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HDR

Hickory Daily Record

REMAINS FOUND NEAR MOORESVILLE WATER TOWER

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 17, 2019

www.hickoryrecord.com

\$1.50

5 THINGS TO DO

1. Chamber Classics III: Inside-Out/side-In

The Tesla Quartet will perform at the SALT Block. Doors and cash bar open at 6:30 p.m. A free meet-and-greet reception will follow the concert. For more information, visit www.wpsymphony.org or call the Western Piedmont Symphony at 828-324-8603.

What: Concert
When: Saturday from 7:30-10 p.m.
Where: Drendel Auditorium on the SALT Block in Hickory

Cost: Tickets cost \$12-\$22 plus tax for season ticket subscribers, and \$22-\$32 for individual tickets purchased through the box office, at the door or online (fees may apply).

2. Wintergreen Hike

Enjoy a leisurely walk along the Hemlock Nature Trail, and learn about some of the many plant species that

stay green all year long. Meet at the Jacob Fork parking area for this easy 1-mile walk. All ages are welcome. Call the South Mountains State Park office at 828-433-4772.

What: Hike
When: Saturday at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.
Where: South Mountains State Park in Connelly Springs
Cost: Free



3. Wrestling Show

An action-packed midget wrestling event. This is the first show of a five-month season for ages 21 and older. An hour meet-and-greet will take place before and after the event. For more information, call Wayne's Silver Bullet at 704-462-1030 or find them on Facebook @midgetwrestlingentertainment.

What: Wrestling show
When: Friday with doors opening at 8 p.m.
Where: Wayne's Silver Bullet, 5172 N.C. 127 South in Hickory
Cost: For up-to-date pricing on tickets, visit www.waynessilverbullet.com.

4. Board game night

This is an opportunity for your youth to come out and play checkers, Sorry, Monopoly and several other games to help get them out of the winter season boredom. Ages 4-12 are welcome to participate. Contact the Neill Clark Recreation Center at 828-322-2188 for more information.

What: Board games
When: Friday at 6:30 p.m.
Where: Neill Clark Recreation Center gymnasium in Hickory
Cost: Free



5. Make and Take at ReSource Warehouse

Bring your kids to the Arty Party Room at

ReSource Warehouse and Gallery to make their own crafts with the help of a creative and talented leader if needed. Families and all ages are welcome. Call ReSource Warehouse at 828-256-2695 for more information.

What: Craft making
When: Friday from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
Where: ReSource Warehouse and Gallery in Hickory
Cost: \$5 per person per hour



Marco's Pizza to open its first Hickory restaurant



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Expert testimony: It appears she was thrown

Former Hickory policeman on trial for altercation in 2013 maintains suspect's fall was an accident



ROBERT C. REED/HICKORY DAILY RECORD

Robert George lowers his head as he leaves the federal court building in Statesville this week. George is on trial for use of excessive force and obstructing justice by falsifying a report. The case stems from an altercation with Chelsea Doolittle in 2013.

See the full story on Page 9A.

BUS DRIVER, STUDENTS HONORED



KRISTEN HART / HICKORY DAILY RECORD

The Alexander County Board of Education recognized an emotional Rita McAuley, bus driver for West Alexander Middle School, for her efforts to avoid a more serious collision during a Dec. 17 bus accident. McAuley (right) embraces Brigette Rhyne, vice chairman of the school board, at the meeting this week. See the full story on Page 9A.

City OKs 161-acre donation to support state park plans

BY KEVIN GRIFFIN
kgiffin@hickoryrecord.com

Last fall, the Hickory City Council passed a resolution in support of a proposed state park along the Jacob Fork and Henry Fork rivers.

The City Council continued that support Tuesday by indicating a willingness to donate 161 acres of city-owned property along the Henry Fork River to the state park effort.

The resolution enables City Manager Warren Wood to sign a letter of intent and any other documents needed for the donation of the land in the future.

Tom Kenney, land protection director for the Foot-hills Conservancy of North Carolina, said the letter would be used to support the conservancy's application for a grant.

The Morganton-based land trust will use the grant to acquire property that it hopes one day will be part of a park, Kenney said.

Kenney said the conservancy has or is planning to acquire several properties to be a part of a future state park. These include a 188-acre property along the Jacob Fork River the conservancy expects to close on by

See DONATION, Page 9A

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Deaths

James Carpenter Sr., 71
Linda Collins
William Hawkins, 85
Joe Hayes Sr., 90

Loretta Martin, 62
Peggy Musgrave, 80
Lewis Odom, 63
Ruth Piercy, 94

Carl Shook, 85
Duane Webb, 76
Jimmie White Sr., 87

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Sports 1B

Lottery



JAN. 15:
29, 52, 58, 60, 62

MEGABALL: 7 MEGAPLIER: 2X



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Obituaries

HICKORY
Lewis Alexander Odom, 63, of Hickory, passed away Wednesday, Jan. 9, 2019, at Catawba Valley Medical Center in Hickory.

