



Catamounts gear up for fall athletics

By Stewart Butler

Catamount athletics are in full swing this fall with football, soccer, volleyball, cross country and golf all fighting for a spot in the SoCon championship.

FOOTBALL

The Catamounts and Wolfpack traded blows at the season opener in Raleigh Aug. 29.

Though the team couldn't take home the win, they showed the offensive prowess of the Cats against a Top 25 ACC team.

The team has been working hard since its first game against NCSU. Head coach Kerwin Bell is confident in the team's ability and says a championship season may be on the horizon.

"We've gotten better every year for the last three years. We've got a good team now that we think can go for a championship. If you're going to be a championship team, it can't be all about the individuals. It's got to be guys that truly believe in that team," Bell said.

The team is looking to take home a win after a loss against Campbell Sept. 7. They'll hit the road for a game against Elon Sept. 14, then it's

off to Missoula to play University of Montana Sept. 21.

"These next three weeks are going to be very crucial - non-conference games against Campbell, Elon and Montana," Bell continued, "They're three really good football teams, so we've got to play extremely well to come out with some wins."

WCU Football will be back on home turf Oct. 5 to play Wofford College.

To view the full schedule, visit catamountsports.com

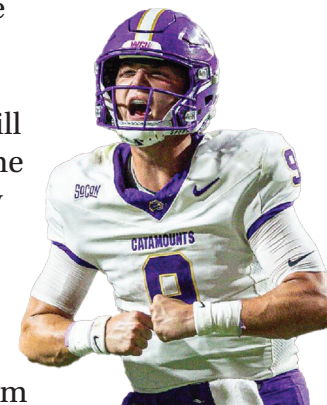




Photo courtesy of Catamount Athletics.

SOCCKER

WCU Women’s Soccer is working to follow up their championship-winning 2023 season. Last year the Lady Cats went 7-2 in-conference and beat Samford 1-0 in the SoCon championship.

“The ladies are working hard with the goal of defending their championship from last fall. You have to have talent to win games, but leadership and team chemistry has been the

recipe for success with our group,” said head coach Chad Miller.

Last season junior Isabella DeMarco (29) brought home SoCon Player of the Year – a first for the program. DeMarco, along with Naya Marcil (7) and Becca Campbell (3) were selected to the SoCon All-Conference First Team.

Ten new student-athletes will join the team this year, eight freshmen and two transfers. Miller says the team chemistry is at an all-time high and that he has high expectations for the upcoming season.

Catamount Women’s soccer also shows their grit in the classroom. They’ve been awarded the United Soccer Coaches Team Academic Award 19 years in a row. They boasted a 3.77 GPA in 2022-23 – the sixth highest among all NCAA Division I schools. The team was publicly recognized at the NC General Assembly in May for their outstanding scholarship and athleticism.

Catamount Women’s Soccer will be at home for their next four games, facing Presbyterian, Winthrop, Samford and Mercer.

To view the full schedule, visit catamountsports.com



Photo courtesy of Catamount Athletics.



Photo courtesy of Catamount Athletics.

VOLLEYBALL

The Volleyball team is preparing for its first regular season matches beginning Sept. 25 against The Citadel in Charleston. They’ll be back in Cullowhee later in the week to play Mercer.

The team has been sharpening its skills in preseason matches since Aug. 23. They have yet to take home a win, but head coach Karen Glover says this is the best time to practice.

“We can do a lot with the team this year. We want to take these next few weeks of preseason to work things out so that we are ready to be successful in conference play. We’ve got pieces that can make that happen, but we definitely need to grow a little bit to reach our potential this year.”

Catamount Volleyball will face Mercer Sep. 27 and will be back in Cullowhee to play UNCG Oct. 11. To view the full schedule, visit catamountsports.com



Photo courtesy of Catamount Athletics.

Letter from the Editor

By Marrah Ste. Marie

Welcome back catamounts! We hope you had a great summer, we certainly did. Over the summer, we've kept busy finding ways to keep improving The Western Carolinian for you!

As you may know, last year we set up our new distribution boxes in front of Ingles in Sylva, Mountain Laurel in downtown Sylva and next to the Town of Dillsboro Office. We still have one more distribution box to set up once we find the perfect home. We constantly strive to make every copy of The Western Carolinian more accessible for you, our readers.

This year, we're excited to work with WHEE-TV in hopes of bringing some of our stories to life through their live newscasts and printing some of their video stories to share with you. WHEE-TV's newscasts will be available on the new multimedia tab on our website. This year until November, we will also have an election tab featuring stories by WCU students covering local elections in Jackson County, Macon County, Swain County and Haywood County with the hopes of

keeping you informed.

Speaking of our website, we're excited to rock a new look. Over the summer, we redesigned our website to make it brighter, with new tabs added and some tabs taken away in order to make stories easier to find.

Finally, we are excited to share our new newsletter. This email newsletter will include news stories, movie and book reviews, opinions and commentary and so much more. There will also be surveys on each letter where you can vote which staff member has the best taste in a variety of categories such as best song, favorite comfort tv show and good books.

We hope you are as excited as we are for this upcoming year. We plan to make it our best one yet. As always please feel free to reach out to us for any reason including tips, opinions or ideas. You can call us at (828)227-2694, email us at westerncarolinian@wcu.edu or follow us @thewesterncarolinian on Instagram and @wcunews on Facebook. Thanks for reading!

Our Team



Marrah Ste. Marie
Editor-in-Chief

Leah Marshall
Lead Designer

Cora Haste
Managing Editor

Stewart Butler
Issues & Features Editor

Mackenzie Atkinson
News Editor

Mattilynn Sneed
Arts & Entertainment Editor

Marie Spencer
Senior Reporter

Max Poku-Kankam
Senior Reporter

Callie Addikis
Copy Editor

The Western Carolinian
329 A.K. Hinds University Center
Cullowhee, North Carolina 28723
(828) 227-2694

Pardon our dust: Drainage improvements cause commotion on campus

By Cora Haste

Students may be wondering what the construction around campus is for. The various marked areas are part of an extensive drainage improvement project that has been in the works over the past several months.

Daneil Fiskeaux is the assistant director of design with WCU's Facilities Management. Fiskeaux explained the renovations that are underway.

During heavy rainfall, poor drainage created large puddles and standing water across campus. These conditions caused brick

pavers to shift creating tripping hazards.

The areas surrounding Blue Ridge Residence Hall, Balsam Residence Hall and Courtyard Dining Hall were most affected by this issue.

"The objective of the Central Plaza Drainage and Landscape Improvements project is to repair the subsurface base conditions beneath the brick pavers in certain problematic areas," Fiskeaux said.

The drainage work below the surface was completed over the summer. Crews are now

working to lay brick pavers in areas where subsurface drainage work and new concrete support systems were installed.

Students should be prepared for work to continue through the fall semester. Fiskeaux explained the time-consuming nature of the project's next phase. Laying the brick pavers requires precision to ensure the work is long-lasting.

The drainage improvements are projected to be completed in December.



Construction near Cullowhee Community Garden forms an unlikely partnership

By Marrah Ste. Marie



Construction has been active on Monteith Gap Road, South Painter Road and Ledbetter Road to create a new roundabout. The goal of the project is to make the intersection less dangerous for both drivers and pedestrians. However, the construction borders the Cullowhee Community Garden interrupting the garden's previous tranquility.

"People come to the garden to work in the dirt," David Claxton, garden manager, said. "But also, it's a peaceful, quiet, natural place to be. So, when you're in the garden and you've got tons of machines working around and making a lot of noise, it does affect the calm and peaceful setting of the garden."

Despite this, as a commuter on the constructed roads, Claxton sees the importance of the project. According to Claxton, while being a commuter on that road there have been multiple accidents, one that resulted in a death.

Outside of building a new roundabout, there are also plans to build new sidewalks and bike lanes. The new pedestrian routes will make things safer for students

who walk or bike to WCU's campus from Bellamy, University Suites, University Villas, River Park, River Walk or The Maples of Cullowhee apartments.

During construction, Claxton and the construction team formed an unlikely friendship.

"The people who are building that round about have been very, very easy to work with," Claxton said.

As the project began, Claxton was having problems with water running from the parking lot to the entry path of the garden. He asked the project leader, Lenny, for help. Lenny returned with road bond and used machinery to spread it. Since, Claxton has had no issues with the parking lot flooding into the path.

Lenny and his team saved the day again in mid-August. When volunteers and gardeners pull weeds, they create piles that are removed by the Public Works Department. When the department showed up to remove the weeds, they told Claxton there were too many and it would take a long time for it to be fully removed. Claxton asked Lenny for his help again and he used machinery to pick up the weed pile and filled two dump trucks cutting the work load down significantly.

Like in nearly all construction projects, some native plants have been killed and removed to make space for the new roads. Lenny did his best to prevent this though. Claxton said,

Lenny dug up a large magnolia tree that would have been cut down during construction and replanted it in the garden.

"[Lenny] said, 'it's your job to keep watering it,' so I'm doing my best to keep it alive," Claxton said. "I think it's going to survive. We wouldn't have a nice magnolia tree without him putting it in the ground."

Outside of the sound, there were concerns that plants could've been affected by the construction, but this isn't the case.

"I talked to the woman who runs the beehives, and she said that they are producing tons of honey," Claxton said. "So, I think the bees have all the flowers and native plants that they need."

The goal of the Cullowhee Community Garden is to donate half or more of the food grown to aid food insecurity in Jackson County. This goal is always in the forefront of Claxton and other gardener's minds.

This summer, Claxton was most excited about the new addition of fruit trees to see how they would add to donated food. However, one night Claxton said the fruit trees were stripped without documentation leading him to believe it was stolen.

Despite this incident, donation numbers are still higher than ever. By the end of August, the garden donated 750 pounds of food. This time in 2023, the garden donated 697 pounds, 187 pounds of that being fruit.

Graduate student curates exhibit at Mountain Heritage Center commemorating Cowee 19

By Mackenzie Atkinson



WCU archeology students excavate the Cowee incarceration labor camp. Credit Western North Carolina Railroad Archeology Instagram.

Walking through the doors of the Mountain Heritage Center is like walking through a time machine. You are surrounded by sounds of nature; birds chirping, crickets and running water, complemented by music that was popular in the late 1800s.

That all changes when you enter the Cowee 19 exhibit. Suddenly, you become

surrounded by the oppressive silence and sadness of history.

Nineteen boys and men lost their lives at an incarceration labor camp tucked away in the mountains while working on laying the railway that would launch Western North Carolina into an era of economic development.

