

MITCHELL NEWS-JOURNAL

The area's leading hometown newspaper serving Bakersville, Little Switzerland, Spruce Pine and the rest of beautiful Mitchell County

Our 90th year

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Explanations offered about Mission decision

BRRH board, president issue statements at press conference

By BRANDON ROBERTS
Editor

SPRUCE PINE – Protests and other forms of public outcry did not keep Mission Health from making the decision to stop labor and delivery services at Blue Ridge Regional Hospital.

BRRH President Becky Carter announced in a Tuesday, June 6, press conference the hospital's labor and delivery services will be transitioned to McDowell Hospital as of Sept. 30.

BRRH will continue to provide pre- and post-natal services, gynecological

services, surgical procedures and preventive, routine and complex care for women of all ages as well as, in conjunction with McDowell Hospital-affiliated OB/GYN providers, provide women's care at the Spruce Pine, Burnsville and Marion clinics, according to a press release.

"Our patients will continue to have their pre- and post-natal care provided here locally in Spruce Pine

and Burnsville, with the same physicians performing deliveries in Marion," Carter said. "Once they are released from the hospital, mother and baby will return home and continue to receive care locally."

The decision follows a recent trend for Mission. The company announced in May it was discontinuing labor and delivery services at Angel Medical Center in Franklin as of July 14.

The decision to relocate services offered in Spruce Pine comes about a month after Mission Health CEO Ron Paulus said a proposal to move labor and delivery services to McDowell Hospital was being considered.

"The decision to partner with McDowell Hospital for delivery services was made by BRRH and Mission Health leaders to ensure that Mitchell, Yancey and Avery County mothers and

newborns receive the safest and highest-quality birthing experience today, tomorrow and in the years to come," according to a press release. "Today, women in the BRRH service area already choose to deliver in Asheville frequently, with approximately 60 percent of women in Yancey County and 40 percent of women in Mitchell County choosing to deliver their babies" See BRRH on page 3

PASSING THROUGH

Former resident's hike from Florida to Canada brings him back to Mitchell Co.

By BRANDON ROBERTS
Editor

SPRUCE PINE – When Pat Paton left Mitchell County for Florida in 2012 to care for his ailing father, he never thought he would be back in these mountains he called home for three decades. But, come back he did, and on foot.

His father died in September of 2016. His siblings subsequently sold his father's house so Paton reverted to something he has done all his life: hiking.

"I'm hiking from Florida to Canada," Paton said about his trek from Hudson, Florida, to New Brunswick, Canada. "I

gave away all my belongings. I'm homeless. But, I feel more blessed today than ever. I feel great."

Paton, a Michigan native who worked at the Brian Center and the Department of Social Services while living in Mitchell County, departed Dec. 7 on his 5,400-mile hike on the Florida Trail, Georgia Trail and Appalachian Trail along the Eastern Continental Divide. Paton hiked the entire Appalachian Trail in 1980 and in 1983 hiked 1,000 miles of the Pacific Coast Trail from Mexico to Oregon.

"It's been a long time since I've been out on the trails," he said. "I'm older now and can't really do more than 15 miles in a day. But, I'll hike as long as I can and if I can't get it all done this year because of winter, I'll finish it next year."

With an unkempt beard, straw hat and clad in a kilt to honor his Scottish heritage, Paton said he likely would not have embarked on the endeavor if he were not homeless, but added he is having a "great time."

"I never thought I'd be hiking again," he said. "I've had to fight off a bear at one campsite and watched great horned owls that look like angels coming to the ground. I feel alive again."

He forages for food as he walks along the trail and often eats mushrooms and sweet briar.

"I won't eat Ramen noodles or peanut butter," he said.

