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CLOSED FOR NOW

A closed sign is now a familiar sight around Asheville and WNC, with many local businesses and even Asheville City Hall closed to the public — though City Council meetings have moved to live-streams. In this issue, we chart the ongoing effects of COVID-19 concerns on our local community.

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Scott Southwick

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 One year (52 issues) \$130 / Six months (26 issues) \$70. We accept Mastercard & Visa.

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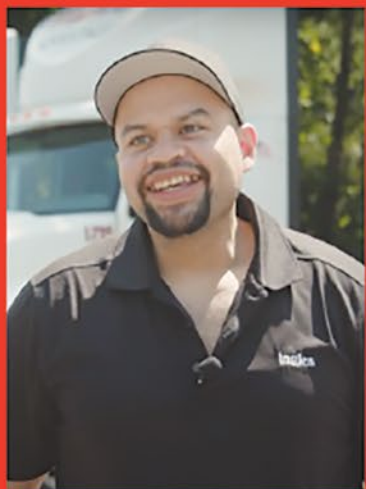
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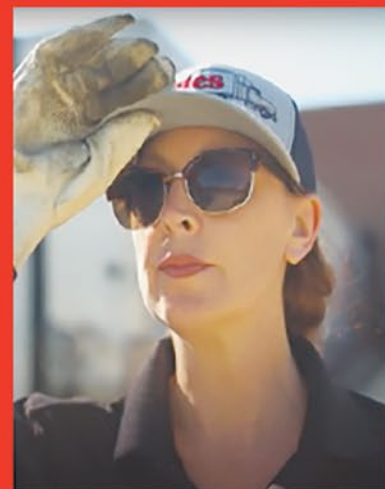
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Commissioners' silence sent a strong message

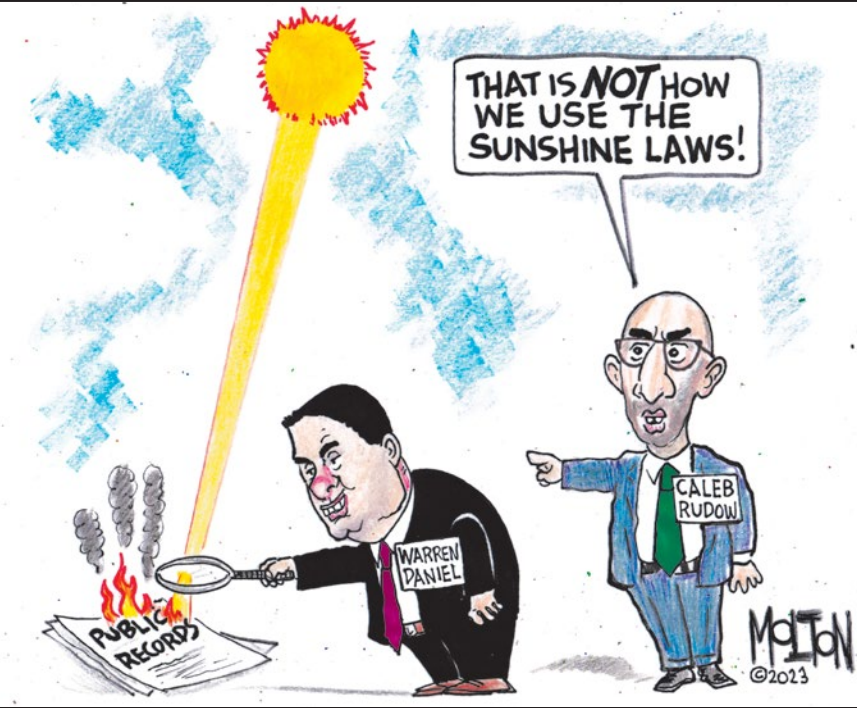
We hope the Buncombe County commissioners listened carefully to the messages of the many college- and high school- age people at their Dec. 5 public hearing on the rezoning of Biltmore Farms land for further development. Their words courageously called out the complicity in an ongoing atrocity. But their voices carried an even more powerful message: *We are angry. We are sad. We are in despair at and in this world.*

These young people and many elders, too, see before them a disaster unfolding. They see the unnecessary killing and mistreatment of innocent Palestinians in both Gaza and the West Bank. They see world governments looking the other way and our government enabling the disaster with words and weapons. They see a world that will likely be unlivable in their lifetime and that of their children. They see a system that bows to corporations and neglects people. They see elected leaders who appear not to care. They see blank faces, technical rules and obscure procedures. They see a system that lacks authentic engagement.

Are they radical? You bet they are. Do they shout, chant and bang pots for hours outside their meeting? You bet they do. They must, as there seems to be no other way to make their voices heard. And even then, they are silenced or pushed aside as inappropriate.

Like all of us, these young people want to see true democracy, where in there are systems and places for active engagement. Unfortunately, the commissioners' meeting was not an example of that. Public hearings are a farce. After the comment period where so many spoke passionately, the commissioners had no discussion, and they offered no evidence or authentic rationale for their decision. Their silence sent a strong message. Public hearings are required, but decisions are made secretly, and opinions of citizens don't really matter.

What are young people learning about government from these practices? What are they learning about the integrity of elected officials? Where, leaders, are these young people to engage? What, leaders, are they to do? We know what they will say: They should engage actively in the processes of government. Be on a board or commission. Write letters to the editor. Join a political party. We know very well that institutions marginalize certain voices and use technical rules and prescribed pro-



CARTOON BY RANDY MOLTON

cedures to limit engagement. The young people at the meeting on Dec. 5 learned that lesson.

What we learned from our research into how the 2020 tax incentive deal for Pratt & Whitney came down with so little public knowledge or engagement is that economic development deals, among other decisions, are deliberated about and negotiated out of the public eye. Consequential discussions are held behind closed doors. Landowners, corporations, the Chamber of Commerce and elected officials are more important than the general public.

And, to truly engage, a citizen must be *very* knowledgeable, must be able to navigate the morass of bureaucratic workings and must stay with the process for the long haul. Where do college or high students learn any of this? What efforts do county officials make to educate the public,

especially young people, about how to engage in the political process?

The Buncombe County commissioners should be happy that 30 angry voices engaged at their Dec. 5 meeting. They should be proud that an additional 100 motivated people spent hours in the cold outside yelling and banging pots. Because these days, that is what democratic engagement has to look like.

— *Melody Shank and Anne Craig*
Retired educators and Reject Raytheon AVL organizers Swannanoa and Asheville, respectively

Choose how your next 525,600 minutes will unfold

“Five hundred twenty-five thousand, six hundred minutes. How do

you measure, measure a year? In daylights, in sunsets, in midnights, in cups of coffee, in inches, in miles, in laughter, in strife.”

— *from Jonathan Larson's "Seasons of Love"*

Each year we are given 525,600 minutes. How will you measure this new year?

I am brand-new to Asheville, so I am looking forward to spending my 525,600 minutes exploring all that this great community has to offer: the creativity of the arts and music, the fabulous variety of good food, the beauty of nature, the diversity of the people here — my 525,600 minutes will be full of goodness!

We stand at the threshold of a brand-new year. Unconsciously, many of us repeat the same year over and over because we do not intentionally change the pattern of our thinking and doing. Will you walk through the threshold of a revolving door or of an evolving door? Will you relive the past 525,600 minutes, or will you live a brand-new 525,600 minutes? The choice is yours.

We choose how the next 525,600 minutes will unfold by setting clear, conscious intentions. We can consciously choose to *not* be at the effect of our past and instead, consciously choose to be the cause of our intended future, which then pulls us toward it with magneticlike attraction.

Your best year ever is not somewhere out there in a far-off future. The life you've always wanted is within reach right now — the seed of it lies in the soil of your soul. Join us at Center For Spiritual Living Asheville on Sunday, Dec. 31, at 11 a.m., to release 2023 with a Burning Bowl Ceremony and a White Stone Ceremony to set intentions for 2024.

Consciously listen to the still, small voice within and claim your highest intentions. As you cross the thresh-

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If I Must Die

If I must die,
you must live
to tell my story
to sell my things
to buy a piece of cloth
and some strings,
(make it white with a long tail)
so that a child, somewhere in Gaza
while looking heaven in the eye
awaiting his dad who left in a blaze—
and bid no one farewell
not even to his flesh
not even to himself—
sees the kite, my kite you made, flying up
above
and thinks for a moment an angel is there
bringing back love
If I must die
let it bring hope
let it be a tale.

by Refaat Alareer

Teacher & writer killed by Israeli bomb on Dec. 6

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old of this year, allow your greatest expression and fullest possibility to be revealed and lived in your next 525,600 minutes, and you will arrive at the doorstep of your deepest desires. Not only will you be blessed, you will be a blessing to the world. Happiest New Year!

— The Rev. Suzi Schadle
Senior minister

Center for Spiritual Living Asheville

Treatment can help menopausal sleep disruptions

Thank you for your recent piece on how to reduce insomnia [“Sleepless in Asheville: Insomniacs Share Strategies for Finding Rest,” Nov. 22, Xpress], because this is such a huge problem, particularly among midlife women. I was especially glad that the article specifically highlighted menopause as a major driver of sleeping problems in women. As a menopause specialist working in health care, I spend a lot of time educating women and providers alike about perimenopausal changes and how hormone changes impact well-being in midlife. There is a lot of misinformation around menopause in health care, and as a result, many women’s health providers remain uneducated about the benefits of hormone replacement therapy.

Many people don’t realize the cost of women not treating these temporary but often debilitating symptoms. The perimenopause transition begins on average seven-10 years before a woman reaches full menopause. The average age that women reach menopause in the U.S. is 51, which means that hormonal shifts begin on average around ages 41-45, and sometimes even earlier. The most common hormonal problems that contribute to disrupted sleep and altered circadian rhythms in midlife women are waning progesterone levels, erratic estrogen levels and sometimes depleted levels of testosterone.

In addition to causing multiple nighttime wake-ups and sometimes increased difficulty falling asleep, early menopause symptoms like anxiety, fatigue and decreased resilience can start years earlier than hot flashes for some women. In addition, as a woman gets closer to her menopause transition, hot flashes and feeling increasingly uncomfortable and wakeful when hot at night (“night sweats”) are the most common driver of sleep disruption. Together with hormonal weight gain and increased risk of sleep apnea (as the article

also mentions), midlife women really suffer as a result of not sleeping well. Sometimes several nights per week of sleep are affected, over a period of nearly a decade.

Over 80% of women report sleep difficulties during their menopause transition, but only 12% or less are offered hormone replacement therapy, or HRT. Despite what many people have been misled to believe, modern body-identical HRT is safe and affordable, and offers highly effective treatment for hot flashes and sleep disruption with the most long-term benefits (namely, reducing osteoporosis, diabetes and heart disease). Women and providers can get more education about ways to treat menopause symptoms safely and effectively by reading the Menopause Society guidelines at [avl.mx/d7w].

— Jill Gustafson
Certified menopause specialist
and nurse-midwife
Asheville

How to improve next year’s holiday parade

I noticed while watching this year’s holiday parade that our group was not really known at all to the commentators, and they struggled to talk about who we are. The ones they already knew, they had no problems with, but I don’t think they even mentioned “Warriors of Ash” or knew that the sport we do is called historical European martial arts. They seemed to have this problem with a few other groups, too. I don’t think that’s their fault, but I have an idea to help!

I think sending a Google form out to each group/slot to provide the commentators (for example) a word-limited sentence of who they are and two small bulleted highlights about what they’d most like highlighted for the parade would really help the commentators and the people watching understand who they are seeing better.

I’d never expect anyone to know everything about almost 100 different floats, so I think this idea could help everyone involved.

Thank you kindly for listening and your consideration.

— Kryss Earles
Fairview

Rain came at right time for wildfires

The recent wildfires in Western North Carolina and East Tennessee have all caused tremendous damage to the Blue Ridge Mountains and



CARTOON BY BRENT BROWN

Smoky Mountains areas. And on Nov. 8, N.C. Gov. Roy Cooper issued a state of emergency for the Western North Carolina area. These fires in the regional area have now since been contained after some bad and serious drought conditions we have had in the Upstate South Carolina and Western North Carolina area that made matters worse for these wildfires.

Before we had that needed rain, the wildfires in Western North Carolina were very hard for the N.C. Forest Service to control. And burn bans from the N.C. Forest Service were even issued.

The majority of the damage brought on by this long drought to the area with these wildfires in Western North Carolina was in Henderson County and Cherokee County. Thank God, Western North Carolina received much-needed rain showers. These much-needed rain showers came truly at the right time.

It is very much good news that the awful wildfires in Tennessee that happened in a short amount of time got contained really fast. And I am glad the wildfires that happened in Western North Carolina that were out of control because of the drought conditions got contained because of the needed rain showers we had that made most of the wildfire damage

disappear for the good of the residents of Western North Carolina.

— Steven Hawkins
Greenville, S.C.

Edwards outs himself with census bill

It's good that Chuck Edwards has outed himself with his attention-seeking "No Representation Without Legal Immigration Act" proposal. Republicans claim to be "originalists" about the Constitution, but Edwards wants to rewrite it to suit his perversity. In the Constitution, the census is supposed to be an accurate count of the number of people living in the USA and each state "according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed..."

Reactionary Edwards has decided who should count and who shouldn't. On the one hand, he hearkens back to the three-fifths compromise that his slaveholder political ancestors invented to not count enslaved Black Americans as full human beings, while not losing the advantage of counting them to wield political power for the slave states. On the other hand, he appears to be unfamiliar with the 13th, 14th and

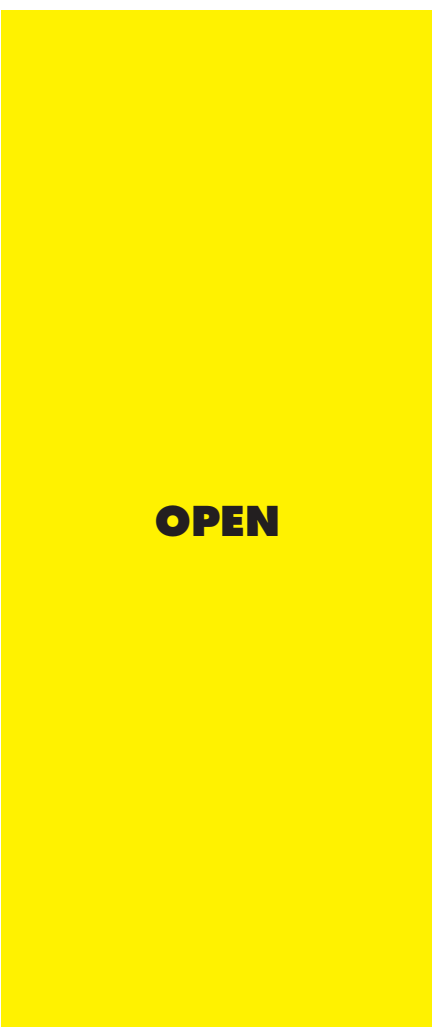
15th amendments, which freed those slaves and attempted to ensure their right to vote. Perhaps Edwards is still enthralled with his Confederate and Jim Crow political guides.

Not counting people who can't vote? Might as well not count anyone under 18 years old. That would go over well, wouldn't it? Not counting noncitizens? Those people, whether documented or undocumented, pay many billions in taxes, rebuild communities decimated by natural disasters (while anti-immigrant politicians turn a blind eye) and — lest we forget — probably had major roles in planting, harvesting, cooking, serving and cleaning up from many of Edwards' last 100 meals. As well as working so many of the essential low-paid, difficult and dangerous jobs that very few citizens want any longer.

Of course, the people Edwards doesn't want to count are overwhelmingly people of color. With his stunt, Edwards reveals himself to be an out-and-out racist and a true believer (much above "love thy neighbor as thyself") in the "great replacement theory," which is a favorite of Edwards' mob boss, DJ Trump.

— Paul Weichselbaum
Hendersonville

Editor's note: Xpress reached out to Edwards' office for a response to the letter writer's points but did not receive a reply.



Talking points

Readers offered views on downtown, infrastructure, plastic bans and more



Xpress readers engaged with a wide range of local issues in 2023 — from concerns about downtown Asheville to infrastructure priorities, a possible single-use plastic bag ban, education issues and more. Here’s a look at some of the topics that sparked letters to the editor, commentaries and online comments.

INFRASTRUCTURE PRIORITIES

The city’s water crisis — which began Dec. 24, 2022, and left thousands of city water system customers without water, some till Jan. 4 — was top of mind for some readers at the start of the year. In a letter published Jan. 4, Leonard Nickerson of Swannanoa wrote: “Time to put a hiatus on new buildings and structures and talk to experts on what the infrastructure can handle. I have a wife in CarePartners on Sweeten Creek Road with no water. Really don’t think this problem will help her and all the other patients.”

And after a July 19 *Xpress* article about an independent review committee’s report on the outage, Asheville reader Carole Schaefer, who lost water for almost a week, commented: “It’s time for the city to consider the consequences of their decisions, check their priorities and do what’s right now.”

Potential infrastructure improvements of another sort spurred readers’ reactions after the Tourists baseball team’s ownership group, at the insistence of Major League Baseball, threatened to leave town if a \$30 million funding commitment for McCormick Field renovations wasn’t secured.

In a Feb. 1 letter, Trish Howey of Leicester declared: “I can’t even get my head around \$30 million or how we



IF YOU UPGRADE IT: Readers weighed in on the prospect of McCormick Field renovations in 2023. Photo courtesy of the City of Asheville

can find a way to get it, but I’m pretty sure there’s enough people with that kind of money to preserve our honored tradition in our wonderful city!”

Countered online commenter indy499: “City taxpayers are tired of paying for things used by many who have no financial skin in the game.”

By July, the funding deal had come together with commitments from the City of Asheville, Buncombe County and the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority.

EYES ON DOWNTOWN ASHEVILLE

Concerns about crime and cleanliness in downtown Asheville, reported in an *Asheville Watchdog* series and via *Xpress* reporting, prompted mul-

multiple letters, including one from Black Mountain reader Susan A. Stone.

“I felt a great deal of sadness reading about the increase in vagrancy, crime and homelessness in Asheville,” wrote Stone in the March 22 letter. “I have lived in this area for 24 years and have loved Asheville, but it has changed. It’s no longer the delightful and quirky place it used to be, with its street musicians, wonderful music and little shops. It’s full of traffic, chain stores and tourists.”

By April 20, a downtown safety initiative had been announced, with a May 1 start date.



SEARCHING FOR SOLUTIONS

Readers also reflected on local efforts to understand and address homelessness. In a Feb. 22 letter, for-

mer Asheville City Council member and Buncombe County GOP chair Carl Mumpower remarked: “When the personal accountability of the recipient is removed from any helping equation, that effort is doomed to fail — if not now, then soon.”

And in a March 29 letter, Asheville reader Vikki Dibble wrote: “It is blatantly obvious to me that there are many homeless advocates and agencies in such a small city, yet rarely do I read about collaboration and true problem-solving for the social issues among these agencies. This is hard for me to believe, yet the first recommendation from the most recent homeless study done for the city/county was the lack of collaboration.”

MONUMENTS AND MORE

A June 21 commentary about the deconstructed Vance Monument (whose ultimate fate remains unresolved) by retired UNC Asheville history professor Milton Ready sparked spirited debate online, along with several letters to the editor.

Wrote Ready: “Frankly, I miss the presence of Zebulon Vance’s granite obelisk, a poignant local landmark on Pack Square for over a century. ... Moreover, I wish Pack Square hadn’t been historically cleansed by removing such a visible reminder of its past. Instead, perhaps Asheville and Buncombe County should follow the British model of ‘retaining and explaining’ controversial monuments and statuary.”

But in a July 5 letter, Weaverville reader Mouse Wilson countered: “What Mr. Ready fails to grasp is the idea that Confederate monuments were intimidation tactics when they were constructed in the first place. For what other military engagement in history has the losing side been commemorated in such ways?”

Expanding on the conversation Aug. 2, retired lawyer Peter Robbins of Marshall focused on place names — and specifically Asheville, named for early North Carolina Gov. Samuel Ashe, who, like Vance, was a slaveholder. In the year’s most widely read Opinion piece, Robbins wrote: “I’ll bite the bullet and propose that, to the extent practicable, we really should look into changing some of those odious slaveholder names, if we can accomplish the task in a cost-tolerable fashion. Asheville wasn’t always called Asheville, you know. Marshall wasn’t always Marshall.”

GIVENS GERBER PARK



THE NEXT GENERATION

Meanwhile, Melissa Mahoney, an associate professor of economics at UNC Asheville, and Mollie Gordon, a UNCA graduate, zeroed in on the lack of affordable child care and low pay for child care workers in a July 12 commentary.

“It’s no secret that child care has long been too expensive and hard to find, and without policy intervention, this situation will only continue to worsen,” they wrote. “To give Asheville families the support they need, the state legislature must prioritize tackling the multifaceted weaknesses in the child care labor market.”

Concerns around public education also rallied readers. In an Aug. 30 letter, Asheville reader Peggy Crowe commented on an *Xpress* article about the legislature’s intent (later carried out) to expand eligibility for school vouchers. “I am exceedingly concerned about the national trend toward school vouchers,” wrote Crowe. “While the playing field appears to be leveled, it is actually subsidizing students already enrolled in expensive private schools, while draining the funding of public schools.”



TAKING STOCK OF PLASTICS

Readers also took up the topic of how best to reduce plastic pollution. As Asheville considered banning single-use plastics, letter writer Meiling Dai of

Asheville urged another tack in a May 17 letter: “The solution, to my mind, is to educate the public about the harm that single-use plastic bags can inflict on the environment, not to ban the use of these bags through legislation.”

Meanwhile, Karim Olaechea, deputy director of strategy and communications for MountainTrue, laid out the nonprofit’s proposed plastic-bag ban in a Sept. 13 commentary prior to a Buncombe County Board of Commissioners meeting.

“Buncombe County residents use approximately 132.4 million plastic shopping bags annually,” wrote Olaechea. “On balance, our ordinance would significantly reduce the amount of pollution, waste and greenhouse gases created to help county residents carry their groceries out of the store.”

Yet before the commissioners could even consider a ban, the state legislature took the option off the table by adding language to the state budget barring cities and counties from regulating plastic bags.



GIVE KINDNESS A CHANCE

Along with political discourse, readers also contributed illuminating personal accounts, including an Oct. 4 My Story essay from reader Richard Kownacki. In it, the Asheville resident recalled a series of events that started when he took a spill on his mountain bike at The N.C. Arboretum.

“So, it looks like I’m now committed to acts of kindness toward strangers,” wrote Kownacki. “I encourage everyone to give it a try.” X

URBAN EXHALE MESSAGE

ASHEVILLE HABITAT FOR HUMANITY RESTORE

Cops and robbers

Public safety remains a hot-button topic

BY EDWIN ARNAUDIN
earnaudin@mountainx.com

Crime and public safety have long been topics of keen interest in Asheville. But throughout 2023, they were on the minds of many local residents in unusually amplified ways.

Asheville Watchdog's 12-part "Down Town" series shed light on the myriad issues impacting the central business district, reporting that attracted the attention of *Fox News*, which painted Asheville as a city "plagued with rising violent crime." Whether the national coverage led to decreased sales at local businesses during the summer was among subsequent debates reported by *Watchdog*. Meanwhile, portions of the city's 60-day downtown safety and cleanliness pilot transitioned into ongoing services in hopes of addressing numerous urban woes.

To help see the bigger picture on the past year in public safety, *Xpress* checked in with some local notable figures whose work and lives intersect with the topic's various aspects.

What do you think are the main drivers for crime in our area in 2023, and how have local governments responded to it?

"If you look at the poverty level in Asheville, where crimes are taking [place] and who is committing those crimes, the common denominator is poverty. Our local governments might

be doing the best they can, but this is a nationwide problem that has to have a different and alternative approach to handling these types of situations."

— **Michael Hayes**,
executive director of *Umoja Health, Wellness and Justice Collective*

"The decrease in COVID dollars from the government is one factor increasing poverty and, in turn, crime. The opioid epidemic is also increasing crime as people get desperate and do things they might not normally do."

— **Andrew Celwyn**,
former board member,
Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority

"For certain, crime is driven by inequality, alienation, scarcity and segregation. Asheville has all of these things. Local governments can only do so much — Raleigh has made sure of it. I think there's a tendency among Asheville residents to blame outsiders for our problems, and I'd love to see our local governments ask us to take a harder look at ourselves. At least some of the aforementioned problems are of our own creation."

— **Andrew Paul**,
lead organizer, *Asheville For All*

"Heat and density. There have been studies that suggest crime decreases as the canopy increases. Asheville has responded by hiring a dedicated individual to ... work with all citizens to improve their understanding and



ON THE LOOKOUT: Asheville Police Department officers Garrett Proffitt, left, and Joseph Savastano were part of increased city efforts to curb downtown crime in 2023. Photo courtesy of APD

conservation of the natural environment that surrounds us all."

— **Keith Aitken**,
urban forester, *City of Asheville*

"Crime is complex and multifaceted, and drivers can be related to ... a multitude of social, economic, psychological and other factors. Whether it be substance abuse disorder, experiencing homelessness, low wages [and] high cost of living, among other issues — these items all have the potential to contribute to crime. We have been fortunate to have a low crime rate in Fletcher. However, we all need to figure out how we can collaborate to support our most vulnerable popula-

tion so that they may exist in a happy, healthy and safe community."

— **Preston Blakely**,
mayor of *Fletcher*

Do you feel more or less safe than you did at the start of the year?

"I'm feeling as safe as a chicken in a fox den, toting mace and hiring security for our shows. That's a first. The queer scene is a whole new rodeo with national drag bans and laws targeting our transgender family. Having been harassed like a raccoon in a trash can a few times, I've had police escorts and one show turned



KEITH AITKEN



MORGAN ALBRITTON



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PRESTON BLAKELY



ANDREW CELWYN



DIVINE



BILLY DOUBRASKI



PIP FLICKINGER



JAX HAMMOND



MICHAEL HAYES



STU HELM



HELEN HYATT



SANDRA KILGORE



XERO KOFFSKY



ESTHER MANHEIMER

into a real protest. Other performers have their own tales. It's real."

