



**A strong showing**  
The Mitchell wrestling team finished in fourth place this past weekend at the Highlander Duals in Columbia, South Carolina.  
**Sports / 10**

**Lady Mountaineers getting hot**  
The Mitchell High School girls' basketball team has won three of its past four games as the regular season winds down.  
**Sports / 9**



# MITCHELL NEWS-JOURNAL

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## AG places stipulations on Mission, HCA deal

**Mitchell News-Journal**  
ASHEVILLE – HCA's acquisition of Asheville-based Mission Health's assets received approval from state Attorney General Josh Stein Wednesday, Jan. 16, paving the way for the largest health care provider in Western North Carolina to move from nonprofit to for-profit ownership while setting up a massive nonprofit foundation with the sale's proceeds.  
Stein listed a series of stipulations, however, to which the parties have consented in his letter approving the transaction. Some of these address concerns that residents of Western North Carolina have voiced since negotiations between HCA and Mission Health became public knowledge.

Stipulations include:  
• HCA extends its promise to acquire and maintain several smaller Mission Health properties in Franklin, Spruce Pine, High-

lands, Marion and Brevard from five years to 10 years, with greater specificity for continued services at these hospitals.

• An independent monitor will review compliance and, along with an advisory board, must sign off on any exceptions to these continued services at the local hospitals.

• HCA will be limited in its ability to cite economic conditions as a pretext for seeking exceptions to compliance.

• Both the new Dogwood Health Trust and the Regional Foundation will have the right to bid on the assets of any local hospitals that are sold or closed.

• HCA will build a new facility in Franklin to replace the existing Angel Hospital. Mission Health has already received a certificate of need for this project.

• HCA will build a new 120-bed behavioral health hospital in Asheville.

• HCA will continue most of Mission Health's community service programs, with at least a \$14.28 million expenditure.

• HCA will continue Mission Health's financial support of emergency medical services in Madison, Mitchell and Yancey counties.

Stein's letter also made specific provisions for the Dogwood Health Trust's board, limiting terms of

See **STEIN / 3**

## A furry friend to all



Tri-County Christian School junior Ben McKinney holds Henrietta, the school pet, as students in the kindergarten through the second-grade learning center pet her. Henrietta, a Flemish Giant rabbit, joined the school courtesy of the McKinney family earlier this school year. (Cory Spiers/Mitchell News-Journal)

## Flemish Giant rabbit, Henrietta, a hit at Tri-County Christian

**BY CORY SPIERS**  
Mitchell News-Journal  
reporter@mitchellnews.com

SPRUCE PINE – Tri-County Christian School has a new, furry friend and she's quickly become the school's biggest celebrity.

Henrietta, a Flemish Giant rabbit, became the school pet when junior Ben McKinney, who is also enrolled at Mayland Community College, brought her into the school from home.

McKinney said his family originally planned to use Henrietta for breeding and hoped to sell or give away her offspring, but they quickly realized she had a different destiny.

"We got her to our house, and we realized she was a little too much of a pet to be with other rabbits," McKinney said. "She was a little pampered."

McKinney's dad was in the school's office one day when he heard Tana Winslow, the teacher for the school's



Students in the kindergarten through second grade learning center at Tri-County Christian School spend time with Henrietta, the school pet. Henrietta, a Flemish Giant rabbit, came to the school earlier this school year and has become a school celebrity. (Cory Spiers/News-Journal)

kindergarten through the second-grade learning center, talking about how she wanted a pet for the learning center with which students

could pet and connect. "You can't really pet a goldfish," McKinney joked. "So my dad said, 'Well, how would you like a rabbit?'"

Mrs. Tana said 'OK,' and my dad said, 'Well, is it OK if the rabbit is as big as the kids?'"

See **HENRIETTA / 3**

## Rowland inducted into National 4-H Hall of Fame

Bakersville native is 13th North Carolinian recognized as national laureate

**BY BRANDON ROBERTS**  
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A lifetime North Carolina 4-H alum has been honored with the nation's top 4-H recognition, the National 4-H Hall of Fame Award, which recognizes individuals who have made a significant impact on the 4-H program and its members through their contribution of time, talent, energy and financial resources.

Sharon Runion Rowland, of Bakersville, formerly of Raleigh, was inducted Friday, Oct. 19, 2018, into the National 4-H Hall of Fame her lifetime achievements and contributions to 4-H. She is the 13th North Carolinian only recognized as a national laureate.