He uses hostels whenever he can and See PATON on page 3

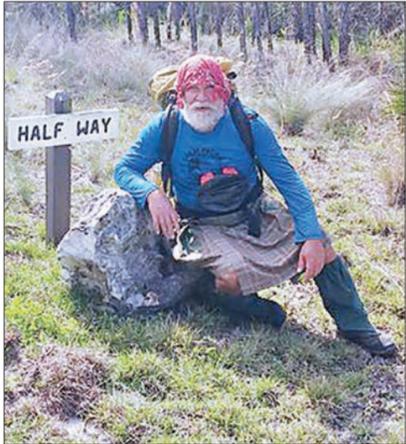


PHOTO SUBMITTED

Former Mitchell County resident Pat Paton takes a break from hiking. Paton began hiking Dec. 7, 2016, a 5,400-mile trek from Hudson, Florida, to New Brunswick, Canada.



PHOTO SUBMITTED

Members of the Females in Action, or FiA, Spruce Pine chapter use the handrail leading into Riverside Park during their early morning exercise.

F3, FiA groups shaping mind, body, soul

By BRANDON ROBERTS
Editor

SPRUCE PINE – It takes place early in the morning, it is difficult and it is outdoors rain or shine, hot or cold.

There are three reasons those things did not matter to Spruce Pine resident Adam Bursleson: fitness, fellowship and faith.

F3, as it is known, was officially formed in 2011 by David Redding and Tim Whitmire as a free, participant-led boot camp that took place early on Saturday mornings at a park in Charlotte. The group's mission is creating small workout groups that ultimately invigorate male community leadership.

"The average age of men in the groups is 40," Adam, 29, said. "It's mostly people who have graduated college, had kids and had 'sad-clown syndrome,' which is when

someone appears happy in all aspects of their life but, deep-down, are sad about something. A lot of times it's being out of shape that causes the sadness and that's what we do, focus on fitness; the faith and fellowship just happen."

F3 groups have since spread throughout the country and Bursleson started the F3 Spruce Pine chapter June 25, 2016, which meets three days a week: 5:30 a.m. Tuesdays at Harris Middle School; 5:30 a.m. Thursdays at the Mitchell High School track; and 7 a.m. Saturdays at Deyton Elementary. The idea behind the early morning workouts is minimizing the intrusion on one's personal life.

"When there's failure in the male leadership in the community, communities fail," Adam said. "In the group, we lift" See GROUPS on page 3

Spiers hired as News-Journal reporter

Mitchell News-Journal editor and publisher Brandon Roberts announced this past week Cory Spiers has been hired as a reporter for the publication.

Spiers began working Tuesday, June 13. He replaces David Purtell, who resigned from the reporter position this past May.

"We went nearly two months without a reporter and, because of how important that job is to this community, I had to ensure the person hired was the right fit," Roberts said. "It was a long, exhausting search that resulted in several dozen applicants. Cory is exactly the

type of reporter for whom I was looking. He possesses the necessary experience and education, and is familiar with the role of true community newspaper. I welcome him to the team."

Spiers, 24, is native of Waxhaw and attended Appalachian State University, where he earned his bachelor's degree in journalism in 2015. He has worked as a general assignment reporter for the daily Hickory Daily Record, covering crime, courts, government, business, entertainment and lifestyles before transitioning to the

See SPIERS on page 3



Spiers

INDEX

- Opinion 4A
- Obituaries 6A
- Community calendar 7A
- Classifieds 10A
- Sports 1B
- Education 2B

ONLINE POLL

What attraction is needed most in Mitchell County?
Answer at
www.mitchellnews.com

LAST WEEK'S POLL
Did you participate in the Toe River Studio Tour?



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Thank you, Angela Jarrett, of Glen Rock, Pennsylvania, for subscribing to the News-Journal.



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RANTS AND RAVES

Editor's note: Rants and raves are subject to editing for hate speech, foul language and the specific mention of a business, individual, agency or organization.

- The camper on Shootout Mountain is straight-piping again. They don't seem to care that kids are playing in the water downstream.

