

THE COMMUNICATOR

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Surry Welcoming Amazon

E-commerce company Amazon has selected a site in Surry County for one of five new last-mile distribution centers in North Carolina. The company late in 2024 closed on the \$4.1-million acquisition of about 15 acres on N.C. 89 roughly midway between the on-ramps to I-74 and I-77 — a strategic crossroads near the North Carolina-Virginia border.

The site about 8 miles west of Mount Airy is not within any city's municipal limits, but has water and sewer services due to many years of development work to extend utilities to the area. What makes the property highly valuable for Amazon is its location, its "fit" into the company's hub-and-spoke distribution model. The Surry County center will serve Amazon customers within the range of an approximately 45-minute drive. Expectations are that about 50 workers in the local hub will break down semi-trailer loads of products from Amazon's major distribution warehouses. Drivers in the company's fleet of smaller package-delivery trucks then will make to-the-door deliveries.

Expected to open in the third quarter in 2025, Amazon's center will bring millions in investment and dozens of jobs to the area. We also believe the company's commitment will help validate and reinforce our long-held belief that Surry County's geographic location and highway network are valuable resources to exploit for economic development in transportation, warehousing, and logistics.

Surry County Economic Development Partnership's Board Chair Peter Pequeno spoke to this potential when he joined in the announcement of Amazon's plans. He said, "Surry County has long been a regional economy, utilizing the workforce and market of surrounding communities to spur growth. This announcement by Amazon is yet another example of the advantages of locating in Surry County — a pro-business community, cooperative local partners, and access to advantageous markets. Surry County EDP expects this announcement to aid us in bringing attention to all Surry County has to offer. We are grateful for Amazon's choice to locate in Surry County and look forward to being a partner in their success."

We, too, welcome Amazon's investment in Surry

County. We also congratulate Surry County EDP, the county government, and other partners both public and private — notably the team at Rogers Realty working on behalf of the land owner, Henson-Hiatt Properties — for their commitments to this project.

Trucking & Transportation

Amazon's decision to build a distribution center in Surry County also is a reminder that trucking, transportation services, and warehousing together are a growing and vital part of the local economy.

Nearly 90 companies in Surry County employ more than 1,500 drivers, mechanics, schedulers, handlers, couriers, logistics people, and other support staff whose annual wages total more than \$85 million. Those labor-force numbers don't include uncounted hundreds of self-employed carriers.

Cooke Trucking Co. in Mount Airy has been a mainstay in the local trucking industry since 1958. Bottomley Enterprises and Mountain River Trucking Co., are among the 25 largest employers in the county, according to a survey by the Surry County Economic Development Partnership. Petroleum Transport Company Inc. in Pilot Mountain operates 17 terminals in six southeast U.S. states. W.L.A. Trucking Inc. specializes in moving dry freight (like textiles, automotive parts, and building materials) from the Carolinas and Virginia to the West Coast and bringing back temperature-controlled freight.

Since 2019 (prior to the COVID pandemic), the number of area people employed in trucking, transportation, and warehousing in Surry County has grown 7.5% and average weekly wages have risen 20%, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Those who serve in the transportation industry comprise about 5% of the private-sector labor force. It's a small, but vital segment that keeps our county, the state, and our nation moving.

Elkin Has New Commissioner

Elkin's new town commissioner is Graham "Bear" Ray. The Board of Commissioners selected Ray from among five candidates who applied to complete Will Gwyn's two-year term. Gwyn was elected Mayor of Elkin in November.

Sen. Settle Shares Outlook

N.C. State Sen. Eddie Settle, R-NC36, in January shared his outlook for the state and the legislature in 2025 during a program sponsored by the Greater Mount Airy Chamber of Commerce and presented at White Sulphur Springs Weddings & Events Venue near Mount Airy.

Settle is entering his second term representing State Senate District 36 comprised of Surry, Wilkes, Yadkin, and Alexander counties. The Senate leadership has appointed him to chair the Commerce Committee.