Mr. Odom was born Aug. 13, 1955, in Catawba County to the late Frank and Goldie Mae Carpenter Odom.

Survivors are his sister, Brenda Odom of Hickory; and numerous cousins and friends.

The funeral service will be held Thursday, Jan. 17, at 1 p.m., at Friendship Baptist Church with the Rev. Antonio Logan officiating. The family will receive friends from 12:15 to 1:00 p.m., at the church, prior to the service.

Bass-Smith Funeral Home & Crematory in Hickory is serving the family of Mr. Odom.

Ruth Burns Piercy

VALDESE
Mrs. Ruth Burns Piercy, 94, of Valdese, passed away Wednesday, Jan. 16, 2019. Arrangements are incomplete at this time and will be announced later by Heritage Funeral Service & Crematory of Valdese.

Send your condolences

Visit www.hickoryrecord.com to read the obituaries on this page and sign the guest books for the families. Your condolences will be visible for 30 days and appreciated by those who read them. Visit www.hickoryrecord.com and click "obituaries."

Donation

From Page 1A

May and a 290-acre property next to the city-owned property along the Henry Fork River that the conservancy has under option.

The conservancy will hold the properties until such a time as legislation is passed allowing the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation to take over the land, Kenney said.

The land the city would be donating was purchased in the late 1990s. At that time there was an expectation of economic development occurring there, but those plans did not pan out, Wood said.

The city would also be able to retain or regain the land if the state park is not authorized.

Historic district expansion

The council also approved the nomination of 183 additional properties to be included in the Oakwood National Register Historic District.

The nomination will go before the North Carolina National Register Advisory Committee in February. From there, it will go to the National Parks Service for final approval.

The expansion of the district, which currently includes 78 properties, would make even more properties in that area eligible for federal tax credits and other funding.

Unlike local historic districts, recognition by the national register does not require owners to maintain their properties according to certain standards unless they accept government funding.

In his presentation to the City Council, Senior Planner Ross Zelenske said the city is not planning to expand the local district and would only do so if there was considerable support in the community.

For more information, visit the city's webpage on the expansion at <http://www.hickorync.gov/content/oakwood-national-register-historic-district-expansion> or call the planning department at 828-323-7422.

'We pushed the door open and helped some of the people who had fallen on other people get up and get off the bus.'

Students, bus driver honored by Alexander school board

BY KRISTEN HART
khart@hickoryrecord.com

Rita McAuley drives bus 159 for West Alexander Middle School. On Dec. 17, she boarded her bus and began her usual route. As she approached the school to drop students off for the day, McAuley noticed a car over the centerline that divides the highway and the vehicle was headed her way.

Drawing on 18 years of bus driving experience, McAuley tried to avoid it.

"I saw [the car] coming and started to move over and let her go by so then we could go on our way, but things didn't happen that way," McAuley said.

The car struck the bus, toppling the school vehicle onto its side and sending students sprawling across the inside of the bus.

Eighth-grader Christopher Pennell and sixth-grader Christopher Shumake searched for a way off the bus. They first tried the roof emergency exit on the bus, but it wouldn't open. Then, they made their way to the back of the bus.

"All I wanted to do was



The Alexander County Board of Education honored sixth-grader Chris Shumake, bus driver Rita McAuley and eighth-grader Christopher Pennell for their actions during a Dec. 17 school bus accident. Driver McAuley took evasive action before the bus was struck. Students Shumake and Pennell helped students exit the bus.

help," Pennell said. "We pushed the door open and helped some of the people who had fallen on other people get up and get off the bus."

The Alexander County Board of Education invited McAuley, Pennell and Shumake to the board meeting Tuesday so the three could be recognized for what they did for the students on bus 159.

"Rita was praised by a state trooper on the scene that morning ... for reacting quickly to the impact which prevented the bus from overturning completely," Jennifer Hefner, superintendent of Alexander County Schools, said.

"Had the accident happened a little differently, the bus would have likely flipped multiple times."

Hefner added, "A well-skilled driver is our greatest asset on a school bus, and we recognize Rita McAuley this evening, not only for her service to the school system, but also for her driving skills, but most of all for her love for the children that she transports each and every day."

McAuley said she struggled to sleep for some time after the accident, seeing the accident when she would close her eyes. Thanks to the support of friends and community members, McAuley is do-

ing better knowing all of the students are recovering and back at school.

"I'm getting there," McAuley said. "Each day is better."

McAuley is back driving her same route and many of her students are back on the bus as well.

Students involved in crash are back in school

A total of 19 students were on the bus at the time of the accident, West Alexander Middle School Principal Chad Maynor said. Two students were transported by their parents to seek medical treatment. Eleven students

were transported by emergency personnel to three regional hospitals. Six students returned to school and were released to their parents. Of those six returning to school, three were transported by a parent to receive treatment as well for injuries related to the accident.

All of the students, excluding one, were released on the day of the accident. The student not released on the date of the accident was released on Wednesday, Dec. 19, following the accident on Monday, Dec. 17.

All of the students have returned to school and are recovering, Maynor said.

