested by commissioners, which included changing language around two roads — Suttles Road and Eubanks Road — listed in the proposed agreement as potential projects that could be addressed with the bonus funds, and making it clearer in the agreement that any additional roads built with the bonus allocation would be controlled by Chatham Park.

Pursuant to the agreement, Chatham Park would have the right to select the additional roads, and the decision wouldn't be subject to the approval of Pittsboro, provided that the roads serve the town, provide a "material benefit" to the developer and be located on CPI property or property otherwise approved by the town.

The revised version of the agreement also included an alternative acceleration procedure, which is the first time the concept has been raised. According to a memo

from Town Attorney Paul S. Messick Jr. to the board, CPI and NCDOT are in discussions that might allow the acceleration to occur at a lower cost to CPI. In the case that CPI chooses an alternative acceleration procedure for the project, Pittsboro would continue to serve as a conduit for the funds paid to the NCDOT and would continue to convey the right of way. The town would serve the same role it would have in the bonus allocation program and CPI would reimburse Pittsboro for "reasonable costs."

Commissioners moved to approve the revised bonus allocation agreement 4-1, with Commissioner John Bonitz being the opposing vote.

Bonitz said his opposition to the agreement increased due to the acceleration procedure, saying he believed it to be "like a bait and switch."

"And [I'm] very concerned that basically we have a town whose financial prospects, because of the dominance of residential development, because of the lower likelihood of significant revenues from industry or commerce, I don't believe that we're going to have the kind of revenues we need to take care of highway projects outside of PDD [planned

development district]," Bonitz said.

The board also accepted the dedication and conveyance of 51 acres of parkland a section from the Chatham Park Planned Development District.

Bonitz also raised concerns about the usability of the park site in accordance with earlier plans in the town's Master Plan for a regional sports complex.

Katy Keller, director of the town's Parks & Recreation department, said, in theory, both the size and topography of 51 acres should be compatible with building a sports complex, but it depends on what the board and town eventually decide to include in the complex.

"What we're saying is that it will really depend on what we're able to do once we get into it, of what this [a sports complex] looks like," Keller said.

The board also unanimously moved to accept a \$125,000 donation from CPI to invest in Pittsboro's downtown. Commissioner Kyle Shipp said the funds would go towards reimbursing the town for downtown projects that address needs that have come up in community surveys and the Downtown Pittsboro Work Plan.

## Other business

The Land Use Plan update has been delayed by a month, and is now expected to be available for commissioners in February. Town Planner Janie Phelps said the delay was anticipated and as the holidays approached, it became clearer that the project required the additional time.

Charlie Davis, director of marketing and business development from Wooten Company, provided an update on the Sanford sewer force main infrastructure project.

In September, the Wooten Company, on the town's behalf, applied for a \$10.5 million construction grant from the N.C. Division of Water Infrastructure to supplement funding for the project. Earlier this summer, the town also approved the ability to pursue and request \$5 million in additional state revolving funding, which Pittsboro was successful in securing, Davis said. Pittsboro commissioners also accepted a "distressed community" designation in June, which could open the town up for potentially millions of dollars in support for water and wastewater infrastructure challenges.

Throughout the process, Davis said Wooten has been meeting month-

ly with DWI, which is an unusual occurrence, to maintain continuity.

Davis also outlined two impactful events that contributed to delays with the project, including environmental concerns brought up during developmental reviews. He emphasized that the two elements of the project — the pump station and over 14 miles of force main — had no environmental issues. The other event included a need for a re-routing of the force main last fall due to development changes in Lee County.

"That impact took a year out of this process," Davis said. "And I can tell you the engineering reports, the FONSI, which is the 'finding of no significant impact,' design, permitting — essentially all elements of this project had to be revisited in some form, shape or fashion to ultimately get through the permitting process to get us back to where we could have authority to award or authority to bid again."

Next steps for the project include continuing negotiations, potentially rebidding to mitigate cost escalation, pursuing supplemental funding and considering benefits like cost-sharing or cost provisions from the potential Sanford-Pittsboro water system merger.