Nominated by the North Carolina State University 4-H Youth Development Program, Rowland was one of 15 people inducted during the ceremony at the National 4-H Youth Conference Center in Chevy Chase, Maryland. A national committee selects honorees based on their leadership at the local, state, national and international

See **ROWLAND / 3**



Sharing her thoughts about 4-H passion and legacy was Sharon Runion Rowland during the Hall of Fame ceremonies. (Photo submitted)

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Thank you,  
**Nell English,**  
of Spruce Pine,  
for subscribing to  
the News-Journal.



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Zoe Ellis

## Community mourns loss of Zoe Ellis

**Editor's note: We have received several phone calls and emails asking about the publication of Zoe Ellis' obituary. It has not been published because it was not provided to the Mitchell News-Journal.**

The community is in mourning after a single-car accident claimed the life of a 19-year-old Mitchell County woman.

Zoe Ashlyn Ellis, 19, of Bakersville, was traveling north on NC 197 Thursday, Jan. 10, in Yancey County, when she reportedly lost control of her 2005 Toyota. The car then struck a tree and flipped on its top into the North Toe River. She was later pronounced dead at Blue Ridge Regional Hospital.

Ellis was a Class of 2018 graduate of Mitchell High School. She was an honor student at Mayland Community College at the time of her death and had recently been approved as a substitute teacher for Mitchell County Schools.

She was the daughter of Scott and Wendy Ellis, of Bakersville, and a member of Bear Creek Baptist Church. She has two sisters, Jada and Erin.

A celebration of Zoe's life took place Monday, Jan. 14, in the gymnasium at Mitchell High School.

## ROWLAND

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levels. Rowland's 12 years as a Mitchell County 4-H'er and her 36-year career as a 4-H professional have been supplemented by years as a volunteer for three 4-H clubs and provided the basis for the top award.

Honorees were presented with a National 4-H Hall of Fame medallion, plaque and memory book during the ceremony.

"We are proud to recognize the 2018 National 4-H Hall of Fame honorees for the passion, dedication, vision and leadership they have shown toward young people during their many years of service to 4-H," said Jeannette Rea Keywood, National 4-H Hall of Fame Committee Chair.

Rowland believed in the history of 4-H Youth Development and trusted in its future. Through her work, she epitomized the program in which she believed.

**Read more about Rowland's induction in next week's News-Journal.**

## HENRIETTA

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McKinney brought Henrietta in this past September. He and his family provided all the necessary supplies, including food and a crate.

Henrietta is soft, fluffy and quiet but she's as big as some dogs. When stretched out, she clocks in at about two feet long and is so heavy,

## TOWN OF SPRUCE PINE

# Council extends audit contract

BY CORY SPIERS  
Mitchell News-Journal  
reporter@mittellnews.com

SPRUCE PINE – The Spruce Pine Town Council at its regular meeting this past week received department updates and unanimously approved a one-year extension to the town's audit contract with Combs, Tennant and Carpenter Certified Public Accountants.

During her department update, Spruce Pine Main Street Executive Director Libby Phillips said vendor applications for the Fire on the Mountain festival have been sent out. Phillips added the building that used to house Uptown Funk is now available and the building that was home to Appalachian Pets and Supplies is now being used by Herman Buchanan as an antique store.

Las Cruces by YUMMI, a Latin-Fusion restaurant and Tapas bar that will move into the old McCall's building, has moved equipment and some tables into the new location, Phillips said.

"They're really moving along," she said. "It's exciting."

Natural herb store Poppy's Wildcraft is relocating to the other side

of the McCall's building. The store's former location on Upper Street has been rented, but information on the business that will move in has not yet been disclosed, Phillips said.

Spruce Pine Police Chief Billy Summerlin started his department update by asking the council to approve the promotion of road officer Michael Hollifield to the detective position. Summerlin said he recently lost a detective to the Mitchell County Sheriff's Office, leaving an open spot for him to fill.

The council unanimously approved Hollifield's promotion.

Summerlin then turned the update over to officer Kelly Johnson, who spoke to the council about how the police department could utilize a drug dog.

Johnson said a drug dog, which would cost about \$9,500, could help cut down on local drug issues because it could give officers probable cause to search suspicious vehicles during routine traffic stops.

The price of the dog includes all of the dog's continual training.

Johnson explained that during traffic stops, unless an officer sees something suspicious or has other

probable cause, they can only ask the driver if they can search the vehicle. If the driver refuses, there is nothing more the officer can do.

"I really think it would benefit the town," Johnson said. "If you walk the dog around a car and it sits down or alerts in some way, you have probable cause to search at that point."

