

★ **HIGHLIGHTS:** *Bethlehem Community news highlights from 2016*

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The Alexander Early College to serve incoming freshmen in Alexander County was being organized in early 2016. The program, a partnership between Alexander County Schools and CVCC Alexander Center, offered an opportunity for Alexander County students to earn a high school diploma and an associate's degree while staying in Alexander County. Students accepted into the school have the ability to graduate high school with an associate's degree or 60 hours of transferrable college credit. Students were not required to pay for tuition or textbooks. The first class was to be no larger than 75 students. Early College students could participate in any after school activities offered at ACHS including sports.

In the March 15 Primary Election, Ryan Mayberry and Jeffrey P. Peal won the Republican nomination for Alexander County Commission with incumbent Larry Yoder finishing third in the race for the two spots on the November ballot. Incumbent Lee Zachary won the Republican nomination for State House District 73 over Dwight Shook. In the Democratic presidential primary, Hillary Clinton got 1,148 votes in Alexander County and Bernie Sanders 1,123. Ted Cruz led the Republican vote for president with 2,830 votes and Donald Trump was second with 2,608 in the county.

Commissioners' Choice Awards were presented March 22 at ACHS. The Hiddenite Community Helpers Food pantry won first place and \$200 in the adult division and Alexander Central FFA Chapter was first in the youth division. Community Spark award winners included Ken Wasmund - Bethlehem Community Development; Betty Worrell - Gwaltney Ruritan Club; Trey Braswell - Bethlehem Ruritan Club; Mike Richmond - 957 Mobile Cafe; Judy Wilson - Hiddenite Community Helpers Food Pantry; and Wayne Wooten - Emerald Squares Dance Club.

Village Inn Pizza of Bethlehem and Girl Scout Troop 02034 hosted the Girl Scout Cookie Eat-Off Challenge on Thursday nights in February. The winner was King Stone and Will Lackey placed second.

Cynthia Summey of Hickory received a 2011 Kia Sportage sports utility vehicle courtesy of her Hickory High School Class of 1977 friends. Debbie Teague of Bethlehem noted that Summey was in a bad auto wreck about ten years ago and had been beset with health problems, lost her job and was disabled. Teague, along with other HHS classmates, raised over \$8,000, purchased a vehicle for her and presented it at a special dinner at PJ's Bethlehem Seafood & Steak on March 5.

APRIL
Some 300 runners participated in Robin's Run in Taylorsville on April 2. Brad Barbee finished first in the race and Marissa Cooper was the top female finisher.

The art exhibit of Robin Isenhour-Stewart of Conover was featured in the Bethlehem Branch Library April 7-May 26.

The Crossroads Community Theater production of "Shakespeare In Cricket County" was presented April 15-17 at Fellowship Advent Christian Church in Bethlehem.

The Second Annual Buy Local Challenge, co-sponsored by The Taylorsville Times and Alexander County Economic Development, offered local shoppers the opportunity to register and win over \$4,700 in prizes during a 4-week promotion. The Grand Prize was a \$1,000 Customized Shopping Spree.

Anchor-Richey EVS, Inc. of Bethlehem added five tankers in March 2016 to its lineup of products its manufactures and services for the fire service industry. Ellendale Fire Department purchased the firm's first tanker in June.

Bethlehem Baptist Church pastor Wayne Caviness announced the church members would take up a "Chest of Joash" offering on April 24 as one phase of fundraising for the church's new facilities. The sanctuary was destroyed by fire in July 2015.

The Bethlehem Ruritan Club provided \$1100 for tools and car kits to West Alexander Middle School so students could compete in the NC Gravity Games (Soap Box

Derby).
Alexander Central High student Lauren Lackey was elected as National Association of Student Councils President Elect and will serve a two year term on the NCASC state board. She will serve as state president during the 2017-2018 school year. ACHS senior Shelby Corriher was selected to attend the 2016 Session of the NC Governor's School West in the area of Natural Science.

Some 100 athletes participated in the 2016 Special Olympics held at ACHS on April 15th.

ACHS student Dara Little raised over \$1,000 plus collected some 650 toys which she delivered to St. Jude Hospital in Memphis, TN as part of her senior project.

Kathleen Gwaltney was honored at a retirement celebration at the Bethlehem Branch Office of Taylorsville Savings Bank on April 29. She worked 24 years for the bank.

