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LCMS fields first cross country team

For the first time, Lincoln County Middle School has fielded a cross-country team. Many of the runners are dual athletes competing in two sports this fall so, these dedicated students are practicing for cross country on their own time on weekends.

The first meet saw the boys finish second ahead of Washington-Wilkes. The girl's team was unable to field a complete team because several students were playing softball.

The team's first home meet is slated for 5 p.m. Tuesday, September 14, at the Howard Ellis Track and Field. The LCMS Cross Country team includes (sitting, l-r) John Hodnett, Randson Thompson, Presley Ingram, Luck Turner, Haley Keown, (kneeling) Pyper Metsker, Patricia Huffman, Nathanael Chiles, Addisyn McKee, Reginald Fears, Chloe Lowes, (standing) Coach Jason LeRoy, Andrew Washington, Mary Claire Matthews, Kate McWhorter, Brayden Crook, and Emily Maynard. Not pictured Thomas McWhorter and Fortson Partridge.

Pinkston offers five cybersecurity tips

By GYVONNE PINKSTON
Cybersecurity Analyst

Over the past year it seems there has been an uptick in ransomware attacks or data breaches on our critical infrastructure and businesses in the news. Although hackers often go after high value targets, for the normal person protecting your digital data is equally important. Reporting from the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center shows nationally up to \$260 million in losses have resulted from online scamming.

If you use a device to conduct business online either to pay your utility bills or shop at your favorite ecommerce site, you are potentially a target for the next hacker-in-thief. Here are some very simple ways to strengthen and make your data less vulnerable to compromise while using the internet.

1. Passwords. In the 2021 Data Breach Investigations Report by Verizon, 81% of hacking-related breaches can be traced back to compromised passwords. Commonly used passwords such as 123456, qwerty, Million2, iloveyou, password123 or 9999 can easily be cracked by hackers. Try creating variety in your passwords and resisting the habit of reusing old passwords. At a minimum, setting your password length to 8 characters is recommended by NIST (National Institute of Standards and Technology). Also, using a passphrase instead of a password may be helpful in deterring cyber criminals from easily accessing your personal digital data.

2. Updating software. If you are a frequent user of desktop computers, you may already have automatic updates scheduled to download

the most recent security patches for your system. Popular browsers such as Chrome, Safari, Mozilla and Microsoft Edge regularly release updates to keep your computer protected from malware and viruses. When downloading apps for your tablet or smartphone, use trusted sites and official app stores for updates or upgrades. Also, installing anti-virus software or using vendor specific products, such as Windows Defender from Microsoft will bolster defenses on your device.

3. Safe browsing while on public WiFi. Each time you use a smartphone or a public desktop computer, a "digital footprint" is created which may carry information about your location, spending habits or personal communication. According to Avast, customer data is legally collected by asking customers directly, the use of tracking habits or accessing other sources of data found on social media accounts or comments on review sites. Using a VPN or Virtual Private Network can add a layer of protection when connected to a public WiFi source.

4. Phishing, Vishing, Smishing, Spoofing. Say these words really quickly and you may get a sense of how fast a cyber criminal can compromise your data. In a phishing attack, be aware of links in emails masquerading as legitimate websites but may lead to a malicious website. Hackers will pretend to be a trusted source. Review the email for spelling errors or any graphics that seem out of the ordinary. For example, if you receive an email out of the blue from a contact you haven't heard from in a while, use an alternative way to verify the correspondence. Vishing and smishing tactics often use phone calls or texts



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to target individuals to disclose financial or personal information. All of these are considered a type of spoofing in which hackers are constantly improving their methods and means of gaining access to sensitive data. Just remember: Think before you click.

5. Data backups. There will always be incidents of hardware failure, acts of God or human error when managing important data. Popular options available for backing up data include cloud storage, external hard drives or Cloud storage. For the small business owner, keeping your devices secure by utilizing screen lockout and turning off computers when not in use will add a layer of protection for your data. Also, considering recovery options in the event of a ransomware attack will allow for business continuation.

With a few of these simple practices, both the individual and business owner can become more cyber secure in their daily activities.

Old-time Barn Dance to be held at historical park pavilion Sept. 10

Old-time barn dancing to old-time music will make for a night of fun and history in the Pavilion at the Lincoln County Historical Park on Friday, September 10

from 6 to 9 p.m. in the Pavilion.

According to Historical Society Publicity Director Gary Edwards three different groups will play live Olde Time Mountain Music,

and Valerie Green will call the dances. Admission is free and BBQ plates will be available for \$10. Participants will learn English country dances and U.S. dances from the mid-1800s such as the Virginia Reel, Irish Line dances, Polkas, Waltzes, and Square Dances. Learn how to Do Si Do, See Saw, Allemande, and Promenade. Dancers will learn with their partners, and also progress to dancing with other couples.

Tickets for the BBQ dinner plates are available in advance from Historical Society members, or call Vice President Julie Ilhardt at (706) 359-6555. BBQ plates will also be sold that evening for cash only. Event planner David Donehoo comments, "It will be an enjoyable time of learning new dances and meeting new friends. Nothing could be more fun!"

Though there is no admission fee, the Lincoln County Historical Society is a 501(c)3 organization and donations are gladly accepted.

Event updates are posted on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/lincolncountyhistoricalsocietyga>, and the Society's web page at lincolncountyhistoricalsocietyga.org. For information, call Donehoo at 706-359-3023 or email Society President Don Thomas at dpdastro@aol.com.



Area artisans gather for Arts in the Park

Artist Sally Bacon with Salty Bacon Art was one of several artisans participating in last month's Art in the Park event, which is held the second Saturday of the month at the Lincoln County Historical Park. The event is free to the public and will be held this Saturday from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

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