

the **western carolinian**



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By Abigail Quinn



A crowd of Sylva Pride attendees line up for the pride march through downtown Sylva. Photo by Abigail Quinn.

In a meeting on April 11, Sylva's Board of Commissioners voted to deny Sylva Pride a parade permit for their 2024 pride celebration.

"Sylva Pride is saddened by the recent denial of our parade permit by the Town of Sylva," said Burgin Mackey, Sylva Pride president. "This decision overturned the precedent of our festival and parade that has occurred annually, without any major logistical or safety issues, for the past three years."

The town board denied the request for the road closure for the parade quoting fears of safety issues as the impact of closing the road for local businesses.

In response to the denial, Leighanne Young presented a letter to the board written by her and other local business owners. In her statement she detailed why the board should consider allowing Sylva Pride to hold their parade.

"Sylva Pride is not the only downtown festival that requires road closures. To honestly evaluate the economic impact, we need to consider all festivals that impede traffic," Young said.

Greening Up the Mountains, WCU Homecoming and the Christmas parade are all events that Young cites in her address. These events have not been denied a permit to close portions of Sylva's downtown. They do close the roads for longer.

Greening Up the Mountains closes the entirety of downtown Sylva's road for over six hours. Sylva Pride's parade lasts under two hours.

With the letter, Young and other downtown businesses wanted to make it clear they were not the reason the board denied the permit.

"This decision confuses many of us in town," Mackey said. Not only is there confusion, but Mackey also says based on the rapid decision to vote on the matter and deny issuing Sylva Pride a permit, there is an underlying tone of discrimination.

Former commissioner Natalie Newman made remarks at a follow up town board meeting in response to the permit denial.

"I am deeply hurt and disappointed following our last meeting and the recent decision and vote to deny Sylva Pride's application for a two-block street closure," Newman said. "It is not the denial that has been so troubling to me, more so it is how flippantly and hastily this board made that decision with little to no consideration to what was before us."

Newman details that the issue began with Commissioner Jones presenting a motion to deny the permit outright and refused to resend this motion, as requested by

Newman, to allow the Sylva Pride board to convene and discuss options that had not been presented to them prior to the meeting.

"Sylva Pride was not offered an opportunity to discuss footing the bill or to move the closure to another time of day. Road closures may be a headache for a day, but when the majority of your local businesses sign a letter of support, it's clear that this town wants Sylva Pride to continue as planned," Mackey said.

Newman also requested that the commission look at Pride's application at a future meeting to allow all commissioners to be present in response to commissioner Waldrop being absent at the decisive meeting. This would have given the board time to speak with constituents and the community on the issue instead of deciding on their behalf.

Votes were cast nonetheless, and Sylva Pride was denied the permit.

"The handling of this vote by this board does not reflect our proposed town values and our claims to be committed to inclusivity and for me at least that is hard to swallow," Newman said.

Members of the pride board recognize how denying a permit for the parade puts a damper on how members of the LGBTQIA+ community feel within their community.

"The visibility of a Pride Parade along Main Street has had a lasting impact on how welcome folks feel in our town," Mackey said. Without the parade, members in the

community lose the symbolic freedom of being out and proud in the main street of Sylva.

Though the commissioners mentioned not wanting to set a precedent for denying these types of permits, Mackey says they may have inadvertently done that anyway.

“As a town board, I think that any precedent they set should be to support local businesses and to listen to the will of the people. Sylva loves our festival,” Mackey said. “Voting against the wishes of taxpayers and local businesses is disheartening to me.”

Newman also is concerned about the denial vote considering that previously commissioners delayed a vote to choose new streetlights because two commissioners were not in attendance. When in the same circumstance with Sylva Pride, a commissioner was absent, and commissioners proceeded with the vote regardless.

“I find it very sad they we can take the extra time to choose streetlights but refuse to give a moment more to the consideration of permits,” she said.

Mackey says that the bottom line is Sylva residents need to pay more attention to local government to prevent things like this from continuing to happen.

“During the last local election, we lost two key supporters on the town board and [if] they maintained their seats, we would not be having this conversation. Former town Commissioners Ben Guiney and Greg McPherson served as advisors to Sylva Pride Board and are still consulted today. It is imperative that we vote in our local elections at every opportunity,” she said.

A statement released from Sylva Pride days after various responses from the initial controversy, describes the pride board’s disagreement with the Sylva Town Board. Though disagreeing, they chose to present an inspiring message to their followers on social media.

“We have decided to not reapply for a parade permit with the town of Sylva,

we will improvise and overcome as we always do, however Sylva Pride weekend is still on,” said Sylva Pride in their social media statement.

For more opportunities to connect with Sylva Pride, consider joining the Queer Volunteers and follow them at @sylvapride on Instagram or Facebook for more information.

Honorable Town Commissioners,

We write as business owners in downtown Sylva concerned about the Sylva Pride parade and potential road closure, and its impact on us.

Sylva Pride is not the only downtown festival that requires road closures. To honestly evaluate economic impacts, we need to consider all festivals that impede traffic – Greening Up the Mountains, the WCU Homecoming Parade, the Christmas Parade.

Those close longer stretches of roadway for longer periods of time than Pride, which last year occupied two blocks on Main Street for less than an hour. Are we suggesting doing away with any of these community events? Absolutely not.

The reason is simple. Our downtown is the heart of our community. While we might see less foot traffic immediately during an event, events draw people into our downtown, many of whom choose to return to shop or to dine. The indirect economic impact of events might be hard to calculate, but it is certainly felt in the oft-heard refrains from visitors about how charming, quirky, and welcoming Sylva is.

We recognize that Sylva’s limited resources are a challenge, but a community finds ways to pay for things it values. How can we not see the value and beauty in a joyful, homegrown, community-affirming and well-attended Sylva Pride event, which last year brought over 250 people to our downtown? If funding is the primary limitation, please consider seeking alternative sources of financial support, or allowing organizers of these events to assist you in meeting these obligations.

There are many things your downtown businesses do that are not motivated by economics. Buying ads in the high school yearbooks, donating products and gift cards to silent auctions and raffles that benefit sports teams, class field trips, and local nonprofits. We do this because we are actively creating the community in which we wish to live. Sylva Pride is now very much a part of this community.

As representatives of Sylva’s downtown businesses, we encourage you to consider allowing this event to take up space within our community, rather than sidelining and minimizing it. And if, after careful consideration, you still decide to make this event smaller than it deserves, please recognize that you are not doing so at the behest of many of your local businesses.

Catamount Dining: Are the current vegetarian and vegan options enough?

By Marie Spencer

Catamount Dining's vegetarian and vegan options have received mixed reviews from students, leaving some satisfied and others frustrated.

WCU's Catamount Dining includes two dining halls and several affiliated restaurants. The affiliated restaurants range in their vegetarian-friendliness from Which Wich's fully customizable sandwiches to Panda Express's lack of any vegetarian entrées. Panda Express formerly offered Beyond Orange Chicken but discontinued the entree nationwide in early 2023.

Meghan Dempsey, WCU's registered dietitian, provided a statement on behalf of Catamount Dining via email.

"At Catamount Dining, we are continually working towards bettering our program and providing additional offerings that align with our students' needs," Dempsey wrote. "While we recognize that there is always room for improvement, we are very proud of our efforts to design menus which are inclusive of a variety of dietary needs and preferences."

Dempsey mentioned many of the vegetarian and vegan additions Catamount Dining has added in the past year. These additions are primarily in the new Rise and Dine station in Courtyard dining hall and include vegan eggs, gluten-free waffles and pancakes, gluten-free oatmeal and dairy alternative milks.

"We have a robust selection of 30+ vegan and vegetarian recipes that are a part of our four-week menu cycle not including our daily offerings such as black bean burgers at our grill station, beyond burger patties at our Nature's Plate station, hummus at the deli and Cajun tofu and vegan mozzarella shreds at the plant-forward station."

One vegan student, who wishes to remain anonymous, has had an overall positive experience with Catamount Dining.

"The options at Courtyard are pretty good, and Which Wich has nice options. I only get smoothies from Freshens, but they do have a variety of them."

However, many student vegetarians disagreed with this opinion saying that Catamount Dining's vegetarian-friendly options are lacking.

Josie Naumowich, a pescatarian, said, "I would say my overall experience with campus dining has been negative. I



Photo by Marie Spencer.

think mainly Courtyard can work on being more vegetarian-friendly. And there is definitely not any variety for the vegetarian options! Just about the only things I can eat at Courtyard are pizza, burgers and salad. Like that's just about it. So having more options would be good."

The lack of options is an opinion held by many students.

Vitoria Domingues, another vegetarian student, has had to find ways to make Catamount Dining work for her. "I got used to having limited dining options and I adapted to the issue, which is probably a passive approach but what else could I do?" Domingues said. "I often find myself taking animal protein out and still paying the full price for an item, even though I am consuming a far less nutritional meal due to not having the plant protein substitution option."

Domingues also shared that many of the vegetarian-friendly items that Catamount Dining offers only include tofu. She pointed out Freshens' inclusion of meatless chicken options, offered in the Meatless Mexican rice bowl and as a substitution for other meals. She said, "Vegetarian people don't only consume tofu and soy protein all day long. Shocker!"

Another concern of WCU vegetarians is the cross-contamination of meat and dairy products. While many students are vegetarians by choice, there are still several students who must eat vegetarian or vegan because of allergies and intolerances.

Jamie, who hopes to keep his last name anonymous, fits into this second category.

Despite telling Catamount Dining-affiliated restaurants about his dairy allergy when ordering, Jamie said, "I got Freshens and



Photo by Marie Spencer.

made sure to order my food without cheese, but still had some shreds in there just from stuff getting mixed together."

Students say that the lack of vegetarian-friendly options extends to events catered by Catamount Dining.

According to the Catamount Dining website, "Catamount Dining is the University's contracted food service provider and manager for all student, faculty, staff and guest dining on campus. This includes all retail sales, residential dining, and catering at WCU."

Little information on the three catering menus is provided online. However,

Domingues shared her experiences with trying to eat vegetarian at catered events.

"How difficult is it to not add meat to a mushroom soup? Or have bacon on the side instead of shoving it inside the cheese potato? I have experienced several situations where a meal that is normally made vegetarian by nature was altered to include bacon or other animal protein unnecessarily."