MAY
Dr. Wayne V. Wilson, 55, of Bethlehem, was sentenced to 18 months in federal prison on health care fraud charges submitted to Medicare and Medicaid.



DR. WAYNE WILSON

The family owned and operated Mexico Viejo, Mexican Grill opened its fourth location in the Bethlehem Community in May 2016 in the former Bethlehem Restaurant building. The first Mexico Viejo opened in Taylorsville in 2003, later restaurants were opened in Hickory and Lenior.

The Alexander County Commissioners voted 4-1 to pass a resolution seeking North Carolina General Assembly legislative assistance regarding a proposed Wittenburg Township election for an ABC (Alcoholic Beverage Control) referendum. The proposed budget for 2016-2017 totaling \$38.2 million was presented by County Manager Rick French at the May 25 meeting.

JUNE
Bethlehem Baptist Church hosted a dinner theater on June 4, featuring the musical "Down by the Creekbank" presented the Bethlehem Baptist Church kids. Over 30 children in K thru fifth grade participated.

Taylorsville True Value Hardware store held its grand opening June 3 in Taylorsville.

Jason Evans, West Alexander Middle School Assistant Principal was selected to serve as principal of Alexander County Early College which was to open in August 2016.

Mt. Pisgah Lutheran Church members honored their pastor on June 5 for his 30 years in the ministry. He has served at Mt. Pisgah since 2002.

The Bethlehem Ruritan Club recognized Bethlehem area Boy Scout leaders at its June meeting. Robbie Huffman and Allen Garren were presented with Eagle Statuettes for their years of service.

JULY
The medical practice of Dr. Wayne V. Wilson, MD, in the Bethlehem Community closed on July 15 in preparation for Wilson to report July 18 to the Federal Bureau of Prisons to begin serving an 18-month sentence in a Medicare fraud conviction.

The Bethlehem Ruritan Club awarded \$5,000 in scholarship assistance to 11 students at the club's July meeting. Hannah Starnes was the recipient of the Tommy Hefner Memorial \$1,000 Scholarship.

A Grand Opening event was held July 9 for the new Dollar General Store on NC16 in the Wittenburg Community.

The county commissioners voted on July 18 to hold a countywide alcohol referendum on the November general election ballot. The vote was 3-2 for the election. Commissioners Josh Lail, Milton Campbell, and Ryan Mayberry voted for the resolution and commissioners Larry Yoder and Ronnie Reese voted against the measure.

Antioch Church celebrated its 190th Anniversary on July 31, 2016. Former pastor Dr. Ronald Rowe was the



The Alexander County Public Education Foundation held its fifth Sports Hall of Fame induction ceremony on Monday night, November 21, at McLindon's Restaurant at Brushy Mountain Golf Club in Taylorsville. More than 200 family members, friends, and sports fans turned out to honor the five-person class of 2016. The 2016 Class of Inductees are pictured above (from the left): Jerry Ray Fox, Karen "KC" Canter Setzer, Jeremy Fortner, Rick Sherrill, and Van Tarlton.

guest speaker.

AUGUST
Alexander Early College (AEC), a dual enrollment opportunity for rising ninth graders, opened on August 2 at the CVCC Alexander Campus. Some 60 students were enrolled to engage in high school and college level classes with the opportunity to graduate with a high school diploma and an Associate Degree of Arts or Science in four years.

The Taylorsville Times and Pollard Raceway Park coordinated a series of six weekly competitions at the go-kart track to raise donations for six local pantries. The Race Against Hunger benefitted The Christian Crisis Center, Mt. Pisgah Lutheran Good Samaritan Food Pantry, Hiddenite Helpers Food Pantry, 957 Mobile Cafe, Stony Point Christian Ministries, and Taylorsville Rotary Club's Backpack Food Program. The first race pitted drivers representing The Town of Taylorsville against members of The Taylorsville Times staff. Other matches were: Alex Co Sheriff Dept vs Alex Co Commissioners; East Tay. Baptist Church vs Harbinson & Brzycky; Scotty's Hometown Grill vs Sigs Tire Center; Tay. Savings Bank vs First Community Bank; and Thomas Insurance Services vs Garry Goble Insurance Center.

Jay McCarragher was named assistant principal at Alexander Central High School, effective August 1.

