

**Online POLL**

Should Mitchell County have a fox-trapping season? Visit [www.mitchellnews.com](http://www.mitchellnews.com) to vote and our Facebook page to leave a response

**OPINION**

**LAST WEEK'S POLL RESULTS**

Do you participate in arts-related activities?  
NEVER: 0%    SOMETIMES: 45%    NEVER: 55%

**NEWS-JOURNAL EDITORIAL**

**Beautification lifts spirits, property values**

Studies show beautification should be high on a community's agenda. Volunteer-led projects, such as the one 16-year-old Spruce Pine resident Paul Miller recently completed as his Eagle Scout Service Project, are one of the quickest ways to inspire more community action.

A visually appealing community increases property values, attracts businesses and improves a neighborhood's image, according to the website Useful Community Development.

Beauty is one of the three most influential factors in "community attachment," which means loyalty to a town or city. Some research even shows a nice-looking neighborhood



Part of Spruce Pine resident Paul Miller's Eagle Scout Service Project was building this decorative rock wall at the entrance to downtown.

NEWS-JOURNAL PHOTO/BRANDON ROBERTS

promotes good behavior.

Opportunities to organize private citizens into their own commu-

nity beautification campaigns is also beneficial, such as the slate of downtown cleanups by Spruce Pine

Main Street.

A tree-planting project or landscaping beautification endeavor like Miller's is great for improving community appearance at a relatively low cost, according to the website.

A small town's character is what distinguishes it from another. When small towns are struggling to grow or even survive, one town's reputation of being "junk" can cause it to lose out on dollars that will be taken to and spent in a close, less junky small town.

Miller and his volunteer helpers should be commended for not only their hard work but also for what his project will potentially do for the community.

**I'll take 'obsession' for \$1,000, Alex**

I have been watching Jeopardy! for as long as I can remember. Even as a young child, many of the clues came relatively easy to me.

My friends and loves ones often say they can find no purpose in possessing such "useless knowledge." I rebuke the notion such knowledge is "useless" and, with any luck, will soon prove my theory.

For the second time in my life this past week I took the online Jeopardy! contestant exam. I first took it in 2009 and passed. I was disqualified, however, for not taking it in my time zone. (Anyone who has taken the online exam knows one is required to take it in the time zone in which they live.) So, as it goes I never really thought about it much since with work and life in general taking precedence, but I decided to give it another shot.

I have yet to hear whether I passed this time around. I have emailed the fine folks at Jeopardy! inquiring about my exam and was told, "All we can say is bad news travels fast." That makes me think I have once again passed or am at least on the cusp of being considered.

When I was editor of the daily News-Graphic in Georgetown, Kentucky, I assigned myself to interview a man named Bill Needle. Bill did radio play-by-play for Georgetown College athletics and was as unassuming as anyone I have ever met. He had made a career being on the radio for several colleges across the country and was a voracious reader, just as I am.

When we met for the interview he rode his bicycle to a small barbecue restaurant near his one-bedroom apartment in downtown Lexington. In his late 60s, he carried a picture frame



Brandon ROBERTS

close to his body as he approached the table. He propped it up and looked at it before the interview began. It was a picture of him with Alex Trebek taken after the show taped.

I hung on every word he said and through that interview and I found out some things that aren't necessarily common knowledge among Jeopardy! hopefuls.

Bill said he barely passed the contestant exam, but was invited to the show because of an answer he gave on the questionnaire. When asked what he would spend his Jeopardy! winnings on, Bill said he responded: "I would spend have of it on liquor and partying, and the rest I'd just waste."

Bill is neither a drinker nor does he party, but what he did was expose a loophole in the Jeopardy! contestant process. He was told the show was trying to revamp its image by having contestants on who are "less uptight" than those people normally associate with the show.

Bill finished third and brought home about \$1,000 after taxes. But finishing third on Jeopardy! is better than not getting on the show at all.

I'm keeping my fingers crossed I can just get to the questionnaire portion.

**Brandon Roberts is publisher and editor of the Mitchell News-Journal. He can be reached by email at [editor@mitchellnews.com](mailto:editor@mitchellnews.com) or by calling 828-765-7169.**

**LETTERS**

**Reader saddened by loss of labor and delivery service**

Dear editor:  
I was released from the Spruce Pine Mission Hospital recently after a week of inpatient treatment for viral pneumonia. It started at my home in South Toe when suddenly, I felt as if I couldn't breathe; very frightening and indeed, I thought I was dying.

Fortunately, a friend was there who called 911 and in a very short time, my bedroom was filled with a crew of kind and comforting faces, some of old friends and neighbors who were a part of the EMS team. They quickly helped to stabilize me and guide me down my very steep staircase, load me onto a gurney and wheeled me to the ambulance. There was some difficulty driving up the narrow lane to the dirt road at the top, but soon enough we arrived at the ER where again I was warmly welcomed by the many familiar faces of the nursing staff.

During the week I spent there, although the first few days were difficult until my condition began to improve, I felt professionally and expertly cared for, but maybe even more importantly, I felt so much sincere love, concern and kindness from each of the ever-changing staff in charge of me.

We know from extensive research that these qualities are an indispensable part of the healing process all the sophisticated technology in the world can't make up for.

I have lived in this community for 40 years, worked here and raised my children. I have had many



occasions to experience the services of the hospital from supporting friends through childbirth, tending to my own elderly mother when she was hospitalized at various times, to the heart-break of watching my late husband die there after five days of inpatient treatment for a severe stroke. I have encouraged many pregnant women to take advantage of our wonderful labor and delivery rather than go to the city for what they imagine is superior care. Of course, there are exceptions.

It breaks my heart that we no longer can welcome our babies in this nurturing environment.

With the closing of labor and delivery, I am concerned now about the sustainability of our hospital and want to bring more awareness to this treasure in our midst, which is symbolic of the beautiful, caring community where we live.

In this fast-moving, changing world we are blessed to have available to us an institution of both expertly trained staffed that maintain a very human web

of skill and interpersonal relationships.

Janey Zietlow  
South Toe

our precious children. May it also remind our elected officials they, too, have an important role to play in those efforts.

Ronald Rolett, M.D.  
Burnsville

**Reader encourages participation in walkout**

Dear editor:  
As the grandparent of three current high and middle school students and as a retired public health doctor who recognizes gun violence to be an important public health issue, I am encouraging my grandchildren and their friends to participate in a 17-minute school walkout on March 14 – the one-month anniversary of the mass shooting in Parkland, Florida.

Each minute will be dedicated to the memory of a teenager or school staff member who was murdered on Valentine's Day.

This walkout will undoubtedly be meaningful for the participants and their families and will encourage public health and law enforcement professionals to further increase their efforts to safeguard

**Property owners should keep roadsides clean**

Dear editor:  
Regarding all the ballyhoo about litter pickup, or lack thereof, in the Feb. 28 News-Journal, of course people need to cease littering.

Do they live like that at home? I think not.

Property owners should keep their roadside properties picked up, unless, for some reason, they cannot.

I own property that borders Fork Mountain Road and Cook Town Road. Not only do I keep it picked up, but also the side across from me.

Not a big deal. The exercise is good, but that's just this crotchety old woman's opinion.

Lavina Mack  
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.

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**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 News-Journal.



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