Settle told the group of about 75 people that helping western North Carolina recover from Tropical Storm Helene is the number one priority for the state government and the legislature. He said, "That will be at the top, but I'm going to work for Surry County and work for things that we need here." Among those, he said, is help with funding issues regarding schools. "I think that needs to be at the top of the priority for us," Settle said.

Settle's speech was recorded by Surry on the Go, the county's free TV and streaming service that covers Surry County and its towns. The 30-minute video titled "Senator Settle Speaks About Surry County Budget Needs" can be viewed on YouTube, on cable at Spectrum Channel 1300 and Surry Communications Channel 7, on the downloadable Surry on the Go app, and at the website www.surryonthego.com.

The Chamber's Public Policy Committee arranged for Settle's appearance as part of its lecture series. For information about upcoming Chamber programs and events, go to <https://members.mtairyncchamber.org/events/>

Surry On The Go

Want to learn, hear, and see more about what's happening in Surry County? Watch the streaming and broadcast video service "Surry on the Go." It's on cable at Spectrum Channel 1300 and Surry Communications Channel 7 and on Live Playback in the app downloadable on Roku, Roku TV, Firestick, Fire TV, Apple TV, smartphones and tablets. Videos also are available to view on demand in the app and at the website www.surryonthego.com.

Surry on the Go features local information, weather, high school sports, and public board meetings. The Town of Elkin, Town of Pilot Mountain, City of Mount Airy, Town of Dobson, Surry County, local public schools, and local non-profits are all featured on Surry on the Go.

For updates on programs past, present, and upcoming, search for SurryontheGo on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. To contact the service, call 336-401-8215 or send email to surryonthego@co.surry.nc.us.

Big Elkin Brrrfest and Great American Soup-Off

The Big Elkin Brrrfest and Great American Soup Off will return to downtown Elkin on the second Saturday of February for a day filled with warmth, flavor, and vibrant community spirit! This year's action starts at 11 a.m. Feb. 8 in Coley Hall at The Liberty, 222 E. Main.

Hosted by Explore Elkin, the Big Elkin Brrrfest brings together the best regional breweries and local culinary talents. Beermakers including Angry Troll Brewing, Red Buffalo Brewing, Boondocks Brewing, Williamson Mead & Brewing, Oden Brewing, Lost Worlds Brewing, and Lost Province Brewing will serve classic favorites and new brews. Local chefs and home cooks will compete for soup-making honors.

The Box Dogs & Michael Chaney will perform throughout the day. Betting begins at 1 p.m. in a Simulated Superbowl Squares Game — rep your favorite NFL team's gear and join the fun for a \$5 buy-in.

Online ticket sales are under way. The general admission ticket (\$10 in advance, \$15 at the door) includes a souvenir cup, beer tasting, and mug. The Great American Soup-Off tickets cost \$10 for adults and \$5 for children 11 & under and let holders sample soups and vote for favorites. A combination ticket (\$20 in advance, \$25 at the door) purchases a souvenir cup, the beer tasting, a mug, a soft pretzel, and soup samples.

A pre-ordered ticket comes with a free Brrrfest T-shirt. For advance tickets visit <https://allevents.in/elkin/200027721206725>.

Calling All Super Soup Cooks

Do you have a prize-worthy soup recipe? Put it to the test at the Great American Soup-Off on Saturday, Feb. 8, in Elkin. Contestants must be present by 10 a.m. in The Liberty, 222 E. Main St. in Elkin. The competition starts at 11 a.m.

To register, fill out the entry form at www.exploreelkin.com/bigelkinbrrrfest and submit your recipe and \$5 entry fee by the February 1 registration deadline. On the day of the soup-off, bring a large pot of soup or chili, at least 5 quarts, in a slow cooker or crockpot.