Each of them were convicted of petty crimes, mainly larceny, and were sentenced to multiple years of hard labor. Black Codes in North Carolina limited African Americans from being able to serve on juries which almost always guaranteed that any African American put before a jury was going to receive a guilty verdict.

The 19 didn't stand a chance against an all-white jury, in rural, Jim Crow era North Carolina.

The story of the Cowee 19 details the strife and oppression of African Americans in the late 19th century. The Mountain Heritage Center opened the Shadows of Incarceration: The Cowee 19 Story, curated by graduate student Danielle Duffy, to the public Monday, May 6 and will be available through Friday, Dec. 13.

The Cowee 19 are (ages are estimated):

1. Sampson Ward (1827-1882), Onslow County, 55

2. David Dozier (1830-1882), Edgecombe County, 52

3. George Rush (1838-1882), Montgomery County, 44

4. Jerry Smith (1849-1882), Wilson County, 33

5. Nelson Bowser (1850-1882), Hertford County, 32

6. Moses Brown (1852-1882), Warren County, 30

7. Thomas Miller (1852-1882), Chesterfield County, SC, 30

8. Lewis Davis (1852-1882), Warren County, 30

9. Robert Robinson (1855-1882), New Hanover County, 27

10. Alex Adam (1857-1882), Washington County, 25

11. Orren Brookes (1860-1882), Orange County, 22

12. John Newsome (1862-1882), Hertford County, 20

13. Albert Cowen (1862-1882), Rowan County, 20

14. John Whitfield (1862-1882), Wayne County, 20
15. George "James" Tice (1863-1882), Iredell County, 19
16. James Fisher (1864-1882), Polk County, 18
17. Jim McCallum (1864-1882), Gaston County, 18
18. Allen Tillman (1864-1882), Anson County, 18
19. Charles "Chas" Eason (1867-1882), Martin County, 15

"The Cowee 19 is a story that has been swirling around this area since it happened," Duffy said. "It's risen up and died back down kind of like the seasons. The story kept coming up and I kept on coming in contact with it. I got my chance [to tell this story] through a historic preservation project and just kept that ball rolling."

Duffy has been interested in incarcerated people's rights since she was young and took this opportunity to talk about the history and conditions that incarcerated people have experienced. To conduct her research, she used genealogical history and scoured the incarceration records in Raleigh.

There are no photos of the Cowee labor camp or of those who lived, worked and died there. There are photos of other labor camps, replica bunkbeds, prison outfits and various artifacts that were used in the exhibit to put into perspective the conditions of incarceration labor camps.

A map found pointed out the camp's location which Duffy has displayed at the MHC. She talked with Cayla Colclasure, an anthropology doctoral candidate from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, about this labor campsite at a conference.

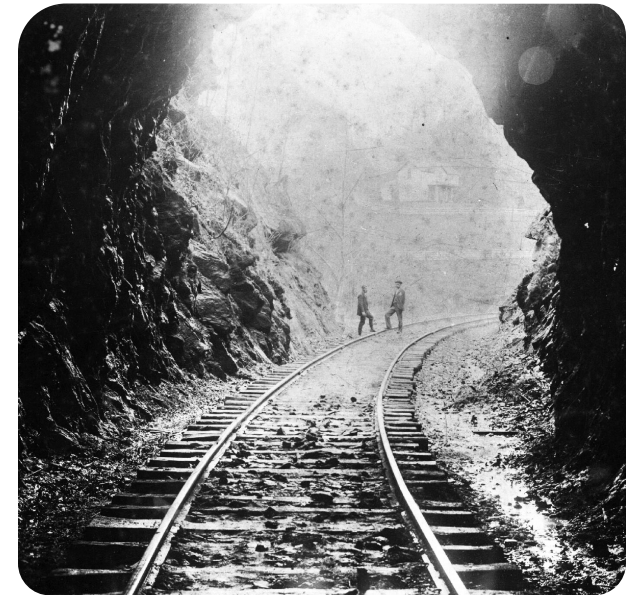
Colclasure, along with a WCU archeology department field school, is currently excavating the labor camp site and have been uncovering artifacts as of early May.

Many would assume that incarceration labor camps are a thing of the past. They are not.

In the U.S. the use of incarcerated individuals in the labor force is still a prevalent practice. As of 2022, nearly 800,000 people work while in prison for pennies on the dollar, varying by state according to the American Civil Liberties Union.

Duffy sees this exhibit as a way to comment on the current system and view it as a mirror.

"I want people to recognize that incarcerated



The Western North Carolina Railroad connected the region to the rest of the state economy at the expense of incarcerated labor workers.

people aren't just a number," Duffy said. "I think that's a really important thing to remember when we talk about deep things like structural racism. This is a structural issue, but this is also a people issue. I hope that when people go through the exhibit, they can see this long shadow of control and power systems in the incarceration system. You can see these links from the late 1800s to mass incarceration today and it's just a path that has been walked down. With that path are there ways we can make a new direction?"

To view the exhibit, visit the Mountain Heritage Center connected to the Hunter Library.

BAXLEY'S
Crafting Sweet Memories
Chocolates

Handmade Chocolates, Brittle, Fudge
and Caramel Corn

Ice Cream, Gelato, Shakes and Floats

546 West Main Street, Downtown Sylva

www.baxleyschocolates.com

Open until 6, Monday thru Saturday

The past, present and potential future of DEI in the UNC System

By Max Poku-Kankam

Sometimes staying neutral creates more anger than if you chose a side.

All colleges in the University of North Carolina System were given a deadline to share their compliance plans to the new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) policy Sept. 1.

On May 23, the UNC Board of Governors voted 22 to 2 to repeal its DEI policy from 2019 and replace it with the “Equality Within the University of North Carolina” policy.

The DEI policy was designed to “advance diversity and foster an inclusive environment

that engages, respects, and values all members of the university community and to ensure such efforts are carried out in an effective manner.”

The new policy will make universities in North Carolina focus more on “institutional neutrality and nondiscrimination.”

“Our public universities must take a stance of principled neutrality on matters of political controversy ... it is not the job of the university to decide all the complex and multi-dimensional questions of how to balance and interpret identity,” said Peter Hans, the UNC System President. “This policy

will preserve the university’s role as a trusted venue for that vital debate.”

According to a Best Colleges article, the vote took four minutes with no discussion or questions.

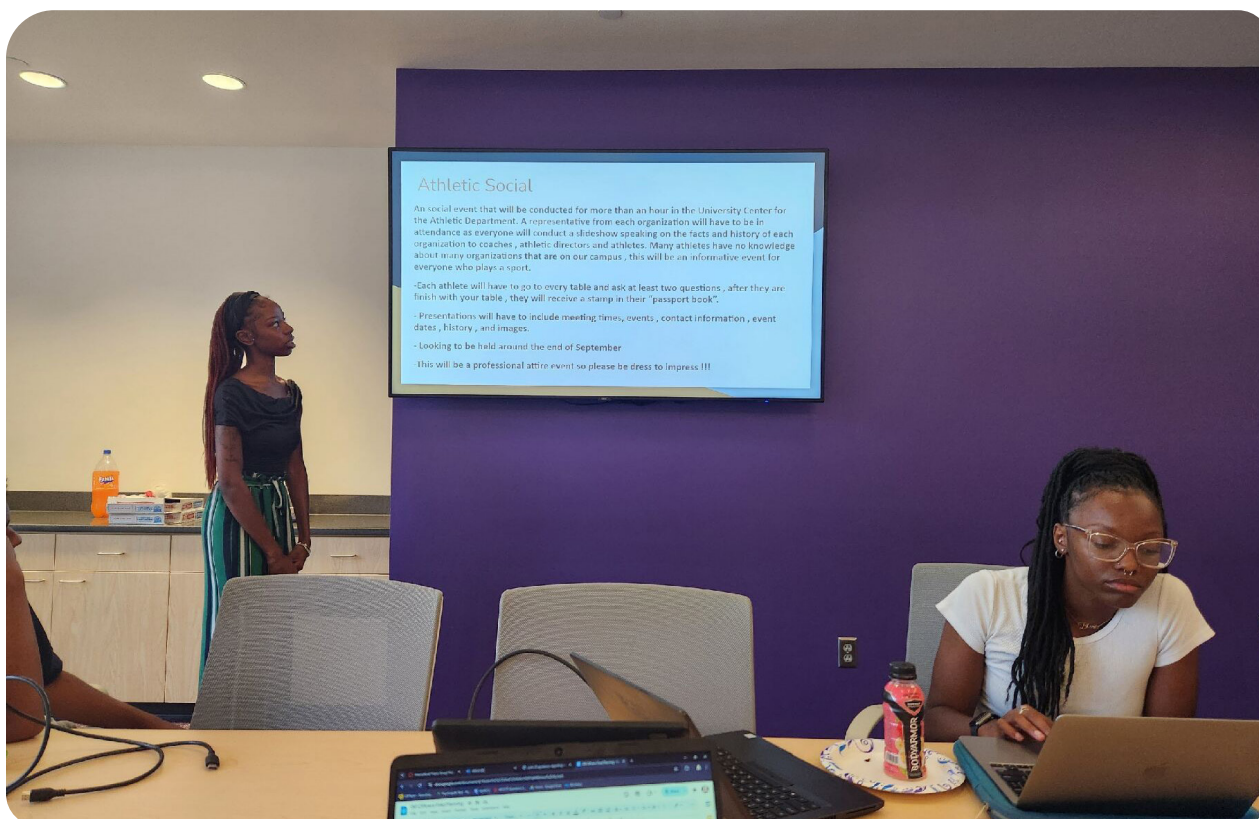
Pearl Burriss-Floyd, a Black UNC Board of Governors member, voted yes on the repeal. She does not think that services that help minority students will disappear and she assures minority students that the board has not “turned their backs on them.”

On June 28, the UNC System released a document that gave institutions guidance about changing with the new DEI Policy. The document calls for institutions to stop “endorsing a position or opining on a matter of contemporary political debate or social action” and to “focus more on student success.”

After June 28, UNC schools made changes to the new DEI policy, according to a WUNC article.

Most UNC colleges did the same thing, close their DEI offices and either change the position of their Chief Diversity Officer or close the position.

The University of North Carolina at Charlotte had three DEI offices, all of which closed. North Carolina State University renamed its office to the ‘Office of Equal Opportunity’ and suspended all DEI training for jobs around their campus.



