



Your Community-Minded Newspaper

# YANCEY COMMON TIMES JOURNAL

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**Welcome to Spring!** Last Friday brought heavy downpours and flooding, then Saturday's surprise was snow at higher elevations in the WNC mountains. Blake Tipton with WJHL TV in Johnson City captured this shot on Roan Mountain.

## Local chapter of Elizabeth Program started to support students to become medical professionals

By Bill Steigerwald

A local chapter of the Elizabeth Program: Mentoring for Medicine has been formed in Burnsville to support high school and college students in becoming primary care medical professionals and hopefully, return to this community.

The program is supported by St. Thomas Episcopal Church and has been adopted by the Burnsville Rotary Club, which is sponsoring its formation, training, and outreach.

The Elizabeth Program was founded by Rev. Marty McCarthy who saw the tremendous need for primary care in rural North Carolina.

North Carolina is the second most rural in the country, where most primary care is being given in a hospital – not preventive, very costly, and with poorer outcomes.

In rural areas, 30% of hospitalizations are preventable, and the mortality rate is 18% higher than urban areas, because of poor access to care, according to the NC Rural Health Research Program.

The mentoring is designed to help students realize their dreams, in navigating medical school, staying true to their desires to return to their communities, and minimize debt.

Over 85% of doctors leaving

medical school opt for a specialty because of medical school pressure and student debt, and the lure of higher pay and a cosmopolitan lifestyle. Over 50% of these doctors become disenchanted over time, but remain because of the standard of living and ties they created.

Mentoring has proven to be extremely effective in keeping students on track and successful. Experience has shown in Washington State, New Mexico, and Alabama that mentoring greatly improves a student's chances of achieving their original goal, stay motivated in school, and have less difficulty handling the stresses of medical school.

Students in high school and community college who are interested in becoming primary care medical professionals are encouraged to contact a member of the Burnsville Rotary Club, like Dr. Michael Reif, who is a local retired surgeon.

Students will be matched with a pair of local mentors who will provide them free consultations, by phone and in person, to not only navigate school, but also connect them with programs to minimize the financial burden.

The Elizabeth Program exists to help make our students' dreams come true while benefiting our local community.

For more information, go to [elizabethprogram.org](http://elizabethprogram.org), and/or email Dr. Reif at [merreif@gmail.com](mailto:merreif@gmail.com).

## More honors for Lady Cougars basketball

Additional honors have been bestowed on Mountain Heritage High School's Lady Cougars.

USA Today has named both Shelton and Tipton All-USA N.C. Girls Basketball Team.

Shelton was selected as the N.C. Basketball Coaches Association Coach of the Year after leading Mountain Heritage to the 2A State Championship.

USA Today named coaches and players to the All-USA Today Team based on their athletic achievements during the 2018-19 season.

For this latest honor, Tipton was selected as a second team member for the All-USA North Carolina Girls Basketball Team by USA Today.



Shelton



Tipton

As a sophomore, Tipton was at the forefront of the Lady Cougars 29-0 season and the 2A state championship, averaging a team-high 17.4 points and seven rebounds. Tipton was named the 2A state title game MVP after scoring 29 points in the championship game.

Tipton and Shelton were named All-WNC Coach and Player of the Year.

## Extension Service's Yancey County 4-H Cattle Club helps raise cattle – and kids

By Jennifer Jenkins

"We're not raising calves, we're raising kids." Yancey cattle producer Lynn Austin is referring to youngsters who participate in the N.C. Cooperative Extension 4-H Club's Dairy Beef Feeder Program also known as The Cattle Club.

When a new member joins The Cattle Club, he or she (girls are welcomed) receives a three-day-old calf along with a starter kit that includes a bottle, halter and a bag of feed.

This usually occurs in March and marks the beginning of a six-month commitment designed to instill responsibility, confidence and a strong work ethic in the aspiring cattle person.

The process begins with a morning feeding before school, as early as 5 a.m., and 12 hours later after school. The weaning process from bottle to grain begins at eight weeks. The calf can be kept in a small 10-ft. x 10-ft. pen but must be exercised

daily using the halter. A bond naturally develops between the calf and its master, much like a pet. The kids not only feed and walk their calf but pet, nuzzle and hug them. By September or August, the full grown calf is ready to be shown.

The next step in the program is preparing for a "full presentation" at area livestock shows. This means preparation not only for the calf but the owner/handler as well. With great pride dressed in their "Sunday best," the showmanship aspect is taken quite seriously by all participants. After the showing, the animal is then auctioned and sold to the highest bidder.

Frequently, this part of the process brings tears. But Adam McCurry, NC Extension Agricultural Technician, stresses they are raising livestock not pets.

McCurry explains the program is meant to teach animal

husbandry and the work ethic that includes making money. At this point, the tears dissipate and the participant begins to

look forward to receiving the check and reinvesting it in more livestock.

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4-H Cattle Club member Allie Shuford with her calf at Mountain State Fair at the WNC Ag Center.

## Operation Back Roads Bagged kicks off cleanup of secondary roads by local inmates

Operation Back Roads Bagged kicked off Tuesday, April 16, in Yancey County with convicted misdemeanor inmates housed at the Sheriff's Office Detention Center picking up trash along the smaller secondary roads.

These would be roads other than the county's primary arteries of US Hwy 19E, 19W, 80, and 197 North and South.

County Manager Lynn Austin, Chief Deputy Shane Hilliard, and Jail Administrator Mark Geouge have worked together on this effort. "The need is there and these misdemeanor inmates are available to help supplement our citizen's efforts in the Adopt-A-Highway Program and the loss of state prison inmates doing the job through the Department of Transportation," said County Manager Lynn Austin.

The inmates started picking up last week on randomly selected roads and will work as weather permits and when the inmates are not needed on other county projects. "One day they may pick up on Little Creek and the next time out they may be on Cattaill, Seven Mile, or Ar buckle roads," Hilliard said.

"When the state decided to stop their program in 2017, they



Local inmates will be picking up trash along the county's secondary roads under Operation Back Roads Bagged. The county is urging citizens to report instances of littering as well as illegal dumping, also called "midnight dumping."

began working with contractors to pick up trash only along the main highways and primary roads, but that left the majority of our county's smaller secondary roads unattended. We hope Operation Bagged will fill in for those losses," Hilliard added.

The inmates chosen for this work crew, even though convicted on misdemeanors at this time, receive a thorough background check for past violent or physically abusive behavior that would make them ineligible for this work privilege.

Jail Administrator Mark

Geouge explained that, "The State now houses manageable convicted misdemeanor inmates in the local county jails under the State Misdemeanant Confinement Program (SMCP). Not all counties choose to participate in the SMCP so we will house not only Yancey County inmates but inmates for other counties in the state as well."

As you travel the roads in your communities, please be vigilant and safely navigate the areas where detention officers are supervising these inmate crews picking up and bagging trash.

Hilliard added that the Sheriff's Office is committed to cracking down on illegal dumping and littering along roadways. "We urge citizens to assist in our efforts by reporting any dumping or littering. Get license tag numbers and vehicle descriptions and note the location and even take a photo of the trash with your cell phone."

The first littering offense is a \$250 to \$1,000 fine, a second offense is a maximum of \$1,000, and additional offenses up to \$2,000 with community service. Illegal or "midnight dumping" is an environmental crime and carries hefty penalties.



Watch for "Inmates Working" signs along roadways in Yancey County.



Inmates will work as weather and scheduling permits.

Brothers David and Luke Banks were proud of the prizes they won after showing their calves at a livestock show last year at Mountain State Fair.

Photos courtesy of Lynn Austin

