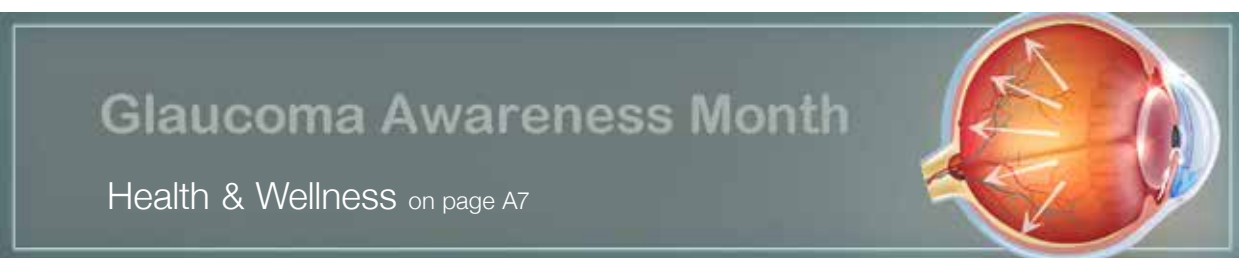


The mission of the Pamlico Musical Society is to present diverse musical experiences that enrich the quality of life in our community.



Glaucoma Awareness Month

Health & Wellness on page A7

Vol. 58 No.03, 12 Pages

The Pamlico News

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It's Girl Scout Cookie Time

by: Hiram Lupton



As the calendar rolls to mid-January, many of us have already given up on those New Year's resolutions, particularly those which may involve eating and diet. After all, a little snack never hurt anyone. If you haven't already given up, now may be the best time to, because once again it is Girl Scout Cookie season. The young ladies of Pamlico County Troop 4131 are ready to be your cookie supplier. They were out and about last weekend and will be selling your favorites at cookie booths until the first of March.

January

- 24th- Pamlico County Library 11 to 2
- 24th- Grantsboro VFD 11 to 3
- 25th- Grantsboro VFD 11 to 2
- 25th-Dollar General (Alliance) 11 to 2
- 31st- Piggly Wiggly 11 to 3

February

- 1st- Dollar General (Alliance) 11 to 3
- 7th- Piggly Wiggly 11 to 3
- 8th-Piggly Wiggly 11 to 2
- 14th- Library 10 to 2
- 15th- Dollar General (Alliance) 11 to 3
- 21st- Piggly Wiggly 11 to 2
- 22nd- Piggly Wiggly 10 to 2
- 28th- Library 10 to 2

March

- 1st- Dollar General (Alliance) 11 to 2

Money from cookie sales not only goes to help out girl scout troops but it is much more than that. Selling cookies help the girls to learn the basics of running a business like customer relations, bookkeeping, and inventory control. Stop by and see these girls and by a box or two. You can always restart that diet when cookie season is over.



Cat & Kitten Fostering Workshop

Have you ever wanted to foster a cat or kitten but just needed a bit of guidance? Join us on Saturday, February 7 at 11am at the Pamlico County Library at 13896 NC Highway 55 in Alliance. Sponsored by the Pamlico Animal Welfare Society, you will learn the basics, and then some, about fostering one or more cats, kittens or a mama and her babies. We will give you lots of tips and guidance and help prepare you to save lives! No commitment and no pressure - our goal is to educate you and hopefully encourage more people to foster. And we welcome folks from other rescues and their volunteers - saving lives takes and entire community! Please RSVP to mehiatt@gmail.com (just for planning purposes.)127

Road Improvement Projects on Tap for 2026

by: Hiram Lupton

A pair of projects to improve Pamlico County roads have been approved and funded by the North Carolina Department of Transportation for 2026 and now only await for the contractors to begin. The five lanes of NC 55 are the major link from Pamlico County to neighboring Craven County and a large portion of it is now scheduled to be resurfaced this year. The project will stretch from inside Craven County near the Town of Bridgeton to NC 55's intersection with NC 306 in Grantsboro. Hopefully this project will alleviate the dips and bumps along the route. The other project involves State Road 1324, also known as Florence Road. This project will widen both lanes of the road. Both of these projects will most likely cause some minor traffic delays when they commence due to lane closures. The bids for these projects have been awarded, and specific start dates will be announced by the contractors. One other NCDOT project that was originally scheduled to start this summer now looks to be delayed. The Dawson Creek Bridge replacement has been put on hold awaiting a final environmental impact study. The start date on that project is now unknown.