Lots of people who reacted negatively to the DEI policy thought that the change in the DEI policy would make people lose interest in applying to UNC System colleges, as they wouldn't be getting the representation they might want at other schools.

Students at WCU share this concern as well. Nakayla Clohè, the president of the Black Student Union, believes that WCU will lose a lot of minority students because of this new change in the DEI policy.

"It's mainly white students here, so we don't have the opportunity to support minority students here, which will make a lot of minority students not come here," Clohè said.

Another big change that is happening all over the country is the loss of funding to DEI initiatives in colleges in the UNC System.

Expecting DEI to be cut off, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill redirected \$2.3 million from DEI programs toward public safety measures like campus police.

WCU's senior media relations coordinator, Julia Duvall released a statement saying that no employees have "been separated" because of the new policy. However, WCU hasn't had a permanent Chief Diversity Officer since 2023.

"Full information about the policy will be available after the September UNC Board of Governors meeting," Duvall said in a statement.

WCU students have had negative reactions and feel like this is just the beginning.

"I feel like losing more of that representation is always another risk factor, because it seems like we're always backtracking instead of getting more diverse, and we're taking away that stuff," said Mari Flowers, a



member of BSU.

Flowers is a sophomore at WCU, and he feels that less representation within our school will lead to the downsizing of BSU as a group.

Organizations across the school are planning to protest. Clohè started a new club called The Roundtable, and at the first meeting members of the Roundtable talked a lot about the DEI policy ban.

At The Roundtable, Asha Asha, a senior and co-founder of the Global Black Studies organization, talked about many different groups in the UNC system coming together and working together.

"UNCW (University of North Carolina at Wilmington) is a part of a coalition of other schools that have been affected by this," Asha said at the meeting. "I think this is a great opportunity for us to expand and get support at a state level."

These groups have big things planned and they are working together to repeat the events

that led to the first DEI policy.

On Martin Luther King Jr. Day in 2018, in the middle of a march, someone yelled out a racial slur at people marching and told them to "go home" according to a news story from WLOS.

After there were no repercussions or investigations of who said it, students at WCU started Whee Matter, which was an initiative that led protests and other marches against discrimination. These protests eventually led to the passing of the DEI policy in 2019.

Clohè and other members of the student government use this as an example that when they fight for something they believe in, it has the possibility of happening. Clohè has a message for anybody who feels like they will struggle with this in these upcoming years.

"Just keep your head strong and continue to fight," Clohè said. "No matter if it gets better or worse, continue to fight, especially around [WCU]."

			5		9	7		4
	3	4			1	2		5
5			3		4	1		6
	9		1				7	2
						9		
	7	6					4	
	5	8		9	3		1	7
	4	3		1			2	9
2	1	9			5	3	6	8



Two-wheeled hoax: Scooter larcenies turn out to be false alarm

By Max Poku-Kankam

Between Aug. 25 and 27, the University Police Department sent out a timely warning notifying students about larceny of electronic bikes and scooters, scaring student scooter owners.

Jonathan Byers, a sophomore student at WCU, has heard about the warnings and has taken extra precautions because of it.

“Anytime I have my truck, and I go anywhere, I put my bike in the back of my truck and use my lock to lock it,” said Byers.

Byers has been riding his bike to and from class this semester. He says he has been increasingly worried because of the timely warnings sent out. He’s also helped to spread the word of larcenists on campus taking people’s bikes and scooters.

With a small amount of bike racks on campus, the bikes and scooters get compressed in one area.

“When they’re all bunched up in one area on the bike racks, from a different perspective, people won’t notice that one is missing,” said Byers.

Because of the threat of people stealing them, Byers takes time out of his day to make sure that his bike is still there.

“I can look at the bike rack from my window in my room, so if it’s been a good minute, I’ll look down and make sure my bike is good and I’ll go down to see if it’s been messed

with,” Byers said. “Some people are crazy.”

However, according to UPD, these timely warnings are nothing to be worried about.

“To the Department of Education, who is the federal compliance we have to use, they classify a motor scooter as a motorized vehicle,” said Brian Thomas, the Assistant Police Chief of the UPD. “Under the federal guidelines called CLER, anytime there’s a motor vehicle stolen, we have to send out a timely warning.”

Thomas explained that a lot of the reported stolen scooters have been misplaced.

“They’re like, ‘oh I forgot I parked it over there, and I went over here, and my scooter wasn’t there when I came out,’” said Thomas. “When we reunite scooter and owner, we call it unbounding a crime.”

Thomas showed the call logs that had many calls about scooters and bikes, most of which were misplaced.

For students who worry about the theft of their bike or scooter, UPD released tips to keep your vehicles safe.

“Just, if it’s valuable to you, then secure it,” said Thomas. “If you want to keep your scooter, there are lots of bike racks on campus to secure it.”

UPD also advises people who own scooters to change the combination from the default.

They also advise people who use bikes and scooters to be aware of their surroundings, have a buddy with them when they lock up the scooter, utilize locks when they leave their bikes and scooters unattended and keep them in a secure location.



The Long March for Unity & Justice kicks off in Sylva

By Mackenzie Atkinson

The Long March for Unity & Justice is a statewide movement spearheaded by the Beloved Community Center which aims to bring light to communities across North Carolina.

The march started in Cullowhee and Sylva Friday, Sept. 20 with a community luncheon at the Cullowhee Baptist Church.

Over the course of 10 days, the march will make 12 stops working their way from Sylva to Wilmington bringing awareness to a range of local social justice issues ranging from environmental health to women’s and LGBTQ+ rights.

The Beloved Community Center, founded in 1991, is a “grassroots empowerment-oriented organization rooted in Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s legacy” according to the website. It was co-founded by Rev. Nelson Johnson, Rev. Barbara Dua and Rev. Z. Holler in Greensboro, NC.

Brigette Rasberry, operations officer for the BCC, visited Dr. Vincent Russell’s Interpersonal Communication class Thursday, Aug. 29 in search of volunteers for the organization.

“Our primary work is community building and movement building,” Rasberry said. “We work with the people within the community that are most marginalized and oppressed to build a sense of community and to wrap the community around them so that there is this belonging.”

Rev. Nelson Johnson found his calling for civil rights while attending North Carolina A&T State University which set him on a path that led him to getting involved with planning a Communist Workers Party anti-Klan march. That march in Greensboro in 1979 would later be known as the Greensboro massacre where five protesters were shot and killed by counter-protesting KKK members.

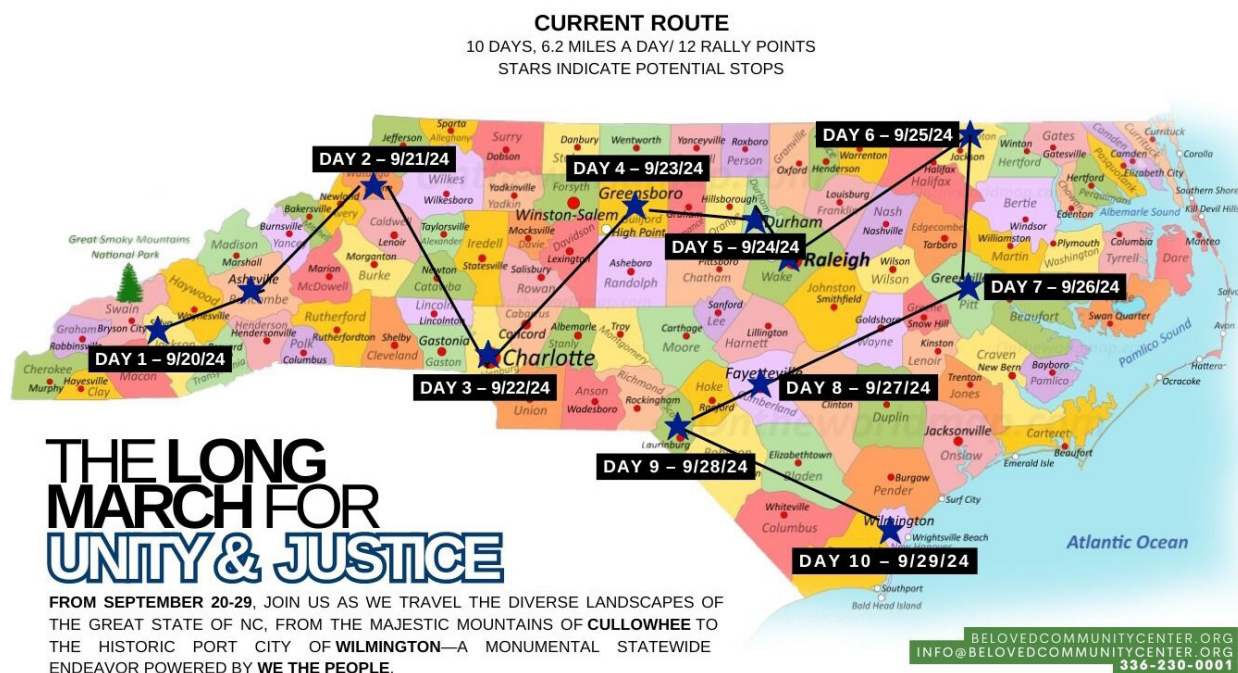
The BCC continues the fight for justice for the five victims of the massacre through the Greensboro Truth & Reconciliation Commission Project which seeks to bring understanding to the massacre as well as heal and unite the City of Greensboro in a fight for civil rights.

“Rev. Johnson would often say that there can

be no justice without truth,” Rasberry said. “Unless we get at the root causes of the issues and things that divide us and keep us from living in a just society then we can’t get to the justice that we are seeking. We have to be willing to dig for it and go wherever it leads us and then once we unearth the things then we have to begin to heal from those things.”

The search for justice and healing is not only focused within the Greensboro Truth & Reconciliation Commission but also a wide range of movements. The BCC works with voter engagement, police accountability initiatives and economic justice movements.

“As a nation we are vulnerable because we are divided,” Rasberry said. “Change starts when people demand it.”



WCU celebrates 50th Mountain Heritage Day

By Stewart Butler



Photo courtesy of WCU Marketing and Communication

The hills will soon cry sweet sounds of music and laughter as WCU prepares for its 50th annual Mountain Heritage Day Saturday, Sept. 28. The celebration runs from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and will feature activities for all ages and interests.

Mountain Heritage Day is a celebration of life in Appalachia and consistently draws crowds from across the southeast. The festival aims to preserve and celebrate the ways of life that make this area so special.

The day will be jam-packed with events across campus – concerts, sporting events, arts and crafts, nationally recognized artists, even a chainsaw competition.

