

# Happy Valentines Day

SAMPSON COUNTY'S COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

# The Sampson Weekly



VOLUME 12, ISSUE 07

www.thesampsonweekly.com

Week of February 12-18, 2021

## INSIDE



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## Local Law Enforcement Task Force Officer Recognized



Sampson County Sheriff Jimmy Thornton, US Attorney Eastern District Bobby Higdon, Sampson County Commissioner Sue Lee (contributed photo)

(Press release from the US Dept of Justice U.S. Attorney's Office Eastern District of North Carolina)

On Wednesday, the Director of the Department of Justice Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) recognized Jason Corprew, a task force

**RECOGNITION, see P. 3**

## Vaccination Clinics Scheduled for 65+ Age Group



### COVID-19 TESTING REPORT FOR FEBRUARY 12, 2021

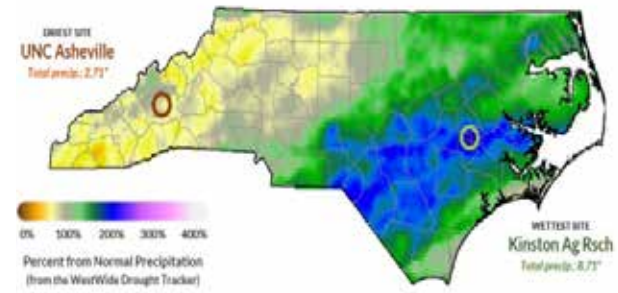
Total Number of Tests Reported to Date: 17,490  
Positive Test Results: 6,546 (43 additional since 2/11 report)  
Negative Test Results: 10,944  
COVID Reported Deaths to Date: 85 (no additional since 2/11 report)

### COVID-19 TESTING REPORT FOR FEBRUARY 11, 2021

Total Number of Tests Reported to Date: 17,403  
Positive Test Results: 6,503 (33 additional since 2/9 report)

**COVID, see P. 4**

## From the Vine - Rain 2021



If Eddie Rabbit (country singer) was still alive, he would definitely be enjoying our recent weather patterns, because he had a #1 hit song, I Love a Rainy Night. For us, he could change it to I Love a Rainy Year. One question that I have gotten more frequently since fall has been "when is it ever going to quit raining?" The inundation of rain we have had the last several months has affected everyone within our county and region. You can't ride down the road and not see mudholes, water standing in ditches, ponding in fields, or standing on the highway. And you know there is a problem when the most popular memes on the internet are about rain. Some of my favorite memes are mudholes with the caption "Thank goodness it is raining again, because my mud was getting dehydrated". Another is a picture of a guy with a fish on a leash on the highway with a caption "walking my fish". My favorite is of Forest Gump when he was in Vietnam and the caption reads "One day it started raining and it didn't stop for 4 months."

I'm sure most of you feel the same way, that it hasn't quit raining for 4 months, and you are ready for it to dry out. So, when can we expect drier weather? I contacted the NC Climate Office and asked their experts. They explained that we are currently in a La Nina weather pattern, which is typically associated with drier and warmer winters, but we haven't seen the dryness over eastern NC. Our weather setup over the last few months has brought the jet stream over us and with it, storm systems that have tapped into the ocean's moisture. This has brought us our current rainy conditions. Moving forward, they are forecasting the same weather pattern for the next 1-3 months before it is expected to break in the spring.

Historically, North Carolina's average rainfall is 49" per year. For the previous 4 years our rainfalls recorded in Clinton are as follows:

- 2017: 46.6"
- 2018: 64.5"
- 2019: 54.9"
- 2020: 69.1"

**RAIN, see P. 3**

## WEATHER

<b>Thur</b>	Partly Cloudy	10%
Hi: 51°	Lo: 35°	
<b>Fri</b>	Rain	90%
Hi: 40°	Lo: 37°	
<b>Sat</b>	Rain	60%
Hi: 41°	Lo: 37°	
<b>Sun</b>	Rain	40%
Hi: 43°	Lo: 39°	
<b>Mon</b>	PM Showers	90%
Hi: 53°	Lo: 49°	
<b>Tues</b>	Partly Cloudy	40%
Hi: 61°	Lo: 41°	

## WEEKLY VERSE

We love because he first loved us.  
1 John 4:19

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## LOCAL NEWS

# North Carolina Continues its Commitment to Equitably Distribute COVID-19 Vaccines



Raleigh, N.C. – Governor Roy Cooper and North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Mandy K. Cohen, M.D., outlined Tuesday how North Carolina is working to provide equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines. They were joined by Charles Evans, president of the North Carolina Association of Black County Officials and Chairman of the Cumberland County Board of Commissioners.

“Speed is critical, but we are also emphasizing equity,” said Governor Cooper. “Communities of color have been disproportionately impacted by this devastating pandemic, and the state is working to reduce the high rates of sickness this population is experiencing.”

Among the strategies that the state is implementing are requiring all vaccine providers to collect race and ethnicity data. The state is also prioritizing a portion of its weekly vaccines to events that focus on underserved communities and allocating a baseline weekly amount of vaccine based on county population to ensure geographic equity with vaccine available in all 100 counties. The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) has formed a dedicated team to track and provide technical assistance to vaccine providers to ensure they are hitting targets for speed and equity.

“We are embedding equity into all aspects of our vaccine plan and holding ourselves and vaccine providers accountable for ensuring that underserved and marginalized communities have access to vaccines,” said Sec. Mandy K. Cohen, M.D. “The vaccine is still in short supply, but all North Carolinians will have a spot to get their shot.”

The state continues to engage historically marginalized communities and share accurate information from trusted messengers. Commissioner Evans encouraged everyone, especially people of color, to get their vaccine when it's their turn.

“Some Black and Brown citizens may mistrust the vaccine, and I understand why based on longstanding and continuing racial and ethnic injustices in our health care system,” Commissioner Evans said. “I trust

the vaccines because they have been tested. They are safe and effective. If we are going to gain control of our lives, we need to get vaccinated.”

North Carolina is making some progress in improving vaccine access for Black North Carolinians. The state has seen a 65% increase in the weekly number of first doses administered to our African American population over the past four weeks. The week of February 3rd, 18 percent of the vaccines administered in the state have gone to our Black/African American population, up from 11 percent the week of January 13th. African Americans make up 22% of North Carolina's population. There is still more work to do in our Latinx/Hispanic community where rates have stayed around two percent of vaccines administered in the state.

Last week, North Carolina became one of the first states in the country to release statewide race and ethnicity data for COVID-19 vaccines. The Department added new county demographic data including data by race, ethnicity, gender, and age group for COVID-19 vaccinations to the vaccine data dashboard.

NCDHHS also expanded its COVID-19 vaccine help center to answer people's questions and help them determine when they are eligible for a vaccine. The hotline, 888-675-4567, is open Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m. and on Saturday and Sunday from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. Callers can get help with general COVID-19 vaccine questions, information on eligibility groups, clinical questions about the vaccine, and how to find vaccine locations and transportation services.

Because vaccine supply is limited, states must vaccinate people in groups. North Carolina is currently vaccinating people in Groups 1 and 2, which include health care workers, long-term care staff and residents and people 65 and older. Detailed information about each vaccine group is online at [YourShotYourSpot.nc.gov](http://YourShotYourSpot.nc.gov) (English) or [covid19.ncdhhs.gov/vacuna](http://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/vacuna) (Spanish).

Governor Cooper also issued Executive Order No. 193, which amends and extends Executive Orders Nos. 130 and 139. Tuesday's Order also gives the NCDHHS Secretary the authority to expand the types of providers who may have the authority to administer FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccines. Through this Order, providers with this authority will now include dentists licensed in North Carolina. As the state continues to fight the pandemic and protect North Carolinians, the Order directs state officials to marshal all state resources, including property, facilities, and personnel, upon request by NCDHHS, towards vaccination efforts.

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**RAIN, cont. from P. 1**

In January 2021, there was 8.3” of rain recorded in Clinton and .8” of rain recorded in February. We are currently 200% above normal precipitation for this year, and more rain is forecasted.

The continuing wet weather in eastern NC has been a frustration for farmers, cattlemen, gardeners, and homeowners. Some soybeans are yet to be harvested and small grains such as wheat and oats may see reduced yields since fields have been too wet to apply fertilizer. Gardeners can't work their ground, preemergent herbicides may not work on lawns, and many driveways have turned into mud runs.

The good news is that 99 counties in NC are free from drought and the weather is forecasted to break in spring. Keep your boots and umbrella handy until then. To learn more, visit the NC Climate Office at: [climate.ncsu.edu](http://climate.ncsu.edu)

**By Brad Hardison**  
Agriculture Agent



**RECOGNITION cont. from P. 1**

officer with the Drug Enforcement Administration, and Kevin Perry, a task force officer with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, for their outstanding work with and their commitment to the OCDETF Program. Officer Corprew is an officer with the Wilson Police Department, and Officer Perry is a deputy sheriff with the Sampson County Sheriff's Office. Both officers were nominated due to their work on OCDETF operations in the Eastern District of North Carolina and were two out of nine awardees in the country.

The National OCDETF Awards recognize outstanding investigations, as well as individuals that best exemplify the prosecutor led, intelligence driven, multi-agency mission of the OCDETF program. These officers demonstrated leadership and commitment, overcoming seemingly insurmountable obstacles to bring an investigation from sometimes one traffic stop or single drug arrest to targeting and dismantling of national and international criminal organizations. These investigations have resulted in numerous arrests and successful prosecutions, and lengthy sentences from 20 years to life imprisonment for some of the most dangerous individuals involved in these organizations. Officers Corprew and Perry relentlessly pursued these organizations, spending countless hours over several years to bring members of the organizations to justice. These officers were the backbones of complicated investigations, taking these dangerous individuals off the streets of the Eastern District of North Carolina and off the streets of multiple other states and countries.

The Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Forces Program was established in 1982 to mount a comprehensive attack against organized drug traffickers. Today, the OCDETF Program is the centerpiece of the United States Attorney General's drug strategy to reduce the availability of drugs by disrupting and dismantling major drug trafficking organizations and money laundering organizations and related criminal enterprises. The OCDETF strategy aims to focus federal drug resources on reducing the flow of illicit drugs and drug proceeds by identifying and targeting major trafficking organizations, eliminating the financial infrastructure of drug organizations by emphasizing financial investigations and asset forfeiture, redirecting federal drug enforcement resources to align them with existing and emerging drug threats, and conducting expanded, nationwide investigations against all the related parts of the targeted organizations.

The awards were presented by Robert J. Higdon, Jr, the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina. Principle Associate Director of the OCDETF Program, Gil Guerrero, OCDETF Southeast Regional Director Michael Smith, DEA Assistant Special Agent in Charge of the Raleigh, NC, office, Matthew O'Brien, and ATF Special Agent in Charge of the Wilmington, NC, office, Shawn Stallo, also made remarks. During the presentation of the awards, special appreciation was shown for the Chief of the Wilson Police Department, Thomas Hopkins, and the Sheriff of Sampson County, Jimmy Thornton, for their departments' willingness to contribute these Officers and many other resources to the mission of the Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force.