While vegetarian and vegan options at WCU have improved over the past years, students are still hopeful for a continued commitment toward a more diversified vegetarian-friendly experience with Catamount Dining.

Preserving tradition: Donna Ray Norton keeps Appalachian ballads alive

By Abigail Quinn

Originally published by The Mountaineer



Donna Ray Norton plays in front of a crowd with Sheila Kay Adams. Photo by William Ritter.

Donna Ray Norton, eighth generation ballad singer and Local to Revere, North Carolina joins the Canton library concert series for a free performance of traditional ballads and stories.

One of a “dying breed” of Appalachian ballad singers, Norton fights to keep the tradition alive by singing and storytelling all over the east coast.

Though it wasn’t always this way.

“My mom always took me to the festivals, and she would offer to let me sing, but I just always said no,” Norton said.

As a 16-year-old in a family of acclaimed musicians Norton did not originally feel the same calling as the rest of her family.

“My mom was a ballad singer herself. She didn’t really push me to do things because I think she just didn’t want to push me away from it. She just let me find my way

back to it on my own,” Norton said.

Eventually, with her mother’s patience and with help from her cousin Sheila Adams, Norton found her musical calling just like the rest of her family. She took up ballad singing like her mother and soon after, she began receiving accolades and attention.

She and her family of musicians have performed all over the east coast and their music has been featured in numerous albums including “Big Bend Killing, The Appalachian Ballad Tradition” which went on to receive a Grammy nomination in 2018.

Norton’s ballad singing has different effects on people regardless of their familiarity with the art, and Norton has witnessed that effect at various concerts she has performed.

“When I come off stage, I have people that come up to me all the time and say, I remember hearing my grandfather singing that song. They tell me about how their parents passed away recently or something like that,” Norton said. “I had one woman who, not too long ago, was in tears while she was talking about how beautiful it all was. She had never heard anything like ballad singing before, so it wasn’t that she remembered something... she was crying because she felt [the beauty of the ballad].”

For Norton, there seems to be something in the water somewhere in her hometown of Revere that leads to musical success. Revere, also known as Sodom Laurel, is known for its rich heritage and historical musical community.

It's known as the "Nest of Singing Birds" and got its name from the famous collector of folk songs, composer and musician Cecil Sharp. Norton's family is of direct lineage from the people who Cecil Sharp recorded singing when he came through Western North Carolina over 100 years ago.

That tradition continues to be passed on.

Norton's paternal grandfather, Byard Ray, was a well-known fiddle player around the country. Norton is also the second cousin of renowned ballad singer, storyteller, and musician, Sheila Kay Adams.

"If it weren't for folks like my cousin Sheila Kay Adams, my mom and Cecil Sharp coming through the mountains and collecting all those old love songs... if it weren't for David Holt and Rob Amberg and all these different names of people

that you hear in our area coming through and collecting and recognizing all these things, it would be a dying art form," Norton said.

It remains critical to Norton that she pass the ballad singing tradition on to preserve its rich culture and unique way of storytelling.

"We're eighth generation and we don't have five kids and we don't have ten kids. Hopefully a couple of those kids are going to pick up on ballad singing," said Norton. "I only have three kids and my cousin only has one. I've got a shot because I've got three, maybe one of them will pick it up."

Though she has fewer children than her grandparents to pass on ballad singing to, she still tries her best to impart her wisdom on her young daughter. She does this the same way her mother did for her, with gentle encouragement, but never force.

"It's definitely just so important because it's an unbroken tradition for my family and I would like to continue that," Norton said.



Donna Ray Norton is an Appalachian ballad singer, one of a thinning group of musicians. Image by Jamie Blankenship.

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“We are Anikituwahgi:” Reclaiming language and identity

By Mattilynn Sneed

The mission for Cherokee language reclamation continues to gain traction.

In 2019, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, the Cherokee Nation and the United Keetoowah Band declared a state of emergency for the Cherokee language at a tri-council meeting. At that time, there were only about 2,000 first language Cherokee speakers, many of them elderly, making up 0.005% of the population.

Tribal members and allies have stepped up to ensure the language’s survival. Since the declaration of a state of emergency, the tribes have seen new facilities for immersion schools, more programs funded, more learning resources and an overall higher prioritization of ensured continuance of the language.

An outsider may wonder why the Cherokee people would go to such great lengths to save a language when English is already shared among all members. The Cherokee Language Summit participants explain why revitalizing the language is paramount.

Every year since 2017, Dr. Sarah Snyder Hopkins, the director of Cherokee Studies at WCU, organizes the Cherokee Language Summit at WCU. She started it because she wanted to host an event that would bring together adult Cherokee language teachers and students to share methods and materials and connect with one another.



Language Summit participants face the mound at Kituwah, the birthplace of the Cherokee people. The name of the Cherokee used for themselves was “Anikituwahgi,” people of this earth.

“I am not native, but the Cherokee people and I are friends,” she said in Cherokee.

Her work with the language began when she was in graduate school for ethnomusicology. In school, Snyder Hopkins wanted to see how music could be used in language revitalization.

This evolved into her teaching music and arts at New Kituwah Academy as part of her dissertation, where she stayed for six years. She began teaching Cherokee studies

at WCU in 2016 where her experiences provide insights into the relationship between language and culture.

“Language is everything. It has everything in it, the world view, the culture, the history, identity. At the end of the day, it’s important because it matters to Cherokee people. Being able to speak and use language is a universal human right. It’s their language, their choice. It’s sovereignty to decide what is spoken,” Snyder Hopkins said.

The first day of the Language Summit commenced with a visit to Judaculla Rock on the frigid, windy morning of April 4. From there, attendees made their way back to the WCU campus where the workshops began.

Before commencing the workshops, Snyder Hopkins announced the launch of the Cherokee language minor in the fall of 2024. It will be more specifically tailored to language classes than the Cherokee studies minor currently offered.

Leading figures in the language revitalization movement like Dr. Heartwell Francis hosted workshops at WCU. Francis founded the Cherokee Studies program in 2006, and later worked as the curriculum developer for the Kituwah Preservation and Education Program. He was made an honorary member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in 2021 for his dedication to language preservation.

Other presenters included Dr. Ben Frey, a University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill professor and Eastern Band member who specializes in language shift, and Chi Shipman, the adult language education coordinator at the Kituwah Preservation and Education Program.

At her workshop Shipman, a WCU graduate and member of the Eastern Band, talked about methods she uses to teach students.



Chi Shipman giving a workshop on her work at Cherokee at Kituwah Preservation and Education Program.

“We do a lot of outside work, because not only are we teaching language, but we are also teaching culture, and history and what it is to be a Cherokee person and to live within the language,” Shipman said.

Like her students, Shipman learned to speak Cherokee as an adult. Her interest in learning the language sparked when she participated in the Remember the Removal bike ride in 2012 that honors those who were forced to walk The Trail of Tears.

“On this ride, I learned a lot more of what it means to be a Cherokee person, what ancestors went through, and the struggles that they faced. I wanted to know more, I wanted to share more, I wanted to educate,” Shipman said.

The final push came when she visited the Māori people in New Zealand with group members from the RTR bike ride. The rules of the gathering in New Zealand dictated she could only speak Māori or her native language.

“I was really ashamed that I hadn’t taken the time to learn my language,” she said.

She returned home determined to learn Cherokee, and four months later was accepted into the Cherokee Language Master Apprenticeship Program.

Shipman explained how the disconnect from Cherokee people and their language came to be so pervasive.

From 1869 into the 1960s, it was common practice to place Indigenous children in boarding schools. The goal of these facilities was to assimilate these children into white, Christian American culture. R. H. Pratt, who developed several Indian boarding schools across the country, was

known for saying, “Kill the Indian. Save the man.”

In these schools, children were forbidden from speaking their language and engaging in their cultural practices. In this way, the language and other cultural practices began to slip away.

Keawe Bone and Matt Tooni are two members of the Eastern Band keeping some of those cultural practices going. They led traditional dances for the evening social at the language summit.

The social provided the opportunity for event goers to enjoy community, food, and dance. The Cherokee Repertory Choir commenced the social with a performance of hymns and “Yellow Submarine” by The Beatles translated into Cherokee.



The Cherokee Repertory was founded by Sarah Snyder Hopkins in 2023.

Bone and Tooni sang in Cherokee and lead “The Friendship Dance”, “The Bear Dance” and more. Tooni said he learned the songs from his grandfather. He hoped that those who were not familiar with the meanings and customs around the dances would seek further education and understanding of the traditions they were engaging in.

The two encourage non-Cherokee people to learn the language. Tooni said it can’t be just Cherokee people who learn to speak the language if we want to see it go on.



Language Summit Participants doing the Friendship Dance.

“Our old ways tell us, it’s not your skin, your nationality, it is how you show up here,” Bone said, pointing to his heart. “And if it is on your heart to learn our language, then something is calling you telling you to do so. So, listen to the spirit and follow your heart, because we might need you.”

Tooni and Bone believe language is at the heart of culture. “Language is at the center of the web that is culture, if you lose the language the whole thing unravels,” said Tooni.

“There is an idea and a way of thinking of our elders and the first language speakers. That way of thinking created that language. It sees the world in a particular way. And if we lose that, we may lose the idea of what it means to be Anikituwah; to have a home place and the understanding of our relationship with our place,” Bone said.

Noquisi Star of the Cherokee Nation wants to make sure his two children have access

to that way of thinking. Star and his wife drove from Ohio to be at the Language Summit, their 2-year-old and newborn in tow. Star says he is in a race against time to learn the language fast enough to teach his children while they’re young.

“My expectation is that they will speak Cherokee. My hope is that when they do it, they will be able to do it free of an English mindset,” Star said.

The second day of workshops featured a live translation session of historical letters with Tom Belt, Wiggins Blackfox, Sara Snyder Hopkins, Stuart Marshall and Barnes Powell. The translation project is helping historians better understand Cherokee history and the progression of the language dialects.

Jakeli Swimmer, a WCU alumni, Cherokee language teacher and cultural resources and archive officer at Kituwah Preservation and Education Program, gave the final workshop on archiving the Cherokee way. He spoke about why it’s important for Cherokee people to take charge of their artifacts and historical materials.

The group gathered at Kituwah Mound for the closing speech with Tom Belt.

Belt has dedicated much of his life to language revitalization. He is a first language speaker from the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma, was the Cherokee Language Program Coordinator at WCU in 2018 and was awarded a doctorate of humane letters.