WCU will reign in the 50th anniversary hype by pushing focus toward the craftspeople and vendors. Over 100 artists, demonstrators and crafters from across the region will display their skills in everything from blacksmithing to basketweaving. Crafts of all shapes, sizes and materials will be built, displayed and sold throughout the day.

“We rely heavily on the community itself to help out – people coming in to sell, perform, demonstrate,” said Peter Koch, planning board chair. “This year we’re highlighting a lot of heritage demonstrators, people who make crafts like they did long ago.”

WCU’s Mountain Heritage Center will display and demonstrate a period moonshine still, though it will only pump water.

WCU’s Sport Management Association will beat the heat with their 15th annual 5K Walk/Run from 8-10 a.m. The course snakes its way through campus, starting and finishing in front of the McKee academic building. Eight age brackets will offer winners handcrafted prizes from Mud Dabbers Pottery in Balsam. Proceeds will go to the Sport Management Association Scholarship Fund.

Live music will be heard from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Blue Ridge Stage and Bear Lake Family Circle Stage. Sister Sadie will headline the afternoon shows at 1 p.m. at the Blue Ridge Stage. Other local bands, dancers and entertainers will pack the stages all day – many of whom are WCU alumnus.

Later in the evening, Lindsey Lou will open for Grammy-winning Old Crow Medicine Show in the Ramsey Center. The old-time string band will fill the air with mountain spirit and conclude the 50th anniversary celebration. Admission is free for all students, staff and faculty, though tickets must be reserved prior.

There’ll be a little bit for everyone with

programs and events that run the gambit. Just like in years past, the festival will continue its focus on the rich and storied history of Appalachia.

Some highlights include:

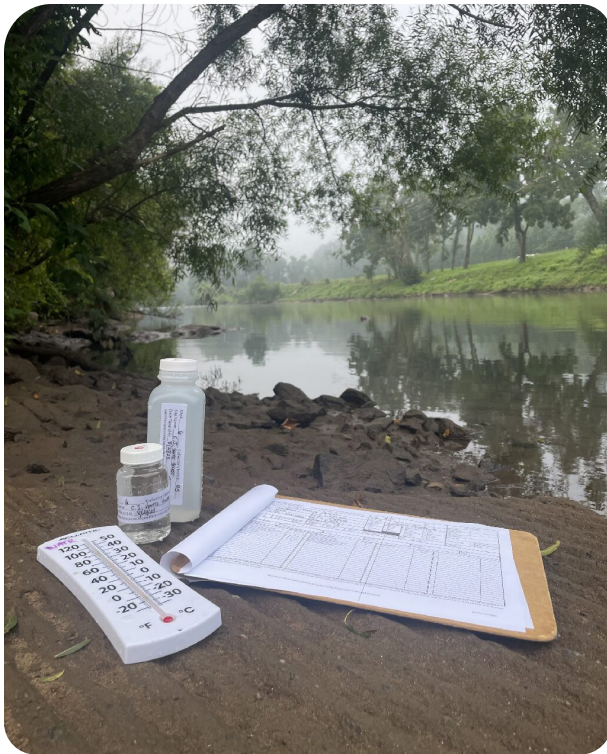
- 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. - Chainsaw Competitions
- 10:00 a.m. - Travis Stuart and Deb Shebish (Blue Ridge Stage)
- 10:45 a.m. - Junior Appalachian Musicians Blue Ridge & Jackson County JAM (Family Circle Stage)
- 11:00 a.m. - Big Cove Stickball Team Game (First Bank Stickball Field)
- 12:15 p.m. - Mountain Heritage Award (Blue Ridge Stage)
- 12:30 p.m. - Egg & Spoon Race (Intramural Fields)
- 2 p.m. - Andy Shaw Ford Classic Car Show - Awards Presentation
- 6 p.m. - Old Crow Medicine Show and Lindsey Lou (Ramsey Center)



Photo courtesy of WCU Marketing and Communication

Muddy water: 2024 sampling season produces concerning results

By Mattilynn Sneed



A water sample collection kit at the CJ Harris River access in Dillsboro.

Testing sites in the Tuckasegee Watershed throughout Jackson County saw high levels of fecal coliform bacteria in the water on several occasions during the sampling season.

According to the EPA, water that tests above 126/100 mL for fecal coliform, also called *E. coli*, is considered hazardous. The Watershed Association of the Tuckasegee River is a local nonprofit organization who tests at 14 different sites along the Tuckasegee and its headwaters from the end of April to the end of August. The results are used to inform the public of water quality ratings at popular water recreation sites using an app called Swim Guide. They observed levels exceeding

this threshold at multiple sites over the past several months.

“It’s caused by a variety of factors, but the most prevalent is sheet flow from rainfall that picks up matter from faulty septic [systems] or animal operations and washes it into the waterway,” biologist Ken Brown said.

Water samples collected in 2023 and 2024 at various points in Scott’s Creek and Savannah Creek were used for a microbial source tracking project conducted by WATR to find the sources of the fecal coliform. The tests found much higher levels of *E. coli* after stormwater events and that the sources included human, dog and cattle fecal matter.

Brown said another cause for high readings could come from the release of large amounts of water from hydropower impoundments (dams). The increased velocity of the water flow stirs up sediment in the riverbed. This sediment has *E. coli* embedded within.

“There might be an assumption that we’re living in a wonderfully protected clean and preserved watershed that supports these great fisheries. But when you go out to the Dillsboro recreation area on Scott’s Creek in the summer you have a higher likelihood than not of exposing yourself to what the EPA deems to be dangerously high fecal coliform levels,” Hydrologist and executive director at WATR Katie Price said. “It’s sort of a nasty little secret.”

While *E. coli* does not often cause illness

from contact, assuming it is not consumed, it is typically an indication of a source of fecal contamination and can alert to the presence of other harmful pathogens. Additionally, it points to conditions that are at odds with the overall health of the watershed.

“*E. coli* is not likely directly hurting creatures living in the water, but it’s correlated with things that are,” Price said.

An example is the fecal contaminants connection to high levels of algae growth. The algae feeds off nitrogen and phosphorous, which are both components of fecal matter. They can also come from other sources such as runoff containing high amounts of fertilizer. Price says the algae growths are made worse by the declining population of macroinvertebrate species which clean the algae off the rocks. When the algae grow in large quantities, it can deplete oxygen levels in the water, affecting the health of the entire river’s food web.

Price said one of WATR’s goals in monitoring these *E. coli* levels is to obtain funding and resources to execute plans that would help fund action plans to better understand its effects on the ecosystem and respond accordingly. The North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality says solutions such as improved infrastructure, implementing best management practices on agricultural operations, more effective nutrient management and improved storm water capture would help produce cleaner waterways.

Sampling Site		2023			2024		
ID	Name	Min	Max	Mean	Min	Max	Mean
SG01	Tuckasegee at East LaPorte	28	1990	338	45	921	254
SG03	Jackson Co Webster Access	16	1050	271	27	1540	311
SG04	Dillsboro Park Access - Scotts Creek	108	3920	571	34	1550	318
SG06	CJ Harris Access	62	2420	503	61	11700	978
SG08	Oconoluftee Island Park	8	613	115	30	2190	318
SG09	Locust Creek Access	29	1740	339	29	977	225
SG10	Island Park	33	687	145	42	1730	243
SG11	Ela Access	35	775	159	53	5040	505
SG12	Shook Cove Access	1	29	8	0	26	10
SG13	Tuckasegee Lake Access	0	1120	100	0	152	32
SG14	Pine Creek Access	0	19	4	0	21	5
SG15	Barkers Creek Access Area	43	2050	338	35	922	235
SG16	Cullowhee Access	146	2830	530	20	361	172
SG17	Above Sav Cr confluence	-	-	-	28	3970	365

A record of the minimum, maximum, and average levels of fecal coliform recorded at each of the Swim Guide sampling sites. Cells in red are those that exceeded 126 MPN/100ml, which is that level that the EPA deems harmful.

Catamounts for Civility host conference to promote civil discourse

By Max Poku-Kankam

The Catamounts for Civility held a Civil Discourse Conference on Sep. 21 in Apodaca.

With the increase in people talking about social, political and economic issues, disagreements and arguments are bound to happen. The Catamounts for Civility invited 6 speakers in different fields to speak on ways to have civil discourse.

“We wanted to do some learning and

engagement around civil discourse and dialogue for our students,” said Kelsey Jones, the senior assistant director for leadership programs.

The Department of Campus Activities, the Intercultural Affairs office and the Center for Civic Engagement and Service Learning had the same goals. This led to Jones and each of the three departments cmoing together to create the Catamounts for Civility.

The Catamounts for Civility have three parts to their plan. This conference is the first part, with the other two parts being civil dialogues on campus and an IMPACT retreat.

The conference started with an overview of ways to have civil discourse by Lindy Wagner. Wagner is the assistant vice chancellor for inclusive excellence, education and development at Southern Illinois University. She facilitates workshops for the Sustained

Dialogue Institute, focusing on inclusive leadership and conflict resolution.

Wagner talked about rules to having civil discourses, like not dehumanizing people and valuing other people's experiences because they live a different life than other people.

"It is imperative that we disagree at times because it allows us to learn from one," said Wagner. The next speaker was Ingrid Bego, an associate professor of political science and public affairs.

Bego focused on the use of civil discourse inside of a democracy. She explained that when civil discourse declines, democracy declines. If we cannot have civil discourse, then we cannot have a democracy.

"Democratic culture requires a supportive public that identifies in the political communities and trusts the institutions of government," said Bego.

After Bego spoke, Myron Jackson was the next to speak. Jackson is an assistant professor in the Department of Philosophy and Religion. He's a published author and former Besl Chair of Ethics/Religion and Society at Xavier University.

Jackson talked about fragility versus anti-fragility and cultural openness. Jackson mainly focused on how to have cultural pride without going overboard and falling into unhealthy nationalism. He spoke about how people can have discussions about their cultures without making it an us versus them mentality.

"Us versus them are dangerous because they're always self-serving," said Jackson. "They're always self-righteous."

After Jackson was Yancey Gulley, a professor and program director in the Higher Education

Student Affairs. Gulley was a student affairs administrator before joining faculty.

His session was on student activism and how it is a key feature of the development of colleges and universities in the United States. He talked about moments when positive change has been made because of student activism and how to balance student activism with the rest of your life in college.

After lunch there was a talk from Vincent Russell, an assistant professor in the Communication Department. Russell teaches courses on intercultural communication, interpersonal communication and public speaking.

