

THE COMMUNICATOR

Phone: (336) 835-2511

Email: wifm@wifmradio.com

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Surry's Love Saves Christmas

Responding to an urgent last-minute appeal, generous donors saved Christmas for hundreds of children in Surry County who benefited from this year's Give A Kid A Christmas campaign. Former Sheriff Graham Atkinson announced on Saturday morning, Dec. 7, the nonprofit group desperately needed 500 \$100 donations to meet its fundraising goal in time for the annual Shopping Day at Walmart, Dec. 10. By Monday night the \$50,000 goal was met and by Tuesday when gift buying began the group had enough to spend \$200 per child on Christmas gifts for a record 591 children. Way to go, Surry County!

More than two months earlier, back in October, the leaders of the Sheriff Atkinson's Give A Kid A Christmas Foundation knew this season might be a difficult time for fundraising. Tropical Storm Helene in late-September caused relatively little damage in Surry County, so people here opened their wallets and purses for recovery efforts elsewhere, donated thousands of dollars' worth of needed supplies, and volunteered their time to help hard-hit western N.C. That's wonderful, and we congratulate all who gave generously, but Surry County has needs, too.

Since 1993, the mission of Give A Kid A Christmas is exactly what the name says — to ensure that every boy and girl in Surry County can experience the joy of Christmas with warm clothes and full tummies. Toward that goal, The Salvation Army and Surry County Schools identify hundreds of children and families in need. Then the Surry County Sheriff's Department calls on the community to donate funds and turn out volunteers for packing food boxes, buying clothing and other gifts, and making deliveries.

This year on Dec. 2 the fifth annual streaming Give A Kid A Christmas telethon on Facebook Live and Surry On The Go raised \$28,883. All of that money went to buying food for families and shoes for children on the list. Scores of volunteers packed the food boxes on Saturday, Dec. 7, at Surry Central High School. More than 425 families benefited from the effort.

Then on Tuesday, Dec. 10, at about 8 a.m., more than 200 volunteers — many in groups from

churches, scout troops, sports teams, and civic clubs — gathered at Walmart in preparation for buying gifts. Surry County Board of Education Vice Chair Raleigh Scales delivered the good news: Give A Kid A Christmas not only achieved its goal of raising funds for 500 children, the donations exceeded expectations. The volunteers would be fulfilling hopes and dreams on wish lists for 591 children.

Speaking to the news media, Atkinson shared, "Part of the Christmas magic is how Give a Kid a Christmas comes together every holiday season. This happens every year, but we just don't know how it's going to happen. This year we were behind on our fundraising, more than we ever have been before. We asked the community to help us. We told them what we needed, and we could just watch the deficit go down hour after hour after hour. That is nothing in the world but the Lord's stirring the hearts of the people of the community."

Please join us in saluting and congratulating Sheriff Atkinson's Give A Kid A Christmas Foundation, the Surry County Sheriff's Department, The Salvation Army, Surry County Schools, Mount Airy Walmart, and all of the volunteers, supporters, and groups who help ensure every child in Surry County will experience happiness and joy this Christmas. You can see many pictured here: <https://www.facebook.com/giveakidachristmas>.

Mount Airy Seats Board Members

Mount Airy City Schools seated four Board of Education members in December. MACS welcomed one newly elected member, Mark Welch, and three re-elected members: Jayme Brant, Thomas Horton, and Randy Moore. With their colleagues Tim Matthews, Ben Cooke, and Kyle Leonard, the board members have committed themselves to serving the Mount Airy public schools and community.

The Board of Education also seated its new student representatives, Steven Huang and Cassidy Moore, who bring fresh perspectives and a strong voice for their peers.

We applaud these dedicated leaders and students and the schools, faculty, staff, pupils, families, and community as they work together to shape the future of education in the Mount Airy area.

Speedway Children's Charities Gives \$320k to Wilkes Nonprofits

Speedway Children's Charities celebrated a record-breaking year of fundraising by presenting nearly \$320,000 to 14 nonprofit organizations in Wilkes County. At "The Night of Joy" presentation in North Wilkesboro Speedway on Dec. 5, almost \$117,000 was donated specifically to nonprofits providing support to children impacted by Tropical Storm Helene in western North Carolina.