Sheriff Jimmy Thornton commented on the award, "What an honor it is to have an officer from my agency to be recognized for their outstanding work by the US Department of Justice Organized Crime and Drug Task Force. Kevin Perry is a "top shelf" employee who strives hard daily to serve the citizens of Sampson County with the upmost professionalism. Perry was one of only nine officers to be recognized for their work nationwide. We are certainly blessed to have him be a part of our team. I would like to thank, US Attorney Bobby Higdon for the distinct recognition of Kevin Perry and Vice Chair Sue Lee for joining me for this special occasion."

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# LOCAL NEWS

## COVID, cont. from P. 1

Negative Test Results: 10,900  
 COVID Reported Deaths to Date: 85 (no additional since 2/9 report)

### COVID-19 TESTING REPORT FOR FEBRUARY 9, 2021

Total Number of Tests Reported to Date: 17,249  
 Positive Test Results: 6,470 (27 additional since 2/8 report)  
 Negative Test Results: 10,779  
 COVID Reported Deaths to Date: 85 (no additional since 2/8 report)

### COVID-19 TESTING REPORT FOR FEBRUARY 8, 2021

Total Number of Tests Reported to Date: 17,102  
 Positive Test Results: 6,443 (41 additional since 2/5 report)  
 Negative Test Results: 10,659  
 COVID Reported Deaths to Date: 85 (4 additional since 2/5 report)

No testing numbers for February 10th due to Vaccine Clinic being held.

#### UPCOMING VACCINATION EVENTS

February 17th, 2021 (INSIDE, BY APPOINTMENT ONLY)

-Location: Inside Prestage Hall, Sampson County Expo Center, 414 Warsaw Road, Clinton

-Times: 8 am – 4 pm

-Eligible Groups: Vaccines will be given to front line health care workers and persons 65 years and older who have Sampson County Health Department appointments.

February 24, 2021 (DRIVE THRU – SECOND DOSE ONLY)

-Location: Drive Thru Clinic, Sampson County Expo Center, 414 Warsaw Road, Clinton

-Times: 8 am – 4 pm

-Eligible Groups: Reserved for 65+ year old group who received first dose vaccines during the January 23rd event

#### Transportation Services Available

If you are a Sampson County resident and want to come to a drive-thru event but do not have transportation, please call Sampson Area Transportation at (910) 299-0127. COVID precautions limit the number of riders allowed on our vehicles, so transportation assistance is dependent upon availability of vehicles and seats during the event. The ride is free but limited to the vaccine event location and return trip. All passengers MUST comply with the COVID protocols established by Sampson Area Transportation, which includes wearing a face covering all at times

Do you have a scheduled vaccination appointment with the Sampson County Health Department and need transportation to that appointment? Fare free assistance may be available for Sampson County residents by calling Sampson Area Transportation at (910) 299-0127. COVID precautions limit the number of riders allowed on our vehicles, so transportation assistance is dependent upon availability of vehicles and seats on the day/time of your appointment. Transportation is available only from your residence to the appointment and return and may involve some wait time for the next available vehicle for the return trip. All passengers MUST comply with the COVID protocols established by Sampson Area Transportation, which includes wearing a face covering all

# CRIME

## ARREST REPORTS

02-04 Rhonda Kaye Williams, 25, Roseboro. OFA Misdemeanor Probation Violation. Bond \$15000. Trial Date 03-17-21

02-04 Patrick Alfred Nixon, 47, Clinton. Identity Theft. Bond \$5000. Trial Date 02-19-21

02-04 Joe Nathan Killlett Jr, 27, Clinton. Possess Marijuana, Possess Drug Paraphernalia. Trial Date 05-11-21

02-05 William Earl Faison II, 25, Clinton. Possession of Cocaine, Possession of Marijuana. Bond \$25000. Trial Date 03-19-21

02-05 Ronald Wayne Turner, 51, Clinton. OFA- Probation Violation, Resisting Public Officer. Bond \$27500. Trial Date 03-04-21

02-05 Victoria Eve Brown, 20, Roseboro. Larceny- By Employee. Bond \$2500. Trial Date 03-19-21

02-05 Sara Faith Davis, 19, Clinton. Possess Marijuana, Expired Registration Card/Tag.

02-06 Justin Alexander Gurganius, 29, Clinton. OFA- FTC,

Driving While License Revoked. Bond \$1015. Trial Date 03-31-21

02-06 Tykevin Lashawn Boykin, 27, Clinton. Possess Marijuana, No Insurance. Trial Date 06-07-21

02-07 Erik Jason Davis, 35, Clinton. Drug Equipment Violations.

02-08 Jordan Ray Howard, 18, Clinton. Carrying Concealed Gun, Fail to Burn Headlamps/Rear Lamps. Trial Date 06-07-21

02-07 Michael Murphy, 23, Turkey. Simple Assault, Second Degree Trespass. Bond \$500. Trial Date 03-17-21

02-08 Nicole Lynn Johnson, 32, Roseboro. Simple Assault.

02-08 Anna Rose Emanuel, 22, Clinton. Simple Assault.

02-09 Angel Dawn Kirkland, 29, Dunn. OFA- DWLR Not Impaired Rev, OFA- Fail to Comply Monies. Bond \$295. Trial Date 03-31-21

02-09 Ormon Rashan Carroll, 34, Clinton. Driving While License Revoked, Expired Registration Card/Tag, Speeding, Simple Possession of Marijuana. Bond \$1000. Trial Date 04-12-21

02-09 Antoine Demetri Saunders, 24, Clinton. WFA/Assault by Pointing a Gun, WFA-Misdemeanor Stalking, WFA/Cyberstalking. Bond \$4500. Trial Date 03-29-21

02-10 Lener David Herrera Paguada, 21, Magnolia. Assault with a Deadly Weapon, Carry Concealed Weapon, Possess Firearm by Felon. Bond \$105000. Trial Date 03-05-21

## INCIDENT REPORTS

02-04 Fiesta Auto Mart reported Theft of Motor Vehicle Parts- catalytic converters \$200.

02-04 Sherry Willis reported Damage to Property- automobiles \$5800.

02-04 Verizon reported Larceny- Earbuds \$59.99, Scoshe Lighting \$39.99, Scoshe Mount \$24.99, LG GPad Folio \$39.99, Apple Charger \$39.99, Apple iPad \$2000.

02-06 Whitney McDonald reported Damage to Property- dwelling \$250.

02-07 Kierra Sherman reported Theft from Motor Vehicle- Nintendo Switch \$400, 2 games \$100.

02-08 Bath & Body Works reported Harassing Phone Calls.

02-08 Nicole Johnson and Anna Emanuel- Galaxy Pro 7 \$170.

02-08 Best of Clinton reported Theft of Motor Vehicle Parts or Accessories- dealer tag \$20.

02-10 Annie Dixon reported Breaking & Entering Residence- stolen firearms \$900.

02-10 Days Inn reported Damage to Property- curtains, bedding, toilet, smoke detector \$1800

02-10 Shirley Staton reported Larceny of medication

02-11 Mandy Knight reported Damage to Property- tire \$50.

02-11 Autry Pain Washing & Repairs reported Motor Vehicle Theft and Theft From Motor Vehicle- automobile \$2000, ladders \$900.

02-11 Zarinah Chance reported Theft From Motor Vehicle- cell phone \$80.

*\* The Crime Report is provided by the Sampson County Sheriff's Office and the Clinton City Police Department.*

## Senator Brent Jackson Votes to Require In-Person Learning Option

*\*Science overwhelmingly shows in-person learning is safe and children are suffering without it*

*\*Families could still opt for remote learning*



Raleigh, N.C. – Sen. Jackson (R-Sampson) voted in support of legislation to direct all schools to provide an in-person learning option. The measure, Senate Bill 37, passed 29-15.

The bill effectively eliminates Plan C, the all-virtual learning option, and grants school districts wide flexibility in how best to operate in person. It requires schools to adhere to N.C. Department of Health and Human Services safety protocols (DHHS).

Sen. Jackson said, “I have heard from students and parents across Sampson, Johnston, and Duplin counties who are struggling to obtain a quality education because

they are not being allowed an in-person option. We intend to rectify that issue by giving students the type of education that works best for them while also keeping them safe.”

The legislation directs schools to follow the requirements in the DHHS Strong Schools NC Public Health Toolkit for reopening, and it aligns with Gov. Roy Cooper’s “recommendation” to return to in-person learning.

Studies have shown that with mitigation efforts schools can reopen safely.

Earlier this week Gov. Cooper said that research conducted in North Carolina “tells us that in-person learning is working and that students can be in classrooms safely, with the right safety protocols in place.”

DHHS Secretary Dr. Mandy Cohen echoed that sentiment, saying, “New studies also reaffirm that strong prevention measures, like the ones we have here for our North Carolina schools, they work. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently cited North Carolina as an example that schools can reopen safely, even during periods of high community transmission, when they follow those COVID-19 safety protocols.”

This legislation balances the critical need for in-person learning with the requirements set out by NCDHHS in the Strong Schools NC Public Health Toolkit.

DHHS told the State Board of Education recently that COVID-19 cases associated with K-12 schools accounted for 0.15% of the state’s total cases as of Jan. 30.

The evidence that school closures harm children is overwhelming. As far back as last summer, public health experts at Harvard University warned that school closures are “a disaster that some students may never recover from.”

Earlier this month, the CDC concluded there is “little evidence that schools have contributed meaningfully to increased community transmission.”

Last month, UNC and Duke researchers with the ABC Science Collaborative reported “no instances of child-to-adult transmission of SARS-CoV-2 were reported within schools” during their examination of 11 open school districts in North Carolina serving 90,000 students. The researchers concluded, “Our data support the concept that schools can stay open safely in communities with widespread community transmission.”

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# Colorful Kitchen Inspiration

## 5 impactful, on-trend cabinet stylings

### FAMILY FEATURES

The kitchen is the heart of many homes, and careful planning is a necessity when it comes to redesigning this essential living space. Picking out cabinetry – and a color for those cabinets, in particular – can be a challenging process.

Everything from the style of your cabinets to the amount of natural light your space receives are key factors to consider when choosing an updated hue. While white cabinets are an everlasting choice, and wood-stained cabinetry once held 70% of the market, painted cabinets now account for 70% of sales, signaling a significant shift among homeowners and their preferences.

While there are virtually no limitations when it comes to the paint, stain and glaze options available to complement your overall kitchen design, the current stylings reflected in Wellborn Cabinet’s annual color trends provides an opening to a range of impactful colors, such as grays, blues, blacks and wood tones, and a mixture of these on-trend hues.

### A Gray for Every Mood

While gray cabinets have been a popular design choice for several years, much like shades of white, no two grays are exactly alike. Cabinet colors live on a color spectrum that ranges from warm to neutral to dark; warm grays have yellow or brown undertones while cool grays have hushed hues of blue.

