

Ledford awarded Pugsley Medal

NEW ORLEANS — Lewis Ledford, of Raleigh, was recently awarded a 2017 Honorable Cornelius Amory Pugsley Medal recognizing outstanding contributions to the promotion and development of public parks and conservation.

Ledford, a native of Bakersville and 1972 graduate of Bowman High School, is the executive director of the National Association of State Park Directors, a nonprofit organization serving America's state parks.

Prior to his current role, Ledford had a lengthy career with the North Carolina state parks system. In 2003, he was named the director of the division of parks and recreation, becoming the first entry-level ranger to head the division.

During his tenure as state director, North Carolina's state park system experienced unprecedented growth, including renewed invigoration and expansion of the Mountains to Sea Trail, six natural areas and five new state parks, including two privately owned natural landmarks: Grandfather Mountain

and Chimney Rock Park. Parklands increased by more than 50,000 acres.

He was successful in working with the state legislature to secure \$437 million for state and local parks for land acquisition and capital construction. He also secured more than \$23 million in private donations during the years he served as state director. During his tenure as state park director, Lewis introduced an internet-based reservation system for the 3,000 campsites and other facilities and completed the first study of the economic impact of the state park and recreation system.

Through his leadership, the environmental education programs were dramatically expanded, and all major buildings in the state park system were designed to meet green construction standards.

"While the North Carolina State Park System's history mirrors that of the National Park Service, it was during Lewis Ledford's term that it might be considered the Golden Era for North Carolina's State Parks," said Dr.



Lewis Ledford

Phil Rea, NC State University professor emeritus in support of Ledford's nomination. "His leadership has benefited state park systems across the United States and the citizens they serve."

On the national level, Ledford has given multiple testimonies to Congress advocating for parks, conservation and the Land and Water Conservation Fund. He recently completed six years of service on the National Recreation and Park Association Board of Directors. He currently serves on the North Carolina Parks and

Recreation Authority and the North Carolina State University Natural Resources Foundation Board of Directors, where he is chair-elect. He is a member of the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration and serves as Director of the State Park Leadership School sponsored by NC State University, the Oglebay National Training Center and the National Association of State Park Directors. Internationally, he promoted and participated in World Parks Conference in Australia and regularly participates in conferences with the Canadian Parks Council.

He has received numerous awards including the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management at NC State University, Appalachian State University Alumni of the Year as well as the William Penn Mott Jr. Award for Excellence from the National Society for Park Resources.

He has received special awards from three governors including the Order of the Long Leaf Pine,

North Carolina's highest award. Ledford lives in Raleigh with his wife, Susan, and is a native of the Roan Mountain area in northern Mitchell County where he enjoys spending time and working on the family property.

As a Pugsley Medal winner, Ledford is in good company. Previous winners include Stephen Mather, the founder of the National Park Service; former Secretary of the Interior Stuart Udall; Noted Conservationist Lady Bird Johnson; American conservationist and philanthropist Laurance Rockefeller; and Eunice Kennedy Shriver, founder of Special Olympics.

The Pugsley Award is presented by the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration, in partnership with the National Park Foundation and the Davey Tree Expert Company.

"Winners of the Pugsley Medal have made an exceptional difference in parks, recreation and conservation," said Ron Dodd, Pugsley Committee chair. "It is the Academy's great honor to acknowledge them with this award."

Avoid peak season soil sample fees

Fall is not only a great time of year for football, pumpkin spice and changing leaves, it is also an excellent time to take soil samples for testing through the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Agronomic Services Lab.

By submitting samples before Dec. 1, users can avoid peak-season fees and get results back quickly. The peak-season testing fee will be in effect through April 1, 2018. During this time, the cost of soil test-

ing is \$4 per sample. The fee originated in 2013 to encourage earlier sampling in the fall, one of the busier times of the year for the lab.

Outside of the peak season, soil testing is free to growers. Samples with completed soil sample information forms must be delivered and received by the Agronomic Services Division prior to Dec. 1, to avoid the fee. Samples will not be accepted without completed paperwork.