Johnson, who would serve as the dog's primary handler, said the dog could also be utilized as a track dog to search for lost children or elderly people. The dog would not, however, be a bite dog.

"This dog will be a working dog," Summerlin said. "It won't be a pet. It would be just another tool we could use."

Summerlin said the department has enough money in its drug fund to pay for the dog, if necessary. The council asked Johnson to begin looking into grants while they consider the information he presented.

The approved agreement with Combs, Tennant and Carpenter means the firm will perform the town's annual financial audit again. The agreement is identical to the previous year's, which pays the firm \$25,500 for its services.

## York wanted for multiple felonies

Mitchell News-Journal

BAKERSVILLE – The Mitchell County Sheriff's Office is seeking information about the location of man with multiple felony warrants.

John Travis York is wanted for felony breaking and entering and other charges.

He was last seen in the Spruce Pine area.

Mitchell County Sheriff Donald Street is asking anyone with any information about York's whereabouts to call the sheriff's office at 828-688-3982.



York

## BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

### Incentive program approved

BY CORY SPIERS  
Mitchell News-Journal  
reporter@mittellnews.com

BAKERSVILLE – The Mitchell County Board of Commissioners at its recent regular meeting approved the Mitchell County economic development incentive grant program.

The EDC incentive program, which was unanimously approved near the end of the meeting, offers monetary rewards from grant funding for businesses that either open in the county or expand after previously operating in the county.

EDC Board Chair Richard Canipe said the program is positive for the county.

"We can't compete if we don't have something like this," Canipe said. "This is tied to investment, not so much just jobs."

Grant money cannot be awarded to a business without an advertised public hearing.

County Manager Kathy Young gave her report before the board adjourned. She said the brick was laid for the new 911 center this past week and the center is targeting June as its anticipated opening month.

Young said Mitchell County received \$750,000 from the North Carolina Neighborhood Revitalization Grant. The funds will cover the revitalization of eight area homes.

## STEIN

From page 1

representatives from Buncombe County and ensuring that by 2021 the number of members from any one county will be no more than four.

The letter additionally required efforts to have a level of diversity on the board reflecting the diversity of Western North Carolina's population.

Stein's letter observed the initial board had no persons of color but has now been changed to have 27 percent membership by persons

of color. Stein also called for Dogwood's meetings to be open to the public.

Also, the letter provided for a number of means of enforcement of its requirements and for fairness in concluding the transaction.

Ultimate approval of the hospital companies' deal, with stipulations, was in keeping with comments Laura Brewer, a spokesperson for the state Department of Justice, made to Carolina Public Press in a November email.

"Ordinarily, when our office has objections, the parties involved accommodate those objections and revise the transaction accordingly," Brewer wrote, suggesting outright

rejection of the deal was not likely.

In announcing Wednesday's decision, Stein emphasized the importance of continued access to health care for residents of the areas currently served by Mission.

"Access to health care is truly a life-or-death issue," Stein said. "We kept that fact in mind as we conducted our review of this transaction. After extensive negotiations, I am satisfied this new agreement protects health care in Western North Carolina, ensures that the full value of Mission's assets will continue to be used for public purposes and requires that the Dogwood Health Trust will be independent and representative."

# Submit poems for the 2019 NC State Poetry Contest

The annual NC State Poetry Contest is a free literary competition open to all North Carolina residents, including out-of-state and international students who are enrolled in North Carolina universities. It remains one of the largest free-to-enter poetry contests in the South.

This year's guest judge is award-winning poet Ada Limón and features a grand prize of \$500.

Due to volume, we cannot contact each contestant or return your poems afterward.

Winners will be announced at the 2019 NC State Poetry Contest Awards Ceremony, which will include a literary reading by Ada Limón, at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 20, at NC State's Talley Student Union (Mountains Ballroom).

Visit [go.ncsu.edu/poetrycontest](http://go.ncsu.edu/poetrycontest) for more information.

### POETRY CONTEST RULES

- The contest is open to all North Carolina residents except:
  - Tenured/tenure-track professors in the University of North Carolina system; writing instructors teaching at North Carolina State University (but teaching assistants and graduate students are eligible);
  - Writers with a published book of poetry (if we can buy your book online or from a publisher or bookstore, we consider you published); and
  - Previous winners. Previous finalists must submit poems that have not been previously submitted.
- Contestants may submit up to three poems.
  - There is no limit as to genre or length.
- Entries may not have been previously published anywhere, in print or online (including personal blogs/websites).
- All entries must be typed and titled.
- Contestants should not include their name on their poems so that their work can be judged anonymously. Instead, contestants should include their name, address, telephone number and email address on a separate cover sheet.
- No emailed entries are accepted. Please either:
  - Mail entries to: NC State Poetry Contest, Department of English, North Carolina State University, Campus Box 8105, Raleigh, NC 27695-8105; or
  - Drop off entries in person at the Department of English, 221 Tompkins Hall, by the postmark deadline.
- The postmark deadline is Feb. 14, 2019.