More than 200 people, including representatives of the 14 nonprofits, community advocates, and children, gathered at the speedway for the event. Guests were treated to a visit from Santa and track rides around the historic 0.625-mile oval.

The 14 Wilkes County nonprofits are:

- Catherine H. Barber Memorial Homeless Shelter
- Child Abuse Prevention Team of Wilkes County/Our House
- Ebenezer Christian Children's Home
- Hospitality House of Northwest North Carolina
- Old Hickory Council (Scouts)
- Robert Duncan Ministries
- Safe Spot Child Advocacy Center of Wilkes
- Safe Kids Wilkes County
- Samaritan Kitchen of Wilkes
- Wilkes Community Partnership for Children
- Wilkes Dental Consortium Inc.
- Wilkes Ministry of h.o.p.e.
- Wilkes Youth Life Development
- YMCA of Greater Charlotte (Camp Harrison)

SCC Wilkesboro raises funds for nonprofits with special events and sales at North Wilkesboro Speedway. For example, NASCAR All-Star week included the second annual Window World Bootleggers Cup, presented by The IGA Marketplace, which is SCC's second-largest charity golf event. Hot laps, auctions, a sponsor appreciation dinner, 50/50 raffles, the Trunk or Track Speedway Bash, and the ongoing sale of commemorative jars filled with asphalt from the track's historic surface also helped raise funds.

"This is the best night of the year," said Jessica Fickenscher, president of Speedway Children's Charities North Wilkesboro and chief experience officer at Speedway Motorsports that owns the North Wilkesboro Speedway. "What we do in the NASCAR industry and racing is fun, it's a bucket list for people to come to our events, but when you go out to the community and you see that there are kids who aren't eating and don't have clothes, don't have shoes, they're not getting the right tools they need for their education, it's really special that you can make a difference in one child's life, let alone hundreds of kids in the community."

The SCC North Wilkesboro Board of Trustees, now in its first year, includes Board President Jes-

sica Fickenscher of Speedway Motorsports; Billy Mauldin of Motor Racing Outreach; Bob Ballard of ECMD; Denna Parsons of the North Wilkesboro Speedway; Jackie Mallory of Carolina West Wireless; Wilkes Chamber of Commerce President Linda Cheek; community advocates Karen Shelton, Mary-Margaret Banner, and Terri Parsons; Laura Call of Call Family Distillers; Mandy Souther of Joe Campbell Roofing; Wilkes Community Partnership for Children Director Michelle Shepherd; Sara Redmond of Raymer Oil & The IGA Marketplace; Steve Swift of Speedway Motorsports; and Window World Chairman and CEO Tammy Whitworth.

People can support SCC North Wilkesboro in 2025 through the Bootleggers Golf Tournament, the 50/50 raffle presented by Central Logistics, or by purchasing a commemorative jar of the North Wilkesboro Speedway racing surface.

The North Wilkesboro chapter of SCC is one of 11 at Speedway Motorsports facilities across the country. In 2024, SCC will distribute more than \$4 million nationwide to charities that directly impact children in need. Since its inception in 1982, SCC has awarded more than \$72 million to nonprofit organizations across the United States.

For more information about Speedway Children's Charities in North Carolina, visit its page at [Facebook.com/scc.northcarolina](https://www.facebook.com/scc.northcarolina) or go to the website [SpeedwayCharities.org](https://www.SpeedwayCharities.org)

Warm Up With Wintery Mix Music

The Alleghany Arts Council's "Wintery Mix" live music series will resume on Saturday, Jan. 25, with the band "Empire Strikes Brass" playing horns-heavy funk rock from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Muddy Creek Café & Music Hall, 60 S. Main St. in Sparta.

The "Wintery Mix" series will continue on Feb. 22 with Ethiopian reggae from dubAddis and March 22 with Latin jazz from SalsaWiz. All shows run from 7 to 9 p.m. at Muddy Creek Café & Music Hall. Tickets for each show cost \$20 per person, and buying in advance is recommended. Visit [AlleghanyArtsCouncil.com](https://www.AlleghanyArtsCouncil.com) for details and to purchase tickets.

