



It's your SUNDAY

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**News**
Watauga's 2019 Best of the Best honored

See insert

Watauga's best in 2019



PHOTO BY THOMAS SHERRILL

David Shore, Melissa Shore, Matt Rice, Robert Rice and Sara Rice pose during dinner of the 2019 Best of the Best award ceremony on Tuesday, April 23.

Local businesses honored at 2019 Best of the Best

BY THOMAS SHERRILL

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Over 330 guests, staff and servers packed Alliance Bible Fellowship for the ninth annual *Watauga Democrat* Best of the Best awards ceremony to celebrate the top tier of businesses in the Boone area on April 23.

Hosted by the *Watauga Democrat*, presented by Blue Ridge Energy and Peabody's Wine and Beer Merchants and cosponsored by Farm Bureau of Watauga County and Ross Chrysler Jeep Dodge Ram, the results were read by Mountain Times Publications Advertising Director Charlie Price and Advertising Sales Manager Manuel Zepeda. The winners walked down the VIP red carpet to receive their award from MTP Marketing

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DAWN O'NEAL-SHUMATE

Julie O'Dell, senior vice president, chief administrative officer and ethics officer for Blue Ridge Energy, gives the keynote speech at the 2019 *Watauga Democrat* Best of the Best Awards ceremony in Boone.

Frontier Natural Gas making Watauga priority in expansion efforts

BY KAYLA LASURE

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WATAUGA — Frontier Natural Gas is looking to expand its services in Watauga and Ashe counties during the next five years, according to General Manager Fred Steele.

Frontier — certified by the N.C. Utilities Commission — operates out of Elkin and serves six different counties, Steele said. He and two other Frontier representatives approached the Watauga County Commissioners on April 2 to discuss its plans for expansion. Steele said Frontier is required by the NCUC Pipeline Safety division to reach out to public officials and educate them on their services.

Steele said Frontier currently services less than 40 percent of Watauga County, and sees it one of the areas with the most growth potential.

In the coming fiscal year, Steele said Frontier has plans for about five natural gas projects in Watauga. These include

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Blowing Rock hires Shane Fox as new town manager

BY THOMAS SHERRILL

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BLOWING ROCK — Blowing Rock's new town manager might be coming from Cleveland County, but he's no stranger to the High Country.

The Blowing Rock Town Council unanimously voted to hire 40-year-old Shane Fox as its new town manager during a brief meeting on April 24.

"I'm truly humbled to be here in the town of Blowing Rock," Fox said after his hiring was approved. "Being here is truly a dream."

"It's fulfilling to me to work in a professional town like Blowing

Rock," Fox added.

Fox will be sworn in as the new town manager on Monday, June 3, at 8:30 a.m., when he will begin his duties.

"You immediately rose to the top for me," Councilwoman Virginia Powell told Fox. "It wasn't a hard decision."

According to the contract Fox signed on April 24, he will be paid at a yearly rate of \$100,000 through January 15, 2020, at which time the council will conduct a performance review for the preceding six months and potentially give Fox a salary increase.

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PHOTO BY THOMAS SHERRILL

Shane Fox, left, signs his contract to become the new town manager of Blowing Rock on April 23 as Mayor Charlie Sellers, right, looks on.



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