

**Online POLL**

**Should the county have one middle school?**  
Visit [www.mitchellnews.com](http://www.mitchellnews.com) to answer and our Facebook page to leave a response.

**OPINION**

**GUEST EDITORIAL**

**LAST WEEK'S POLL RESULTS**  
Will public-private partnerships create more economic development?  
**YES: 66 NO: 34%**

**Several more initiatives on tap for Mayland**

Mayland Community College's 2018 Fall semester is successfully underway, and there have been many initiatives completed in the past year with more to come. Renovation projects have been carried out at all campus locations during the past year. Four new science labs were built on the Mitchell Campus, and students will be able to take advantage of the latest state-of-the-art lab equipment. A new facility for the Mitchell Campus welding program is in design and will include updated safety and production equipment. Also in Mitchell County, the Pine-bridge Project is progressing with a new roof going onto the

Coliseum building in October. Mayland continues efforts to obtain temporary occupancy for the event space area of Pine-bridge and plans to start the construction process for a new Cosmetology Center in Spring of 2019. Also, MCC's Avery and Yancey Center locations have undergone extensive cosmetic updates. Mayland is in the process of expanding activities at the newly named Earth to Sky Park, previously known as the EnergyXChange. To enhance the experience visitors have at the Bare Dark Sky Observatory, a landscaping design has been approved with the first phase beginning this fall. This phase will



**John BOYD**

incorporate the construction of eight private telescope viewing stations and will provide better handicapped access areas to the observatory. More than 1,624 people visited the observatory this past year, and that number is anticipated to grow with the completion of a 63-seat planetarium. Mayland is currently in the process of hiring an architect to design the planetarium with

plans to begin construction in the spring of 2019. This fall, Mayland will offer outdoor, family friendly movie nights at the ESP. An astronomy club has been created with membership open to both students and community members. There will be special events for club members at the Bare Dark Sky Observatory throughout the year. The Mayland Foundation is hosting a Dream Home Tour Oct. 5 in Yancey County. This day-long event assists the college in raising funds for student scholarships and is a great way to spend a fall day in the mountains. Tickets are available at [www.mayland.edu/foundation](http://www.mayland.edu/foundation) or by calling the Foundation of-

rice at 828-766-1233. Community support will assist in the elimination of financial barriers for students and help them reach their educational goals. New on the tour this year is a paid lunch option catered by Pig and Grits in Burnsville. Mayland Community College continues to play a substantial role in education and economic development for our communities. We encourage suggestions on how the College can continue to be a resource, and as always, our doors are open to offering excellence and opportunity to those we serve. **Dr. John Boyd is president of Mayland Community College.**

**GUEST COLUMN**

**Downtown development efforts show positive results**

In a world that expects instant gratification and fast-paced results, sometimes it's important to step back and look at things through a longer lens. One of my tasks as Spruce Pine Main Street Director is to track the statistical data for economic development within the downtown district.

It doesn't sound that exciting, but when you take a look at those cumulative numbers and consider the size of our town: wow, it's pretty impressive. Almost \$4.3 million has been invested in our downtown district since 2014!

Within the last several years, a lot of things have improved in downtown Spruce Pine. If you are one of the "downtowners" (those that live, work and play on our two main streets every day), you know what I am talking about. But for those of you that haven't been downtown in a while (or a long while), I invite you to come down and see what's new.

- Since 2014:
- 30 new businesses have opened (net)
- 63 new jobs have been created (net)
- 30 buildings received facade improvements
- Six business expansions

Public investment is on the rise also. Within this period, we have had 14 public improvement projects within the Main Street District alone. In addition to the new town hall and police department, our new visitor center, pocket park and public restrooms have completely changed the downtown landscape. We now have an established sidewalk program that has