- If we built the bike trail from the Parkway to Downtown Spruce Pine we'd have a lot more tourists.

- Have our politicians considered the impact of losing hospital services and our future chances to create businesses and good paying jobs for Mitchell County?

- I think people should live their own lives and not look for approval on Facebook.

- I'm so glad Hillary is sticking around. We need her.

- I think women should have nothing to do with chauvinistic men, they make women's lives miserable. Young girls, beware.

- Poor old Donald, grasping at straws. Comey is so much smarter than him. He's met his match.

- Liars are nothing more than trash.

- I think all Clinton and Obama supporters should get a bumper sticker that says, "Dump Trump."

- Great job on the sidewalks leading to the walking bridge.

- Businesses closing would bother me if there weren't so many opening, too.

Call 828-765-0347 after 5 p.m. to leave a rant or rave.

PATON

Continued from page 1

said unlike some younger hikers, cleanliness is of the utmost importance.

"I'm older and have a little bit more money than the kids who are hiking," he said. "I can't go long without taking a bath." He never watches TV

GROUPS

Continued from page 1

each other up. It's a total team effort; we lift each other up."

F3 is hosting "The Wolf" from 6-8:30 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 19, which is a group endurance event covering roughly 8 miles beginning in downtown Spruce Pine.

Adam's wife, Brooke, 35, started this past April a Spruce Pine chapter of F3's female counterpart, Females in Action, or FiA, which has the mission of making women stronger in all aspects of their lives. FiA members participate also in book clubs, career and family discussion groups and faith interactions. As of now, FiA meets at 8:15 a.m. in Riverside Park on Saturday mornings.

SPIERS

Continued from page 1

to the sports desk. He more recently worked as the primary sports reporter at the Enquirer-Journal in Monroe before being hired at the



Terry Lewis and his carpentry classes made 67 crosses with the names and communities of Mitchell County Veterans who died while serving in wars and peacetime. The crosses were separated by war and arranged in alphabetical order on the circle in front of the school during a Memorial Day recognition program.

PHOTO SUBMITTED

MHS has Memorial Day program

Mitchell High School's Young Patriots Club Friday, May 26, conducted its Memorial Day recognition program.

The goal of the program is reminding students of the meaning of Memorial Day, which is a day set aside to remember men and women who died in service to our country. The program also seeks to impart to the students the sacrifice made by Mitchell County veterans.

Terry Lewis and his carpentry classes made more than 67 crosses with the names and communities of Mitchell County Veterans

who died while serving in World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and during peacetime. The crosses were separated by war and arranged in alphabetical order in front of the school.

The ceremony started with Trystan Jenkins leading the student body in the Pledge of Allegiance and the Mitchell High School Chorus directed by Greg Franklin singing the National Anthem and "In Flanders Fields." Michaela Sparks gave a speech on the meaning of Memorial Day and Eden Phillips read a poem about Mitchell

County's war dead.

Jacob Caroll, Sean Hobson and Tucker Hobson performed a bluegrass medley of "God Bless America" and "America the Beautiful." Stephanie McClellan sang "My Country 'Tis of Thee" and Grant Sparks played his guitar as Caroline Atkins, Marie Duncan and Kyndal Ringwood sang "Traveling Soldier."

Sara Haney, Kayla Bryant and Emily Robinson were winners in the Mitchell County Memorial Day Trivia Contest and Layton Fox played "Taps" to close the ceremony.

BRRH

Continued from page 1

in Asheville."

Blue Ridge and Mission Health Women's Services Leadership determined consolidating labor and delivery services at McDowell Hospital, with support from Mission, is the sustainable and responsible decision for Mitchell, Yancey and Avery County families based on an assessment of women's current delivery options, community birth rates, population changes and clinical quality and safety standards, according to the press release.

