

NEWS-JOURNAL EDITORIAL

Meeting about area's economy informative

After a meeting took place in November in Bakersville about the pros and cons of Mitchell County and how to promote the pros and improve the cons, a similar meeting took place this past week in Spruce Pine.

About a dozen people attended the meeting to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the area, evaluate the current business landscape and to brainstorm about ways to rectify problems and capitalize on the positives.

The meeting was another indicator people and business owners in Mitchell County want to stay here and want to see the area do better economically.

The meeting also proved again how many economic stakeholders love this community.

It is no secret, or at least it shouldn't be, that several business owners in downtown Spruce Pine feel neglected by many people and entities at many different levels as well as feel current policies are not bringing the prosperity they seek and need.

One thing seems clear after the meetings in both Bakersville and Spruce Pine: the current mindset needs to be changed. Every municipal government has its own idea as to the direction a community should take, which is valuable, but too often that vision was created by only a handful of peo-

ple whose ideas may drastically differ from those of the masses.

Too many times local politics has killed branding efforts. Someone with political clout has one vision while someone else has another and the result is an all-out political war with branding as its first victim.

A study by the Citizens' Institute on Rural Design found small towns need a comprehensive approach when it comes to revitalizing their downtowns and need to leverage existing assets. The study also shows small towns are surprisingly complex with regard to economic development challenges and analytical needs, to complex land use and transporta-

tion issues. They also suffer from chronic unemployment and need to think outside the box to begin resolving this issue, according to the study.

Another difficulty is a lack of resources and expertise to support and implement change, according to the study. Successful small communities have developed a range of alternative approaches by leveraging limited resources and working with nearby communities, as well as by creating business networks, consortiums and economic development organizations and it seems as if that is what the residents and business owners in Bakersville and Spruce Pine are attempting to do.

COLUMN

Merry Christmas

It feels like Christmas to me every around 2 p.m. every Tuesday because that's when the new edition of the News-Journal arrives at our office.

It's not all because the new paper is tangible evidence of yet another brutal week of work with little sleep and lots of driving. It's not because the arrival of the new paper means I can relax (whatever that means) for a day and regroup.

What makes it seem like Christmas to me is that the very fact the News-Journal exists means at least some people are still interested in the truth. Newspapers remain the most trusted source for accurate and reliable information, and even though we don't cover the national hot-button issues, what we report is very important.

Print journalists are held to a level of accountability unrivaled in the media industry, and that creates a lot of pressure.

Some people may think the smaller the newspaper, the lower the level of expected accountability. But as someone who has worked at small weeklies, large weeklies, small dailies and large dailies, let me go on record as saying the opposite is the truth. Small papers are in small communities, thus making accuracy in what we report perhaps even more important than at our



Brandon
ROBERTS

larger counterparts.

A vibrant, well-read community newspaper is symbolic of a vibrant, well-informed community. People who read the local paper care about what's going on in the community and oftentimes in small communities have a personal stake in the state of local affairs.

We are a business, yes, but we also provide a community service. As publisher and editor of the News-Journal, I consider myself a public servant and the best service I can provide to this community is producing a quality newspaper every week. A newspaper that reminds the community of its values and greatness as well as offers suggestions for improvement.

With every edition, we try to put out a newspaper that makes our community proud.

Merry Christmas.
Brandon Roberts is editor and publisher of the News-Journal. He can be reached at editor@mitchellnews.com, by calling 828-765-7169 or at the News-Journal office at 261 Locust St. in Spruce Pine.

LETTERS
TO THE
EDITOROur rural health
care is at risk

Dear editor:

Our family has had a farm here for almost half a century. The tradition of our neighbors helping each other when difficulties arise is something I have always loved about both Yancey and Mitchell counties.

It is, for this reason, I am so concerned about the current rural health care crisis. Our government has reduced the enrollment period for the Affordable Care Act, eliminated most ACA advertising dollars and ended the services of most of our local ACA navigators. Our neighbors and friends are now confused about how to sign up for the ACA and may be left without adequate coverage for serious, life-threatening ailments as well as pre-existing conditions. Add to this the negotiation issues between Blue Cross Blue Shield and Mission, as well as the recent closing of labor and delivery at the Spruce Pine hospital, and we find ourselves facing frightening health care realities right here in our community.

Health care should be readily available at reasonable cost to all our citizens. All those who provide or assure our health care are human beings who I hope can recognize and respond to other's human needs and suffering.

Our health care providers, whether it be the federal government for Medicare, Medicaid and the ACA, our insurance companies, such as BCBS, or our local Mission hospital system are composed of human beings with, I hope, a moral compass based on Judeo-Christian values.

As a person who has dealt personally with astronomical health care costs and lack of affordable treatment due to a pre-existing condition, along with a husband who suffered an unexpected major head injury, I urge our community to come together, honor its traditions of mutual support, and become a "community of caring" for our most vulnerable, which could be any one of us at any time.

Please step forward to help. Learn about and participate in the work



LETTERS POLICY

The Mitchell News-Journal welcomes letters to the editor about issues of local importance. Deadline to submit a letter for publication in the coming week's edition is 5 p.m. Friday. All writers are expected to abide by the following policy:

- Letters must be exclusive to the News-Journal;
- Letters must include the writer's full name, street address and daytime telephone number for verification. The writer's name and city of residence will be published – names cannot be withheld;

- Letters must be original – no photocopies;
- Letters should be 500 words or fewer;
- We do not publish poems, excerpts from other publications, lengthy submissions of scripture or letters signed by groups or multiple individuals;
- Letters endorsing or criticizing a business will not be published;
- We reserve the right to edit letters for brevity, style and libel. Publication of any letter is at the sole discretion of the Mitchell News-Journal.

of Sustaining Essential and Rural Community Healthcare, or SEARCH, and other local efforts to find appropriate non-politicized solutions to this growing rural health care crisis.

Juanita Brown
Burnsville

White Oak Road
residents fed up
with speeders

Dear editor:
People who live close to White Oak Road in Bak-

ersville are fed up with speeders and cars with loud mufflers on our very curvy road with almost non-existent shoulders on the sides.

Many people have run off the road and down banks because of their carelessness and immature driving habits. The elderly take their time on this road, but others think they have somewhere to go in a hurry and we know they don't.

This past week one of our neighborhood deer, which was only half-grown, was hit and killed

by a driver who failed to allow for proper stopping time in case some animal or person was suddenly in front of them. This has happened before.

Just because they have a gas pedal doesn't mean they own the road. Someone will eventually be maimed or killed there.

Slow down. Don't rush through life, it is short enough.

Ann Beecham
Bakersville

MITCHELL
NEWS-JOURNAL

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Our Mission

The Mitchell News-Journal is published with pride for the people of Mitchell and adjoining counties by Community Newspapers Inc., Athens, Georgia.

We believe strong newspapers build strong communities – "Newspapers get things done!" Our primary goal is to publish distinguished and profitable community-oriented newspapers.

This mission will be accomplished through the teamwork of professionals dedicated to truth, integrity, loyalty, quality and hard work.

Tom Wood, Chairman Dink NeSmith, President
Rachel Hoskins, Regional Publisher

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