— **Divine**,
producer,
Bearded Lady Productions

"I feel more safe downtown than at the start of the year due to increased police presence on the street and less unhoused people laying on the pavements."

— **Helen Hyatt**,
activist and South Asheville resident

"I feel as safe most places in Buncombe County as I did at the start of the year. What has changed for me are the steadily increasing crowds of people in downtown Asheville, especially during 'tourist season' and especially on weekends. Crowds of (occasionally inebriated) tourists juxtaposed with our homeless population is a recipe for trouble. But I grew up visiting Asheville starting in the 1970s, and downtown at night has always been edgy."

— **Terry Roberts**,
author

"Honestly, I feel no different than I did at the beginning of the year. 2023 felt like it had just started, then I blinked and we are about to be in 2024. So, no real noticeable change."

— **Xero Koffsky**,
junior at Warren Wilson College

"Our city continues to prosecute activists engaged in mutual aid with the 'felony littering' charges and arrest of journalists in Aston Park. We've increased surveillance with systems like Fusus and multiple new drones that hover over protests or even at a local bookstore's opening. In a time when so many of our civil rights are under attack, criminalizing the ability to dissent is inherently unsafe."

— **Grace Barron-Martinez**,
activist and Realtor

Should addressing panhandling be a priority for local government?

"Panhandling is legal here in Asheville, although it is regulated. However, even after reading the regulations in their entirety twice, I'm still not 100% clear on where and when panhandling is allowed, so I wish the rules were a little more clear, and then it would be easier to determine whether or not the city is doing a good job enforcing the regulations."

— **Stu Helm**,
food blogger and food tour guide,
Stu Helm Food Fan

"I am not a fan of panhandling but I do not have a problem with it. There is a group of people that hang out at the 240 exit onto Haywood Road coming from downtown. They seem to have a system and are always polite and respectful. These people are not a problem. People that scream obscenities and follow you down a street, however, are a problem."

— **Lucious Wilson**,
board member,
Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority

"Yes. I view panhandling as a cry for help from our most vulnerable community. We must ensure our outreach is adapted to the various needs such as substance abuse, food and shelter. We must also be pragmatic — resources are needed to help support the many services that we provide for the community. In doing so, we must use the laws we have available to enforce the violations and offer assistance when necessary. Enforcement

is also needed to prevent bad actors (aka professional panhandlers) from taking advantage of the community."

— **Sandra Kilgore**,
vice mayor, *City of Asheville*

"Addressing the source of panhandling should be the priority. Why are there so many homeless/houseless and dangerously addicted individuals in Asheville now, yet property taxes keep going up?"

— **Jax Hammond**,
creator, *Visit Asheville (For Tourist and Locals!)*
and *Asheville Quarantine Community Facebook groups*

"It should be addressed for the comfort and safety of both the panhandler and the citizens or tourists they are appealing to. I think people want to help, and perhaps there is a way to do so and get those resources in the hands of the folks who need the help so they would not have to stand along the side of the streets or highways and could be out of potential harm's way."

— **Billy Doubraski**,
East West Asheville Neighborhood Association board member

"I've noticed a definite decrease in panhandling in the West Asheville area where my store is located since summer ended. We and our nearby neighbors chose to sign a petition to increase the watch of authorities, along with our addition of 'No Trespassing' signs. It's a joint effort from multiple neighboring businesses."

— **Morgan Albritton**,
owner, *Morgan's Comics*

Has community support for law enforcement changed since the start of 2023?

"There has definitely been a 'swing of the pendulum' from 2020 to 2023. We are no longer hearing cries to 'defund' or reduce the size of the Police Department. In fact, from our business community to our residential community — be they affluent or underserved — we are hearing requests for increased presence. I believe this indicates that confidence and trust are improving between APD and our community."

— **David Zack**,
chief of Police,
Asheville Police Department

"I've seen an uptick in media reinforcement and public support for using arrests to address our housing crisis. Ample evidence shows this approach doesn't work and causes harm, including greatly increasing how long people are on the streets. Personally, I know multiple people who lost upcoming housing due to the recent waves of

nuisance crime arrests. Continuing to use the same broken tools we have been using only digs us deeper into the hole."

— **Pip Flickinger**,
outreach worker


"Recruitment and retention have been an acute challenge for the Asheville Police Department. The approval of a 6% salary increase for existing APD employees, a wellness incentive pilot program and additional pay for intermediate law enforcement certification has been met with great support by our community."

— **Esther Manheimer**,
mayor of Asheville

"I've noticed the rise of local citizen groups, largely through social media, taking on a more conservative, combative tone to anyone critical of law enforcement. And these seem to be people who, at least before the Black Lives Matter protests, likely would have identified as liberal, or at least as Democratic Party voters. But these people have grown fearful and alarmed at the visible homelessness and mental illness on Asheville's streets, and they deny the loss of a romanticized version of Asheville they believe has disintegrated through liberal city leadership. I think this shift could probably be traced back to 2022 and perhaps even 2021, but it has certainly grown in 2023."

— **Matt Peiken**,
host,
The Overlook with Matt Peiken

"I think our community is paying closer attention to what practices keep our community safe. I appreciate our conversations with our neighbors and the Buncombe County Sheriff's Office's focus on prioritizing violent crime. I've also heard significant community support for our co-response efforts, so I believe we'll continue to see community support for effective law enforcement strategies and innovative approaches."

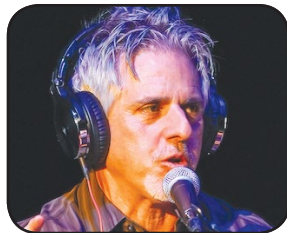
— **Martin Moore**,
Buncombe County commissioner 



MARTIN MOORE



ANDREW PAUL



MATT PEIKEN



TERRY ROBERTS



LUCIOUS WILSON



DAVID ZACK

OPEN

Breaking new ground

Locals look back on infrastructure changes in 2023

BY CHASE DAVIS

cdavis@mountainx.com

When it comes to breaking news, infrastructure typically is not the first thing that comes to mind. However, Asheville's infrastructure took local news by storm this year with several hot-button issues and controversial proposals.

Asheville's aging water system was the first piece of infrastructure that took the spotlight in 2023, with thousands of Asheville residents ringing in the new year without water after a cold snap led to multiple breaks and system failures across the city's waterlines. Later in the year, the addition of bike lanes on Merrimon Avenue divided the community with some arguing the lanes would increase cyclist and pedestrian safety, while others worried traffic snarls would put a strain on the thoroughfare's businesses.

Here's what developers, government officials, activists and residents thought about those topics and others.

What lessons did the City of Asheville learn from the water outage, and has it made progress in addressing a future water service issue?

"After the outage, the City Council created an Independent Review Committee (IRC) to review and provide a comprehensive account of the water outage, including an assessment of the operational and emergency response, communication efforts and needed infrastructure improvements. Since then, the Water Resources Department has either implemented or is in the process of implementing the IRC's recommendations per the city's duty to provide safe, clean water to our customers."

— **Esther Manheimer**,
mayor, City of Asheville

"First, let's recognize the city workers who committed themselves over the holiday week to fix the problem. However, in addition to our aging infrastructure, Asheville has a communication problem. During the



NEW LANES: The proposed addition of bike lanes throughout Asheville, such as this one in the River Arts District, have been a major topic of discussion in 2023. Photo by Mark Barrett

water crisis, critical areas like the hospital were prioritized, but that was not communicated to the community, which was rightfully upset and disillusioned by the city's response."

— **Lissa Pedersen**,
teacher and vice president,
Buncombe County
Association of Educators

"From the outside, it looks like they [are] taking it seriously with the post-mortem review that the city conducted. I have seen more underground utility work around town, so I imagine that [the city] is working toward a more sustainable water system with more dependable service."

— **Billy Doubraski**,
East West Asheville Neighborhood
Association board member

"The water outage was terrible for so many families and businesses, and the city has taken it very seriously. Since the water outage, we've invested in the Mills River Treatment Plant to fortify against extreme weather, established communication protocols to better share information with the community and updated our Emergency Management Plan to improve [our] coordinated response."

— **Maggie Ullman**,
Council member, City of Asheville

Were this year's infrastructure priorities correct? Or should we have focused elsewhere? Examples from this year include Merrimon Avenue and McCormick Field.

"I honestly don't think the mess that was made of Merrimon Avenue and the time it took to complete the project was worth it. I am, however, grateful for the steps taken to ensure that the Asheville Tourists remain the Asheville Tourists. Much can be argued about the importance of safeguarding the things that make Asheville what it is. Our baseball team and field are a part of that. Simple to some, but as an 11-year resident here, this matters to me."

— **Ashanti Ternoir**,
community member/service provider

"The infrastructure that's most impactful on our community is our stormwater system, especially given our mountainous topography. It not only feeds into our waterways, but

when it malfunctions, it can cause substantial damage. I'm thankful for the city's commitment to addressing these issues through its 10-year plan, notably in areas like Biltmore Village. I was also happy with the Merrimon Road improvement. It's safer for cars and pedestrians now, which will save lives and money."

— **David Moritz**,
developer, Mori Blue Holdings LLC

"The Merrimon Avenue project, while controversial, has been a huge success. It has made Asheville a friendlier, safer and more accessible place to live. It's a great model for how we can design cities for people instead of cars. As safety data continues to come in and people get used to the change, the value of the project will be clear to all. The top infrastructure need for Asheville, however, is more housing options. Local governments and our whole community need to be dedicated to solving the housing crisis, not only so people who live here now can afford to stay, but also to make room for the huge numbers of climate-change refugees that will be relocating here in the coming years."



ASHLEY ALLEN



GRACE BARRON
MARTINEZ



MONICA WALSH
BLANKENSHIP



ANDREW CELWYN

enzaHOME
Furnishings & Mattress
Gallery

ORGANIC
Latex & Kiwi Jama Wool
Mattresses & Bedding



25 Long Shoals Rd, Arden

— **Josh Kelly**,
public lands biologist, MountainTrue

“Supporting McCormick Field was a big mistake. The economics of supporting a minor league team are horrendous, and this investment will not pay for itself over time. At best, it’s a bid for nostalgia by paying to keep a minor league team here instead of having an independent team play here. At worst, it’s a huge subsidy to \$2 billion-dollar businesses, the Houston Astros and Major League Baseball.”

— **Andrew Celwyn**,
former board member,
Buncombe County Tourism
Development Authority

“‘Correct’ probably isn’t the right word, but they’re certainly defensible. I live in North Asheville and am slowed every day by the Merrimon Avenue ‘road diet’ and have never once decried it. It makes our city more livable, and I’m hoping the city does a better job of connecting multimodal streets to encourage more bike commuting. McCormick Field, on the surface, was a giveaway to a billionaire team owner, but if this means the field will now be open to year-round use for concerts and other events outside of baseball season, this could be a huge and much-needed addition to Asheville’s cultural and entertainment venues.”

— **Matt Peiken**,
host, *The Overlook with Matt Peiken*

“I drive Merrimon every day. Initially, with the lane changes that were made, I felt there was just too much traffic for one lane, but I have changed my tune! I think it has made a big difference in the safety of drivers, cyclists, even walkers, in the North Asheville area. Hats off on that one.”

— **Monica Walsh Blackenship**,
veteran

What’s the biggest infrastructure need for your neighborhood that you’ve noticed this year? (Please include the name of the area where you live.)

“I live on South French Broad Avenue and I walk a lot, so from my perspective, the biggest infrastructure needs are sidewalks, trees, benches and trash cans. Many of our sidewalks are crumbling, and/or have poor drainage. Lots of the trees lining the streets have died or are dying, so there’s less shade each year. Benches would be nice to rest on, and trash cans would cut down on litter.”

— **Stu Helm**,
food blogger and food tour guide,
Stu Helm Food Fan

“Our office is located in the Pisgah View Apartments community in West Asheville, a property of the Housing Authority of the City of Asheville. One of the largest infrastructure needs we see where we work includes better transit opportunities for community members to access jobs, grocery stores and health care. Without a car, team members require additional hours of transit time on a city bus to reach the office, pick up lunch and visit program sites.”

— **Ashley Allen**,
co-executive director,
Read to Succeed Asheville/Buncombe

“Believe it or not, only one major apartment building was built in North Asheville over the past 10 years. That’s because our zoning laws are outdated. On Merrimon, for example, where we have two bus lines, you can only build a fast-food joint because of the two-sto-

ry height limit, 6,000-square-foot floor plan limit and parking requirements. How are we going to provide people with somewhere to live, especially in areas near amenities and transit, if we can’t build?”

— **David Moritz**

“I live in West Asheville next to Pisgah View Apartments. It’s saddening to see the homeless population surrounded by the low-income housing development. They were camping in the woods, and the [Asheville] Police Department tore down the surrounding bushes. A lot of them suffer from addiction, so I’d like to see facilities in Asheville that can help people get off the streets if they decide to do so themselves.”

— **Nina Gi**,
singer-songwriter

How have changes in the real estate market impacted you this year?

“The challenge of unaffordable housing continues with rising interest rates and housing prices. My friends and neighbors are struggling to afford to live here with rising rents, and homeownership is less and less accessible. The lack of housing also creates an environment where many of our neighbors can’t afford housing at all. I am saddened to see our city criminalizing folks for not being able to afford our extremely expensive city.”

— **Grace Barron-Martinez**,
activist and realtor

“This year, I was forced to move out of my rental home because it was put on the market for sale. As I start the new year, I also will be looking for a new place to live. With rental prices astronomically high, and a dog, the search has been tiresome and quite difficult.”

— **Karis Roberts**,
executive director,
Asheville Brewers Alliance


“The increase in construction costs and interest rates have greatly impacted housing development, especially affordable housing. Our community has a great need for housing units for multiple income groups. Slowing housing production means higher rents for everyone, which impacts lower-income families the most. Also, with increased costs, developers and builders look to both the city and the county for more funding to make it feasible to build affordable housing.”

— **Sasha Vrtunski**,
Affordable housing officer,
City of Asheville

“I’ve been a homeowner in Buncombe County for almost 30 years. I see the reward of additional wealth from a strong real estate market, and in my professional life, I see the challenges that come with that. I welcome the appreciation in my property value due to current market conditions. However, I also realize that my adult children may find it difficult to purchase that first home due to the same conditions.”

— **Keith Miller**,
tax assessor, *Buncombe County*

“Remote work has changed the landscape of real estate. People can choose where they want to live without sacrificing the money that they make. Remote workers are willing to spend more on a house based on their financial situation. The resulting increase in local cost of housing is a strain on people that live off of local market wages.”

— **Lucious Wilson**,
board member,
*Buncombe County Tourism
Development Authority* 



BILLY DOUBRASKI



NINA GI



STU HELM



JOSH KELLY



ESTHER MANHEIMER



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LISSA PEDERSEN



MATT PEIKEN



KARIS ROBERTS



ASHANTI TERNOIR



MAGGIE ULLMAN



SASHA VRTUNSKI



LUCIOUS WILSON

Making ends meet

Education, equity and rising costs define quality of life in 2023



BY GREG PARLIER
gparlier@mountainx.com

Community conversations — both formal and informal — over pay for educators, equity for underrepresented populations and housing affordability abounded in Western North Carolina in 2023. Those issues, as well as nationwide inflation, underpinned any efforts to improve the quality of life for Asheville-area residents.

Early in the year, educators lobbied both state and county governments — with varying degrees of success — to adjust budgets so they can better afford to live in the same county in which they teach. Affordable housing advocates asked local governments to do more to increase housing stock.

On the topic of social and environmental justice, nonprofits pushed for a countywide single-use plastic bag ban before being stymied by a rule passed in the state budget, and the City of Asheville and Buncombe County continued the work of a Community Reparations Commission to explore ways they can make amends for decades of systemic racism.

These issues and more informed newsmakers' reflections on quality of life in *Xpress*' 2023 Year in Review.

How has your neighborhood changed in 2023?

"New, expensive houses have continued to be built in my neighborhood this year. My neighbors continue to live under the threat of the I-26 expansion

project that will displace folks who've lived there for generations. [However,] the relationships that I have with my longtime neighbors continue to be strong and beautiful."

— **Grace Barron-Martinez**,
activist and Realtor

"I live in Kenilworth Forest, and we had a small neighborhood-owned, city-managed park. Recently, the city [indicated] they would no longer maintain it. The neighborhood stepped up, and we now have a chair swing, pollinator garden and lots of park benches."

— **Jessie Landl**,
executive director,
Preservation Society of Asheville

"My neighborhood [in Enka] is like most in Buncombe County. We are experiencing the change in ownership from an older generation to a new, younger generation and seeing more nonlocal buyers as opposed to long-term locals with deep roots in the community. We welcome these new homeowners and share in their excitement. These young families moving into the neighborhood are seeking a community of families that share the same dream for the future."

— **Keith Miller**,
tax assessor, Buncombe County

"I live in West Asheville and have noticed an increase in families with children moving into the area. Earlier in the year, homelessness, panhandling and theft were very prevalent. As of late, I have noticed a reduction in homelessness activity as well as panhandling. I have also noticed an uptick in homeless

services within the community, which has helped with the overall challenges."

— **Sandra Kilgore**,
vice mayor, City of Asheville

"I've watched the affordability drastically change in my neighborhood, [and] with rising costs of basic necessities, it appears that needs for feeding programs, housing, heating and broadband are growing all around."

— **Sara Nichols**,
regional planner,
Land of Sky Regional Council

How has the local economy affected you, the broader community or both in 2023?

"I pinch my pennies. But I notice that fees are going up faster than my Social Security check. I have some savings I regularly dip into. Many people who live in the Vanderbilt [Apartments for senior citizens] like me, however, have no savings to fall back on. But we often help each other out."

— **Rachael Bliss**,
author and community activist

"With the amount of [tourism] dollars that come into Asheville on a yearly basis, I feel that we could provide more opportunities for individuals and families to thrive. The development of a strong workforce with living-wage salaries and affordable housing is a start."

— **Michael Hayes**,
executive director of Umoja Health,
Wellness and Justice Collective

"The local economy has been good for the travel industry. Unemployment

is low, and discretionary income is being prioritized for travel. Within our industry, wages are stronger than they've ever been, which is good for employees. However, again, the price of housing in our local market continues to be challenging."

— **Lew Bleiweis**,
president and CEO,
Greater Asheville Regional
Airport Authority

"I work for Buncombe County Schools and have not seen a significant raise in my wages in many years. As the cost of utilities, food and housing have increased, as well as interest rates, I have trouble buying basics like groceries and am constantly behind in paying for after-school care for my children and fixing my car. As I read my local parenting forums, more and more moms are posting daily for help with food, formula, how to get rental assistance and seeking better-paying jobs to support their families. Many moms express burnout, depression and hopelessness as we approach the holidays and nothing seems to be getting better. The disproportionate inflation in Buncombe County is real."

— **Joan Hoffman**,
teacher, A.C. Reynolds High School

"Locally, as it is nationally, prices are going up. Rather than buying less, I focus on buying smarter and more efficiently. But I also make sure there's room in the budget for fun and adventure."

— **Matthieu Rodriguez**,
marketing manager,
Harrah's Cherokee Center
- Asheville



MORGAN ALBRITTON



GRACE BARRON MARTINEZ



AMEENA BATADA



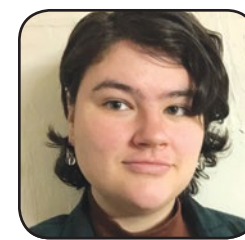
LEW BLEIWEIS



RACHAEL BLISS



HARTWELL CARSON



ALLIE DAUM



DIVINE



DAVE ERB



MICHAEL HAYES



BROOKE HEATON



JOAN HOFFMAN



ROB JACKSON



JESSIE LANDL



SANDRA KILGORE



FAIR PAY: Dozens of educators and school employees gathered at a rally March 20 to demand a living wage from both Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools. All received modest wages after state and county budgets were passed later in 2023. Photo by Greg Parlier

What did our local governments get right in 2023 regarding the environment?

“Asheville and Buncombe County’s push to ban plastic bags was absolutely the right policy, but the N.C. Retail Merchants Association and N.C. General Assembly, representing big retailers like Ingles and Walmart, decided it knew what was good for our community [better] than we did. That was despite overwhelming support from businesses and the public for this policy. But we aren’t giving up our effort to reduce plastic pollution.”

— **Hartwell Carson**,
French Broad riverkeeper,
MountainTrue

“A brilliant move is supporting the AVL Unpaved projects. They encourage walking, biking and hiking instead of using our personal vehicles, and give us all access to many of the places we would like to [go] without requiring the use of our cars and thus minimizing the damage to our mountains [in a] cost-effective way.”

— **Morgan Albritton**,
owner, Morgan’s Comics

“Maintaining and restoring our tree canopy solves multiple problems. It’s our greatest tool for addressing flooding, the heat-island effect, air quality and resilient green spaces for

human and natural habitats. Thanks to recommendations by our Urban Forestry Commission and community organizing efforts, the City of Asheville responded to research regarding our declining tree canopy by hiring the city’s first urban forester and budgeting for an Urban Forestry Master Plan that prioritizes partnership.”

— **Kim Roney**,
council member, City of Asheville

“I’m heartened by the adoption of electric vehicles in local government fleets, even though supply-chain issues have slowed the process. The Merrimon Avenue road diet has been a blessing for [the environment in my neighborhood]. Noise levels have decreased dramatically, even before accounting for the reduction in screeching collisions. It’s a far safer, more pleasant place to walk and drive now.”

— **Dave Erb**,
member, Blue Ridge EV Club

What changes in education in 2023 have benefited or disadvantaged local students?

“Traditional education is under attack. ... If public schools are important to a vibrant community, then we need to prioritize ways to recruit and retain the people who make these schools strong. What we pay the folks who work with our children is embarrassing.”

— **Lissa Pedersen**,
teacher and vice president,
Buncombe County
Association of Educators

“In 2023, Buncombe County Schools experienced enrollment growth and a stabilization of the faculty. Both of these metrics point to increased satisfaction with the teaching and learning environment in our schools and have resulted in substantial increases in academic results for students across the school system.”

— **Rob Jackson**,
superintendent,
Buncombe County Schools

“K-12 education is heading toward increased segregation along socioeconomic and racial lines as affluent families leave public schools for charter and private options. The “school choice” movement (House Bill 823) is sorting students into “haves” and “have-nots.” These changes paint a future where students go to school with classmates that increasingly resemble themselves, undermining the community-building potential of public education.”

— **Brooke Heaton**,
web architect

“[This year] has been a time of both benefits and disadvantages for local students. This past year, while both the General Assembly and the Buncombe County Commissioners approved millions of dollars of extra funding for schools, the General Assembly also passed the “Slate of Hate,” three laws that affect all students negatively but affect LGBTQ+ students even worse.”

— **Timothy Lloyd**,
school custodian and president,
Asheville City
Association of Educators

What has the community gotten right in regard to promoting equity and inclusion?

“The passion I’ve seen people acting on for the greater good of the community is something that we’re getting right. There’s been consistent energy put toward taking to the streets, to social media and to City Council to make the changes that we need to see in our community and to educate others

on inequities being experienced here. Keeping those conversations going and continuing to make connections is, in my opinion, the most important part.”

— **Allie Daum**,
senior at UNC Asheville

“The single most important thing the community has gotten right was to open honest dialogue to address some of the painful truths that many have chosen to ignore. The establishment of the [Community Reparations Commission] and full staffing of the [City of Asheville’s] Office of Equity & Inclusion were major steps. However, there is much more to be done to address the many challenges that are on the horizon. Community engagement has increased significantly to include input from those most impacted.”

— **Sandra Kilgore**

“I think it is a ‘step forward, step back’ situation. More local institutions are hiring people with lived experiences related to the work and this region to lead efforts. However, if a board or staff doesn’t trust a leader’s way of leading because it is different from their conceptualization, they can do harm. Inclusion and equity need to go beyond seats at the table — to gathering and acting in new ways.”

— **Ameena Batada**,
co-director of the master of public
health program and professor of
health and wellness at UNC Asheville

“Our Pride Festival’s success warms the heart, but needing extra security this year leaves me wondering. Neglecting to promote equity and inclusion puts our diverse community at risk in safety, health care and education. And I mean people of all genders, orientations, religions, etc. Silence ain’t just quiet; it’s deadly. If we don’t speak up and define what equity and inclusion mean, and act on making it happen, there may not be much of it left.”

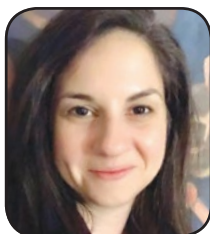
— **Divine**,
producer, Bearded Lady Productions X



TIMOTHY LLOYD



KEITH MILLER



SARA NICHOLS



LISSA PEDERSEN



MATTHIEU
RODRIGUEZ



KIM RONEY

OPEN

Going Green

Local environmental activists reflect on 2023

YEAR
IN
REVIEW

BY CHASE DAVIS

cdavis@mountainx.com

It's no secret that locals and visitors alike fall in love with Western North Carolina largely because of its natural amenities. For some organizations, preserving the region's environment is of paramount importance, as seen in April when MountainTrue, alongside several other local organizations, proposed a ban on single-use plastic bags in Asheville. The initiative garnered support across the community and among local officials but was abruptly brought to a halt in September when the N.C. General Assembly barred municipalities from regulating plastic bags.

However, WNC was able to take several other steps forward to help preserve the local environment. In August, RiverLink opened the greenway at **Karen Cragolin Park** after 17 years of removing toxic soil and replanting native grasses and flora. Additionally, the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy secured 343 acres on top of Deaverview Mountain for a public park.

Xpress asked several local environmental activists to reflect on how the environment and related issues shaped 2023.

What local environmental issue was underreported in 2023?

"After China banned crypto mining, the number of U.S. crypto mines exploded, including here in WNC. Mining cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin provides little in the way of jobs, economic benefits or tax revenues for our communities. Instead, they gobble up immense amounts of electricity that should be used for more socially productive purposes and threaten North Carolina's green energy agenda. Both Buncombe and Madison counties have passed moratoriums on new crypto mines, but we really need broader statewide action."

— **Bob Wagner**,
executive director, MountainTrue

"We learned in 2022 that the French Broad River and its watershed contribute over \$3.8 billion annually to the region's economy but that 19 miles of the river [from the airport to Woodfin] and multiple tributaries are classified as impaired due to fecal coliform. The river's water quality and ecosystem are fragile, but we continue to build and develop, putting additional pressures on the river and watershed without acknowledging the consequences of doing so."