Spectators pay \$10 for an adult's ticket, \$5 for ages 11 and under, and can taste the soup entries and vote for The People's Choice. The public's votes will determine the winners. The cash prizes are \$100 for the top vote-getter, \$50 for second place, and \$25 for third.

Proceeds will benefit The Ark. If you have questions or need more information, send email to [Laurenn](mailto:Laurenn@theark.director@gmail.com) at theark.director@gmail.com.

Chris Lumsden Honored

The Northern Leadership Academy at Northern Regional Hospital in Mount Airy now will be called the Chris A. Lumsden Leadership Academy, honoring the incredible legacy of the hospital's President and CEO since 2018 who recently retired. In the Academy's fifth year, 38 Northern Regional Hospital employees have graduated from the six-month leadership development program.

Lumsden, in announcing his pending retirement, wrote, "My service at NRH and in our community has been tremendously fulfilling and continues to mold me into a better leader and person. I will always proudly wave the NRH flag. Thank you for allowing me the distinct pleasure to serve as Northern Regional President and CEO."

Also retiring recently, after 11 years of service at Northern Regional, was Vice President of Finance and CFO Andrea J. Hickling.

Robin H. Hodgkin, RN, MHA, NE-BC, has moved up to interim President, Chief Executive Officer and Chief Nursing Officer at Northern Regional Hospital. Derek White is interim Vice President and Chief Financial Officer. Others in leadership positions are Senior Vice President-Clinic Operations Brian Beasley; Senior Director-Facility Services Gregory S. Casstevens, CHSP; Chief Medical Officer Dr. Jason W. Edsall, MD, FACEP; Director of Quality, Risk, and Compliance Emily Volk, MSN, RN; Vice President Human Resources Christi Smiley; Senior Director-Revenue Cycle Jessica Arrington; Manager of Marketing & Community Relations Rylee Giles; and Senior Director of Ancillary Services Chad Riggs.

Surry County Schools Leaders

The Surry County Schools Board of Education has approved leadership changes, some of which went into effect as of Jan. 1 and others scheduled for mid-year. All exemplify Surry County Schools' commitment to investing in the personal and professional growth of its leaders.

Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources Kevin Via will retire at the end of the 2024-2025 school year after many years of dedicated service as a teacher, assistant principal, principal at Surry Central High School and Surry Early College High School, and Assistant Superintendent since 2017.

Principal Shannon DuPlessis at East Surry High School will be the new Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources. She is currently enrolled in the Educational Leadership doctoral program at High Point University.

Amy Harris, who was Director of Secondary Curriculum, became Assistant Superintendent of Academic Services effective Jan. 1. In 2021, she was recognized as Principal of the Year.

Dr. Shelley Goins will serve as the new Director

of Secondary Curriculum and Accountability.

Neil Atkins, current Director of Accountability and Career and Technical Education (CTE), will be Director of Safety, overseeing efforts to ensure secure and supportive learning environments across the district's schools.

Arts Ball In Mount Airy

The Surry Arts Council's popular annual Arts Ball will begin at 6 p.m. Friday, Feb. 28, in Cross Creek Country Club at Mount Airy. The North Tower Band from Raleigh will perform beach, funk, oldies, and Top 40 music. There will be a silent auction, dining, and dancing.

All proceeds from this event will support free cultural arts programming for Surry County Schools, Mount Airy City Schools, and Millennium Charter Academy during the 2025-26 school year. Thousands of students are bused to the Andy Griffith Playhouse and the Historic Earle Theatre annually for the arts programs.

Arts Ball guests may preview and enter bids on the silent auction's offerings between noon and 5 p.m. Doors open at 6, dinner is at 8. Tickets are \$100 plus tax per person. The Arts Ball also welcomes table requests. For more information contact the Surry Arts Council at 336-7886-7998 or email melissa@surryarts.org.