Third Thursday Book Club

The Third Thursday Book Club at the Charles H. Stone Memorial Library in Pilot Mountain is reading "Sufficient Grace" by Darnell Arnoult. Set in two Southern towns, the novel follows Gracie Hollaman who, after hearing voices telling her to leave everything behind, embarks on a journey of self-discovery that changes her life.

The club will gather at tables by the Adult Fiction section for a discussion from 11 a.m. to noon Thursday, Jan. 16, at the library, 319 W. Main St. in Pilot Mountain. New members are always welcome.

MAHS Men's Soccer Is #1 In NC

The Mount Airy High School Men's Soccer Team, the Granite Bears, has won the NCHSAA State 1A Championship for the first time. The season's final triumph was on Nov. 23 at the Mecklenburg County SportsPlex in Matthews — a 4-3 win over Hobbton High School from Sampson County.

The hard-earned and well-deserved accolades for both the team (24-3) and individual players continue to come in. At the N.C. Soccer Coaches Association All-State Banquet, Mount Airy's Angel Ortiz-Osorno was named to the 1A All-State squad for the first time. Ortiz-Osorno previously was chosen Northwest 1A Conference Offensive Player of the Year and was voted MVP of the 1A State Championship match in which he scored three goals.

Covering the championship, sports writer J. Mike Blake wrote in HighSchoolOT.com, "To win the boys soccer title, you've got to have a rock-solid team. Enter the Granite Bears. Both teams were aiming for a first state championship in the sport, and both had suffered heartache in the late postseason for much of the last decade. Mount Airy, the 13th seed from the West, was making its first championship appearance after having been stopped in the regional final four times. The Granite Bears showed their fortitude by winning on the road in four straight rounds before reaching the state final."

Mount Airy Head Coach Cody Atkins shared, "They had to beat four out of the top five seeds in the West. For them to finish the deal is just unbelievable. I'm proud of every single one of them."

We congratulate the players, coaches, volunteers and other supporters. The 2024-25 MAHS varsity boys soccer roster (reported by MaxPreps) includes Aaron Ruiz Angel, William Garcia, Diego Rodriguez, Xavier Hernandez Ibarra, Adrian Rodriguez, Gavin Guerrero, Barack Galloway, David Garcia, Angel Ortiz-Osorno, Enrique Hernandez Ibarra, Vicente Gomez, Brayden James, Chris Castillo, Edwin Perez Garcia, Long Dao, Justice Collins, Jonathan Valadez, Gabe Mauck, Daniel Rakoczy, Josh Gilley, Alejandro Bobadilla, Manny Morell, Jexyel Diaz, Adrian Fermin, Axel Pizano, Andy Chen, Isaias Andrade Perez, Omar Duarte, Ricky Mijes, Luca Livengood, Isaac Torres, Tri Dong, Kannon Strickland, Anthony Escudero, Aiden Frank, David Salmeron, Luis Torres, and Noel Paguada.

Members of the coaching staff are Head Coach Cody Atkins, Assistant Coach Bobby Collins, and Assistant Coach Cory Hiatt.

Feeding The Bears

Saturday, Nov. 23, was a magical and exhausting day for Mount Airy High School Men's Soccer. The Granite Bears defeated Hobbton in the 2024 NCHSAA 1A State Championship game on that Sat-

urday afternoon in the Mecklenburg County Sportsplex at Matthews.

By now most have read or heard that news, but here's a story many may not know. We saw it in a reel posted the following day on the Mount Airy High School Men's Soccer page on Facebook.

The story goes, "The boys were starving after the game in Matthews, and teenage boys are all about the next meal! Before we even had a chance to think about it, Mely Melendez reached out to invite the team, the coaches, and their families to eat at Chile Rojo. Inviting 50-plus people to take over your restaurant after 8 p.m. when you close at 9:45 p.m., and having to jump in and work after traveling multiple hours to watch your son win a state title, all while knowing how crazy excited everyone will be, and the inevitable mess that will be left behind, is selfless and the definition of family."