— **Lisa Raleigh**,
executive director, RiverLink

"I think it's easy to lose sight of how the global change in climate is impacting us in the French Broad River valley. For us, it means an influx of people seeking a cool respite and also a reordering of wild species responding to hotter conditions at lower elevations. Our mountains are a treasure box of perfect conditions for humans and biodiversity, but all the systems are under strain now."

— **Jay Leutze**,
senior adviser,
Southern Appalachian
Highlands Conservancy

"Both the City of Asheville and Buncombe County have passed 100% renewable goals. It would be nice if their progress toward meeting these goals was reported and also their plans going forward to meet the goals."

— **Ken Brame**,
president, Sierra Club's WNC Group

Whose local environmental contributions surprised you the most in 2023?

"I was delighted by the attendance and participation in the French Broad River Partnership's annual meeting. The panelists reflected the importance of the river and watershed to the region and included decision-makers and thought leaders from our elected officials, government, industry, business and tourism stakeholders, in



BAG MONSTER: A member of the Plastic-Free WNC coalition shows off a suit of plastic litter at a rally in Pack Square before advocating for a plastic bag ban. The state legislature halted such bans. Photo by Greg Parlier

addition to the 200-plus in attendance. It was a wonderful example of everyone coming together to talk about this critical resource and how we can work together to protect it."

— **Lisa Raleigh**

"The closing of the Canton paper mill cost our region good-paying jobs and will be a painful chapter for many families in Haywood and Buncombe counties. There are also ongoing pollution issues that need to be addressed. However, the French Broad and Pigeon rivers are already bouncing back. I've also been heartened by Canton Mayor **Zeb Smathers'** commitment to cleaning up the site and his vision for a bright postindustrial future for the town."

— **Bob Wagner**

"Woodfin approved new zoning laws to better manage development, including restrictions on steep-slope development, along with restrictions on short-term rentals to better manage its

explosive grow and shortage of affordable housing. Weaverville purchased its first all-electric police car, making it one of the first towns in North Carolina to do that. Buncombe County is establishing a Green Fund to help local citizens invest in energy efficiency."

— **Ken Brame**

"Kids! At our Community Farm in Alexander, kids keep showing up to help us build trails, help with habitat management and implement our regenerative farming concept. Their enthusiasm and elbow grease inspire us all to keep working."

— **Jay Leutze**

What was your organization's greatest achievement in 2023?

"The Sierra Club, along with a coalition of other environmental groups, worked to educate citizens on the



KEN BRAMES



JAY LEUTZE



LISA RALEIGH



BOB WAGNER

negative impacts of plastic bags and Styrofoam. Surveys showed overwhelming support from both citizens and businesses for a ban on both. The city councils of Asheville, Woodfin, Black Mountain, Weaverville and Buncombe County were in favor of the bans.”

— **Ken Brame**

“In 2022, 19 miles of the French Broad River were listed as impaired due to bacteria pollution. MountainTrue found that the biggest culprit is stormwater runoff from farms. This year, we successfully secured \$2 million in the North Carolina budget to help farmers in the French Broad Basin fence cattle out of streams and make improvements to reduce runoff. The French Broad River is a vital natural and economic resource that needs to be protected.”

— **Bob Wagner**

“Securing the chance to create a county park on Deaverview Mountain. The mountain was slated for development, but now we have three years to raise funds to create what will be the most scenic county park in the Eastern United States.”

— **Jay Leutze**

“RiverLink was delighted to activate and connect Karen Cragnolin Park’s greenway this past September in honor of our founder. Karen Cragnolin Park, a former industrial brownfield, perfectly embodies Karen’s commitment to promoting both the environmental and economic vitality of the watershed. In addition, we completed the Southside Community Stormwater Project, a collaborative effort to address water quality issues and the needs of a marginalized community.”

— **Lisa Raleigh**

What was the biggest setback for local environmental initiatives in 2023?

“It was the N.C. General Assembly adding a provision in the final budget bill that prohibited local governments from regulating single-use plastics and Styrofoam containers. This happened just as our local towns and Buncombe County were poised to pass local bans. Unfortunately, the current supermajority in Raleigh had more concern for industry lobbyists in Raleigh than the wishes of local businesses and citizens or the health impacts on people from microplastics in our water and air.”

— **Ken Brame**

“Our policy and funding for wildlife crossings has to keep up with all this road building and expansion. We have taken baby steps as far as some initial funding for better underpasses that wildlife can use, but the time

to fund safe crossings for migrating elk, bears, deer, turtles, right down to salamanders, is before bridges and culverts are installed. Retrofitting is really expensive, and the costs of wildlife and automobile collisions are catastrophic for all involved. Our natural landscape must become more connected, more climate resilient, and we are missing opportunities right now.”

— **Jay Leutze**

“Two come to mind. In March, the U.S. Forest Service adopted a management plan that puts 100,000 acres of old-growth forests and several endangered bat species at risk. Then in September, as we were about to win ordinances banning single-use plastic bags in Asheville and Buncombe County, the state legislature, at the 11th hour, inserted an amendment into the budget that prevents local governments from regulating or banning food packaging, including single-use plastic bags.”

— **Bob Wagner**

“The single-use plastic coalition was an amazing example of environmental leadership, collaboration and support in our region and was backed by science, legal policy, advocacy and a pathway forward. It was disappointing when the General Assembly passed a budget that precluded pursuing this initiative.”

— **Lisa Raleigh**

What should be the top environmental priority in WNC in 2024?

“Loss of farmland. Small farmers are in crisis, and conservation can help keep our farmers in business. Buncombe County does a better job than any other county in the state in helping farmers find conservation solutions that can keep them on the land, but the headwinds are fierce. Federal agriculture policy continues to incentivize consolidation and a business model that disadvantages the family farm in favor of corporate giants. WNC’s economy and culture evolved with close-to-the-soil family farms. Converting more of these productive operations to residential subdivisions would be a tremendous loss to us all.”

— **Jay Leutze**

“RiverLink believes addressing the French Broad River’s water quality — and the sediment loading that is greatly compromising it — needs to be an environmental priority throughout the region. We must take some pressure off this economic backbone and utilize green stormwater infrastructure. With the ongoing development boom throughout the county and watershed, this is the only way to reduce the sediment loading, flooding vulnerabil-

ity and existing water quality impairments. Too much is at stake not to.”

— **Lisa Raleigh**

“Tackling our region’s housing crisis. Housing as an environmental issue? Yes, because we desperately need more housing, and where and how that housing is built is incredibly important. By embracing missing-middle housing and building closer to public amenities and where infrastructure already exists, we can meet our housing needs in a way that is more climate friendly and energy efficient, minimizes vehicle miles traveled and reduces sprawling development that encroaches on our forests, farms and green spaces.”

— **Bob Wagner**

“Doing everything we can to fight climate change. Local governments should be transitioning to electric vehicles, making their buildings more energy efficient, creating resilience hubs in vulnerable neighborhoods, and passing a green bond to fund these types of initiatives. We also need to educate people on the economic incentives available to people to buy electric vehicles, heat pumps, induction stoves and making their homes more energy efficient.”

— **Ken Brame** X

MUSICIAN’S WORKSHOP, INC

TOWN AND MOUNTAIN REALTY

Hot off the press

News about the local news, 2023



BY JON ELLISTON

jonelliston@gmail.com

By some measures, 2023 was a volatile year for Asheville-area media — the good kind of volatile. Several local outlets surged their news operations, bringing new resources, programs and reporters into the mix. Here are some highlights from a year that suffered no lack of local issues begging for media and public scrutiny.

- As part of a self-declared “Big Switch” to a “news-forward footing,” Asheville-based Blue Ridge Public Radio ramped up its reporting staff. Among the organization’s many hires, in May, veteran North Carolina journalist **Laura Lee** became news director; in June, **Laura Hackett** came on board to cover Asheville and Buncombe; in October **Jose Sandoval** joined as afternoon host and reporter; and that same month, **Felicia Sonmez** was introduced as the radio’s growth and development reporter. Now, breaking news: National nonprofit Report for America announced in early December that WCQS has been awarded the services of an early career journalist, whose work RFA will co-fund.
- In March, longtime local journalist **Karen Chávez** was named executive

editor of both the *Asheville Citizen Times* and the *Hendersonville Times-News*. She began with the *Citizen Times* in 2000 and served in several editorial positions before becoming “the first Latina in the newspaper’s more than 150-year history to lead the newsroom,” the newspaper noted.

- February brought the debut of “The Overlook with Matt Peiken,” a thrice-weekly podcast by local radio veteran **Matt Peiken**, formerly of Blue Ridge Public Radio. On the program, Peiken showcases a variety of artistic, political and journalistic voices from “the growing, complicated city of Asheville.”
- *Asheville Watchdog*, the non-profit investigative online outlet launched in 2020, extended its mounting reportorial coverage with work such as the 12-part series “Down Town,” which explored Asheville’s concerns with homelessness, mental health services, crime and public safety over the summer. The series was a finalist for the Institute for Nonprofit News’ 2023 Best Investigative Journalism Award. Meanwhile, the N.C. Press Association awarded the series a first-place finish for its News Enterprise Reporting category. *Asheville Watchdog* earned

six additional NCPA awards this year. The online outlet also added investigative journalist **Andrew R. Jones** to its staff and welcomed **Keith Campbell** as its managing editor. Reporter **John Reinan** also joined the *Watchdog* team.

- *Asheville Blade*, which describes itself as “a leftist local news co-op focusing on hard-hitting journalism, in-depth investigation and sharp views from our city,” became national news this summer as trespassing charges against two *Blade* reporters, **Matilda Bliss** and **Veronica Coit** (who were reporting on a public park clearing by Asheville police) wended through the courts. The case raised hotly debated questions about First Amendment and local press freedoms. Stay tuned: For the second time, the reporters are appealing their trespassing convictions.
- Don’t stop the presses: After announcing in November that it might have to cease publishing, *The Fairview Town Crier*, a free monthly newspaper that has covered the community for 26 years, said in its December issue that after making two key hires, “The Crier will live on.”
- **Angie Newsome**, founder and executive director of Carolina Public Press left the organization in October. Newsome was replaced by **Kara Andrade**, who left shortly after taking over. Amid the changes, former Managing Editor **Frank Taylor** rejoined CPP in his previous role and **Lisa Lopez** assumed the role of interim executive director. The organization also won 14 NCPA awards.



Jon Elliston. Photo by Jack Sorokin

- *Xpress* welcomed two new reporters, **Greg Parlier** and **Chase Davis**, to the news team this year. Meanwhile, **Lisa Allen** came on as an editor. Reporters **Justin McGuire** and **Jessica Wakeman** both received NCPA awards this year: McGuire earned a first-place finish for Sports Feature Writing; Wakeman won two third-place finishes for Editorial Ledes as well as News Feature Writing. Reporter **Brooke Randle** received an honorable mention by the Association of Alternative Newsmedia for Election Coverage.
- Raise a glass for **Tony Kiss**: No recap of 2023’s comings and goings in our mediascape would be complete without noting the death, in August, of this local media icon. The 68-year-old journalist was nigh synonymous with Asheville’s brewing industry, which he helped catapult as “The Beer Guy,” one of his many reportorial guises for the *Asheville Citizen Times* (and later as “Carolina Beer Guy” for *Xpress*). Kiss was remembered for his tremendous personality and deep imprint on Asheville’s arts, culture and journalism. X

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Council approves two affordable housing developments

Asheville City Council approved zoning requests for two housing developments at its Dec. 12 meeting, including a 279-unit apartment complex on Lake Julian in Arden and a 281-unit development on Fairview Road in South Asheville.

Georgia-based Flournoy Development Group, lead developer for the Arden development, requested to have 8.25 acres that front Long Shoals Road and Plott Place rezoned from Community Business II to Residential Expansion – Conditional Zone. The developer also sought a modification to allow 32 units per acre instead of 20 units per acre and reduce the width of internal sidewalks from 10 feet to 5 feet.

The parcel is between Bojangles and the State Employees' Credit Union near Lake Julian. The complex would replace several vacant single-family homes and a small mobile home park.

The project had come before the Council on Nov. 14, when Council members voiced a desire for more family-sized units and a commitment to some form of renewable energy, especially since the parcel qualifies for an energy community tax credit bonus because of its proximity to the retired Duke Energy coal plant on Lake Julian.

In the second presentation Dec. 12, the plan now will include at least 30 total solar panels and at least 14 units would have three bedrooms.

"I was able to sit down with the applicant, and we talked extensively about what it takes to get solar panels, and I am pleased to see that [the developer] is doing that," said Council member **Maggie Ullman**, following the presentation. "I think adding the 14 three-bedroom units was also real-



AFFORDABLE OR NOT: Affordable Housing Officer Sasha Vrtunski discussed the affordability of a proposed 281-unit development in South Asheville. Photo by Chase Davis

ly responsive to our conversation last time. I feel like they listened, and I am really appreciative of that."

The project would include one- to three-bedroom units, as well as a pool, a fitness center, a carwash and a dog spa. Plans include roughly 358 surface parking lot spaces, 24 garage spaces and 40 bicycle spaces.

The complex will have five residential buildings, with 10% of the units deemed affordable for those earning at or below 80% of the area median income. Up to half of the affordable units also would accept housing choice vouchers.

Following Ullman's remarks, the zoning request passed in a 5-1 vote, with Council member **Sage Turner** opposing. Turner did not comment regarding her vote.

Mayor **Esther Manheimer** recused herself from the vote and discussion because the applicant is represented by **Craig Justus**, who practices at the Van Winkle Law Firm, where Manheimer is an attorney.

Council approves grant, zoning for South Asheville development

Council voted to approve the zoning request for a 281-unit development at

115 Fairview Road, the current site of ScreenDoor near Biltmore Village. The Council also approved over \$4.5 million in Land Use Incentive Grant funding for the project.

Charlotte-based developer Catalyst Capital Partners requested that the 8.25 acres be rezoned from Urban Village to Residential Expansion — Conditional Zone. According to urban planner **Clay Mitchell**, the zoning change is required because the development has more than 50 units.

The project is slated to include 269 apartments across two four- to five-story buildings and 12 townhomes across three buildings. The development will provide 333 parking spaces and a pool.

According to project documents, 20% of its units, or 57, would be deemed affordable at or below 80% of the area median income. Up to half of the affordable units would accept housing choice vouchers, according to a presentation from affordable housing officer **Sasha Vrtunski**.

Vrtunski said that the project qualifies for 16 years of LUIG funding under the program's current policies, however the developer requested 21 years of funding due to the site's "locational efficiency," as well as increased construction costs due to existing asbestos. After reviewing the

request, staff recommended a \$4.56 million grant allocation over 18 years.

While the LUIG request was approved in a 4-3 vote, with Council members **Sheneika Smith**, **Kim Roney** and **Antanette Mosley** opposing, concerns remained regarding the policy itself, with several Council members arguing that it does not adequately address affordability. In a Nov. 9 presentation to Council, local nonprofit Thrive Asheville data showed that the median income for Black and Latino families of four is below 50% AMI.

"When we are talking about 80% AMI, we are talking about households earning around \$68,000 per year, which is still not affordable for many minority families," said Mosley. "The current policy hinders our ability to leverage tax dollars for more deeply affordable units."

"We say that equitable, affordable housing is our priority," said Roney. "I want to support Land Use Incentive Grants as a voluntary rent control because I think our community needs that, but if it is not getting us to racial equity, then it is not helping me be responsible for our goals."

Ullman, who voted in support of the grant funding, acknowledged the issues regarding the current LUIG policies but expressed concern about delaying a much-needed housing development.

"This is the last step in a long process for the project and the applicant, and if our current policies are causing concerns, we should have that policy conversation to tell the community to stop pitching these proposals to us," said Ullman. "That conversation is really important for us to have. Otherwise, I feel a lot of discomfort having a project go through exhaustive work to get to us to then say, 'Well we don't like our rules and we want our incentive to be better.'"

Vrtunski said in the presentation that the city is working with national nonprofit Enterprise Community Partners to review its Affordable Housing Plan and expects to have recommendations on affordable housing incentives, including LUIG and the Housing Trust Fund, back from Enterprise by May.

Following the discussion and vote regarding the development's request for LUIG funding, the council passed the rezoning request, 5-2, with Mosley and Roney opposed over the project's affordability.

— Chase Davis



Asheville school board delays vote on Parents' Bill of Rights policies



NOT TODAY: The Asheville City Board of Education delayed a vote on policies written to comply with Senate Bill 49 because they want to consider adding "supportive" language to the seven policies. Photo by Greg Parlier

Four days after Buncombe County Schools passed controversial new policies to comply with the state's new Parents' Bill of Rights, the Asheville City Board of Education postponed action at its meeting Dec. 11.

Board Chair **George Sieburg** said board members wanted to explore how to show support to teachers and students in the policies beyond what has been provided by the N.C. School Boards Association. Opponents of Senate Bill 49 have said it will create an unsafe atmosphere for LGBTQ+ students, while supporters argue it will safeguard parents' role in their children's education.

Unlike the two hours of public comment heard at the BCS meeting last week, just two commenters spoke in front of the Asheville board, both asking the board to delay its vote.

"I know you have heard from many community members, students and families and staff and faculty about the damage that this law will do, particularly to LGBTQ students," said **Craig White**, supportive schools director for the Asheville-based Campaign for Southern Equality. "And I know that you've been working very hard on finding a way to thread the needle to comply with SB 49 without violating federal nondiscrimination laws, such as Title IX. What I would like to say to you tonight is that is not your ... problem to solve. It is not your homework to complete."

White asked the board to wait until the N.C. Department of Public Instruction issues guidance on how school boards can legally comply with both SB 49 and federal civil rights law, adding that NCDPI will soon face

a federal civil rights complaint of its own on the topic.

School board attorney **Chris Campbell** told the board that nothing prevents its members from adding "supportive" language to the policies beyond what is recommended by the school boards association, but they need to have that discussion in an open session, which has not happened yet.

Campbell did ask the board to adopt two procedural elements of the parental involvement policy regarding student health and parental requests for information. The new procedures require parental appeals of an information denial to come before the local school board before going to the state school board.

"It doesn't prevent a parent from going further but gives you a chance to resolve it first," Campbell said.

The procedures also set timelines for staff — first the principal, and then the superintendent — to respond to parental appeals.

"I want to recognize that there are now more hoops that our staff have to jump through to comply with these procedures," he said.

Board members approved the updated procedures 6-0. Board member **James Carter** was not present. The board will discuss the rest of SB 49-related policies at the January board retreat, open to the public and scheduled for Thursday, Jan. 18.

Those policies are parental inspection of and objection to instructional materials, comprehensive health education program, criminal behavior, surveys of students, student health services and staff responsibilities.

Board approves academic calendar for next two years

Students in ACS will get to recover from their Halloween hangover at home next year after the board passed academic calendars for the next two school years Dec. 11.

Board members asked staff to draw up two extra calendar proposals — one with Nov. 1 as an optional workday for teachers and one with Oct. 28 as an optional workday. Two-thirds of the calendar committee preferred the day-after-Halloween option, citing a lack of student focus on that day, historically.

Superintendent **Maggie Fehrman** recommended the board pass the calendar with the Oct. 28 workday to avoid an awkward sequence where students would have days off on Friday, the following Tuesday for Election Day and the following Monday for Veterans Day.

"It seems to me that the teachers on the committee have overwhelmingly asked us to have the day off after Halloween, so we should be listening to that. I just think that the teachers are the ones who are in the classroom," said Vice Chair **Amy Ray** before the board voted 6-0 to approve the Nov. 1 day off.

The board approved the 2024-25 calendar despite complaints that the Aug. 26 start date would require the first semester to extend into January, meaning end-of-semester exams for high schoolers come in mid-January instead of before the winter break, making preparations difficult.

The board's hands were tied because state law requires districts to start

school on the Monday closest to Aug. 26, despite that creating an imbalance on each side of the winter holidays.

An earlier draft calendar for ACS had a start date of Aug. 14, which 70% of the 95 teachers surveyed by the calendar committee preferred.

"This is a state law, and we have, as an elected body, sworn to uphold the laws of this state, which puts us in a really tough position, because we know ... this isn't what's best for students or staff," Sieburg said.

The board also passed a 2025-26 calendar, which is similar except the day after Halloween lands on a Saturday, meaning an optional workday will land on Monday, Oct. 27, 2025.

Superintendent announces central office reorganization

In an update to the board at the end of the Dec. 11 meeting, Fehrman announced a reorganization of the district's central offices.

Fehrman created two new departments — Equity, Policies and Public Relations, and Community Partnerships.

Fehrman said she hasn't been able to spend as much time working specifically on equity in the schools as she would like, and having a dedicated manager to lead that position is essential. Other tasks had been shifted over the years to various departments where they don't necessarily fit, so this reorganization is necessary, Fehrman said.

"What's happened over time is we've centralized a lot of work that needs to go back to our schools. So [we're] taking a really close look at what's happening in each department," Fehrman said.

"We have so many community partners, we have lots of organizations that we work with, and we haven't been able to create a cohesive way to look at what those departments [are doing]. What are we asking of our community partners? How are we tracking the effectiveness of those partnerships?" Fehrman asked rhetorically.

In other news, Fehrman said she is continuing to study the possibility of moving Montford North Star Academy to Asheville Middle School because of low enrollment at both middle schools. The principals of both schools have collected data on how rooms at each school are being used. Preliminarily, Fehrman said there are at least three rooms at Asheville Middle used as offices that could be converted to classrooms.

She said she would have a more thorough analysis of the possible merger at the January board retreat.

— Greg Parlier

Around the region

Mill closing, trail progress, new elected officials mark year in WNC

BY JUSTIN MCGUIRE
jmcguire@mountainx.com

SMALL TOWNS

YEAR IN REVIEW



END OF AN ERA: Canton, which has long billed itself Papertown, faces life without a paper mill for the first time in more than a century. Photo courtesy of Town of Canton

For Western North Carolina cities and towns, 2023 was a year of endings and beginnings.

Canton was dealt a devastating blow when the Pactiv Evergreen paper mill shut down after 115 years. Hendersonville and Brevard, on the other hand, got some good news as construction on the long-planned Ecusta Trail finally got underway.

Meanwhile, Woodfin elected a new mayor for the first time in two decades, while Weaverville welcomed two new Town Council members. All these municipalities and others continued to deal with the region's enormous population growth and related issues such as housing costs, transportation, employment and environmental protection.

Amid these changes, *Xpress* launched "Around the Region" — the monthly feature you are currently reading — in November. In it, we examine topics of concern to small cities and towns outside Asheville.

For this month's feature, *Xpress* asked leaders and residents of these communities to weigh in on the issues that shaped 2023 — and to take a look ahead to 2024.

Who made the biggest impact on your community in 2023?

"The biggest impact in our community has, in fact, been the WNC community itself. I will never be able to adequately say thank you to the people, businesses and prayers that have been bestowed upon Haywood County this year. At our lowest, it was our friends that came to our need and lifted us up to remind us that towns like Canton and her people matter; their stories, their setbacks and their successes."

— **Zeb Smathers**,
mayor of Canton

"Not just one person but a group — Friends of the Ecusta Trail. This rail-

to-trail will connect Hendersonville to Brevard. Hendersonville funded initial feasibility studies, but a grassroots coalition of passionate community members, nonprofits and governmental entities, working since 2008, has led to the recent groundbreaking. This project will have major impact on Hendersonville, Henderson County, Brevard and Transylvania County for our economy, recreational amenities and healthy lifestyle."

— **Barbara Volk**,
mayor of Hendersonville

"The City of Brevard has definitely made the biggest impact on our community. Two years ago they didn't hesitate to step forward to take on the responsibility for constructing and managing the Ecusta Trail in Transylvania County. This year they

applied for and received grants totaling nearly \$46 million toward construction of the trail. Because of their leadership, the Ecusta Trail should be completed in three to four years if all goes according to plans."

— **Mark Tooley**,
president,
Friends of the Ecusta Trail

"Hands down, that person is **Judy Butler**, Town Council member and board member of MANNA FoodBank. Judy personally leads the monthly food distribution in town and led the task force that raised over \$300,000 to build a new playground at Woodfin Elementary School."

— **Jim McAllister**,
mayor of Woodfin

"We have been fortunate to have a tremendous manufacturing com-

munity in Fletcher. We are thankful for their consistent investment in our community. Our manufacturers have created high-quality and high-paying jobs. Additionally, we are excited about new manufacturers coming into town. For example, the French tech company Tageos has decided to establish a North American headquarters in Fletcher. Tageos will invest \$19.25 million and bring 64 jobs to Henderson County."

— **Preston Blakely**,
mayor of Fletcher

"The biggest impact has been made by forging strong, collaborative teams. The Ecusta Trail is progressing in partnership with Henderson County, NCDOT, Friends of Ecusta Trail, Conserving Carolina and our representatives in Washington, D.C. Our beautiful new soccer field



PRESTON BLAKELY



MAUREEN COPELOF



JOE FISHLEIGH



JIM MCALLISTER



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ASHANTI TERNOIR



MARK TOOLEY

was made possible by Transylvania Youth Soccer Association. Our economy and downtown remain vibrant thanks to partnerships with Heart of Brevard, Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority and Transylvania Economic Alliance.”

— **Maureen Copelof**,
mayor of Brevard

How has your community maintained its uniqueness in the face of growth this year?

“Uniqueness comes not from building strip malls and megadevelopments with our precious mountains in the background, but instead comes from protecting open space, building where density already exists and balancing growth with protecting our county’s rural character. We are struggling with this. Crab Creek staved off a major storage facility, but many new developments are coming, and our loosey-goosey land rules promise more of the same unless we can tighten up those rules.”

— **David Weintraub**,
executive director,
Center for Cultural Preservation
in Hendersonville

“For many years, Fletcher has been considered a bedroom community to Asheville. However, we have an opportunity to embrace growth while still maintaining our hometown feeling. We are expecting and have already made investments in serving our community in relation to growth. We would like to continue pushing forward our Heart of Fletcher [Town Center] Project and also investing in recreation. We have added amenities such as basketball, tennis and pickleball courts at Bill Moore Community Park but would also like to extend our greenway.”

