

SEE OUR AP TOP 25 MEN'S BASKETBALL RANKINGS. 2B

LITTLE WORLD OPENS TODAY AT HERITAGE HIGH SCHOOL. 9A

A worthy investment



GOV. BILL LEE ADDRESSES a small crowd about improvements to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and Cherokee National Forest in Cocke County.

Foothills Parkway receives \$6M to fund bike trails

BY SHELBY HARRIS
shelby.harris@thedailytimes.com

Gov. Bill Lee and U.S. Sen. Lamar Alexander announced Monday that \$6 million in grant funding will be used for mountain bike trails in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the Cherokee National Forest in Cocke County — an investment Lee said could help tourism throughout East Tennessee.

At a small outdoor gathering at a rest stop in Cocke County, Lee told The Daily Times that the project could help tourism and employment growth throughout the region and state.

“Tourism brings not only the folks that are here, but it brings the businesses to support the tourists, and it brings economic activity to areas



GOV. BILL LEE (LEFT) and U.S. Sen. Lamar Alexander answer questions about a \$6 million project to put mountain bikes trails in Great Smoky Mountains National Park and Cherokee National Forest.

SEE FUND, 5A

BCS encourages face masks as virus cases rise

BY AMY BETH MILLER
amy.miller@thedailytimes.com

Blount County Schools appeared to take a stronger stance requiring students and staff to wear face masks on Monday, Nov. 30 — the same day the state reported 34 new school-age COVID-19 cases across the county.

In social media posts BCS said, “Face coverings will be required by all employees, students and visitors inside our schools to support a healthy and safe learning environment in Blount County Schools.”

Previously the district had said students were “expected” to wear face coverings but it would not enforce them as it would a dress code violation.

In an email to The Daily Times, Director Rob Britt wrote, “With rising levels of infection due to the community spread of COVID-19, we want to do our part to mitigate the infection rate and number of quarantines in our schools. Therefore we are going to be more restrictive with our face coverings protocol. We want to do all we can to provide the safest and healthiest environment for students and staff in our schools.”

“Our state and local health departments agree that face coverings are essential in preventing, mitigating, and reducing the spread of COVID-19. We are committed to do our part to keep our Blount County Schools buildings open for in per-

son learning to the extent feasible and practical.”

In a phone interview Britt said, “It’s not really a whole lot different than what we’ve been doing,” adding that staff have been required to wear face coverings and the district would heighten awareness of the protocols.

“We will do a lot of reminders and support our students,” providing face masks if they don’t have them, he said.

While school policy allows the district to take action when a student is “defiant,” Britt said, “I don’t anticipate that’s going to happen.” He said he believes most students want to be in school, and school officials will talk with parents about any issues.

Explaining the new emphasis on face coverings, Britt noted, “The two weeks prior to Thanksgiving were our two most difficult weeks,” with some schools and classes moving to online learning in the days before the holiday.

Monday, Nov. 30, BCS was able to fill only 71% of the needs for substitute teachers, and Britt said it is possible some schools will have to move to virtual instruction.

The director said he’s trying to keep schools open as long as the district possibly can. “I want to say to our community that we’ve done all that we can do,” he said. “I hope we’ll have a great deal of cooperation.”

SEE MASKS, 5A

Warming shelter opens tonight at First Baptist Church in Maryville

BY SHELBY HARRIS
shelby.harris@thedailytimes.com

Blount Countians suffering from homelessness will have a safe haven in tonight’s frigid temperatures.

The warming shelter at First Baptist Church of Maryville will open its life center doors to those in need beginning at 7 p.m., Dec. 1. Temperatures are expected to drop to as low as 21 degrees early Wednesday.

The center opens when temperatures hit 25 degrees or below. People are welcome in the shelter from 7 p.m. until 7 a.m.

While at the FBC Maryville, those seeking shelter will receive a cot and bedding, two warm

meals and access to a shower.

“These guys have had a rough year this year,” shelter organizer and Chilhowee Baptist Center Director Rick Myers said about those suffering from homelessness. “They didn’t have anywhere they could go day or night, and they suffered through the summer. It really took a toll on the ones who I’ve met. Any little bit of shelter they can find, they’re looking for.”

Organizers weren’t sure that a warming shelter was possible during COVID-19, but on Saturday, they received the go-ahead from First Baptist.

“They’re good people over there,” Phil Hoffman, board chair for Family Promise Blount Coun-

ty, said about organizers at First Baptist. “They’re doing everything they can to try to help. They just had to put their heads together.”

To protect both volunteers and shelter seekers, volunteers will enforce social distancing and the wearing of masks for all who enter.

“We’re going to insist on washing hands,” Hoffman said. “Rather than having them go through a buffet line, we’re going to serve them with paper plates and plastic utensils just to keep things as clean as possible for everybody.”

Because of the pandemic, volunteers have been hard to come

SEE SHELTER, 5A



VOLUNTEERS STAND READY TO receive homeless people at the First Baptist Church in Maryville as part of a countywide effort to provide emergency services to area people who are homeless. The shelter, which organizers say will open every night the temperature drops to 25 degrees or lower, is the first of its kind in Blount County.



Blount Records.....4A	Crossword.....9B	Horoscope.....9B	Opinion.....6A
Bridge.....10A	Daily Calendar.....10A	Life.....9A	Sports.....1B
Classified.....6B	Dear Abby.....9A	Money & Markets.....7A	Sudoku.....9B
Comics.....8B	Deaths.....4A	Nation & World.....8A	Weather.....9B

A.M. flurries; clouds and sun
High 40 | Low 19



Get The Daily Times sent to your email box every day with a digital subscription at TheDailyTimes.com.



JACK RABY OPTICAL
Bring your RX!
Gill Street, Alcoa