Way to go, Mely Melendez. We salute you and all of the soccer team members' parents, guardians, and other family for their encouragement and support. You're all winners.

MAMS Soccer Goes Undefeated

Here's also a shoutout to the Mount Airy Middle School Boys Soccer team for their undefeated season. These players don't know the word quit. They went all gas, no brakes, loudly cheered on by their supportive sideline. Their coaches are Daniel Wright, Andrew Wright, and Andrew Barlow.

Word Match Game

Match the word on the left with one on the right.

- | | | |
|-----------------|-------|--------------------|
| 1. vacillate | _____ | A. devout |
| 2. ambidextrous | _____ | B. hasty |
| 3. auspicious | _____ | C. waver |
| 4. regressive | _____ | D. cheerfully |
| 5. mundane | _____ | E. conclusion |
| 6. polemic | _____ | F. dry humor |
| 7. vapid | _____ | G. implied |
| 8. ubiquitous | _____ | H. everywhere |
| 9. alacrity | _____ | I. shallow |
| 10. pious | _____ | J. calm |
| 11. cursory | _____ | K. both hands |
| 12. docile | _____ | L. speech |
| 13. flaunt | _____ | M. dull |
| 14. glib | _____ | N. non-stimulative |
| 15. gregarious | _____ | O. submissive |
| 16. harangue | _____ | P. ownership |
| 17. conjecture | _____ | Q. favorable |
| 18. wry | _____ | R. verbal attack |
| 19. tacit | _____ | S. sociable |
| 20. abject | _____ | T. profound |
| 21. placid | _____ | U. provoke |
| 22. proprietary | _____ | V. infantile |

See answers on Page 7.

Continuing The Dream

The 20th annual program to celebrate the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. will be presented by the Mount Airy-Surry County Branch of the National Association of University Women and co-sponsored and hosted by the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History.

"In The Spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: Surry Countians Continuing the Dream" will focus on the love, learning, service, and hope of the African-American community of Surry County. The program will begin at 3 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 18, on the third floor of the museum at 301 N. Main St. in Mount Airy. The 2025 MLK Dreamer Recognition Award also will be presented. The event is free and open to the public.

Chartered in 2016, the Mount Airy-Surry County Branch of the National Association of University Women focuses on its Six-Point Program: education, literacy, health and wellness, political awareness/civic engagement, support for HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities), and Sisters Connect. Earlier in 2024 the local NAUW announced its newest scholarship recipients. They are Niya Smith who graduated from Mount Airy High School and is attending Winston-Salem State University and Willow Lawson, a Surry Early College graduate now attending University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. For more information about the Mount Airy-Surry County NAUW chapter visit its Facebook page or the national association's website at NAUW1910.org

Windows Win In Pilot Mountain

We congratulate the winners of Downtown Pilot Mountain's Window Decorating Contest, many of them Charlotte's and my neighbors along Main Street. Here's the list of winners:

BEST OVERALL: Indulge Soapery Kids Boutique. Theme: "Building a community one brick at a time." Fun fact: They built all of the Lego displays used!

RUNNER(S)-UP (exact two-way tie): Grace and Sparrow, "Christmas Gifting Fun." **Myriam Hair-colorist Salon LLC,** "Everything upside down this Christmas!"

HONORABLE MENTION: Mount Pilot Country Store. Theme: "Merry & Bright with Mickey and Minnie." Fun fact: The Mickeys both move.

PEOPLE'S CHOICE: Liv For Sweets. Theme: "The Sweetest Classic Christmas." Fun fact: Liv drew all the window art by hand.

All of the windows were amazing. People loved seeing the creativity and holiday spirit. We thank the judges panel, everyone who voted online, and especially the businesses that put time, effort, and money into creating their displays to make downtown even more enticing for holiday shoppers.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Martin Luther King Jr. Day is a federal holiday that honors the life and legacy of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (Jan. 15, 1929-April 4, 1968). Also known as MLK Day, the holiday is observed on the third Monday of January. This year it is on Jan. 20.

The day honors Dr. King's work for racial equality and advancing civil rights using nonviolent civil disobedience. By act of Congress, MLK Day also is the only federal holiday designated as a national day of service. All Americans are encouraged to volunteer and improve their communities.