— **Preston Blakely**

“The people of Woodfin have been energized by the opening of Silver-Line Park on the French Broad River and the coming together of neighbors to support Woodfin Elementary School and MANNA FoodBank.”

— **Jim McAllister**

“Clearly defining our vision and holding numerous public input ses-

sions to hear what citizens value about Brevard has ensured that Brevard’s unique characteristics are front and center as we manage growth. We tie all of our decisions back to our vision and values when working on economic development, infrastructure upgrades, zoning changes, etc. This focus has allowed us to sustain the historical downtown, beautiful natural environment and close community connectedness that make Brevard unique.”

— **Maureen Copelof**

“In Canton, an economic crisis, growth and other challenges have been constant in 2023. From zero hour of the mill closing, we have been purposeful in desiring to build a future that is directly tied to our past; we can still be a mill town without a mill. Canton’s next chapter will be one that allows us to maintain our beliefs, unique history and principles while at the same time bringing in new ideas and innovation.”

— **Zeb Smathers**

“We work to blend old and new. The reimagined Laura E. Corn Mini Golf transferred some favorite elements of the old course and brought in new features, including handicapped-accessible holes. We continue to support such community favorites as Rhythm & Brews, Bearfootin’ Art Walk and our farmers market, but strive to improve what we already have, as with a new streetscape for Seventh Avenue.”

— **Barbara Volk**

What changes have you noticed in your community in 2023? What changes are you looking forward to in 2024?

“We elected a new mayor! I have been a Woodfin Township resident for the last seven years and am looking forward to seeing how our newly elected mayor, **Jim McAllister**, rises to the occasion in this elevated leadership role.”

— **Ashanti Ternoir**,
community member and
service provider

“For my rural community of Sandy Mush, I am excited that we have seen

CONTINUES ON PAGE 24



BARBARA VOLK



ALLISON WALKER



DAVID WEINTRAUB



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growth and engagement in our young families. Community and connection are key for rural communities. Building out the high-speed fiber internet was instrumental in drawing and retaining our young families, and our Sandy Mush Community Center provides ample opportunities for community members to gather for events, volunteer opportunities and various activities to strengthen the community.”

— **Terri Wells,**
Buncombe County commissioner

“I live in Woodfin and work in South Weaverville part time. The traffic is getting worse and worse by the minute. And there are so many wrecks.”

— **Allison Walker,**
auto mechanic

“Our neighborhood is West Hendersonville. Several roundabouts are in process of being constructed on U.S. 64/Brevard Road; their usefulness will be more down the road. The Ecusta Trail project is already an economic driver for this area. All neighborhoods need more quality, affordable housing and neighbors willing to see the value of that housing.”

— **Joe Fishleigh,**
executive coach

“As a resident of Weaverville, I’ve been excited to see the accessible playground arrive at Lake Louise and the Town of Weaverville’s police Mach-E. The greatest need I see for Weaverville is more access to sidewalks that access downtown and Weaverville Boulevard; I see more people walking across the interstate overpass with no shoulder.”

— **Sara Nichols,** *regional planner,*
Land of Sky Regional Council

What is the biggest issue facing your community entering 2024?

“How to handle the many development proposals the town is receiving. We have so much undeveloped land in Woodfin that must be thoughtfully considered. Our council will not allow projects that would change the peaceful character of Woodfin. Together, we will figure it out.”

— **Jim McAllister**

“Weak land protection continues to haunt us as we enter the threshold of 2024. Allowing overdevelopment has consequences, including reduced water quality, fragmentation of ecosystems, raising the risks of dangerous landslides, loss of rural land and

farms, and the cultural history of our community. We can’t eat our smart-phones, drink McMansions or breathe in more roadways. We can protect what’s left so we, and the rest of the species that live here, can heal.”

— **David Weintraub**

“We are updating our long-range plan. This project, GenH, will guide growth and development for the next 20 years. We received over 4,000 surveys on how people would like Hendersonville to grow, from which we will develop a vision for the future. The challenge for the staff and members of City Council will be to adopt plans and ordinances to fulfill that vision. We expect to have this ready by the summer of 2024.”

— **Barbara Volk**

“Affordability. As mayor, I have come to terms that there’s no other force that is and will continue to change Canton and WNC more than affordability. The cost of living is affecting everything from early child care and health care to the decisions we make every day for our families. It is not lost on me that it’s easy to identify this problem but much more difficult to solve. Affordability is the issue which keeps me up at night.”

— **Zeb Smathers**

“The lack of affordable and workforce housing is the biggest issue we face. Prices for home purchase and rentals have skyrocketed, and availability is less than 1%. This issue is compounded by natural features [like mountains, flood plains, and national and state forests] that limit available land [in Brevard]. Dealing with this issue requires collaboration between local government, nonprofits, faith organizations and for-profit developers.”

— **Maureen Copeloff**

“We have made significant progress on our Heart of Fletcher [Town Center] Project over the years. The town owns over 40 acres of land that we would like to transform into downtown Fletcher. The initial 5 acres along Hendersonville Road near Town Hall were under contract with a developer to create a mixed-use development but fell out of contract because of hurdles with NCDOT. Nevertheless, we will continue to try to cultivate a public-private partnership to continue to push forward this significant project that is key to Fletcher and important to residents.”

— **Preston Blakely**

**GIVE!LOCAL HOUSE AD
(MANDATORY)**

AROUND THE REGION: Do you live in a small town or city in Western North Carolina? We want to hear from you. What are the top issues facing your community? What stories aren’t being told? Contact Xpress reporter Justin McGuire at jmcguire@mountainx.com. X

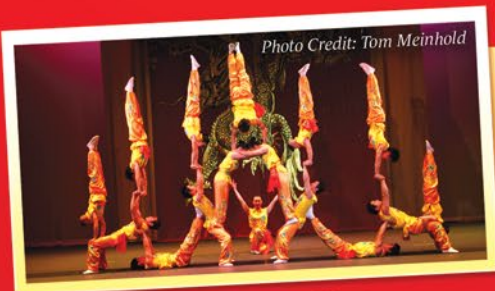
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- String Lights
- Garland & Tinsel
- Ornaments
- Metallic Wrapping Paper & Bags
- Ribbons & Bows
- Bubble Wrap, Styrofoam & Plastic Film
- Real & Artificial Trees & Wreaths

**To find recycling outlets for
items, download the AVL
Collects app or visit
ashevillenc.gov/AVLCollects.**



Hope in abundance

WNC's collective spirit carries us forward

BY XPRESS STAFF
news@mountainx.com

It's been a challenging year across the globe — wars, gaping political divides, ferocious weather events and a host of other ills. In WNC, our families, neighbors and friends also faced struggles with encroaching development, a visible unhoused community, downtown crime and a wage-and-cost-of-living mismatch amid a hit-or-miss safety net.

But life is nothing without hope, and fortunately, this area is rife with it. Collectively, people across our communities worked throughout 2023 to make our region sustainable, fair, just and supportive. Volunteers at Asheville GreenWorks, for example, dedicated countless hours across multiple cleanup days to improve the environmental conditions of our waterways and neighborhoods. Meanwhile, Made by Mountains launched its new Outdoor Equity Fund, a \$125,000 grant program that aims to support individuals and organizations focused on advancing equity in outdoor recreation. And athletes across our city continued to raise funds for nonprofits through AVL Hoppers, a volleyball league dedicated to charitable giving.

In this spirit, Xpress reached out to dozens of local residents to discuss what keeps them hopeful heading into 2024. As you read their responses below, may you find their optimism contagious.

Who is your local hero of the year and why?

“My local heroes of the year are the first responders for the work they do round the clock, every day of the

year, in challenging circumstances. I am especially appreciative of the relationships they build in the community with people who need help, with people who care about those who are in need and with colleagues within the broad first-responders community.”

— **Amanda Edwards**,
Buncombe County commissioner

“My local hero is not just one person, but many: All of you out there doing mutual aid work in our community. Whether you're fighting for food justice, housing equity or something else, your work is needed, and I see you and appreciate you so much. Some notable groups you should check out are Asheville Survival Program, 12 Baskets, Asheville Solidarity Network, BeLoved and, on UNCA's campus, the Food Equity Initiative.”

— **Allie Daum**,
senior at UNC Asheville

“My local hero is **Austin McIver ‘Mack’ Dennis**, the senior pastor of First Baptist Church — that huge dome you can see from almost anywhere in Asheville. In most every respect, Mack is not what you would expect. His ‘talk’ and his ‘walk’ have to do first and foremost with reconciliation in a time of division and conflict. He is heavily involved in Project Aspire, intended to create affordable workforce housing, early childhood development and educational opportunities for downtown.”

— **Terry Roberts**,
author

“Hmm ... I don't believe in heroes, so I'll just nominate all the black bears, who, by giving absolutely zero f*cks, have won our hearts, dominated social media, gone viral worldwide and redefined what it means to live, laugh and love in the mountains of Western North Carolina. Plus, they only knock over my trash cans when they contain scraps from the best restaurants in the area, so I know they have impeccable taste in garbage.”



THE GREATER GOOD: Asheville GreenWorks regularly rallies volunteers to tidy up the community, one item at a time. Looking toward 2024, dozens of residents share what local initiatives give them hope for the new year. Photo courtesy of GreenWorks

— **Stu Helm**,
food blogger and food tour guide,
Stu Helm Food Fan

“**alexandria monique ravel** and her commendable efforts to ‘Bring Black Back to The Block.’ She is my local hero because she helps elevate the dreams and businesses of folks who look like us. She is the creator and owner of Noir Collective AVL, a boutique, art gallery and bookstore featuring Black entrepreneurs located on The Block within the retail spaces of YMI Cultural Center, one of the oldest operating African American cultural centers in the United States.”

— **Karis Roberts**,
executive director,
Asheville Brewers Alliance

“My heroes are the men, women and children that have been affected by the closing of [the] Evergreen Packaging [paper mill]. In the face of severe emotional and economic trauma, these people have found a way to put one foot in front of the other with the confidence that better days are ahead. Like so many these days, their smiles hide their struggles, but they believe in each other, their community and its survival.”

— **Zeb Smathers**,
mayor of Canton

“**David Rodgers** is my local hero for his multiyear effort to rebuild Jones

Park in North Asheville. When the park was razed in 2021, David didn't hesitate to pick up the baton and spend two years of his life convincing city leaders to sign a multiagency agreement to maintain the park, then organizing a massive effort of 1,000-plus volunteers working over five days in October to rebuild the park as Candace Pickens Memorial Park.”

— **Brooke Heaton**,
web architect

What should be the community's top priority for 2024?

“From my perspective, creative policies for maintaining and increasing Asheville's flora and fauna, which may include developing neighborhood nurseries and pocket forests.”

— **Keith Aitken**,
urban forester, City of Asheville

“Let's have more real, meaningful conversations where collaborative visions are brought to the table for smart, manageable growth. We are fortunate to be a part of a place that is managing the challenges of success rather than struggling in an atrophying community. More ‘and’ conversations and fewer ‘either/or’ conversations will foster greater cooperation and create opportunities for more people to succeed in the years to come. We all have different roles to play, and

OPEN



SIMONE ADAMS



KEITH AITKEN



MORGAN ALBRITTON



BEN BROWN



ALLIE DAUM

there are many perspectives and a lot of passion to harness for good.”

— **Vic Isley**,
CEO of Explore Asheville and
president of BCTDA

“Free education! If we want a stronger and more competent workforce, we should be focusing on making higher education free for all people, so that we as a people can be better in the long run.”

— **Xero Koffsky**,
junior at Warren Wilson College

“A commitment to workers and families. Our service workers are the lifeblood of our economy. I hope we can bring the full portfolio of resources to the table to fully fund our schools, early childhood development and deeply affordable housing initiatives. We have prioritized other areas and allowed folks to be unhoused, food insecure and cost burdened for housing, and we’ve significantly shorted our educators and schools. We can do better.”

— **Ben Williamson**,
nonprofit administrator

“More housing of every type. Ideally, for those at lower income levels, of course. And especially in urban areas closer to jobs and daily needs, where families can do without a car for every adult. But we should be honest about the subsidies, the support services and the political angst the commitment requires and stop pretending we can close housing supply-demand gaps by arm-twisting developers to do what the market cannot come close to providing.”

— **Ben Brown**,
retired partner in
urban planning firm

“Asheville’s top priority should be zoning reform to allow more ‘missing

middle’ housing [townhouses, duplexes, triplexes, garden apartments, etc.]. This one measure would simultaneously combat climate change, encourage cheaper housing, help repair a legacy of segregation and enhance livability in a city overly dependent on automobile exhaust. Its defeat, on the other hand, would force locals to confront their pinched-face hypocrisy in the mirror and admit they really aren’t progressives after all. It’s win-win.”

— **Peter Robbins**,
retired lawyer, Marshall area

“I have the opportunity to work with a lot of young people every day, and I think that they should be our community’s top priority in 2024. We should be addressing substance and violence prevention, youth mental health, substance misuse, workforce development and education in more impactful ways. Our children are the future, and they should be involved in the planning and preparation of that future.”

— **Michael Hayes**,
executive director of Umoja Health,
Wellness and Justice Collective

What from this year gives you hope for WNC in 2024?

“I am excited about the energy and interest that is sparking around WNC agribusiness, ag-tech and resilient local agriculture and food systems. In November, I attended the Western NC AgTech and Agribusiness Discovery Event with leaders from across our region to discuss opportunities for growing agribusiness to have positive multigenerational economic impacts across WNC. Now is the time for us to work collaboratively to ensure we have robust and resilient agriculture and food systems.”

— **Terri Wells**,
Buncombe County commissioner

“I love where we live — the rivers, forests, mountains and people. How lucky are we to call this little pocket of the universe our home? I am hopeful every time I step outside my front door. Young people and their passion give me hope. Also, the great nonprofits we have here and the support they receive from our community gives me hope.”

— **Joe Fishleigh**,
executive coach

“This year I connected with an amazing community of Black and brown people in WNC who enjoy the outdoors. Not only do they enjoy it, they are creating opportunities to help others feel a sense of belonging. Plus, the outdoor industry is ready to better understand the need for inclusivity. With WNC being the epicenter of outdoor recreation in the East, 2024 feels like an important moment in time for #representationmatters in the outdoors.”

— **Simone Adams**,
executive director,
Color My Outdoors

“I have seen the county and city really listening to the community and coming up with multiple innovative ideas to help manage concerns voiced by community members, i.e., BCSO Co-Responder program and Asheville Fire Department Community Responder Team, etc. These programs and more in development give me hope for positive changes to individuals in need in our community and, therefore, our community at large.”

— **Sherrie Pace**,
licensed social worker and
addictions specialist

“Since launching ‘The Overlook with Matt Peiken’ podcast, I’ve learned so

much more about what and who make this city tick. In particular, I’m awed by the people doing the day-to-day work of Asheville’s smaller social service nonprofits. It will largely be through their work if our city makes headway with some of our more intractable issues.”

— **Matt Peiken**,
host,
“The Overlook with Matt Peiken”

“Despite the financial- and heart-crushing burglary we were forced to stomach in February 2023, we have learned a lot about boundaries for [our] ‘Nerd Sanctuary’ Morgan’s Comics to make our haven a more safe, nearby, inexpensive, fun and educational place for locals and visitors to enjoy their day. This will be the first year since the ‘bleak vortex’ of 2020 that we have not had to take out a business loan, which lends to our hope that we will continue to grow in a positive direction as the new pastel and neon buds begin to appear all over our beloved Blue Ridge Mountains again this spring 2024.”

— **Morgan Albritton**,
owner, Morgan’s Comics

“In 2019, during my run for office, one of my top concerns was the disconnect and the divide within the community and organizations. I have noticed a community that is synchronizing, collaborating and working together to address many of the city’s major challenges, such as public safety, homelessness and affordable housing. The improved communication and collaboration between the City of Asheville and Buncombe County to eliminate and reduce cost and achieve similar goals is promising. The awareness of the need to work as a team gives me hope moving forward.”

— **Sandra Kilgore**,
vice mayor, City of Asheville **X**



AMANDA EDWARDS



JOE FISHLEIGH



MICHAEL HAYES



BROOKE HEATON



STU HELM



VIC ISLEY



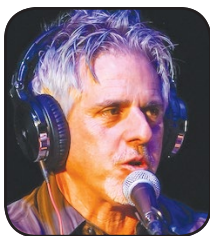
SANDRA KILGORE



XERO KOFFSKY



SHERRIE PACE



MATT PEIKEN



PETER ROBBINS



KARIS ROBERTS



TERRY ROBERTS



ZEB SMATHERS




TERRI WELLS



BEN WILLIAMSON

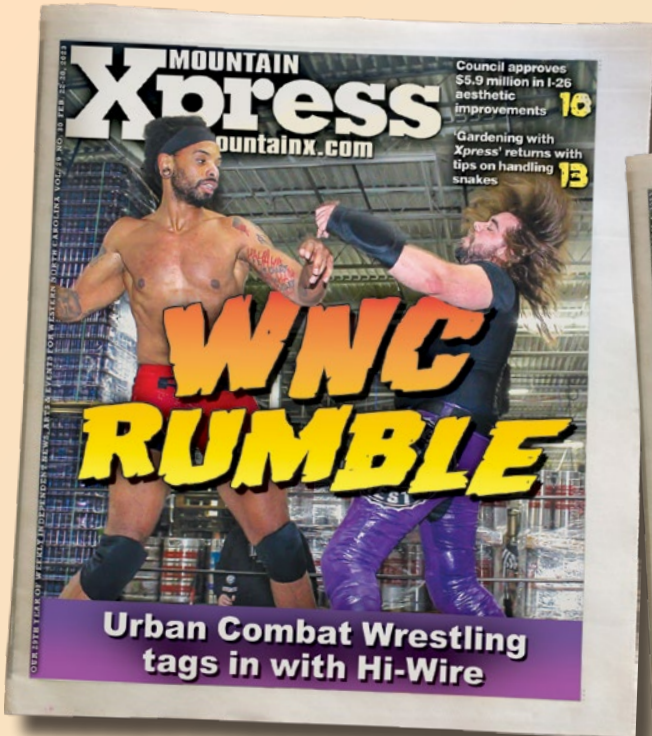
Got It Covered

Every week, Xpress proudly displays a new issue in its purple distribution boxes. Every cover has a backstory. For some, we work with local illustrators; for others, we connect with local photographers. We're also fortunate to have a wonderful design team that comes up big when a cover story calls for a more conceptual design. Featured here are 12 of our top favorites from 2023.

— Thomas Calder 

Vol. 29, No. 30 Feb. 22-28

Vol. 29, No. 26
Jan. 25-31



Vol. 29, No. 35
March 29 - April 4



Vol. 29,
No. 40
May 3-9



Vol. 29, No. 38
April 19-25



Vol. 29, No. 45
June 7-13

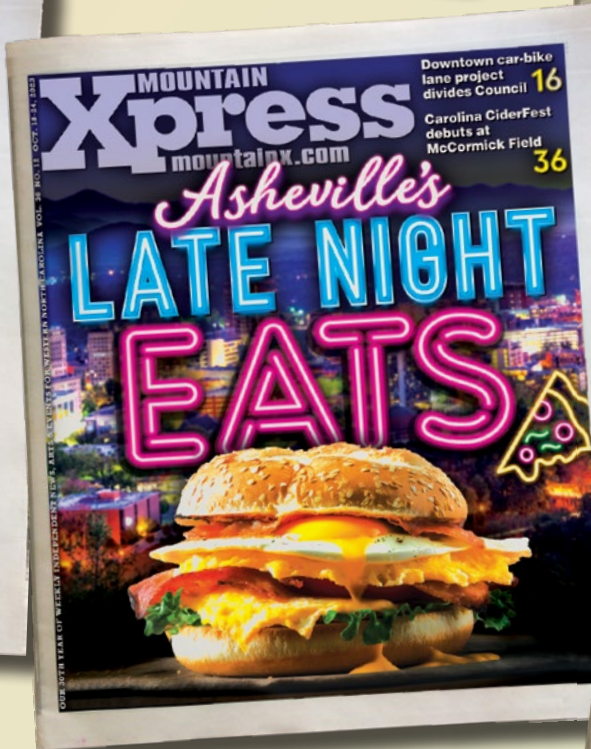


Vol. 29, No. 52
July 26 - Aug. 1

Vol. 30, No. 3 Aug. 16-22



Vol. 30, No. 7 Sept. 13-19



Vol. 30, No. 12 Oct. 18-24



Vol. 30, No. 14 Nov. 1-7



Vol. 30, No. 20 Dec. 13-19

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Caption

DEC. 13 - DEC. 21, 2023

For a full list of community calendar guidelines, please visit mountainx.com/calendar. For questions about free listings, call 828-251-1333, opt. 4. For questions about paid calendar listings, please call 828-251-1333, opt. 1.

- Online-only events
- Feature, page XX
- Feature, page XX
- More info, page XX
- More info, page XX

WELLNESS

Free Zumba Gold
Fitness program that involves cardio and Latin-inspired dance. Free, but donations for the instructor are appreciated. For more information please call (828) 350-2058.
WE (12/20), 12pm, Stephens Lee Recreation Center, 30 George Washington Carver Ave

Asheville Women's Breathwork Circle
A transformative and empowering women's circle where the power of our breath meets the strength and healing of sisterhood.
TH (12/21), 6pm, \$22, WellSpring Wellness Center, Tunnel Road, Asheville, NC, USA, 960 Tunnel Rd, Asheville

Dharma & Discuss
People coming together in friendship to meditate, learn and discuss the Dharma.

Beginners and experienced practitioners are welcome.
TH (12/21), 7pm, Quietude Micro-retreat Center, 1130 Montreat Rd, Black Mountain

Therapeutic Slow Flow Yoga
A blend of meditation, breathing and movement. All bodies, genders, and identities welcome. Bring your own mat.
SA (12/23), 10am, Mount Inspiration Apparel, 444 Haywood Rd, Ste 103, Asheville

Mettā Meditation
In-person guided meditation focused on benevolence & loving-kindness. This event is free to attend. Beginners and experienced practitioners are welcome.
MO (12/25), 7pm, Quietude Micro-retreat Center, 1130 Montreat Rd, Black Mountain

Qigong for Health
A part of traditional Chinese medicine that involves using exercises to optimize energy within the body, mind and spirit.
TU (12/26), 9am, \$15 - \$130, Dragon Phoenix, 51 North Merrimon Ave #109, Asheville

Indoor Walk Party
Pump up the volume and get moving with others as you start the day in the Stephens-Lee gym. For more info, call (828) 350-2058 or email kkennedy@ashevillenc.gov.
WE (12/27), 8:30am, Stephens Lee Recreation Center, 30 George Washington Carver Ave

Morning Meditation
Everyone is most welcome to join the sit; however no meditation instructions are provided.
FR (12/29), 7:15am, Quietude Micro-retreat Center, 1130 Montreat Rd, Black Mountain

Yoga for Everyone
A free-in person yoga class for all ages and abilities that is led by registered yoga instructor Mandy. Bring your own mat, water bottle and mask. Registration required.
SA (12/30), 9:30am, Black Mountain Presbyterian, 117 Montreat Rd, Black Mountain

Magnetic Minds: Depression & Bipolar Support Group
Free weekly peer-led meeting for those living with depression, bipolar, and related mental health challenges. For more information call (828) 367-7660 or email depressionbipolarasheville@gmail.com.

SA (12/30), 2pm, 1316 Ste C Parkwood Rd, 1316 Ste C Parkwood Rd, Asheville

Gentle Yoga for Queer & GNC Folks
This class is centered towards creating an affirming and inclusive space for queer and gender non-conforming individuals.
SU (12/31), 1:30pm, West Asheville Yoga, 602 Haywood Rd

New Year's Eve Morning Flow w/Chakra Balancing
With instructor Jamie, levels 1+. Get ready for 2024. Set your intentions and release what needs to stay in 2023. This class includes an extra 30 minutes of chakra balancing, while you lie back or sit in meditation. Registration is required.
MO (1/1), 10:30am, \$22, One World Brewing West, 520 Haywood Rd

Tai Chi for Beginners
A class for anyone interested in Tai Chi and building balance, whole body awareness and other health benefits.
MO (1/1), 11:30am, \$15 - \$130, Dragon Phoenix, 51 North Merrimon Ave #109, Asheville

Nia Dance Fitness
A sensory-based movement practice that draws from martial arts, dance arts and healing arts.
TU (1/2), 10:30am, \$15 - \$130, Dragon Phoenix, 51 North Merrimon Ave #109, Asheville

Tai Chi for Balance
A gentle Tai Chi exercise class to help improve balance, mobility, and quality of life. All ages are

welcome.
WE (1/3), 11:30am, \$15 - \$130, Dragon Phoenix, 51 North Merrimon Ave #109, Asheville

Tai Chi Fan
This class helps build balance and whole body awareness. All ages and ability levels welcome. Fans will be provided.
WE (1/3), 1pm, \$15 - \$130, Dragon Phoenix, 51 North Merrimon Ave #109, Asheville

ART

Weaving at Black Mountain College: Anni Albers, Trude Guermonprez & Their Students
Weaving at Black Mountain College: Anni Albers, Trude Guermonprez, and Their Students will be the first exhibition devoted to textile practices at Black Mountain College. Gallery open Monday through Saturday, 11am. Exhibition through Jan. 6, 2024.
WE (12/20), 11am, Black Mountain College Museum & Arts Center, 120 College St

Western North Carolina Glass: Selections from the Collection
Western North Carolina is important in the history of American glass art. A variety of techniques and a willingness to push boundaries of the medium can be seen in this selection of works. Gallery open daily, 11am, closed Tuesday. Exhibition through April 15, 2024.
TH (12/21), 11am, Asheville Art Museum, 2 S. Pack Square

Public Tour: Intersections in American Art
Docent led tours of the Museum's Collection and special exhibitions. No reservations are required.
TH (12/21), 6pm, Asheville Art Museum, 2 S. Pack Square

Lelia Canter: Explorations in Heritage & Nature
Lelia Canter's vibrant paintings depict Cherokee, Celtic, and Appalachian heritage with unique and informative illustrations of Appalachian history and culture. Gallery open Monday through Saturday, 8am. Exhibition through Dec. 30.
FR (12/22), 8am, Zuma Coffee, 7 N. Main St, Marshall

Daily Craft Demonstrations
Two artists of different media will explain and demonstrate their craft with informative materials displayed at their booths, daily. These free and educational opportunities are open to the public.
TU (12/26), 10am, free, Folk Art Center, MP 382, Blue Ridge Parkway

Creating Textures: Focus Gallery Exhibition
This exhibition features the work of five Guild members: Michael Hatch, Valerie Berlage, Joseph Rhodes, Barry Rhodes, and Joanna Warren. Each artist will display their own respectable arts and crafts during this exhibition. Open daily, 10 am. Exhibition through Feb., 2024.
WE (12/27), 10am, Folk Art Center, MP 382, Blue Ridge Parkway

OPEN

American Art in the Atomic Age: 1940-1960

This exhibition features works created during the 1940s-1960s. Much of the art during this time expressed the uncertainty of the era, often relying on automatism and biomorphic forms. Gallery open daily, 11am, closed Tuesday. Exhibition through April 29, 2024.