Russell's talk was about effective communication strategies when participating in civil discourse. He discussed active listening and taught students at the conference how to facilitate civil dialogue on campus and online.

The last session was about media literacy and critical thinking with two speakers, Grace

Cheshire and Gabriel Wisnewski-Parks.

Cheshire is a professor at WCU who teaches foundations of communication and media literacy. She has been published and her research has been presented at many national conferences.

Wisnewski-Parks is a human communication instructor at WCU, teaching foundations of communication and a freshman seminar on media literacy.

Wisnewski-Parks and Cheshire's session taught about how media literacy worked its way into civil discourse and how meme culture can spread misinformation and disinformation.

The conference went over the many different parts of civil discourse and ways that we can promote it when we start to have a controversial discussion.

Discourse is bound to happen in our lives. It's better to have it be civil than to start to debate with other people.



Downtown Sylva hosts first social district celebration

By Mattilynn Sneed



Hayley shows off her Sylva Social District tumbler, a perk of spending at least \$100 at downtown business on the day of the event

Sylva, NC- The Main Street Sylva Association hosted the first Sylva Social District Celebration at Bridge Park on Sep. 23.

The event is a reimagined version of Brew Hop. Brew Hop, which began in 2017 with the intention of showcasing downtown breweries, grew to a size that became difficult for the businesses to manage. Community feedback stating that the best part of Brew Hop was spending time with friends and family downtown led MSSA to pivot to the free event in the park.

At the celebration were Innovation Brewing, Lazy Hiker Brewing and Balsam Falls Brewing serving beer, wine, and selling merchandise. Luke Walden served beer for Innovation Brewing. He's lived in Sylva for 5 years and thinks the social district has been good for the downtown experience. "It adds a very nice vibe on Friday night. With Concerts on the Creek, it's really cool to have a beer being

sold here or at the pub. People can walk down with it and check out the concert," Walden said. "I think it's a very progressive, fun thing to do, and it connects all the businesses."

He said he'd like to see more fall events for the downtown area so that people can enjoy the nice fall weather and have more opportunities to come together.

95.3 WVCU provided music and broadcasted live from the Bridge Park stage. Mayor of Sylva Johnny Phillips took a few moments to talk with 95.3 hosts about what was going on downtown and explain to listeners how the social district works.

Activities included cornhole, 4 square and other lawn games, along with a chalkboard where visitors could write what they loved about the Sylva social district.

While attendance at the event was sparse, those who came appeared to be thoroughly enjoying themselves.

Chairman of the board of directors for MSSA Jay Spiro hosted a booth for their organization and served popcorn to guests. He said he feels confident that the event will grow with time and that the social district has been a positive addition to the downtown experience.

"It's been going great. There were some who were worried about people being able to walk around downtown and drink. All of the worries have been proven to be unsupported. Even the police chief here says he hasn't had any problem with anybody. It's been good for business downtown, because it encourages strolling and shopping," said Spiro.

Attendees who spent at least 100\$ at downtown businesses received a free Sylva Social District Tumbler.

Pat Thoman of Dillsboro has lived in the area for 13 years. She agrees that the social district has had a positive effect on the downtown area and hasn't seen any negative drawbacks. "It's nice to be able to walk around and have a drink. I think it's been a very positive thing for the town of Sylva," Thomas said.

She thinks the event could be improved by having more vendors, live music and a shaded area for attendees to get out of the sun.

Law 2021-150 was ratified in September 2021 and allowed for local governments to determine whether they'd like to establish social districts that would be exempt from open container regulations. In April 2022, Sylva launched a six-month test period, later extending the hours after Sylva Police Department reported the district caused no increase in incidents.

The district includes Main Street, Mill Street, and Bridge Park and is in effect Monday Saturday, 8 AM - 9 PM, and Sundays, 10 A.M. - 9 P.M. Excluded from the social district are churches, government buildings, public parking lots, Schulman Street, and Evalina Street. Businesses may choose whether they would like to opt in to serving alcohol in social district containers or allowing social district containers in non-alcohol serving locations. Patrons who wish to participate in the social district must purchase a social district cup at participating businesses. Only alcohol purchased at approved locations are eligible for the social district. There are 10 businesses that serve alcohol participating in the social district and 15 that allow for social district drinks in their establishments.

Porch 40 spreads it heavy for the first time in 4 years

By Mattilynn Sneed



Bass player and backup vocalist Carter McDevitt. Photo taken by Terri Clark.

The beloved local band, Porch 40 played a reunion show to a packed house at Lazy Hiker Brewing in downtown Sylva Aug. 24.

In September 2014, Porch 40 played the same venue, then Mad Batter Food and Film, for the release of their debut album “Spread It Heavy.” Ten years later, tickets sold out to their loyal fan base just as they had for the release of their first album.

The excitement was palpable as the band took the stage and opened with one of their most popular songs, “Left Hand Cigarette.” They followed with other songs from “Spread It Heavy” and their second and final album “Radio Edit.” In another parallel to their first album release, the reunion show was opened by local reggae band PMA.

Porch 40 began in a farmhouse near WCU. “We were just a bunch of college guys who wanted to jam. We weren’t even sure we wanted to become a band yet,” saxophone player Scott Burr said.

Lead singer and guitarist Drew Duncan and

violinist Mitchell Metz set out to form the band in 2012, recruiting Burr, bass player Carter McDevitt and former drummer Spencer Bradley.

Current drummer Brett Wilson joined in May 2016 after Bradley’s abrupt departure from the group. “I had my own projects going on, so they knew that I played drums. In an act of desperation, they called me for a show that was scheduled the same day,” Wilson said.

That act of desperation proved to be fruitful and Wilson became a permanent member of the band.

They described their genre as progressive funk-rock, taking inspiration from bands like Primus and Vampire Weekend. “I tell people it’s Hozier covering Rage Against the Machines,” Metz said of the band’s sound.

Before the reunion, their last show was March 16, 2020. Compounded with canceled shows due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the band

said the music scene was beginning to wear on them both finically and mentally. “The burn out was very real. We had been playing for 8 years straight..When we stopped playing there wasn’t any bad blood, but there was definitely resentment built up from the burn out.” McDevitt said.

For now, the band doesn’t have any plans to get back in the game, though they could see themselves playing a few more shows. Duncan said the reunion is about getting back to having fun with their music and finding closure for themselves and their fans.

Burr sang lead on their final song, a cover of “Killing in the Name” by Rage Against the Machine, before telling the audience, “We’ve got people here who we haven’t seen in many years, people who traveled from all over the world to be here. Thank all of you for being here, because that really hits home for all of us, and it’s you that made tonight special... It’s been a pleasure and maybe, maybe not, the last time Porch 40 plays a show.”



Lazy Hiker Brewing was packed with Porch 40 fans, some sporting inflatable saxophones in honor of saxophone player Scott Burr.

Tennessee representative hosts meet and greet at UC, causes strife with local GOP

By Mackenzie Atkinson

Tennessee State Rep. Justin Pearson (D-Tenn.), in collaboration with the Kamala Harris and Tim Walz campaign and the College Democrats at WCU, hosted a meet and greet at the WCU A. K. Hinds University Center at 3 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 4.

The meet and greet was aimed at connecting with locals and college students advocating for social change and to rally votes in Western North Carolina.

“There’s something powerful happening in North Carolina,” Pearson said. “There is a group of folks who are ready to see North Carolina help to make the history that we know is necessary to create the country that we know we deserve to live in.”

Pearson went on to talk about the hopeful view of the future that the Democratic Party has been campaigning on.

“There’s this version of America that they have that says that it was better in the 40s, in the 30s and in the 20s. I disagree,” Pearson continued. “We are living in the best times that we have. The only way we can build a country that we deserve is to realize that the country is not the best that it can be yet. We know that there is a version of America that is possible that is more fair, more equitable and more just.”

Pearson alongside Rep. Justin Jones (D-Tenn.) were the two Tennessee representatives that were expelled from the Tennessee state assembly in April 2023 by the Republican

majority after they led a protest against gun violence following the March school shooting in Nashville on the chamber floor. Both were later reinstated to their positions by local officials less than a week after their expulsion.

After they were expelled, Vice President Kamala Harris visited Tennessee in support of Pearson and Jones.

“She said the courage and momentum that we built for the movement has to continue and charged us with helping to make sure that young people realized that they had a voice in this fight,” Pearson said in an interview with Cory Vaillancourt, the politics editor of the Smoky Mountain News. “She shared her concern for democracy because of the authoritarian actions of the (Tennessee) General Assembly and worry about people misusing and abusing their power to silence the voices of people especially the two youngest, democratically elected lawmakers of color.”

The meet and greet took place not long after the news of another school shooting broke, this time in Georgia where four students were killed occurred. Pearson started off leading a prayer for the victims of school shootings.

At the end of the event as the group was dispersing, Jackson County Republican Chairman Keith Blaine made an appearance and voiced his intent to organize a College Republicans club on campus.



Tenn. Rep. Justin Pearson advocated for college students to get out and vote for this election.

“I was hanging around with some other College Dems after the event when a gentleman who identified himself as the Jackson County Republican Chair appeared in our doorway,” Zach Powell, the president of the College Democrats at WCU, said. “He was asking questions about who we were, what was the nature of our event, and we just responded we were the College Democrats and at that point with a sly grin on his face he told us that he was looking to start a College Republicans. He just seemed there to send a message, to let the College Democrats know that the Republican Party in Jackson County is actively trying to organize against Democrats on campus. There doesn’t seem to be any real effort on behalf of students at Western to make that happen.”

Blaine declined an in-person interview with The Western Carolinian

It Boy shines on WCU during Week of Welcome

By Marrah Ste. Marie

Young, on-the-rise rapper, bbno\$ (pronounced baby no money), performed at WCU Thursday Aug. 22 as part of Last Minute Productions' Week of Welcome event series.

The event opened with DJ Juasca. As he performed, the crowd steadily continued to grow. The set included songs for every student from "Axel F" by Crazy Frog to "360" by Charli XCX. Music ranged from pop to techno, but energy never faded, instead, it consistently grew. Throughout, dance circles opened and closed sporadically in the audience.

As the set ended, the energy from the crowd radiated in the air. Students dressed as bbno\$ began to appear with his signature pink beanie and iconic goatee. Signs bounced around above the crowd with hand drawn

pictures of the rapper, signs of his name, song requests and requests for bbno\$ to use their phone for a selfie.

At the front of the stage barrier, different audience members lined up, each holding a letter spelling out, "IT BOY BBNO\$" referencing the artist's most recent hit, "it boy."

