



Bulldog Faces in the News

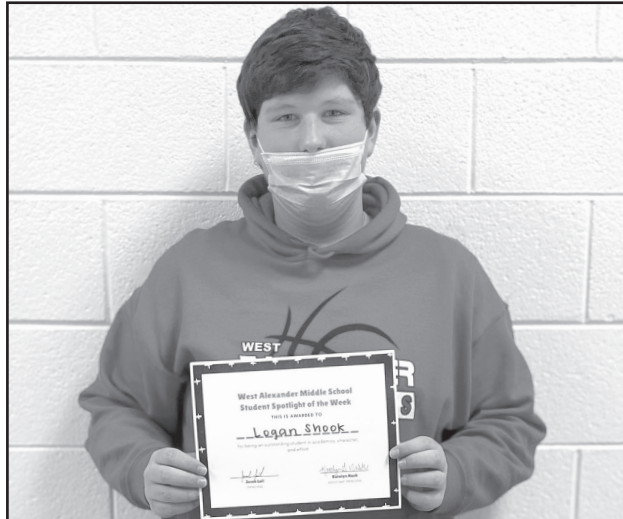
West Alexander Middle School recognizes student and staff achievements



HUNTER GENDRON - EIGHTH GRADE
Week of Jan. 11-15, 2021



JONATHAN COLLINS - EIGHTH GRADE
Panthers Team
Week of Jan. 18-22, 2021



LOGAN SHOOK - EIGHTH GRADE
Bobcats Team
Week of Jan. 18-22, 2021



TYLER WILLIAMS - SEVENTH GRADE
Mighty Ducks Team
Week of Jan. 25-29, 2021



R.J. YAROSH - SEVENTH GRADE
Titans Team
Week of Jan. 25-29, 2021



TEACHER OF THE MONTH
Amanda Gilbert
6th Grade EC

Top quality caviar being grown in Catawba Co.

Historically, sturgeon has been a part of the fishing industry in the United States but it is native to Europe and Russia. Through a passion for fish farming and a little help from experts at N.C. State University, Marshallberg Farm has grown to be the largest producer of Russian Sturgeon and Ostera Caviar in North America.

Brian Reburn, Farm Manager at Marshallberg Farm, married into the fish farming industry and joined the company in 2011.

“My father-in-law always knew he wanted to be a fish farmer,” Brian said, “and thanks to N.C. State University, he got started farming in 2003 with about 3,000 Russian Sturgeon.”

Today, the farm is home to about 25,000 fish and operates two facilities, one near the N.C. mountains and the

other near the coast. Each year they produce roughly one ton of caviar for their consumers.

Ostera caviar is one of the highest grades of caviar due to its brown/gold color, firm texture, medium size, and nutty/buttery flavor. It takes about 7 to 10 years for a Russian Sturgeon to mature and produce high-quality caviar, making patience a key trait for Brian and his family. On a daily basis, much of the work done on the farm is preventative. “Only about 10 to 20% of our work week is handling the fish,” he said, “a lot of our job consists of maintenance on the machines, cleaning to ensure high-quality safety and recording data from the tanks.” Tanks at the facility recirculate around a million gallons of water on a normal basis and fish are

moved through the tanks based on size, age and gender. “It’s round-the-clock work,” Brian said, “and we all rely on each other to keep everything going and working properly.” At the end of the day, Brian and his family take pride and satisfaction in educating the public on the importance of the fish farming industry and providing a high-quality caviar to their customers.

Although it is still a young industry, Brian reminds us that there is plenty of opportunity to get involved. “There is plenty of honor, respectability, trade growth and salary in the fish farm industry, and, although it is expensive to get into, it is so worth it,” Brian said.

Ostera Caviar from Marshallberg Farm can be purchased directly through their website and Brian recommends eating it straight

off your thumb. “It is an old Russian trick and you really taste the full flavor of the product that way,” he said, “but mixing it into an omelet is always a good second choice.” In the future, Brian and his family plan to continue farming and raising high-quality caviar for their consumers and hope to become an innovator in the aquaculture industry.

Next Star prints March 18

The next issue of The Bethlehem Star will be printed on Thursday, March 18, 2021. The deadline for advertising and correspondence is Tuesday, March 16, 2021, before 5 p.m.

Medicaid beneficiaries transition to new program

Did you know that approximately 20 percent of Alexander County citizens receive Medicaid services? This means that many local residents will be affected as the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) will transition most beneficiaries to NC Medicaid Managed Care on July 1.

Starting March 1, most current Medicaid clients will receive enrollment packets in the mail to help explain the process and to direct them to choose a health plan. Some people will remain in the current fee-for-service program (now called NC Medicaid Direct), and will not receive a letter.

For those who receive

the mailing, it will provide important information about the open enrollment process and the transformation to NC Medicaid Managed Care. Alexander County DSS staff urges Medicaid recipients to be on the lookout for the enrollment packet in the mail to review the enclosed valuable information and to follow the instructions.

Open enrollment for a health plan in the new program begins March 15 and ends May 14. Anyone who does not self-enroll during this time will be auto-enrolled between May 15 and June 30; however, a client knows his/her needs best, so he/she is advised to choose the appropriate health plan.

Alexander County DSS

staff will still determine Medicaid eligibility and provide basic advice, but cannot assist in the enrollment process or selection of a health plan.

Medicaid beneficiaries should visit www.ncmedicaidplans.gov to learn more about NC Medicaid Managed Care and the enrollment process. Beginning March 1, clients can chat with an enrollment specialist on the website or they can call the toll-free help line at 1-833-870-5500 to speak with an enrollment specialist. During open enrollment, the call center will be open seven days a week from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Clients may also use the NC Medicaid Managed Care mobile app on Apple or Android.

From Hello to Help, NC 211 is here

In a crisis, in a disaster, in a pandemic, NC 211 is here to help North Carolinians get connected to food, housing assistance, healthcare resources and much more. On February 11th, NC 211 will join United Way organizations and 211 call centers across the country to celebrate 211 Day and highlight this critical service.

In the last year, many North Carolinians who may have never had to reach out for assistance before found themselves dialing 2-1-1. Jessica (a single mom of two) called 2-1-1 when she tested positive for COVID-19 and was unable to work for at least two weeks. The NC 211 Call Specialist provided a referral to the county COVID helpline and information on two local programs that may be able to help Jessica with her bills.

On March 18th, when NC 211 was activated by Governor Cooper as part of the State’s emergency response, call volume skyrocketed. NC 211 answered

more than 206,000 calls in 2020 and the team of call specialists doubled to keep up with the demand. Despite these challenges, NC 211 remains strong in their mission to provide personal connection to resources. That means from the first hello, someone calling 2-1-1 is reaching a real person who can talk through their specific situation.

“North Carolinians contact us for a variety of reasons, from how do I file for unemployment? To where can I find food to put on the table? And how do I pay my rent now that my income is gone?” said Heather Black, NC 211 State Director. “211 truly is for everyone.”

During COVID-19, NC 211 has adapted to the fluctuating environment. The resource team has kept track of how community services adjusted in response to the pandemic and the entire NC 211 staff shifted to working 100% remotely.

In addition to finding information over the phone,

North Carolinians can also search NC 211’s database of resources by visiting nc211.org and entering their need and location. This updated search tool makes it easier for residents to find services quickly if they don’t have time to make a phone call.

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