Because MLK Day is a federal holiday, most U.S. government offices will be closed, including the U.S. Postal Service. Most banks and financial institutions will be closed and transactions won't process until the following business day. Entrance fees to national parks are waived. In North Carolina, state and federal courthouses will be closed. Public schools and school districts will be closed as well.

The MLK Day of Service is a call to action, in the spirit of Dr. King, who once said, "Everybody can be great because anyone can serve." These words are an invitation to contribute to our communities, addressing issues that we are passionate about and that resonate with the values Dr. King championed. Watch and listen for announcements of a variety of volunteer opportunities across the country and in northwest North Carolina where folks may make a difference in their community.

Want A New Hobby?

If your New Year's resolutions include "Start a new hobby," here's a suggestion: Make a keepsake book to preserve meaningful moments and memories that you can later share with family and friends.

The Alleghany Arts Council is presenting the workshop "Make a Book With Chris Davis" from 9:30 to noon Saturday, Jan. 18, in the Alleghany Public Library, 115 Atwood St. in Sparta. Attendees will learn how to use repurposed materials and other ephemera to create a personalized and unique spring-themed keepsake book.

The cost is \$45 and it includes materials. Spaces are limited. Register at AlleghanyArtsCouncil.org.

SCC Summer Course Schedule

Summer seems a long ways away, but it's not too early to start thinking about signing up for classes at Surry Community College.

SCC has posted its interactive Summer Course Schedule at <https://surry.edu/summer-courses>. For more information about registration and financial needs, contact Student Services at 336-386-3264.

MAHS Granite Bears Football

Mount Airy High School's football team was defeated in this year's NCHSAA 1A West Regional semifinals, but not before the Granite Bears established one of the nation's longest active winning streaks: 43 consecutive victories dating back to the 2022-23 season. Along the way, the Mount Airy teams captured 1A State Championships in 2022 and 2023. Win or lose, this year's Granite Bears are champions in our hearts and minds.

Speaking to reporters after Mount Airy's young men lost 14-7 to Corvian Community High School, Head Coach Austin Taylor said, "I wanted to remind the boys how amazing of a run they had been on and how amazing of a season we had. No reason to hang their heads. We fought and gave everything we had. There will never be regrets as long as we do that. Also made sure to thank the seniors for everything they have done for this program. Forty-three straight wins and two state championships will be remembered forever. They should be proud of themselves."

Mount Airy finished the season 13-1 overall and 6-0 in the Northwest 1A Conference after graduating eight offensive starters and seven defensive starters. The Granite Bears outscored their opponents 569-126 with three shutouts.

"This season has been both incredibly rewarding and challenging," Taylor told reporters. "I am beyond proud of the players and coaches on this football team. I have so much pride in getting to work with them every day. All the hours and sacrifice are worth it, getting to coach this amazing group. We had a lot of success, but also areas where we can grow, and I'm looking forward to doing that."

Fifteen seniors on the team will be graduating. They are Yanniell Arce, Jayle Bryant, Bryson Caudle, Dee Dawkins, Fletcher Gallimore, Landon Gallimore, JD Harper, Cash Hemric, Colin Hiatt, Jourdain Hill, Dyson Long, John Martin, Saadiq Pilson, Jayden Sechrist, and Bryson Taylor. The Class of 2025 has a four-year record of 57-3. The seniors won four conference championships, two regional championships, and two state championships.

"We talk about living up to the tradition and playing for the players who have come before on a daily basis," Taylor remarked. "The senior class lived up to those traditions and more. These boys' accomplishments will be remembered for a long time by winning 43 games in a row and back-to-back state championships. And more importantly, this class always did things the right way and it showed."

