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Mountain treasure

Eastern Hellbender Salamander common in Toe River Valley

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On a roll

Mountaineers cruise to 49-19 win over McDowell

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MNJ PHOTO/CORY SPIERS

Mitchell High School history teacher Matthew Hurd addresses students during a special assembly in remembrance of the lives lost on Sept. 11, 2001. Hurd, a veteran, told students about the importance of appreciating those that fight for their freedom.

County using new emergency notification, warning service

By BRANDON ROBERTS
Mitchell News-Journal
editor@mitchellnews.com

BAKERSVILLE – Mitchell County has a new emergency notification service known as Hyper-Reach to provide warnings and notifications about local emergencies, hazards and other threats to county residents.

Hyper-Reach uses telephone calls, text messages, email and TTY/TDD services to send alerts.

To receive messages, residents must sign up for free at www.mitchellcounty.org and follow the instructions on the front page, or call 828-688-5988 to enroll.



Computers or smartphones are not required, as the service can contact landline telephones with these announcements. Call Misty Sparks at 828-688-4771 for assistance.

Hyper-Reach is a mass emergency notification system designed for public safety. It sends telephone calls, SMS text messages, and emails to phones and computers of those who enroll within seconds of an emergency announcement being posted.

Hyper-Reach Anywhere is a smartphone app available for free through the iTunes store as well as Google Play for Android devices that allows phones to receive emergency alerts directly when they are posted. The app is not required to receive alerts from the system.

Mitchell County plans to use the service primarily for announcements about weather and environmental hazards, criminal activity and missing persons, according to a press release.

Mitchell has Sept. 11 recognition ceremony

By CORY SPIERS
Mitchell News-Journal
reporter1@mitchellnews.com

LEDGER – Mitchell High School students ended their school day this past Monday with a special presentation to commemorate the 16th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in New York. Mitchell history teacher

and military veteran Matthew Hurd organized the assembly and invited area first responders and other emergency officials.

The first responders were honored at the beginning of the presentation, which also featured patriotic music and a speech from senior Anna Zheng.

Zheng told her fellow students the importance of appreciating first responders.

“We are remembering and paying tribute,” she said. “On a daily basis, these people are running to the danger on our behalf. They are putting their lives on their line to keep us safe.”

Hurd closed the assembly with a short message to the students and a moment of silence.

“None of us had any idea how it was going to affect us going forward,” Hurd said about the attacks. “We’re extremely lucky. People are working on our behalf every day.”

Local couple's gender reveal video goes viral

By BRANDON ROBERTS
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editor@mitchellnews.com

SPRUCE PINE – A Spruce Pine couple's gender reveal video has been viewed tens of thousands of times and been seen all over the world.

Whitney Williams, 28, and her husband, John, 30, are both former basketball players – Whitney at Montreat and John at UNC Asheville and later the Harlem Globetrotters – and they incorporated the sport they played into the video.

“John wanted to dunk a basketball to reveal the gender,” Whitney said. “So, I made a packet that would explode when he dunked

and we filmed it.”

A cloud of pink powder was created when John dunked an alley-oop from Whitney at the basketball court at Brad Ragan Park, signifying Whitney

was pregnant with a girl. The baby will be the couple's second daughter, joining big sister Selah, 2, in the Williams household.

“We already knew it was a girl,” Whitney said. “This was just a way we came up with to let everyone else know.”

Whitney is a Mitchell County native and the daughter of Lisa and Chris Boone. John is from

See VIDEO on page 3A



PHOTO SUBMITTED

Spruce Pine resident and former Harlem Globetrotter John Williams dunks an alley-oop from his wife, Whitney, that created a cloud of pink powder for the couple's gender reveal video.

TOWN OF BAKERSVILLE

Wise gives reasons why she is running for mayor

By BRANDON ROBERTS
Mitchell News-Journal
editor@mitchellnews.com

BAKERSVILLE – The town of Bakersville will have a contested race for mayor in November as Darlene Tipton Wise filed to run against longtime incumbent Charles Vines.