# Chatham's Emergency Management receives \$25,000 grant from Duke Energy Foundation

PITTSBORO — The Duke Energy Foundation presented Chatham Emergency Management with a \$25,000 Emergency Preparedness & Storm Resiliency Grant on Dec. 8 for the purchase of a Utility Terrain Vehicle (UTV).

UTVs are designed to carry multiple responders and equipment and may be used to transport patients. The Chatham County UTV will be used to support emergency responses and pre-planned events including moving supplies, equipment, responders and patients.

"We are grateful for this generous donation from the Duke

Energy Foundation," said Steve Newton, Chatham County's emergency management director. "As a suburban-rural county with miles of trails and creeks, recreation areas and lakes, and a growing population enjoying the outdoors, we are faced with incidents that occur in areas inaccessible to a full-size vehicle. The UTV will be a great asset to bolster our response efforts."

Duke Energy supports North Carolina communities with more than \$750,000 in grants to support emergency preparedness. Funding will support 24 nonprofits and government agencies from across the state

and will help pay for training, life-saving equipment and essential tools to aid in disaster planning and recovery operations. Duke Energy supports these communities and their ability to help residents prepare for and recover from severe weather events.

"Emergency preparedness and storm recovery begin at the local level in the communities we serve," Indira Everett, Duke Energy's east region director said. "Households and businesses in Chatham County have endured significant and costly storms in recent years. These grants will help our communities and residents by



Photo by Adam Gaines

Pictured from left are Duke Energy District Manager Indira Everett, Chatham County Manager Dan LaMontagne, Emergency Management Director Steve Newton, Assistant County Manager Bryan Thompson, Assistant County Manager Carolyn Miller, Finance Officer Roy Lynch and Commissioner David Delaney.

# Education Corps partners with Chatham Schools to recruit, train, support high-impact tutors

From Chatham County Schools & North Carolina Education Corps

PITTSBORO — Chatham County Schools is partnering with North Carolina Education Corps (NCEC) to accelerate learning for young readers through high-impact tutoring. Applications are open for anyone interested in pursuing a paid part-time opportunity to support elementary school students as a literacy tutor.

Qualified candidates may include college students, recent graduates, parents, community members, and former educators who have flexible schedules (weekly time commitment: three days and a minimum of 10 to 15 hours in the class-

room) and a desire to make a difference in the public school system.

Visit [www.nceducationcorps.org/application](http://www.nceducationcorps.org/application) to apply for a tutoring position.

In partnership with Chatham County Schools, NCEC will train tutors to provide effective support for students using evidence-based practices. Tutors are employed directly by the school district, with a commitment to serve for the 2022-23 school year.

Launched in September 2020 as a partnership among the North Carolina State Board of Education, the Office of the Governor, and local school systems, NCEC was established to help extend the reach of teachers to fill critical learning

gaps.

As members of the NCEC, tutors work with one to three students at a time in kindergarten through third-grade levels to improve their foundational reading skills and expand teacher capacity.

“NCEC has a proven track record of elevating student performance in reading,” said Dr. Amanda Moran, Chatham County Schools assistant superintendent for Academic Services and Instructional Support. “This partnership will help bolster continued academic growth for some of our youngest students. We are excited to see the progress of our students as a result of this high-impact tutoring model.”

Prior to the COVID-19 pan-

dem, just 36% of North Carolina’s 4th-graders were reading at grade level. Test results from the past two years show young readers in North Carolina falling further behind, due to lost instructional time and other stressors.

This widening gap highlights the critical opportunity to step up and accelerate learning for students through high-impact tutoring.

“North Carolinians are coming together to accelerate learning recovery in the wake of the pandemic,” said NCEC Executive Director John-Paul Smith. “They are coming together to close education opportunity gaps that have been around for far too long. We are grateful for the perseverance

and spirit of hardworking, service-minded people across the state, and we invite North Carolina residents to step up to give teachers and students the critical help they deserve.”