Members of Mount Airy High School's 2024-25 Varsity Football Team (roster reported by MaxPreps) are Zach Goins, Landon Gallimore, Fletcher Gallimore, Taeshon Martin, Kylan Mason, Scott Moore, Cash Hemric, Yanniell Arce, Tyson Youmans, Aidan

Polmeroy, Bryson Taylor, Saul Oakley, Jayle Bryant, Ethan Clabo, DJ Joyce, Karson Strickland, Cashtyn Revels, Ty Hemric, Janet Ramirez, Spencer Ferris, Bryson Caudle, Hasson "Dee" Dawkins, McKennon Hiatt, Bryson Grey, Camdyn Easter, Wyatt Creed, Britton Ward, Miles Fonville, JD Harper, Haden Goins, Jayden Sechrist, Jourdain Hill, Third Floyd, Colin Hiatt, Jackson Byerly, Carson Soriano, Julian Ortega, Carter Moncus, Dyson Long, Saadiq Pilson, and Tymere Brown.

The staff is Head Coach Austin Taylor; assistant coaches Wesley Bowman, Justin Combs, Reece Deaton, Richard Grissom, Tanner Hiatt, Kelly Holder, Nic Isom, David Meredith, Weston Miller, Dennis Moore, Justin Moore, Patrick O'Neal, Caleb Thomas, Jordon Tucker; and statistician Ashton Simmons.

(The Communicator thanks MaxPreps, Mount Airy sports historian Doug McDaniel, and sports writer Corey Smith of The Mount Airy News for their contributions to this article.)

State 1A Tennis Champions

We congratulate Mount Airy High School's Carrie Marion and Audrey Brown who won the NCHSAA 1A Tennis Doubles State Championship. Kudos also go to East Wilkes High School's Ava Darnell and Emerson Simmons, state championship runners-up.

Marion, a senior, won her sixth overall state title. She also holds the 2021 Doubles State Championship, 2022 Singles State Championship, and the 1A Dual Team State Championship 2021-23.

Brown, a junior, won her third overall state title and her first individual championship. She also won dual team championships in 2022 and 2023.

All-State Soccer Honorees

As reported elsewhere in this issue, N.C. Soccer Coaches Association named Mount Airy High School's Angel Ortiz-Osario to the 1A All-State squad. NCSCA also honored Surry Central High School's Luke Creed. He was named to the 2A All-State squad for the second consecutive season.

Creed, a striker, scored 55 goals in his senior season. He tied for third in the state and 10th in the nation, averaged 2.8 goals per match, scored in 20-consecutive matches and netted nine hat tricks (three goals in a game). Creed scored six goals in a match three times this season. His high school soccer career total is 135 goals. Surry Central finished the season with a 13-9 record and competed in the first round of the 2A State Playoffs.

Ortiz-Osorno, playing both midfield and forward, either scored or assisted in 24 of his 26 games this season. His career totals in high school soccer are 42 assists and 108 goals including five hat tricks, the last his crucial contribution to Mount Airy's victory in the State Championship.

Surry County Has World Champ

Kaleah Dee Pyles, 17, won the World International Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Federation No-Gi World Championship in Las Vegas on Dec. 13. The Triad's first IBJJF world champion lives in Westfield with her parents Kevin and Derina Pyles, co-owners of Pyles Jiu Jitsu on Cooke School Road between Mount Airy and Pilot Mountain.

Kaleah has practiced jiu jitsu since she was 3 years old, often five or six days a week. "Kaleah has a tremendous work ethic, never misses a training session, and has an amazing attention to detail," says her proud father, instructor, and coach. She has been the World IBJJF No. 1-ranked juvenile in the past two years.

Kaleah herself said, "It feels unreal. My dad, my team, and I have worked so hard for this. We spent countless hours making this happen! I have the best coaches and teammates, so I wanted to represent our academy and community well."

Kaleah and her brother, Kage, who also works and trains at Pyles Jiu Jitsu, grew up learning Brazilian jiu jitsu. The self-defense martial art and combat sport is based on grappling, ground fighting, and submission holds. Their father, Kevin, has nearly 30 years' experience in martial arts. He established the American Martial Arts Academy in the 1990s in Winston-Salem and opened the AMMA facility in Mount Airy in 1998. In 2023, Pyles Jiu Jitsu opened in a brand-new, state-of-the-art training center between Pilot Mountain and Mount Airy. Pyles' academies teach jiu jitsu, anti-bullying strategies, and positive character development along with developing a world-class competition team.