Neutral gray, or Ash, is a true black and white mixture of colors. However, many homeowners are opting for warmer or cooler shades instead. For example, light gray cabinets can create a chic, modern motif for homeowners looking to liven up their space while avoiding completely white cabinetry. One of the latest gray trends is a warmer gray that can look almost beige, earning the nickname “greige.” Shades of dark gray – whether painted or stained – are also options for making a luxurious, traditional statement that can span ever-changing color trends.

### A Sea of Blue

One of today’s hottest trends in kitchen cabinetry is the use of shades of blue, which provide calming and restful effects and the feeling of harmony and serenity. Pops of blue can be used as an accent color on islands or on either upper or base cabinets. To balance out these dramatic darks, many homeowners are opting to pair a bold color choice like a navy hue – such as Bleu – with neutral to warm whites, such as wool and bone white, to create a crisp, clean look. Gold hardware can be used on navy cabinetry for an upscale and regal look while silver-tone hardware provides a contemporary finishing touch.

While lighter shades of blue, like aqua, are perfect for keeping spaces light and airy, one of the latest colors to emerge is a mid-tone classic blue. A balanced option like Sapphire from Wellborn Cabinet, which is a classic, mid-tone royal blue available in the Premier and Estate Series framed cabinetry, as well as the full-access, frameless Aspire Series, can help create energy and inspiration for dining or cooking.



### Mixed Wood Tones

Even with the rise in painted woods, stains are seeing a surge in popularity. The application of stain to natural wood can enhance the character of the cabinetry. Neutral color, dimension, texture and soft luxury can be layered into nearly any space to create a blended balance.

Wood grains typically pair well with whites, grays, blues and brass tones – all of which are popular colors in modern kitchens and other localized entertaining areas such as in-home refreshment areas or bars.

### Dark Drama

Often overlooked as more of an “accent” color, black has become livable, luxe and inviting with textured woods adding rustic, homely charm. For example, Wellborn Cabinet offers a decorative laminate veneer option in matte black. Edgy but classic, black cabinets can pair perfectly with nearly any design element still in its natural wooden state to create a distinct style that is all your own.

### Multi-Tones and Unexpected Pops of Color

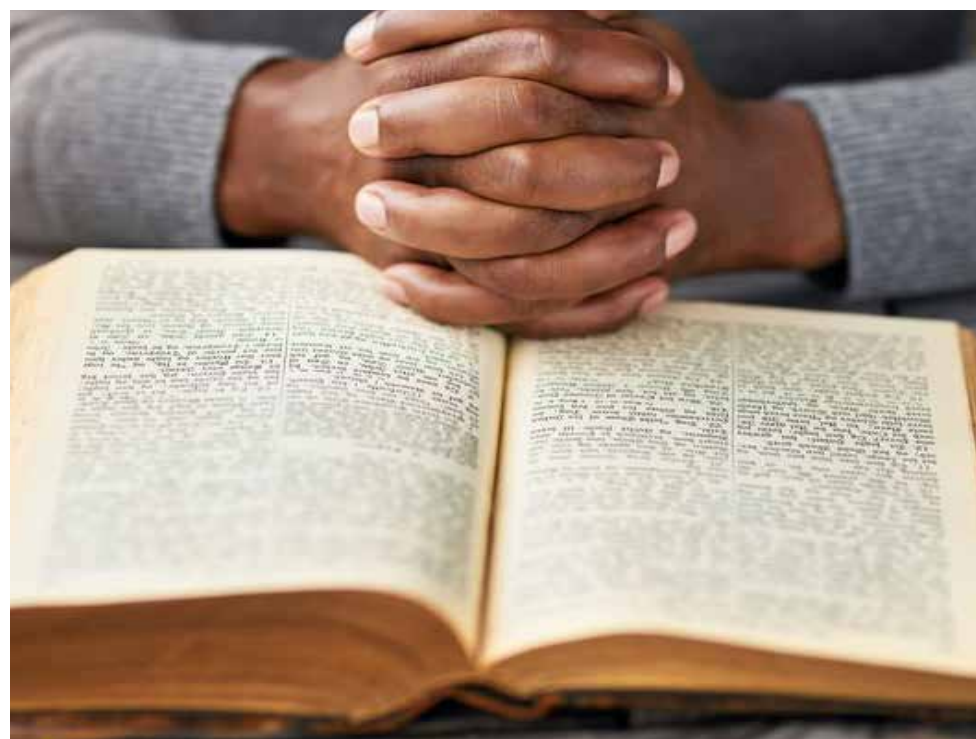
While all-white palettes have long reigned supreme in the kitchen for their timelessness and versatility, straying from neutral tones can add an energetic and welcoming feel to nearly any space. Smaller kitchens that once had an all-white look are getting a facelift by adding a burst of bright, bold color on either the upper or base cabinets. Adding colorful retro appliances or using the island as a canvas for an energetic and welcoming pop of color can also make a similar statement and help create a space unique to your style and personality.

Many homeowners are even pairing two or more complementary colors to create two- and three-toned looks. For example, lighter gray, Shale or blue can be used for the upper cabinets with darker shades used below for the base cabinetry, or a neutral hue can be used on the uppers with a contrast color on the bottom. In three-toned kitchens, an additional color or material is introduced to create asymmetry in the palette to help define zones or functions and keep the eye moving.

Find more on-trend kitchen inspiration and color options at Wellborn.com.

## FAITH

# What Makes You Happy?



*Psalm 1:1-2, "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night."*

I can recall growing up hearing adults say, "If you lie down with dogs, you get up with fleas." As a kid I wondered what exactly they meant by that statement. Little did I know that statement came from John Webster in his 1612 play "The White Devil." Act five, scene one, line 170: "For they that sleep with dogs, shall rise with fleas." This quote has a large almost universally agreed meaning of "You should be cautious of the company you keep. Associating with those of low reputation may not only lower your own, but also lead you astray by the faulty assumptions, premises and data of the unscrupulous." However, when you read the first recorded Psalm you discover this idea was present long before 1612.

The psalmist shows the slow decline of a person's spiritual condition based on those they associate with. He stated that we can be happy if we are not walking in the counsel of the

ungodly. Who do you turn to when you need advice? Is it a parent, friend or coworker that you call upon when you desire guidance? Believe it or not there are some folks that don't have your best interest in mind. They enjoy telling others about your pains, problems and phobias. Proverbs 13:20 states, "Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm." Ungodly advice can destroy families and friendships overnight.

The psalmist also says we will be happy if we are not standing in the path of sinners. A path speaks of a way or direction one chooses to travel. The righteous individual is not traveling in the same direction as sinners. Psalm 16:11, "You reveal the path of life to me; in your presence is abundant joy; in your right hand are eternal pleasures." True happiness comes from knowing that we are on the path that leads to eternal joy in Heaven. The great news of the gospel is that if we find ourselves on the path of sinners we have a detour called Jesus Christ. Anyone can exit from the path of sin, but only Jesus can bring us to God the Father.

The psalmist then states happiness comes if we avoid sitting in the seat of scoffers. The scoffer loves to sit and criticize the people of God and the things of God. We will never be happy by sitting on the sidelines and listening to the voices of the scoffers. 2 Peter 3:3, "Knowing this first of all that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires." Scoffers never have a real solution to the problems of our world only sarcastic remarks to those that will listen. The more we are around scoffers we slowly adapt to be more like them. The apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:33, "Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals." Our friends can influence the way we think, our decisions and even sometimes what we do. One of the best ways to break free from friends that cause us to compromise is to spend more time with God and less with scoffers.

We all want to be happy, but true happiness will only come from knowing and obeying God's Word. This week I encourage you to examine your spiritual walk, standing and sitting because it does make a difference to your joy. There might be people that you need to subtract from your life because they are destroying your chance for true happiness. I guess the best way to avoid getting fleas is to elude lying down with dogs that have them.



by Rev. Ken Smith  
Atkinson Baptist Church

## A DIFFERENT AND BETTER CANCEL CULTURE



What next great advancement can modern man achieve? Dr. Weston set out to answer this question in C.S. Lewis' *Out of the Silent Planet*. While Weston knew he was on the precipice of a major scientific breakthrough, he had no conception of the utility of his efforts. After drugging an unsuspecting traveler, he and his accomplice Devine force him into a rocket ship that would travel to a distant planet. When the traveler confronts Weston, the physicist remarks:

*"My only defense is that small claims must give way to great. As far as we know, we are doing what has never been done in the history of man, perhaps never in the history of the universe. We have learned how to jump off the speck of matter on which our species began; infinity, and therefore perhaps eternity, is being put into the hands of the human race. You cannot be so small-minded as to think that the rights or the life of an individual or of a million individuals are of the slightest importance in comparison with this."*

Weston views the world through the lens of humanism; that humanity has not only the ability, but the obligation to master nature in order to shape and develop the world according to humanity's will. In this view, the social breakthroughs will not only create a better world for all, but finally put an end to the need for a transcendent divinity who imposes his authority. The philosophy that sprang from the Enlightenment with co-opted Christian elements has created the narrative that society forges towards a problem-free state in which humanity will be delivered from the tyranny of God. This specious promise has not yet been fulfilled, as evident by the cancel culture that ubiquitously influences society.

In this reality, biblical Christianity has lost favor and respect. Modern culture, once aligned with the values of transcendent moral authority, has now aligned itself with humanism and individual autonomy. Chatraw and Prior propose that in some cultural spheres of the West, this societal drift accelerated in the 1960's and 1970's, believing that "by the time Many Christians realized the church had surrendered moral ground, the cultural shift had already found solid footing that was not easily unsettled or reversed." Paul M. Gould argues that this "disenchantment" has led to a world saturated by secularism, "devoid of moral or aesthetic absolutes" and without clear direction. Seemingly, modern Western culture tolerates and accepts faith commitments so long as it aligns with science and reason and does not appeal to transcendent moral authority. The faith commitment of the cancel culture movement rests not in the God of the Bible, but in the human ability to create social progress. Through the bullying of the cancel culture movement, humanism has a loud voice that dominates social spheres. Like a pack of wolves, those in the movement take their seat in the social hierarchy as alphas, arbitrating a humanist view of justice and morality.

While cultural goods often have redemptive qualities, often cultural ideas do not. The church must have the knowledge to realize what can be used for good and what cannot. In certain respects, the church is to engage culture by pushing back against those bad ideas that have detrimental effects on society. Cancel culture and its tendency to oppress free speech and religious liberty limits the church's freedom to enter the public square with a free exchange of ideas.

The temptation to fight or withdrawal from culture entices the church. The "culture wars" often drafts Christians into the army of the "religious right," where a noble war wages on a political battlefield to preserve the values that have been sieged by humanistic forces. But instead of seeing culture as a sinful entity that must be simply dealt with or fought against, Christians should see culture as a gift from God to make, shape, and engage. The church should not be fighting culture in and of itself, but wrestling with the humanistic philosophy that creates more problems than it solves. While humanism can only offer shallow optimism that humanity can make things better, Christianity offers robust hope that the Creator will judge all wrongdoing and correct all injustices. This, in essence, is a different and better cancel culture.