**Libby PHILLIPS**

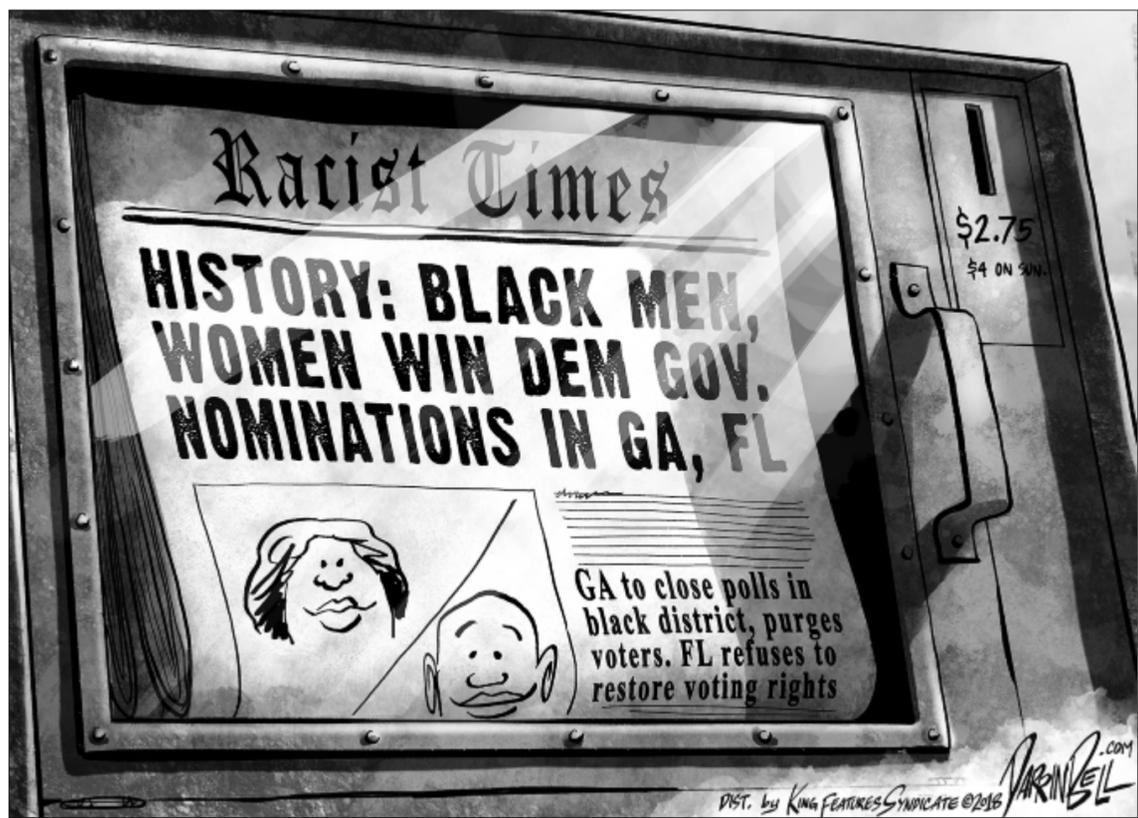
expanded the walkability of our town significantly. We have begun renovating the pedestrian walking bridge that connects to the proposed Mayland Community College satellite campus and Riverside Park. And let's not forget our award-winning Wayfinding signage project that helps direct tourist to our downtown businesses.

Our latest endeavor, the McCall's Project, has already shown a return on investment and is a perfect example of community development at its finest. This public-private partnership is not only creating jobs but also creating opportunities for additional small business development.

As a volunteer-driven non-profit, probably the most exciting number I see is the investment of community pride. People who come out and give their time and talents to improve our little downtown are amazing to me. These "vehicles of change" have invested almost \$100,000 and over 4,400 hours of time since 2014. That's the total value of volunteer hours invested in downtown Spruce Pine.

To volunteer with Spruce Pine Main Street, call 828-765-3008 or email [smps@downtownsprucepine.com](mailto:smps@downtownsprucepine.com).

**Libby Phillips is executive director of Spruce Pine Main Street.**



**LETTERS**

**Real democracy similar to mob rule**

**Dear editor:**  
This, I promise, is the last time I'll write about this subject, as it is tiring trying to convince anyone who has blinders on when it comes to what is going on in today's political arena.

I agree with Mr. Mazzuckelli that we are far more socialist than I favor, but I also believe what I refer to as the "left" wants to take it to a whole different level.