Word Match Game

Match the word with its definition

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 1. ____ respond | A. anticipation |
| 2. ____ appeal | B. gift |
| 3. ____ generous | C. charities |
| 4. ____ benefit | D. plea |
| 5. ____ donation | E. celebrated |
| 6. ____ volunteer | F. group |
| 7. ____ community | G. help |
| 8. ____ preparation | H. charitable |
| 9. ____ expectation | I. viewpoint |
| 10. ____ communicator | J. structure |
| 11. ____ perspective | K. readiness |
| 12. ____ renowned | L. contributor |
| 13. ____ nonprofits | M. promoter |
| 14. ____ organization | N. messenger |
| 15. ____ advocate | O. learning |
| 16. ____ education | P. answer |

See answers on Page 7.

Blue Ridge & Beyond Concert Series Fills Calendar

The 2025 Blue Ridge & Beyond concert series presented by the Surry Arts Council includes numerous winners of International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) awards including Entertainer of the Year, Female Vocalist of the Year, and multiple instrumentalists of the year.

Here's the schedule — it's subject to change; some entertainers lead complicated lives — from SurryArts.org/shows/BlueRidgeBeyond.

- **WPAQ 77th Birthday Celebration.** 5:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 1, at Historic Earle Theatre. Free.
- **SEAN OF THE SOUTH.** Sean Dietrich is a multi-instrumentalist, author, creator of the Sean of the South podcast, and stand-up storyteller. 7 p.m. Feb. 14, at Historic Earle Theatre. Tickets: \$35-\$55.
- **AMERICAN HISTORY: THE BLACK EXPERIENCE** featuring Winston-Salem State University Inspirational Voices and local talent. 6:30 p.m. Feb. 15 at Andy Griffith Playhouse, 218 Rockford St., Mount Airy. Free
- **TOMMY JARRELL BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION.** March 1-2. Music jams, classes, and performances featuring Surry County's old-time music and traditions. Tommy Jarrell Birthday Concert & Dance with Wayne Erbsen followed by The Round Peak Boys, 6:30 p.m. March 1. Tickets: \$12.
- **THE MORRIS FAMILY BAND.** Irish-American music with a Celtic style for St. Patrick's Day. 7 p.m. March 15, Historic Earle Theatre. Tickets: \$15
- **ELKIN BIG BAND TRIBUTE.** 7 p.m. March 27, Andy Griffith Playhouse. Tickets: \$20-\$25.
- **RHONDA VINCENT AND THE RAGE.** Grammy and IBMA award-winning singer and her band. 7:30 p.m. April 26, Historic Earle Theatre. Tickets: \$55-\$80.
- **TAYLOR VADEN & MEMPHIS THUNDER.** 7:30 p.m. May 3, Historic Earle Theatre. Tickets: \$20-\$35
- **JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION with The Legacy Motown Revue.** Free event funded in part by the Grassroots Grant Program of the North Carolina Arts Council, a division of the Department of Natural & Cultural Resources with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts. Celebration begins at 6:30 p.m., band performs at 7:30 p.m. June 19 in Blackmon Amphitheatre. Free.
- **JOHN FLOYD - THE MOUTH OF MAYBERRY.** Family-friendly comedy. 2 p.m. daily, Sept. 22-25, at Historic Earle Theatre. Reserved seats: \$20.
- **KAREN KNOTTS.** Author, actor, comedian, and daughter of everyone's favorite television deputy sheriff, the late Don Knotts. 11 a.m. Sept. 26, at Historic Earle Theatre. Tickets: \$20-\$30.
- **RODNEY DILLARD and THE DILLARDS.**

Bluegrass concert including songs performed on "The Andy Griffith Show" (TAGS). 1 p.m. Sept. 26, Andy Griffith Playhouse. Tickets: \$45-50.