The Christian story offers an alternative. In the Christian story, the glory and goodness of God sets the standard for shaping humanity, creation, and culture. Corrupted by sin, humanity tends to spread corruption through all spheres of life and to all of culture. Therefore, both man and culture need a redeemer from the outside: one who knows the standard of moral goodness and one who can restore things to its original good state? The good news in all of this is that Christ came to die on the cross. Through the gospel there is hope that all things are being and ultimately will be redeemed. According to theologian N.T. Wright: "God's future has come forward to meet us in the present; what God intends to do at the last has already broken into the world the way it is." A.W. Tozer helpfully states this redemption in another way: "The knowledge that we are all God's, that He has received all and rejected nothing, will unify our inner lives and make everything sacred to us." Wright demonstrates the hope that while things aren't fully restored, God has already began a good work in the world. Tozer challenges believers to join God on mission as he redeems culture. What humanity knows about God and his purposes of redemption should naturally unfold in their lives as the church courageously and boldly persuades unbelievers towards that hope.

At the end of Lewis' *Out of the Silent Planet*, the traveler who was taken to another world against his will stands between Dr. Weston and Oyarsa, the divine being of Malacandra, to translate the proceedings of a trial. In the dialogue, Weston announces his intentions for humanity to Oyarsa:

*"It is in her right ... the right, or, if you will, the might of Life herself, that I am prepared without flinching to plant the flag of man on the soil of Malacandra: to march on, step by step, superseding where necessary, the lower forms of life that we find, claiming planet after planet, system after system, till our posterity - whatever strange form and yet unguessed mentality they have assumed - dwell in the universe wherever the universe is habitable."*

Dr. Weston's goal to create progress by cancelling out all forms of life that block that progress typifies the humanism that drives cancel culture. In a society that has changing moral norms, predicting the next target of cancel culture proves difficult. The church has the unique opportunity to be a witness for biblical truth and to reach victims of cancel culture with thoughtful conversation, grace, and forgiveness. The road to reconciliation begins with encountering people with different worldviews and different alignments with honest gospel-conversations and meaningful listening. Culturally speaking, it means encountering the ever changing moral landscape with gospel truths so that these spheres can begin to be realigned.



Will Matthews

## HEALTH WATCH



PEXELS

### STUDY SAYS Nurses quit due to burnout

A new study has found that among registered nurses in the U.S. who reported leaving their current employment in 2018, 31.5% reported leaving because of burnout. With greater strain on health care workers due to the coronavirus pandemic, these findings suggest the need for solutions.

The analysis included 3,957,661 nurses. Among nurses who reported leaving their job in 2017, 31.5% reported burnout as a reason. The study found that the hospital setting and working more than 20 hours per week were associated with greater odds of burnout.

“Burnout continues to be reported by registered nurses across a variety of practice settings nationwide,” concluded the study. “How the COVID-19 pandemic will affect burnout rates owing to unprecedented demands on the workforce is yet to be determined. Legislation that supports adequate staffing ratios is a key part of a multitiered solution. Solutions must come through system-level efforts in which we reimagine and innovate workflow, human resources, and workplace wellness to reduce or eliminate burnout among frontline nurses and work toward healthier clinicians, better health, better care and lower costs.”

### HEALTH STAT 90

Because reinfection is possible, the CDC recommends you get the COVID-19 vaccine even if you have had and recovered from COVID-19. If you were treated for COVID-19 symptoms with monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma, however, you should wait 90 days before getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

### NUTRITION STATION Measure cream, sugar before adding to coffee

Coffee can be a lifesaver on rough mornings. The caffeine, aroma and even thought of coffee can help us out of bed in the morning. Though cream and sugar can help elevate this morning beverage, adding too much is unhealthy.

To avoid adding too much cream and sugar, Eat This, Not That suggests measuring these before adding them to your coffee. By pouring cream from the carton or spooning in sugar directly, you may be adding significantly more than one serving with realizing it. Use preportioned sugar packets, which typically equals 1 teaspoon.

More Content Now



# Pulse check

## Watch your heart rate, but don't obsess about it

**Michael Precker**  
American Heart Association News

**K**eeping track of your heart rate is probably a good thing. Obsessing about it probably isn't.

That's one drawback of the increasing popularity of wearable devices that constantly monitor heart rates, said Dr. Tracy Stevens, a cardiologist at Saint Luke's Mid America Heart Institute in Kansas City, Missouri.

“I've had people suffer significant injuries when they're trying to check their heart rate while exercising,” she said. “They take a hand off their treadmill and shoot right off the back and fall off.”

Even without a monitor, the preoccupation can have consequences.

“They'll push too hard on their carotid arteries to check their pulse, which instigates a reflex that drops their blood pressure, and they pass out,” Stevens said. People shouldn't put “too much emphasis on a number.”

A 2013 study published in the journal *Heart* of nearly 3,000 men in Denmark showed the risk of death increased by 16% for every 10 beats per minute increase in resting heart rate. But Stevens said she is far more focused on high blood pressure, obesity, smoking and other risk factors for heart disease.

“Heart rate is just a piece of the whole picture,” she said.

Dr. Patrick Ellinor, director of the Cardiac Arrhythmia Service at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, called heart rates a measurement “that can be checked occasionally but should not be obsessed over. It's important to know there is a wide range of normal.”

For most adults, a normal heart at rest generally beats between 60 and 100 times per minute, Stevens said, with many factors affecting individual numbers. Figure in exertion, stress, work, even watching the news, she said, and nobody's number always stays the same.

“With our normal day in America,



FREEPIK

## 16%

A 2013 study published in the journal *Heart* of nearly 3,000 men in Denmark showed the risk of death increased by 16% for every 10 beats per minute increase in resting heart rate.

we're not going to have a steady 70 beats a minute,” she said. “It's going to be variable. Don't be worried if it's 60 and then it's 80. That's your body responding to what's going on around you.”

Generally, athletes and people in good shape tend to have lower resting heart rates.

“Our heart gives us what we need by beating stronger or faster,” Stevens said. “An athlete may need just 40 beats per minute, and that's fine because it's so efficient. On the other hand, I've got a young patient whose heart muscle is so weak, their heart rate is 130. It can't beat stronger, so it compensates by beating faster.”

Still, a number outside the norm can be a warning sign.

“Too fast or too slow can be a sign of abnormality or disease,” said Ellinor, who likened it to the story of “Goldilocks and the Three Bears.”

“You want to be just right. If someone is at either extreme, it's worth getting checked out.”

He said a low heart rate can result in fatigue or lack of stamina, and might even require a pacemaker. Too fast could indicate an overactive thyroid or atrial fibrillation, an irregular heart rhythm that can lead to issues.

Stevens recommends checking heart rate and blood pressure every month “so you know what's normal for you. Then if you find something out of range, that's a red flag.”

Many people focus on their heart rate as an indication of how effectively they're exercising. The general formula for calculating a maximum heart rate is 220 minus one's age, and many people measure their workout intensity by how close they come to the maximum.

During moderate-intensity exercise, a person's target heart rate is about 50% to 70% of their maximum heart rate. For a 40-year-old, that's 90 to 126 beats per minute. During vigorous activity, target heart rate is about 70% to 85% of the maximum, or 126 to 153 bpm at age 40.

“To get to peak fitness, you do need to increase your heart rate, but not to the maximum,” Ellinor said.

## TODAY'S WORKOUT

### Planking shoulder tap offers a challenge

**Marlo Alleva**  
More Content Now  
USA TODAY NETWORK

**F**itness is always a popular choice to start fresh at the beginning of the year. That being said, you should be in a routine, and the soreness of any new fitness routine has worn off by now. It is time to intensify your routines and give yourself a challenge.

Our move today is a planking shoulder tap. All you need for this exercise is a flat surface. This shoulder-tapping plank will be working your whole body, but focusing on the core, your balance and upper body.

Begin this exercise on the floor on all fours. Positioning your hands



Marlo demonstrates a planking shoulder tap. [ERNST PETERS]

shoulder-width apart, hold your chest tall and engage your core. Then, extend both feet behind you by straightening your legs and propping your body weight onto the balls of your feet.

Now, you should be in a planking position with both arms sturdy underneath your upper body. Your core is engaged

and your legs are holding the weight of your lower body. Once you are in this position, you are ready to start tapping each shoulder.

Keeping a focal point, begin to lift your left hand off the floor and reach over to tap your right shoulder. Replace that hand on the ground and immediately shift

to your other side. Take your right hand off the floor and tap your left shoulder. This may be slightly tricky at first, as it could throw your balance off. You can always drop to your knees at first to get a feel of the movement, and as your balance and strength increase return back to your toes.

This shoulder-tapping plank can be performed for a particular length of time or a set number of shoulder taps. Either way you choose, you will find this move not only challenging, but rewarding as well.

This exercise is a great way to challenge your workout partners. And it's great on its own for a quick personal task. It can even be added to any upper-body routine.



Photo courtesy of Getty Images

# Go BIG on Brunch

## FAMILY FEATURES

Building out a full menu to please your brunch guests with simple, tasty recipes can help create a fun, flavorful atmosphere when it's time for a morning bite.

By making a variety of dishes to accommodate an array of personal tastes, you can give friends and family the flavors they desire. With choices like Apple Strudel Pancakes and Mini Hash Brown Casseroles, you can fulfill a multitude of food groups from

grains and fruits to dairy and meat. Allow the adults at your gathering to top off the meal with a spicy take on this Watermelon Bloody Mary, featuring simple preparation and a handful of garnish options. Find more brunch recipes at Culinary.net.

## A Small Brunch Bite

A full brunch menu calls for small bites on the side to complement the multitude of flavors brought on by a variety of brunch dishes.

For a clever option that's quick to make, these Mini Hash Brown Casseroles provide a morsel bursting with flavor to pair with just about any morning meal. Made with refrigerated Simply Potatoes Shredded Hash Browns, which are pre-shredded for a faster fridge to fork kitchen experience, you can make a batch of the tasty cups in less than an hour. Find more brunch solutions and recipes at simplypotatoes.com.

## Mini Hash Brown Casseroles

Prep time: 10 minutes  
Total time: 30 minutes  
Servings: 24

- 1 package refrigerated Simply Potatoes Shredded Hash Browns
- 1 pound Bob Evans Farms Original Sausage Roll
- 4 large eggs
- 1/2 cup milk
- 3 tablespoons butter, melted
- 1 cup ham, cubed
- 1 cup red pepper, diced
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese

Heat oven to 350 F.

Remove hash browns from refrigerator and let rest.

In skillet, cook sausage according to package directions.

Lightly grease two 12-cup muffin tins. In bowl, whisk eggs and milk. Add hash browns, butter, ham, red pepper, black pepper and cheese; mix.

Fill muffin tins 2/3 full. Bake 27-30 minutes. Serve warm.



