



Blasting operations to start near N.C. 105 bridge construction

BY MOSS BRENNAN
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WATAUGA — Blasting operations will take place on N.C. 105 near the bridge-replacement

construction project over the Watauga River, which will cause traffic delays in the area. Traffic may be stopped for up to 30 minutes on N.C. 105 on days when rock removal is necessary

through blasting operations. The contract allows rock removal between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. on Mondays through Wednesdays, but the operations are not necessary every day, according to the

North Carolina Department of Transportation.

According to NCDOT Communications Officer David Uchiyama, safety precautions during the blasting include adding a loose

material to prevent any fly-rock or other debris from reaching the road, and having safety personnel, explosive experts and fire

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Boonerang a hit



PHOTO BY JILLYAN MOBLEY

AnnaLisa Hadnavny and Andre Pierre Rowland danced to the bluegrass music played by Wiseapple at Boonerang on June 17..

WCS preparing for free school meals to end

BY MOSS BRENNAN
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WATAUGA — Watauga County Schools is preparing for a school year where students will no longer have access to free breakfast and lunch.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States Department of Agriculture passed waivers nationwide that allowed schools to serve breakfast and lunch to students without collecting payment. That waiver expires on June 30, meaning parents will have to again apply for free or reduced lunch for their children.

“It is very disappointing that school meals for children are a casualty of Washington politics,” WCS Superintendent Scott Elliott said in a statement. “Of all the things the federal government has spent money on over the last two years, nothing has been more beneficial to our working families than free school meals. If our leaders want to help our families through these difficult times, providing meals to children is an easy way to give people some relief.”

During the two years that students could receive free lunch, WCS saw a large increase in the amount of meals they served. Between August and March in 2019-20 — pre-COVID — the school system served 90,276 breakfast meals and 236,418 lunches.

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Thousands descend on downtown Boone for music and arts festival

BY MOSS BRENNAN AND JILLYAN MOBLEY

BOONE — The streets of downtown Boone were transformed on June 17 and 18 when thousands of people descended on the town for the Boonerang Music and Arts Festival.

Boonerang Founder and Director and Town of Boone Cultural Resources Director Mark Freed said an estimated 6,000 people attended the festival, with more than 4,000 ID checks taking place — which did not include artists, vendors, staff, children and non-drinkers.

Freed said there was a lot of unknown factors entering the inaugural festival and he questioned if there would be enough space for stages, cars and people.



PHOTO BY MOSS BRENNAN

SEE **FESTIVAL** ON PAGE 2A Alexa Rose performed at the Jones House stage on June 18 during Boonerang.

MountainTrue, Wine to Water raise money for clean water access in Uganda

BY JILLYAN MOBLEY
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BOONE — A fundraising event at Ransom Pub & Event Venue raised money to send water filters and tanks to communities in Uganda to increase access to safe drinking water.

The fundraiser was organized by Watauga River Keeper Andy Hill, Uganda Victoria Lake Waterkeeper Daniel Musota, Wine to Water Director of Special Initiatives Shane Hillman and French Broad Riverkeeper Hartwell Carson, a MountainTrue member, and local non-profit Wine to Water. Drinks and appetizers were provided for guests.



PHOTO BY JILLYAN MOBLEY

Watauga River Keeper Andy Hill, Uganda Victoria Lake Waterkeeper Daniel Musota, Wine to Water Director of Special Initiatives Shane Hillman and French Broad Riverkeeper Hartwell Carson celebrate a successful fundraising event.

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AppHealthCare releases COVID-19 update

BY MOSS BRENNAN
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BOONE — AppHealthCare has provided a COVID-19 update as the health department says it continues to “circulate and even increase over the past few weeks in key statewide metrics like hospitalizations, COVID-19 like illness in the Emergency Departments and COVID-19 particles found in wastewater.”

According to AppHealthCare, Watauga County is currently at a medium COVID-19 Community Level as defined by the CDC, which measures the impact of COVID-19 on health and healthcare systems. A medium level means community members may need to take more precautions to prevent illness and protect themselves and others from severe outcomes like hospitalization and death, AppHealthCare stated.

The following are tips from AppHealthCare to help prevent a COVID-19 infection.

- Stay up-to-date with COVID-19 vaccines, including boosters. More information on COVID-19 vaccines can be found on AppHealthCare’s website.

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