



Farmville Herald

Honor for the past, help for the present, hope for the future

Friday, October 30, 2020

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Living in a food desert

BY ALEXA MASSEY
The Farmville Herald

Many are aware that Cumberland County is considered a food desert in which residents have very limited access to healthy or affordable food.

And while the installation of a greatly needed grocery store may remove Cumberland from the list of food deserts in the United States, it could take much more to solve the greater problems of food accessibility and affordability.

Jennifer Sullivan, a Cartersville resident, said she's had food insecurity on her mind ever since she held

CUMBERLAND

a seat on the Cumberland County School Board in the late 1990s, witnessing firsthand the relationship between hunger and poor test scores.

Although back then there was still no significant supermarket, Sullivan recalled there were some shops like Marion's Market where residents could purchase basic groceries.

"If I needed a cup of sugar or to go get some ground beef, I could go to town and grab it."

Although she is now retired, Sullivan last worked in real estate and

often attempted to sway developers and commercial clients into considering opening up a grocery store.

She even started her own Facebook group, "Cumberland County Needs a Grocery Store," that has garnered more than 1,000 members in the last several years. She attended several Board of Supervisors meetings to voice her thoughts to county officials.

Despite her efforts, clients were never interested in bringing a grocery store to the area. Sullivan said she was often told there was not

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REGINA CARAWAY | HERALD

A True Value Hardware store is now in the location of the former Marion's Market where Cumberland residents purchased basic groceries.

Police stop leads to pursuit

BY TITUS MOHLER
The Farmville Herald

A stop for a traffic violation led to a pursuit by the police department Wednesday afternoon, Oct. 28, in downtown Farmville.

"We had an officer attempt to stop a vehicle for a traffic violation," Farmville Police Department (FPD) Chief Andy Ellington said. "The vehicle took off and crashed at the intersection of Osborn Road and (Route) 45 (North Main Street), crashed into another vehicle."

The fleeing vehicle had four occupants, Ellington said. Three jumped out and fled on foot, and one was arrested at the scene.

After a search between Northview Drive and Needham Street, police were able to find some of the fleeing suspects.

"We've got three in custody out of the four," Ellington said at 6:40 p.m.

He reported at 8:35 p.m. that the fourth suspect was taken into custody after being found walking down Plank Road near Raines Tavern in Cumberland County.

"The vehicle that was involved in the crash they were driving has been confirmed to be stolen out of Henrico County," he said.

In the early evening, Ellington reported there were no major injuries that he was aware of.

"One of the suspects was taken to (Centra) Southside (Community Hospital) just to be checked out," he said.



Nicholas Storment, left, rings the bell three times, signifying the end of his chemotherapy treatment at Centra Southside Community Hospital this year. He is celebrating in this photo with his wife, Kristin Storment, who has been his biggest supporter as he has successfully battled Hodgkin's lymphoma.

Storment successfully battles cancer

BY TITUS MOHLER
The Farmville Herald

Nicholas Storment and his wife, Kristin, were visiting with family in the Farmville area toward the beginning of this year when he went to see a doctor to address a cough that would not go away.

"We were living in Oregon, and we were actually planning on moving overseas, so we were coming home to visit with family, and then I found out I

had cancer," he said. "So we are kind of here now."

The cancer was identified as Hodgkin's lymphoma.

Born and raised in Gresham, Oregon, just outside of Portland, the 32-year-old Storment was a long way from home as he battled cancer this year amid the COVID-19 pandemic. But together with support in

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Stanley addresses his past

BY TITUS MOHLER
The Farmville Herald

It has been a challenging year for incoming Prince Edward County Administrator Douglas Stanley, but he has confidence in a positive conclusion to 2020 and a bright future in Prince Edward.

In a Tuesday, Oct. 27, interview, Stanley addressed the future and both successes and pitfalls of his past.

"Without doubt, it's been probably the most difficult and challenging year of my career," he said.

Stanley was formerly the county administrator in Warren County. Along with that county's Board of Supervisors, the county attorney, the county schools superintendent and the Front Royal-Warren County Economic Development Authority (EDA) board, Stanley was charged by a special grand jury in September 2019 with two counts of misfeasance and one count of nonfeasance due to lack of oversight of the Front Royal-Warren County EDA.