The Alexander County Schools opened on August 29th for students for the 2016-17 term. Some 800 school system faculty, staff, and administrators gathered for the 2016-2017 opening session on August 23.

The Brushy Mountain Film Users Group photo exhibit was featured in the Bethlehem Branch Library in August and September.

A worker for the contractor making repairs to the NC 127 bridge over the Catawba river, fell off the bridge on August 30 and drowned. He was identified as Filogonio Perez Brave, age 24.

A total of 4,886 students were in attendance on Tuesday, August 30, the second official day of the Alexander County Schools 2016-2017 term.

SEPTEMBER
West Alexander Middle School Teacher Ann Bebbler was selected as the 2015-2016 Outstanding Secondary Mathematics Teacher.

Schools officials reported on student testing data for the system, Alexander Schools had 80% of school meeting or exceeding growth in 2015-16 which was steady with 2014-15 results. Three schools exceeded growth, five met growth and two did not meet expected growth. Alexander Schools ranked in the top 25 out of 115 districts in eight areas.

On September 11, the National Day of Service and Remembrance, Mt. Pisgah Lutheran Church in Bethlehem invited area First Responders to join with the congregation and be recognized for their efforts in the community and join in the tribute to the 15th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks on America.

National Grandparents Day was observed on Sunday, September 11.

The Alexander County Public Education Foundation and Sports Hall of Fame

announced the 2016 Class of inductees. They included: Jeremy Fortner, Jerry Ray Fox, Karen Setzer, Rickey Sherrill, and Van Tarlton. This was the fifth class selected.

The 7th Annual Bethlehem Day Festival and Classic Car Cruise-In was held September 17 offering live music, entertainment, and activities, arts, crafts, and food.

Captain Michael D. Harrison of the Alexander County Sheriff's Office, was awarded the Advanced Service Award by the NC Sheriff's Education and Training Standards Commission on September 9. He has 35 years of criminal justice service.

OCTOBER
The Bethlehem Ministerial Association held a Community Singing on October 2 at Fellowship Advent Christian Church in support of the Bethlehem Benevolent Fund.

Fire Prevention Week was observed in Alexander County October 9-15. The fire chiefs of the eight fire departments in the county were pictured and a list of the firefighters of each department was included. The fire chiefs: Ashley Starnes, Bethlehem Community Fire and Rescue; Tim Keever, Hiddenite; Matt Jordan, Taylorsville; Steven Carson, Vashiti; Randy Walker, Wittenburg; Scotty Abernathy, Stony Point; Joe Carson, Ellendale; and Steven Davis, Sugar Loaf. Also pictured was Terry Foxx, Captain of the Alexander Rescue Squad with a list of squad members.

Mt. Bethel UMC sponsored their 5th CROP Hunger Walk on October 16 with over \$10,092 being raised for local and world hunger.

A joint community/church service was held at the Alexander Central Auditorium on Sunday, October 16, sponsored by the Yet Another Alcohol Referendum Committee and Alexander Citizens for Faith and Family Values. Rev. Gary Jennings was the keynote speaker on the subject of the ABC Referendum on the November 8, 2016 general election ballot.

Faith Temple Church located at 975 Cheatham Ford Road, Hiddenite, celebrated its 50th anniversary on Sunday, October 16.

The Alexander Sheriff's Office investigated a complaint of vandalism littering at Grace Baptist Church on Oct. 14. Empty beer bottles and cans were dumped in the church yard with printed white labels that read "If we can't have the tax, you can have the trash".

Citizens for the Future of Alexander County Referendum Committee held a "Vote Yes" rally at McLindon's Restaurant on Saturday, Oct. 29.

The Bethlehem Branch Library held a 10th Anniversary Celebration on Sunday, October 23 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

A record single-day number of 1,340 voters cast One Stop ballots on Monday, Oct. 31, 2016, according to Patrick Wike, Deputy Director, Alexander County Board of Elections.

NOVEMBER
Some 24,211 persons were registered to vote in the 2016 November General Election in Alexander County. Breakdown by affiliation was Republican 10,634, Democratic 6,543, Unaffiliated



G.O.P. KEEPS COMMISSION — Republican County Commission candidates Ryan Mayberry (left) and Jeffrey Peal (right) congratulate each other on Tuesday, November 8.

6,964, Libertarian 69.