- **MICHAEL HOOVER: "MEMORIES OF ELVIS" with Denise Glass as Patsy Cline.** 7 p.m. Sept. 26, Historic Earle Theatre. Tickets: \$20-\$30.
 - **BELLAMY BROTHERS.** 8 p.m. Sept. 26, Andy Griffith Playhouse. Tickets: \$80-\$90.
 - **TIM WHITE & TROUBLESOME HOLLOW.** Bluegrass and Americana band from Hickory Tree, Tenn. 9:30 p.m. Sept. 26, Historic Earle Theatre. Reserved seats: \$15-\$20.
 - **MAYBERRY MELODIES.** Six-member band playing tunes associated with TAGS. 2:30 p.m. Sept. 27, at Andy Griffith Playhouse. Tickets: \$20-\$30.
 - **MAYBERRY MELODIES GOSPEL SHOW.** Six-member band playing faith-based traditional and contemporary gospel music associated with TAGS. 2 p.m. Sept. 28, Andy Griffith Playhouse. Tickets: \$20-\$30.
 - **CRAIG SOUTHERN AND PHOENIX.** Free concert during Mount Airy's Autumn Leaves Festival. Time TBA, Oct. 11, Blackmon Amphitheatre.
 - **ELKIN BIG BAND presents "Holiday Hits."** 7 p.m. Oct. 30, Andy Griffith Playhouse. Tickets: \$20-\$25.
 - **ELKIN BIG BAND presents "Light Up The Andy Griffith Playhouse"** holiday show. 3 p.m. Dec. 21, Andy Griffith Playhouse. Tickets: \$20-\$25.
- Sponsors of the Blue Ridge & Beyond concert series include The City of Mount Airy, Come Hear North Carolina, Classic Country 98.1 WBRF, North Carolina Arts Council, Blue Ridge Music Trails, and the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area.

Mitchell River Preserve

Piedmont Land Conservancy has acquired 311 acres along the Mitchell River near historic Kapp's Mill in Surry County. This \$1.3-million land purchase will help create the future Mitchell River Preserve to safeguard the habitat in the coming years.

"This land is exactly what we're always working to protect," said PLC Executive Director Kevin Redding. "It's a large tract of undeveloped land next to a significant river. Creating a nature preserve here will protect a vital habitat while benefiting the river, wildlife, and nearby communities."

The property borders more than 1,000 yards along the Mitchell River and will help ensure the future of clean water and critical habitats for wildlife.

While large sections of the land will remain untouched to preserve its ecological integrity, Piedmont Land Conservancy plans to create public hiking trails in areas suitable for safe access. For more about plans for the preserve go to www.piedmontland.org/mitchellriverpreserve.

There's A National Holiday On Feb. 17. What's Its Name?

An annual federal holiday on the third Monday of February — Feb. 17 this year — is an occasion to honor all U.S. presidents. Many call it Presidents' Day, but the holiday's official name at the federal government's level and in many states, including North Carolina, remains "Washington's Birthday."

The official federal observance began in 1879 when George Washington's birthday, Feb. 22, was celebrated for the first time as a U.S. holiday, and the name remained "Washington's Birthday" for nearly a century. The holiday as we know it took shape in 1971 following the Congress's passage of the Uniform Monday Holiday Act of 1968 that not coincidentally created three-day weekends. Initially proposed to honor both George Washington and Abraham Lincoln (whose birthday falls on February 12), the holiday evolved to recognize all U.S. presidents. "Presidents' Day" has become the commonly accepted term partly due to national retailers' use of the name in promotions.

Incidentally, there remains a controversy over the proper placement of the possessive apostrophe. Some print it as Presidents' Day, some as President's Day, and some with no apostrophe at all.

What happens on Presidents' Day? Perhaps one should say what does NOT happen. Government offices, the U.S. Postal Service, most banks, and most public schools will be closed. However, most retail and grocery stores, public libraries, and colleges and universities will be open as usual.

Our hope is that Presidents' Day's inspiration and effect will extend beyond a day off from work or school. It offers an opportunity to reflect on the leadership and legacy of past presidents and to consider the challenges facing our nation's current and future leaders. Please use this Presidents' Day to recommit ourselves to the ideals of democracy, civic engagement, and informed citizenship and to inspire and educate generations to come.