Douglas Stanley

PRINCE EDWARD

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Mom says return to school is critical for her kids

BY ALEXA MASSEY
The Farmville Herald

A Prince Edward County mother is hoping the local school system will elect to send children back to in-person classes in the near future, fearing the safety of virtual learning is outweighed by the effects it is having on children, particularly students with special needs.

Emma Webb is a working

mother with nine children, six of whom are currently at home and enrolled in Prince Edward County Public Schools. She's got kids in elementary, middle and high school.

Webb's family is no stranger to COVID-19. In fact, it was affected firsthand by the virus in the spring. During the last school year, several members of the family, including some children, contracted

PRINCE EDWARD

COVID-19. The family was quarantined for four to six weeks and one family member was hospitalized. Some of the family members still have lasting symptoms, such as rashes, chronic fatigue and severe bruising, she said.

Webb initially was a supporter of a more virtual-oriented approach to the 2020-2021 school year, but her opinion

has changed.

While most of her kids were honor roll students in the pre-pandemic world, the majority of her children are now borderline failing, especially her young elementary-school age son, who was recently diagnosed with dyslexia.

Webb explained that virtual learning did happen to some degree last semester as schools all over the country tackled the issue of how to

wrap up the semester in the midst of a pandemic. However, the impromptu end-of-the-year grading system involved much more paperwork than online work, and students were able to pass primarily just by participating and turning in packets.

Now, her children work online weekdays from approximately 8:20 a.m. to 2:20 p.m.

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FOOD: 'I don't see box stores as the answer'

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enough business in the county to support a grocery store.

"They don't want to do it because there's not enough of an economical reason to do it here," she said.

Despite this, Sullivan still thinks the Courthouse area would make an excellent location for a grocery store. And while she often finds her fridge stocked mainly with quick and easy finger foods that can be heated up in a pinch, she worries the most about the county's older population who may be struggling to afford food with nowhere nearby to obtain it.

"They have to make big decisions. Do I put gas in my car? What am I cutting out of my budget to eat?"

"A food desert is more than just food," Doris Seal, president of Cumberland Community Cares (CCC) at Delma's Food Pantry, said.

CCC is one of 133 agencies in the Feed More network that stretches across 34 counties and cities. Seal serves on the council for Feed More.

Tuesday, Oct. 26, Seal highlighted Cumberland as the only county in Feed More's coverage area that is considered to completely be a food desert.

"It's an issue that has grown for a long time, and it's not going to be solved by a single grocery store," she said. "It certainly would be great, and I would love it, and I'm sure there would be plenty of business, but it's not going to solve some of these underlying issues."

Seal referenced other issues the county is facing beyond a lack of grocery stores. The county is food insecure, but it's also lacking a medical center, a daycare, a public park, public transportation, widespread internet access, and unemployment is a significant problem.

And in a county that lacks these types of things, fundraising for the food pantry itself can be difficult. When other agencies go to places like retirement communities to fundraise, Cumberland must look elsewhere. There is a lack of a wide variety of strong organizations

to partner with.

And because so many Cumberland residents seek jobs outside of the county, putting a grocery store in the middle of Cumberland may not be a viable option.

"If Kroger has a good sale and I work in Richmond, I'm going to go there on my way home from work. If I live in Cartersville and a grocery store is here in the center of Cumberland, am I going to go to the center of Cumberland, or am I going to go to Food Lion in Goochland? Do we have a market to sustain a store?" she asked.

Seal discussed that CCC has a variety of programs offered to citizens which can have a great impact on those who are food insecure. The pantry holds TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program) distributions on the second and fourth Friday of every month, and the Feed More Mobile Pantry is held every third Friday, just to name a few.

There's also programs such as Senior Box, which supplies wholesome, shelf-stable food to supplement the diet of low-income adults aged 60 or over.

But while the majority of Cumberland residents qualify for some sort of program, Seal said, many do not take up the offer.

According to Seal, almost 70% of people in Cumberland County are eligible for USDA federal programs such as the Senior Box program. That number was at 87% when the organization started.

And while the pantry serves approximately 1,000 people a month, some of whom are duplicate recipients that participate in multiple programs, around 7,000 residents are eligible.