America250 North Carolina - First in Freedom

by: Hiram Lupton

As one of the thirteen original colonies, North Carolina played a pivotal role in the American Revolution and two events in our state that occurred leading up to the Declaration of Independence exemplified this. These events have been deemed important enough to be immortalized on the North Carolina state flag. The first action is shrouded in a bit of controversy. On May 20, 1775, the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence was alleged to have been signed by a committee of citizens meeting in Charlotte, North Carolina. It supposedly was the first document of its kind signed by a gathering of citizen representatives in the colonies declaring their independence from British rule. I use the word "alleged" because the original document was said to have been destroyed in a fire and a reproduction wasn't published until 1819, written from testimonials from several attendees of the meeting. What is not in contention is another resolution that was produced at this meeting, known as the Mecklenburg resolves. It is a set of resolutions adopted on May 31, 1775, asserting that British authority over the colonies was annulled. The 20-point document asserted the colonies right to self-rule as well as the establishment of governing committees and local courts. It also called for the arming of militias. Nearly a year later, on April 12, 1776, another important resolution was passed in our state by North Carolina's Provincial Congress. Known as the Halifax Resolves, because the State Colonial Congress was meeting in the town of Halifax. The resolution was unanimously passed by all 83 delegates present at the meet-



ing and in effect urged all the delegates meeting in Philadelphia at the Continental Congress to declare independence from Great Britain. It officially empowered North Carolina's three representatives to join with the other 12 colonies to free themselves from British rule, which they did with signing the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. The Halifax Resolves was the first official action in the colonies to expressly declare independence from Great Britain. Both May 20, 1775 and April 12, 1776 appear prominently on the North Carolina state flag. In addition, one of the options for auto license tags in North Carolina also shows these dates along with the words "First in Freedom" displayed at the top.



SPORTS on Page 5

The always awesome Hurricane cheerleaders

Reverend Rex Horne to Retire

Submitted by: Ben Casey



On December 29, 2025, Evelyn Paul, Board Chair of Silver Hill Christian Church in Grantsboro, announced the retirement of Reverend Rex Horne who served as the church's minister for 14 years. This retirement marked Horne's having served in a ministerial role for 62 years.

Prior to serving at Silver Hill, Horne had retired as the Regional Minister of the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ, North Carolina after holding that position for 7 years. Nine years into retirement he accepted the call to serve Silver Hill Christian Church in 2011.

A New Bern native but reared in Kinston, Horne graduated from Atlantic Christian College (now Barton College) in Wilson, NC in 1964 and Lexington Theological Seminary in Lexington, KY in 1967. He served churches in Alabama and in Charlotte, NC before serving in general ministry for the Pension Fund of the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ, headquartered in Indianapolis, IN. He accepted the call to be Regional Minister of the Christian Church in NC in 1995 serving in that position until his first retirement in 2002.

Continued on Page A3



UNC Gillings School to join Imagine Pamlico's efforts to improve access to health, wellness

BAYBORO, NC - Imagine Pamlico, the innovative nonprofit working to tackle serious healthcare deficiencies in Pamlico County, has partnered with UNC's nationally ranked Gillings School of Global Public Health.

Gillings School leaders agreed last week in a meeting with Imagine Pamlico's Health and Wellness Taskforce to collaborate on aspects of the group's broad plan to create a multidimensional solution to the growing regional healthcare crisis. Gillings committed to providing resources to help develop a metrics system to guide the larger project, and to help create a "wellness team" to confront the top health challenges in the county. The Taskforce has chosen for its initial focus, hypertension and behavioral health (anxiety/depression and addiction). Recent community surveys identified these health issues, as well as diabetes and obesity, as the major health problems facing citizens.

"The problems are large, and we are both small," said Nancy Messonnier, MD, Dean of the Gillings School, who attended the meeting. "But I'm optimistic." Messonnier committed to providing both student and faculty assistance, and asked, "How can

Continued on Page A7

LIKELY WEATHER OVER THE WEEKEND

Saturday, January 24th **36° Hi** Rain and snow showers in the morning

Sunday, January 25th **36° Hi** Freezing rain...changing to light rain



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Continued from page A1

UNC Gillings School to join Imagine Pamlico's efforts to improve access to health, wellness

Gillings intersect with Imagine Pamlico's goals?" Named the No. 1 public school of public health in the country, Gillings works in all 100 North Carolina counties and over 35 countries.