WE (12/27), 11am, Asheville Art Museum, 2 S. Pack Square

In the Flow: The Art of Safi Martin

Safi Martin, recently begun creating her own art using a unique form of painting. Martin involves pouring acrylic paints directly on the canvas, which conveys a celebration of flow, both in art and in life. Gallery open Monday through Saturday, 11am and Sunday, 1 pm. Exhibition through Jan. 7.

WE (12/27), 11am, free, Flood Gallery Fine Art Center, 850 Blue Ridge Rd, Black Mountain

Beyond the Lens: Photorealist Perspectives on Looking, Seeing & Painting

This exhibition offers viewers an opportunity to explore a singular and still vigorous aspect of American photorealism. Gallery open daily, 11am, closed on Tuesday. Exhibition through Feb. 5, 2024.

SA (12/30), 11am, Asheville Art Museum, 2 S. Pack Square

Romare Bearden: Ways of Working

This exhibition highlights works on paper and explores many of Romare Bearden's most frequently used mediums including screen-printing, lithography, hand colored etching, collagraph, monotype, relief print, photomontage, and collage. Gallery open daily, 11am, closed Tuesday. Exhibition

through Jan. 22, 2024. **SA (12/30), 11am, Asheville Art Museum, 2 S. Pack Square**

Vessels of Merriment

This invitational exhibition will feature handcrafted drinking vessels by 15 studio potters from around the country. Viewers will have the opportunity to browse ceramic mugs, goblets, whiskey cups, wine cups, tumblers and more. Gallery open Monday through Sunday, 10am. Exhibition through Dec. 31.

SU (12/31), 10am, Grovewood Gallery, 111 Grovewood Rd

Spark of the Eagle Dancer: The Collecting Legacy of Lambert Wilson

This exhibition celebrates the legacy of Lambert Wilson, a passionate collector of contemporary Native American art. Gallery open Tuesday through Friday, 10am. Exhibition through June 28, 2024

WE (1/3), 10am, free, WCU Bardo Arts Center, 199 Centennial Dr, Cullowhee

Weaving at Black Mountain College: Anni Albers, Trude Guermonprez & Their Students
The first exhibition devoted to textile practices at Black Mountain College. Gallery open Monday through Saturday, 11am. Exhibition through Jan. 6, 2024.

WE (1/3), 11am, Black Mountain College Museum & Arts Center, 120 College St

COMMUNITY MUSIC

Advent Recital Series & Lunch

The recitals will last thirty minutes, and lunch will follow for a donation of \$6. Come enjoy some quiet time and hear music reflecting the season's

beauty. **WE (12/20), 12pm, \$6, Trinity Episcopal Church, 60 Church St**

Chloe & Leah of Rising Appalachia

An intimate candlelit evening concert of unreleased new songs, a global song and expressive singing master class. The vocal master class explores sound vibration and body movement as tools for self-awareness. **WE (12/20), 7pm, \$55 - \$100, AyurPrana Listening Room, 312 Haywood Rd, Asheville, North Carolina 28806-4232, USA**

The Songwriter Sessions w/Elaine Anderson, Jon Charles Dwyer & Charlie Wilkinson

An evening of original songs in a natural acoustic listening room. This week features Elaine Anderson, Jon Charles Dwyer and Charlie Wilkinson. **WE (12/20), 7pm, The Brandy Bar, 504 7th Ave E, Hendersonville**

December Live Series: Laura Boswell

Laura Boswell, on guitar, will be playing intimate folk music with classical influence that has been described as meditative, transcendental. **TH (12/21), 6pm, Asheville Art Museum, 2 S. Pack Square**

Ritual of Senses Winter: Solstice Celebration w/Meg Mulhearn

A record release party with Meg Mulhearn that features Elisa Faires, Farewell Phoenix and DJ set from NHN. **TH (12/21), 7pm, Eulogy, 10 Buxton Ave, Asheville**

Travelling Pilsburys Holiday Special

Five local Asheville singer and songwriters, get together for an evening of brilliant vocal harmonies and beautiful songwriting. There will be a hot chocolate and cookie special on the menu for

the evening. **TH (12/21), 7:30pm, Asheville Guitar Bar, 122 Riverside Dr**

Candlelight Holiday Special: The Nutcracker & More

A live, multi-sensory musical experience to awe-inspiring locations. Discover the music of *The Nutcracker* and more under the gentle glow of candlelight. **TH (12/21), 8:45pm, \$38, AyurPrana Listening Room, 312 Haywood Rd, Asheville**

December Live Series: Laura Boswell

Boswell, on guitar, will be playing intimate folk music with classical influence that has been described as meditative, transcendental, and within the "chamber-folk" genre. **FR (12/22), 12pm, Asheville Art Museum, 2 S. Pack Square**

Vienna Light Orchestra

A collection of holiday favorites performed by world-class musicians and vocalists from around the world. With over two thousand flickering candles illuminating performers and surrounded by sparkling Christmas trees. **FR (12/22), 4pm, \$65, Asheville Masonic Temple, 80 Broadway St, Asheville**

Candlelight: Holiday Pop Classics & Modern Favorites

A live, multi-sensory musical experience in awe-inspiring locations like never seen before in Asheville. Discover the music of holiday pop classics and modern favorites under the gentle glow of candlelight. **FR (12/22), 6:30pm, \$38, AyurPrana Listening Room, 312 Haywood Rd, Asheville, North Carolina 28806-4232, USA**

Asheville FM Live Music Sessions: Thomas Kozak & The Poets

This month features Thomas Kozak, a

10 years of Asheville's *Brightest* Holiday Tradition!

Winter Lights

10 YEARS



Presented by:



BILTMORE PARK TOWN SQUARE

Join us this winter for enchanting displays throughout the gardens!

THE NORTH CAROLINA ARBORETUM ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

November 17 - December 31
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locally-based singer-songwriter known for his poetic lyricism and captivating guitar mastery.
FR (12/22), 7:30pm, The Getaway River Bar, 790 Riverside Dr, Asheville

Queen Bee & The Honeylovers Holiday Concert
 Hear your favorite holiday standards as well as Asheville-themed originals in "Hot Club" swing style with a string quintet and tight vocal harmonies.
FR (12/22), 8pm, \$15 - \$20, LEAF Global Arts, 19 Eagle St

Holiday Caroling
 A gathering neighborhood friends and family for an afternoon of caroling. There will be at least one musician on hand and songbooks for those who want to sing along.
SA (12/23), 3pm, Barn Door Ciderworks, 23 Lytle Rd, Fletcher

Classical Guitar Holiday Show: Andy Jurik, Rachel Hansbury & Jake Mossman
 Classical guitar compositions by Andy Jurik accompanied by the beautiful vocals of Rachel Hansbury singing Edith Piaf with holiday classics

and Flamenco by Jake Mossman.
SA (12/23), 6pm, Asheville Guitar Bar, 122 Riverside Dr

Asheville FM Live Music Sessions: Thomas Kozak & The Poets
 This month features Thomas Kozak, a locally-based singer-songwriter known for his poetic lyricism and captivating guitar mastery.
SA (12/30), 7:30pm, The Getaway River Bar, 790 Riverside Dr, Asheville

Open Folk
 A songwriters showcase where the audience is required to stay silent while six songwriters play three original songs each. Donations are accepted.
TU (12/26), 7pm, Funkatorium, 147 Coxe Ave

Adama Dembele, Chinobay & Friends
 An evening of African-themed music featuring two talented masters of their craft, Adama Dembele (of Ivory Coast) and Chinobay (of Uganda).
TH (12/28), 7:30pm, \$18 - \$20, White Horse Black Mountain, 105C Montreat Rd, Black Mountain

Asheville FM Live Music Sessions: Thomas Kozak & The Poets
 This month features Thomas Kozak, a locally-based singer-songwriter known for his poetic lyricism and captivating guitar mastery.
SA (12/30), 7:30pm, The Getaway River Bar, 790 Riverside Dr, Asheville

Billy Jonas Band: Pre-New Year's Eve Family Concert
 A performance for adults, families, school groups, faith communities that entertains and moves people literally and figuratively.
SU (12/31), 1pm, \$9 - \$11, The Greig Eagle, 185 Clingman Ave

Reuter Center Singers
 Seasoned seniors that study and perform classical, popular, show tunes and other favorites. Membership fees apply
MO (1/1), 6:15pm, UNC Asheville Reuter Center, 1 University Heights

Reuter Center Singers
 Seasoned seniors that study and perform classical, popular, show tunes and other favorites. Membership fees apply.

TU (1/2), 6:15pm, UNC Asheville Reuter Center, 1 University Heights

LITERARY

Homing in the Natural World: Solstice Reading
 An enchanting evening of stories and poems with three of the city's finest nature writers. This in-person event will be a delightful gathering of nature and literary lovers.
WE (12/20), 5pm, OM Sanctuary, 87 Richmond Hill Dr

StoryWalk: Outside In
 Enjoy fresh air and walking along the StoryWalk trail while reading Outside In, a mindful contemplation on the world's connectedness and the many ways nature affects our everyday lives.
TU (12/26), 6am, Weaver Park, 200 Murdock Ave

Poetry Open Mic Hendo
 A poetry-centered open mic that welcomes all kinds of performers every Thursday night. 18+
TH (12/28), 7:30pm, Shakedown Lounge, 706 Seventh Ave East, Hendersonville

Poetry Critique Night
 Everyone is welcome to share a few poems or just sit back and listen. Signups to share will open 15 minutes prior to the start.
TU (1/2), 6pm, Black Mountain Library, Black Mountain

THEATER & FILM

Elf: The Musical
 A heartwarming and hilarious adaptation of the beloved 2003 holiday film. This enchanting musical follows the journey of Buddy, a human raised by elves at the North Pole who embarks on a journey to New York City to find his real father.
SA (12/23), 7:30pm, \$18 - \$36.50, Asheville Community Theatre, 35 E. Walnut St

Asheville Vaudeville: The Queen is Dead, Long Live the Queen
 A celebration of Queen April's reign in the Asheville performance arts scene. There will be clowning, puppets, bellydance, juggling, hooping, comedy and loving tributes to our Gracious Sovereign as we send her off to

other adventures.
SA (12/23), 8pm, \$20, The Greig Eagle, 185 Clingman Ave

Holiday Movie Night
 Alex Jones will host a Holiday movie night starting with a Christmas Story and ending the night with Love Actually
SA (12/23), 8pm, Sovereign Kava, 268 Biltmore Ave, Asheville

Karaoke Party
SA (12/30), 8pm, Alley Cat, 797 Haywood Rd, Asheville

MEETINGS & PROGRAMS

Holiday Break Camp
 This will be a week spent learning about the different holidays from around the world. We'll be exploring some winter-themed art projects, fun activities and more.
MO (12/18), 9am, Kids Garden Asheville, 4 S. Tunnel Rd, Asheville

Free E-Bike Rental
 A free one hour bike adventure to experience Asheville's historic River Arts District, French Broad River Greenway, local breweries, restaurants and more.

WE (12/20), 10am, ACE BIKES, 342 Depot St, Asheville River Arts District

Christmas Tours
 Take a guided or self-guided tour of the farm decorated for the holidays. All tours include hot chocolate and cookies and a visit with the Heritage Weavers and Fiber Artists.
WE (12/20), 10:30am, \$5 - \$15, Historic Johnson Farm, 3346 Haywood Rd, Hendersonville

Aerial Silks Foundations
 Learn how to properly ascend, descend, and create stunning shapes on the silks while emphasizing safety and proper form. Participants of all ages and all abilities are welcome.
WE (12/20), 5:30pm, Amethyst Realm, 244 Short Coxe Ave, Asheville

Southside Walking Club
 Gather with others and walk inside Grant Southside Center's gym or outside if it's a nice morning.
TH (12/21), 10:30am, Dr Wesley Grant, Sr. Southside Center, 285 Livingston St, Asheville

Kids & Teens Kung Fu
 Learn fighting skills as well as conflict resolution and mindfulness. First class is free to see if it's a good fit for you.
TH (12/21), 4pm, Dragon Phoenix, 51 North Merrimon Ave #109, Asheville

Photos w/The Kava Bar Santa
 Santa will be taking photos with you, your kids and your furry friends. Tell the big guy whether you have been naughty or nice.
TH (12/21), 4pm, Sovereign Kava, 268 Biltmore Ave, Asheville

Makerspace: Holiday Card Making
 This drop-in style open studio will teach our visitors how to create unique, collage-style holiday cards rooted in self-expression.
TH (12/21), 5pm, Asheville Art Museum, 2 S. Pack Square

The Longest Night
 A winter service of light in the midst of darkness for all who have experienced loss and grief in this season.
TH (12/21), 6:30pm, First Baptist Church of Black Mountain, 130 Montreat Rd, Black Mountain

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Swing Dance Lesson & Dance

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TH (12/21), 7pm, \$5 - \$10, Alley Cat Social Club, 797 Haywood Rd

Teen Cuisine

Learn how to make delicious and easy meals from breakfast to desserts. For ages 13-18 with advance registration at avrec.com required.
FR (12/22), 6pm, \$10, Tempie Avery Montford Community Center, 34 Pearson Ave, Asheville

Holiday Game Night

A night filled with hearty laughs, high-fives, and holiday cheer. Enjoy a sleigh-load of fun with Christmas Charades, Pictionary, and Mini Trivia.
FR (12/22), 9pm, The Getaway River Bar, 790 Riverside Dr, Asheville

Free Santa Photos

Free photos with Santa at the food court. Visitors will receive one 4" by 6" photo and digital download of a single image from TapSnap Phototainment.
SA (12/23), Asheville Outlets, 800 Brevard Rd

Photos w/Santa

Get your holiday photos with Santa on his big red tractor. Bring the whole family for a magical experience, and let the little ones share their wishes with Santa Claus.
SA (12/23), 12pm, Grange by Foothills, 120 Broadway Ave, Black Mountain

Treasure Hunt: Walking Team Scavenger Hunt

Use your treasure map to follow clues, solve puzzles, and crack codes on this unique scavenger hunt through downtown Asheville. The hunt typically takes about 60 minutes to complete.
SA (12/23), 2pm, free - \$20, DSSOLVR, 63 N Lexington Ave

Christmas Eve Potluck & Caroling w/Julia & Mark

Bring a friend or join us on your own. This is a fun community day, full of laughter, music, food, dancing, and celebrating life in Asheville.
SU (12/24), 3pm, Asheville Guitar Bar, 122 Riverside Dr

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Candlelight service with both choral and instrumental accompaniment. For more information please contact the church office at 253-076.
SU (12/24), 5pm, Asbury Memorial UMC, 171 Beaverdam Rd

Christmas Eve Traditional Candlelight Service

Traditional candlelight

worship service. Hear the Christmas story, sing familiar carols, and listen to special music by the Grace choirs.
SU (12/24), 7pm, Grace Lutheran Church, 1245 6th Ave W., Hendersonville

Christmas Day Service

Hear the Christmas scripture readings, a Christmas message, join in singing favorite carols, and celebrate Holy Communion.
MO (12/25), 10am, Grace Lutheran Church, 1245 6th Ave W., Hendersonville

A Night of Vegan Cooking

Two local chefs curate a night of delicious vegan cooking while explaining the health benefits of nature's herbs and spices. This class is open for anyone and everyone.
TH (12/28), 6pm, free, AmeriHealth Caritas, 216 Asheland Ave, Asheville

Winter Art Camp: Grades 3-5

Students in grades K-2 are invited to join our educators for an afternoon of art-filled fun. Students spend their time in the Museum's Studio creating art with a variety of media.
FR (12/29), 1pm, \$50, Asheville Art Museum, 2 S. Pack Square

Letting Go & Letting In: A New Years Ceremony & Celebration

Set your intentions for the new year and reflect on anything you are ready to let go of so you can receive (let in) what you truly desire. Anjali will lead us through an all levels yoga class to get into the body and then take us through a somatic breath work ceremony.
MO (1/1), 11am, \$45, Black Mountain Yoga, 116 Montreat Rd, Black Mountain

Southside Walking Club

Gather with others and walk inside Grant Southside Center's gym or outside if it's a nice morning.
TU (1/2), 10:30am, Dr Wesley Grant, Sr. Southside Center, 285 Livingston St, Asheville

Free Six-Week Pottery Class

Learn the basics of pottery in this six-week course with a rolling start. Start when it's convenient for you and continue for the next six weeks. Space limited, advance registration required
TU (1/2), 4pm, free, Grove St Community Center, 36 Grove St, Asheville

Tarot Club

A monthly meetup that explores the Tarot as a metaphysical practice. Each month we will study new ways to work with the cards while engaging in personal

journey work.
TU (1/2), 7pm, The Well at Mountain Magic, 3 Louisiana Ave, Asheville

Eightfold Path Study Group

A group will gather to study the Eightfold Path Program. Kris Kramer will host the group as a fellow participant and student.
WE (1/3), 3pm, Black Mountain, Honeycutt St, Black Mountain

Peace Education Program

An innovative series of video-based workshops that help people discover their own inner strength and personal peace.
WE (1/3), 5pm, free, AmeriHealth Caritas, 216 Asheland Ave, Asheville

LOCAL MARKETS

DIYabled Holiday Market

Browse unique gifts for your loved ones and support some of Asheville's artists, crafters, tarot card makers and more.
WE (12/20), 3pm, Different Wrld, 701 Haywood Rd #Suite 101, Asheville

RAD Farmers Market Winter Season

Browse 30+ local vendors all winter long with fresh produce, pastured meats, baked goods, honey, and more. Safely accessible by bike or foot on the greenway, plus free public parking along Riverside Drive.
WE (12/20), 3pm, Smoky Park Supper Club, 350 Riverside Dr

Holiday Pop Up Shop

Browse over 100 vendors inside this curated Holiday pop up with local and indie craft, vintage, housewares, handmade jewelry, ceramics and more.
SA (12/23), 10am, Center for Craft, 67 Broadway St, Asheville

Holly Jolly Market

A new hub for local artisans, craftsmen, and home-based businesses, this event aims to foster a vibrant connection between the community and its talented creators.
SA (12/23), 10am, free, White Horse Black Mountain, 105C Montreat Rd, Black Mountain

Jingle & Mingle: Holiday Craft Market

Local vendors will be selling handmade goods, arts and crafts in time for the holiday gift-giving.
SA (12/23), 10am, The Grey Eagle, 185 Clingman Ave

WNC Farmers Market

High quality fruits and vegetables, mountain crafts, jams, jellies, preserves, sourwood honey, and other farm fresh items. Open daily

8am, year-round.
SU (12/31), 8am, WNC Farmers Market, 570 Brevard Rd

Bad Luck Vintage Pop Up

Discover a curated collection of vintage clothing and home decor. The items on display are a blend of quirky, colorful, and a tad devilish, embodying a fun, playful, and slightly weird vibe.
SU (12/31), 3pm, Asheville Beauty Academy, 28 Broadway St

FESTIVALS & SPECIAL EVENTS

8th Annual Trolley La La La

Trolley to the Omni Grove Park Inn followed by an oyster roast (purchase oysters separately) with live holiday music from Brody Hunt & The Silent Knights at The Grey Eagle. We'll also be collecting canned food items for MANNA Food Bank.
TH (12/21), 6pm, \$5 - \$15, The Grey Eagle, 185 Clingman Ave

Community Christmas Eve Celebration

This annual holiday treat is a special way to celebrate with your community while enjoying free music and carol singing.
SU (12/24), 7pm, free, White Horse Black Mountain, 105C Montreat Rd, Black Mountain

3rd Annual Winter Wonder Walk

A live action storybook walk, and a memorable winter festival. Guests will walk through an outdoor trail while our actors bring the pages of the giant book to life. Families can also enjoy a holiday market, a kids' play area, and tasty concessions.
WE (12/27), 6pm, \$18 - \$40, Adventure Center of Asheville, 85 Expo Dr, Asheville

Wicked Weed Brewing 11 Year Anniversary

An anniversary bash with a special crafted special brew, good company and entertainment.
TH (12/28), 6pm, Wicked Weed Brewing, 91 Biltmore Ave

Party Like it's 1998: A New Year for the Museum of the Cherokee People

Enjoy a final look at the current main exhibit before the museum gets renovated. There will be conversations with feature artists, entertainment, a cash bar, food trucks and opportunities to learn about the Museum's work.

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Happy, healthy, whole

Health care gets mixed marks in 2023



BY JESSICA WAKEMAN

jwakeman@mountainx.com

It might seem that only one story dominated the local wellness landscape in 2023: the frustration some residents' have with Mission Hospital and its for-profit owner HCA Healthcare. But a closer look will show that the community faced other successes and struggles with public health.

For example, Buncombe County and the City of Asheville put major resources toward addressing substance use, including the rise of fentanyl and xylazine in the street drug supply. The county debuted a co-responder unit, composed of a Buncombe County sheriff's officer and a trained mental health counselor, to respond to certain calls. The Mountain Area Health Education Center coordinated with Mission Hospital to initiate medication-assisted treatment for people with substance use disorders upon leaving the emergency room in an effort to address the illness.

But not all impacts to our local health care landscape originated in our county. Due to a change in North Carolina state law, beginning July 1 women can no longer terminate a pregnancy after 12 weeks of gestation, with few exceptions. And this year also saw North Carolina expand Medicare eligibility, which will allow thousands of more people locally to obtain health insurance.

Xpress heard from residents from all walks of life — some in health care, many not — about their thoughts on health and wellness in the region in 2023.

Looking back on 2023, do you think Buncombe County and Asheville are on the right path in how they address substance abuse in our community? Why or why not?

"There seems to have been some improvements on that front with more direct, proactive involvement from our first responders. It would be wonderful to see those programs that help people struggling with substance abuse continue to grow in size and scope of services. Treatment, employment and shelter/housing seem to really have a positive impact for the folks that are ready to receive help."

— **Billy Doubraski**,
East West Asheville Neighborhood Association board member

"I believe that Buncombe County has made a start in the treatment of substance use, but I also feel that the stigma of addiction remains so great in this area that the community at large makes it very difficult to put the treatment needed where it is needed and when it is needed. Focusing on reducing stigma may improve outcomes in substance use treatment."

— **Sherrie Pace**,
licensed social worker and addictions specialist

"Our local governments are fully aware of the challenges presented by substance abuse. There is a mutual commitment to meet this problem head-on, a dedication of resources and a sense of collaboration and shared vision. We didn't get here overnight, nor will we overcome this menace in

short order. Our focus remains on the disease rather than the symptoms, and I believe this is at the forefront of our local leaders' minds."

— **Brad Branham**,
city attorney, City of Asheville

"More needs to be done to help with mental health and substance abuse as we continue to see many overdoses in our community. Initiatives like the medication-assisted treatment program are a path forward."

— **Karis Roberts**,
executive director, Asheville Brewers Alliance

"My answer is controversial at this point. With all the junk in drugs these days — causing all sorts of problems, including overdoses and psychosis — I believe getting 'illicit' drugs from my doctor and pharmacy would at least give me a measured dosage of what I want to ingest, and my doctor would also be working with me directly, maybe more regularly. Major change of mindset needed for this one."

— **Michael Harney**,
local educator

"Fentanyl use has been incredibly difficult to plan around in child welfare, given the safety considerations and the higher rates of death associated with its use. I think community paramedics have been a bright spot providing education, support and resources to those that are substance affected and unhoused. I also think the more we can use peer support specialists, the greater chance we have to impact change."

How, if at all, have the state legislature's restrictions on abortion impacted your friends' and family's reproductive or family planning decisions?

"It is truly wild to me that any government entity has the desire or power to hold an individual's bodily autonomy hostage. North Carolina's Senate Bill 20 is detrimental to the livelihood of many and directly impacts anyone who deserves the right to make their own choices about their present-day experiences and their future, myself included."

— **Ashanti Ternoir**,
community member and service provider

"Limiting and criminalizing access to this vital health care is a threat to the lives of those who can become pregnant. I think it is important for us to educate ourselves and take care of one another in community to ensure everyone continues to be able to get the health care they need, regardless of the unjust laws that are being passed to control our bodies."

— **Grace Barron-Martinez**,
activist and Realtor

"Limiting access to full-spectrum reproductive care made it more complicated, delayed and expensive to access health care. Our neighbors are weighing the costs of family planning — housing, transportation and child care — with the reality that they may need to travel to receive medically necessary care. People who can afford it are making difficult and costly decisions to take off work, arrange child care and travel to other states to have their health care needs met while others must self-manage abortions."

— **Kim Roney**,
council member, City of Asheville



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ALLIE DAUM



BILLY DOUBRASKI



MICHAEL HARNEY



HELEN HYATT



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MICK MCGUIRE



SHERRIE PACE



JAKE QUINN



KARIS ROBERTS



TERRY ROBERTS



NEW RESTRICTIONS: On July 1, the window in which to end a pregnancy in North Carolina narrowed when Senate Bill 20 criminalized abortion after 12 weeks of gestation. It was one of the many changes to health care that locals faced in 2023. Photo by Vicki Catalano

What have your experiences with regional health care providers been like in 2023?

“I continue to hear stories from people who are very frustrated with the lack of options and quality of care. We need to have a variety of high-quality health care options across our region in order to ensure that our residents are able to obtain the best quality care at the most affordable price.”