His work includes developing curriculum for teaching Cherokee and working with the American Philosophical Society and the Smithsonian to develop protocols for the treatment of Cherokee archeological materials.

That only scratches the surface of his impact in language revitalization.

Belt’s words on the importance of the language and what it means to be Cherokee commanded attention and strong emotions. Tears rolled down the cheeks of some who listened.



Tom Belt speaking to Summit participants at the Kituwah Mound.

“The words we have are key,” Belt said. “It’s a key to look inside and see that world that we have known for 13,000 years. That’s how important the language is. That’s what will happen if you continue on with learning. It will become more intrinsic and dearer to your hearts than anything in this world.”

Reclaiming the language is not just about words. It is reclaiming identity and reconnecting what was broken.

“We are Anikituwahgi, the people of this place. People of the earth, people of the dirt that belongs to God...Cherokee doesn’t mean a damn thing in our language. That’s who they told us we are. We are Anikituwahgi.”

Opinion: A farewell to four years

By Liam Bridgeman

It's amazing how quickly four years can vanish. It seems like just yesterday I was crying in the bathroom after moving in freshman year. In that moment, all I could remember thinking to myself was "why am I crying?"

Today, as I near my final days at WCU, after growing into the person I am today, through the trials and tribulations of college, I can tell you exactly why I'm tearing up writing this farewell. These past four years have been the best of my life. I've met some of the most amazing people this world has to offer. So many have been a part of my journey, but no group of people have had a bigger impact on me than the staff of The Western Carolinian.

At an early age, I began working with my dad. As an independent contractor, my dad always told me "No matter where you go, make sure you leave that place better than the way you found it." Of course, he meant it in the physical sense – clean up after yourself and make sure our work was superb in whatever house we worked on that day. Although he meant it in the physical sense, I tend to think of it metaphorically. That was my mindset as I was thrust into the co-editor-in-chief position in 2022– leave this place better than the way I found it.

When Nick Childs and I took over as the editors-in-chief of The Western Carolinian, it was very clear changes needed to be made. Like a lot of print media during COVID, The Western Carolinian was hit hard. Students didn't want to work, and



The Western Carolinian wins Most Innovative Program at WCU's CELA awards 2024.

that lack of engagement showed. The Carolinian needed a revamp. So, we got to work. We hired an almost entirely brand-new staff. Unfortunately, though, as these things happen around here, most of that staff graduated. So, we rebuilt our staff again in 2023.

We brought back four returners and added three more going into this year. A staff of seven with no advisor - we didn't look like we belonged. A weird group of people from very different walks of life with wildly different personalities. Because of everyone's differences, I struggled to see how the vision I created just a year ago was going to come to fruition.

Despite our differences, we all had one thing in common – we were committed to doing our part as a paper serving our community. Over time, that passion allowed this staff to grow and learn from each other until one day, we realized something – we created a family.

Through all the differences and struggles throughout the year, we all grew to love each other.

To say goodbye to this paper, to this university and most importantly, to this family is more than my heart can take in this moment. The majority of my college experience has been devoted to this paper and the individuals responsible for its success. I wouldn't take a moment of it back. Through all the staff meetings, stories, editions and awards, this organization and the people behind it continue to prove people wrong. I am so grateful to have created wonderful memories through my work with The Western Carolinian and those memories will last forever.

Now, as I look back at my time here, I realize my goal of leaving this paper in a better place has been accomplished. This paper, for which I have dedicated countless hours to, is being left in the hands of a group of people I call my family. Who better to hand down my passion project to, than the people who have also devoted their college careers to improving.

In the end, I want to leave you with this. Journalism is and will always be what makes The Western Carolinian an important piece of the WCU ecosystem. Without us, this campus and the surrounding community would lose a vital resource. Our world needs journalism. Our world needs journalists like the ones that call The Western Carolinian family.

For the final time – thank you for reading.

Voters be warned, November is fast approaching

By Mackenzie Atkinson



The election is right around the corner set for November 5, 2024.

The 2024 general election is quickly approaching and there is still much to learn about the candidates on the ballot. What is next for the 2024 election in North Carolina? Things seem to have died down since the March primary. Campaign signs have been taken down, billboard ads have shifted away from politics and the public's attention has moved toward other issues. But campaigning isn't over yet.

North Carolina will hold a second primary election May 14 for republican nominations for state auditor, lieutenant governor and U.S. House Representative for District 13. These positions have the potential to impact a wide range of areas of public interest.

Dave Boliek and Jack Clark will compete

in the state auditor runoff.

The state auditor keeps track of tax dollars moving throughout the state. They identify potential improvements to make tax dollars more effective and ensure programs funded by taxes are meeting the criteria for their funding.

Jim O'Neil and Hal Weatherman are running for lieutenant governor.

The lieutenant governor of North Carolina is essentially the vice-governor. They preside over the state senate and serve as a member or chairman of various councils and commissions.

Kelly Daughtry and Brad Knott will compete for the U.S. House District 13 seat.

The House holds the "power of the purse," allocating funds for organizations and bills passed through the federal chambers.

Looking outside of this runoff, candidates who have won their primaries are listed on the draft ballot. The draft ballot provides a great opportunity to get acquainted with nominees for the November election and the policies they endorse.

Researching candidates does not have to be a burden. It can often be easily worked into day-to-day life.

WCU political science professor Chris Cooper advocates for people to educate

themselves on each race, the candidates and the positions that will be on the ballot. "Before things get ramped up it's a great time to learn about the candidates," Cooper said. "You can look at your ballot right now on the State Board of Elections website. So maybe next week you learn about the state treasurer and what they do and who's running for office, and then next week you learn about the auditor, so it doesn't take over your life."

Education is a key component to civic engagement. With politics being very complex and having multiple levels, it can be hard to decide where to dedicate your attention. Cooper encourages voters to focus on local elections.

"The first thing I would do is pay less attention to the presidential race," Cooper said. "We know who those people are, we know where they stand. There's nothing else to be learned about Donald Trump and Joe Biden."

"My guess is the average student doesn't have an opinion on the Superintendent of Public Instruction race in North Carolina," he continued. "They do on the presidential race, so lean into what you don't know as much."

There are many resources available for voters to educate themselves on different races, ranging from voter guides published by newspapers, to non-profit organizations dedicated to voter education.

Opinion: How to develop healthy voter habits

By Mackenzie Atkinson

Politics are messy – that is the name of the game.

Educating oneself on how the government functions and which offices do what can negate the messiness of politics.

The election process is complicated, and many names get thrown around. This can stress voters and even deter them from participating in the elections.

Alexandria McCormick, a senior at WCU, has been deterred from paying attention to races because of the complexity of politics.

“Politics often seem overly complicated for no reason,” McCormick said. “There are so many different factors that people have to consider while voting.”

Developing healthy civil habits can help wade through the complexity of politics and counteract the stress that comes along with getting involved.

McCormick finds it hard to find out what people stand for when they are on the campaign trail.

“It’s difficult to see where people stand, especially with all the promises people make just to get into the office,” she said.

There are ways to research candidates and their platforms while avoiding the noise.

To start the education journey, voters need to know which positions on the ballot impact them.

The North Carolina State Board of Elections website is a great starting place for voter information. On the website, voters can enter their registration information to see what offices are up for election in their district, and view sample ballots once primary results are finalized.

From there, voters can Google search any of the offices listed and see who is running for each.

Typically, Ballotpedia compiles a list of candidates for each office race and provides links to the campaign websites. This is where you can find the platform the candidate is running on. This can become time consuming.

Another option for looking into candidates is to view a “voter guide.”

Some news outlets or organizations dedicate time to publishing a breakdown of candidates and their platforms.

An example at the local level is The Sylva

Herald’s publishing of a quick look at the Jackson County Board of Education candidates. This cuts down on the time needed to look into the candidates because someone has already compiled the work for you.

Looking at more nationally recognized races, the non-profit organization guides. vote produces voter guides for national and state elections. The guides break each candidate down by policy topic in alphabetical order.

These are only some of the resources available for voters to research candidates that could impact their community.

Finding time for this can be a tricky endeavor. Spacing out the research is a great way to get familiar with the offices over time.

There are 17 offices predicted to be on the Jackson County ballot in November. Voters still have time to dedicate an hour or so over the course of the next few months to investigate the function of each office and the candidates running for those offices.

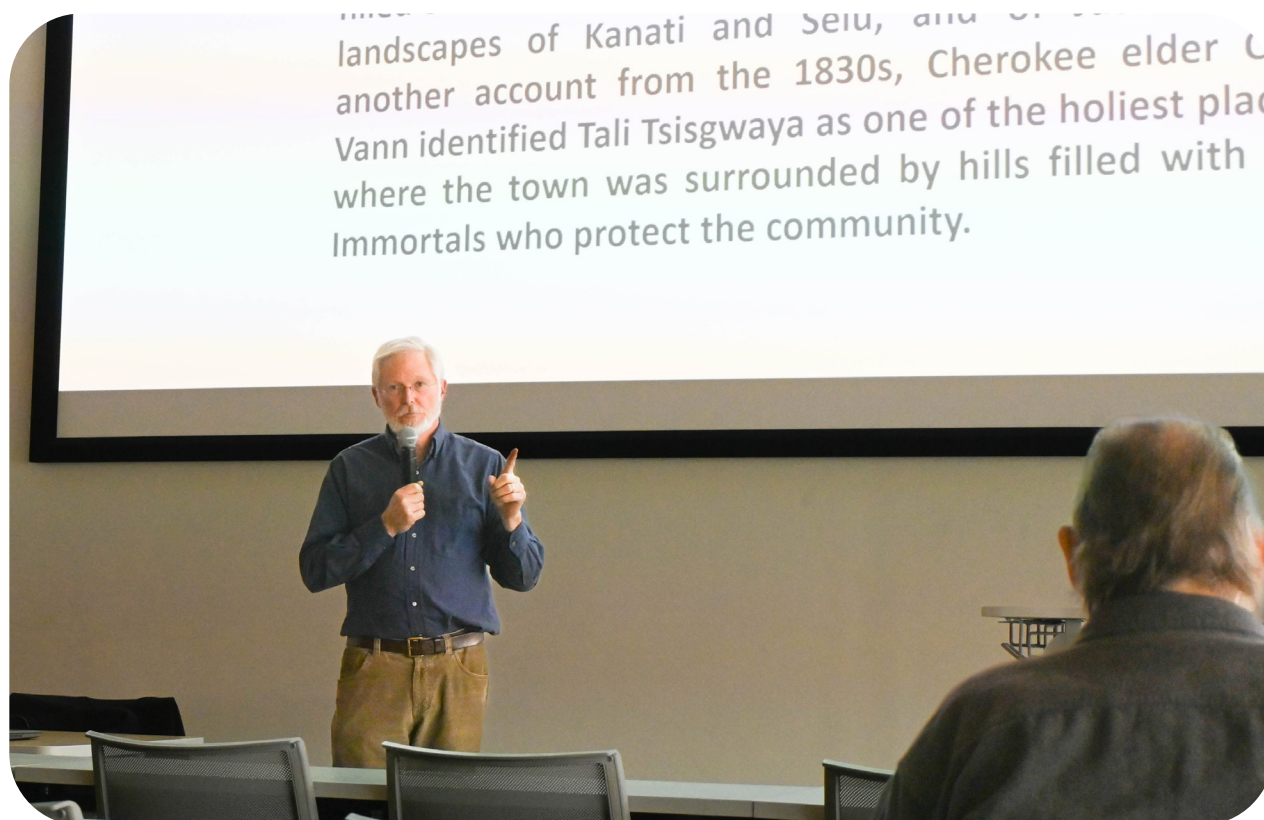
Voting does not have to be a big scary monster that people fear every two to four years. Education is the key to many things, including politics.