New Alleghany County Manager

We welcome Bill Shepley, the new Alleghany County Manager. He is a native of Fairfax County, Va., who was county administrator for Grayson County, Va., from 2017 to 2022. No stranger to North Carolina or Alleghany County, he holds a bachelor's degree in anthropology from East Carolina University, a master's degree in nutritional science from East Carolina, and a master's degree in health-care administration from University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. He has a home overlooking the New River and frequently visits Sparta. His wife Lori teaches art at Cedar Ridge High School in Hillsborough.

Wilkes Community College Offers Free Classes For Small Business

Are you starting, operating, or imagining your own small business in North Carolina? The N.C. Small Business Center Network (ncsbc.net) helps make seminars, workshops, and classes for small-business people available "from across the state to just down the road." Most are free and conveniently offered by the 58 Small Business Centers including one at Wilkes Community College.

Following is a list of some upcoming programs at the Wilkes Community College Small Business Center in Kendrick/Church Hall on the college's campus in Wilkesboro.

- Penny Ballgame: Costs, Prices And Profits In Food Business. Online. Monday, Feb. 3, 9-10:30 a.m.
- Writing an Effective Business Plan. Online. Tuesday, Feb. 4, 6-8 p.m.
- Amplifying Humanity in the Age of AI for Small Business Owners and Entrepreneurs. Wednesday, Feb. 5, noon-1:15 p.m. at Wilkes Chamber of Commerce, 717 Main St., North Wilkesboro.
- Strength in Numbers: How Your Menu Shows Up In Financial Forecasting and Reporting. Online. Monday, Feb. 10, 9-10:30 a.m.
- Navigating The North Carolina Food Industry. Friday, Feb. 14, 1-5 p.m. at Wilkes County Agricultural Center, 416 Executive Drive, Wilkesboro.
- The Business of Farming. Tuesday, Feb. 18, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at Wilkes County Agricultural Center.
- Small Business Taxes. Online. Thursday, Feb. 20, 6-8 p.m.
- How to Start a Small Business. Online. Tuesday, Feb. 25, 6-8 p.m.

For more information, call 336-838-6166 or send email to SBC Director Laurie Brintle-Jarvis at lsbrintle336@wilkescc.edu.

Jonesville's New Police Chief

Scotty W. Vestal is Jonesville's new police chief. He is a long-time member of the town's police force and has a wealth of experience and a strong commitment to community and public safety.

Vestal joined the Jonesville Police Department in 2001 as an auxiliary officer. He became a full-time patrol officer in 2002, patrol sergeant in 2003, K-9 handler in 2004, detective sergeant in 2008, and police captain in 2014. He also stepped in and served as interim police chief in early-2017.

Vestal succeeds Chief Dane Mastin. Mayor Anita Darnell said, "We are immensely grateful for the tireless dedication and remarkable contributions of Chief Mastin during his time with Jonesville. He brought years of experience and knowledge to our town and the department."

Yadkin Valley Chamber Directory & Visitor Guide

The all-new "2025 Directory & Visitor Guide" from the Yadkin Valley Chamber of Commerce is now available in print and as a free PDF download. The colorful magazine-style publication includes loads of information not only for visitors or Chamber members, but for everyone who lives and works and enjoys sports, entertainment, and recreation in Surry, Wilkes, and Yadkin counties.

Readers will find detailed guides to festivals and other celebrations; cruise-ins and farmers markets; music venues and art exhibits; trails and parks; rivers, access points, fishing, and boat rentals; golf courses; and so much more. There also are listings and articles about some of the Chamber's notable member businesses and nonprofits and an invaluable Business Directory that serves as a guide to products, services, and resources ranging from accountants and advertising to wine tours, women's health, and youth organizations in the community.