"At BRRH, we were priv-

ileged to deliver only 173 babies last year, which is relatively consistent year-to-year and too few to attract and support full perinatal teams to practice in Spruce Pine," Carter said. "This is the right decision for mothers and newborn babies in our community. The practice of obstetrics has become much more advanced and specialized over the past decade, requiring a substantial team of specialists that McDowell Hospital can provide."

The BRRH Board of Directors released a joint statement following the press conference in which it said board chair Martha

Tyner and the other board members made the decision after "extensive and careful analysis."

CRIMES AND ARRESTS

The following arrests took place between Wednesday, June 4, and Sunday, June 11, according to reports on file at the Mitchell County Sheriff's Office

JASON LEE FILMORE, 42, of 184 June Bug Hollow Road, Spruce Pine, was arrested by Deputy W.R. Hobson for failing to pay child support. He was released on a \$189 cash bond. He is scheduled to appear in court June 26.

RANDALL FRANKLIN MEYERHOFFER, 38, of 67 B Deer Park Lake Road, Spruce Pine, was arrested by Deputy W.R. Hobson for a probation violation. He is being held in jail on a \$10,000 secured bond. He is scheduled to appear in court July 26.

ROGER GARRETT BOWMAN, 55, of 92 Buchanan St., Bakersville, was arrested by Deputy W.R. Hobson for failing to appear on possession of methamphetamine, simple possession of schedule II, simple possession Schedule IV and drug paraphernalia. He is being held in jail on a \$24,000 secured bond. He was scheduled to appear in court June 12.

JUSTIN LEE CONLEY, 33, 240 Gage Branch Road, Bakersville, was arrested by Sheriff Donald Street and Deputy S.E. Davis for simple possession of a schedule II, carry a concealed handgun and drug paraphernalia. He was released on a \$2,000 secured bond. He is scheduled to appear in court July 26.

MISTY ROBINSON, 39, of 54 Woody Lane, Bakersville, was arrested by Deputy W.R. Hobson for a probation violation. She was released on a \$500 secured bond. She is scheduled to appear in court June 14.

CITATIONS ISSUED

KIMBERLY ANN CROWDER, of 55 Ridge St., Marion, was cited by Lt. J.D. English for simple possession of marijuana.

MCC Plant Sale

June 17 from 8 a.m.-1 p.m.

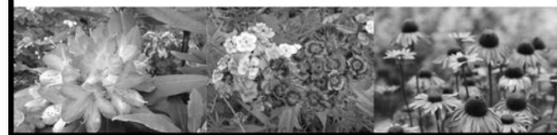
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JULY 14 & 15, 2017

July 14: 4pm - 10pm • July 15: 10am - 10pm

FESTIVAL ACTIVITIES:	HOSTED BY:	
Entertainment	The Rotary Club of Spruce Pine and all profits go to local charitable efforts through the Spruce Pine Rotary Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable organization. The majority of this year's festival will help develop and finish the hiking/biking path from Riverside Park in Spruce Pine to the Blue Ridge Parkway, along the historic Overmountain Victory Trail. This trail work is in cooperation with Toe River Valley Watershed Partnership and the US National Park Service.	
Food & Craft Vendors		
Musicians and Championship Clogging Teams		
Award Winning BBQ		
Antique Farm Equipment & Tractor Show		
Kids Activities		
Jamming Stage		
Plus Much More!		
<h1>Rotary</h1>		

For all the details, including Advance Tickets and Reserved Seating, please check our webpage at www.sprucepinebbqbluegrass.org

NEW LOW ADMISSION	\$5 SINGLEDAY GENERAL ADMISSION	Tickets may be bought at festival or in advance online Full-Access Entertainment Passes with Premier Seating Available!
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News-Journal.

"I'm very excited to be joining the News-Journal staff," Spiers said. "Mitchell County is a beautiful area full of great stories I can't wait to help tell. I'm

excited to meet more folks and help our publication serve its readers."

Spiers is no stranger to Mitchell County. His wife, Ellie (neé Huendo), is a Spruce Pine native.