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Beneath Our Feet

By Mattilynn Sneed



Brett Riggs explaining how they rediscovered the name Tali Tsigwayahi.

Three Western Carolina University professors discussed the university's complex relationship with the land it occupies at the "Beneath Our Feet" history and archeology panel April 2.

Dr. Andrew Denson, Dr. Jane Eastman and Dr. Brett Riggs each spoke on their area of expertise in Cherokee archeology and history on WCU's campus.

The land WCU occupies was once called "Tali Tsigwayahi" or "Two Sparrows Place." It was one of the oldest Cherokee towns. Riggs discussed how he and Tom Belt rediscovered the name in the field notes of ethnographer James Mooney. Not

wanting the name to be lost again, they set out to have the university archeological curation facility named for Two Sparrows Place. The facility was dedicated as Tali Tsigwayahi Archeological Collections Curation Facility in 2019.

The panelists want this aspect of WCU's history to be more prominent in its current identity and campus culture. Denson felt it was a good time to begin having more talks about the land's heritage in light of an ongoing exhibit planning project that will promote Cherokee culture and language on campus.

Associate Provost for Academic Affairs,

Carmen Huffman is leading the project in collaboration with Riggs, Bardo Arts Center Executive Director Denise Drury Homewood and the Cherokee Preservation Foundation. Huffman hopes to see the project's planning phase completed within the next six months. Once the first phase is complete, the next step will be to apply for more grants to execute the plan. Huffman said this will likely take more than a year.

"The project will bring in more exhibits and wrap its arms around existing installments so that it all feels more cohesive," she said.



This interactive touchpad exhibit is in the McKee building and features audible Cherokee language. Dr. Huffman said the exhibit plan will bring more pieces like this one to campus.

The recent 20th anniversary of responsible archeology at WCU was another influence on Denson's decision to host the panel. Eastman taught her first archeological field school on campus in 2003. Over three summers, they found that everywhere they looked, there were well-preserved archeological remains of the town beneath up to three feet of fill dirt. Discoveries dated Cherokee inhabitation of the land

9,000 years back. “We are superimposed on a holy place,” Riggs said.

The difference between Eastman’s work and previously conducted archeology on campus is the collaboration with the Eastern Band Tribal Historic Preservation Office. “That’s a pretty stark contrast with some of the collecting that was done in the mid-twentieth century,” Denson said.

He gave an example of how a mound was demolished in 1956 to allow for construction of the Killian building. In Cherokee towns, the mound held the council house. Eastman said these council houses could be compared to a

church, a courthouse and community center wrapped into one. It was a sacred place. When the mound was demolished, the university invited people to come and look for artifacts. “They treated it like a celebration of Cherokee history, but really it was an act of desecration,” Denson said. Some of the artifacts collected included human remains.

Austin Faircloth, a Cherokee student who attended the panel said it is important that the university hold these events and share this knowledge. “I feel like a lot of people don’t realize what they’re walking on every day. Incorporating not only that we were here, but that we are here needs

to be shared with everybody that goes to this school,” he said.

Denson wants to see the university learn from its mistakes and ensure that future initiatives are well informed.

“As we take on this new campus interpretation, we have to confront that broader history as an institution,” Denson said. “These old patterns remind us that an institution like a university can celebrate its indigenous past without any sense of responsibility to the indigenous present. When we do this kind of work, we have to think about the responsibility that this knowledge bestows upon us.”



A fresh look at university planning and construction

By Cora Haste

Western Carolina University, like most higher education institutions, is constantly changing. With new construction proposed, immense planning is required to delegate funds, resources and man hours to meet university goals.

The university uses a living plan to determine how construction and facility updates should take place on WCU campus. The “master plan,” as it is titled, was last updated in 2022 and details major projects coming to WCU in the future.

Major projects within the master plan reflect the university’s strategic goals.

The strategic planning document was updated in 2021 and gauges university success through various priorities and benchmarks.

Dr. Kim Winters served as chair of the strategic planning committee from 2020 to 2023. Winters is the Dean of the College of Education and Allied Professions.

“When you’re looking at a strategic plan, you’re looking at something that defines you,” Winters said.

Strategic plans include large ongoing goals that are under continuous review.

Some goals are more concrete such as goal 4.3.1 which aims to “develop two business development centers, one in Jackson County to serve southwest NC and one in Buncombe County to serve metro Asheville, that [can] physically bring together WCU’s and other entities’ business development units.”

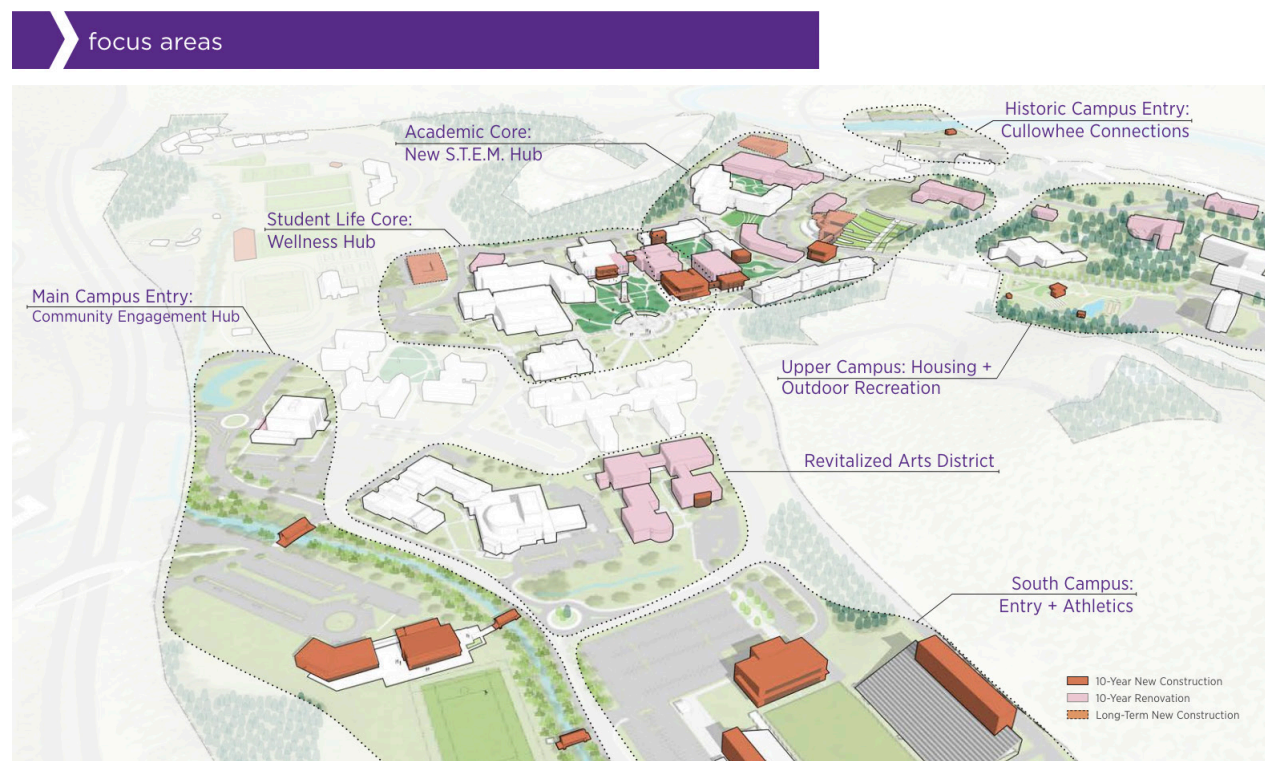
The strategic plan can be accessed at wcu.edu/discover/about/strategic-plan/.

Strategic Direction 6 of the plan addresses responsible stewardship which focuses on facilities, technology, core resources and business policies and practices. This direction includes maintaining and delegating funds toward the master plan.

The updated 2022 campus master plan is an 83-page document with photos, renderings and detailed plans for construction and renovations into 2024.

The master plan is a living, fluid document that changes as funding and student needs change. It can be accessed wcu.edu/_files/learn/provost/2022_Campus_Master_Plan_Update.pdf.

Current projects include a renovation of Moore Hall, construction on intermural fields around Norton Residence Hall, athletic facility improvements and construction on a new engineering facility. These projects, along with many others, range from near completion to early planning stages.



KEY BUILDING RECOMMENDATIONS:**(N) New Football Team Facility**

The proposed facility will include a football locker room, player's lounge, equipment area, team meeting spaces, coaches' offices, space for sports medicine, strength and conditioning, and academic facilities for all student-athletes.