Yadkin Valley Chamber of Commerce Board Chair Marty Roberts writes, "At the heart of our mission is the belief that community means everything. We are dedicated to fostering a vibrant business environment that promotes economic development and enhances the quality of life across Yadkin, Wilkes, and Surry counties. Our unique blend of rural charm and urban accessibility positions us perfectly to support local businesses through various initiatives."

The Chamber distributes approximately 1,000 printed copies of the community guide through its office at 257 Standard St. in Elkin and at tourism centers and select businesses in the area. The guide also is available for download at bit.ly/3E2BXgq or visit the chamber's website, YadkinValley.org. As a long-time and loyal member of the Yadkin Valley Chamber of Commerce — and proud recipient of the "Member of the Year Award" in 2023 — we at 100.9 WIFM Radio encourage you to support the Chamber's mission and its members.

Explore Elkin This Year

Making plans for entertainment and recreation in the coming months? Explore Elkin's useful calendar of upcoming festivals, events, and other activities is on the web at ExploreElkin.com/festivals-events.

The list includes:

- Elkin Downtown Farmers Market on Saturdays
- Big Elkin BrrrFest, Feb. 8
- St. Paddy's Day Pub Crawl, March 15
- Explore Elkin Community Gathering, March 27
- Elkin Cruise-ins, 4th Sunday of the month, March through November

- Food Truck Fridays with live music, second Friday of every month, April through October
- Earth to Elkin celebration, April 19
- CommUNITY Picnic, April and October
- Yadkin Valley Wine Festival, May 17
- NC Trail Days, June 4-8
- FreedomFest
- Take A Break From The Interstate
- Yadkin Valley Pumpkin Festival
- Trick-or-Treat Main Street
- Elkin Explorers Appreciation Dinner
- Explore Elkin's Trim-A-Tree For Charity
- Light Up Elkin

For information about accommodations, dining, and events, also visit www.YadkinValleyNC.com and the Town of Elkin's website at ElkinNC.org.

Explore Elkin took off in 2017 as a grassroots effort to get people involved in the downtown community. Since its inception, Explore Elkin has grown into a larger initiative that plans specific events in the downtown, carries out marketing campaigns, and maintains "Elkin Explorer" memberships.

Cornbread Contraband

The group Cornbread Contraband will provide the music for the Alleghany Arts Council's monthly contra dance at 7 p.m. March 4 in Sparta United Methodist Church, 190 N. Main St. The band's members are Lucas Pasley, Kyle Dean Smith, and Martha Spencer.

A contra dance is an old-time style of group dancing. Couples pair off and dance in lines. A caller announces and demonstrates the upcoming movements. George Segebade from Winston-Salem and Stephanie Marie Voncannon from Concord usually call the contra dances in Sparta.

Lessons for beginners start a half-hour before the contra dance itself. Tickets are \$10 for an adult, \$5 for a student, and free for a child 12 or under.

Weekly Breakfast For Vets

The Bruce Wayne Osborne Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7034 & Auxiliary provides a weekly breakfast for veterans at 8:30 a.m. Wednesdays in the post home, 1193 U.S. 21 South in Sparta. The post extends a hearty welcome to veterans new to the area and ones who haven't visited before.

Shared Meals At Grace Kitchen

Grace Kitchen at Sparta United Methodist Church, 190 N. Main, provides an opportunity for individuals and families to enjoy a shared meal each Wednesday afternoon between 4:30 and 6 p.m. There is no charge. It's open to everyone in the community. Grace Kitchen posts the menu weekly at Facebook.com/GraceKitchenSparta

It's Never Too Late To Learn

I took drafting instead of typing in my sophomore year at Mount Airy High School. Consequently, I never learned to type. In the late-1980s I hoped to gain some computer skills, but I soon fell far behind in the class because I couldn't type. I arrived in my 70s with zero computer and keyboard skills.

