

## Super accomplishment

Former Trojan will have rare experience of playing in one of the sports world's biggest events. **SPORTS, B1**



## Pets are back

Biden's dogs settle in at White House. **OUT & ABOUT, C1**



# Independent Tribune

The local voice of Greater Cabarrus County

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### CABARRUS COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION



THOMAS LOTT PHOTOS, INDEPENDENT TRIBUNE

A group of teachers and parents gathered outside the Education Center before Saturday's Board of Education retreat to express their thoughts about the return to Plan B last week.

## Plan A starts Feb. 16 for some

Pre-K through third grade affected

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The Cabarrus County Board of Education voted 5-2 to move into Plan A (full in-person education) for Pre-K through third grade on Feb. 16 at Saturday's Mid-Year Planning Session.

Additionally, the vote set a date of March 15 for the return of fourth- and fifth-grade students in Plan A.

The Board of Education wanted to set a date for a return for fourth and fifth graders to give the district a time to aim for, but it also included the caveat that if the metrics aren't where they need to be, board members will change the plan.

The board didn't want to catch schools off-guard and wanted to give them enough time to plan for the potential adjustment.

Also with this vote, all children classified as EC, ELL, 504 and McKinney-Vento will be able to come back four days a week in Plan A.

Carolyn Carpenter and Rob Walter voted against the motion, while Holly Grimsley, Laura Blackwell, Keshia Sandidge, Denise Adcock and Tim Furr voted in favor.

When the board began discussing the current plan the district was in, it became quickly clear that a move to Plan A was what several board members wanted.

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# Hasty decisions?

Teachers, residents demonstrate before retreat

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The sun hadn't even risen when teachers and community members gathered in front of the Cabarrus Education Center on Saturday to demonstrate to the Cabarrus County Board of Education they are not happy with the way school re-entry has gone to start 2021.

The last several weeks have been particularly polarizing in Cabarrus County with the Board of Education confirming the vote to return to Plan B (a combination of virtual and in-person learning) on Jan. 19 at last week's business meeting, a group of teachers contemplating a "call-out-sick" day in



Meredith Newman, a second-grade teacher at Patriots STEM Elementary School, spoke about the need for more personal protective equipment as well as vaccinations in general, but especially if there is a move to Plan A as has been discussed by the Board of Education.

response, which prompted the school board to consider possibly punishing these educators at

and an answer to that statement from the board itself a couple of days later.

All of that culminated with the demonstration Saturday morning as educators and parents alike greeted board members on the way into their annual retreat where they would be discussing upcoming issues for the year like budgets and a new task force created to gather community input on how to approach everything surrounding COVID-19.

"There's a large sentiment of 'We need to listen to teachers, listen to teachers, listen to teachers,' but really, the reason we've gotten to the point of 'listen to teachers' is because we haven't listened to the experts," said Meredith Newman, a second-grade teacher at Patriots STEM Elementary, who was in attendance Saturday. "(Superintendent) Dr.

Please see **DEMONSTRATE**, Page A3

## Speedway to help provide meals

Drive-thru distribution is set for Thursday

FROM STAFF REPORTS

CONCORD — Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (Blue Cross NC), Charlotte Motor Speedway (Speedway) and the Latin American Chamber of Commerce of Charlotte (LACCC) are teaming up to provide meals to those in need within the Charlotte community.

These organizations will be hosting a meal distribution event, as part of LACCC's Community Kitchen Program, at Charlotte Motor Speedway on Thursday, Jan. 28, from 4:30-8:30 p.m. to distribute 6,000 hot meals from 25 local Latin restaurants to those in need. This drive-thru event is free and open to the public. Event attendees must enter through the entrance at 5555 Concord Parkway S., Concord, NC 28027.

LACCC's Community Kitchen Program provides additional food security for families of essential workers impacted by



PHOTO COURTESY BLUE CROSS NC

"Serving the community is part of our DNA, as it is for Blue Cross NC, and we're excited to drop the green flag on this unique event to support those in need," said Greg Walter, with Charlotte Motor Speedway. The speedway has partnered with Blue Cross NC to provide 6,000 meals to community members.

the COVID-19 pandemic while also offering financial support for local, Latino-owned small businesses in the Charlotte metropolitan area. The program has already fed 8,000 families and supported 41 small businesses, and through Blue Cross NC's \$200,000 investment, the program's reach will extend to im-

act an additional 600 families and support 30 small businesses. "As an insurer that has served North Carolina's communities for over 85 years, we have an ongoing commitment to improving the health and well-being of all North Carolinians," said Reagan

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## UK COVID-19 variant found in Mecklenburg

New strain is more contagious

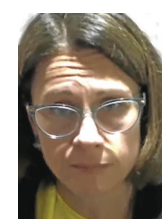
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Over the weekend, the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services announced that the state has seen its first confirmed case of the UK COVID-19 variant, which is more contagious.

The NCDHHS announced Saturday, Jan. 23, in a news release that one patient in Mecklenburg County was confirmed to have the COVID-19 B.1.1.7. Variant, known as the UK variant.

Dr. Katie Passaretti, medical director of infection prevention at Atrium Health, said the variant is known to be more contagious. In a Monday press meeting, Passaretti explained the variant's infection rate. She said that instead of one person infecting just two people, that person could infect three or four.

"We are still in the learning



Passaretti

stage with the newer variant," Passaretti said. "It does appear that this UK variant is more easily spread from person to person."

Since the virus is more contagious, this poses a risk to increase the numbers of people infected and potentially the number of hospitalizations.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said Jan. 22 that the UK variant may be linked to a higher degree of morbidity from the virus. But the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has stated that there is no current evidence that it causes more severe illness or increased risk of death. A European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control's Jan. 21 risk assessment also stated that the UK variant isn't

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### OBITUARIES, PAGE A6-7

ELIZABETH J. HINSON	LESSIE HUDSON
PHYLLIS J. LINKER	CLARENCE H. ROBBINS
BETTY C. BAUCOM	HOPE BAKER
WILLA D. BOWERS	WEYMAN KIDD
WILLIAM F. RODGERS JR.	BRIAN H. PEIRCE
CECIL C. TUCKER	

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