Kevin said he hopes Kaleah's win can be an inspiration for anyone wanting to better themselves and aspire to have big dreams, even from a small town. His wife Derina, general manager at Pyles Jiu Jitsu, said, "We are really wanting to build our 14- to 18-year-old demographic for our competition team, with plans to compete in Europe early next year followed by competitions all around the USA."

To see Kaleah in action visit Pyles Jiu Jitsu on Facebook, her Instagram @kaleahd, or www.MartialArtsInMtAiry.com.

Three Concerts In Yadkinville

The "Sounds of the Mountains" concert series returns this month to the Yadkin Cultural Arts Center in Yadkinville. For the ninth year, the Yadkin Arts Council and Blue Ridge Music Center have teamed up to present Americana, folk, roots, bluegrass, country, and other music genres from a lineup of outstanding musicians.

Dom Flemons will perform on Saturday, Jan. 11; Sister Sadie on Saturday, Jan. 18; and Colby T. Helms & The Virginia Creepers plus The Wilder

Flower on Saturday, Jan. 25. All performances begin at 7:30 p.m. in the Willingham Theater, 226 E. Main in Yadkinville.

Sounds of the Mountains is part of the Blue Ridge Music Center's "On the Road" series of concerts and events hosted throughout the year in partnership with regional arts and cultural organizations at the partners' locations or virtually.

Dom Flemons is a founding member of the Grammy-winning old-time string band Carolina Chocolate Drops. He is also a songwriter, music scholar, historian, actor, slam poet, record collector, and podcaster, and the host of American Songster Radio Show on WSM in Nashville, Tenn. His repertoire spans nearly a century of American roots music, including blues, country, folk, bluegrass, and Americana. He plays the banjo, guitar, harmonica, jug, percussion, quills, fife, and rhythm bones. His albums *Black Cowboys* (2018) and *Traveling Wildfire* (2023) received Grammy nominations for Best Folk Album. Tickets: \$30.

Sister Sadie combines raging hot bluegrass and awe-inspiring vocals. Band members are Deanie Richardson (fiddle), Gena Britt (banjo, vocals), Jaelee Roberts (guitar, vocals), Dani Flowers (guitar, vocals), and Maddie Dalton (acoustic bass, vocals). Their music is described as "far more than the 'high lonesome sound' of traditional bluegrass; it's the sound of the mountains themselves." Tickets: \$35.

Colby T. Helms & The Virginia Creepers play "raw and real country music that cuts to the bone." Helms is a native of southwest Virginia whose signature style blends country storytelling, bluegrass energy, and blues power. Opening that night's show will be The Wilder Flower, an all-female trio from the Carolinas whose sets may include folk, Americana, bluegrass, and old-time music, ballads, and modern melodies. Tickets: \$20

Seating is general admission. For tickets, visit www.yadkinarts.org or call 336-679-2941.

Underrated Elkin

Elkin has been selected as "The Most Underrated Destination in North Carolina" by voters in an online poll conducted by travel website NCTripping.com.

The folks who populate the Explore Elkin page on Facebook exclaimed, "We're thrilled to share that Elkin has been voted the most underrated destination... Whether it's our charming downtown, scenic trails, award-winning wineries, or the incredible community spirit, there's something truly special about Elkin — and now the secret's out! Come explore why Elkin is a hidden gem worth discovering."

We at WIFM second Explore Elkin's opinion.

Incidentally, NC Tripping said Elkin dethroned close neighbor and last year's winner Wilkesboro as the "Most Underrated Destination." Wilkesboro this time was runner-up among the underrated towns.

Breakin' Up Christmas

It is time once again for the annual Appalachian holiday tradition of "breakin' up Christmas." It is the occasion for 12 days of partying, dancing, and music-making through January 6, "Old Christmas" day. Not known widely elsewhere in America, breaking up Christmas has a long history closely held in an area that roughly includes Surry County in North Carolina, nearby Grayson and Carroll counties in Virginia, and the independent city of Galax.