Wise, 60, is retired from Mitchell County Schools and is currently a full-time bus driver.

“I just think the (town of Bakersville) needs a new view and new ideas,” she said. “Everything needs new ideas every now and then and the town needs brought up to date.”

Water would be her top priority if elected, Wise said.

“My running for mayor is nothing against anyone,” she said. “I just think the town could benefit from a change.”

Wise is married to Mike and has one son, Justin McMahan. This is her second time running for public office. She ran for Mitchell County Clerk of Courts in the late 1990s.



Darlene Wise

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TOWN OF SPRUCE PINE

Council tours vacant downtown properties

By CORY SPIERS
Mitchell News-Journal
reporter1@tmitchellnews.com

SPRUCE PINE – In lieu of its regular meeting earlier this month, Spruce Pine Town Council toured downtown properties with Main Street Director Libby Phillips and Peter Franklin of Foxfire Real Estate.

The tour took the group to five properties the town anticipates selling to businesses soon – the building currently housing Not Bob's Antiques, the Carolina Theatre, the site of the old Toe River Texaco station, and the McCall's and Wellborn buildings.

Council member Jackie Rensink said seeing the properties gave council new insight.

"It was very educational," she said. "Libby had told us of some of the challenges with these properties, but until you see it, it's hard to visualize."

The buildings will all need work before they are ready for a business.

"We do face a lot of challenges in getting any of those buildings ready for

occupancy," Rensink said.

Perhaps the more difficult building to prepare, Rensink said, is the old Toe River Texaco station, which was covered in debris after a rockslide.

"There are so many unknowns with that building," Rensink said of the former service station. "A geologist told us there is a fault line there and because of that, there can be continued rock activity unless it's stabilized."

Rensink said the council unanimously agreed the McCall's and Wellborn buildings appear most prepared for buyers.

Council member James Acuff said the tour was a "good start," but council is just beginning the process of deciding how to proceed.

"A lot of businesses don't have the money to fix the properties up," he said. "We'll probably end up

going into closed session to talk about how we want to market these properties and get an idea of what the potential businesses would be looking for."



Members of Spruce Pine Town Council prepare to tour vacant downtown properties.

MNJ PHOTO/CORY SPIERS

Some council members discussed the possibility of a brewery or a restaurant in the Not Bob's Antiques building. Looking at up at

the high ceilings and wide space on the first floor, the members came up with many ideas for how to best use the massive space.

"We were just discussing what we could get into these buildings," Acuff said. "We don't want to hold on to property. We

want to find the perfect piece to invest in and turn it over to somebody to try to break even, but it comes at a big price."

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

County gets update from DSS director

By CORY SPIERS
Mitchell News-Journal
reporter1@tmitchellnews.com

BAKERSVILLE – The Mitchell County Board of Commissioners at a special-called meeting this past Tuesday received information about respite and an update from Department of Social Services Director Paula Holtsclaw.

A Caring Alternative is a social services group based out of Morganton and is working on opening a respite home in McDowell County.

Sheila Perkins of A Caring Alternative said the group provides many services. A respite home, she added, allows children in need from age 6 to 18 to spend a few hours, a night or even a few weeks inside the supervised home.

The McDowell home is Medicaid-funded service with a daily cost is \$300 per child.

"It would be a case-by-case decision on how we fill the home and what is seen as a priority," Perkins said. "I think it would be very doable for a lot of other counties to start something. We're just really interested in help-

ing to provide."

Commissioner Jacob Willis invited Perkins to the meeting. He said he sees the value of a respite home.

"The reason I asked Sheila if she'd come tell us about it is that it would eliminate having a child spend the night at the office if we get them late," he said.

The board did not take any action with regard to respite homes.

Holtsclaw gave the board a copy of her department's August statistics and discussed several changes she has made to her department after it was audited in August.

Holtsclaw said she had a workshop and is continuing to keep her workers focused on the fundamental principles of social work.

"I held a big workshop at the hospital for all of child welfare to go over what they found and what I envisioned is the way child welfare will work," Holtsclaw said. "That vision is a family focused vision. We have something called the Principles of Partnership and the Children's Bill of Rights of what the expectations

are from the state. All of the workers now have those documents posted in their office or on their door so they can go back and look at it."