— **Terri Wells,**
Buncombe County commissioner

“I’m very privileged in my own access to health care and for not having encountered any major health problems recently. There have been quite a few cracks in my experience with mental health care this year, however, and that’s something that I see reflected in

a lot of my loved ones’ experiences as well. There’s a mental health crisis in adolescents and young adults especially, and our health care system doesn’t have the infrastructure to improve it.”

— **Allie Daum,**
senior at UNC Asheville

“I am a veteran and receive most of my health care at the Charles George VA, and it is outstanding. It truly stands out for friendliness, efficiency and compassion. Employees seem to enjoy working there, and the positive vibe is palpable.”

— **Monica Walsh Blankenship,**
veteran

“On a personal and professional level, I have found the waitlist for most services to be extensive and overwhelming. Behavioral health care is abundant in this area, and yet it is very difficult to get an appointment and even to get some providers to call you back. The wait for specialty medical care was so extensive in this area that I traveled to South Carolina for an appointment a month earlier than I could get it in the Asheville/Hendersonville area.”

— **Sherrie Pace**

“I have had some of the best experiences with regional health care providers in 2023.”

— **Michael Harney**

“The school system is blessed with outstanding partnerships with a variety of regional health care providers. From support in providing school nurses and athletic trainers to the opening of our first school health center at Clyde A. Erwin Middle School, health care providers have been responsive and proactive in supporting the needs of our students and staff. We look forward to opening our second school health center early in the new year at Enka Middle School.”

— **Rob Jackson,**
superintendent,
Buncombe County Schools

“In my limited experience, I think the regional providers have done well. I had a recent experience with the Mission ER, and they provided great care to my loved one. I work routinely with Decedent Affairs at Mission and they have dramatically improved in

their communication and support over the last six months. I do think there are significant gaps in mental health care for children and adults, and limited supports and placements for children who need higher levels of supportive care. The wait times for appropriate levels of care and mental health supports are entirely too long.”

— **Mick McGuire**

If you had an emergency, would you go to HCA or elsewhere? Why?

“Faced with a medical emergency, I would avail myself of the closest available care, and if that happened to be HCA, I would seek care there. Two years ago, I was diagnosed with atrial fibrillation and received excellent care from the doctors at Asheville Cardiology Associates, including a successful cardiac ablation performed in the Heart Tower at HCA.”

— **Terry Roberts,**
author

“Anywhere else. I recently took [a loved one] to the ER. After six hours waiting, we scrambled to get an urgent care appointment and went there. What HCA has done to Mission is criminal and is a shining example of how basic human rights, such as access to quality health care, can’t be trusted to executives in faraway boardrooms. WNC requires a nonprofit, comprehensive health system that prioritizes people, preventative care and long-term health over profit.”

— **Ben Williamson,**
nonprofit administrator

“Definitely not, unless I had a heart attack. I would go to Pardee or Advent for better quality care and to try and ensure a better outcome for myself.”

— **Helen Hyatt,**
activist and South Asheville resident

“Profit-driven health care creates outcomes like we’re seeing at HCA.

HCA continues to have many services that other local hospitals nearby do not. What has happened with HCA is an example of a larger systemic problem we’re facing in our country. I’ve been extremely inspired by the organizing of the workers at HCA as they advocate for better working conditions and better care for patients.”

— **Grace Barron-Martinez**

“I’ve gone to the ERs at St. Joseph’s and Mission, but thankfully, not for many years. More recently, however, I’ve read and heard too many horror stories to go to Mission’s ER if I had a choice. If it wasn’t a heart attack or stroke, I’d drive the additional 15 minutes to Advent.”

— **Jake Quinn,**
chair,

Buncombe County Board of Elections

“Excluding the confusion with various groups changing their relationship back and forth with Mission, my care has been good. I do feel like a viable alternative to Mission in the area would be good for all. There are great departments at Mission, and some not so great. But, again, my personal exposure has been limited.”

— **Monica Walsh Blankenship** X

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BEN WILLIAMSON

The show must go on

YEAR
IN
REVIEW

Arts professionals share ups and downs of 2023

BY EDWIN ARNAUDIN

earnaudin@mountainx.com

Where were you the day the HVAC died?

In late June, the Thomas Wolfe Auditorium's heating, ventilation and air conditioning system failed, prompting the Asheville Symphony Orchestra to find a new home until repairs were made. Previously announced shows by **Nick Cave** and **Ray Lamontagne** were moved to the adjoining Harrah's Cherokee Center — Asheville, and in autumn, Asheville City Council whittled down plans to renovate the aging performing arts center to two options.

The city's arts scene also suffered a setback in June when Moog Music sold to InMusic. Three months later, a significant number of staff at the formerly employee-owned electronic instrument manufacturer were laid off.

Elsewhere, AVLfest shook off the ghost of Bele Chere, bringing a new four-day music festival to venues across the city in August; West Asheville institution Orbit DVD turned 20; and in November, Burial Beer Co. opened Eulogy, a South Slope music venue that carries on the spirit of the dearly departed The Mothlight while forging its own distinct identity.

Xpress asked six local members of the arts community to ponder the biggest issues facing the creative sector in 2023. Featured below are reflections from **Katie Cornell**, executive director of Arts AVL; **Marcus "Mook" Cunningham**, recording artist and co-founder of Urban Combat Wrestling; **Silas Durocher**, vocalist/guitarist for The Get Right Band; **Bob Hinkle**, founder and CEO of White Horse Black Mountain; **Stephanie Moore**, executive director of the Center for Craft; and **Kevin Patrick Murphy**, founder of The Actor's Center of Asheville.



CREATIVE TRUST: Clockwise from top left, Katie Cornell, Marcus "Mook" Cunningham, Silas Durocher, Kevin Patrick Murphy, Stephanie Moore and Bob Hinkle reflect on local arts happenings over the past year. Photos courtesy of the artists

What recurring themes did you notice within the local arts scene in 2023?

Moore: The arts continue to rebuild, yet this year in particular reflects a renaissance of innovative approaches. We are all trying to figure out how to get audiences back into our spaces.

The free ArtsAVL trolley connecting downtown to RAD is a fun way to encourage exploration. Several inventive offerings popped up, like Asheville Community Theatre's *Bat Boy* and the Center for Craft's *Krafthouse 2023*. Many new art spaces have increased their programming to provide important resources. Story Parlor and The Residency at 821 offer artist residencies to emerging and established artists.

Revolve [Gallery] has been hosting programs with organizations like Youth Outright and Campaign for Southern Equality. Connections are being made between all areas of our local art scene to grow and engage our community in new ways.

Hinkle: As a venue manager/booker, I've noticed that customers are regularly buying tickets for shows on the day of the event, unlike in the past when it was not uncommon to sell the majority earlier. Also, I happily note even more of an openness on the part of audiences toward music of different cultures and genres.

Cornell: One 2023 theme is the major impact visitor behavior has on local arts businesses. This year's national Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 report revealed that drops in nonlocal attendees in 2021-22 caused economic activity generated from local nonprofit arts events to drop 26% from the previous study. A recent survey by ArtsAVL also showed that drops in tourism this summer/fall led to major sales losses for arts businesses downtown and in the River Arts District.

Murphy: The recurring theme that I noticed in my medium, fortunately, was more female-run and -supported

projects. Women are directing, producing and booking jobs. ... And in general, there's a movement toward an open attitude and exploring more diversity.

Cunningham: Within my medium, being wrestling and hip-hop, I saw a huge combination of hip-hop and LGBTQ+ event collaborations. Whether wrestling and hip-hop, wrestling and drag, drag and hip-hop — it was awesome to see this.

Durocher: I think 2023 was the first "normal" year of gigging since the pandemic. Venues, bands and audiences seemed to pretty much operate normally through the year, which has been a relief. As far as trends go, year by year I'm noticing a lot more bands releasing singles instead of albums and sometimes just doing digital releases instead of manufacturing CDs. It makes sense — things have been heading that direction for years — but it seems like a lot of people made the switch over the last year or two.

What local arts initiative deserved greater recognition than it received this year?

Murphy: More attention needs to be paid toward education of children in the arts. Schools are cutting music and theater programs from basic education, and if that's going to continue to be the case, the artistic community needs to provide the opportunity. For example, The Actor's Center just started a scholarship fund specifically to help people who may not be exploring acting training because they can't afford it or their school doesn't provide it.

Cunningham: The local hip-hop scene. I feel this is a repeatedly overlooked community of Asheville and is hugely missing from the lineups in Asheville festivals. There is also no real local hub for artists in this genre, except unpaid open mics or the artists themselves paying to be a part of shows.

Moore: Designer **Sala Menaya**, who is involved with Noir Collective, organized a fashion show, "Asheville Black Excellence Experience," at the Foundry Hotel, which honored several leaders in our community. I found it to be such a thoughtful way to highlight her work and draw attention to so many important people working hard for Asheville every day.

Durocher: I'm a big fan of Music Video Asheville. I'm not saying the event doesn't get a lot of recognition but I'd love to see more and more people showing up every year. It seems like it's mostly attended by people who were involved in making the videos, but I think a ton of people would enjoy the event. I love making and watching music videos. MVA is such a cool and

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unique opportunity to see what the local music and film industry is doing.

Cornell: Land of Sky Regional Council was awarded major grants from the Appalachian Regional Council and Dogwood Health Trust to begin building creative manufacturing infrastructure in Western North Carolina. This will help large and small arts businesses producing things in multiples to grow their businesses across the region. ArtsAVL is thrilled to be a partner in this initiative.

In 2023, what encouraged you most about the local arts scene and what discouraged you most?

Cornell: One of the most encouraging and discouraging issues happening in the local arts scene in 2023 is the renovation of Thomas Wolfe Auditorium. After shutting down due to a major HVAC failure, it finally appears like the city is going to move forward with some major renovations to the historic space — even though it will not be a quick fix and comes with a big price tag.

Moore: I was so encouraged that Buncombe County included \$129,788 in line item funding for arts and culture in the 2022-23 budget for regranting through ArtsAVL, our local arts council. The arts are an essential part of the vibrancy of Asheville and the surrounding area. However, I am discouraged that the city and regional foundations have not yet recognized the importance of support.

Hinkle: I've felt good and relieved to witness the post-COVID, ongoing return of folks who were largely absent during the pandemic. It took a long-ish time for many of them to return to something like their previous attendance habits. There seems to be more laughing.

On the other hand, I'm a bit discouraged from what I can see by the decreasing number of venues that can be categorized as "listening rooms." Too many times, artists play an event where they wish to present their creations or interpretations in such ways that they need ears, yet there's a noise level too high for them to be effective. Their music loses a large fraction of what it was intended to accomplish. Over the longer haul, it's a process that tends to make the music become part of the wallpaper. It's "music by the pound."

Murphy: I'm encouraged by more the comedy, improvisation and independent film scenes growing. And I'm discouraged by the lack of mingling of more artistic communities. There's not enough cross-pollination.

Durocher: AVL Fest was obviously a big exciting thing for the local music

scene this year. As a performer and a fan, I thought the festival went amazingly well, and I'm really excited to see it develop in future years. I also love seeing bands from Asheville doing great on the national scene, like Indigo De Souza, Wednesday and Secret Agent 23 Skidoo.

The discouraging things are always the same for me: it's hard for artists to make a living, especially making unique, original music or art. And that's getting tougher as the cost of living in Asheville goes up. I do worry that we might, at some point, price ourselves out of the kind of people that make this place so interesting and special.

What social issue didn't get enough attention within the local arts scene this year?

Cunningham: Social issues affecting the African American and Latinx experience in Asheville. These artists are immensely talented and get little to no recognition of the culture and community they represent.

Moore: Mental health issues have drastically risen since the pandemic. Participating in the arts enables people to deal with a wide range of distress, individually and within a community. Artists are supporting efforts to address critical issues all over the region, which deserve recognition and support. We have this amazing tool — art — that is ready-made for human connection and healing.

Cornell: A growing issue within the creative sector is the need for affordable creative space. Due to the rising cost of living and workspaces, many creatives can no longer afford to live in Buncombe County. Many are moving to surrounding counties or even out of state. ArtsAVL will be conducting a creative spaces study in early 2024 to more closely examine this issue. The report, with an accompanying town hall event, will come out in May.

Murphy: I think the theater scene should be playing with much deeper issues. The need for the arts to challenge us to think and look at ourselves in scary and real ways is extremely necessary right now.

Hinkle: I think anything we can do to bring together the folks who give charitably to local causes and the recipients of that aid could potentially "de-stranger" us. If we were able to see our fellow humans as very much like ourselves, some of our local social problems would be balloons with slow leaks. The potential is to not see "us providing largess to them" or "them" feeling patronized by us. Instead, I might be just another guy with a funny haircut speaking a similar language with no strings attached. ❌

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'Bound to be delicious'

*Chefs reflect on
2023's highs and lows*

YEAR
IN
REVIEW

BY THOMAS CALDER

tcalder@mountainx.com

Nothing lasts forever, and in 2023, Asheville's food and beverage industry made that abundantly clear: Bhramari Brewing Co., Buxton Hall Barbecue, Blue Dream Curry House and Sawhorse were among several businesses that closed this year. Other staples, such as Geraldine's Bakery in North Asheville and Gan Shan West in West Asheville welcomed a change in ownership. Meanwhile, one of the biggest surprise announcements within the local food industry arrived in October, when **Mike Rangel** revealed that he and his business partners were looking to sell Asheville Pizza & Brewing Co. after a 25-year run.

Along with these game changers, *Xpress*' weekly food coverage spotlighted a number of 2023 openings: Botiwalla, The Daily Grind, Little D's, Rabbit Hole, Regina's, Sweats & Seats and The Tiki Easy Bar were among this year's new arrivals.

Meanwhile, *Xpress* also launched a new monthly food feature, "Fresh Dish," wherein we speak with local chefs about Asheville's culinary scene — both its accomplishments and needs.

For this year's Year in Review, we caught back up with several of the feature's participants — **Katie Button** (Katie Button Restaurants), **J Chong** (J Chong Eats), **Steven Goff** (Taste Diner) and **Suzy Phillips** (Gypsy Queen Cuisine and Simple Cafe & Juice Bar) — to discuss some of the highs and lows of 2023. We also looked ahead to 2024.

Based on their responses, there's one thing for sure: Asheville's restaurateurs are very excited for **Ashleigh Shanti's** forthcoming Good Hot Fish, slated to open next year at 10 Buxton Ave.

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What restaurant that closed this year will you miss the most?

Button: Buxton Hall for sure. I have lots of fond memories of taking my kids there and watching them draw on the menus and chow down on barbecue. I am sure the Chai Pani Group has great things in store for that space, though. I can't wait to see what they do next.

Chong: I was really sad to see Zia Taqueria close this year. Zia's was such a staple in West Asheville!

Goff: Supersad to see Sawhorse go! **Dan [Silo]** and his team were really good folks doing good things. We just don't have any other north-eastern Canadian-style restaurants in the area or in this part of the country at all. And meat pies! I love meat pies but they're pretty hard to come by almost anywhere. I feel like Dan did a good job making this food fit so well here in our region, and the Sawhorse team as a whole did well supporting their local community.

Phillips: I will miss Executive Chef **Michelle Bailey** and General Manager **Kristie Quinn**, who are leaving their roles at Smoky Park Supper Club at the end of the year. I love and respect them both. Michelle's food is amazing.

What was your restaurant's most popular dish in 2023?

Button: This completely took me by surprise. In the restaurant upstairs at La Bodega by Curaté, our most popular dish was our salad. With a pistachio and caramelized shallot vinaigrette, it's practically addictive. The ingredients in the salad itself change seasonally, so you get a fresh take on it every few months. It is clearly a hit among the Asheville locals.

Chong: Aside from the pork dumpplings being a popular item this year, I would have to say that there were two other items that were popular in 2023: My lo bak go and the woutine were a crowd pleaser for sure.

Goff: Hot chicken sandwich on a honeybun was our most popular dish for sure, followed closely by the beef chopped cheese sandwich. The hot chicken sandwich is straightforward enough for people to see how the flavors work and different enough to feel adventurous in your order.

Phillips: Our most popular dish at Gypsy Queen is the lamb and beef shawarma wrap, and at Simple Cafe, it is the avocado tempeh melt. More and more people are loving lamb, and



TABLE FOR FOUR: Chefs, clockwise from top left, Katie Button, J Chong, Suzy Phillips and Steven Goff share their thoughts on the 2023 food scene. Photos by Andy Hall

Middle Eastern food has been in the spotlight for a couple of years now, especially Lebanese food. We only use local meats. We trim our lamb and beef, marinate it and stack it on the shawarma machine. Everything on that wrap, except the pita, is made in-house with high-quality ingredients that deliver pungent flavors, and you can taste it from the first to the last bite.

For the avocado tempeh melt, from Simple, the cashew tamarind slaw delivers a punch to the palate. We use local tempeh, Smiling Hara, and we marinate it with our special marinade and cook it to perfection with melted cheese, or vegan cheese, plus the cashew tamarind slaw and fresh avocado slices. All that makes this a unique sandwich with memorable flavors.

What restaurant opening has you excited in the new year?

Button: Ashleigh Shanti's Good Hot Fish. I know she's been running a bunch of pop-ups, but I can't wait for the full restaurant concept to open up. Ashleigh is so talented and has such a

wonderful food perspective and story to tell. It is bound to be delicious.

Chong: I am superexcited about Good Hot Fish opening up this year with Chef Ashleigh Shanti!

Goff: Good Hot Fish! I can't wait to taste what Ashleigh has on offer! Ashleigh is an amazing chef that's seriously talented at providing an excellent guest experience. We are also sorely lacking in the fish camp department here in Asheville. And if you need even more reason, Ashleigh is a nationally recognized chef and also does a lot to promote the local food community, as well as Southeastern food as a whole. I've been waiting to see what her vision of a fish camp is because I'm sure it's tasty and different.

Phillips: As far as new restaurants, Tamaleria y Tortilleria Molina. Besides being next door to Gypsy Queen, they offer fresh tortillas and amazing tamales. They have been [selling those out of the shop] for years, but this year they opened up their taqueria in the back of the shop. It's authentic, fresh and delicious!

— with additional reporting from Andy Hall X

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Book recommendations

WNC poets and writers share their 2023 must-reads



BY THOMAS CALDER

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There is plenty to write home about when it comes to 2023, including Western North Carolina's literary scene. Looking back over *Xpress'* coverage this year, our region saw a lot of new initiatives, publications and nonprofit firsts.

For example, in June, Yetzirah, a local literary nonprofit for Jewish poets, hosted its inaugural five-day Jewish poetry conference at UNC Asheville. A month later, fellow literary nonprofit, Punch Bucket Lit (which I am a member of), introduced listeners to its new podcast. In October, Dark City Poetry Society, a Black Mountain-based reading series, published an anthology featuring 26 local writers. Meanwhile, in November, thousands of local residents signed up and participated in

the annual National Novel Writing Month.

We'd be remiss to not also note *Xpress'* own contributions to the local lit scene through our ongoing monthly poetry feature, as well as the paper's launch of the new "Look Homeward" series, where we speak with local authors and historians about the impact and legacy of Thomas Wolfe.

To celebrate WNC's 2023 literary accomplishments, *Xpress* reached out to the following local authors and poets who published a new work this year: Mildred Barya (*The Animals of My Earth School*); Clint Bowman (*Pretty Sh!t*); Michael Hettich (*The Halo of Bees: New & Selected Poems, 1990-2022*); Meagen Lucas (*Here in the Dark*); and Brit Washburn (*Homing In: Attempts on a Life of Poetry and Purpose*).

We asked each writer to share their 2023 book recommendations as well

as upcoming titles they're excited to read in 2024. Based on some of the answers, it is worth noting that the featured writers did not know who else was participating in the article, nor did they see each other's responses.

Was there a book published in 2023 by a local or regional WNC writer that blew you away? If so, what made it so spectacular?

Barya: Brit Washburn's *Homing In: Attempts on a Life of Poetry and Purpose*. There's deep love and focused attention here. There's candidness, grace and perceptive skill in knowing and admitting that even when a person is conflicted about "what is" or "what ought to be" beneath the confusion is an intelligence holding a mirror to life's mysteries and humbling surprises that go beyond "reasonable interpretation."

This book shows what an "examined life" looks like.

Bowman: A small, but mighty book that knocked me off my feet was *Total Annihilation* by Michael Conner from Swannanoa. I particularly liked the lasting images Michael put in the reader's head with poems like "Christ Addresses a Gathering Crowd After Setting the NRA Boardroom Ablaze," and "The God of Death Goes Sailfishing." Michael's poems touch a lot on religion and human impact on nature, which are two subjects that frequently inspire my own writing. He shines a light on some of the grotesque parts of nature, such as roadkill and "soil soaked in dog piss," while not giving up hope on nature's perseverance. I'd recommend this book to anyone looking for a quick (but lasting) read.

Hettich: *Travelogue: A Photographic Journey* by the photographer Charter Weeks and the writer Sebastian

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WORDSMITHS: Local poets and writers, from left, Mildred Barya, Clint Bowman, Michael Hettich, Meagan Lucas and Brit Washburn all celebrated the release of new publications in 2023. Photos courtesy of the writers

Matthews is a collection of stunning photographs accompanied by insightful, incisive, moving meditations on those photographs. There's a tenderness and vitality here that's rarely achieved in such collaborative efforts. As **Larry Fink** blurbs, this book is "a softly purring love affair with dignity and the small elements of pride which make up all of our lives."

Lucas: *Bushwhacking: How to Get Lost in the Woods and Write Your Way Out* by **Jennifer McGaha** is a can't-miss. McGaha is a naturalist and a writer, and the book is memoir but also a meditation on the creative life. I found it really encouraging as a writer, but I think that any creative will find a lot of wisdom in it. Particularly as we move into a new year, and a new beginning, I think *Bushwhacking's* optimism and honesty will be a welcome addition to anyone's to-be-read pile.

Washburn: Ugandan native and Western North Carolina resident **Mildred Barya's** poetry collection *Animals of My Earth School*, published by Terrapin Books in 2023, really blew me away. It is a sustained exercise in inhabiting the experience of others, in this case nonhuman others, which may well be prerequisite to the cultivation of compassion and kinship with other humans as well. It is a prime example of poetry's capacity to expand our consciousness and, by extension, our hearts.

Was there a book, old or new, that you read this year that everyone should consider? If so, why?

Barya: **Michael Hettich's** *The Halo of Bees: New & Selected Poems, 1990-2022*. This is a true gem of a book! Besides beauty and magical elegance, the reader gets to encounter Hettich's artistic range across

a broad spectrum of subjects and emotions, from his earliest to most recent works. All packed in one book.

Bowman: *Facts About the Moon* by **Dorianne Laux**. Dorianne is an incredible poet with ties to North Carolina — having taught creative writing at N.C. State University and now living in Raleigh. Her book is a great example of how she beautifully jumps back and forth between big concepts such as outer space and down-to-earth moments like sitting on a hospital bench. If you're a fan of poets such as **Anne Sexton** and **Adrienne Rich**, I can't recommend Dorianne enough.

Hettich: For years **Campbell McGrath** has been one of our most capacious, daring, emotionally and intellectually powerful American poets. He is also a tremendously readable writer, someone whose work should certainly appeal even to those who rarely read poetry. His most recent book, *Fever of Unknown Origin*, which was published this year, is one of his finest. It's teeming with pleasures and surprises — short and long poems, poems and prose. As always, his work sings with lyricism and wit as it delves down deep. His longer poems are capacious; his short ones are witty and surprising. All of them are moving. I read the book in one sitting.

Lucas: **Karen Tucker's** *Bewilderness* is a wonder. It's a story of female friendship and opioid addiction in rural North Carolina. But where so many other stories of this kind focus on the crime and violence inherent in this problem, Tucker focuses on how addiction, and its fallout, changes relationships. It's a revelation.

Washburn: I read many wonderful books this year, old and new, but with so much available and of value, I want to be very careful with

what I recommend prioritizing. That said, I think absolutely everyone should read **Kate Di Camillo's** *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*, which I do at least annually. It is among the greatest depictions of how the annihilation of ego teaches us to love, written by anyone, for any age group, no matter that the antihero in question is a china rabbit.

What forthcoming book in 2024 are you eagerly awaiting? Bonus points if it's a local writer.

Barya: **Rick Van Noy's** *Borne by the River: Canoeing the Delaware from Headwaters to Home*. I loved reading Noy's earlier book *Sudden Spring*. I appreciate the way he balanced important climate change narratives with research and personal reflections, while also highlighting the collaborative, intersectional and interdisciplinary approaches required to address environmental shifts. Lately, I've been thinking about my home rivers — literally and figuratively. So I think Noy's forthcoming book will

offer new perspectives and clues to sustaining the lives of rivers as well as our own.

Bowman: I'm looking forward to reading **Rachel Hanson's** book, *The End of Tennessee*, in 2024. Rachel has given so many writers in our community a platform through her nonprofit, Punch Bucket Lit. I can't wait to see her writing get more of the spotlight that it deserves.

Hettich: I've read **John Balaban's** writing for years, always with admiration for his clear eye, beautifully shaped sentences and lines, and ability to bring the larger world — the world of history and ideas — gracefully into his poetry and prose. His translations from the Vietnamese are stunning, and his memoir *Remembering Heaven's Face* is a classic. Balaban taught for years at N.C. State University and lives in Raleigh. His new book, *Passing Through a Gate: Poems, Essays and Translations*, is due from Copper Canyon Press in 2024. That's the book I'm most looking forward to as we turn toward the new year.

Lucas: **Tessa Fontaine's** *The Red Grove*, coming in May 2024, is an exploration of the legacies of violence, the price of safety and the choices we make to protect what we love — and it sounds freaking awesome.