The set began with bbno\$'s DJ playing a few songs. As anticipation peaked, the it-boy jumped on stage to the opening clip of his most popular song "Lalala" then rickrolled the audience cutting the song off with "Never Gonna Give You Up," by Rick Astley. The crowd jumped and sang along as the bass of the speakers vibrated chests.

After the opening song, Brian Boyer came to announce Last Minute Production's upcoming events. Upon seeing Boyer's popularity among students, bbno\$ bowed as Boyer came on stage. After the announcements, the show really began.

As motivation, bbno\$ announced he'd be giving a signed cookbook to "whoever went the hardest." He held the cookbook out in front of the screaming crowd and read out recipes as people cheered.

Between songs, bbno\$ used his time to talk about the importance of mental health. He opened up about his own struggles saying he had therapy earlier in the day. He also admitted when he first came on the stage that evening, he was having an anxiety attack.

The rapper also spoke about the importance of a college education. Before pursuing rap, bbno\$ got his degree in kinesiology.

During the show, bbno\$ chose students to bring on stage to act as his friend and fellow rapper, Yung Gravy to perform a few of the duo's greatest hits. Three students each spent one song on stage during the songs "Welcome to Chilis," "Shining on my Ex," and "Whip a Tesla."

As the show was coming to a close, bbno\$ awarded the signed cookbook to a student who brought their dog to the show. The decision later sparked controversy on anonymous social media app, YikYak, whether it was ethical to bring a dog to a crowded concert.

The show closed with a sped-up house remix of "Lalala," the song that put bbno\$ in the public eye after it trended on video social media app, TikTok.

Energy was still high as the show closed. Students lingered behind begging for an encore. Students slowly scattered, stopping to talk about the show and their favorite parts.

Last Minute Productions consistently puts on free events for students throughout the year. To see upcoming events, follow Department of Campus Activities on Instagram or Facebook @wcucampusactivities. You can also find events on Last Minute Productions' engage page.





Bigger and better: Sylva Pride expands after parade denied

By Marie Spencer

“There is going to be a lot of music, a lot of fun and a lot of rainbows,” said Burgin Mackey, Sylva Pride President.

Sylva Pride held their fourth annual pride celebration Sept. 13 through 15, despite not being able to hold their traditional parade.

In April, Sylva’s Board of Commissioners denied Sylva Pride a parade permit this year due to safety concerns. The organization

refused to allow this choice to stop the annual celebration. Instead, the celebration expanded into a three-day festival packed with events.

“I really wanted to find a way that would de-escalate tensions and promote a safety culture for our community,” said Mackey.

“Sylva Pride is not canceled because there is no parade, it is bigger and better,” said

Natalie Newman, Sylva Pride board member. “[Sylva Board of Commissioners] denying the parade has now opened up this whole world of possibilities and allowed for more to happen.”

The denial of the parade also increased the anticipated turnout this year. Sylva Pride expected 500 people to attend the various events throughout the weekend, up from the 400 people expected prior to the parade denial.

St. John’s Episcopal Church hosted a special mass Friday afternoon to celebrate pride.

Sylva Pride kicked off with Quare Dancin’ at Santé - The Wine Bar on Friday night.

QuareDancin’ featured spirited performances of “We are Family” by Sister Sledge, “Cotton Eye Joe” by Rednex and “Poker Face” by Lady Gaga. Steppin’ Out AVL, an Asheville-based country and western dance group, gave line dancing lessons to anyone interested.

This year is the first year Quare Dancin’ is part of Sylva Pride. The event was met with overwhelming positive reactions from participants.

“Quare Dancin’ is a really good way to promote queerness in the community,” said Lola Hickey.

“It’s really just nice to see just happy queer people all in one space with no random toxicity,” said Katy Riggs.



Sarah Doss, WCU student, chalking the sidewalk in front of The Cut Cocktail

“I am having so much fun,” said Parker Matthews. “It’s really great and it’s nice to be in such an inclusive environment.”

Neon Moon Drag Karaoke at the Dark Moon Cocktail Bar was the final event of Friday. Dark Moon hosts Drag Karaoke throughout the year, but Friday’s karaoke was dedicated “Bye Bye Beulah.” The theme was dedicated to Beulah Land, WCU alumni and Sylva drag queen.

“Attending pride was very last minute, but I’ve never really been able to celebrate Pride because of the schedule. I made it a priority this year, just because of how much the community has grown,” said Caroline Hufnagle.

“I think it’s great that Sylva has a community like this, and it makes me feel really safe being a queer woman in the area to have such supportive events and to get community together like this,” said Kathryn Ross.

Saturday’s events included a chalk walk, Mad for Drag! and Beach Barbies: Drag Brunch.

A new addition to the celebration is the Chalk Walk. “I’m hoping to see a lot of people from the community get involved, drawing on the



Sarah Doss, WCU student, chalking the sidewalk in front of The Cut Cocktail

sidewalks and enjoying the nice weather we’re starting to have,” said Newman.

Also on Saturday, Indivisible Common Ground WNC hosted Rock the Vote to promote voter registration.

The three-day event ended Sunday with the

new pride festival and an after party. The festival is the newest and biggest addition to Sylva Pride.

“This year gives us a lot more opportunity to spread things out, to be together and to prolong the celebrations,” Newman said.



Hand-patted gourmet burgers, fresh-cut fries, and vegetarian options.

414 West Main St., Sylva, NC
Next to Innovation Brewing.

Open seven days a week.

(828)506-2830

Lights, camera, action: Movies are back on campus

By Max Poku-Kankam

This semester, movies are back being played at WCU in a new style.

Last Minute Productions, the student-led programming team for campus activities, is known for their free weekly movie nights on Fridays and Saturdays. LMP accesses the movies through a movie licensing supplier.

“They’re like the middle agent between the studios and us,” said Coleman Leopard, the Associate Director for Student Programs and Campus Activities.

As the staff advisor overseeing LMP, Leopard handles many of the contracts. Before the first movie event in the spring semester, the movie licensing supplier LMP was working with notified Leopard they changed their contract.

“They said that they had changed their terms and how they represent colleges, and so their contract was no longer valid with the university,” said Leopard.

For the rest of the spring 2024 semester, WCU did not have movie nights like they did before. Leopard and his team searched for solutions to bring back movies. One of the solutions was Swank.

“Swank controls a lot of movie licensing for the industries,” said Leopard. “They’re kind of the head honcho when it comes to licensing.”

Swank gave LMP a new contract and helped them bring movies back to the WCU campus.



A showing for “Twisters” on the UC Lawn

The movies will continue to be free for students. However, there are a few changes because of the new contract.

A big change in the movie events on campus now is that they won’t be as often as in years past.

“Just to be fiscally responsible, one movie license is \$1,000,” said Leopard.

With movie licenses being so expensive, LMP has become more selective about the films that they show. They have some rules that will help with making the movie license worth it.

“We have to make sure we’re going to show a movie that one, is really popular in theaters, and two, that we think we’re going to get the crowd that will justify the cost per student,” said Leopard.

LMP won’t only change what movies

they show, but where students can watch the movies.

On Sep. 21, LMP planned a movie event that was a little different. They showed “Twisters,” an action film about tornado chasers, on the University Center Lawn.

“When we show a movie outdoors, we’re able to get many more people in at one time,” said Leopard.

The movie theater inside of the University Center is limited to 175 seats, but a movie on the lawn can fit more. For example, LMP showed “Pitch Perfect” on the UC Lawn, and had over 380 students there.

The movie events on campus are changing, but one thing is staying the same, and perhaps one of the most important parts.

“We will provide as much popcorn and drinks as we can possibly provide,” said Leopard.

American Museum of the House Cat

NOW OPEN

wnccatmuseum.org

(828) 476-9376



Athlete Spotlight



Cole Gonzales

What is your job and how do you do it?

I am a Residential Case Manager for the Department of Residential Living. There are so many things about this position that make it special and unique. No two days ever look the same for me. Much of my day is determined by student needs. With this position it is important to stay flexible and patient, and you have to be prepared to pivot at any and all times. Ultimately the payoff is, and I don't think this is overselling it, that I have the opportunity to positively impact the lives of students each and every day. What an honor.

How did you find your way to Western?

When I was finishing up with graduate school, I just started to apply for jobs within housing at several different universities. I remember attending a conference in Memphis and interviewing with several schools. My very interview was with Western Carolina, and after that interview I remember calling my girlfriend at the time and telling her, "I know where I want to work." She was skeptical because it was my first interview, but all I can say is that it was a vibe, and I knew I wanted to be there. I never waived from that and thankfully it worked out.

What are your personal interests?

I love white water rafting. I am a guide on the Nantahala

What do you like most about football?

From my entire time growing up playing football on multiple teams what I love most about it is all the relationships I have to this day. I have met some of my best friends playing this game and I will forever be thankful for that. From the relationships I've made all over the country living in multiple states growing up playing this game, with that I can reach out to anyone of them and they would pick up the phone in an instant and talk to me like nothings changed. So I'm very lucky and thankful for the lifelong relationships I've made over the years.

How did your passion for football begin?

I was born into the game with my dad being a college football coach my entire life. My family is a football family with my dad being a big-time division one college football coach. Hes taught me everything I know about the game. Getting to grow up around some of the biggest stars in the game that he coached and having every single one of my dad's players treat me like a brother since the first day I went to his practices. Watching him coach every Saturday in those big stadiums made me have that drive and goal to play Infront of those big crowds representing a school one day.

What makes your sport unique?

What makes our sport unique is the environment, college football has the best fan base in the country. Packing out a stadium every Saturday from the first weekend in September

and that has turned into one of my favorite activities. I am a big NASCAR fan and have attended over 150 races. It is my goal to go to every NASCAR track. I am crossing another one off of the list soon which will be number 17, so I still have a ways to go. I am also a formula 1 fan. I listen to a lot of audio books as well. I also enjoy WCU athletics, and specifically supporting our student athletes by attending games both on campus, and on the road as well.

What is your favorite aspect of WCU?

That is the easiest of all these questions to answer...students. I would put our students up against any university in this country. The student body here is full of some incredible students. They are resilient, compassionate, and incredibly genuine. They show up for each other and I have witnessed some amazing acts of selflessness. The students are what make the long hours ok and what makes me get out of bed on most mornings with a smile on my face. The day that it is no longer like that, I will know that it is time to try something different.

What advice do you have for students?