"When you all live here together and you think you're all fine ... you qualify for that food," she added. "I tell people all the time, 'Come and fill out an application. You may qualify.'"

Over the last several months, the Cumberland Board of Supervisors has allocated significant CARES Act funds to upgrade the CCC/Delma's Pantry facility. The pantry has

seen a tremendous increase in participants since the pandemic, and the organization that touches so many lives can now operate more efficiently.

The board itself often faces questions of why a grocery store has not come to the county and what is being done in order to attract the attention of such a business.

"The county government is keenly aware of the lack of grocery options in Cumberland, and we are working to court retail in our county," District 1 Supervisor and Board of Supervisors Chairman Brian Stanley said. "Currently Cumberland County residents rely on Goochland, Powhatan and Farmville to access groceries.

"Grocery chains have shared that Cumberland's population currently primarily uses Food Lion and Walmart locations for grocery items. They have indicated that greater population density would make it economically viable for a Cumberland grocery location to succeed."

Stanley referenced the county's two Dollar General stores, which do carry some grocery items such as frozen foods, canned and dry goods, bread and some dairy items. He stated Dollar General is in the process of rolling out more comprehensive grocery choices including fresh vegetables in some of their stores.

"We hope to benefit from these changes," he said.

Stanley explained that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, an agreement was reached between the county and the Ruritan Club of Cartersville to host a farmers market weekly to benefit citizens. The market was set up to accept EBT cards and be part of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), allowing for healthy food alternatives over other choices while offering a venue for local growers to market their goods.

"Unfortunately, the restrictions associated with the pandemic coincided with the scheduled opening of the market," he said. "We hope the farmers

market will reboot in the spring."

Stanley said as broadband comes to the county through Firefly Broadband, officials feel more individuals and businesses will see Cumberland as a viable location to call home.

"New job opportunities coming to Cumberland will provide economic drivers to allow our citizens to live, shop and work in Cumberland rather than facing a lengthy commute where picking up groceries to or from work is an option. We feel the job opportunities will attract retail.

"The pending Cobbs Creek Reservoir and the eminent development and increase in population which will follow should make locating a large grocery store possible in the county. We are moving forward to work from completed citizen input to develop a comprehensive land use and development plans near Cobbs Creek and the rest of the county. We intend to be prepared for the potential growth and have a plan in place to ensure growth is responsible and will benefit all citizens.

"The ability for Cumberland residents to access food items within our county is a priority. Driving 30 miles or more round trip for groceries creates costly burdens on our residents. We welcome input from our citizens and value ideas to address our food desert situation," he concluded.

Cumberland County Public Schools (CuCPS) Superintendent Dr. Chip Jones said Wednesday, Oct. 27, the county's food desert status compounded by a lack of public transportation means students are forced to rely on nearby convenience stores for food if they can afford it, citing a 2014 report by Virginia Tech that notes 9.49% of Cumberland's population lacks transportation to reach a grocery store.

"The low average income makes it difficult for many families to purchase sufficient quantities of food, which results in students who suffer from food insecurity," Jones said. "Studies have consistently shown that having

sufficient nutritious food reduces food insecurity, obesity rates and poor health. According to Feeding America, hunger is also associated with poor physical and mental health, delayed development in young children and behavior problems such as hyperactivity, anxiety and aggression."

Jones said that in order to assist families, CuCPS currently provides breakfast and lunch to every student free of charge through the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Program.

"During the pandemic, students were provided five breakfasts and five lunches each week, which could be picked up at one of three distribution sites or delivered directly to homes," he said. "In addition, CuCPS has partnered with Backpacks of Love. This organization provides needy children with food for weekends."

Jones added the school division partners with Delma's Pantry, which uses the school as a food distribution site. He also referenced that the school system distributes information on the Cumberland PATH (Positive Attitude Toward Health) program.

Sponsored by No Kids Hungry and Delma's Pantry, Cumberland PATH is a program that focuses on nutritional education, economic development and food distribution. Under this program, residents can participate in Vouchers for Veggies, in which participants are given vouchers that are redeemable at several nearby locations for up to \$40 worth of fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables.

