



VISITORS CHOW DOWN
Valle Country Fair visitors enjoy food, music. **9A**

Body found on Blue Ridge Parkway identified, investigation ongoing

STAFF REPORT
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BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY — An autopsy has been completed by the North Carolina State Medical Examiner's Office on the body found Oct. 9 on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Investigators have identified the victim as Josue Calderon, age 33, of Rhode Island. This incident is being investigated as a homicide. Special

Agents from the National Park Service Investigative Services Branch, with support from NPS law enforcement rangers, are leading the investigation with assistance from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation and the Watauga County Sheriff's Office. NPS dispatchers received a report from a park visitor of a body near an overlook on the Blue

Ridge Parkway on Saturday, Oct. 9, at approximately 1:14 p.m. Law enforcement rangers responded to the scene and located a deceased male at 1:19 p.m., below Yadkin Valley Overlook at milepost 289.8. If community members have information that could help investigators, they can contact the NPS Investigative Services tip line by phone at (888) 653-0009 or by email at nps_isb@nps.gov.

Information gathered by investigators continues to suggest there is no ongoing concern for public safety, or that this investigation is related to any other ongoing investigations. At this time, all other details regarding this incident are linked to ongoing investigative efforts. Updates and further details will be provided when they are available and will not compromise the integrity of the investigation.



Locals, businesses honored



PHOTO BY ANDREA ELAVER

Pictured (left to right): Hal Hood (LifeStore Bank), Brian Greer (LifeStore Bank), Carolyann Johnson (Watauga County Sheriff's Department), Stephen Poulos (Watauga County Parks and Recreation), Bob Gates (Boone Sunrise Rotary), Nick Friedman (Boone Sunrise Rotary), John Eckman (Boone Sunrise Rotary), Lynne Mason (Boone Sunrise Rotary), Maria Whaley (BRC), Ben Lucas (BRC), Charlie Brady (BRC), Wendy Patoprsty (BRC), Carolina Poteat (BRC), Leila Jackson (BRC), Sally Tatum (Grandfather Mountain Vineyard), Steve Tatum (Grandfather Mountain Vineyard), Matt Lucas (Quiet Givers). Not pictured: Reggie Hunt (Cornerstone Summit Church), Dr. Scott Elliott (Watauga County Schools).

Nine awards honor local leaders, businesses during 72nd Annual Membership Meeting for Boone Chamber

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VALLE CRUCIS — The Boone Area Chamber of Commerce held its 72nd Annual Membership Meeting Oct. 12 at Valle Crucis Community Park. The event was presented by First Horizon Bank with additional sponsorship support from Peak Insurance Group, Appalachian Regional Healthcare System, and Spangler Restoration. North Carolina Secretary of Commerce Machel Baker Sanders delivered the keynote address for the event, sharing a message about the economic resiliency of rural communities throughout North Carolina to an audience of over 300 members and guests of the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce. Secretary Sanders also discussed First In Talent, the Strategic Economic Development plan for the State of



PHOTO LEILA JACKSON

Community members gathered on Oct. 12 for the 72nd Annual Membership Meeting of the Boone Chamber of Commerce.

North Carolina, which provides recommendations and reference points for policy makers and economic developers across

the state. Sandy Vannoy, interim dean of the Walker College of Business at Appalachian State, was

introduced as the Chair of the Chamber's Board of Directors

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PHOTO BY MARISA MECKE

Eric Wood, who hails from Hickory, NC, was convinced to attend the festival by his cousin from Taylorsville. Wood poses with his championship ribbon and trophy, along with his champion climbing woolly worm. The \$1,000 cash grand prize was put away for safekeeping.

Banner Elk Woolly Worm Festival celebrates successful downtown return

BY JAMIE SHELL
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BANNER ELK — Despite uncharacteristically warm temperatures leading up to the festival weekend, Mother Nature flipped a switch to bring back typical fall weather, as a wet and damp beginning to the opening day of the 44th Annual Banner Elk Woolly Worm Festival on Saturday, Oct. 16, gave way to a cooler afternoon to close the first day and reign on Sunday to close the two days of activities. Thousands of visitors flocked again to downtown Banner Elk on both Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 16 and 17, following a 2020 festival that was curtailed to a single race due to the Covid-19 pandemic. With returning patrons came the other facets of the festival that attendees know and love, including the more than 150 arts and crafts vendors selling their wares to food vendors providing tantalizing aromas and palate satisfiers, with everything from doughnuts to barbecue available on offer. Also present were various local organizations who pitched in to make the event take place, with efforts that ranged from raising funds through offering parking services near the festival grounds in town to the regular

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Three local women bond after breast cancer diagnosis

BY MOSS BRENNAN
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BOONE — On Oct. 30, three local women who were diagnosed with breast cancer are doing a 5K walk to fundraise for the High Country Breast Cancer Foundation at the Boone Greenway Trail. Lauren Watts, Kim Kirby and Erin Ellington were all diagnosed with breast cancer in fall 2020. While they are celebrating that they are cancer free, each of them is still in active treatment either on chemotherapy, hormone therapy or immunotherapy. Every year, the High Country Breast Cancer Foundation does a 5K, but the event was moved to a virtual format this year due to

COVID-19. Even though it's still on as a virtual event, Watts, Kirby and Ellington wanted to do something a little more. "We all have a really big community support between the three of us, and so we just decided 'Hey guys, the run was scheduled for Oct. 30. Let's still do it,'" Kirby said. "Let's just round up our crews and our crowd and our tribe and let's all just go meet at the Greenway assuming weather's OK and let's still walk in support of breast cancer survivors. Those who have gone before us, those who have yet to go through it, and let's raise money for the foundation so they can keep helping more breast cancer patients." For the three women, the HC-

BCF has helped them tremendously during their fight against breast cancer. According to the women, the HCBCF paid for cold capping so they did not lose their hair. "I think we all felt really indebted to the foundation that we got that support and all got to keep our hair," Watts said. "When you have small children, losing your hair looks really scary to them. We wanted to give back. We needed to just try to get awareness and give back to this group that's given so much to us." Kirby said talking to others who have had breast cancer, losing their hair was one of the hardest parts when going



PHOTO SUBMITTED

Lauren Watts, Kim Kirby and Erin Ellington met after they were diagnosed with breast cancer in fall 2020.

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