Bob Fuller, a founding board member of Imagine Pamlico and a former healthcare executive, praised Gillings' "immediate commitment in joining us to solve this challenge." Fuller, past president of the Pamlico County Chamber of Commerce and vice chair the Advisory Board of Health, chairs IP's Community Health and Wellness Taskforce. "What we are doing is developing a comprehensive view of what it means to be well," he told the group. "What do we need to do to fill in the gaps?"

Rural health care in North Carolina and across the United States is in a critical state. Rural counties have seen significant challenges in recent years, including hospital closures, workforce shortages, and higher rates of chronic disease. North Carolina has the second-largest rural population in the U.S., with one in three residents living in a rural community, and it has one of the highest rates of hospital closures, trailing only Texas and Tennessee. Since 2014, six rural hospitals have closed, leaving 20 rural counties without a hospital and 35 without any ICU beds. Many remaining facilities operate on thin or negative financial margins.

Pamlico County is officially designated as a Health Professional Shortage Area with residents having difficulty securing appointments and accessing timely care, citing long delays and a shortage of providers, according to Dr. Sharon Stephenson, a retired OB-GYN and a member of the Taskforce. The current ratio of primary care physicians to residents is approximately 1 to 3,100, in contrast to the North Carolina state average of 1 to 1,400. A commonly accepted benchmark for adequate primary care access is 1 physician per 2,000 residents. UNC's Rural Health Care Workforce reports that only 3 percent of primary care physicians practice in rural areas.

At Imagine Pamlico's first Rural Health and Wellness Conference last June, Stephenson reported that in addition to the county's top health concerns – substance use, mental health issues, and chronic conditions such as obesity and diabetes – there are critical service gaps in pediatrics, women's health, and mental health and substance abuse treatment. The proportionate rate of drug overdose deaths in the county is 92 per 100,000 population. The state average is 36 deaths per 100,000 people, and the state, 31.

In addition, Pamlico County has a need for specialists like psychiatrists and endocrinologists, she said. There is also a lack of urgent care and emergency services.

"We are at a crossroads in 2026," Lenn Murrelle, founder and president of Imagine Pamlico and an epidemiologist with expertise in public health and biomedical research, told the group. In an earlier interview, he noted that counties close to population centers, like RTP or the Triad, get spillover medical benefits. "We don't have any of that here, so we have to attack these things from the ground up and get grassroots input." Murrelle is leading efforts to obtain financial resources to support the project.

Compounding the problem are reductions in services like Medicaid, which expects to see cuts resulting in approximately \$1 trillion in losses nationwide in the next 10 years, including \$49.9 billion in North Carolina, and these cuts will disproportionately impact people who live in rural communities, according to North Carolina's Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP).

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services last month awarded North Carolina over \$213 million in federal funding through RHTP, but it's not clear how that money will be distributed. Imagine Pamlico assisted North Carolina in submitting an application for the funds which is reported to total \$50 billion nationwide for the purpose of improving health care for rural communities.

Imagine Pamlico's Health and Wellness Taskforce is made up of a diverse group of community leaders, government officials, nonprofit leaders and medical professionals. In addition to UNC, the group has also partnered with NC State University, Duke University and East Carolina University on various aspects of its broad-ranging vision for improving health and wellness in rural Eastern North Carolina. The two-year-old organization has received grants and funding from the Office of Rural Health's Telehealth Infrastructure Grant Program, the Z Smith Reynolds Foundation, and the Harold H. Bate Foundation, among others.

Its long-term goals are to support health services, wellness education and community engagement through the development of a regional multidisciplinary Health and Wellness Pavilion that could become a model for rural communities across the U.S.

Submitted by Carl Crothers

The Pamlico News Editorials and Opinions section features opinion articles, newspaper editorials and letters to the editor on the issues of the day. The views and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of The Pamlico News. Any content provided by authors are of their opinion, and are not intended to malign any religion, ethnic group, club, organization, company, individual or anyone or anything.