(O) Whitmire Stadium Improvements

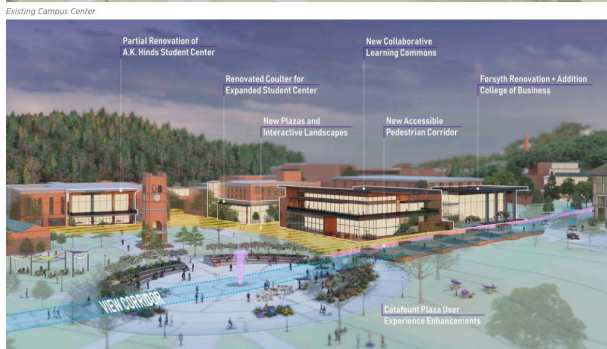
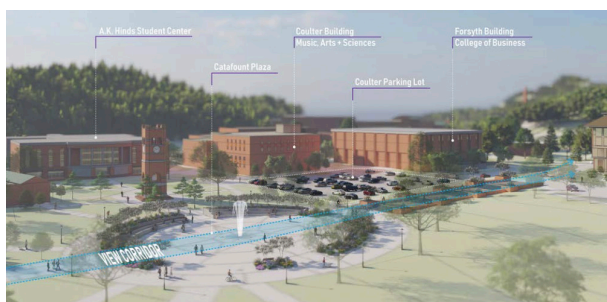
A new press box and amenity club tower, (including suites, boxes, loges, and Chancellor's box), is proposed on the west side of Whitmire Stadium to address orientation related glare and visibility issues. The existing press box and Chancellor's box on the east of Whitmire Stadium should be renovated to address accessibility and deferred maintenance issues while providing additional premium seating options for patrons.

LANDSCAPE RECOMMENDATIONS:**(vii) New Pedestrian Promenade**

The proposed Football Team Facility serves as the southern terminus for the primary north-south pedestrian axis through main campus. A wide pedestrian path will include native landscaping, new trees, seating, and shade.



Existing Bob Waters Field and Ramsey Regional Activity Center



The plan builds upon an idea of “reshuffling the deck” that originated in 2014. Shuffling the uses of campus buildings and spaces reimagines and strengthens existing infrastructure on Western’s campus.

The Moore building will be renovated for Arts and Sciences programs. Arts programs will be consolidated into a renovated Belk building. The university center will be renovated to create a more integrated student recreational space.

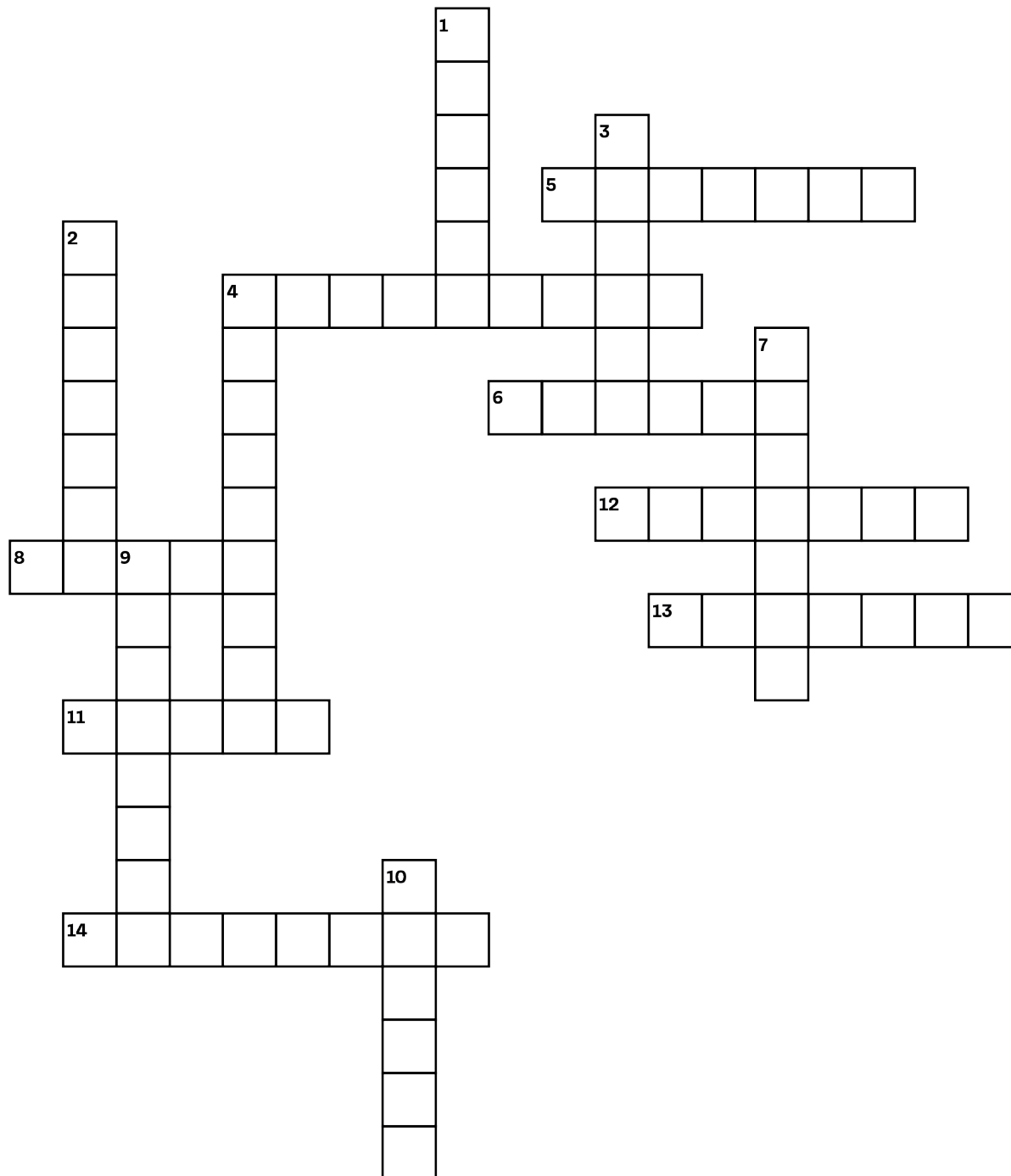
Mike Byers serves as the Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance. He provides oversight for the master plan.

“Projects take years to plan and to find funding. So, as you look at the Master Plan, many of those things won’t begin until years after you’ve graduated. In fact, some may not happen at all. As things change, plans have to change,” Byers said.

Students can get involved in conversations about university planning by talking to their Student Government Association leaders. Student representatives are appointed to the strategic planning committee every year.

Visit affiliate.wcu.edu/sga/ to contact SGA leaders and learn more about getting involved.

May Crossword



Across

4. transforms into this from a caterpillar
5. a mixture of decaying organic materials that can be used as fertilizer
6. waterproof cloak originally made from wool to keep warm in the Andes Mountains
8. using products more than once
11. zodiac sign for the beginning of April
12. April ____ bring (with 13 across)
13. May ____ (with 12 across)
14. annual holiday in support of environmental protection

Down

1. to cut down on the use of plastics
2. to covert waste into reusable products
3. a yellow powder produced by plants
4. an insect named after the sound it makes when pollinating flowers
7. the North Carolina state flower
9. this is used to stay dry
10. zodiac sign for the end of April

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Mental health issues addressed by WCU and outside organizations

By Max Poku-Kankam

College is stressful. Classes, clubs, planning for your future and jobs weigh on your shoulders until you cannot stand them anymore. Multiple organizations at WCU are working to bring attention to mental health and offer strategies to combat stress, just in time for finals. Before COVID, mental health issues were not as common inside colleges as they were after the pandemic.

“The summer of 2021, when we went back face-to-face, rather than 2% or 3% of my classes having these issues, I started to see 25-30% of my students having these issues,” said David Scales, an associate professor in the Department of Psychology.

Because of COVID, college students missed a huge part of their lives, which led to people experiencing mental health and social struggles between the ages of 14 and 18 during the pandemic. “The social skills one would pick up around 15 or 16 years old from regular social interactions weren’t picked up by college students,” Scales said.

Generation Z started initiatives to help people with mental health issues. “This is a generation who are far more open to discussing these issues publicly,” Scales said. “They try to get in front of these issues by having some conversations and trying to get people to engage in mutual support.”

WCU offers many resources including Counseling and Psychological Services

(CAPS), which offers students free counseling services. To help students and raise awareness, CAPS started the Be Kind campaign. Multiple white signs were put up around campus that encourage people to take care of themselves in multiple ways. The signs encourage behaviors such as unclenching your jaw, relaxing your shoulders, drinking water, getting sunlight and even resting. They also have motivational quotes and a wide range of funny sayings.

There are other organizations outside of WCU that students can utilize for mental health resources. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) offers diverse ways to support young adults through their mental illnesses.

Mary Grimes worked as a student intern, participating in work-based learning with NAMI in Wake County before attending WCU. “They were founded as a grassroots movement by family members with individuals who have experienced mental

health concerns,” Mary Grimes said.

NAMI is the largest mental health organization in the country. They “support the unique journey toward mental health and wellness for individuals and families,” according to their pamphlet. NAMI has done many different studies on mental health. According to their research, the percentage of young adults who report experiencing a major depressive episode or any mental illness has increased every year since 2009.

NAMI aims to help young adults achieve mental wellness. They do this by partnering with the Jed Foundation, another nationwide health service, to make the Mental Health College Guide. The Mental Health College Guide is a newsletter written by college students to offer advice to fellow students in many different areas. The guide gives tips on relationships, self-care, self-advocacy, identity, staying safe on a college campus and so much more. It even gives college students resources to turn to when they feel like they need help.

NAMI is available on college campuses through NAMI On Campus. NAMI On Campus are student-led clubs that aim to focus on raising awareness of mental health, educating campus with presentations, advocating for improved mental health policies on campus and supporting people who are going through mental illnesses.



Signs are placed around campus to encourage students to focus on their mental health. Photo by Max Poku-Kankam.

Athlete Spotlight



Jeralynn Wells

What do you like most about softball?

There are a lot of aspects that made me fall in love with this game. I love to compete; it has almost grown to be a part of me in everything I do. I love to compete and bring the best out of people and softball has allowed me to do that. Softball has brought so many people into my

What is your major/minor and why did you choose them?

I was a forensic anthropology major for most of my time here, now I'm just a regular anthropology major, and my minor is Japanese studies. I wanted to be a forensic anthropologist since I was a kid. I know professors who can name a bone just by touching it with their eyes closed. It's just so cool. It's too bad it didn't work out, but I adore being an anthropologist — doesn't matter what kind.