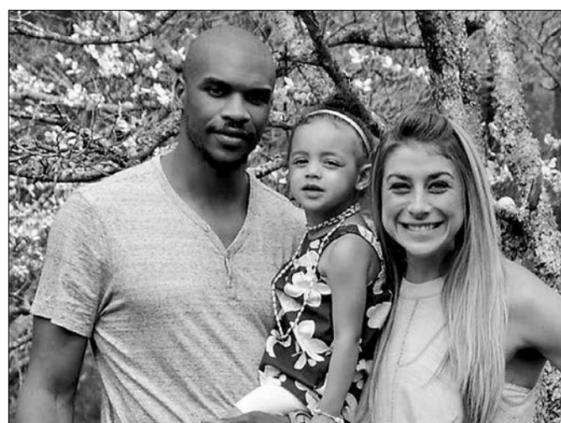
Holtsclaw said she also had her workers create a work plan that contains four of five things they have been assigned to do as well as two or three things of their own on which they feel the need to improve.

"I'll hold them to it," she said of the plans. "They'll go over their plans every 90 days with me."

Holtsclaw said she changed around the department's supervisors. She added she plans to leave the roles as is for six months before rotating again so all the supervisors know all the cases and families.

Holtsclaw said she is working to ensure her employees are trained.

"Right now, there are six staff members in child welfare who have been to all the trainings," Holtsclaw said. "I have two that lack just one class and the rest are new workers who have to get the training done within a year, but I have those set up."



The Williams Family are, from left, John, Selah, 2, and Whitney Williams.

VIDEO

Continued from page 1A

Raleigh and his parents, Roger and Sheila Williams, moved to Spruce Pine two years ago.

Whitney and John own and operate basketball improvement program JWB Elite Training. John is also head girls' basketball coach at Asheville Christian Academy and an announcer for My40's Thursday Night Lights broadcasts.

"(The video) has been posted everywhere," Whitney said. "It had 6,000 views in less than 24 hours. We had no idea it was going to take off like it did. It has been on TV and shared all over the internet. We just thought it was a cute idea."

The video can be seen on the News-Journal's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/MitchellNewsJournal and at www.mitchellnews.com.

Artists sought for 2018 duck stamp competition

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission and the Washington Tourism Development Authority are seeking artists for the annual N.C. Waterfowl Conservation Stamp Print competition.

The winning artwork will be featured on the 2018-19 waterfowl conservation stamp, also known as the North Carolina duck stamp. Artists 18 years and older are eligible to enter the competition.

Entries, along with a \$50 entry fee, must be submitted by 5 p.m., Jan. 19, 2018, to the Washington Tourism Development Authority, 108 Gladden St., Washington, N.C. 27889.

The Commission and the Washington Tourism Development Authority sponsor the annual national contest, which typically draws artists from across the United States.

This year, artists may submit a full-color, realistic rendering of tundra swans, blue-winged teal, ring-

necked duck, canvasback or bufflehead, which must be depicted in the appropriate habitat.

Artwork will be judged on the following:

- Level and accuracy of detail in all aspects of the anatomy of waterfowl;
- Appropriateness, accuracy and detail in depiction of the selected species' habitat;
- Attractiveness and creativity of the composition regarding spatial balance, lighting, and harmony of subject and background; and,
- Visual appeal and suitability for reproduction at both the print and stamp scales.

Artists may submit one design only in whatever medium they choose. Images must be horizontal, 13-by-18 inches, matted in white to outside dimensions of 18-by-23 inches and should be loosely covered with a protective overleaf, although not framed or covered with glass.

The image should bear no signature or other marks identifying the artist.

Complete entry guidelines, as well as specific requirements for artwork, are on the Little Washington website at www.littlewashingtonnc.com/nc-duck-stamp.

A panel of five judges will select the winning artwork Jan. 23, 2018. The winner will receive \$7,000.