## ARREST REPORT

**BAKERSVILLE – The following arrests took place between Sunday, Jan. 13, and Sunday, Jan. 20, according to reports on file at the Mitchell County Sheriff's Office:**

**WILLIAM ALBE NORFLEET-ADAMS**, 56, of 232 Sierra Drive, Bakersville, was arrested by Sheriff Donald Street for failing to appear on no operator's license and a revoked tag. Adams was released on a \$300 secured bond. He is scheduled to appear in court Feb. 27.

**ANASTACIO AMBROSIO MAROS**, 27, of 203 Locust St., Spruce Pine, was arrested by Deputy N.W. Bowman for driving while impaired. Maros was released on a \$500 secured bond. He is scheduled to appear in court Feb. 27.

**HEAVEN UMBERGER**, 24, of 3528 Grapevine Road, Marshall, was arrested by Lt. J.D. Holmes for simple assault. Umberger is being held in jail on a \$2,500 secured bond. She is scheduled to appear in court Jan. 28.

**DANIELLE NICOLE GRINDSTAFF**, 28, of 338 Brook Hollow Road, Boone, was arrested by Deputy W.R. Hobson for failing to appear for communicating threats. Grindstaff is being held in jail on a \$2,000 secured bond. She is scheduled to appear in court Feb. 27.

**JESSICA JILL BURLESON**, 40, of 958 Brushy Creek Road, Spruce Pine, was arrested by Deputy W.R. Hobson for defrauding a drug test. Burleson was released on a \$2,500 secured bond. She is scheduled to appear in court Feb. 27.

**JUSTIN BRADLEY JOHNSON**, 30, of 331 Fox Den Lane, Spruce Pine, was arrested by Deputy W.R. Hobson for failure appear on reckless driving and driving while license revoked. Johnson was released on \$750 secured bond. He is scheduled to appear in court Feb. 5.

### HAVE A STORY IDEA?

Call 828-765-7169  
or email editor@  
mittellnews.com  
and tell us about it.

she can open the gate of her crate using her body weight, prompting McKinney to add an extra latch to the crate's door to keep her secure at night.

As the school year has progressed, Henrietta has developed a routine, and she enjoys daily attention.

"She's just taken to the kids," McKinney said. "She loves them, and the kids love her. She'll go around and get every kid to pet her. Then

she'll just go back to her little corner and lay back down."

McKinney cleans Henrietta's cage every day or two, but in Winslow's classroom, there is also a rotation for "Henrietta duty."

When it's their time to chip in, Winslow's students keep an eye on Henrietta throughout the day, ensure she has food and water each morning and makes sure she is put into her crate and secured when everyone leaves

the room.

On long breaks, Henrietta goes home with McKinney.

"She gets moody," he said, smiling. "I'll pet her, and she'll look at me like she's thinking I'm not the students."

Winslow said Henrietta has been a hit. She said such a unique, large pet has distinct advantages.

"With a fish, you feed it, and that's it," Winslow said. "The kids will actually cry

when I have to explain to them where Henrietta is if she's not here. She's happy, and the kids are happy. It's been a win-win."

Winslow said Henrietta keeps students focused and seems to provide individual attention at just the right moments.

"She comforts," Winslow said. "She seems to know who needs interaction and she'll come right up to their desks. It's precious."

With the sale's value potentially exceeding \$1.5 billion by some estimates, the resulting Dogwood Health Trust would immediately rival the largest grant-making foundations in the state of North Carolina.

Mission Health currently operates hospitals in Asheville, Marion, Spruce Pine, Brevard and Franklin in addition to numerous smaller healthcare provider facilities across Western North Carolina.

HCA owns more than 150 hospitals in the United States and the United Kingdom. If the purchase is successful, Mission Health's facilities would be the company's only hospitals in North Carolina.

School principal Teresa Young said Henrietta has become a frequent topic of conversation even beyond the K-2 learning center. She's also become the subject of many stories.

"Some of the other students have been writing adventures of Henrietta stories," Young said. "They talk about what Henrietta does when the school is closed, and they really take it to a high level."