I really wanted to find a school with a Japanese language program so I could continue my high school studies. I've traveled to Tokyo, Kyoto, and Okinawa, and I loved every minute of it. Poet Anna Akhmatova said "Italy is a dream that keeps returning for the rest of your life." That's Japan to me.

What is UASWS and what does it do?

UASWS, the Undergraduate Alliance for Student Worker Success, is Western's student-worker union. It exists as a peer support network and a student employment resource. We try to create relationships with student-workers and on-campus employers to make sure students know all of their rights as workers and how to act, legally or not, when something isn't right. We use our platform to urge WCU to act in the best interests of our student-workers, which includes, yes, paying them

life that I will cherish forever. It's crazy how I go to school 2,000 miles away from home and have meet my lifelong sisters. My most favorite thing about softball is making those ESPN highlighted plays and feeling the adrenaline flow through you as the crowd screams with excitement. It's the best feeling in the world!

How did your passion for softball begin?

My passion for softball started in T ball. I was 5 years old when I started to play and I remember hitting my first homerun (in the park homerun LOL) and I ran all the way home and collided with the catcher, but I was still safe, and I stood up and screamed "LETS GO!!!" It was it that moment that I just fell in love with being in the dirt, running around the bases, and hitting BOMBS!! My passion has never stopped! I've had people doubt me telling me I was never good enough to play D1 softball but that just motivated me more to prove them wrong. Now I play at the highest collegiate level, been a 4 year starter and am a captain this year and leading my team.

What makes your sport unique?

Well softball is fast! The fast pace makes everything more intense. The distance is shorter than baseball which means less time to get the runner out at first and the base paths are shorter so coming from an outfield perspective, you have less time to throw a runner out at home. The pace of the game is fast, and it can either eat you up or you can embrace it!

much more. A union is a tremendous resource to have, so it's hard for me to sum up all of our goals. Basically, we're built by students, for students, and our mission is to make sure that WCU is providing dignified, safe, and respectful workplaces, by any means possible.

What inspired you to run for SGA Senate?

The time I spent as a senator was really important to me as a marginalized student. I've always felt obligated to advocate for folks who don't feel seen and heard, and I hope I've been able to encourage my younger colleagues to be loud and fearless, especially in the campus community. We, as students, are the most important to this university. As student leaders, it's our job to make sure Western never forgets that.

What are your plans after you graduate from WCU?

I plan to take a gap year, work, start building a life with my partner, and then pursue my master's in library science from UNC Greensboro. I'm going to hang around and support UASWS as much as possible; in fact, I want to be more active in the community in general — being here has taught me to love being Appalachian and it's introduced me to a whole world of lovely people. Other than that, I have no idea what my next chapter has in store for me and I think I'm alright with that.

What do you hope your team accomplishes this year?

I want my team to accomplish a SoCon Championship of course! The talent that we have this year is amazing. We may be young, but the talent and work ethic is phenomenal! I want my team to accomplish confidence from an individual standpoint. We are young and many of us are still finding that confidence and how to deal with pressure, but I think once we learn to embrace the pressure of the game we are going to break through! Our team is so close, and we have each other's backs no matter the obstacles and when we connect on all cylinders, we will be unstoppable.

What is next for you after WCU?

After graduation, I will be continuing my education and to receive my master's in nutrition and Dietetics. I have applied to Western and schools back in California, but I hope to stay here at Western! I would like to be a sports dietitian and work with collegiate athletes and educate them on the importance of a balanced diet. A balanced diet that is filled with key macronutrients and micronutrients is key to an athlete's performance and recovery. One of my passions is to coach for at least a year or two, so I hope to coach at the collegiate level or with younger softball players while I do my schooling online. I would love to influence younger softball players to play at the collegiate level and be that coach that gives them confidence.

Student Spotlight



Aiás Magitas

Staff Spotlight



Rainy Brake

How did you get into teaching?

I received my BA in English Literature at East Carolina University in 2007. Originally, I intended to work towards a PhD in Native American Literature. I was encouraged to focus on language first. At that time, WCU was one of the only schools in the country to offer Cherokee language. I intended to study the language for a year, but I fell in love with the language, the Appalachian

What is your job and how do you do it?

I work as a tour guide for the Office of Undergraduate Admissions. To do this, I work with the office to have a script of information that students need to know when making a decision on where to go to college. We go on tours with students and try to tailor the tour to them so they can learn as much as possible about how amazing Western is.

What made you choose Western Carolina University?

I chose Western for the location mainly. I'm from Greensboro and we only spent short amounts of time in the mountains, and I have always loved them. Seeing the area when I came to tour made me fall in love with this campus. I did also come to WCU with the intention of being in *Pride of The Mountains*.

What are your personal interests?

Some of my personal interests in academic areas are

Mountains, and WCU. I switched my major to TESOL and focused on Cherokee Studies. A few years later, I was hired at New Kituwah Academy as a kindergarten teacher and worked there for ten years before returning to WCU to work with the Cherokee language program. It was a very full circle moment, and I have loved each part of my teaching journey, though I will always have a special place in my heart for early elementary education.

What are your research interests?

I love curriculum design and immersion pedagogy. There is nothing more fulfilling than designing a curriculum map, dreaming of where my students will be a few short months down the road, and building tools and activities to help them reach that goal. I love being creative and designing tools to make language learning accessible and engaging. My goal is to ensure that every student finds a tool or technique that works for them, whether it's a game, a song, a worksheet, or a chart. I have worked with Louise Brown for almost twenty years, and we make a great team. We work together to ensure our curriculum is challenging, diverse, and constantly evolving.

What is your favorite aspect of WCU?

I grew up on a farm, and our elementary school had about thirty students K-12. I have always loved small towns. WCU is the perfect blend of academic excellence and small town familiarity. You can walk into one office and see a beautiful handmade patchwork quilt or eat homemade cookies, and you can walk down the hall and listen to a lecture about Mississippian burial practices or new archeological discoveries right over the hill. It was my favorite part of WCU as a student, and it continues to be my favorite part as a teacher.

genetics and STEM research. Outside of the classroom I find myself more interested in music and the area we are in. I love to explore trails nearby.

What is your favorite aspect of WCU?

My favorite part of WCU is how close everyone seems to be. I love walking around and seeing how many people have found community here. It is really nice knowing that everyone is so kind and has a place on campus where they can be themselves.

What advice do you have for other student workers?

To other student workers I would say just stick with it. I think there are definitely times where any job can seem so difficult and not worth it, especially with schoolwork on top of it. In the end I've found it always turns around and pushing through will have a much bigger impact than leaving.

What are your personal interests?

I'm passionate about education and community activism. I like to volunteer for events that support children, like the Jackson County Back to School event or Culture Day. I love to spend time with my friends and family, including my rescue dog Chewy. I love science and experiences like the planetarium, arboretum, and nature walks. I also enjoy quiet activities like reading, knitting, baking, and painting. And I sing in the Cherokee Repertory Choir (run by the outstanding Dr. Sara Snyder Hopkins and Garrett Scholberg) and Voices in the Laurels in Waynesville, NC.

What advice do you have for students?

Always dream about where you want to end up, and work backwards from there to blaze your path. As a student, I took a lot of independent study classes. In undergraduate classes, I wanted to focus on early American transcendentalism and Native American literature. There weren't many classes in the catalogue that focused on that, so I worked with professors who created incredible, challenging independent studies. At WCU, I wanted to focus on Cherokee language, and Dr. Hartwell Francis and Dr. Tom Belt created a host of great classes that prepared me to be an immersion teacher. I also took incredible classes in history, linguistics, and education, which really enhanced my teaching and I still reference the things I learned to this day. The faculty at WCU have always been supportive, creative, and bold, and I am so grateful to have been their student and now a colleague. I look forward to continuing that cycle, and helping WCU graduates achieve their dreams, whatever they may be.

Student Worker Spotlight



Alex Cisney

What is Cat Eyes Club?

Cat Eyes Club is made up of members who directly impact Western Carolina University by assisting in recruitment and enrollment efforts. Members develop relationships with prospective students by sharing their WCU experiences and highlighting the university's impact on their lives. They share the impact WCU had on them both personally and professionally.

Who can join Cat Eyes Club?

WCU alumni or friends and family of alumni willing to serve as an ambassador of WCU for prospective students and their parents with friendliness, enthusiasm, patience and respect. All prospective students should be treated equally.

What are Cat Eye Club members' responsibilities?

Recruit students in your own respective area and life. Recruitment can include encouraging students who you encounter on a daily basis to apply, visit and/or enroll,

sharing application deadlines and fee waiver options, sharing financial aid and scholarship deadlines and opportunities, and more.

Communicate with prospective and admitted students as a part of alumni outreach. Outreach may include alumni sending emails or calling admitted or prospective students to introduce yourselves as an alumni contact/resource, congratulate them on their admission, share your WCU experience, etc.

How can someone become Cat Eyes Club member?

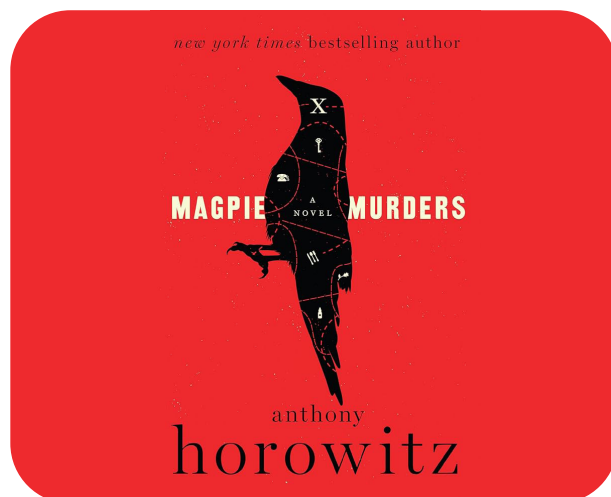
Alumni or friends and family of alumni can sign up to be a member of the Cat Eyes Club through wcu.edu/portal/cat_eyes_club. Members are expected to attend two virtual information sessions per academic term. These sessions will provide you with up-to-date knowledge on applications and the admissions process. Members will also receive and review a bi-monthly newsletter to keep them up to date on the current happenings future Catamounts should know.