The Board of Education approved its 2016-2017 fiscal year budget at its Nov. 7 meeting. The budget totaled \$47,629,011 with the following breakdown: State Funds \$30,022,141, General Expense \$6,608,926, Federal Funds \$3,142,046, Capital Outlay \$1,980,505, Child Nutrition \$3,245,557, Child Care \$303,383, local fund \$2,326,453.

Catawba Valley Medical Group announced the addition of primary care provider Carrie Herman, Nurse Practitioner, to the staff of the Family Medicine Practice in Taylorsville.

November 8 election results included Ryan Mayberry and Jeffrey Peal winning four-year terms as county commissioners, Scott Bowman, Caryn Brzycky, and Bridgette Rhyne elected to four-year terms on the school board. The alcohol referenda, both countywide and in the Town of Taylorsville, passed on all four items countywide and on the two items for the town.

The Alexander County Veterans Day program was held at ACHS Auditorium on Nov. 11. Veteran Service Organization Commanders participated along with elementary school Veterans Day poem winner, the ACHS Band and JROTC.

The Fifth Alexander Sports Hall of Fame class induction was held November 21 at Alexander Central High School. The 2016 inductees included: Jerry Ray Fox, Rick Sherrill, Karen Setzer, Jeremy Fortner, and Van Tarlton.

The "Cricket County Christmas Carol" dinner theater was presented November 25, 26, and 27 at Fellowship Advent Christian Church by the Crossroads Community Theater group. Proceeds were to benefit a number of area ministries, including seasonal assistance for needy families.

Alexander County Schools announced the release of the 2015-2016 NC School Report Cards, which included state, district, and school-level information. Included was information about public school student performance, class size, school safety, teacher quality, funding, and classroom technology.

The Bethlehem Ministerial Association sponsored a Celebration of Thanksgiving on Wednesday, Nov. 23 hosted by the Bethlehem Church of God.

DECEMBER
The Alexander County Board of Education re-elected Caryn Brzycky as chairperson and Scott Bowman as vice chairperson for 2017 at its organization session on Dec. 5.

ACHS "Cougar Empty Stocking Project" was

launched with the goal of assisting as many as 150 students.

The Alexander County Christmas Parade was held December 3rd with Mary Wike as the Grand Marshal.

The 39th annual Bethlehem Star Lighting was held on December 3rd.

The Alexander County Sheriff's Office collected toys for the Santa Cops program to help bring cheer to children of county jail inmates.

Several police officers and firemen were recognized at the Town of Taylorsville Board of Commissioners meeting on Dec. 6. Police Sgt. Richard Taylor recognized officers Lee Hoyle, Travis Pennell, Josh Lackey, firefighters Jacob Barnes and Brandon Caudle for their life saving actions with patient Timothy Rogers on Nov. 12. Responding to a 911 call, the men administered CPR to Rogers, who was unresponsive, but was helped and then transported by Alex EMS to the hospital, and after a short stay was released.

The Save The Star 4K race was held Dec. 10 in the area of Bethlehem Elementary School.

The Bethlehem Lions Club shared Christmas Cheer with donations to the Christian Crisis Center, Alexander County Angel Tree program, the Santa Cops of Alexander County, and to the Bethlehem Elementary School.

The Alexander County Board of Education recognized the winning holiday card artists at its Dec. 13 session. Three students, Lanie Greene, second grader at Bethlehem; Ian Julsrud, fifth grader at Stony Point; and Emma Maltba, eighth grader at West Middle. The students' winning artwork was displayed on the front of the school system holiday cards.

The county commissioners, at their Dec. 5 session, elected Milton Campbell as chairman and Ronnie Reese as vice chairman for 2017.

The "Christmas in Bethlehem" Drive-Thru was held December 9-11 sponsored by the churches in Bethlehem and featured over 25 live scenes depicting Bethlehem at the time of Jesus' birth.

Officers of the Bethlehem Ruritan Club for 2017 include Jim Helton, president; T. J. Garrison, vice president; Fred Lacker, secretary; Wanda Stafford, treasurer; and directors Lucille Hefner, George Collins, and Max White. Terry Rairdon was named Ruritan of the Year.

The Taylorsville Apple Festival, Inc. presented \$24,000 to Alexander County Schools according to Gina Kay Honosky, Festival Director. This represented proceeds from the Apple Festival.