I understand the blame for our present can of worms is not entirely partisan, but both sides are not equally guilty.

As to my being firmly aligned with one part of our two-party system, you bet your boots I am.

I and a majority of the U.S. electorate not located in the rundown squalor of the bankrupt Democrat enclaves of Detroit, Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco and the list goes on are aligned with the Republican Party.

This, I believe, is reflected in the number of counties won by Trump (2,600) versus Clinton (500). Had Clinton lost in 100 of the 500 she won, she would have lost by 12 million votes.

You think the founding fathers were on to something? They saw in their infinite wisdom a real democracy is little more than mob rule.

As to Mr. Mazzuckelli's reference to a child talking about all the bad things his friends are doing while insisting on his innocence, I stand by my statement that both parties contributed to the current mess, but not by any stretch equally. Witness the last two administrations.

Not even arguably eight years of the most divisive torture in modern history led by the most inept person to ever occupy the oval office, and it had nothing to do with his race.

The election of Clinton would have promised four more years of the same or worse. I am genuinely sorry to see so many people driven by pure hatred, but as a far wiser man than I once said, "If your enemy is committing suicide, by all means, don't interfere."

In closing, I would like to say the "alleged" campaign violations by Trump pale in comparison to the treason and

crimes committed by the Clintons.

**Charles Boone**  
Spruce Pine

**Partnerships show positive results**

**Dear editor:**  
I would like to thank the Spruce Pine Police Department, the town administrators of Spruce Pine, the Mitchell County School System and The Quartz Corporation. These people worked together to make improvements to our schools and are helping protect and improve our children's and our lives by helping to solve a huge traffic problem on Harris Street as school lets out each day.

They are a fine example of what can be accomplished when we work together.

**Pat Turner Mitchell**  
Spruce Pine

**Board members need scrutinized**

**Dear editor:**  
I am a retired physician living in Yancey County. Blue Ridge Regional Hospital is 17 miles from my home. I happily used this hospital several times in the past 15 years. My grandson was born there.

I have followed the announced purchase of Mission Health by HCA. There have been numerous articles about this purchase in the Asheville Citizen-Times and the Yancey and Mitchell county newspapers. I also attended many SEARCH meetings over the past 15 months.

I am alarmed by Mission's and HCA's obfuscation. In my opinion, the lack of community involvement in the creation of the Dogwood Health Trust bodes ill for the future of BRRH. Mission's other rural hospitals, local doctors' practices and ancillary health, education and social institutions.

It appears, as of this date, members of the Dogwood Health Trust's Board of Directors have already been named without consultation with the communities they are presumably selected to represent. As far as I know, all members so named have or have had direct

relations with Mission Health System. This smacks of collusion as the Trust's Board is supposed to have policing authority over future interactions between HCA and the Trust.

The process used for distributing the \$50-\$100 million, which the Trust is set to distribute annually in the form of grants to successful grant applicants in western North Carolina's 18 counties, needs to be above board. HCA should be prohibited from dipping into this money for its ongoing operations and construction purposes. I am aware of two cases where HCA did precisely that. Lengthy and costly lawsuits were initiated in both cases, which HCA ultimately lost. We needn't go through such legal processes; a representative and transparent Board is required to prevent such an eventuality.

I have written a letter about these matters to NC Attorney General Josh Stein. His office has assured me the creation and operation of the Dogwood Health Trust will be carefully scrutinized and monitored. That's all I ask.

**Ronald Rolett, MD**  
Burnsville

**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;
- 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.

**MITCHELL NEWS-JOURNAL**

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828-765-7169 • Fax: 828-765-1616 • USPS 639-240

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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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[rhoskins@thefranklinpress.com](mailto:rhoskins@thefranklinpress.com)

Periodical postage paid in Spruce Pine  
Regular yearly subscription rates: \$27 in Mitchell, Avery & Yancey Co.; \$37 for seasonal residents of Mitchell County; \$47 for out-of-county  
Postmaster: Send address changes to: Mitchell News-Journal, P.O. Box 339, Spruce Pine, NC 28777. In the event of typographical errors in advertisements, the Mitchell News-Journal is responsible only for the space occupied by the actual error.

