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Forum at Jefferson Forest features diversity of speakers



Tina Ragland talks with students at JFHS

By JOHN BARNHART
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Jefferson Forest High School's (JFHS) Diversity Club sponsored a day long Black History Month Forum last Friday.

This is the second year the students have done this and according to Jennifer Ferris, the club's faculty sponsor, it was bigger than ever with 25 speakers. The list included business, government and professional leaders from Bedford County and others from Lynchburg.

The club started when Nia Flood, granddaughter of Mary Flood, a former Bedford City Council

See FORUM 2A

Militia muster set for Saturday

By JOHN BARNHART
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A group calling itself Concerned Citizens of Bedford County has called an unorganized militia muster for Saturday, Feb. 14 at Falling Creek Park.

The muster is scheduled for noon. The group is asking for citizens between 16 and 55 to turn out.

All people must be able to legally possess a firearm under current law. They are asked to bring an unloaded semi-automatic rifle, preferable an AR-15. However, people who don't have an AR-15 may bring what they have.

People over 55 are encouraged to attend if they are willing to serve

See MILITIA 3A



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50 YEARS LATER...

School to be renamed after Susie G. Gibson



Susie G. Gibson

By TOM WILMOTH
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Fifty years ago this month the school board representing Bedford County voted to take Susie G. Gibson's name off of the school that bore her name.

It was a controversial decision and one that didn't sit well with those in the African American community.

Last Thursday, that wrong was rectified.

Alumni and supporters of the former Susie G. Gibson High School filled last week's Bedford County School Board meeting to request that Gibson's name be restored to the school. They left the meeting knowing that the school would now be known as the Susie G. Gibson Science and Technology Center.

The change was a long time coming.

Susie G. Gibson

In 1954, Susie G. Gibson High School opened, bearing the name of the long-time supporter of education for African Americans in this community. Gibson, who died in 1949,

See GIBSON 2A

Middle school sports School board to consider transition from B-Teams

By TOM WILMOTH
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Bedford County Public Schools (BCPS) is looking at moving from B-Team sports to middle school sports.

At last Thursday's school board meeting, Dr. Tony Francis presented the board with an overview of what that move would mean.

B-Team sports were instituted when school divisions transitioned from the junior high model to the

See SPORTS 2A



(Above) Rhurbard competes in a field training event while (inset) Cynthia Morris comes home with an armful of trophies after a good day of competition.

Local woman raises coonhounds

By TOM WILMOTH
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Cynthia Morris's grandfather had coon dogs and she grew to love them.

And for the past 15 years, she has been raising and competing

Redbone Coonhounds.

"I love the Redbones," Morris said. "They're just beautiful to me."

A nurse by trade, she had been wanting to bring the dogs here. She started selling jams and jellies at area Farmers' Markets and opened Dancing Chick Jams and Jellies.

She also has an online presence for her goodies.

But the coonhounds are her real love.

She has eight Redbone Coonhounds and takes them to numerous United Kennel Club

See MORRIS 3A

In need of a miracle Local infant has many health issues he has to overcome

By JOHN BARNHART
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Wyatt Lowe, a 10-month-old baby, has never been outside a hospital.

He looks healthy, but he is far from healthy inside. He has serious congenital heart defects—"his heart is arranged wrong"—his mother Katie Marie Lowe explained.

His liver is in the wrong place

and he was born without a spleen. The lack of a spleen compromises his immune system and even a common cold would hit him hard. He takes an antibiotic daily as a preventive.

Wyatt's family is from Thaxton, but right now both parents are in Philadelphia to be with him at Children's Hospital there.

See WYATT 3A



Wyatt Lowe looks healthy. But the photo (right) after his most recent surgery tells a different story.



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Facebook group making masks for those on the front lines



The group has made as many as 1,700 masks.

By TOM WILMOTH
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The Facebook Group "Bedford COVID 19 Masks" was started by Reagan Flaherty Sampson and soon attracted the attention of about 35 helpers and seamstresses in Bedford.

Reagan asked if anyone was willing to help sew masks for the medical hospital community in Bedford. Some donated fabric, elastic, money, while others washed and cut fabric. Others stitched and delivered completed masks.