"The agricultural indus-

try is very much aware of the peak-season fee now, and it has been successful," said Steve Troxler, North Carolina Agriculture Commissioner. "With people submitting their samples earlier, it has helped reduce turnaround time for test results. In addition, our lab has been able to improve efficiency by using fees to add robotic equipment and hire temporary personnel during the busy season."

The soil testing lab's longest turnaround time was

nine weeks this past year, which occurred on Dec. 1, after the start of the fee period. Turnaround time was down to two weeks by the third week of January. Up-to-date turnaround times can always be found at www.ncagr.gov/agronomi/PALS/.

Growers are encouraged to submit sample information forms online. Starting Dec. 1, peak-season fees can be paid with a credit card using the secure online payment service PayPoint. Online submissions can be accessed through the PALS homepage at www.ncagr.gov/agronomi/PALS/ after a user account is established under the "utility" link.

If faster turnaround time is needed, the lab offers an expedited soil testing service on a limited basis. Growers can purchase expedited shippers, which can hold up to 36 soil samples, for \$200 each while supplies last. The service guarantees a seven-business-day turnaround time if the lab is contacted and notified 24 hours in advance of the quantity being delivered. Otherwise, the guaranteed turnaround time of two weeks upon delivery at the lab is offered. These guarantees exclude the Christmas season. Unused expedited shippers can be used in following years.

Contact the Agronomic Services Division at 919-733-2655 for questions regarding the peak-season soil testing fee, online sample submission or the purchase of expedited shippers.



PHOTO SUBMITTED
Bowman Middle School students participate in an indigo dye art class.

Bowman students take part in 'carousel' workshops

Students at Bowman Middle School were immersed in indigo dye during recent art classes.

These "carousel" workshops are made possible through Toe River Arts as part of its community-funded program.

Art teachers from the two-county area public schools came together to learn specific art processes not available in the classroom. They were then provided with all the equipment and supplies necessary to take the newly learned techniques back to their students.

Indigo-dyeing was chosen as the first the art experience for the 2017-18 school season in the middle and high schools.

Mission Health announces in-network health plans for 2018

Mission Health announced in a press release it is contracting with a suite of health plans in 2018, including five Medicare Advantage plans. The expansion of its insurer relationships is part of the health system's ongoing efforts to ensure optimal, in-network access and the highest quality of care for everyone in western North Carolina. The announcement comes at the start of Medicare Advantage open enrollment for 2018, the once per year time when individuals eligible for Medicare can sign up for Medicare Advantage or change their Medicare Advantage insurance provider.

Medicare Advantage open enrollment began Sunday, Oct. 15, and ends Dec. 7. Mission Health's seven hospitals and 189 physician practices are in-network with the following Medicare Advantage plans in 2018:

- AARP, MedicareComplete, insured through UnitedHealthcare
- FirstMedicare Direct Healthy State HMO Plus
- Gateway Health Plan
- Humana
- WellCare Health Plans Inc.

Mission Health does not have a contract with Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina and any Blue Cross Medicare Advantage patient will be out of network at all Mission Health physicians and facilities given that status. Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina HMO plans have no out of network benefit and therefore any consumer in western North Carolina on that plan will have no benefits whatsoever at any Mission Health facility.

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation's Medicare Advantage 2017 Spotlight, more than 587,000 North Carolina residents enrolled in Medicare Advantage plans last Fall for 2017, a number expected to grow in 2018. The same report notes that nationally, Medicare Advantage enrollment has increased 71 percent over the past seven years.

High Country

United Way



High Country United Way says "Thanks" to our Caring Business Community for their generous support!

These Mitchell County businesses all have the desire to give back to the community. We are grateful they chose High Country United Way to help meet basic needs, improve community conditions, and positively impact the lives of those less fortunate in Mitchell County.

COMMUNITY KEYSTONE



UNIMIN

COMMUNITY PILLAR



THE QUARTZ CORP



Piedmont Natural Gas

COMMUNITY CORNERSTONE



Bank

America's Most Convenient Bank®

COMMUNITY BUILDER



United Community Bank

504189

Great things happen when we LIVE UNITED

CONNECT WITH US



/MitchellNewsJournal



@MitchellNewsJou



@mitchellnews

MITCHELL NEWS-JOURNAL