In addition to the N.C. Dept. of Public Instruction, NCEC is also supported by public-private partners, including the C.D. Spangler Foundation, Mebane Foundation, Goodnight Educational Foundation, SECU Foundation, and the North Carolina General Assembly, and North Carolina governor’s office.

For more information about North Carolina Education Corps or to apply for a high-dosage tutoring position in a school district near you, visit <http://nceducationcorps.org>.

# Chatham again gets receives national award for excellence in financial reporting

From Chatham County Government

PITTSBORO — The Chatham County Board of Commissioners recognized the county’s Finance Department on Nov. 21 for receiving the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) for its annual comprehensive financial

report for fiscal year 2020-2021.

It’s Chatham County’s 32nd consecutive year of receiving this national honor.

The Chatham County Finance Department received the Certificate of Achievement, which is the highest form of recognition in governmental accounting and financial reporting. According to GFOA, its attainment represents a significant accomplishment

by a government and its management.

“I couldn’t be more proud of our finance staff for demonstrating such a high level of professionalism, integrity and excellence with the county’s financial reporting,” Chatham County Manager Dan LaMontagne said. “The fact that the finance team has achieved this national recognition for more than 30 years is remarkable, and their high standards will continue to position us

well as Chatham County embarks on tremendous growth.”

According to GFOA, the annual comprehensive financial report was judged by an impartial panel to meet the high standards of the program, which includes demonstrating a constructive “spirit of full disclosure” to clearly communicate its financial story and motivate potential users and user groups to read the report.



Naturally Chatham  
2022 Calendar

Presented by  
Grand Trees of Chatham

Photography by Gary Simpson

Cover photo by Gary Simpson

## Calendars

Grand Trees of Chatham is selling its 2023 calendars — featuring photographer Gary Simpson’s pictures of some of the county’s most beautiful trees — to help raise money for the organization. The calendars can be obtained for a \$20 donation at the following Pittsboro retailers who, without compensation, make room for the display and distribution of the calendars in their stores: Chatham Marketplace, Fair Game Beverage Company, Liquidambar Gallery and Gifts, New Horizons West. This year the calendar will also be available at The Chatham Rabbit in Siler City. GTOC was initiated in 2009 by a small group of Chatham County citizens with an interest in raising awareness of the county’s outstanding trees and the many contributions trees make. County commissioners created an all-volunteer board to administer the program, and today GTOC is an independent non-profit with close ties to the N.C. Cooperative Extension - Chatham center.



Contributed photo

## Pittsboro Class of '57

The Pittsboro High School Class of 1957 celebrated its 65th year Class Reunion recently. Those in attendance were, front row: Frances Clark Smith, Ava Mae Fogleman, Katie Beckwith Cooper and Frankie Moore Danek; back row, Jean Carpenter Tripp, Graham Camp Oldham, Steve Jackson, Hoyt Beard, and Ronald Copeland.

# Chatham residents win medals at North Carolina SilverArts

From the Chatham County Council on Aging

A total of four Chatham County residents — Evette Evans, Mark

Herboth, Alan Reid and Patricia Reid — secured medals at the recently completed 2022 North Carolina SilverArts competition.

SilverArts, which is “a celebration of the creative expression of seniors in North Carolina,” is a major component of the traditional athletic competition of the North Carolina Senior Games.

In a philosophy that strives to keep seniors healthy, active and involved, SilverArts unites the athlete and artist in a program that recognizes the similarities of both endeavors: discipline, dedication and pride in one’s accomplishments.

Evans earned a gold medal in the Literary Arts category in the short story competition for her work entitled, “The Journey.”

In Woodturning, Alan Reid and Herboth finished second and third, respectively. Reid picked up a silver medal in the Heritage Arts category for his woodturning work “Ornament,” while Herboth earned bronze in Woodturning for “Vase.”

Herboth earned gold in the visual arts category, picking up his first-place distinction for his film photography selection of “Hay Roll.”