To date the group has sewn well over 1,400 masks. Masks have been

See MASKS 4A

Call Center offers support for mental health

Dealing with the COVID-19 crisis can be a very stressful time.

The Bedford County Call Center, which opened to residents on March 30, has recognized the need to add supportive services for those struggling with ways to cope. Additional staff have been added to help with information and referral.

Any Bedford County resident needing assistance dealing with emotional stressors due to COVID-19 is urged to call the Bedford County

See HEALTH 4A



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STUDENTS vs. LEARNERS

School Board wrestles with what to call its K-12 pupils

By TOM WILMOTH
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The School Board met Thursday, practicing social distancing and live-streaming its meeting so that not more than 10 people were there.

Students vs. Learners. Last Thursday the Bedford County School Board spent a considerable amount of time on just what to call the K-12 residents who attend Bedford County Public Schools.

And it's still not settled. Thursday wasn't the first time this issue has come up. Back in January the board visited this issue as it related to a term in

the school system's strategic plan, deciding whether to use the term learner-centered or student-centered.

A majority of the board does not want the term "learner" being used.

But there seemed to be some confusion as to just what the board directive was. Board member Dr. Susan Mele made that direction clear in her motion Thursday, stating in part that: "Bedford County Public Schools change from using the word learner or learners to exclusively using the word

See DEBATE 3A

Jones stresses need to keep following safety measures

By TOM WILMOTH
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Jack Jones believes how the public responds to the COVID-19 pandemic in the next couple of weeks could make a great difference in how quickly life could get back to normal.

As Emergency Management Coordinator for Bedford County, Jones stressed the need for county citizens to continue to wear masks when in public, to practice social distancing and to make a frequent habit of washing their hands and wiping items down.

The number of positive cases in Bedford County passed 15 this past week.

"They are dispersed throughout the county," Jones said. "We don't have

See JONES 3A

Monday morning rescue



Members of Bedford County's Special Operations Command bring the driver of a van to safety after his vehicle got stuck in Monday morning's flooding waters.

Heavy rain leads to local flooding

By JOHN BARNHART
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"Turn around, don't drown," is Chief of Fire and Rescue Jack Jones' advice to people when they see water of unknown depth running across a road. You don't know what's under that water.

It's advice that a man driving a white van didn't follow, Monday morning, when he drove into water running across Otterville Road where it crosses Sycamore Creek. The water was chassis deep at the point where the van stalled, stranding the driver. Fortunately, he didn't drown. He was able to get out of the van,

See RESCUE 2A

BCPS selects Teacher of the Year finalists

Bedford County Public Schools (BCPS) has named its three finalists for Teacher of the Year.

Those finalists include Leslie Ponder, Bedford Primary School's Teacher of the Year; Lisa Taylor, Huddleston Elementary School's Teacher of the Year; and Shannon Thomas, Staunton River High School's Teacher of the Year.

The winner will be named later this month.

Leslie Ponder – Bedford Primary School's Teacher of the Year

Ponder has been teaching in Bedford County for 38 years. She has taught Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grade at Huddleston and Bedford Primary. She has been teaching Kindergarten at Bedford Primary for the past 32 years. She is a leader at Bedford Primary serving as Grade Chair, member of the school



Leslie Ponder



Lisa Taylor



Shannon Thomas

See FINALISTS 2A

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Board argues over how to spend CARES Act funding

By JOHN BARNHART
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Monday night's Bedford County Board of Supervisors meeting was preceded by a 5 p.m. work session in which they heard from Brian Key, the director of the Bedford Regional Water Authority (BRWA).

Following the work session, the board debated what to do with the CARES Act funding the county received.

Work Session

The supervisors spent the entire 90 minute work session with Key and most of this time involved the sewer situation in the Forest area.

Along with water, BRWA provides sewage service. In the Forest area, four primary pump stations pump sewage to a regional sewage treatment plant in Lynchburg. The first of these pump stations was built in 1991 and the last in 2008. The BRWA is a partner in this plant and owns 1 million gallons per day of its capacity. It currently is using less than half of this capacity.

