

# OPINION

## COLUMN

### Come be a part of something great

The local community is a core value for newsrooms. What does the audience get from its relationship with the local newspaper? That's the question we keep at the center of our work.

Comments on articles and Facebook groups aren't new ideas. What's different now is an understanding of why paying attention to the community is crucial to the health of a newspaper: cultivating trust and loyalty. When it comes to values, the News-Journal makes the people who consume its content a priority to reach those goals. Our audience matters. That's not the case for all newspapers. The local community remains on the backburner for many publishers, but not here. Building connections between our employees and our audience before, during and after the reporting process benefits journalism in all aspects, and that realization has become a focus in our newsroom.

My forming a News-Journal Community Advisory Board was just one way to weave our audience into our newsroom. We do nearly everything possible to prove over and over that emphasizing the community benefits everyone involved — the journalists, the audience and the newspaper. By sharing with our audience and getting an opinion about what's working and what's not, we create a common language for the community and foster loyalty.

As Lauren Katz of Vox wrote, "Newsrooms will no longer build community just because it's nice; newsrooms will lean into the opportunity to connect with the people who are reading and sharing their work to have a devoted audience. People who interact with our newsrooms in engaging, meaningful ways will see more value in our work. So no matter where our traffic is coming from on any given month in any given year one thing will remain consistent: People will be invested."

I am currently asking people to serve on the second News-Journal Community Advisory Board. Let me know if you're interested.

**Brandon Roberts can be reached by email at editor@mitchellnews.com, by calling 828-765-7169 or at the News-Journal office, 261 Locust St. in Spruce Pine.**



Brandon ROBERTS

## GUEST COLUMN

### The Tuscarora War's dirty secret

There is a secret about North Carolina's early colonial days, something even more disturbing and horrifying than traditional slavery.

I learned about it reading UNC-Wilmington professor David La Vere's "The Tuscarora War: Indians, Settlers, and the Fight for the Carolina Colonies." That book interested me because I want to learn more about the



D.G. MARTIN

18th-century explorer, John Lawson, one of the "The Tuscarora War's" main characters. I am studying Lawson to get ready for the upcoming publication of another book about him, "A Delicious Country: Rediscovering the Carolinas along the Route of John Lawson's 1700 Expedition" by Scott Huler, senior staff writer at Duke Magazine.

What does all this have to do with this dark secret? Keep reading to the end.

La Vere sets out in detail the background for the Tuscarora War that began in 1711. In the late 1600s and early 1700s, North Carolina was sparsely settled, mainly

by Virginians moving south onto the lands around the Albemarle Sound. They encountered small groups of Indians and were generally able to subdue them.

However, to the south and west, the mighty Tuscarora Indian strongholds stood as a barrier. They were, writes La Vere, like a "cork" that capped settler expansion.

Meanwhile Lawson's glowing descriptions about his travels in the colony sparked the interest of the Lords Proprietors, who owned the colony and were looking for ways to encourage settlement. Lawson met a minor Swiss noble, Christopher de Graffenried. They worked out a plan with the Lords Proprietors in England to transport groups of poor German refugees and Swiss paupers to lands along the Neuse River near today's New Bern.

La Vere writes that after overcoming great odds, "De Graffenried's colony of Swiss and German Palatines at the mouth of the Neuse River was thriving, expansion up the Neuse seemed a real possibility."

Therefore, Lawson and Graffenried made a trip up the Neuse, through Tuscarora lands to scout sites for future settlements.

"All the while, the Indians grew more worried and angry as the abuses

against them escalated and their complaints fell on deaf ears. That spark came in mid-September 1711," according to La Vere, with this trip up the Neuse.

The local Tuscarora king or chief, offended and threatened that his territory had been invaded, captured Lawson and Graffenried and put them on trial for their lives. When one of the more radical Indian leaders berated him, Lawson lost his temper. "He argued back, his anger and sarcasm apparent to all."

Lawson was doomed and shortly executed. Graffenried remained in custody while the Indians planned and carried out their first attacks on Sept. 22, 1711, appearing at first as friendly visitors to the settlers' farms and then striking suddenly from ambush when the defenses were down.