## Add Apples to Your Brunch Buffet

As part of a balanced brunch, these Apple Strudel Pancakes feature whole grains rich in fiber, minerals and vitamins to provide energy for you and your guests. With a rich, nutty flavor, buckwheat flour complements the sweet taste of apples and maple syrup for a twist on traditional pancakes. Find more nutritious recipes at aicr.org.

## Apple Strudel Pancakes

Reprinted with permission from the American Institute for Cancer Research  
Servings: 8

### Apple Strudel Mixture:

- 1 cup water
- 1/4 cup raisins
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/3 cup thoroughly chopped walnuts
- 1 large apple, peeled, cored and chopped

### Batter:

- 1 cup buckwheat flour
- 1 cup unbleached all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 eggs
- 2 cups 1 percent buttermilk
- 1/4 cup safflower oil
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- nonstick cooking spray

### maple syrup

To make apple strudel mixture: Boil water; add raisins. Remove from heat and let steep until raisins are plump and reconstituted, about 10 minutes. Drain and set aside.

In shallow pan over medium heat, add butter. Once butter melts and is bubbling, stir in brown sugar and cinnamon. Cook about 3 minutes until sugar starts to dissolve. Add walnuts, apples and raisins. Cook apples until just tender when pierced with fork, about 4 minutes. Set aside to cool completely.

To make batter: In large bowl, mix flours, sugar, cinnamon, baking soda and salt. In separate bowl, beat eggs lightly and mix with buttermilk, oil and vanilla extract.

Pour wet ingredients into dry, mixing as little as possible. Add apple strudel mixture and fold all ingredients together. Set aside.

Heat nonstick pan or griddle over medium heat. Grease pan lightly with nonstick cooking spray. Once pan is hot, ladle about 1/4 cup batter per pancake taking care not to overcrowd pan. After 2-3 minutes, flip pancakes once.

Serve pancakes warm with syrup.

## Sipping on Sweet and Spicy

Take your brunch the extra mile with a twist on the traditional mid-morning beverage. By adding jalapeno and horseradish to this Watermelon Bloody Mary, you'll have a spicy, tasty version of a traditional brunch drink ready for your guests.

With watermelon balancing out the jalapeno, it's an ideal balance of spicy and sweet with just the right amount of kick. Find more brunch recipes at watermelon.org.

## Watermelon Bloody Mary

Recipe courtesy of the National Watermelon Promotion Board  
Yield: 4 cocktails

- 2 cups seedless watermelon, cubed
- 1 medium jalapeno pepper, stem removed, chopped
- 2 limes, juice only
- 6 ounces low-sodium tomato juice
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon fish sauce
- 1 teaspoon horseradish

### hot sauce, to taste

- 1/3 cup vodka
- lime wedges
- chili lime salt
- ice
- 4 bamboo skewers (6 inches long)
- watermelon wedges (optional)
- prosciutto (optional)
- cucumber slices (optional)
- jalapeno slices (optional)
- green olives (optional)

In blender, blend watermelon cubes and jalapeno pepper until completely smooth. Pour mixture through fine sieve set over pitcher.

Add lime juice, salt, pepper, fish sauce, horseradish and hot sauce, to taste, to pitcher; stir to combine. Taste and adjust seasoning as needed. Add vodka and stir.

Line rims of four glasses with lime juice from lime wedges; dip in chili lime salt poured on plate. Carefully put ice in each glass and divide Watermelon Bloody Mary mixture evenly.

Add garnishes, as desired, by skewering watermelon wedges, prosciutto, cucumber, jalapeno and green olives. Place garnishes in glasses and serve.





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# RISE UP - REMEMBER 2021



## Kids Doing Good Deeds in Sampson County!

January 2021

Dear Friends,

Tim's Gift Inc. excitedly shares the good news that "yes, Lord... we are planning a 'Rise Up' this year to glorify You and help your children"! Hopefully, individuals, families, churches, businesses, and organizations will commit to helping spread love and good deeds across Sampson and beyond! Can God bless, protect, and enlarge our territories as we 'RISE UP' and reach out to help people in need? Yes, He can!

Tim's Gift 10th Anniversary Rise Up is being planned, with serving the Lord and safety for all top priorities! Rise Up - Remember 2021 can bring revival through serving and praising God all over Sampson County. Rise Up - Remember gives all people - young and old - opportunities to be involved as we REMEMBER the great commission and share deeds of kindness from one end of Sampson to the other. Can we make a positive difference in peoples' lives and honor God by being Good Samaritans? Yes, we can!!

Please help us share about Rise Up - Remember! Encourage and remind church members, employees, family members, associates, to participate. Together, we can reach thousands in need of a good deed. Glorifying God in every deed done will magnify the blessings of doing!

The Lord blesses the deeds and doers! So, can we do one good deed - before March 21st - or commit to one good deed a day to keep the enemy away? Yes, we can Lord!

Email good deeds daily or weekly to [RISEUPTIMSGIFT@GMAIL.COM](mailto:RISEUPTIMSGIFT@GMAIL.COM)!

Youth groups meeting virtually send individual emails or send to your leader who will submit as a group. Groups that meet on Sunday night at your churches will receive a meal from Tim's Gift and Dominos to enjoy while watching Rise Up - Remember. Mt. Vernon will host the event. Outstanding Youth Group and Good Samaritan Trophies will be presented during broadcast.

Please call Tim's Gift (592-1126) for details, while getting a head start on sharing the love of Jesus doing GOOD DEEDS every day! Please participate and pray for Rise Up 2021! Do good deeds individually, as a family, church, business, school, civic organization, or YOUTH GROUPS! Write about your good deed/project. Mail to Tim's Gift, or EMAIL YOUR GOOD DEED(S) TO: [RISEUPTIMSGIFT@GMAIL.COM](mailto:RISEUPTIMSGIFT@GMAIL.COM) Please include your name, email, and phone#!

Thank you for standing strong together as soldiers of the cross, RISING UP and REMEMBERING God's people in need of a helping hand (cleaning yards, shop for shut ins, do errands, call to check on, pay a bill, send a card, share a Valentine surprise, pray with, deliver a meal, volunteer, support local charities, drive to dr. apt., leave canned food on porches, give gift certificates, etc.! Let's PRAY God will send needed deeds for us to do along our way, as He did the Good Samaritan, one deed or better yet... one a day!

In His Love,  
Becky, Jennifer, Diane, & Tim's Gift Board of Directors



Email Us At:  
[RISEUPTIMSGIFT@GMAIL.COM](mailto:RISEUPTIMSGIFT@GMAIL.COM)

## ...by God's Grace

By God's Grace, we are living in a season when serving Christ means rising up to challenges we've never faced as Christians. Can anyone remember a time when some churches closed for months, masks were required in public, social distancing was a must, being quarantined, censoring speech, and God's Word and way endangered? "NO"!

What then can we do to stand up and let our voices be heard...like the shot heard around the world? We can RISE UP with reason to be revived, renewed, and remember... in giving we receive! Last fall, we cancelled Tim's Gift Rise Up for 2021 due to Covid. God convicted my heart after Christmas - while quarantining for two weeks - with a troubling question, "Are my people going to cancel everything?" "NO"!

The letter on this page explains how Tim's Gift 10th Anniversary Rise Up is being planned, with serving the Lord and safety top priorities! Rise Up - Remember

2021 will be like a revival with good deeds, projects, and praising God happening all over Sampson County. Rise Up - Remember gives all people - young and old - opportunities to be involved as we REMEMBER to do things for people in need. Can we make a positive difference and help people? "YES"!

Stay tuned for more information, while getting a head start on sharing the love of Jesus doing GOOD DEEDS - Sampson together Strong! Please get on board and pray for Rise Up 2021 to be a light shining in Sampson seen around the world! Do good deeds individually, as a family, church, business, school, civic organization and YOUTH GROUPS! Write about your good deed/project and send or drop off at Tim's Gift or EMAIL YOUR GOOD DEED(S) TO: [RISEUPTIMSGIFT@GMAIL.COM](mailto:RISEUPTIMSGIFT@GMAIL.COM) or mail to Tim's Gift! Include name, email, and phone#!

~ In His love, Becky

## SPORTS

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## 18 Years of Coaching Excellence- Sheila Davidson

**\*At the Helm of Success of Lakewood High School Volleyball**



If you are a volleyball enthusiast, you undoubtedly know that Lakewood High is a leader on the volleyball courts in Sampson County. This year they held a record of 11-6 over and 9-4 in the league.

Sheila Davidson has been coaching the Lakewood High School volleyball team for 18 seasons and she is a core reason the team is always successful. Davidson said of her illustrious career, "I got my start after being an assistant to Angela Neal for a couple of years and took over after she left. I now coach track as well as volleyball."

Lakewood volleyball has won over 10 conference championships as well as conference tournament championships over the past 18-year period Davidson has been coaching. Quite an impressive resume.

According to Davidson, "We have won several district and sectional state championships over the years as well and came in regional state runner up 3 times coming 1 game away from a state championship. This year our JV along with assistant coach Bailey Light (a former player of mine and won championships with her) were conference co-champs and the varsity team finished 2nd in regular season and making it to the state playoffs. We won the first round and lost in the second round to Falls Lake Academy (3-0).

Coach Davidson continued, "In the championship game this year we were the host, so going into the season it was a must that we play in that championship

game on our home floor. Even though we lost it was great to see athletes in some kind of normal during this COVID season; families celebrating, team trophy being presented."

Davidson said that the team would be losing 4 seniors this year (1 senior was out all year from an injury). "We are looking forward to filling those shoes they left behind and setting goals for next season during our preseason time. Our Seniors have left a mark and will be missed. We are losing Shaneria Rich, Madelyn Ammons, Reagan Holmes, Gracie Godbold. Our future is bright with returners Carley Joas, Adara Johnson, Rylie Hairr, Sara Teasdale, Taiyah Owens, Harley Matthews, Hannah Register, Sariyah Doss, and some young talented ladies on the JV team coming back as well."

Coach Davidson noted that due to COVID, the middle school feeder programs did not even have a season this year. She stated, "It has been a challenge with low numbers and kids not playing but I'm looking at hopefully being able to communicate with middle school interest and having a camp this summer to bring us all together to enhance our skills early." Any rising freshman who is interested in playing volleyball for the leopards next season can email Coach Davidson at [Sheliad@sampson.k12.nc.us](mailto:Sheliad@sampson.k12.nc.us).

In closing Coach Davidson said that she wanted to

thank the fans and the families of the team. "Thanks, and go Leopards, once a Leopard always a Leopard."