Washburn: I am eagerly awaiting books by two devoted river writers: **Rachel Hanson's** *The End of Tennessee*, due out from University of South Carolina Press in 2024. She is such a deeply intelligent human and generous literary citizen, it's high time the spotlight she so often shines on others is turned her way. I am also looking forward to **Rick Van Noy's** hybrid memoir/natural history *Borne by the River: Canoeing the Delaware from Headwaters to Home*, which will be published by Cornell in May of 2024. He's not yet a Western North Carolina local — he lives just over the border in southwest Virginia — but I hope he will be soon. ✕

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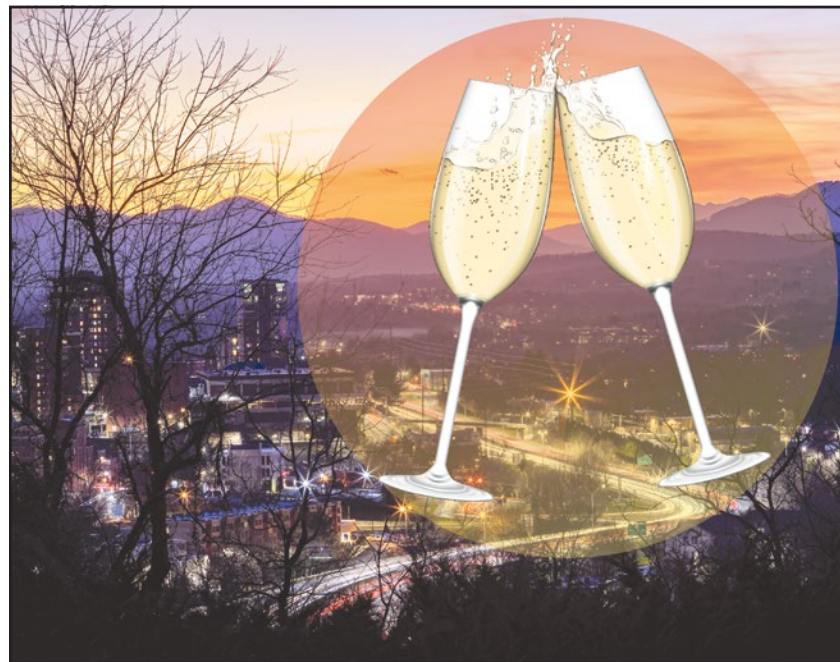
Dining options for New Year's Eve

There's no wrong way to celebrate New Year's Eve. You might bid 2023 farewell in sweatpants, on the couch with a tipples of \$10 sparkling wine served in a coffee mug. But if you're looking for something a little more interactive and appetizing, there are plenty of food-filled New Year's Eve events to choose from.

- Capella on 9's New Year's Eve festivities include tunes by DJ **Phantom Pantone**, a Champagne toast at midnight and unlimited use of the restaurant's photo booth. Tickets aren't required, but Capella on 9 will automatically add a \$30 cover per person to tabs after 8 p.m. All guests will be entered in a raffle for one free night at AC Hotel by Marriott Asheville Downtown as well as a raffle for a couple's Valentine's Day dinner and professional photography session. *Capella on 9 is at 10*

Broadway. For more information visit avl.mx/d82.

- Hemingway's Cuba will host a night of dancing, courtesy of DJ **Gant**, from 9 p.m.-1 a.m., and a midnight toast. Expect old-school hip-hop, top 40 and Latin music. *Hemingway's Cuba is at 15 Page Ave. Visit avl.mx/d81 for tickets (\$25 per person) and more information.*
- Jargon's celebration kicks off with music by **Jason Daniello** and hors d'oeuvres at The Argot Room (Jargon's event space), followed by a prix fixe menu and live music from **Vollie McKenzie** and **Hank Bones** in the heated courtyard from 6-10 p.m. Choices for mains include tamarind chocolate-braised beef cheeks, duck Wellington, pan-roasted halibut and a vegan brassicas dish. *Jargon is at 715 Haywood Road. Visit avl.mx/9hw for reservations and more information. Guests should reserve seating in the courtyard for the live music.*
- MOTHER South Slope cafe will host two seatings of a vegetarian-friendly prix fixe five-course dinner at 5 p.m. and 8 p.m. Wine pairing is included. *MOTHER South Slope cafe is at 244 Short Cox Ave. Visit avl.mx/d85 for tickets (\$150 per person) and more information.*
- Posana's four-course prix fixe mains include filet mignon, pan-roasted halibut, stuffed quail and vegan truffle alfredo. Don't miss the house-made eggnog. Optional wine pairings



CHEERS: If you're seeking to get out on New Year's Eve, there are plenty of tasty options across Asheville's food scene. Photo credit...

are available for \$60 per person. *Posana is at 1 Biltmore Ave. Visit avl.mx/d83 for tickets (\$120 per person) and more information. Call 828-505-3969 for parties of five or more.*

coffee shop is closed Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

Feast of the Seven Fishes at Gemelli

The Feast of the Seven Fishes is an Italian American tradition, says Gemelli chef **Anthony Cerrato**. He's hosted it in Asheville for about 15 years at Strada Italiano, which he also owns, but this year he'll hold it at Gemelli on Thursday, Dec. 21.

The seven dishes are symbolic of Catholicism's seven sacraments, Cerrato explains. Seven fishes are not necessary; the tradition can include seven types of seafood as well. (The holiday was memorably illustrated in "The Bear"'s chaotic Christmas episode, "Fishes.")

Gemelli's Feast of the Seven Fishes will serve two courses, at \$55 per person. The first course is an antipasti trio: a citrus and arugula salad with white anchovy, crab arancini with lemon basil aioli and fried calamari with pomodoro sugo (a San Marzano tomato sauce). The crab arancini is his grandma's recipe, Cerrato notes.

The second course is saffron ravioli filled with mascarpone, wild-caught sea trout and fresh herbs in seafood stock with mussels, shrimp and clams, served with garlic ciabatta. The ravioli is made in-house and is gluten-free, he says.

The feast is traditionally held on Christmas Eve, but Cerrato decided to close on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, so staff can spend time with their families. *Gemelli*

Bad Manners Coffee is now open

Bad Manners Coffee opened Dec. 16 on Haywood Road, in the small shopping plaza alongside rEvolve Buy+Sell+Trade and Botiwalla by Chai Pani.

Owner **Ashlyn Sholar** has operated a coffee cart at Provisions Mercantile, a gift shop on Haywood Road, and pop-ups at events like Asheville Zine Fest for a year and a half. In her first brick-and-mortar space, Sholar will source roasts locally for now and will eventually switch up roasts every few months. Bad Manners Coffee will serve pastries from West End Bakery, as well as gluten-free treats from The GF Baker's Booth.

The name Bad Manners is meant to be cheeky. Sholar's mother suggested Good Manners as a potential name, but Sholar thought the opposite better aligned with her goal of an accessible coffee culture. "Coffee is usually seen as more pretentious or snobby," she says. "My view of coffee, and how I like to present it, is judgment free. Coffee is for everyone." *Bad Manners Coffee is at 697 Haywood Road. Hours are 7 a.m.-2 p.m. on weekdays and 8 a.m.-2 p.m. on weekends. The*

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is at 70 Westgate Parkway. Visit avl.mx/d87 for reservations and more information.

Charcuterie board workshop

Did you know there is an art to constructing the perfect charcuterie board? Learn from Asheville Charcuterie Co. masters at a holiday-themed charcuterie board workshop, Thursday, Dec. 21, 6:30-7:30 p.m., at Catawba Brewing Co.

An Asheville Charcuterie Co. cheese stylist will demonstrate how to choose complementary meats, nuts, fruits and cheeses, the proper way to fold a salami and (of course) the best angles for showing off your charcut skills on Instagram. *Catawba Brewing Co. is at 32 Banks Ave. Visit avl.mx/d80 for tickets (\$50 per person) and additional information.*

Christmas eats at Red Stag Grill

Sometimes the greatest gift of the holiday season is not having to cook

a meal at all. On Christmas Eve, Red Stag Grill inside the Grand Bohemian Hotel will offer an a la carte, four-course dinner for \$115 per person, which includes a complimentary glass of Champagne. Then on Christmas Day, the restaurant will host an a la carte brunch from 6:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. and a Christmas dinner from 5-10 p.m. *Red Stag Grill is at 11 Boston Way. Visit avl.mx/d84 for reservations for Christmas Eve dinner.*

Celebrate 2024 in the 828 with \$8.28 cocktails

Ukiah Japanese Smokehouse will ring in 2024 with a New Year's Day brunch from noon-5 p.m. In case you're getting a later start after a night of partying, a dinner menu will be served from 5-9 p.m. Ukiah will serve craft cocktails for \$8.28 each throughout the day, and one diner will also win a \$200 gift card to the restaurant. *Ukiah Japanese Smokehouse is at 121 Biltmore Ave. Visit avl.mx/d86 for reservations.*

— Jessica Wakeman 



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Around Town

Cherokee potter will share knowledge with UNCA students

Potter **Tara McCoy**, a member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, will work with UNCA Asheville students as the first artist funded through the Celebrating Cherokee Heritage through Art and Making grant. The grant is a collaboration between the National Endowment for the Arts and UNCA.

In the role, McCoy will create educational experiences for UNCA students and “set the stage for empowering Cherokee artists by expanding the knowledge of pottery practices thousands of years old,” according to a UNCA media release. University officials hope the partnership marks the beginning of an ongoing Cherokee artist residency.

“Cherokee pottery is one of the oldest art forms in North America,” McCoy said in the press release. “Colonization and forced assimilation are devastating to our cultural preservation. We have lost a lot, and a lot of it was taken from us purposefully, but we are also trying to revitalize a lot of culture and pottery is one way we are doing that.”

McCoy has previously hosted UNCA students on the Qualla Boundary in Cherokee, where they engaged with local artists about the history of Cherokee pottery and art and visited the Qualla Arts and Crafts and the Museum of the Cherokee People. She also has demonstrated hand-building techniques to students, offered lessons on incorporating story into art and hosted a pit firing with **Matt West**, lecturer of art at UNCA.

“Cherokee people who are not involved in academia still have a lot



ART LESSONS: Tara McCoy demonstrates shaping pottery using Cherokee tools and techniques with a class of UNCA Asheville students. Photo courtesy of Kilyne Oocumma/The Center for Native Health

of education or cultural knowledge that is overlooked because they do not have degrees,” McCoy said in the release. “Projects like this one allow for that knowledge to be utilized and passed on. I hope the students realize that Cherokee people are alive and thriving [and] learn about our culture from us and hear us tell our stories and history.”

An exhibit featuring some of McCoy’s work, as well as student work done as part of the collaboration, will be Thursday, Feb. 8-Thursday, Feb. 22 at Highsmith Gallery, 1 University Heights on UNCA’s campus. For more information, go to avl.mx/d88.

JAM Kids benefit

Grammy Award winner **Jim Lauderdale** will headline an annual fundraising concert for the Junior Appalachian Music Kids of Henderson County program at Trailside Brewing Co. on Wednesday, Dec. 27. The JAM Kids will play from 7-7:45 p.m. before Lauderdale takes the stage at 8:15 p.m.

Sponsored by the French Broad Valley Music Association, JAM Kids

is a program of twice weekly after-school classes in fiddle, clawhammer banjo, guitar, singing, dance and band for students ages 8-17. About 30 students participate in the program, which is held at the Henderson County Parks and Recreation Center and taught by regional musicians.

“Students learn songs and dance tunes, participate in group ‘all-play’ and string band classes, developing listening skills, learning to work together and making new friends,” says **Carol Rifkin**, lead instructor. “Performance is a big part of the program, first learning songs, arranging them, working together to present them. It brings a lot of skills into play. Folk music is simple but is the root of more complex music, and JAM sets the stage for kids to move forward into many styles of music.”

Participants have played at the Cradle of Forestry, the Craft Fair of the Southern Highlands, the Carl Sandburg Home in Flat Rock and more.

Founded four years ago, Henderson County JAM is an affiliate of the parent organization Junior Appalachian Music but is locally operated and funded. This is the second straight

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year Lauderdale has headlined the group's fundraising event.

A native of Iredell County, Lauderdale is a country, bluegrass and Americana singer-songwriter who has released 31 studio albums since 1986. He won a Grammy for *Lost in the Lonesome Pines*, a 2002 collaboration with the legendary Ralph Stanley. His songs have been recorded by **George Strait**, **Elvis Costello**, **Blake Shelton**, **Vince Gill**, **Patty Loveless** and others.

Trailside Brewing Co. is at 873 Lennox Park Drive in Hendersonville. To purchase tickets, go to avl.mx/d89. For more information about JAM Kids of Henderson County, go to avl.mx/d8a.

Night at the museum

The Museum of the Cherokee People will close out its 75th year with *Party Like It's 1998: A New Year for the Museum of the Cherokee People* on Friday, Dec. 29, 6-10 p.m. The event will include artist talks, food and drink, entertainment and prizes for best 1990s costumes.

"It's an opportunity to reflect on the museum's 75-year legacy, what we've learned and our big plans to share the Cherokee story from a Cherokee perspective in a new, updated exhibit," says **Anna Chandler**, the museum's manager of external affairs and communications.

Party Like it's 1998 will be the last chance for patrons to take in the museum's current main exhibition, which opened in 1998. The exhibit takes a mainstream museum approach to exhibit design, following an archaeological timeline from the Paleolithic period to the early 20th century, according to a museum press release. It was designed in collaboration with Disney Imagineers.

The museum is developing a new exhibition it says will tell the Cherokee story from a Cherokee perspective. "The research process for the new main exhibition starts with tribal citizens: Throughout 2023, leadership has held listening sessions at Cherokee's community clubs and legion halls and distributed a community feedback survey for tribal members to share their thoughts on the history, culture, stories and approach that will authentically reflect the Cherokee people," according to the press release.

Founded in 1948, the Museum of the Cherokee People, formerly known as the Museum of the Cherokee Indian, is the nonprofit organization and tribal museum of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

Admission to the event is free for tribal members and museum members, and \$25 for others. The museum is at 589 Tsali Boulevard in Cherokee. For more information, go to avl.mx/d8b.

Locals receive arts grants

ArtsAVL announced that 14 Buncombe County residents received 2023-24 Artist Support grants from the N.C. Arts Council. Buncombe County grantees received \$31,769 for projects in disciplines including ceramic arts, music, filmmaking, fiber arts, acting, metalpoint and dance.

The grants may go to completion and presentation of new work, career promotion, training or travel.

The recipients are glass artist **Kathryn Adams**; potter **Candice Hensley**; musician **Chris LaRue Horton**; folk/Americana artist **Hannah Kaminer**; painter and fiber artist **Genie Maples**; **Summer Merritt**, co-founder of *Pride & Archive Jewelry Design*; silverpoint and digital media artist **Carol G. Prusa**; filmmaker **Mitch Rumfelt**; ceramic artist **Kat Reeves**; voice teacher **Willie Repoley**; potter **Cara Steinbuchel**; **Kirsten Stolle**, a visual artist working in collage, text-based images; dancer, choreographer and dance educator **Melissa Wilhoit**; and sculptor **Leo Woods**.

ArtsAVL also announced 43 Buncombe County recipients of the N.C. Arts Council's Grassroots Arts

Program grant. Recipients include organizations working in such fields as dance, puppetry, choral and symphonic music, children's theater, mask making, arts for healing and community radio. Grants ranged from \$1,500 to \$7,500 depending on the size of the organization.

Funds can be used for program expenses, including professional artists' fees, marketing and publicity, music and equipment rental, or operating expenses, including salaries, office supplies, rent, utilities and small capital projects.

For a list of recipients or more information about the grants, go to avl.mx/d8c.

— Justin McGuire X

MOVIE REVIEWS

THE BOY AND THE HERON:

Legendary animator Hayao Miyazaki's final film is a masterful meditation on creativity and legacies. **Grade: A**

— Edwin Arnaudin



Find full reviews and local film info at ashevillemovies.com and ashevillemovies.substack.com

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LIVE MUSIC AT HIGHLAND

12/22	7pm	Sanford:
12/23	6pm	Sister Ivy
12/27	6pm	Travis Book, Julian Pinelli, & Matt Smith
12/29	7pm	Boat Command
12/30	6pm	Natti Love Joys
12/31	2pm	81 Drifters
1/1	2pm	Brady Turner



81 Drifters

SCAN FOR EVENTS CALENDAR



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20

ALLEY CAT
Karaoke Party, 8pm

AMICI'S ITALIAN RESTAURANT
Rene Russell (Americana, rock, bluegrass), 5pm

ASHEVILLE MUSIC HALL
Stand-Up Comedy Open Mic, 8pm

EULOGY
Wolves In The Taproom: Black Metal Night, 7pm

FLEETWOOD'S
Psych Night w/DJ Torren, 9pm

FRENCH BROAD RIVER BREWERY
Saylor Brothers & Friends (jamgrass), 6:30pm

HIGHLAND BREWING CO.
Well-Crafted Music w/ Matt Smith, 6pm

JACK OF THE WOOD PUB
Old Time Jam, 5pm

OKLAWAHA BREWING CO.
Bluegrass Jam w/Derek McCoy & Friends, 6pm

ONE WORLD BREWING WEST
Latin Night w/DJ Mtn Vibe, 8:30pm

SALVAGE STATION
Dopa-Funk: A Very Soulful Christmas w/ Datrian Johnson & Friends (soul), 8pm

SHAKEY'S
Sexy Service Industry Night w/DJ Ek Balam, 10pm

SHILOH & GAINES
Trivia Night, 7pm

SOVEREIGN KAVA
Poetry Open Mic, 8pm

THE GETAWAY RIVER BAR
Asheville FM Live Music Sessions, 9pm

THE GREY EAGLE
Gabe Dixon w/Sahara Moon (Americana, folk, blues), 8pm

THE ODD
Shake A Leg & George Trouble (folk-punk, rock, reggae), 9pm

THE RAILYARD BLACK MOUNTAIN
Dan's Jam (bluegrass), 5pm

URBAN ORCHARD CIDER CO. SOUTH SLOPE
Trivia, 6:30pm

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21

ASHEVILLE BEAUTY ACADEMY
Moon Night Jazz Speakeasy, 7pm

CROW & QUILL
Para Gozar (Cuban), 8pm

FLEETWOOD'S
A Very Tight Christmas w/Comino & Paprika (garage, punk, indie), 9pm

FRENCH BROAD RIVER BREWERY
Jerry's Dead (Grateful Dead & JGB Tribute), 6pm

HIGHLAND BREWING DOWNTOWN TAPROOM
Not Rocket Science Trivia, 6pm

JACK OF THE WOOD PUB
Bluegrass Jam w/Drew Matulich, 7:30pm

LAZOOM ROOM BAR & GORILLA
Ashevillians Comedy Showcase, 7pm

MAD CO. BREW HOUSE
Chris Long (rock, Americana), 6pm

OKLAWAHA BREWING CO.
Kid Billy (Americana, blues, indie-folk), 7pm

ONE WORLD BREWING
Jake Burns (reggae, rock, folk), 7pm

ONE WORLD BREWING WEST
Ovadya (neo-psych, world-music), 8pm

OUTSIDER BREWING
Robert's Totally Rad Trivia, 7pm

SHAKEY'S
Comedy Showcase w/ Hilliary Begley, 8pm

SHILOH & GAINES
Karaoke Night, 8pm

THE GETAWAY RIVER BAR
Karaoke w/Terraoke, 9pm

THE ODD
Nintenbros (Video Game Cover Band), 8pm

THE ORANGE PEEL
The Long Distance Relationship w/Rond (indie-rock, psych), 8pm

THE STATION BLACK MOUNTAIN
Mr Jimmy (blues), 5pm

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 22

27 CLUB
The Emo Night Before Christmas, 10pm

ASHEVILLE BEAUTY ACADEMY
Live Music Sessions, 7:30pm

ASHEVILLE GUITAR BAR
Mr Jimmy's Friday Night Blues, 8pm

BOTANIST & BARREL TASTING BAR + BOTTLE SHOP
Ethan Harrison Smith (folk, Americana), 6:30pm

CATAWBA BREWING COMPANY SOUTH SLOPE ASHEVILLE
• Comedy at Catawba: Mandee McKelvey, 7pm
• Hot & Horny Holiday Comedy Showcase, 9pm

CORK & KEG
Brody Hunt & The Silent Knights (country, honky-tonk), 8pm

CROW & QUILL
Black Sea Beat Society (Balka, rock'n'roll, Turkish-psych), 8pm

EULOGY
GRRL & Made of Oak w/DJ Lil Meow Meow (alt-indie, experimental), 9pm

FLEETWOOD'S
Great Wide Nothing, Impending Joy & Father Figures (prog-rock, psych, punk), 9pm

HIGHLAND BREWING CO.
Sanford (multiple genres), 7pm

HIGHLAND BREWING DOWNTOWN TAPROOM
Fo Daniels (rock'n'roll), 7pm

JACK OF THE WOOD PUB
• The Sternwheelers (Americana, rock, Irish), 1pm
• Honky-Tonk Fridays w/Jackson Grimm, 4pm

LA TAPA LOUNGE
Open Mic Night w/ Hamza, 8pm

OKLAWAHA BREWING CO.
No Way Out (multiple genres), 8pm

ONE WORLD BREWING
Crystal Fountains Duo (bluegrass, folk, Americana), 8pm

ONE WORLD BREWING WEST
Shed Bugs (folk, blues, psych-rock), 8pm

SALVAGE STATION
Larry Keel Experience w/Red Clay Revival (bluegrass), 8pm

SHAKEY'S
Friday Late Nights w/DJ Ek Balam, 12am

SHILOH & GAINES
Velvet Truckstop (Southern-rock, Americana), 9pm

SOVEREIGN KAVA
Lo Wolf & Friends (acoustic), 9pm

THE GETAWAY RIVER BAR
Christmas Carols Karaoke, 11:30pm

THE ODD
An Odd Thank You w/ Hightower, Systematic Devastation, Jvixen & Gang Beef (metal, hip-hop), 9pm

PISGAH BREWING COMPANY



Caption

THE ORANGE PEEL
Lost Torpedo w/Boy
in Sleep (grunge, dark-
folk), 8pm

**THE RIVER ARTS
DISTRICT BREWING
COMPANY**
Boukou Groove (soul,
funk, jazz), 6pm

WXYZ BAR AT ALOFT
StomperKitty (rock,
blues, country), 7pm

**SATURDAY,
DECEMBER 23**

ALLEY CAT
Karaoke Party, 8pm

**ASHEVILLE BEAUTY
ACADEMY**
• Live Music Sessions,
7:30pm
• Sexmas Dance Party,
10pm

ASHEVILLE CLUB
Mr Jimmy (blues), 7pm

**BATTERY PARK BOOK
EXCHANGE**
Dinah's Daydream (jazz),
6pm

CORK & KEG
Zydeco Ya Ya (Cajun,
Zydeco), 8pm

CROW & QUILL
Drayton & The Dream-
boats (vintage-jazz,
rock'n'roll), 8pm

DSSOLVR
What's This? A Spooky
Christmas Comedy
Show, 10pm

EULOGY
Rap Is Dead w/Phan-
tom Pantone, 8pm

FLEETWOOD'S
Khandroma, JD
Pinkus & Biostatic
(experimental), 9pm

**FOUR POINTS BY
SHERATON**
Comedy Hypnosis w/
Jon Dee, 8pm

**HIGHLAND
BREWING CO.**
Sister Ivy (neo-soul,
jazz, R&B), 6pm

**HIGHLAND BREWING
DOWNTOWN
TAPROOM**
Brown Mountain Light-
ning Bugs (Appalachian,
folk), 7pm

**JACK OF THE WOOD
PUB**
• Nobody's Darling
String Band, 4pm
• Jesse Harman & the
Jugs (swing, rock'n'roll,
bluegrass), 9pm

LA TAPA LOUNGE
Karaoke, 9pm

**OKLAWAHA
BREWING CO.**
• Collin Cheek (Appala-
chian, Americana), 2pm
• The Henderson Coun-
ty Rangers (honky-tonk,
country), 8pm