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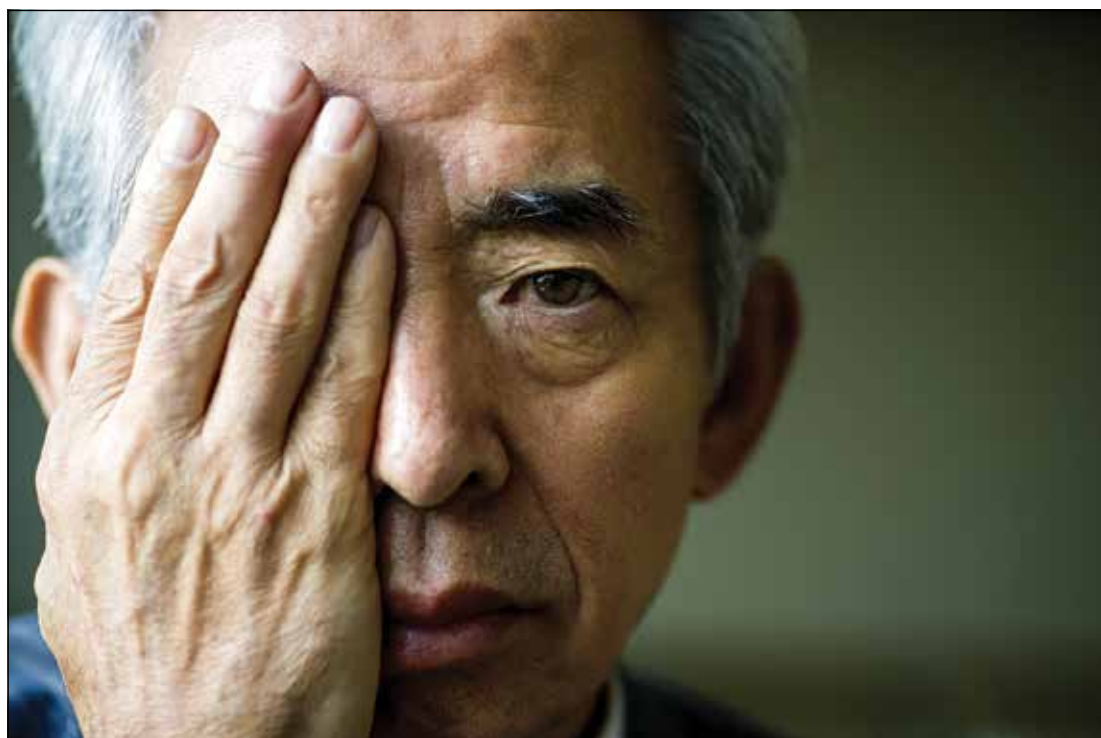
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Health & Wellness

SET YOUR SIGHTS ON GLAUCOMA



Eyesight often isn't fully appreciated until it begins to diminish. Starting in one's thirties, if not earlier, a person's vision may start to be less sharp. Items at a distance or up close may be more difficult to discern, and if prescription glasses or contacts are worn, that prescription may need to be adjusted more regularly. However, there are some eye conditions that are not entirely a result of aging. Glaucoma is one of them.

According to Johns Hopkins Medicine, glaucoma is a chronic, progressive eye disease that occurs when the optic nerve is damaged. Glaucoma is the leading cause of irreversible blindness and usually occurs when an abnormality in the eye's drainage system causes the aqueous humor fluid in the eye to build up, sometimes leading to excessive pressure that impacts the optic nerve. The optic nerve connects the retina with the brain, sending vision signals. Damage to the nerve can cause loss of eyesight. While pressure is largely to blame for glaucoma, glaucoma can occur even if eye pressure is normal.