The Lakewood Leopard volleyball team consists of: Regean Holmes (Sr- L, DS), Rylie Hairr (Jr- RS, DS, S), Adara Johnson (So- RS, MH), Sara Teasdale (C) (Jr- MH), Harley Matthews (Jr- RS, DS), Shaneria Rich (Sr- MH), Gracie Godbold (Sr- OH, MH), Hannah Register (So- DS, L), Taiyah Owens (Jr- RS, MH), Danica Carter (Fr- DS, OH, RS), Carly Joas (Jr- S), Sariyah Doss (So- RS, S), Madelyn Ammons (C) (Sr- OH). Sheila Davidson (Head Coach)

### Game Schedule:

11-17 East Duplin (Loss 3-2)  
 11-19 North Duplin (Win 3-0)  
 11-23 Neuse Charter (Win 3-2)  
 11-24 Union (Win 3-0)  
 12-3 Rosewood (Win 3-0)  
 12-8 Princeton (Loss 3-0)  
 12-9 Union (Win 3-0)  
 12-17 North Duplin (Win 3-0)  
 12-18 Neuse Charter (Loss 3-1)  
 12-21 Hobbton (Win 3-0)  
 12-29 Union (Win 3-0)  
 12-30 Hobbton (Win 3-0)  
 1-4 Rosewood (Win 3-0)  
 1-6 Princeton (Loss 3-0)  
 1-7 Princeton (Loss 3-0)  
 1-12 East Columbus (Win 3-0)  
 1-14 Falls Lake Academy (Loss 3-0)



Lakewood High School Varsity Volleyball Team (photo courtesy Carlton Hubbard Photography)

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# Viking Spotlight: Naomi Sandoval



Written by Olivia Gillespie – Foundation Intern, Spring 2021

*Naomi Sandoval did not know much about the Career College Promise program, but she is starting to learn about the program through her new position at Sampson Community College.*

Naomi Sandoval decided to join the Career and College Promise (CCP) program at Sampson Community College (SCC) as a Career Coach because of her passion to help students further their education. Sandoval has been in this position since December of last year and is currently the full-time Career Coach for Union High School. She wants the high school students that she works with each day to see potential in themselves and their post-high school plans.

Sandoval is the second oldest of six, and is originally from New Jersey. Her mother is Colombian, and her father is Guatemalan. After graduating from Clinton High School in 2015, she attended the University of North Carolina at Pembroke, where she received a bachelor's degree in Mass Communication. Sandoval graduated in May 2019.

Raven Chavez, Union High School's Guidance Counselor, works closely with Sandoval and says her relatability and dedication has quickly made her an asset to the team at Union High School.

"Naomi has been a wonderful asset to our Spartan community. When I first got to know Naomi, it was as if I had known her my entire life. She is someone that is easy to talk to and extremely relatable. These are the traits that stand out to me in leaders like Naomi. Working with high school students who may have never had experience with college or college advising, having someone like Naomi in our guidance department, attributes to our student's success greatly. She has modeled true hard work and dedication by coming to work every day with a positive attitude, ready to assist our UHS CCP students with whatever needs or concerns they may have. We are very thankful that she has joined our Union family and cannot wait to see how the CCP program will be impacted because of her," Chavez stated.

Sandoval says she chose to join the CCP program as a Career Coach because she believes the position will allow her to help high school students think beyond high

# Davis Crowned Miss Crusader 2021



On Friday, January 29th Harrells Christian Academy crowned Victoria Davis the new Miss Crusader for 2021. This title is reserved for one member of the graduating class each year and is voted upon by fellow classmates. Miss Crusader should be a spirited campaigner and loyal supporter of HCA. Victoria is the daughter of Sam and Julie Davis of Rose Hill and has been at HCA since 1st grade. She attends Mt. Zion Baptist Church and is a member of the Beta Club and the Future Farmers of America. Victoria plans to attend college in the fall.

Victoria is pictured with HCA Homecoming Queen Ann Holland Bell of Kenansville.

school. She wants high school students to see how they can further their educations both while in high school and after graduation.

Sandoval shared why she believes that SCC is a great option, "I feel as if it is important for students to consider attending Sampson Community College because it can help a student knock off a couple of semesters of classes that they have to do at a four-year college. I feel like it also can save money."

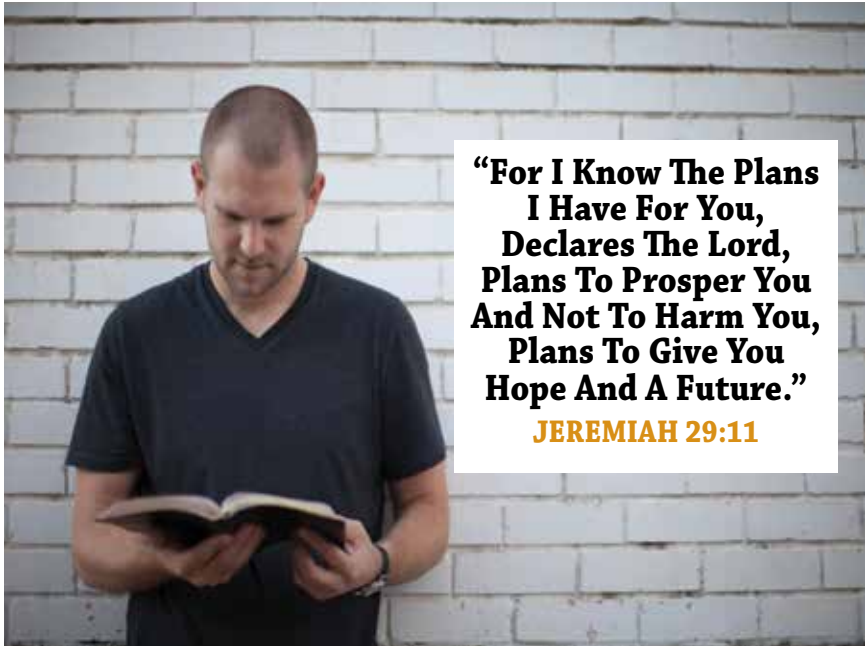
Since starting her new position at SCC, Sandoval has enjoyed her experience. As a Career Coach, Sandoval says she learns something new each day. These new lessons and experiences will follow her as she continues in this role.

"Naomi is a nice addition to our program. I look forward to seeing all the new and creative ideas she brings to the job of Career Coach. I am also excited to see how our numbers at Union will change with her being at the school fulltime. ", Perry Gillespie, Director of Career and College Promise shared.

Sandoval has many goals for herself as Career Coach for the CCP program. She wants to learn more about the CCP program and the opportunities that it can provide for students. Sandoval also wants to ensure that she remains engaged with her students at Union High School by finding resources that help them with their educations and futures.

Naomi Sandoval wants to leave a lasting impact on students and the community as a Career Coach at Sampson Community College. Her brief time in the position has already proven the impact she will have on the Career and College Promise program.

## OPEN DOOR MINISTRY



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JEREMIAH 29:11

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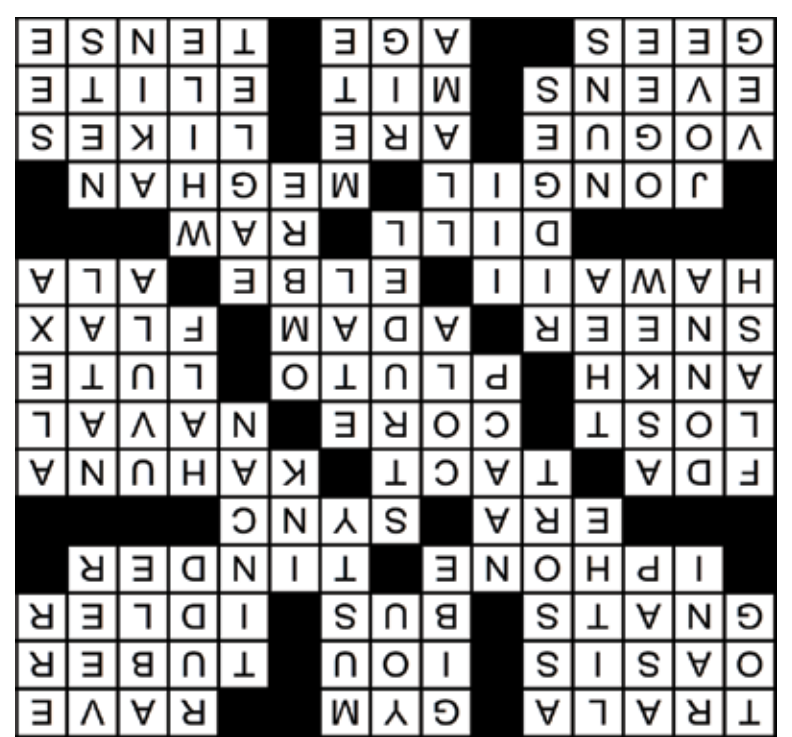
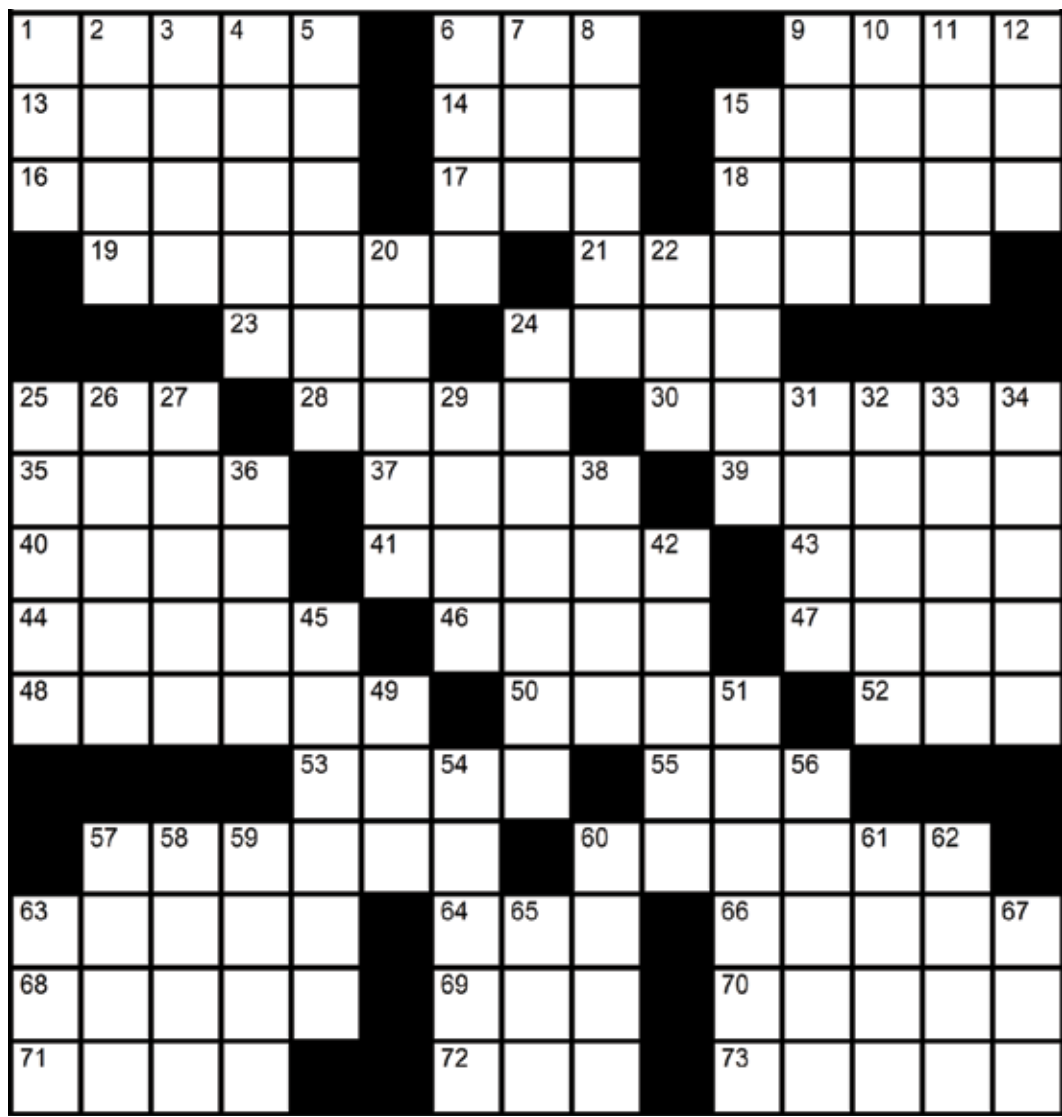
PUZZLES