Club Spotlight



Cat Eyes Club

Paws Pages



Magpie Murders

Summary

Alan Conway is a bestselling crime writer. His editor, Susan Ryeland, has worked with him for years, and she's intimately familiar with his detective, Atticus Pünd, who solves mysteries in sleepy English villages. Alan's traditional formula pays homage to queens of classic British crime such as

Agatha Christie and Dorothy Sayers. It's proved hugely successful. So successful that Susan must continue to put up with his troubling behavior if she wants to keep her job.

When Susan receives Alan's latest manuscript, in which Atticus Pünd investigates a murder at Pye Hall, an English manor house, she has no reason to think it will be any different from the others. There will be dead bodies, a cast of intriguing suspects, and plenty of red herrings and clues. But the more Susan reads, the more she realizes that there's another story hidden in the pages of the manuscript—one of ambition, jealousy, and greed—and that soon it will lead to murder.

Masterful, clever, and ruthlessly suspenseful, *Magpie Murders* is a deviously dark take on vintage crime fiction.

Review

Magpie Murders by Anthony Horowitz was slow to start but once you get involved in the universe of detective Atticus Pünd, it's hard to put down.

The book begins with Susan Ryeland reading the manuscript of Alan Conway's newest novel *Magpie Murders*. Through Susan's point of view, you quickly become submerged in the tight knit society of Saxby-on-Avon where Atticus Pünd

a clever detective, embarks on his next case of investigating a murder most foul. Everyone in the small town is a suspect, and you really get to know each character's motives through Horowitz's style of writing. He establishes the suspects and their motives by letting you see through each of their eyes before eventually settling on a steady narrative from Pünd's point of view. I found that style very beneficial because I often find whodunit type novels hard to love unless I can begin to guess who did it on my own.

Just when you start to get some clarity on the case, the book makes an unexpected narrative shift back to Ryeland's point of view. Though initially jarring, the switch keeps the book feeling fresh. I found the duality in the novel to be something that I unexpectedly enjoyed. It takes skill to pull a double narrative off in a compelling way that doesn't lose your readers in the process. For that reason, I applaud Horowitz.

From that point on, you read from Ryeland's point of view and watch the unfolding of events that are inexplicably tied to the novel she was tasked with reading. I simply loved how Horowitz connected the in-universe *Magpie Murders* with Ryeland in a way that wasn't predictable.

Overall, *Magpie Murders* is a mystery thriller novel with a classic feel. I give it four of five stars.

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Work to be done: Students with disabilities speak out for accessibility on campus

By Rylee Guess



Photo by Liam Bridgeman.

Accessibility on university campuses is necessary to foster an inclusive and equitable community for students with disabilities. Though WCU promotes an environment of diversity and inclusivity, there are still shortcomings in the university's accessibility isolating disabled students.

Of the 766 students registered with WCU's Office of Accessibility Resources (OAR) in the fall of 2023, 38 were registered with mobility impairment. Reports of accessible features not working, such as elevators and automatic doors went unanswered, making these students feel overlooked.

A student, who wanted to remain anonymous due to the discussion surrounding their disability, feels excluded from daily privileges that their peers don't have to worry about.

"A main struggle on campus is the number of stairs without ramp options and elevators being out of order," they said.

The automatic door to the residence hall they live in has been malfunctioning all semester, according to the student. "I've tried talking to RAs about it, but no one really seems to care."

The student-run organization Accessibility Western advocates for the ease of access for students. Their president, Logan Schwab, a third-year recreational therapy major, guides the club in their mission to educate WCU's community and creating a safe space for students, faculty and staff.

"Accessibility Western is a club dedicated to looking at what accessibility looks like on campus," said Schwab. "It's the ease of access for other people, specifically people with disabilities, injuries, and illnesses, acute and long-term."



Photo by Liam Bridgeman.



Photo by Liam Bridgeman.

Accessibility Western was created by students who noticed the accessibility issues around campus. The founders also realized the unique accessibility issues that come with a university campus located in the mountains.

For many disabled students, on-campus housing presents multiple unique issues such as the extra cost for accessible rooms and the accessibility of specific residence halls.

"Have you taken a wheelchair up to Allen? You can't," Schwab said. "There are no ramps, there are stairs that are uneven, and the railing is missing in some areas. There are blind spots, there's some sidewalk and so if you're a student with a physical disability, specifically a mobility-affected disability you're going to experience a really hard time getting up to that dorm."

WCU offers the Office of Accessibility Resources (OAR) as campus-wide service

that provides accommodations for students with disabilities and supports the rights of students. OAR is a direct product of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). Their mission is to ensure students have equal access to the university's opportunities and programs.

While OAR faculty do their best to advocate for accessibility, their requests will often go unattended for weeks at a time. President of OAR Wesley Satterwhite worked this year to ensure better communication with faculty.

“Our office has done some training and department meetings. I’ve also done some webinars geared towards faculty about accessibility and accommodations,” she said.

To ensure success for students, Satterwhite also aims to educate students.

“We have a goal of creating a webinar for incoming students to be able to gain more information and orient them specifically to our office,” she said.

OAR hosts a table at the orientation fair to reach incoming students, but for Satterwhite this does not feel like enough.



Photo by Liam Bridgeman.



Photo by Liam Bridgeman.

“My goal is to really try to reach more students with information about our office and how it operates,” Satterwhite said.

Dorm rooms that are designed to meet the needs of students with disabilities or illness, both temporary and permanent, are known as ADA rooms. WCU offers no additional information about ADA rooms, however students need to know the dimensions of ADA rooms, the layouts and accessible features, to determine which dorm will be best for them.

OAR is not consulted in the planning of new buildings or construction on campus until the blueprints have already been drawn out.

“Our really nice Apodaca building – which is beautiful and costs a lot of money – doesn’t have the best accessibility features,” Satterwhite said. “The elevator that goes to all floors is way on one end and the ramp for the entrance is kind of off to the side as if it’s a second thought.”

Satterwhite feels that the voices of disabled students being excluded during construction planning leads to accessibility falling short.

“I believe they are building things that are minimally compliant, but I wouldn’t say that they’re the most accessible.”

SGA senator Knox Hambleton is also doing what he can to prioritize increasing accessibility on campus. As the chair of the Safety and Accessibility Committee for the 100th session of SGA, he helped ensure the installment of automatic door-opening mechanisms in Judaculla Hall.

Hambleton will remain on the Safety and Accessibility committee next semester.

“I have a few project ideas for next year, including a proposal for WCU to hire an Accessibility or ADA Coordinator to better manage the accessibility of campus facilities,” he said.

Hambleton highly recommends those who have ideas on how to improve campus attend SGA Senate meetings at 6 p.m. on Mondays in the UC Multipurpose room.

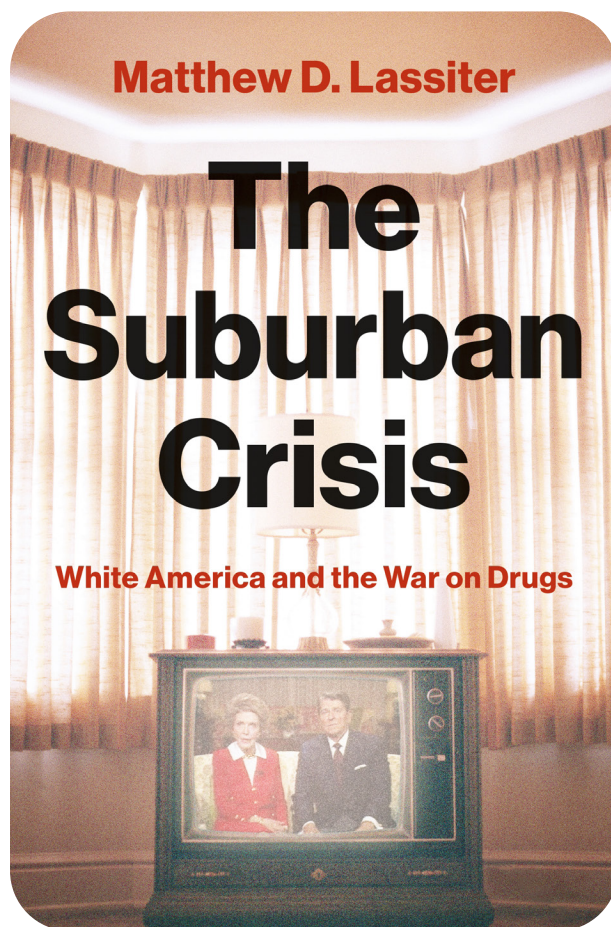
Students who see or experience issues regarding accessibility are encouraged to report them to OAR through the WCU website on the Academic Services page. They can also be reached by email at accessibility@email.wcu.edu.



Photo by Liam Bridgeman.

History of the War on Drugs from the 1950s to the 1980s

By Max Poku-Kankam



Matthew D. Lassiter's book.

The War on Drugs has been a never-ending cycle of people being fearful of the use of drugs in suburban areas. Matt Lassiter spoke at WCU on April 19 about his book "The Suburban Crisis."

Lassiter is a professor at the University of Michigan and an author. He is also a co-director of the Carceral State Project, a project that researches the history of incarceration, criminalization and confinement.

"The Suburban Crisis" is split into three phases, talking about the spread of the War on Drugs in each decade from the 1950s-1970s. Drugs were considered a huge problem during this period leading to a series of laws being passed classifying and criminalizing several different drugs.

"We hear a lot about the red and blue divide, but in drug policy, most laws are passed almost unanimously," Lassiter said.

Drugs were always looked at as a threat to kids in suburban areas. "The suburbs were always looked at as a place you go because the kids will be safe and you will avoid the crime of the city," Lassiter said.

One of the most feared drugs in the suburban areas was marijuana. Marijuana was looked at as a gateway drug and the one that was used most often, making it a symbol.

"For the 1950s, marijuana is a symbolic drug. It's not what it actually does, it's about what it represents and means," Lassiter said.

With drugs becoming rampant, suburban areas began to lose its clean reputation as a haven for kids. The usage of marijuana by high schoolers began to grow and suburban families and politicians began to blame it on drug dealers, also known as pushers. Media created an image of pushers forcing people to get addicted to drugs and forcing them to buy their drugs.

"The idea in the 1950s was the pushers got people addicted to marijuana to then get them addicted to heroin, and then they'll have customers for life," Lassiter said.

Many began to stereotype urban African American and Mexican males as pushers, which worsened discrimination within those communities. Meanwhile, white Americans who were addicted to drugs were seen as victims.

