

The Fayetteville Observer



SPORTS | B1

QUIET CONFIDENCE

Pine Forest's Isiah Washington has a laid-back style

Wednesday, January 27, 2021

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\$2

School districts begin vaccinating employees

Brian Gordon
USA TODAY NETWORK

With many North Carolina teachers still weeks, if not months, away from receiving COVID-19 vaccines, a few districts have already helped give shots to hundreds of staff members.

On Friday, Jackson County Public Schools in Western North Carolina dismissed

students early so staff could get vaccinated. Since last week, public school employees in Rutherford County, Swain County, and Union County received their first vaccine doses as well. In the Triad, Davie County Schools will make shots available to employees on Wednesday.

"It's been a challenging year for students and teachers and parents, but we do feel that

with the vaccine there is light at the end of the tunnel," said Jacob Buchanan, assistant superintendent of Jackson County Schools.

Buchanan said his district received a call last Wednesday from the local hospital, Harris Regional in Sylva, saying the facility had 350 vaccine doses that they needed to administer

See **SCHOOLS**, A4



Mike Taylor, a bus driver for Jackson County Public Schools receives a COVID-19 vaccination from EMS Supervisor Toby Moore on Jan. 22. [COURTESY OF DAVID PROFFITT]

F5K program aims to help Fayetteville's food insecure

Kristen Johnson
The Fayetteville Observer
USA TODAY NETWORK

The fight against food inequity has not been an easy one, but one organization in Fayetteville refuses to surrender.

"Feeding 5,000 at 500", or F5K, is a hunger program created by Dr. Sherri Arnold-Graham last summer to address the needs of residents in Fayetteville and Cumberland County. The initiative began at 500 McPherson Church Road in Fayetteville with the goal to feed 5,000 people from that location. Since its inception the program has expanded and has fed more than 2,000 people in five months.

"Like so many things now, the suffering has grown exponentially," said Arnold-Graham. "You see suffering so far and wide and deep as well."

On Sunday, Arnold-Graham and volunteers helped to pass out boxes of hot meals to more than 500 people in Fayetteville on Brighton Road with the assistance of The Caribbean Grill restaurant. Attendees got boxes of Caribbean grilled chicken, rice and beans, seasoned vegetables, and fresh greens donated by a local farmer. There was also a vegan option.

"It was a beautiful day, but a day of realizing how great the need is and what a privilege it is to share and to call people together," Arnold-Graham said. Many of the people who lined up for food were experiencing homelessness.



F5K volunteers use a contactless, no-touch safety feature designed with protocols supported by The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia. The boxed meals are given to individuals and families who drive up to the restaurant's parking lot. [PHOTO COURTESY OF SHERRI ARNOLD-GRAHAM]

Arnold-Graham, a former Wall Street investment paralegal and minister in Fayetteville, created the F5K program out of her nonprofit organization, the Sherri Arnold Graham Foundation, to give local uninsured women free mammograms and health services. Women who came to the clinic would get the health service and a hot meal to go with it. To date, the organization has provided more than \$800,000 in mammograms to women in the state.

Because of COVID-19, the food insecurity issue in

Fayetteville has only been exacerbated by job loss and the spread of the deadly virus.

Arnold-Graham has been collaborating with local restaurants, community members and leaders to ensure people have food to eat. Yesterday was the fourth time the F5K program has worked with a restaurant, and there are plans to keep going.

"The impact from COVID-19 has been so great and many people have not been able to address how it affected the homeless community," said Dr.

Val, a volunteer and community leader in Fayetteville who only goes by that name. "I saw so many people come through, families, children, babies, and they were just so grateful. The need is there."

Dr. Val works with the non-profit organization Community Awareness Alliance and aims to address the issue of homelessness.

"The increase of homelessness is growing," Dr. Val said. "Sometimes homeless people

See **FOOD**, A2

WEATHER PERMITTING

What are Fayetteville's chances for snow?



Chick Jacobs

Once again, snow-hounds in the Cape Fear region are watching as a promising storm turns into puddles of cold rain.

Ah well, if it's any consolation, long-time residents will remember this date in 2000, when parts of the Cape Fear region were digging out from a foot of snow. Fort Bragg saw 8 inches, and everyone almost to the coast picked up at least 3-4 inches.

Locally, it started as freezing drizzle, which made travel even more treacherous. Modeling for the storm was notoriously off, due mainly to a secondary shot of moisture that arrived late.

What was supposed to be a 3-4 inch annoyance became a two-foot blizzard in spots by nightfall. Raleigh picked up 20 inches, and everyone in Scotland, Moore, Hoke and Harnett ended up with a foot or more.

The pattern this week doesn't hold any such surprise. That said, a fortunate few may see light snow Thursday morning.

Here's the setup: When long-range modeling began pointing at the potential for wintry weather across the Carolinas, there was little thought given to a weak warm front scheduled to lift across the state Tuesday.

Things change fast today. A strong system will churn across the South, sliding just offshore of Myrtle Beach this evening. At about daybreak, winds in the Sandhills will begin to swing around to the north and increase.

See **WEATHER**, A3

Fayetteville vet says he did not defraud VA

Rachael Riley
The Fayetteville Observer
USA TODAY NETWORK

A Purple Heart veteran who pleaded guilty in June to defrauding the Veterans Administration and was sentenced this month said the charges against him are not true.

Earlier this month, U.S. District Judge Thomas D. Schroeder sentenced Willie Doshier Cain to five years of probation and ordered him to perform 250 hours of

community service, after he pleaded guilty to one count of embezzlement in June.

Cain was also ordered to pay more than \$903,000 in restitution and to forfeit a modified van and mobility scooter.

"As far as pleading guilty, this I did and you must remember that there are many in the U.S. who have done the same but were innocent," Cain, 74, said in a statement emailed to The Fayetteville Observer.

Though Cain said he had "great attorneys" on his case and a judge who treated him

"with dignity and respect," he said at his age, he is tired of court and having to pay a "considerable amount of money in attorney fees."

Cain said that investigators who documented his movements never spoke with him for his "side of the story."

According to documents filed with the court, Cain told VA officials shrapnel wounds sustained in Vietnam in 1965 caused him to suffer the loss of the use of both legs, and to lose

See **VETERAN**, A3



Fayetteville veteran retired Command Sgt. Maj. Willie Cain says he did not defraud the Department of Veterans Affairs and has a Purple Heart for shrapnel injuries he sustained while serving in Vietnam. [CONTRIBUTED]