# Crossword Puzzle

**THEME: TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

- ACROSS**
- "An American in Paris" song "\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_-la"
  - Fitness venue
  - Five-star review
  - Desert wanderer's hope
  - Debtor's letters
  - Sweet potato, e.g.
  - Annoying tiny biters
  - Greyhound, e.g.
  - Lazybones
  - \*It runs on iOS
  - \*Swipe right, swipe left app
  - \*21st century of Common \_\_\_\_
  - \*Update an iPod
  - Public health org.
  - Diplomat's forte
  - V.I.P. in Hawaii
  - \*Hit TV show about plane crash survivors
  - Apple leftover
  - The N of U.S.N.A.
  - Egyptian hieroglyph for "life"
  - \*Demoted planet
  - Mandolin's cousin
  - Curl one's lip
  - Sandler or Arkin
  - Seedy source of Omega-3s
  - \*Kilauea Volcano location
  - River in Bohemia
  - In the manner of, French
  - Popular pickling herb
  - Sashimi-style
  - \*Not Jong-un
  - \*Duchess of Sussex
  - Wintour's favorite publication?
  - Form of "to be"
  - \*Friends' approvals
  - Not odds
  - Cambridge university
  - High society
  - "Bee \_\_\_\_"
  - Bartender's concern
  - Past or present

- DOWN**
- Clothe
  - Raja's wife
  - "Hurry!" acronym
  - Like a ballerina
  - Hang out with
  - Wisecrack
  - \*\_\_\_\_Tube
  - Moldy-smelling
  - "Ant-Man" leading actor
  - Having the know-how
  - Swerve
  - Go wrong
  - Diced tomatoes packaging
  - African American civil rights org.
  - Octopus' defense
  - Layered pastry of European descent
  - \*Like modern mob
  - Fashion designer Karan
  - Off kilter
  - Float soda
  - 50 percent
  - Palate lobe
  - Birth-related
  - \*Inanimate conversation partner
  - Short for Dorothea
  - Et alibi
  - Spaniard without "h"
  - Ruffles has them
  - Roman three
  - Aerie baby
  - South American domesticated animal
  - "\_\_\_\_ You Were Sleeping"
  - "By \_\_\_\_\_, I think she's got it!"
  - S-shaped molding
  - Women in habits
  - Boundary line
  - Related
  - \*This team moved to Brooklyn in 2012
  - Relax, with "out"
  - \*Deepwater Horizon, e.g.
  - Get the picture

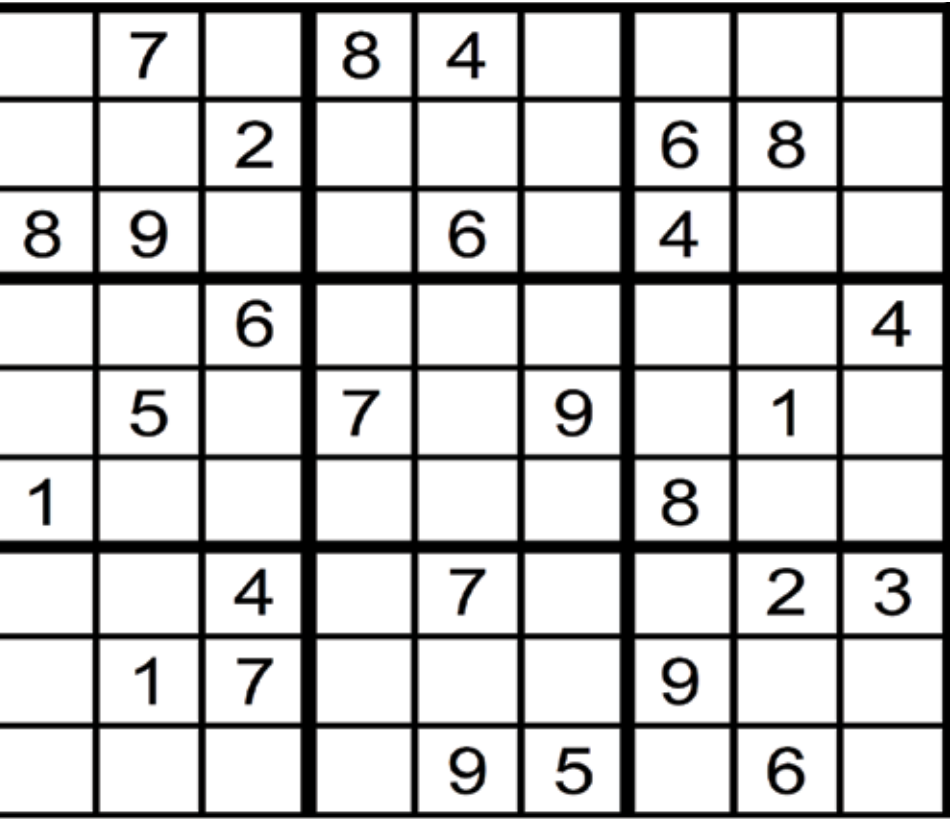


PUZZLE SOLUTION

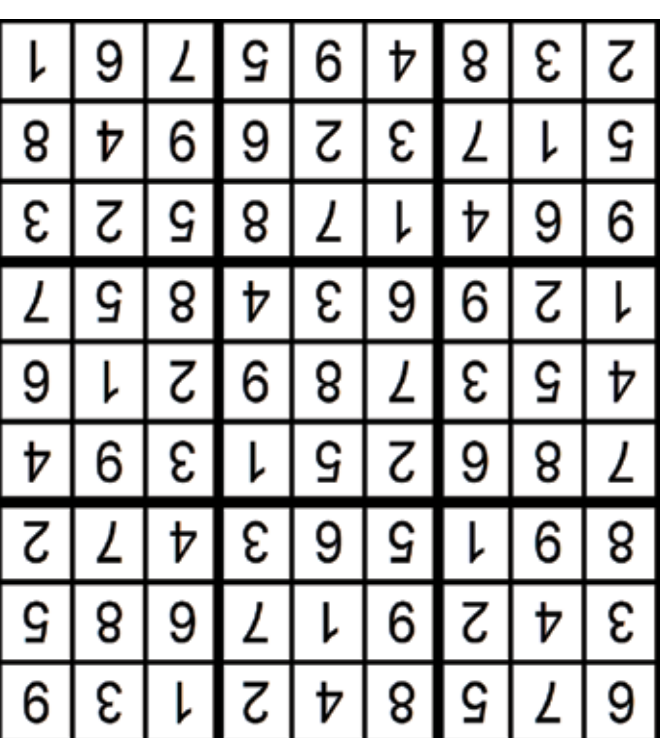
# SUDOKU

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**Here's How It Works:** Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!