North Carolina's efforts to beat back the Tuscaroras were unsuccessful. The colony had not enough manpower, firepower, or money.

Help finally came from the wealthy sister colony to the south. South Carolina sent two expeditions to relieve its northern neighbor.

Hold on, we are close to the dark secret.

The first expedition led by John Barnwell set out with a force of about 700

men. Only 35 were regular militia. The rest were Indians. The results were mixed, and the Tuscaroras remained a threat. The second expedition led by James Moore, made up of 113 militia and 760 Indians, wiped out the Tuscarora at their stronghold at Neoheroaka, near present day Snow Hill in Greene County, and unplugged the Tuscarora "cork" on settlement in the interior of North Carolina.

Why did South Carolina so enthusiastically aid its neighbor? Why did South Carolina Indians provide the critical manpower?

Writes La Vere, "Above all, it was a chance to enrich oneself by looting the Tuscarora towns and taking slaves, which they could sell to waiting South Carolina traders for guns and merchandise."

North Carolina's early colonists secured their colony by facilitating and participating in the enslavement and sale of captured Tuscaroras by South Carolina Indians.

That is history's dirty secret.

**D.G. Martin hosts "North Carolina Bookwatch," at 11 a.m. Sunday and 5 p.m. Tuesday on UNC-TV. The program also airs on the North Carolina Channel at 8 p.m. Tuesday and other times.**

## 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 discretion of the News-Journal.



## LETTERS

### Restoring my faith in government

To the editor:

As everyone knows by now, our very own Blue Ridge Hospital System (formerly Spruce Pine Community Hospital), is being to Hospital Corporation of America on Jan. 31.

What many people probably didn't realize was the original contract between Mission System and HCA would have allowed our local hospital to close without significant input from our community after only five years.

Thanks to some dedicated local citizens (mostly women), their group, SEARCH, carefully researched the details of the contract, discovered loopholes and paid for consultation by an expert on such transfers of a nonprofit hospital system to HCA. That expert was the ex-governor and Attorney General of Missouri, Jay Nixon, who had successfully sued HCA over a similar situation with HCA in his home state.

After seeking as much public input as possible, the members of SEARCH took their concerns to North Carolina Attorney General Josh Stein and his assistant, Jennifer Harrod.

As recently announced, Stein approved the sale to HCA, but with many protections for our local hospital, such as extending the period that guarantees HCA cannot close our hospital from five to 10 years, and specifically outlining the services they must continue to provide. More importantly, the revised contract demands an independent monitor ensures HCA abides by the terms of the agreement.

Stein emphatically stated it was because of the numerous phone calls and well-researched letters received by his office on this matter he felt compelled to amend the contract to protect the rights of all the rural counties surrounding Asheville. After all, our local, nonprofit hospital was built by the donations, augmented by grants, over many years by local citizens.

The profits of the sale must continue the mission of our hospital and contribute to the health and welfare of our local citizens. An elected official actually listened to ordinary citizens and took steps to protect our interests.

Ordinary citizens can have a voice in their local affairs if they organize themselves and come to a common

consensus. I invite people to join me at the next SEARCH meeting, scheduled for 6 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 12, at Trinity Episcopal Church in Spruce Pine.

**Dr. Arch Woodard**  
Spruce Pine

### I want my money back

To the editor:

When plans were being made to build the hospital in Spruce Pine, most of the people in Mitchell County worked at Robbins Hosiery Mill. Each employee donated what he or she could afford to help get the hospital on its way to being built.

After 11 years away from Mitchell County, I am now living at Mitchell House. We still have a hospital in Spruce Pine, but I have to go down the mountain in fog, rain, sleet or snow when I need a doctor. Why?

It's only a short trip to Johnson City, but I have to go down the mountain. Why can't we keep our hospital as it is?

I'm 98 years old, why should I have to go down the mountain, nerves tied in a knot and tense as all get out to get to my doctor in Marion?

**Elberta Wing**  
Spruce Pine

# 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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**Rachel Hoskins, Regional Publisher**  
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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.