Patricia Reid won gold and bronze in heritage arts categories. Her gold-medal work came in tole/decorative painting with “Sleepy Cat Box,” while “Cowboy” earned bronze in the stained glass competition.

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Staff photo by Matt Ramey

The Northwood Marching Band played songs as they made their way through Pittsboro during the Christmas Parade.



Staff photo by Matt Ramey

Residents lined the streets of downtown Pittsboro to watch the annual Christmas parade.

**HOMETOWN HOLIDAY CHEER**

# Pittsboro, Siler City host Christmas parades

CN+R Staff Reports

Siler City and Pittsboro hosted their annual holiday parades last Thursday night and Sunday afternoon, respectively. Residents came to each

event clad in red and green festive wear, smiles evident as parade floats, school bands and businesses marched down N. Chatham Avenue in Siler City and Hillsboro Street in Pittsboro.

The Siler City parade — which was hosted by the Chatham Chamber of Commerce and sponsored by Mountaire Farms — featured a float contest where three winners were selected after entering

floats that followed the theme Christmas: Past, Present and Future.

- Winners were:
- Jordan-Matthews' Future Farmers of America Chapter
  - Full Throttle Marine and

Powersports

• Community Baptist Church  
You can see more photos from both parades on the News + Record website at [www.chathamnewsrecord.com/](http://www.chathamnewsrecord.com/).



Staff photo by Simon Barbre

Clapp tractor riding in downtown this past Thursday night at the Siler City Christmas parade.



Staff photo by Matt Ramey

The Grinch waves to parade patrons in Pittsboro on Sunday.



Staff photo by Matt Ramey

Pittsboro residents watched fire trucks and cars go down East St. during the annual Christmas Parade.



Staff photo by Simon Barbre

Chatham Hospital nurses on their float waving to the crowd at Siler City Christmas Parade.



Staff photo by Simon Barbre

A little boy posing for a picture from his mom, in front of the parade.



Staff photo by Simon Barbre

Trucks lined up, waiting in line for the Siler City Christmas parade.



Staff photo by Simon Barbre

Sheriff Mike Roberson waving to the crowd as he rides his float through the Siler City Christmas Parade.



Staff photo by Simon Barbre

The Grinch riding the float in downtown of Siler City's Christmas parade this past Thursday night.



Staff photo by Matt Ramey

A man in a leather jacket touts his reindeer ears as he watches parade floats make their way through downtown Pittsboro.

LOVE AND LOSS

# 'Death and Cupcakes' event offers space to process death and dying



Staff photo by James Kiefer

**Cathy Brooksie Edwards, the founder of heart2heart, listens while an attendee recounts a moment of grief.**



Staff photo by James Kiefer

**Attendees cast silhouettes during a conversation regarding death and grief. Around a dozen people shared stories during Death and Cupcakes on Saturday morning at the Chatham Community Library.**

**BY MAYDHA DEVARAJAN**  
News + Record Staff

describing acute grief as “deep” and expanded grief as “wide.”

PITTSBORO — In a low-lit room at the Chatham Community Library, a dozen local residents gathered Saturday to share their experiences of grief, death and dying over cupcakes and coffee.

It’s important to remember that grief is not just an experience that happens because of the recent loss of a loved one, Edwards said.

“Grief is the loss of an idea or the loss of who we thought we wanted to be,” she said. “Grief is not just there for a certain thing. Grief is something of any change, we can have grief about anything.”

The event, called Death and Cupcakes, was facilitated by local organizations heart2heart and Abundance NC with the purpose of embracing honest conversations around death, offering a space for community connection regarding the processes of death and dying.

This year marks the first time that Death and Cupcakes has been held since 2019. The event, free to the public, was sponsored by Friends of the Chatham Community Library; Aromatic Roasters provided coffee, while Carolina Cravings Co. provided cupcakes.

Cathy Brooksie Edwards is the clinical director of heart2heart, as well as a licensed counselor and body-worker. The nonprofit heart2heart offers holistic services to individuals seeking support as they navigate the “living path” of a diagnosis or disease through death.