**ONE WORLD
BREWING WEST**
Clouds of Delusion
(Grateful Dead tribute),
8pm

SHAKEY'S
Partyland Sessions w/DJ
Grimmjoi, 10pm

SHILOH & GAINES
Sugar Bomb (jazz), 9pm

**SWEETEN CREEK
BREWING**
Greg Candle (blues,
country), 6pm

THE BURGER BAR
Best Worst Karaoke,
9pm

THE ODD
Party Foul Drag: Satur-
day Night Tease, 8pm

THE ORANGE PEEL
Free Radio w/DJ
Atreau, 8pm

**THE RAILYARD BLACK
MOUNTAIN**
Ashley Heath (Ameri-
cana, blues), 7pm

WXYZ BAR AT ALOFT
Just Nieman, 7pm

**SUNDAY,
DECEMBER 24**

**ASHEVILLE BEAUTY
ACADEMY**
Life's A Drag Brunch,
12pm

**BATTERY PARK BOOK
EXCHANGE**
Parker's Back (swing,
jazz), 3pm

**CATAWBA BREWING
COMPANY SOUTH
SLOPE ASHEVILLE**
Comedy at Catawba: A
Very Cody Christmas,
6:30pm

**FRENCH BROAD
RIVER BREWERY**
Reggae Sunday w/
Chalwa, 3pm

**JACK OF THE WOOD
PUB**
• Bluegrass Brunch, 1pm
• Traditional Irish Jam,
3:30pm

**ONE WORLD
BREWING WEST**
Sunday Jazz Jam,
1:30pm

S & W MARKET
Mr Jimmy (blues), 1pm

SOVEREIGN KAVA
Cosmic Appalachian
Soul, 7pm

**THE GETAWAY RIVER
BAR**
Sunday Brunch Karaoke
w/Terraokke, 12pm

THE ODD
King Sht Presents:
XXX-Mas Party, 9pm

**MONDAY,
DECEMBER 25**

5 WALNUT WINE BAR
CaroMia, Rahm, Iannuci
& Jaze Uries (dread-
pop, soul, R&B), 8pm

FLEETWOOD'S
Best Ever Karaoke, 8pm

**HAYWOOD COUNTRY
CLUB**
Open Mic w/Taylor
Martin & Special Guests,
7:15pm

**HIGHLAND BREWING
CO.**
Totally Rad Trivia w/
Mitch Fortune, 6pm

**JACK OF THE WOOD
PUB**
Quizzo! Pub Trivia w/
Jason Mencer, 7:30pm

**OKLAWAHA
BREWING CO.**
Takes All Kinds Open
Mic Nights, 7pm

**ONE WORLD
BREWING WEST**
Mashup Mondays w/The
JLloyd Mashup Band,
8pm

**THE GETAWAY RIVER
BAR**
World Tavern Poker
Night, 7pm

**TUESDAY,
DECEMBER 26**

**ASHEVILLE BEAUTY
ACADEMY**
• Trivia: Are You
Smarter Than a Drag
Queen?, 8pm
• Karaoke w/Ganymede,
9pm

FLEETWOOD'S
Spooky Tuesdays: All
Vinyl DJs, 7pm

**FRENCH BROAD
RIVER BREWERY**
Robert's Totally Rad
Trivia, 7pm

**OKLAWAHA
BREWING CO.**
Team Trivia, 7pm

**ONE WORLD
BREWING WEST**
The Grateful Family
Band Tuesdays (Grateful
Dead tribute), 6pm

SHILOH & GAINES
Songwriters Night, 7pm

SILVERADOS
Dark City Comedy
Open Mic Night, 8pm

SOVEREIGN KAVA
Tuesday Night Open
Jam, 8pm

OPEN

SHILOH & GAINES

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FEATURE

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JASON SCHOLDER

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SALVAGE STATION

THE RIVER ARTS DISTRICT BREWING COMPANY
Open Mic w/Jenny B., 7pm

WHITE HORSE BLACK MOUNTAIN
White Horse Open Mic, 7pm

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 27

ALLEY CAT
Karaoke Party, 8pm

ASHEVILLE MUSIC HALL
Stand-Up Comedy Open Mic, 8pm

EULOGY
Rap Is Dead w/Phantom Pantone, 8pm

FLEETWOOD'S
Psych Night w/DJ Torren, 9pm

FRENCH BROAD RIVER BREWERY
Saylor Brothers & Friends (jamgrass), 6:30pm

HIGHLAND BREWING CO.
Well-Crafted Music w/Matt Smith, 6pm

JACK OF THE WOOD PUB
Old Time Jam, 5pm

OKLAWAHA BREWING CO.
• Bluegrass Jam w/Derek McCoy & Friends, 6pm

• FBVMA: Mountain Music Jam, 6pm

ONE WORLD BREWING WEST
Latin Night w/DJ Mtn VibeZ, 8:30pm

SHAKEY'S
Sexy Service Industry Night w/DJ Ek Balam, 10pm

SHILOH & GAINES
Trivia Night, 7pm

SOVEREIGN KAVA
Poetry Open Mic, 8pm

THE RAILYARD BLACK MOUNTAIN
Dan's Jam (bluegrass), 5pm

URBAN ORCHARD CIDER CO. SOUTH SLOPE
Trivia, 6:30pm

WHITE HORSE BLACK MOUNTAIN
Irish Session, 7pm

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 28

ASHEVILLE BEAUTY ACADEMY
Moon Night Jazz Speakeasy, 7pm

ASHEVILLE GUITAR BAR
The Tallboys (rock, reggae), 7:30pm

BATTERY PARK BOOK EXCHANGE
Mike Kenton & Jim Tanner (jazz), 5:30pm

CROW & QUILL
Meschija Lake's New Orleans Jazz Band, 8pm

EULOGY
Splash Blade w/Nostalagianoid & Ideal Self (new-age, experimental, noise), 7pm

FRENCH BROAD RIVER BREWERY
Jerry's Dead (Grateful Dead & JGB Tribute), 6pm

HIGHLAND BREWING DOWNTOWN TAPROOM
Not Rocket Science Trivia, 6pm

JACK OF THE WOOD PUB
Bluegrass Jam w/Drew Matulich, 7:30pm

OKLAWAHA BREWING CO.
Adam & The Testifiers (funk), 8pm

ONE WORLD BREWING
Frances Eliza (jazz, indie-folk, pop), 8pm

ONE WORLD BREWING WEST
One Beat Reggae Night, 8pm

SALVAGE STATION
Check Your Head (Beastie Boys tribute), 8pm

SHAKEY'S
Karaoke, 9pm

SHILOH & GAINES
Karaoke Night, 8pm

THE GETAWAY RIVER BAR
Karaoke w/Terraoko, 9pm

THE GREY EAGLE
Corey Ryan Forrester, 7pm

THE ORANGE PEEL
Somewhat Petty (prog-rock, blues), 7pm

THE STATION BLACK MOUNTAIN
Mr Jimmy (blues), 5pm

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 29

ASHEVILLE BEAUTY ACADEMY
Live Music Sessions, 7:30pm

ASHEVILLE GUITAR BAR
Mr Jimmy's Friday Night Blues, 8pm

ASHEVILLE MUSIC HALL
Empire Strikes Brass (funk, rock), 10pm

BOTANIST & BARREL TASTING BAR + BOTTLE SHOP
Rocky Collin (jazz, pop), 6:30pm

CATAWBA BREWING COMPANY SOUTH SLOPE ASHEVILLE
Comedy at Catawba: Tom Peters & Taylor Rodgers, 7pm

CORK & KEG
The Uptown Hillbillies (honky-tonk, country), 8pm

CROW & QUILL
Queen Bee & The Honeylovers (swing, jazz, Latin), 8pm

FLEETWOOD'S
Puppy & the Dogs, Lamps Requires & Saluda (garage-rock, punk), 9pm

GINGER'S REVENGE CRAFT BREWERY & TASTING ROOM
Mike Hollon (Americana, funk, blues), 6pm

HIGHLAND BREWING CO.
Boat Command (post-lo-fi, jazz, yacht-hop), 7pm

HIGHLAND BREWING DOWNTOWN TAPROOM
The Trusty Hucksters (swing, jazz, rock), 7pm

JACK OF THE WOOD PUB
• Honky-Tonk Fridays w/Jackson Grimm, 4pm
• Heavenly Vipers (jazz, alt-folk, Americana), 9pm

LA TAPA LOUNGE
Open Mic Night w/Hamza, 8pm

NOBLE CIDER & MEAD TAPROOM AND PRODUCTION FACILITY
Crispmas Comedy w/Good Cop & Rad Cop, 7pm

OKLAWAHA BREWING CO.
Raditude (punk, alt-rock), 8pm

ONE STOP AT ASHEVILLE MUSIC HALL
Brushfire Stankgrass (bluegrass), 10pm

ONE WORLD BREWING
Paul Edelman (folk, rock'n'roll), 8pm

ONE WORLD BREWING WEST
Freeway Jubilee Duo (rock, bluegrass, jazz), 8pm

SHAKEY'S
• Friday Late Nights w/DJ Ek Balam, 12am
• Booty Tuesday w/DJ Roselle, 9pm
Shelby Lore Band (Appalachian, rock), 9pm

SHILOH & GAINES
Astrosauce (rock, funk, pop), 9pm

SILVERADOS
Mile High Band (country, rock), 9pm

SWEETEN CREEK BREWING
Muddy Guthrie (Americana, rock, blues), 1pm

THE GETAWAY RIVER BAR
Krampus Night After Party, 10pm

THE GREY EAGLE
Carnivale Macabre: Krampus Night, 8pm

THE ORANGE PEEL
The Infamous String-dusters (bluegrass, indie), 8pm

WXYZ BAR AT ALOFT
The Hill Climbers (Appalachian), 7pm

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 30

27 CLUB
Kalgon, Coffin Torture & Hashwitch (doom, sludge, psych), 8:30pm

ASHEVILLE BEAUTY ACADEMY
• Live Music Sessions, 7:30pm
• 80's vs 90's Dance Party, 9pm

ASHEVILLE CLUB
Mr Jimmy (blues), 7pm

ASHEVILLE MUSIC HALL
Monty, Curra, Tunic, King Shotta B2B Menace & The Temple (dub, electronic, dubstep), 9pm

BATTERY PARK BOOK EXCHANGE
Dinah's Daydream (jazz), 6pm

CORK & KEG
Soul Blue (soul, blues, R&B), 8pm

CROW & QUILL
Hearts Gone South (honky-tonk), 8pm

FLEETWOOD'S
Faux Skater, The Discs & Call the Next Witness (punk), 8pm

FOUR POINTS BY SHERATON
Comedy Hypnosis w/Jon Dee, 8pm

GINGER'S REVENGE CRAFT BREWERY & TASTING ROOM
Melodic AF (soul, disco, honky-tonk), 4pm

HIGHLAND BREWING CO.
Natti Love Joys (reggae), 6pm

HIGHLAND BREWING DOWNTOWN TAPROOM
Moon Water (Americana, roots, country), 7pm

JACK OF THE WOOD PUB
• Nobody's Darling String Band, 4pm
• 81 Drifters (bluegrass, folk, Americana), 9pm

LA TAPA LOUNGE
Karaoke, 9pm

NOBLE CIDER & MEAD DOWNTOWN
Pre-Game: A New Year's Eve Eve Comedy Show, 7pm



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CLUBLAND

ONE WORLD BREWING WEST

- The Jacktown Ramblers (bluegrass, jazz, swing), 4pm
- The Osprey Orchestra (folk), 9pm

POINT LOOKOUT VINEYARDS

Tuxedo Junction (rock, swing), 3pm

SHILOH & GAINES

Jones Cove (multiple genres), 9pm

SOVEREIGN KAVA

Will Franke & the Space Fiddle (folk, rock, experimental), 9pm

THE BURGER BAR

Best Worst Karaoke, 9pm

THE ODD

Party Foul Drag: Saturday Night Tease, 8pm

THE ORANGE PEEL

The Infamous String-dusters w/Jon Stickley Trio (bluegrass, indie), 8pm

THE RAILYARD BLACK MOUNTAIN

Jay Brown (Americana, blues, jazz), 7pm

WXYZ BAR AT ALOFT

DJ Molly Parti, 7pm

WHITE HORSE BLACK MOUNTAIN

Comedy Night w/Paul Ollinger, 8pm

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31

ASHEVILLE BEAUTY ACADEMY

Life's A Drag Brunch, 12pm

ASHEVILLE MUSIC HALL

NYE w/The Space Cowboys & The Cosmic Girls (Jamiroquai tribute), 9pm

BATTERY PARK BOOK EXCHANGE

- Parker's Back (swing, jazz), 3pm
- Dinah's Daydream (jazz), 7pm

CROW & QUILL

New Years Eve w/ Firecracker Jazz Band & Meschya Lake, 8pm

EXPLOREASHEVILLE. COM ARENA AT HARRAH'S CHEROKEE CENTER - ASHEVILLE

Asheville Symphony Presents New Year's Eve: She's Got Soul, 8pm

FLEETWOOD'S

New Years Eve Show w/ Cam Girl & Symptoms (punk), 9pm

FRENCH BROAD RIVER BREWERY

Reggae Sunday w/ Chalwa, 3pm

HIGHLAND BREWING CO.

The 81 Drifters (bluegrass, folk, jamgrass), 2pm

JACK OF THE WOOD PUB

- Bluegrass Brunch, 1pm
- Traditional Irish Jam, 3:30pm
- The Howdies (honky-tonk, country), 9pm

ONE STOP AT ASHEVILLE MUSIC HALL

NYE w/Natalie Brooke (jazz, blues, funk), 10pm

ONE WORLD BREWING WEST

Sunday Jazz Jam, 1:30pm

S & W MARKET

Mr Jimmy (blues), 1pm

SALVAGE STATION

New Year's Eve Party w/The Snozzberries, Kirbybright, Funkbox & Luma, 8:30pm

SHILOH & GAINES

Karma Dogs NYE Celebration (rock), 9:30pm

SOVEREIGN KAVA

Cosmic Appalachian Soul, 7pm

THE GETAWAY RIVER BAR

Sunday Brunch Karaoke w/Terraoko, 12pm

THE GREY EAGLE

The Blue Rags. (punk, ragtime), 9pm

THE ORANGE PEEL

The Infamous String-dusters (bluegrass, indie), 8pm

THE RAILYARD BLACK MOUNTAIN

Dark City Kings (indie, bluegrass), 5pm

THE RESTORATION HOTEL ASHEVILLE

Back to the 80s, 9pm

MONDAY, JANUARY 1

5 WALNUT WINE BAR

CaroMia, Rahm, Ianucci & Jaze Uries (dream-pop, soul, R&B), 8pm

EULOGY

The Chosen Ones: Industry Night w/Devyn Marzuola, 8pm

HAYWOOD COUNTRY CLUB

Open Mic w/Taylor Martin & Special Guests, 7:15pm

HIGHLAND BREWING CO.

- Brady Turner (pop, soul, R&B), 2pm
- Totally Rad Trivia w/ Mitch Fortune, 6pm

JACK OF THE WOOD PUB

Quizzo! Pub Trivia w/ Jason Mencer, 7:30pm

OKLAWAHA BREWING CO.

Takes All Kinds Open Mic Nights, 7pm

ONE WORLD BREWING

Open Mic Downtown, 7:30pm

ONE WORLD BREWING WEST

Mashup Mondays w/The JLozyd Mashup Band, 8pm

SHAKEY'S

Open Mic Night w/Nick, 6pm

TUESDAY, JANUARY 2

FRENCH BROAD RIVER BREWERY

Robert's Totally Rad Trivia, 7pm

OKLAWAHA BREWING CO.

Team Trivia, 7pm

ONE WORLD BREWING WEST

The Grateful Family Band Tuesdays (Grateful Dead tribute), 6pm

SHAKEY'S

Booty Tuesday w/DJ Lil Meow Meow, 9pm

SHILOH & GAINES

Songwriters Night, 7pm

SOVEREIGN KAVA

Tuesday Night Open Jam, 8pm

THE RIVER ARTS DISTRICT BREWING COMPANY

Open Mic w/Jenny B., 7pm

WHITE HORSE BLACK MOUNTAIN

White Horse Open Mic, 7pm

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 3

FLEETWOOD'S

Psych Night w/DJ Torren, 9pm

FRENCH BROAD RIVER BREWERY

Saylor Brothers & Friends (jamgrass), 6:30pm

HIGHLAND BREWING CO.

Well-Crafted Music w/ Matt Smith, 6pm

JACK OF THE WOOD PUB

Old Time Jam, 5pm

OKLAWAHA BREWING CO.

Bluegrass Jam w/Derek McCoy & Friends, 6pm

ONE WORLD BREWING WEST

Latin Night w/DJ Mtn VibeZ, 8:30pm

SHAKEY'S

Sexy Service Industry Night w/DJ Ek Balam, 10pm

SHILOH & GAINES

Trivia Night, 7pm

SOVEREIGN KAVA

Poetry Open Mic, 8pm

THE GREY EAGLE

Emerald Rae (Celtic, folk), 8pm

URBAN ORCHARD CIDER CO. SOUTH SLOPE

Trivia, 6:30pm

THURSDAY, JANUARY 4

EULOGY

Pleasure Principles w/ Brandon Manitoa (new-wave, italo, synths), 8pm

FRENCH BROAD RIVER BREWERY

Jerry's Dead (Grateful Dead & JGB Tribute), 6pm

HIGHLAND BREWING DOWNTOWN TAPROOM

Not Rocket Science Trivia, 6pm

JACK OF THE WOOD PUB

Bluegrass Jam w/Drew Matulich, 7:30pm

OKLAWAHA BREWING CO.

Collin Cheek (Appalachian, Americana), 7pm

ONE WORLD BREWING

Kid Billy (Americana, blues, indie-folk), 7pm

SHAKEY'S

Karaoke, 9pm

SHILOH & GAINES

Karaoke Night, 8pm

THE GREY EAGLE

Hannah Kaminer & The Wistfuls w/ Thomas Kozak (roots, Americana), 8pm

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WED: Poetry Open Mic AVL, 8:30pm/8pm signup

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12/29 FRI Aaron "Woody" Wood & The Perfect Sized Things, 9pm

12/30 SAT Will Franke & Space Fiddle, 9pm
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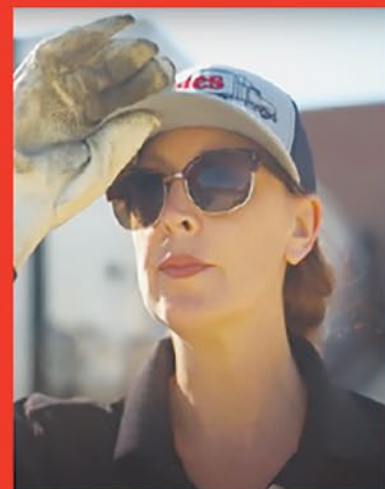
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LOVE OUR PEOPLE

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Aries educator Booker T. Washington advised us, "Do the common thing in an uncommon way." That's a useful motto for you in the coming months. If you carry out ordinary activities with flair, you will generate good fortune and attract excellent help. As you attend to details with conscientious enthusiasm, you will access your finest inner resources and exert constructive influences on the world around you. Be thorough and unique, persistent and imaginative, attentive and innovative. Adore your chores in 2024!

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Taurus philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) was among the smartest people who ever lived. As is often the case with geniuses, he believed in the supreme value of liberty for all. He was a feminist long before that word existed. Like another genius, architect Frank Lloyd Wright, he thought that "individuality realized is the supreme attainment of the human soul, the master-master's work of art. Individuality is sacred." I nominate Mill to be a role model for you in 2024, Taurus. This could be a time when you reach unprecedented new heights and depths of unique self-expression and liberation. P.S.: Here's a quote from Mill: "Eccentricity has always abounded where strength of character has abounded; and the amount of eccentricity in a society has been proportional to the amount of genius, mental vigor, and moral courage which it contained."

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Emotionally and spiritually, you will ripen at a robust rate in 2024. Your intelligence will mature into wisdom in surprising and gratifying ways. Harvesting rich lessons from long-smoldering confusions and long-simmering mysteries will be your specialty. P.S.: Some of you Geminis joke around and say you never want to grow up. But I hope you minimize that attitude in the coming months.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Indigenous people study the intelligence of animals and incorporate it into their own lives. If you're game to do that in 2024, I suggest you choose elephants as a source of teaching and inspiration. Have fun studying and meditating on their ways! Here are a few facts to get you started. Problem-solving is one of their strengths. They are experts at learning how to get what they need and passing that knowledge on to their offspring. They seldom suffer from sickness, but if they do, they often self-medicate with plants in their environment. Elder females are the knowledge keepers, retaining inner maps of where food, drink, and other resources are located.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Writer Janet Champ speaks about the joy of locating "the big wow, the big yesyesyes." It happens when you find something or someone you regard as "better, greater, cuter, wiser, more wonderful than anything you have ever known." I'll be lavish and predict you will encounter a big wow and yesyesyes like this in 2024. Will you know what to do with it? Will you be able to keep it? Those possibilities are less certain, but I have high hopes for you. For best results, cultivate a vivid vision of how the big wow and big yesyesyes will benefit others as well as you.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): In 1916, most women in the world could not vote. Many men considered women to be inferior — lacking in courage and initiative. It was the Dark Ages! That summer, two sisters named Augusta and Adeline Van Buren rebelled against the stereotypes by riding their motorcycles across America. Roads were poor, rains were frequent and police arrested them frequently for wearing men's clothes. Male-dominated media derided them, with one newspaper criticizing their escape from "their proper roles as housewives." I nominate them to be your role models in 2024, no matter what gender you are. It will be a favorable time to transcend conventional wisdom, override decaying traditions, and be a cheerful rebel.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): For hundreds of years, European nations stole land and resources from Indigenous people all over the world. Among the thefts were art, ritual objects, cultural treasures, and human skeletons. Museums in the West are still full of such plunder. But in recent years, some museums have begun to return the loot. Germany sent back hundreds of artifacts to Nigerian museums. France restored many objects to the African country of Benin. Let's apply this scenario as a useful metaphor for you in 2024, Libra. Is there a part of your past that was hijacked? Your memories appropriated or denied? Your rightful belongings poached, or your authentic feelings infringed upon? It's time for corrections and healing.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): I suggest we choose the brilliant Scorpio physicist and chemist Marie Curie (1867-1934) as your role model in 2024. She is the only person to win a Nobel Prize in two different fields. She managed to pursue a rigorous scientific career while raising two children and having a fulfilling marriage. Being of service to humanity was a central life goal. She grew up in poverty and sometimes suffered from depression, but worked hard to become the genius she aspired to be. May the spirit of Marie Curie inspire you, dear Scorpio, as you make dramatic progress in expressing your unique soul's code.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): In my fairy tale about your year ahead, I see you searching for treasure. It's not a wild and wandering exploration, but a diligent, disciplined quest. You are well-organized about it, carefully gathering research and asking incisive questions. You ruminate on the possibilities with both your logical and intuitive faculties. You meditate on how you might make adjustments in yourself so as to become fully available for the riches you seek. Your gradual, incremental approach gives you strength. You draw inspiration from your sheer persistence and relentless inquiry. And it all pays off by the second half of 2024.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): "All the things I really like to do are either illegal, immoral or fattening," quipped Capricorn author Alexander Woollcott (1887-1943). Since he was never arrested, I conclude he didn't get to enjoy some of the activities he relished. Was he immoral? Not exactly, though he could be caustic. Offering his opinion about a famous pianist, he said, "There is absolutely nothing wrong with Oscar Levant that a miracle couldn't fix." The good news for you, Capricorn, is that 2024 will be mostly free of the problems Woollcott experienced. You will be offered an abundance of perfectly legal and moral enjoyments. They may sometimes be fattening, but so what?

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Author Augusten Burroughs is a devoted urban dweller. He says, "When I get a craving for nature, I turn on TV's Discovery Channel and watch bear-attack survivors recount their horror." Martial arts master Morihei Ueshiba had a different perspective. "Mountains, rivers, plants and trees should be your teachers," he advised. "Study how water flows in a valley stream, smoothly and freely between the rocks." I recommend Ueshiba's approach to you in 2024, Aquarius — not Burroughs'. Here are my predictions: 1. You will have no dangerous encounters with nature. 2. You will learn more than ever from the wild world. 3. To the degree that you wander in the outdoors, your spiritual life will thrive.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): A study done at Union College in New York found that being fraternity members raised students' future income by 36 percent, but lowered their grade point average by 0.25 points. Would you make a similar trade-off, Pisces? Would you pursue a path that made you more successful in one way but less successful in another? I suspect you will encounter unusual decisions like this in 2024. My job is not to advise you what to do, but to make you alert for the provocative riddles.

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22; BLK, COBRA, FS380, 38; BLK, MOSSBERG, 500, 12GA; SIL/BLK, TAURUS, REVOLVER, 38; BLK, S&W, M&P, 357; BLK, MOSSBERG, 22; BLK, ZORAKI, P.A.K., 9MM. Anyone with a legitimate claim or interest in this property must contact the Asheville Police Department within 30 days from the date of this publication. Any items not claimed within 30 days will be disposed of in accordance with all applicable laws. For further information, or to file a claim, contact the **Asheville Police Department Property & Evidence Section at 828-232-4576.**

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ACROSS

- 1 Half of an orange?
- 4 Stand of trees
- 9 Nourished
- 12 Dedicated work
- 13 Got on a soapbox, say
- 14 "It's ___-brainer"
- 15 Bad thing to burst
- 16 Obnoxious houseguest?
- 18 "Already?"
- 20 Marble made of metal
- 21 Not a fan of postmillennials?
- 23 Brief brouhaha
- 24 Tournament placement
- 25 Coyote sounds

1	2	3		4	5	6	7	8		9	10	11
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60						61				62		63
64				65						66		
67				68						69		

- 28 Introspective subject
- 29 Passionate
- 32 On the light side
- 34 Rapper Mos ___
- 35 Bit of water splashed on a ship's front?
- 38 Pioneering Dadaist
- 41 Baptism, e.g.
- 42 Roasting platforms
- 46 Told tales
- 48 Syrian's northern neighbor
- 50 Showed up
- 51 North Africa's ___ Mountains
- 53 Cap worn at a Shriners Christmas party?
- 56 Slicker topper
- 59 Go on and on
- 60 Making fun of Beyoncé's beau?
- 62 Show ___
- 64 Historical period
- 65 Some barbecue fare
- 66 Summer in la cité

- 67 Apt name for a sensei
- 68 Management positions
- 69 One-to-one, e.g.

DOWN

- 1 Reel attachment
- 2 Actor in "Elf" and "Up"
- 3 Taken down a notch
- 4 Kind of knot
- 5 Bit of light
- 6 Handle that goes up and down?
- 7 Release some pressure
- 8 Outer limits
- 9 Blamed
- 10 Qualify
- 11 Start to sleep for a while
- 13 Central Plains tribe
- 16 Soak
- 17 Ones showing up in the middle of supper?
- 19 Song one might flip for
- 21 Actor Butterfield of "Sex Education"

- 22 Flies, maybe
- 26 Course standard
- 27 Lost traction
- 30 Neither's partner
- 31 Nincompoop
- 33 Fraternity letter
- 36 "Disco" dude on "The Simpsons"
- 37 Brand of cold and allergy relief products
- 38 Fearing the worst
- 39 British singer with the hits "How We Do (Party)" and "Poison"
- 40 Louisiana's state bird

- 43 Sure thing, or close to it
- 44 Past academics
- 45 "___ who?"
- 47 Musty
- 49 Arctic skin boats
- 52 ___ kebab
- 54 One side in a Senate vote
- 55 Tabloid news org.
- 57 Pot starter
- 58 Neutrogena shampoo line
- 61 Improvisational session
- 63 Appropriate letter to end this puzzle on

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS NY TIMES PUZZLE

I	M	A	G	I	N	E	D		G	H	O	S	T	L	Y				
T	Y	P	E	S	I	Z	E		M	A	R	C	H	E	D				
S	M	A	S	H	H	I	T		C	L	A	R	E	T	S				
M	A	R	T		N	A	S		E	N	I	D							
E	N	T		W	R	E	C	K	I	N	G	B	A	L	L				
				P	H	I		H	I	D		E	M	I	T				
				A	T	R	E	S	T		R	A	I	N	A	G	E		
				B	R	E	A	K		O	N	T	H	R	O	U	G	H	
				A	D	A		T	Y	R	O		O	U	T	S	E	T	
				D	U	P	E			A	R	S		L	A	B			
				S	L	E	D	G	E	H	A	M	M	E	R		S	T	S
				Z	I	O	N			D	I	Y		S	H	E	L		
				U	N	I	C	O	D	E		D	E	M	O	T	A	P	E
				N	E	S	T	S	I	N		G	R	O	V	E	L	E	D
				H	O	T	S	E	T	S		E	S	C	A	P	E	E	S

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