According to Key, the problem in Forest is not the capacity of the Lynchburg sewage treatment plant. The problem is the capacity of the BRWA's pump stations in Forest. Key said the pump stations are near their maximum capacity. Once they reach their maximum capacity, the BRWA will no longer be able to offer new sewer connections to residential development and businesses. This would hamper economic development in the Forest area.

Key said that the BRWA's predecessor, the Public Service Authority (PSA) knew, shortly after the turn of the century, that growth in the Forest area meant they needed to plan for expanded capacity. They were planning for growth.

However, two things created problems. One is that Forest grew faster than they anticipated. The other was Bedford's reversion to town status in 2013. The reversion merged the PSA with Bedford's water department creating the BRWA. It also contained a mandate for the new BRWA to create a connection between the former PSA's water lines and

See BOARD 8A



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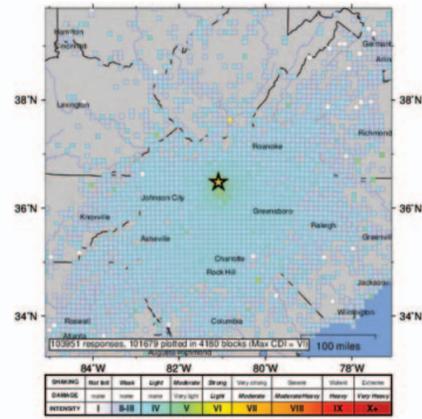
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Did you feel it?



A LITTLE SHAKIN' GOING ON

Earthquake centered in NC felt here

By JOHN BARNHART
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Like the mystery Chinese seed packets that have shown up in some people's mail boxes, nobody ordered the earthquake that arrived Sunday morning either.

According to Don Blakeman, a geophysicist with the United States Geologic Survey (USGS), the 5.1 magnitude quake occurred a little after 8 a.m. at a depth of 3.7 kilometers (2.2 miles) below the earth's surface near Sparta, North Carolina, just south of the Virginia-North Carolina boarder.

There were some reports of minor damage and injuries from the moderate quake in the area directly above it. Here, in the Bedford area, not everybody felt it and some that did, didn't know what it was.

Traci Blido, the county's economic development director said she felt it and thought somebody was coming in the house. She sent her husband to check. Then, she got alerts on her smart phone about a quake.

Bedford Police Chief Todd Foreman said his department did not receive any calls about it.

See QUAKE 4A

School board to consider issues about reopening plan

By TOM WILMOTH
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The Bedford County School Board will have a special called meeting this Thursday, Aug. 13, to discuss and potentially take actions related to the 2020-2021 school year.

The meeting, which will be held in the School Board Office conference room located at 311 South Bridge Street, Bedford, will begin at 6 p.m.

The meeting will be open to the public but will have limited seating due to physical distancing requirements. Additionally, any member of the public attending the meeting will be required to wear a face covering. Priority seating will be given to meeting

See PLAN 7A



Top seller

Thaxton Girl Scout can flat out sell some cookies

By TOM WILMOTH
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Morgan Crigger is quite a sales person.

This year she sold 3,000 boxes of girl scout cookies, second most in the region.

Last Saturday 89 of the top cookie achievers were honored at the String of Pearls/Cookie Program Top Achievers Celebration at Camp Icimani in Roanoke.

Morgan, from Thaxton, was

See SELL 4A

A school at Brook Hill Can have up to eight students

By JOHN BARNHART
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Brook Hill Farm will host a school this school year. The school will be able to accommodate up to eight children.

Brook Hill is equipped for the school. It has a long successful record of rescuing at-risk teens.

According to Jo Anne Miller, Brook Hill has had 132 teens, who probably would not have graduated from high school, graduate. Most have gone on to post high school education. Some have

gone to college and its graduates includes some who are now large animal veterinarians.

Now, Brook Hill will offer an alternative for parents who have chosen the at-home option for their children this school year. The youth have their lessons from Bedford County Public Schools, and use laptop computers, but they will do them at the farm. They will have social interaction, but in a much smaller group than they would be in if they went physically to the

See SCHOOL 4A



The school includes horses.



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