Anti-drug laws and policies had minimum sentencing of drastic proportions for drug dealers. Under the Boggs Act of 1951 first-time offenders got 2-5 years, second-time offenders got 5-10 years and third-time offenders got 10-15 years.

In 1954, a California law was passed that sentenced life without parole to anyone who sold narcotics to minors. However, suburban residents who became addicts went to rehabilitation centers.

In the 1960s, the rise of the free love movement also known as the hippie movement created more widespread fear of marijuana. "The idea was that marijuana was turning young white youth into dropouts and lazy people who are getting off the career track," Lassiter said.

As years have passed, liberal policies have changed from strict drug laws to decriminalization of drugs and legalization of marijuana.

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NC teacher attrition rising, students concerned

By Stewart Butler

North Carolina lost over 10,000 teachers last year, more than 11% of the total workforce. Teacher attrition is an issue North Carolina struggles to address, and it's one sure to have a significant impact soon.

“Education is the profession that starts all other professions. And sometimes we forget that,” said Dr. Amanda Chapman, director of field admissions in the College of Education and Allied Professions.

“Schools need to be structured,” she continued. “When you’re constantly training and constantly hiring, it’s going to have a negative impact on learning and the enhancement of student’s lives.”

Though many teachers are leaving the profession, more continue their work despite inadequate compensation because they recognize the irreplaceable value of their position.

“Teachers seek to make an impact on student’s lives. They do that every day. And that’s their true passion – That’s their calling.” Chapman said.

But passionate teachers still struggle to make ends meet. Some are left with no choice but to leave their schools for better opportunities elsewhere – or to leave the profession entirely.

North Carolina currently holds the fourth-lowest state average for starting teacher salary according to a 2023 study by the National Education Association.

This figure is nearly \$11,000 less than the NEA’s standard of minimum living wage. Only five states are found to pay starting teachers more than \$50,000.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction reported a 122% educator replenishment rate over the last six years, though this number doesn’t imply a higher standard of teaching.

Teacher attrition is often attributed to inadequate compensation. Chapman says the difficulty of teaching may be overlooked when salaries are being set.

“The number of tests that teachers have

to take is on the same level as doctors and lawyers, so they should be compensated at that level.”

Students also have their share of grievances surrounding compensation.

“Teacher pay is a big issue. All the teachers I know have a second job, or third,” said Kestral Welch, an elementary education student at WCU who plans to graduate in 2025.

“It’s been a problem for a while, and I feel it’s being talked about more; But things haven’t changed much and I think they’re getting worse,” she continued.

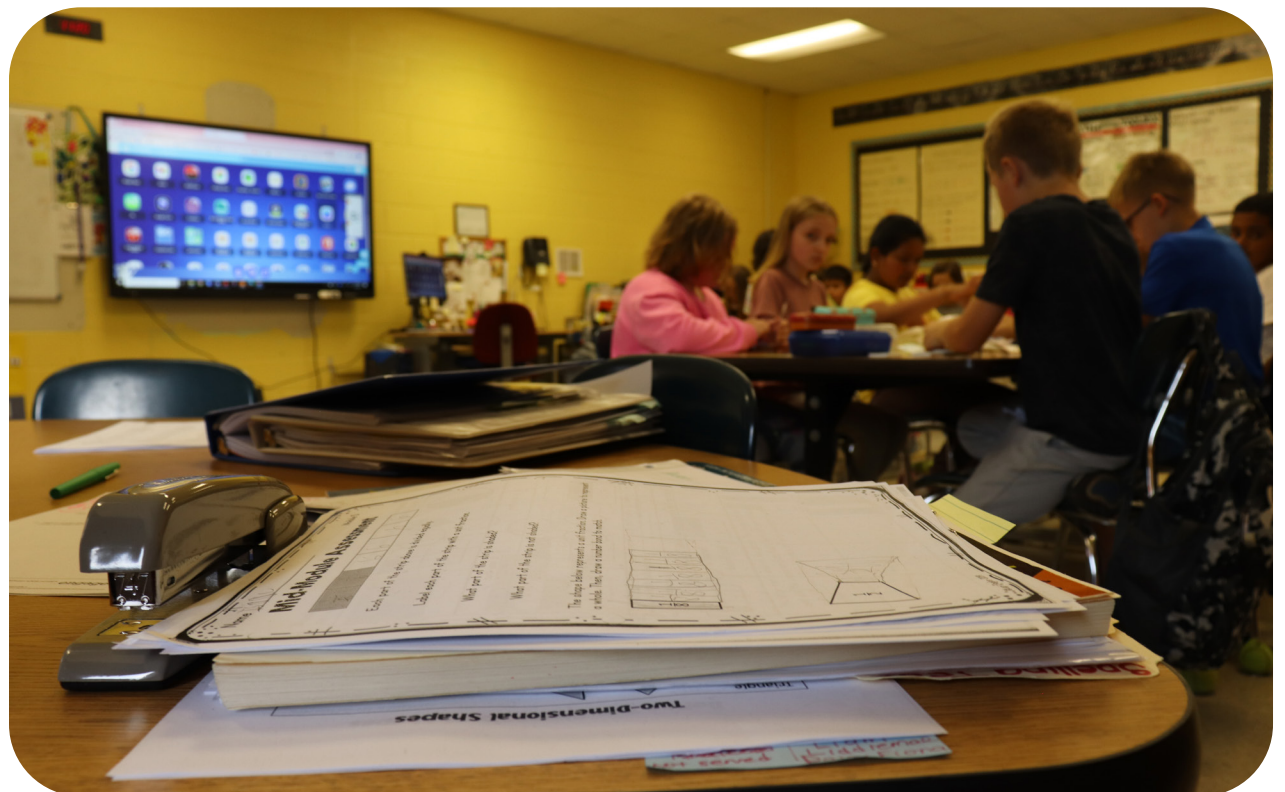


Photo by Stewart Butler.

Ella Jamison and Dylan Blair are also elementary education students at WCU planning to graduate next spring.

“I worry about it every single day,” Blair said. “I worry that I’ll graduate from college and not be able to afford to live off of a teacher salary. I know I’ll have to have a second job when I start teaching.”

According to a report by EdNC, 52% of North Carolina teachers hold second jobs. 24% of those are outside the education system.

Jamison has already decided to leave North Carolina upon graduation.

“I’m moving to Tennessee. All of the teachers I know that work in North Carolina who have lives built here – They tell me to leave. They’ve told me to leave North Carolina, that it’s better anywhere else.”

In 2013, North Carolina became the first state to rescind pay increases for teachers with their masters’ degree. The state is working to reintroduce the increase but is yet to declare anything official.

“If I end up staying in North Carolina, there isn’t really any motivation for me to get my masters,” said Katy Masotti, another WCU education student.

Because of the difficulty in finding qualified teachers willing to work in North Carolina, the state has resorted to hiring applicants with no formal education in teaching. The rate of teachers hired from areas outside education has increased by about 23% since 2017 according to NC DPI.

“College is for threading out the people who don’t really want to teach,” Blair said. “We learn social and emotional



Photo by Stewart Butler.

regulation, how to handle parents, how to handle a classroom, all that stuff.”

“Teaching is a work of heart and you have to want the best for students, and the best is knowing how to teach.”

Welch and Jamison both complain about the lack of qualified individuals hired into teaching roles.

“They’re throwing regular people into classrooms to teach who have no knowledge of children or of how to teach,” Welch said. “Having a teacher that you can connect with and have a real relationship with makes or breaks a student’s educational experience.”

The North Carolina Teaching Fellows program offers up to \$5,000 per semester in loan forgiveness to recent graduates who teach at a low-income North Carolina school for at least one year. WCU was removed from the program in June 2015.

“I’m an independent student, so I have to

take out a bunch of loans – I’m just kind of stuck,” Blair said.

The Federal Teacher Loan Forgiveness program offers up to \$17,500 to highly qualified teachers, though only after committing to teach in a low-income school for five years.

Welch and her peers are concerned about the stipulations of this program.

“That’s the scary part – A lot of the places where they need teachers are in areas of low resources, high crime rates and low security.” Welch said. “My dad has told me he doesn’t want me in that program because of the safety risks. They’ll place you where no one else wants to teach.”

The North Carolina Board of Education and DPI are working to address the many issues within public education in North Carolina. But until substantial measures are set in motion, the state will likely continue to lose qualified teachers to other markets.

May Word Search

A N Q A J S N L Y M T I Q E E C G W Q A	Cinco de Mayo
G V M M C C A R N A T I O N G K U Y S D	Carnation
M E E H W Q I X V V J D Z F H J A A D A	Hawthorn
H A M P L L X J C Y W Y C W K N P F X H	Picnics
A N Y I B I C G O E J S A C Q Y U L M O	Sprouts
W P N P N K A I S Y T P L Y U A P R Y D	Gemini
T L R C O I N L P Z H R I F N E U A V L	Lilac
H A E V E L A G L I E O L S T X M E G O	Maypole
O V L T R V E E Z N S U U P P E Q L N G	Honeysuckle
R E S L I X B S O U X T T P D X Y K I I	Gardening
N N X T D N O I L V Z S T O V N H C N R	Marigold
B D S F Z M T W K X N F C V M V S U E A	Graduation
C E F K Q A K E N K K N V M C P C S D M	Lavender
F R W Z U S I G E A I W B X O P I Y R E	Festivals
X D P D F L Z Q R C W L K P W A N E A E	Iris
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Circles of Jackson County hosted annual luncheon

By Luke Brumley

(Sylva, N.C.) Circles of Jackson County brought back their annual Luncheon on May 1 at First Methodist Church in downtown Sylva to raise money and highlight growth from members.

“We’re very excited to bring back our spring luncheon. It’s been a wonderful opportunity in the past for our Circle Leaders and volunteers to interact with the community and share the Circles story,” Dawn Neatherly, executive director of Circles of Jackson County said.

The luncheon had a head count of 140 who were all invited by the Circles board. Four members of Circles told the audience what the organization had done for them since joining. Live music was provided as well as food from Haywood Smokehouse.

“We put in a lot of hard work to make this event possible. It’s all for a good cause and I’m glad we were able to start it back up again,” Dawn Neatherly said.

Circles of Jackson County is a non-profit organization focusing on moving families towards self-sustainability through education, intentional friendships, support, and community.



Photo sourced from the Circles of Jackson County website.

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