Why 12 days after Christmas? The complicated explanation involves solar years and lunar phases and centuries of arguments between those who watch the heavens (astronomers, astrologers) and those who want to get to Heaven. The simple answer is this: the Three Wise Men ("the Magi") traveled for 12 days from when they saw the star heralding a special birth to when they found Jesus and revealed that the Son of God was born.

The date of the Magi's arrival in Bethlehem, carefully determined to be January 6, became known as Epiphany and it was one of the two most important days in the Christian calendar; the other was Easter. Jesus's birthday, Christmas, got little attention; the Puritans even banned it. Meanwhile, Legends and lore grew up around Epiphany — animals speaking in the barn at midnight on Old Christmas eve, children's shoes left on the hearth (not hanging socks) filled with gifts and treats.

In the 1800s Christmas became increasingly popular and Congress in 1870 made December 25 an official federal holiday. Even so, some people, mainly in Great Britain and Appalachia, clung to the "Old Christmas" date of Christ's birth in the old Julian calendar. After the "man-made Christmas," and with no work needed in the fields, folks had about two weeks for feasting, dancing, and visiting one another — in other words, breaking up the gray, cold, otherwise boring days after Christmas.

Particularly in the Round Peak area and all over North Carolina and southwest Virginia there were nightly house parties. Folks moved furniture out to make way for musicians, friends, dancing, food, and drink. Each night, another home would host a party in an ongoing celebration that lasted about 12 days.

By the way, Epiphany and Twelfth Night ("On the twelfth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me...") are not the same holidays although they occur about the same time. Epiphany dates to the third century A.D. Twelfth Night was a medieval invention. We'll save that story for next year.

Back in the 1970s, the late legendary Round Peak musicians Tommy Jarrell, Fred Cockerham, and Oscar Jenkins recorded and were filmed playing a traditional old-time music reel called "Breakin' Up Christmas." The song was a long-time favorite at dance parties that families would host in their homes in the 12 days leading up to "Old Christmas."

Paul Sutphin believed that Preston "Pet" McKinney, a Civil War veteran from Lambsburg, Virginia, originated the fiddle music in the late-1800s. Here are some lyrics later added to the music:

Hoo-ray Jake and Hoo-ray John,
Breakin' up Christmas all night long.
Way back yonder a long time ago
The old folks danced the do-si-do.
Way down yonder alongside the creek
I seen Santy Claus washin' his feet.
Santa Claus come, done and gone,
Breakin' up Christmas right along.

You can watch Jarrell and friends performing "Breakin' Up Christmas" on YouTube. Recordings also are on Spotify, Apple Music, and other streaming services. In the catalog of old-time and bluegrass music are several related songs named "Old Christmas" and "Old Christmas Morning."

Breakin' Up Christmas Concert

When stockings are unhung from the fireplace, the lights and ornaments stripped off the Christmas trees, candles extinguished, and boxes and wrappings put away for another year, it's time for some breaking up Christmas fun. The Surry Arts Council has scheduled an evening full of dancing, songs, and excitement at the Historic Earle Theatre on Mount Airy's Main Street. Trish Fore and the Wildcats will provide the music in concert at 7 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 4. Tickets cost only \$12. Visit SurryArts.org for details and to purchase tickets in advance.

"Greenbrier Winter" At Museum

The Cherry Orchard Theater's "Evening at the Museum" series will present the play "Greenbrier Winter" by Misty Coldpony at 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Jan. 24 and 25, and at 2 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 26, on the third floor of the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History, 301 N. Main in Mount Airy.

The play is based on the true story of Mary Jane Heaster and her fight to seek justice with the help of her daughter's ghost.

Cherry Orchard Theater's home base is Levering Orchard at Ararat, Va., northeast of Mount Airy, where it stages outdoor performances in summer months. The company is now in its 26th season.

Tickets are \$20 per person. Call the museum at 336-786-4478 for advance purchases.

Match Quiz Answers

(from Page 3)

- | | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. C | 6. R | 11. B | 16. L | 21. J |
| 2. K | 7. N | 12. O | 17. E | 22. P |
| 3. Q | 8. H | 13. U | 18. F | |
| 4. V | 9. D | 14. I | 19. G | |
| 5. M | 10. A | 15. S | 20. T | |

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