Just be yourself. Embrace who you are and don't apologize for it. Spend some time reflecting on who you are, and more importantly WHY you are, and then think about where you want to end up, and get to work.

all the way till January is just something special. The fans are what make every Saturday fun for me. Running out the tunnel and seeing a stadium full of people cheering you on is just awesome. It feels surreal every time I take the field with the offense and all eyes are on us. College football fans are the best.

What do you hope your team accomplishes this year?

With our team this year we are chasing a ring and to write our names in the record books. To be the first team to win the conference out right in school history. It would be so special to be the first EVER to do it. We're not done there though; we are looking to make a run in playoffs this year ending a 40 year drought without being a team to play on thanksgiving and on. We are excited for a special year this season with a such a talented team! We need all the support from the best fans in the country all year long!

What is next for you after WCU?

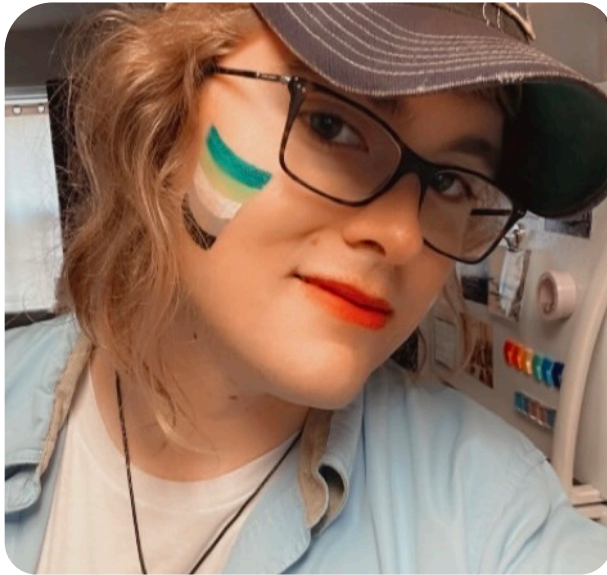
I hope to graduate with a degree and make my family proud. My dream is to get drafted into NFL in the next couple of years. Getting a chance and making a lifelong dream of mine come true to play professional football. I want to pay my parents back one day when I can because they've given me everything I've needed to be where I am now. They are truly my biggest supports and I love them so much. With that I hope to find a beautiful girlfriend one day and get married and raise a wonderful family. In a perfect world I'll win the lottery, Thank You Go Cats!

Staff Spotlight



Brian Boyer

Student Spotlight



Ashbury Haight

What is your job and how do you do it?

I am a graduate assistant, which means I work at the Writing and Learning Commons (WaLC) as a general writing tutor, as well as observing freshman English classes in preparation for next year, when I will transition to teaching ENGL-101 and 202 on my own. At the WaLC, I work with students to help them become better writers— I don't edit their papers for them, I guide them to develop their skills so they can edit their work themselves. My goal is that, eventually, students

What is the WCU Ski and Snowboard Club?

The WCU Ski and Snowboard Club is a community of students at WCU who share a passion for skiing and snowboarding. Whether you're inexperienced or a seasoned rider, the club provides opportunities to get involved, improve your skills and participate in fun events.

What are the club's goals?

The club is dedicated to helping students deepen their connection to skiing and snowboarding. It's not just about learning the technical side of the sports, but also about building a community where students can express their love for riding and the mountains.

Why did you join the club?

I started snowboarding when I was around 13 or

won't have to come see me again, because they'll be able to essentially tutor themselves. The goal of the tutor is to make themselves obsolete, as we say. I'm also very excited to teach next year!

What made you choose Western Carolina?

Well, I made the decision to come to Western almost six years ago, so I don't remember all the details... but I know that I decided fairly quickly that I wanted to go to school up here in the mountains, the only colleges I gave any serious consideration to were Western and UNC Asheville. Ultimately, it came down to two main things: Carolina Promise tuition, and purple is my favorite color, I like purple and gold a lot more than white and blue. I also found Western's campus a lot prettier and more navigable than UNCA's, when I visited them both.

I was here undergrad for five years, and when I decided to go to grad school, there was no other choice— I love it here and wanted to come back immediately. I'm glad I was accepted, because this was the only grad school I applied to!

What are your personal interests?

My biggest interest is writing (hence me being in the Creative Writing concentration for my Master's!); I write all the time, even outside of my classes. I try to do at least a little bit of creative writing every day and constantly develop my craft. I also read constantly, because I think reading helps you grow as a writer just as much as doing your own writing. I currently have like, six or seven books I'm in the middle of reading (I have a bad habit of starting new ones while I'm already in the middle of others). If anyone's curious, the books I'm currently reading are *Ace* by Angela Chen, *Unshrinking* by Kate Manne, *Splinters* by Leslie Jamison, *Freshwater* by Akwaeke Emezi, *How to Find a Missing Girl* by Victoria Wlosok, *Metaphase* by Vonda N. McIntyre, and

14 and quickly fell in love with it. Snowboarding is like therapy for me, it helps heal parts of myself I didn't even realize needed healing. I joined the club to connect with others who feel the same passion. As the social media chair, I hope to inspire others to get involved and share that sense of belonging and confidence.

How can someone join?

Joining is easy! If you're interested, reach out to our club president, Jackson Williams, or contact me directly. We'd love to have new members

What events are coming up?

We have a lot of exciting events throughout the year! We look forward to hosting group gatherings and even cookouts at Cataloochee Ski Area. It's all about fun and building connections on and off the slopes!

Dante's Divine Comedy. Would recommend all of them!

What is your favorite aspect of WCU?

The campus and the community. The campus is a surface-level thing, but Cullowhee is a beautiful place, especially when the leaves change color in the fall. I love the mountains, and I love the aesthetic of our campus, the bell tower, the buildings, the fountain (when it's on). More importantly, I've found a great community here. As a queer and disabled person, it's been pleasantly surprising how many other queer and disabled students I've found and connected with; I didn't expect to find very many on a rather rural Southern campus like this. The community also includes the faculty and staff, who are amazing and have fostered my learning and growth as a person: special shoutout (if I'm allowed to do that) to Dr. Mershon in the Philosophy and Religion department, and to my supervisor and mentor Haylee Wilkie!

What advice do you have for other student workers?

Oooh, that's a hard one. I'm tempted to just say "work at the WaLC!" because I think it's the best place to work on campus! To give a more serious answer— and this is directed mostly towards tutors, people who work at the WaLC and the MTC, because that's all I have experience with, so apologies to Aramark workers— I think I would say, remember that you're there to help students succeed! That's kind of a lame answer, but I've never been good at giving advice. But yeah: remember that you're providing an important service and that you're an important part of this campus. Also, my advice to any student worker is, get involved with UASWS! Organize! Workers of the world (and the campus) unite! Tutors are getting paid fairly well now, but a lot of y'all deserve much better, so get involved with the people who are fighting for you!

Club Spotlight



Ski and Snowboard Club

October Arts and Entertainment Events

This is a non-exhaustive list of art and entertainment events happening in the Cullowhee/Sylva area. The Western Carolinian is not affiliated with these events and has simply compiled them with the intention of connecting and informing the community. Descriptions of events are directly from hosts' platforms.

WCU School of Music Symphonic Band & Wind Ensemble Concert- Oct. 1 at 7:30 p.m.

WCU School of Music Symphonic Band & Wind Ensemble Concert. Free and open to the public. No ticket required. Event at Nardo Arts Center Performance Hall.

Creative Writing Open Mic - Oct. 1 at 5:30-7:00 p.m.

"Come and read your own work, whether poetry or prose, aloud to an audience of fellow writers and writing-enjoyers, or just come to hear some of what WCU's creative writing community has to offer! If you would like to read, please arrive between 5:00 and 5:30 to put your name on the sign-up sheet. Read as many pieces as you'd like, but try and limit your time to 10 minutes at the absolute maximum in order to give others the chance to read their work!" Event in the University Center Illusions room.

Mirror Painting Craft Night - Oct. 1 at 6:00

"Join Last Minute Productions for Mirror Painting Craft Night! We'll provide the mirrors and decorating materials (while supplies last), you just bring yourself and your creativity! Check out our Instagram or Facebook for updates. All events are subject to change." Event in UC Grand Room.

112th Annual Cherokee Indian Fair- Oct. 1 at 6 p.m. - Oct. 5 at 12 a.m.

"Experience the vibrant culture and traditions of the Cherokee people at the 112th annual Cherokee Indian Fair. Join us for five days of activities and attractions, including traditional dance performances, arts and crafts displays, cultural demonstrations, and authentic Cherokee cuisine." Event details at visitcherokeenc.com

A Doll's House, Part 1 - Oct 3, 4, and 11 at 7:30 p.m.

"Nora's world teeters on the edge. In "Doll's House" we unravel secrets, ignite passions, and challenge conventions. Brace yourself for a theatrical tempest that will echo through your soul." Show at University Auditorium. Tickets at arts.wcu.edu/tickets

A Doll's House, Part 2 - Oct 5, 9, and 10 at 7:30 p.m.

"The sequel unfurls - a tapestry of revelations, shadows, and whispered truths. Nora returns; her steps echoing in the corridors of destiny." Show at University Auditorium. Tickets at arts.wcu.edu/tickets

Reception for At the Table - Oct. 3 at 5 p.m.-7 p.m.

"As we enter another fall season, the WCU Fine Art Museum invites you to contemplate themes of community, power, and representation as explored through At the Table. The works in the exhibition, which feature the recurring motif of the table, both literal and metaphorical, use this common piece of furniture to signify a place where people come together in connection,

endure and overcome injustice, and make decisions that can change an individual life or the course of humanity. This event will include a gallery talk by the artists, along with complimentary hors d'oeuvres and drinks. Free parking is available." Event at Bardo Arts Center- Fine Arts Museum.

Oktoberfest at Lazy Hiker Brewing Co.- Oct. 4 at 4 p.m.

"Come dressed in your lederhosen, dirndl, and more... We'll hold all the steins and drink bier galore! In traditional Oktoberfest fashion, we'll be hosting a stein holding competition, costume contest, and other yard games with prizes for the winners!" Free admission

Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead Celebration) - Oct. 8 at 6 p.m.

"Join Last Minute Productions and the Office of Intercultural Affairs (ICA) for a celebration of Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead)! We'll have free crafts and mini churros for students with their Cat Card (while supplies last)! Check out our Instagram or Facebook for updates. All events are subject to change." Event in UC Illusions Room

Hocus Pocus at Innovation Station Dillsboro-Oct. 8 at 6 a.m. - 8 p.m.