Surrounded by many good people who put computer technology to work with ease, I often pondered my plight, but procrastinated on my resolutions to get up to speed in the 21st century. Where does one start when you're one of the maybe three people in 100 who can't use a computer even to Google the location of a basic computer education class? Worse, how does one send an email to a colleague to ask for help?

Then, at age 72, I wandered into the computer lab at Surry Community College's Elkin Center. There I stumbled into the opportunity I desperately needed to become at least a little bit self-sufficient in using a computer to find information. Thanks to instructor Jeff Clark, I moved my needle at least a few degrees off zero. He started by asking about my goals, and then recommended a course at the Elkin Center. I focused my fingers and attention on A-S-D J-K-L and my confidence level rose as I practiced the mundane typing exercises and got better with Jeff's compliments and encouragement.

Even as we begin the second quarter of the 21st Century, there are people — many of them seniors, some with fewer years — who wish they had basic or better computer skills. And today our Surry Community College still offers opportunities to learn.

The next classes in SCC's course named "Technology Awareness for PC" will begin March 17 and continue through May 7. The curriculum and content will focus on developing computer skills related to basic keyboarding, word-processing, and navigating the internet; using technology for job searches and social networking; applying for employment online; and accessing governmental and education resources and services. One class is offered at the Elkin Center, Mondays and Wednesdays, 9 a.m. to noon. The other two classes will be at the Pilot Center on Mondays and Wednesdays, one from 9 a.m. to noon and the other 1 to 4 p.m.

Questions? Call Jennifer Pardue at (336) 386-3674. Her email address is parduejs@surry.edu.

Let The Music Move You

Surry Community College will host its sixth annual Surry Old-Time Music Camp July 7-11 on the Dobson campus. As in past years, some of our region's finest old-time and bluegrass musicians will teach young people to keep the musical traditions alive. Students will receive beginner to advanced instruction in the core instruments: guitar, banjo,

and fiddle. Beginners will learn music fundamentals and participate in singing and dance workshops. Students may join in on jam sessions during the week. Special additional sessions may cover bass, mandolin, banjo styles, and advanced jam. Loaner instruments will be available upon request.

Surry Community College is proud to offer this camp along with the Wright Traditional Music Fund and Martin Guitar Charitable Foundation whose support helps to keep participation affordable. However, some young people may need financial assistance. To help a youth attend the Surry Old-Time Music Camp this summer, call 336-386-3206 and make a donation. One hundred percent of each gift will go to the Music Camp scholarships fund.

Camp registration will be open until 3 p.m. June 27. Watch *The Communicator* in coming months or visit surry.edu/news for more information. Questions? Please contact Sherry White at 336-386-3399 or send email to whites@surry.edu.

What To Say To A Valentine?

Many rely on the internet instead of the post office to send Valentine's Day messages, but some of us may be at a loss for words. The folks at greeting-card company Hallmark have suggestions. Their collected Valentine's Day messages range from sweet to silly and everything in between. Here's a sampling; more are at ideas.hallmark.com.

- It's cool to be married to your best friend.
- I like who I become when I'm with you.
- Thanks for being my better half.
- I'm so lucky to be the one loving you.
- I'd be so dang lost without you.
- You're my everything.
- I love all the adventures we have together.
- I love doing life with you.
- You're the bright spot in my day, every day.
- I love being with you no matter what we do.
- We're so awesome together.
- You make the world better.
- You take my breath away. Always.
- I'd do it all over in a heartbeat.
- I hope no one tells you, but you're out of my league.
- Thanks for putting up with me. Love you!
- I picked the best person ever to share my life with.
- We've shared a lot of Valentine's Days, but it never gets boring loving you.

Word Match Answers

From Page 3

- | | | | |
|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1. P | 5. B | 9. A | 13. C |
| 2. D | 6. L | 10. N | 14. J |
| 3. H | 7. F | 11. I | 15. M |
| 4. G | 8. K | 12. E | 16. O |

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