

Inside this week

Relyant Communications raising awareness of Affordable Connectivity Program
Page 3

Black History Month: The significance of black patriots in the Revolutionary War
Page 6

MLK Day persists despite frigid weather
Page 13



Photo by MICHAEL BOWEN

The Wilkes County Sheriff's Office and the Washington Fire Department escort the Wilkes EMS ambulance bearing Hackney's body to Wills Memorial Hospital

Jeff Hackney dies in Hart County accident

By MICHAEL BOWEN
Editor and Publisher

Beloved paramedic, firefighter, flight medic, and deacon Jeff Hackney was killed in a tragic accident in Hart County Monday afternoon, February 7.

According to the Hart County EMS, Hackney was loading logs to split for firewood with his son Alex when a log rolled off the front-end loader they were using. The log struck the elder Hackney in the head, killing him instantly.

Notified of Hackney's death, Wilkes EMS Director Blake Thompson and EMS personnel drove to Hart County to transport Hackney's body back to Washington. As they returned to Wilkes County, they received

an escort from both the Hart and Elbert County Sheriff's Offices. The Washington Fire Department and the Wilkes County Sheriff's Office escorted the couriers for the final miles of their journey. Close friends and family members greeted the procession upon arrival at Wills Memorial Hospital.

Hackney was married to Shawn Hackney, and was the father of three sons, Adam, Alex, and Austin. He worked closely with various public safety and medical organizations, including the Wilkes EMS, the Washington Fire Department, Wills Memorial Hospital, the Children's Hospital of Atlanta, and others.

"He was a hell of a guy," Thompson said. Hart County

EMS Director and Coroner Mike Adams added, "He was a super guy and an outstanding medic."

According to Thompson, Hackney served as a Paramedic for Wilkes EMS for 32 years and later became a flight medic.

Hackney also served on the Washington Fire Department for 35 years, reaching the rank of lieutenant. He retired in June of 2020 but continued to assist as a volunteer. "He was a very valuable volunteer. He was always going to classes and schools and coming to calls," Fire Chief C.J. Gilland said.

"He impacted a lot of lives here," Wilkes EMS employee Tina Bailey said of Hackney.

Funeral arrangements will be announced when they are finalized.



Desmond Cofer scores for the Tigers

W-W Tigers beat LC Red Devils

Washington-Wilkes Comprehensive High School emerged victorious over Lincoln County in Saturday's home games.

Girls Varsity Game

After the successful Junior Varsity games, the Lady Tigers Varsity Team was the first to strike. Clawing to an early lead, the girls only seemed to gain momentum as the game progressed. Leading 13-5 at the beginning of the second quarter, the Lady Tigers dominated the court. Lincoln County made only marginal gains. By halftime, the Wilkes County girls led 27-9.

The outset of the third quarter saw two shots and a free throw from Washington-Wilkes. But Lincoln County remained unphased and knocked the Tigers off balance with several shots and free throws of their own. Suspense began to build as the Red Devils whittled rapidly at the Tigers' lead. By the fourth quarter however, the Lady Tigers still held the lead 42-22.

The final quarter saw both teams at their liveliest. Sparring on the court, score for score, the

Red Devils and the Lady Tigers struggled fiercely as the clock ticked. When a timeout was called at 4:58, the scoreboard read 50-24 in the Tigers favor. By the second timeout at 2:19, the board registered 57-39. Both teams knew that time was critical. If the Red Devils struck quickly and frequently, they could overtake the Lady Tigers. If the Lady Tigers could hold on for just a few more minutes, their victory would be secured.

In the closing minutes, the Lady Tigers deployed a solid defense, and even extended their lead several points. The Red Devils continued their pursuit, but their time ran out. Washington-Wilkes had the final say, shooting two successful free throws. The final score was a Tiger victory 64-45.

Continued on page 12

Dutch journalist's 'Welcome to Washington' podcast premieres in the Netherlands

Laila Frank, a freelance journalist from the Netherlands, has released her "Welcome to Washington" podcast series.

Frank, who visited Washington late last year, traveled the United States to visit different "Washingtons." Visiting Washington state, Washington County, and Washington, Georgia, Frank made several additional stops in the U.S. before flying back to Amsterdam to edit and release the podcast.

BOE takes action in executive session; bus routes resume

The Wilkes County Board of Education has released a summary of executive session from their meeting January 24.

In executive session, the board considered two lists of prospective new hires and a termination list. Upon returning to open session, the board approved the lists as recommended by School Superintendent Dr. Rosemary Caddell.

In a separate interview with this newspaper, Dr. Caddell provided an update on the bus routes. She stated that the bus routes are being run as normal again, and Wilkes County students are back in school. The next meeting of the board of education will be February 28 at 2 p.m.



Photo by JOAN BOWEN

The medical helicopter that transported the Baltimore Road wreck victim to Augusta University Hospital

EMS responds to 13 calls in a day Wreck victim airlifted to Augusta

On February 3, Wilkes EMS responded to a wreck on Baltimore Road in Washington.

According to EMS director Blake Thompson, the victim was airlifted by helicopter to Augusta University's trauma center. Sustaining blunt force trauma to his head and chest, the victim was transported to Wills Memorial Hospital after wrecking his ATV on

Baltimore Road. When he was interviewed by this newspaper regarding the accident, Thompson stated that it is still unclear what the victim was doing and who he was working for when the accident occurred. When this newspaper contacted the Georgia State Patrol, they stated that no report was on file for the accident.

In an interview with this

newspaper, Thompson revealed that the response to the wreck on Baltimore Road was only one of thirteen calls that EMS received that day. Of the calls they received, most were medical calls for falls, shortness of breath, and cardiac incidents.

He further reported that EMS has responded to approximately 245 calls over the month of January with no signs of slowing

down for February. "We're going to have another busy month this month," Thompson said. "It hasn't slowed down. We average 200 to 220 (calls) a month, and last month was 245 calls." Thompson explained that he has seen a gradual increase in emergency calls over the past eighteen months and emphasized the importance of calling EMS for true emergencies only.