"Tricks and treats are just around the corner! Choose from a Jack-O-Lantern, Mug-A-Boo, the Witch's Lair, or the Frankenstein Candy Dish. After you have finished painting, all items will be taken to ArtWagon's studio and fired in our kiln. All materials are included, with the exception of food and beverage. Please purchase tickets by September 29 (availability may be limited after this date). Tickets are non-refundable. Please contact

us if you are unable to make the event, as with adequate notice, we may be able to transfer your item to the next scheduled event.”

Tickets at artwagonmobilestudio.com

Scary-oke Halloween Karaoke – Oct. 9 at 7 p.m. - 10 p.m.

“Join Last Minute Productions for a frightful night of Scary-oke! Come sing all of your favorite spooky songs at this Halloween-themed karaoke night! Check out our Instagram or Facebook for updates. All events are subject to change.” Event in UC Grand Room.

Ballet Hispánico- Oct. 10 at 7:30 p.m.

Ballet Hispánico is the nation’s renowned Latino dance organization and one of America’s Cultural Treasures. For 50 years, Ballet Hispánico has been bringing communities together to celebrate and explore Latino cultures through innovative dance performances, transformative dance training, and enduring community engagement experiences. Wrap up Hispanic Heritage Month with Ballet Hispánico as they perform new and beloved works from their 50-year history.

Show at Bardo Arts Center. Tickets at arts.wcu.edu/tickets

Mushrooms Abound: Fungi Diversity in Western North Carolina- Oct. 12 at 11 A.M.

“Join at the Jackson County Public Library Community Room as Heather Brooks educates us on some of the most interesting mushrooms in our area. Heather Brooks is an Asheville based nature artist. Through her artwork and active participation in the North American Mycological Association, Heather has developed an expertise in mushroom foraging. Heather currently leads walks for area nonprofits. She also

shares her knowledge and enjoyment of this pastime with her followers on Facebook and Instagram @smallwoodlandthings.”

Roller Derby: I Will Always Shove You- Oct. 13 at 12:30 p.m.

“Put on your country best and get ready for an exciting afternoon of roller derby with Smoky Mountain Roller Derby. Bring your own chair. Our nonprofit partner for this event is Cornbread and Roses. Join the teams for an afterparty at Bryson City Brewing after the games. Consider competing in the Dolly Parton look-alike contest at halftime.”

More info on Smoky Mountain Roller Girls Facebook Page

Tickets: \$8 at the door, \$5 presale. (Admission is free for children 11 and under.)

Pumkin Spice & Everything Nice Tea Party- Oct. 17 at 5:30 p.m.

“Join us for a not-so-spooktacular tea party! There will be tea, snacks, and autumnal crafts. Come celebrate the warmth of the season with us!” Contact Jackson County Public Library for more information (828) 586-2016.

Fall Foliage and Feathered Friends Hike- Oct. 18 at 4:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

“During one of the most colorful times of the year, join Mainspring and Wild Remembering for this special Foliage and Feathers collaboration! Together we’ll share in the joys of autumn by birding and leaf peeping along Yellow Face Trail off the Blue Ridge Parkway. This trail winds through a beautiful high elevation forest filled with vibrant mosses, delicate ferns, and proud spruces, and we’ll catch glimpses of sweeping views along the way. As we reach the summit, the forest will open into a mountaintop meadow, where we hope to spot some interesting birds. As we hike, Mainspring’s Conservation Outreach

Associate Skye will decode the mystery of fall leaf color change, and help us identify any plants and wildflowers that catch our eye. Wild Remembering Founder Topher will be our bird guide, introducing us to the birds we may hear or see in the forest and summit field.” Visit mainspringconserves.org for more information and to register (registration required). Suggested donation of \$15-\$30.

Hunter Library Fall D&D and Boardgame Night – Oct 22 at 4:30 p.m.

“Game night at Hunter Library has both Dungeons and Dragons One Shot adventures and open board gaming. If you’d like to sign up for D&D please RSVP as spots are limited. Priority will be given to WCU students, so please RSVP with your student email. Our D&D games are for players of all skill levels. We will be using the 5th edition rules. Players can bring their own LVL 2 character, or have one provided for them at the event. D&D starts at 4:30 p.m. FREE Pizza will be provided!”

Mountain Murders Dinner in Story and Ballad – Oct. 26 at 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.

Join local historian Paula at The Balsam Mountain Inn on October 26th from 6 to 8 p.m. for an evening of gripping true local murder stories and enchanting mountain ballads. Enjoy a delicious dinner and drinks from the bar. Tickets are \$50 at <https://square.link/u/qgyV4KdT>

WCU School of Music Choral Concert – Oct. 29 at 7:30 p.m.

WCU School of Music Choral Concert. Free and open to the public, no ticket needed. Event at Bardo Arts Center Performance Hall.

Sylva Treat Streat- Oct. 31 at 5 p.m. - 7 p.m.

“Join us for classic Trick or Treating in downtown Sylva.”

WNC trout populations to be impacted by hatchery renovations

By Stewart Butler



Photo courtesy of Abigail Quinn

The Bobby Setzer trout hatchery outside Pisgah, North Carolina has supplied WNC streams with trout since the late 1950s. The hatchery is the largest in the state and one of three cold water hatcheries. Together they raise over one million rainbow, brook and brown trout a year.

Trout fishing in North Carolina is a \$1.3 billion industry according to a 2022 NC Wildlife Resource Commission report. The economic impact of trout fishing goes well beyond the stream, however, with countless benefits arriving by the influx of anglers.

“People come up here to fish the Tuckaseegee, they come to fish Deep Creek, the Nantahala,” said Nicolay Bell, manager at Tuckaseegee Fly Shop in Sylva. “Those people are coming up here and spending money at the hotels, spending money at the restaurants and in the surrounding town.”

The Setzer hatchery, while a top producer, is showing signs of decay. Nearly 75 years

of operation has taken its toll and left the buildings and raceways in dire need of repair.

“There’s serious issues with the concrete and facilities,” said Doug Besler, NC Wildlife Regional Supervisor. “We’ve sort-of been patching it together for the last thirty years,”

Plans for the Setzer renovation were drafted in 2019 and approved in 2024 after receiving a \$20 million grant from the NC General Assembly. Besler says they expect construction to begin in January 2025.

“It’s just outdated at this point. And there’s really no way to do minor renovations – It needs a complete renovation.” Besler said.

The aging hatchery will receive an all-out overhaul complete with new buildings and trout raceways. The redesign will provide new filtration systems, reduced water temperature and improved downstream water quality. Overall production is also expected to increase.

NCWRC is working closely with hatcheries across the southeast to supplement trout populations impacted by the Setzer renovation.

“We’re doing everything we can to minimize the impact. If we can find any trout – anywhere – that would logistically work, we’re trying to get that.” Besler said.

It’s important for anglers to understand the impact of the hatchery’s renovation for the

coming years. While WNC trout populations will take a hit, those wanting to fish are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the changes in their area and to be mindful of game limits.

“Maybe instead of pulling over on the side of the road to fish, go up into the smokies or to the parkway and fish a wild stream,” Bell said. “Many wild trout live in some of the prettiest places in the state. So that may give people the opportunity to branch out a bit more than they’re used to.”

NCWRC expects a 65% reduction in stocked trout from early 2025 through 2026. Depending on completion of the Setzer renovation, populations could be impacted into 2027.

To stay up to date on the Setzer renovation and other North Carolina wildlife projects, visit ncwildlife.org



Photo courtesy of Abigail Quinn

September Strands: Life is Gourd

T A L E A V
 S N U T S E
 E U T T E S
 H C P M U V
 E I S A M R
 C L P I N A
 L L C D A H
 A F E E R L

8	6	3	5	4	7	1	9	2	1	2
9	2	5	1	6	8	4	3	8	1	7
7	4	1	6	5	2	9	3	4	1	7
6	5	8	2	9	3	4	1	7	2	8
3	7	6	9	5	2	8	4	1	7	2
8	2	1	4	6	7	9	5	3	8	1
4	9	5	1	3	8	6	7	2	8	1
5	8	7	3	2	4	1	9	6	7	2
9	3	4	6	9	1	2	8	5	3	8
1	6	2	5	8	9	7	3	4	1	7

For the shifting season

By Cora Haste

September is here, there is a chill in the air, pumpkin spice is back and things are settling in for the semester. Summer is taking her final bow as she fades into fall.

I for one find the first few weeks of the semester exhausting. I can never seem to find my routine and there is always so much to do. And I cannot be the only one experiencing this. But changes in seasons always offer hope of things to come. And the cooling of the earth offers a chance to rest.

Following the autumn equinox on Sept. 22, we enter a season of harvest. Maybe these past few months have brought change, growth or exhaustion. Autumn is a time to take stock, to reminisce and to recalibrate.

As the summertime comes to a close, look back on the season. Was it one of bounty? Did you experience hardship? Then, take advantage of the opportunity autumn brings.

Sit outside. Journal your thoughts. Take evening walks at a leisurely pace. Listen to music that soothes your heart. Eat, drink and be merry. Surround yourself with warm light, sweet smells and refreshing friendships. Read a book. Drink your coffee hot. And rest in the shifting of the seasons.

Take this season to slow down. Classes and exams may feel like a whirlwind and yes, there is much to be done. But the sun will rise tomorrow, and the birds will sing. So, rest and allow each moment to slow down.

Around me the trees stir in their leaves
and call out, 'Stay awhile.'
The light flows from their branches.

And they call again, 'It's simple,' they say,
'and you too have come
Into this world to do this, to go easy, to be
filled
With light, and to shine.'

From *When I am Among the Trees*
by Mary Oliver

Cherokee word of the week

By Mattilynn Sneed



Si-yo (She-yo)

We are pleased to introduce Cherokee language mini lessons to *The Western Carolinian*! Western Carolina University sits on land that once belonged to the Cherokee people and was called Tali Tsigwayahi, meaning Two Sparrows Town. In 2019, the Cherokee people declared a state of emergency for the language, as the number of Cherokee speakers dwindled. Efforts to reclaim and revitalize the language have become integrated into many parts of Cherokee society. Since fall 2024, Western Carolina University offers a Cherokee

language minor to aid in the preservation of the language.

The written form of Cherokee language seen above was created by Sequoyah from 1809 to 1821. It is referred to as syllabary, as each character represents a syllable in the language. The word seen above is siyo, which is how you say hello in Cherokee.

The more Cherokee language is spoken, the better the chances of its survival. So tell your friends siyo!