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# BRANSON NEWS

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## Taneycomo Festival Orchestra to play in the park

By AJ Meakins  
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Musicians from around the world perform with the Taneycomo Festival Orchestra to bring classical music to the Branson area.

The public is invited to a concert experience in the park series in Hollister, where it can enjoy nature while listening to classical musicians play a classical selection.

The Taneycomo Festival Orchestra will be performing its 10th season, which will include five concerts at the Chad A. Fuqua Memorial Park in Hollister June 17-25. All concerts will start at 7:30 p.m.

- Thursday, June 17, TFO All-Star Soloists
- Friday, June 18, Taneycomo Festival Orchestra will play selections including Jessie Montgomery - Strum; Johann Sebastian Bach - Brandenburg Concerto No. 4; and Felix Mendelssohn - Symphony No. 3 (Scottish Symphony)
- Wednesday, June 23, Music by Living Composers
- Thursday, June 24, Our Favorite Pieces
- Friday, June 25, Taneycomo Festival Orchestra will play a selection including Joseph Bologne - Chevalier de Saint-Georges - Symphony No. 2; Ivan Stravinsky - Pulcinella Suite; and Ludwig Van Beethoven - Symphony No. 6 (Pastorale)

In the case of inclement weather, concerts will be held at First Presbyterian Church with limited seating.

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## Shepherd's Copperhead Mountain Coaster welcomes first riders

By Tim Church  
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The Copperhead Mountain Coaster at Shepherd of the Hills has officially welcomed its first drivers and riders.

On Friday, June 11, the adventure park hosted a soft opening to give folks the opportunity to be among the first to take in the loops, drops and curves of the new mountain coaster.

"We hired the best mountain coaster company, Wiegand," Shepherd of the Hills general manager Jeff Johnson said. "They're the No. 1 builders of mountain coasters in the country. We have been working with them since last November. We started our construction during our Trail of Lights, so that was a little messy at times, but we've been after it and working through the winter and a very wet May to get it going."

Johnson explained the inspiration for the name of the Copperhead Mountain Coaster is drawn from two sources.

"In the (Shepherd of the Hills) play, Wash Gibbs says 'I'll stomp him like I would a young copperhead.' It seemed like a nice, fitting tribute for a coaster that snakes its way down the hills. We'll have the longest downhill track of

anything in the area," Johnson said. "We have a few hundred feet more than the Runaway in downhill (track), but our uphill is shorter. We have a wider, sweeping turn where the others do not. They'll drop over 300 feet in elevation. It's a very fun and exciting ride."

In total, the downhill length of the mountain coaster is 3,350 feet long. If you add that together with the 1,450 feet of uphill track, you get a coaster that's nearly a full mile long. The coaster track is divided into sections with names like lethal drop, lurking curve, slither and slide, venomous twists, the big strike, and constriction loop.

"A mountain coaster is a little more environmentally friendly in the sense that it's using the elevation of the property itself and taking folks through the property using primarily the earth's terrain as the bed underneath the track," Johnson said. "We've got a pretty good hill there, so that takes them down across there. Of course we have a road we have to bridge over on our property as well, so that puts you pretty high in the air in a couple of spots."

See **COASTER** on Page 2A



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The Copperhead Mountain Coaster at Shepherd of the Hills is located beneath Inspiration Tower, so when riders are returning to the launch area, they'll get a great view of the tower.

## Covid variant confirmed in Stone Co.

By AJ Meakins  
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The first case of the India variant of COVID-19 has been confirmed in Stone County.

In a press release on Monday, June 14, the Stone County Health Department confirmed the first case of the India variant (Delta or B.1.617) in Stone County. Genetic variants of COVID-19 have emerged and circulated through the state, but this is the first variant that is lab-confirmed in Stone County.

The Stone County resident who contracted the India variant passed away. According to the release, the resident had not received a COVID-19 vaccine.

According to the SCHD, early research

shows vaccines are effective in preventing the B.1.617 variant. Natural immunity from having COVID-19 is not effective in protecting oneself from the India variant. Individuals who previously had COVID-19 and are unvaccinated are not protected from this variant.

The SCHD said in the release it is important to get vaccinated to prevent the spread of this new strain.

In addition to the new strain, cases of COVID-19 have climbed in Stone County. The county has seen an 80% increase in cases over the last seven days, and 25.6% of the county residents are fully vaccinated.

The SCHD said in the release Stone County

will continue to see an increase in cases until the vaccination rate increases.

The SCHD encourages people to continue to wear masks and social distance to help reduce the chance of being exposed to the virus and spreading it but says these measures are not enough and residents should get vaccinated.

Vaccination clinics are planned for every week at various locations in Stone County.

For more information, call the Stone County Health Department at 417-357-6134 or visit their website stonecounty-healthdepartment.com.