But it’s not the only one of its kind in the area.

To Edwards, part of the reason the event is so crucial is that she sees it as helping to dissipate people’s fears around death.

Abundance NC, a community hub based in Pittsboro and incubator for local non-profits, is led by executive director Ally DeJong. Since February 2022, Abundance NC has held a monthly healing circle at The Plant called “Stories of Grief & Healing,” which encourages individuals to come together in a “community-centered” space and share personal experiences of love and loss.

“I think, as humans, we’re so compacted that we forget that death is a part of life,” she said. “And people are really scared.”

“For me, I feel like there’s a lot of healing in knowing that you’re not alone,” DeJong, whose own father died from colon cancer six years ago.

Sitting in a small circle in the library’s Holmes Family Meeting Room, participants shared what brought them to the event, including losses of partners and friends, and how they are processing their grief. Between personal testimonies, Amy Durso, a musician and member of heart2heart’s staff, played and sang songs centered around nature and loss.

Part of the conversation Saturday also revolved around grounding participants in their body, with facilitators leading individuals in deep breathing exercises and other sensory activities.

Edwards opened the event by inviting individuals to share perspectives, whether they revolved around acute grief or expanded grief,

Research has shown that experiences of trauma can leave a lasting mark on the physical body, with connections to chronic health condi-



Staff photo by James Kiefer

**Cathy Brooksie Edwards, the founder of heart2heart, listens while an attendee recounts a moment of grief.**

tions.

“If we don’t do that [ground ourselves physically], our emotions just stay boxed up,” Edwards said. “So if we do those kinds of practices, then it allows our body to kind of breathe a little bit and if we’re willing to then let it out, it really helps.”

For Nancy Jones, 71, being able to share in the event with others was helpful. Jones, who lives in Pittsboro, lost her husband from aggressive

prostate cancer on Easter Sunday in 2020.

“It was wonderful to listen to everybody’s stories, because it does give you encouragement, and the compassion and the recognition that you’re not the only one out there,” Jones said. “That was one of the things that I thought to myself right away — I’m not the first person to go through this.”

While Saturday was the first time that Jones has participated in the Death and Cupcakes event, she said she has been part of a number of



Staff photo by James Kiefer

**HeartSpace, a book edited by heart2heart founder Cathy Brooksie Edwards sits on a table during Death and Cupcakes at the Chatham Community Library.**



Staff photo by James Kiefer

**Musician Amy Durso plays the shruti box while others meditate. Held at the Chatham Community Library on Saturday, the Death and Cupcakes conversation involved guided meditation and music.**

meditation and writing groups, as well as being involved in several prayer groups at her church. Having those connections and being close to her children and family in Pittsboro has been beneficial in processing her grief.

As the holidays approach, Edwards emphasizes the importance of not being in isolation while understanding and experiencing grief from death around this time of year.

“Loneliness leads to depression,” she said. “So try your best to do

something in community or to be out with people. Talk about your loved ones.

“If it’s around loss, like if it’s the first Christmas that we don’t have dad, then bring dad to the table, you know, like talk about [them],” Edwards continued. “You don’t want the people that are dead to be gone, it’s important to tell stories.”

Reporter Maydha Devarajan can be reached at [mdevarajan@chathamnr.com](mailto:mdevarajan@chathamnr.com) and on Twitter @maydhadevarajan.

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**BEST OF CHATHAM 2022 READERS' FAVORITE**