Local businesses/locations participating in the Vouchers for Veggies program include the Bear Creek Market, Raman's Midway Market, Country Corner, Cumberland True Value, Pineview Bulk Food & Deli and the Center for Rural Culture: Cumberland PATH Farm Share.

The Center for Rural Culture, according to Catherine Fleischman, president of the center's board of directors, is very much involved in the fight to get fresh produce to Cumberland residents.

When it first started, the center was structured around a central concept of how to maintain a rural way of life while still having a viable economy. One of the products of that way of thinking was a non-prof-

it online farmers market called Fall Line Farms & Local Roots.

The market is a producers' co-op of small family farms and local businesses providing fresh local food year round to its members.

Fleischman said while the market originally had few members and only a small number of producers, sales skyrocketed when the pandemic hit.

"People became very interested in where their food came from and where they could find food."

Since then, the program has expanded and brought in many more producers. The Center for Rural Culture has also partnered with Delma's Pantry.

Now, the online farmers market has two pickup locations in Cumberland, one located in Columbia and the other at the Courthouse.

Fleischman emphasized that the coronavirus pandemic has highlighted a greater importance in food security and the way food is produced and distributed.

"For years we have been interested in, 'How can you live in a rural community and also be in a food desert?'"

She continued, "Personally, I don't see box stores as the answer to local food ... Do you want only one way to get food, or do you want multiple options?"

"The hardware store in Cumberland is carrying food," she said, referencing True Value's participation in the Vouchers for Veggies program, "because it's needed."

For Fleischman, the greater issue of food accessibility must also mean sustainable access to food.

"If we get a box store and we encourage everybody to eat what's available or what is coming to us but is not necessarily what's the healthiest, then we're not solving the problem, we're contributing to it."

Fleischman said getting on the road for greater food accessibility in Cumberland means all local stakeholders, including schools, county government, farmers, customers, social services, churches and other groups/organizations need to be educated and informed.

"We're not solving the problem by just giving out bags of food," Seal said. "We believe in education. We believe in stimulating the economy here in Cumberland."

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AMERICA FACES HER OWN CROSS

It is at the cross of Jesus Christ where the worst of man meets the best of God. David Seamand's book, *Healing for Damaged Emotions*, gives this quote, "In the Cross God demonstrated His total identification with us in our *undeserved suffering*, as well as in our *deserved punishment*. Never was there more injustice than in that Cross. No one ever received more rejection than our Lord. His accusations, His trial, His crucifixion were all vastly unjust." It is through the cross God offers us mercy, meaning that we do not get what we deserve—Hell and all it offers. He also gives us grace—which means we get what we do not deserve—Heaven and all that it offers.

This election year some Americans, like those around the cross, reveal their worst by showing hate for those who are not of their party, persuasion or opinion. They wish those candidates who do not agree with their views would just disappear or have their sordid secrets exposed. There is nothing too low, degrading or evil they would not do or say for their candidate to win believing the end justifies the means.

Riots reveal they are no different from those who commit injustice against them. Under the guise of being a victim, they commit crimes against those who have done nothing to them. They rob and burn businesses in the name of justice. Sections of cities are taken over by those who impose their will on others. They make heroes out of criminals and criminals out of heroes.

Humanism replaces God by making man the center of his own universe. This puts man at a distinct disadvantage due to his many limitations. One example of this is "love is love," which is one of the catchphrases of today. Most may think this is an unconditional love, whereas it is really a conditional one. It is a reciprocating love which is reserved for those of the same mindset. Another of these phrases is "Kindness is everything," which is limited only to those who we feel deserve it. Then there is the phrase "Good without God," which is a misnomer. If God is taken out of good, all that is left is 0--nothing. Good is then based on personal opinion.



God still, however, identifies with our undeserved suffering as well as our deserved punishment. He comes to us when we refuse to come to Him. He willingly suffers pain and punishment on our behalf. God forgives us for our sins against Him. This frees us to forgive those who sin against us. Our salvation cost the Lord Jesus everything, however, it is free to us for the asking. We, due to all our sins, deserve hell, but thanks to Jesus, we receive Heaven. Salvation is not imposed on us against our will, but is given to those who, through repentance and faith, will receive it. America needs God's mercy and grace for our sins against Him and our fellowman.

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