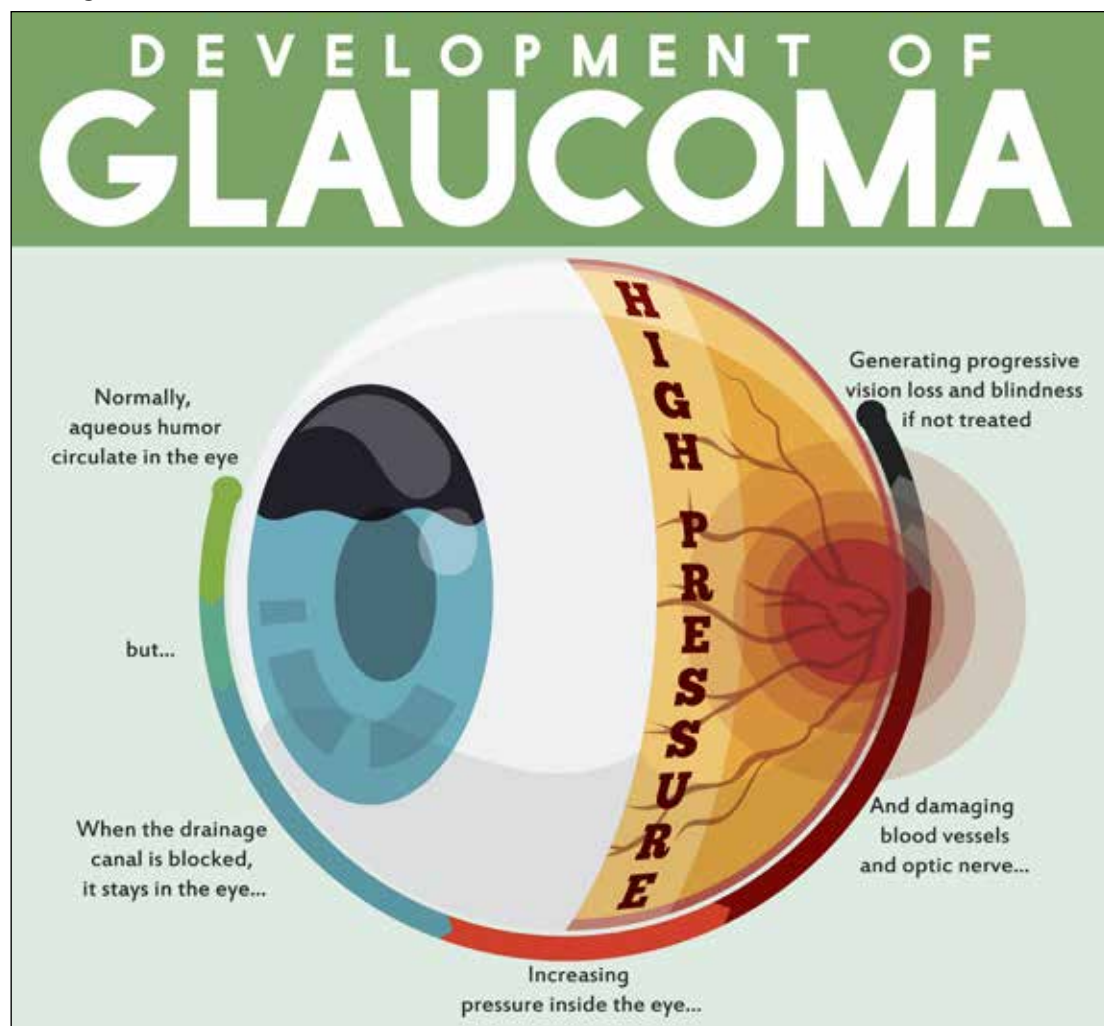
Glaucoma is often a silent condition. The Mayo Clinic advises that many forms of glaucoma have no warning signs. With effects so gradual, no changes in vision may be noticed until the condition is in its later stages.

This underscores the importance of getting regular eye examinations that will include measurements of the pressure in both eyes, says the Glaucoma Research Foundation. Glaucoma caught early can be slowed down or even prevented before it becomes severe. Lifelong treatment and monitoring will be needed after diagnosis.

There are different types of glaucoma. The most common is open-angle glaucoma, which occurs after the clogged fluid does not drain properly. Angle-closure glaucoma, also called closed-angle glaucoma, happens when the iris is very close to the drainage angle in the eye and the iris blocks the drainage angle. This results in an acute glaucoma attack. Some people have normal tension glaucoma, in which eye pressure is in normal range but there are signs of glaucoma. These individuals' optic nerves may be more sensitive to pressure than others' and will have to be monitored.

Certain people are at a greater risk for developing glaucoma than others. Individuals over 40; those with a family history of glaucoma; people of African, Hispanic or Asian heritage; people with high eye pressure; those who have had an eye injury; and individuals who use long-term steroid medications are at increased risk. Other factors also affect glaucoma risk.

Glaucoma should be discussed at routine eye wellness visits to prevent lasting vision damage.



Did you know?

Glaucoma is an umbrella term used to characterize a group of eye diseases that can gradually diminish individuals' vision and eventually lead to blindness. The National Eye Institute says the symptoms are a result of damage to the optic nerve due to increased intraocular pressure. Treatments designed to reduce eye pressure can help to prevent further damage but will not reverse what already has occurred. Glaucoma can occur at any age, but it is much more common in older adults. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates all people over the age of 60 have a higher risk of developing glaucoma. Glaucoma also is more common among Black people over the age of 40. The American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends a more frequent eye exam schedule as individuals age to increase chances of early detection. People 65 and older should see an eye professional every two years, if not every year.

