

Ashe County sees itself opening up after new order is placed

BY CHANDA RICHARDSON
chanda.richardson@ashepostandtimes.com

ASHE COUNTY — On April 21, Gov. Roy Cooper made an announcement stating that he anticipates that all mandatory social distancing, mass gathering and capacity restrictions will be lifted by June 1 in regard to the COVID-19 pandemic. On April 28, he announced that masks will no

longer be required outdoors and mass gatherings outside will increase from 100 to 200, effective April 30.

“Although we’re making progress, we haven’t beaten COVID-19 yet and the virus will still be with us, even after June 1,” Cooper said. “We need to keep being responsible, we need to keep wearing masks. We need to get more people vaccinated and we need businesses to keep paying attention to

current executive orders, and future health recommendations.”

The current executive order allows restaurants, breweries and wineries, amusement parks, gyms and pools to have 75 percent capacity with 100 percent outdoor capacity.

Conference centers, bars, sports arenas, movie theaters and other live

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Fallen heroes

High Country mourns tragic deaths



Amyas Morrison, 3, leaves a piece of artwork he created at the WCSO memorial.

PHOTO BY KAYLA LASURE

BY IAN TAYLOR AND KAYLA LASURE

The High Country is in mourning following an April 28 standoff with law enforcement, including departments and officers from Ashe County, that left five people dead — two of which were WCSO deputies.

“This is an incredibly tragic situation and our thoughts and prayers are with everyone involved as well as their families and our community,” Watauga County Sheriff Len Hagaman said in a statement. “I greatly appreciate the tremendous support we are receiving from law enforcement agencies across the region and the state.”

According to the WCSO, deputies responded to a call for a welfare check at 553 Hardaman Circle just outside of Boone at 9:44 a.m. The check was initiated by the homeowner’s employer, who reported the homeowner did not report to work or respond to telephone calls, according to the WCSO.

The deputies, Sgt. Chris Ward and K9 Deputy Logan Fox, entered the residence after discovering all vehicles belonging to the residents were on the property, according to the WCSO.

After entering, the deputies discovered the bodies of Michelle Annette Ligon, 61, and George Wyatt Ligon, 58, and began searching the home, according to WCSO Major Kelly Redmon. The deputies were allegedly fired

Funeral for fallen deputies announced

BY MOSS BRENNAN

BOONE — Funeral services for Sgt. Chris Ward and K-9 Deputy Logan Fox will take place at the Holmes Convocation Center at Appalachian State University, according to Austin and Barnes Funeral Home.

Services for will be conducted May 6 at 3 p.m. at the convocation center. Doors will open to the public at 1 p.m. All guests will be required to wear face coverings. Face coverings will be provided for those guests who do not bring them.

The service will be live streamed by AppTV and will also be available on the Watauga County Emergency Services Facebook page.

Guest register books will be available at the Watauga County Sheriff’s Office and Boone Police Department.

The site of the funeral service was previously at the Alliance Bible Fellowship church, but has since been updated.

The bodies of the Watauga County Sheriff deputies were brought back to Boone from Winston-Salem on April 30 in a procession that stretched for miles. Hundreds of community members gathered on the side of the road to pay their respects to the two deputies.

Fox, 25, had been with the WCSO for less than two years. He previously spent more than two years at the Ashe County Sheriff’s Office.

Ward, 36, was an eight-year veteran in law enforcement, having previously served with the Beech Mountain Police Department in 2013 before joining the WCSO. He was married and the father of two.

In lieu of flowers, Ward’s obituary states memorials may be made to Candice Ward, in care of the Watauga County Sheriff’s Department at 184 Hodges Gap

upon by a suspect identified by the WCSO as Isaac Alton Barnes, 32. Fox and Ward called for back

up from responding agencies; back up responded immediately, according to Redmon.

Barnes is also believed to have

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Farmers Market sees large turnout in first opening of the season

BY CHANDA RICHARDSON
chanda.richardson@ashepostandtimes.com

WEST JEFFERSON — The Ashe County Farmers Market opened in full swing on Saturday, May 1. A beautiful spring day was the perfect backdrop for the market and its seasonal opening.

Market Manager Carol Griffith said they could not have asked for a better day.

“The market was full of vendors and we had over 670 people that came through the market,” said Griffith.

Vendors reported a good sales day, according to Griffith.

In all, there are 51 vendors that open up shop at the market on Saturdays.

Vendors include: Gairl & Tim Barker — Country Gardens
Linda Bennett — The

SEE MARKET ON PAGE 2A

ACHS holds Project Graduation fundraiser

BY CHANDA RICHARDSON
chanda.richardson@ashepostandtimes.com

WEST JEFFERSON — The annual Project Graduation Fundraiser took place on April 23 and 24 in the parking lot beside McDonalds in West Jefferson. Put together by Dianne Eldreth, nearly \$7,000 was deposited toward the event this past weekend.

Many students and staff volunteered to raise money for the May 28-29 safe-graduation event, which will take place in the Ashe County High School football field vicinity. The event has not been held in person since 2019 due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and students are excited to participate. For

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