Proceeds from sales of the print and stamp support the Wildlife Resources Commission's Waterfowl Fund, which generates revenue for the conservation of waterfowl habitat in North Carolina.

Visit the Washington Tourism Development Authority www.littlewashingtonnc.com for more information about the Waterfowl Conservation Stamp and Print Competition. Visit www.ncwildlife.org/hunting for more information on waterfowl hunting and licenses in North Carolina.

ARREST REPORT

BAKERSVILLE – The following arrests took place between Sunday, Sept. 3, and Sunday, Sept. 10, according to reports on file at the Mitchell County Sheriff's Office:

JACOB CRAIN, no age given, of 883 Sims Fork Road, Burnsville, was arrested by Lt. Det. C.C. Hobson for failing to pay child support. He was released on a \$500 cash bond. He is scheduled to appear in court Sept. 25.

AMBER WAYNETTE BRYANT, 32, of 497 Biggerstaff Road, Spruce Pine, was arrested by Lt. Det. C.C. Hobson for public assistance fraud. She was released on a \$500 secured bond. She is scheduled to appear in court Oct. 9.

WARREN DOUGLAS JACKSON, 54, of 193 Jackson Lane, Plumtree, was arrested by Capt. R.V. Wiseman and Lt. J.D. English for two counts of simple possession of a schedule II narcotic and possession of non-taxpaid liquor. He was released on a \$1,500 unsecured bond. He is scheduled to appear in court Oct. 9.

DEANNA ROSA HUGHES, 27, of 218 Sparks Road, Bakersville, was arrested by Det. A.D. Beam for failing to appear on harboring/aiding certain persons. She is being held in jail on a \$3,000 secured bond. She is scheduled to appear in court Oct. 11.

ROBERT AVERY MCFALLS, 27, of 100 Ridgeview Lane, Apt. 1, Spruce Pine, was arrested by Deputy S.E. Davis for failing to pay child support and failing to appear on a felony probation violation. He is being held in jail on a \$24,542 cash bond. He is scheduled to appear in court Oct. 30.

WILLIAM SCOTTIE SMALLWOOD, 44, of 562 Pond Road, Spruce Pine, was arrested by Deputy J.K. Silver for assault by pointing a gun and second-degree trespassing. He is scheduled to appear in court Oct. 9.

CITATIONS ISSUED

CHRISTOPHER LAWTON BENSON, of 175 R.L. Norris Road, Linwood, was cited by Capt. R.V. Wiseman for simple possession of marijuana.

SPRUCE PINE POLICE DEPARTMENT

The following arrests were made by the Spruce Pine Police Department:

CHRISTOPHER JAMES MONROE, of 340 Bowditch St., Apt. 5, Burnsville, was arrested Friday, Sept. 1, for possession of stolen motor vehicle; possession drug paraphernalia; carrying a concealed weapon; and OFA from Yancey County. He is scheduled to appear in court Oct. 9. His bond was set at \$21,500.

BRITTANY KUENZEL, of 403 South Tallassee Drive, Tallassee, Alabama, was arrested Friday, Sept. 1, for possession of stolen motor vehicle and possession of an open container. She is scheduled to appear in court Oct. 9. Her bond was set at \$12,500.

'Public Vigil for Healthcare' slated for Friday, Sept. 30

On Saturday, Sept. 30, the Labor and Delivery service at Blue Ridge Regional Hospital will close. To mark this loss to healthcare for Yancey and Mitchell counties, a public vigil will be at 7:30 that evening in Riverside Park in Spruce Pine.

Pastors from both counties are coming together to lead this "Vigil for Healthcare." All who are concerned about the availability of essential health services in our mountain communities are urged to attend. The Vigil for Healthcare is co-sponsored

by Sustaining Essential and Rural Community Healthcare, or SEARCH, a recently formed organization of concerned citizens that seeks to "empower greater involvement in decisions affecting the healthcare of our residents" and "to preserve, strengthen and expand access to essential medical services in our area."

The vigil is also co-sponsored by the Yancey-Mitchell NAACP whose mission "is to ensure the political, educational, social and economic equality of rights of all persons."