FOR RELEASE SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2022

**PREMIER CROSSWORD/** By Frank A. Longo

**HOOKED-UP HYBRIDS**

**ACROSS**

1 17-year locusts, e.g.	56 Comic Daniel Folles"	104 Scavenging dog, woolly Peruvian, leaf-munching crawler	6 Digression	52 Milk, in France	85 Ailment causing swelling
8 Intercede	58 Grizzlies, e.g.	109 Onion relatives	7 Exclusively	53 Treats often dipped in milk	86 Horror film assistant
14 Errant	59 Overjoys	110 Low cards	9 Arizona city	54 Somber song	87 Pell- (chaotic)
20 Lovingly, on music scores	63 "Funny Girl" director William	111 "Botch- (old hit song)	11 Lunch on the grass, e.g.	55 Sauce brand	88 JFK follower
21 Daintily small	65 Contend (for)	112 High card	12 Lake feeding the Mississippi	60 Hanoi holiday	89 Weaver of Greek myth
22 Planet shape	66 Aggressive shorebirds	115 "Monster" star Charelize	13 Part of NYSE	61 Noted time	90 Heavy knife
23 Big baboon, Andean spitter, showy parrot	67 Arctic cetacean, swamp snapper, arboreal ape	116 Prairie canine, destructive insect, colorful fish	14 Chichi scarf	62 IRS datum	95 Vail trail
25 Jewel units	73 Not alfresco	120 Successively	15 Interstices	63 Ridge on a fingerprint	96 Revels in
26 Nov. lead-in	74 Tea holder	121 Fought one-on-one	16 Larynx locale	64 Grow mature	98 Illustrate via pantomime
27 "Gloria in Excelsis —"	75 Like dunes	122 "Agreed"	17 One showing houses	66 Actress Parrish of "Pretty Little Liars"	99 Trial figure
28 Lapel inserts	76 City of south India	123 Wee	18 Erté's genre	70 Kin of "Art!"	101 On — with Peter O—
29 Begin a losing streak	77 Founder of Bolshevism	124 Accent	19 "Agreed"	71 Hammered musical disk	102 2006 world figure skating champion
30 Serengeti grazer, long-billed bird, sticky-tongued predator	79 Suffix with hotel	125 Made of clay	24 Weaver's frame	72 Stair support	105 Singer Kravitz
36 Houston coll.	80 Writers Tan and Lowell	<b>DOWN</b>	29 Biting pests	77 First form fill-in, often	106 Actor "Rufus M." author Eleanor
38 Singer Sumac	84 Pink wader, forest anthropoid, aquatic sucker	1 Hunter's garb, in brief	31 Equine sound	78 Gp. backing arms	108 Camera brand
39 Singer Irene	88 Hasty escape	2 Apple desktop	32 Yellowfin, say	80 Cop — (haggle in court)	113 Mötley —
40 Part of NYSE	91 Riser at dawn	3 Website notice to get customer service	33 Remunerated	81 Nickname for the Devil	114 Make at work
41 "Love Me or Leave Me" singer Ruth	92 Pester	4 Ending for dull	34 Kuwaitis, e.g.	82 Michelle of "Tomorrow Never Dies"	115 Little bird
43 Great anger	93 Singer Willie	5 Palme — (Cannes film award)	35 "Notorious" film studio	83 Auld lang —	116 LP replacers
46 — loss	94 Tuba material		36 Four-sided geom. shape		117 Mag staff
48 Kanga's son	97 Lunch, e.g.		37 Langston Hughes poem		118 Blue Jays, on sports tickers
49 Mountain cat, plated burrower, marine crustacean	100 Tree of Iowa		42 Ill-defined situations		119 Doc treating tonsillitis
	103 Milk, in Mexico		44 BBQ meat bit		
			45 Altitude		
			47 Exited right after chowing		
			50 Ruminates		
			51 Skating leap		

**Out on a Limb** by Gary Kopervas

**R.F.D.** by Mike Marland

**The Spats** by Jeff Pickering

**Just Like Cats & Dogs** by Dave T. Phipps

"I set the alarm for April."