Former Hickory officer on trial for altercation in 2013 maintains suspect's fall was an accident

BY JORDAN HENSLEY
jhensley@hickoryrecord.com

During jury selection, defense attorney Myra Cause asked potential jurors about football and instant replay.

"Sometimes a touchdown looks like a touchdown until the footage is slowed down, then it's not a touchdown," she said. The majority of potential jurors agreed that is an accurate statement.

That analogy came into play in U.S. District Court in the Western District of North Carolina on Wednesday in the trial of U.S. v. Robert George.

George, a former Hickory Police Department sergeant charged with excessive force and obstructing justice by falsifying a report, is accused of slamming then 24-year-old Chelsea Doolittle to the ground in 2013 while removing her from his police vehicle to take her inside the Hickory Police Department.

He was fired from the police department in 2014 after an internal investigation.

On Wednesday, the jury heard from expert witness Floyd Yoder, Magistrate James Wike and the defendant.

Yoder, who is now retired from the Hickory Police Department, was responsible for training law enforcement, including George, on when use of force is appropriate and how to implement it. That training included learning the department's use of force policy and

how to fill out the report.

Use of force reports are supposed to be detailed and act like an insurance policy for the officer in the event of an internal investigation, Yoder said.

"Officers are supposed to use the minimum amount necessary to overcome the resistance," he added.

During the federal investigation, Yoder was asked to view the footage of the incident and other documents to form an opinion on whether or not George used excessive force.

"I believe the use of force (in this incident) was unreasonable and unnecessary," Yoder told the jury.

During his examination, Yoder observed on the video, which does not contain audio, that Doolittle appeared to be complying with George's command to exit the vehicle, as her feet leaving the vehicle could be seen on the video.

The jury viewed this footage in court on Tuesday and on Wednesday.

"It appears he reached in in a quick manner, grabbed her, forced her out of the vehicle and threw her on the ground," Yoder testified.

During cross-examination, the defense showed Yoder the video of the incident again, but this time it was slowed down frame by frame.

Defense attorney Anthony Martinez asked Yoder if seeing the video frame by frame changed

his opinion, arguing it is possible Doolittle slipped from George's grip and she fell.

Yoder's opinion did not change. "It appears she was thrown," Yoder said.

After discussing the video, Yoder testified George's use of force report was not detailed enough as it did not contain information about what was being said, what he was asking her to do, her reactions, what his actions were and a description of her injuries.

While George told others she slipped from his grasp, the use of force report does not say that.

When Catawba County Magistrate James Wike testified, he said he was under the impression the incident happened at Union Square. He later learned the injuries to Doolittle occurred at the Hickory Police Department.

On Nov. 11, 2013, Hickory Police Department Capt. Vidal Sipe noticed an improperly parked vehicle and when he approached the women standing next to the vehicle, he could smell alcohol, so he called for a breathalyzer. George responded to Sipe's call and arrived to administer the test and assist Sipe.

The two women, Doolittle and her cousin, became upset and began cursing at the officers, according to testimony from Sipe. They were arrested, and Doolittle was transported to HPD by George. The incident occurred in the department's parking lot outside the sally port entrance.

When it came time to issue a magistrate's order and bond for Doolittle's disorderly conduct and resisting, obstructing and delaying a public officer charges, Wike said George did not tell him Doolittle was injured at the police department.

Wike was the last witness called by the prosecution. Next on the stand was the defense's first witness: Robert George.

During George's testimony, he reiterated the incident was an accident. George did, however, admit to making errors in the use of force report.

"I did not intentionally harm her," George said.

When Doolittle fell, George said he did not realize she fell on her face and could not see the extent of her injuries.

"I thought it was just a busted lip and some scrapes from the pavement," he added.

Doolittle sustained a broken nose, busted lip, injuries to her nasal cavities, a concussion and injuries to her upper front teeth during the incident, which was revealed during testimony by her doctors on Tuesday.

George weighed 240 pounds at the time of the incident and is 6 feet tall. Doolittle is roughly 5 feet 3 inches tall and weighed 140 pounds at the time of the incident.

Testimony will continue in Statesville today, where the defense is expected to call its last witness to the stand.

Marco's Pizza to open Sunday on 29th Avenue

From staff reports

Less than a year after Papa Murphy's take-and-bake pizza store closed its doors, another pizza place is moving into the vacated space.

Marco's Pizza, a chain with 21 locations in North Carolina, will be opening a franchise next to the Family Video on 29th Avenue NE on Sunday, according to a company release.

The restaurant offers dine-in, delivery and catering services.

Highland Ventures, the parent company of both Marco's and Family Video, has an ongoing initiative of locating the two franchises together, according to the release.

"Whether you're coming in or staying home for a double dose of fun with our pizza and movie night, our customers can always expect a one-of-a-kind experience with Marco's Pizza," Marco's Regional Director Jim Lyon said via the release.

For more information, call 828-303-2024.



Marco's Pizza will open Sunday in the space next to Family Video on 29th Avenue NE.