SHEP KEAYED APATOW HIM  
EATA ERIKA SONORA ATO  
WHATBUMPERSTICKER PAD  
SALIERI STERN MAPLE  
OLINS GLITTER FYIS  
MESSAGEWOULDBEPERFECT  
ANE ENNA RICOILA  
SUGARFREE STE UNISON  
FORPEOPLEWHO STRICTLY  
EMMAS MAITAI TEAS  
ALP SAR SIGNS GPA RYE  
LEAP ASHLEE CRIMP  
FOLLOWTHEIRRELIGIOUS  
ASMAR AOSO CASSETTES  
STEREO FUAD IVY  
ORPOLITICALPRINCIPLES  
NERO SENORAS NELLY  
FLING STILE TOELESS  
ION LOVEMELOVEMYDOGMA  
RAG ALANIS PAREE NOUN  
EDS DETECT ELAND SST

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Pictured: Cathy Baker



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## MAGIC MAZE ● ENERGY TERMS

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

Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions forward, backward, up, down and diagonally  
Unlisted clue hint: DERIVED FROM THE SUN

- |                |             |           |           |
|----------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| Battery        | Coke        | Fuel cell | Peak oil  |
| Carbon         | Crude oil   | Grid      | Renewable |
| Climate change | Fossil fuel | Nuclear   | Wind farm |
| Coal           | Fracking    | Oil rig   |           |

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## Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

4				7		8	9
	7			1		4	
2		8	9			5	
	9			6			1
		6		4		5	
5			1			3	
	3			7		2	1
		1			9	8	
6	5		4				3

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

**DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦♦**

♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging  
♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

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## Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



John Cheesborough, MD



Dawn E. Kleinman, MD



Mary Candace Seagle, PA-C



Brittany Atkinson, PA-C



Candace L. Marin, APRN

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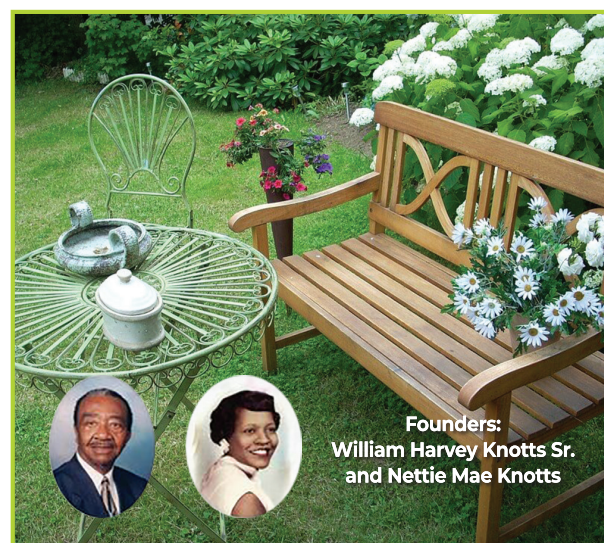
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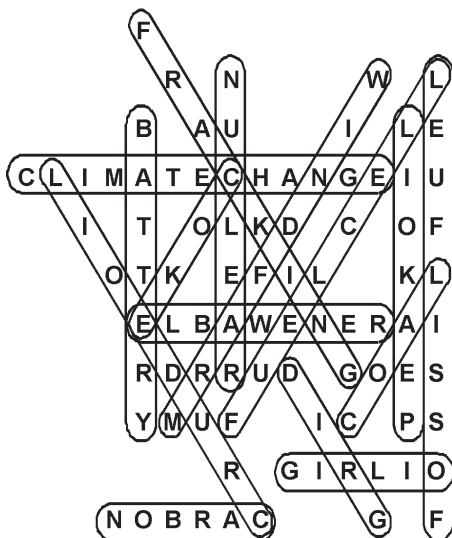
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ENERGY TERMS



Weekly SUDOKU

Answer

4	6	3	2	5	7	1	8	9
9	7	5	8	1	3	6	4	2
2	1	8	9	4	6	5	3	7
3	9	7	5	6	8	4	2	1
1	2	6	7	3	4	9	5	8
5	8	4	1	9	2	3	7	6
8	3	9	6	7	5	2	1	4
7	4	1	3	2	9	8	6	5
6	5	2	4	8	1	7	9	3

## Celebrate Feliz Navidad with some wonderful coquito



Courtesy of Debbie Matthews

Becky's Family Coquito

- 5 fresh cinnamon sticks
- 1/4 thumb size piece of ginger (about 1/2 in.)
- 2 capfuls of vanilla extract
- 2 egg yolks (no membrane)
- 2 cans of evaporated milk
- 2 cans of coconut milk
- 1 can of coconut syrup (Coco Lopez)
- 151 proof dark rum or your choice of dark rum (Important: add only after mixture has cooled down)
- \*Bacardi stopped making 151 a few years ago. I now use Cruzan 137 aged rum.

Take cinnamon sticks and smash them in a paper towel with a mallet so that their oils and taste may be released in the boil. Peel the ginger then cut it into thin pieces. Place the cinnamon and ginger in a small pot filled halfway with water and boil it for about 15 min. This should yield no more than 1 cup of liquid mixture.

Open one can of evaporated milk and one can of coconut milk and empty them into large pot. Place egg yolks in this mixture. Stir well until there's no separation between eggs and liquid. Remove anything floating (remove any egg membrane) and cook on medium for 10 min. Turn off heat and add the coconut syrup, stir, then add the rest of the ingredients including the vanilla extract, cinnamon, and ginger water. Stir well. Cool down and add rum to taste.

Optional: before adding rum, place this mixture in a cold place (fridge or outside) @ 45 degrees or lower overnight then strain the congealed fat from the top.

When mixture's cooled down add rum to your taste.

Because the eggs were slowly cooked this drink can last for years in the fridge. Grandma would always bring out the last year's Coquito (which always taste better) and served it in shot glasses. With time it thickens and becomes even more creamy.

I have had up to 4-year-old Coquito in my fridge. The trick is to shake your refrigerated bottles at least once a month.

Buen provecho! (Enjoy!)

Coquito, a 'grown-up' milkshake from Puerto Rico.



DEBBIE MATTHEWS  
The Curious Cook

Puerto Ricans have their own version of the warming, life-affirming chicken soup made by Jewish grandmothers.

Only it's a drink, which is a heck of a lot more fun, and way tastier. It's a spirituous little beverage called coquito. It's tempting to say it's a Puerto Rican eggnog — but don't.

Sure, there's egg and dairy in there, and of course booze. But coquito (little coconut) isn't just some random carton you

grab at the local A&P in early December. This is a concoction with deep familial roots in Puerto Rico.

I encountered coquito for the first time when I was 10. At the time, we were living in Puerto Rico, and attended a Christmas party. The hosts served creamy, delicious-looking drinks called coquito. When I requested one, my mom said no, because they were "grownup" milkshakes.

Ten minutes later, on very wobbly legs, I made my way into a quiet corner after secretly sampling said milkshake.

Coquito is a delicious milky potion. Silky, rich, and full of the tastes of coconut, ginger, and spices. The ingredient that

gave me noodle-knees was rum — Barcardi 151.

Every Puerto Rican family has its own super-secret, super-special version. The recipe for it is normally tightly-guarded and handed down to only the very favorite offspring.

And somehow, I, and by extension you, Gentle Reader, are now in possession of one of those venerated family heirlooms.

Years ago I met the then-Durham chief of police, Jose Lopez, and his awesome wife, Becky, in line at Costco. They have become friends, and Becky is now my Puerto Rican food mentor, coach, and head cheerleader. And in the spirit of friendship for which Puertorriqueños are known, she gave me her

family coquito recipe to share.

So, here, in her own words, is Becky Lopez' great-grandmother's coquito recipe. And if you'd like to say thanks for her generosity, take a moment and spare a thought or a prayer for the residents of Puerto Rico who are still in dire straits from this year's hurricane season. If you can do more, visit [https://hispanicfederati-](https://hispanicfederati)

tion.org/unidos, where 100% of your donation goes to recovery efforts in Puerto Rico.

And from my snug little apartment in downtown Durham to your very own abode, have the most wonderful of holidays, and a happy, peaceful new year.

Thanks for your time.

Contact me at [dm@bullcitymom.com](mailto:dm@bullcitymom.com).



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