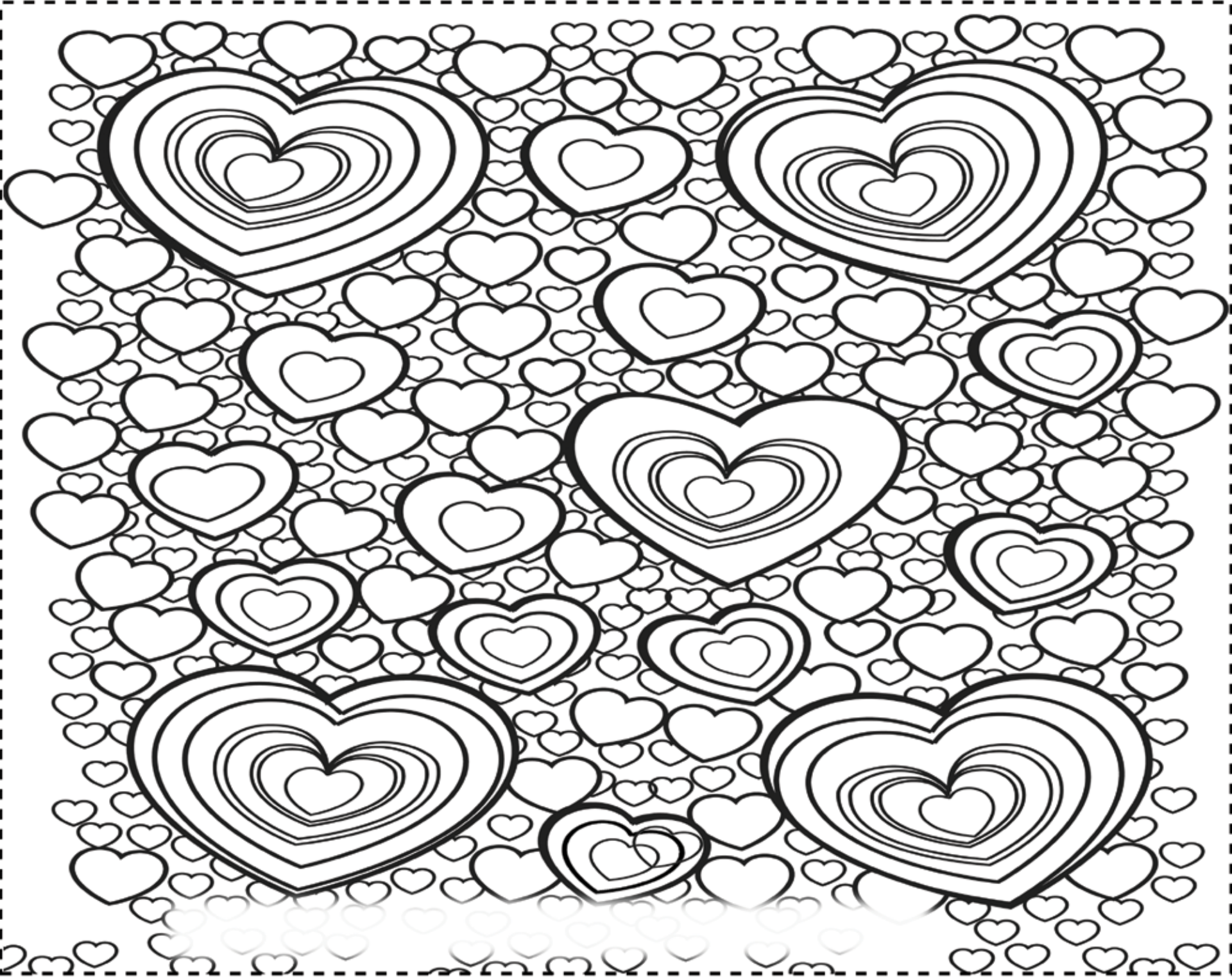
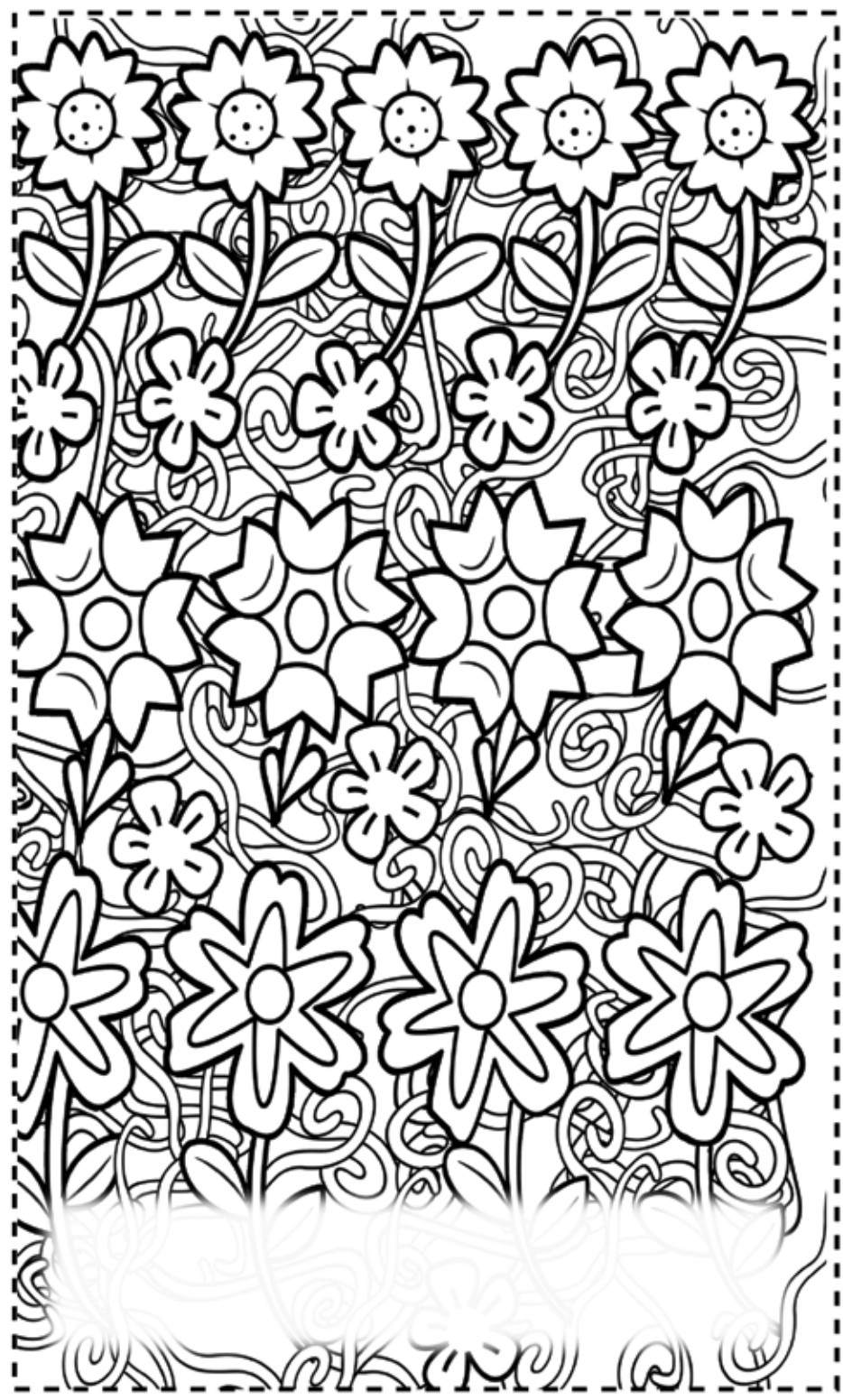
## Peter's Mother-in-law and Many Others Healed (Matthew 8:14-17)



- |         |                 |           |
|---------|-----------------|-----------|
| ARRIVED | BROUGHT         | CAST      |
| COMMAND | DEMON-POSSESSED | EVENING   |
| EVIL    | FEVER           | FULFILLED |
| HAND    | HEALED          | HIGH      |
| HOUSE   | ISAIAH          | JESUS     |
| LEFT    | LORD            | MANY      |
| MEAL    | MOTHER-IN-LAW   | PEOPLE    |
| PETER'S | PREPARED        | PROPHET   |
| REMOVED | SAID            | SICK      |
| SIMPLE  | SPIRITS         | THEN      |
| TOOK    | TOUCHED         | WHEN      |

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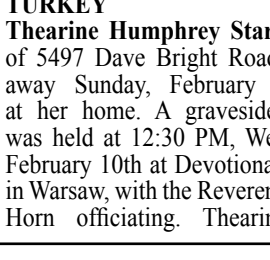
# OBITUARIES



needed it. She loved to bake and make candies and loved her family more than anything, especially her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She is survived by her daughter, Michelle G. Hunter and husband, Jeff of Clinton; her son, Chris Grady and fiancé, Lori, of Roseboro; seven grandchildren: Britni Hunter, Blake Hunter, Shandi Grady, Taylor Grady, Maxx Grady, Chris Grady and Kelsi Grady; five great-grandchildren: Carlie, Reed, Leighanna, Mackenzie and Brooklyn; her Aunt, Frankie Sykes of Goldsboro; sister-in-law, Linda Massey of Turkey; several nieces and nephews and close friends: Alan and Patty Conner of Clinton. In addition to her parents and husband, Glynn; she was preceded in death by her son, Scott Grady and all her brothers: Tommy, Bobby, David and Ed Hall. Visitation will be held following the service on Saturday at the cemetery; and other times at her home. The family would like to extend their sincere appreciation to the entire staff of 3HC and Kitty Askins for their outstanding care and kindness shown to Mrs. Rose during her illness. Condolences may be sent by visiting [www.royalhallfuneralhome.com](http://www.royalhallfuneralhome.com). Royal-Hall is honored to serve the Grady Family.



**WHITE LAKE**  
**Mr. Gary Edward Smoak, Sr.**, 78, of 151 Amethyst Circle, White Lake, formerly of Roseboro, passed away Saturday, February 06, 2021, at UNC Medical Center Chapel Hill. Mr. Smoak was born in Cumberland Co., the son of the late Donnie Hugh Smoak and Mamie Elizabeth Edwards Smoak. Gary was well-loved in the community, a member of the graduating Class of 1961 Clement High School, and a faithful Lakewood Country Club member for more than 50 years before moving to White Lake, NC. He retired in 2012 after 30 plus years with Fluor Daniels Construction "DuPont." He was a past Master of Coharie Lodge # 379 A.F. & A.M., a member of the Sampson County Shrine Club, where he was one of the Sudan Roadsters founding members and past president. Gary loved the outdoors, hunting and fishing and was an avid golfer throughout the years. He was a member of the Lake Church at White Lake and loved his new lake friends and neighbors. A graveside service was held at 2:00 P.M. Wednesday, February 10, 2021, at the Hardy-Autry Cemetery, 3907 Hayes Mill Rd., Godwin, NC, by the Reverend Cameron McGill and Reverend Willie C. Alford officiating. Mr. Smoak is survived by his wife of 55 years Judy Thomas Smoak, two sons Gary E. Smoak Jr, and wife Tammy of Newport News, Va, and Phillip D. Smoak and wife Michelle of Garland, NC, one sister Mary Lou E. Hogan and husband Bill of Titusville, Fl, two grandchildren, Ty W. Smoak of Garland, and Morgan D. Smoak of Newport News Va. There was a walk-through visitation on Tuesday, February 09, 2021, from 1:00 P.M.-8:00 P.M. at Carter Funeral Home in Garland for friends to come by and pay their respects to Mr. Smoak. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Coharie Lodge #379 A.F. & A.M. 976 Autryville Rd., Salemburg, NC 28385 or the Lake Church 1930 White Lake Dr., White Lake, NC 28337. Please follow all COVID guidelines at all times. The live-stream will be available AT THE SERVICE TIME. <https://www.facebook.com/Carter-Funeral-Home>. Services provided by Carter Funeral Home, Garland. [www.carterfh.com](http://www.carterfh.com).



**TURKEY**  
**Thearine Humphrey Starling, 90**, of 5497 Dave Bright Road, passed away Sunday, February 7, 2021 at her home. A graveside service was held at 12:30 PM, Wednesday, February 10th at Devotional Garden in Warsaw, with the Reverend Jimmy Horn officiating. Thearine, born

February 14, 1930 in Onslow County, was the daughter of the late Marcellus Humphrey and Letha Humphrey. In addition to her parents she was preceded in death by her husband, Uda M. Starling, and son Timothy Starling. She was a homemaker and attended the House of Prayer Ministries. Survivors include: sons, Ray Starling, James Starling (Bonnie), and Kenneth Starling (Juanita); nine grandchildren; twelve great-grandchildren; fourteen great-great grandchildren; brothers, Marshal Ward Humphrey (Lauretta), Doulian Humphrey (Letha Mae), and Morris Lee Humphrey (Edith). Online condolences may be sent to the family at [www.crumpler-honeycutt.com](http://www.crumpler-honeycutt.com).

**WARSAW**  
**Mr. Harry Lee "Doc" Straughan, 91** of 216 Walnut St. passed away Friday, February 5, 2021 at Warsaw Health and Rehabilitation Center. Funeral service was held Wednesday, February 10, at 10 AM at Warsaw United Methodist Church with Rev. Vito Bisogno officiating. Burial followed at Devotional Gardens of Warsaw. Born in 1929 in Sampson County, Doc was the son of the late Vander and Beattie Quinn Straughan and the widower of Mary Winders Straughan. Doc was a member of Warsaw United Methodist Church and was an Underground Lineman for Black Industries until his retirement. Doc loved good food, especially eating breakfast at Bland's Restaurant. He was a character, with a great personality and always made people around him smile. When you met him, you had a friend for life. Doc is survived by his sister, Betty S. Cain of Roseboro; brother: Perry James Straughan of Richlands and many neices and nephews. In addition to his parents and wife Doc was preceded in death by three sisters: Hattie S. Lamb, Louise S. Privette and Elizabeth S. Bullington; seven brothers: Henry Thomas Straughan, Howard Straughan, Ollie F. Straughn, William R. Straughn, Fred Straughn, Cliff Straughn and Lewis Straughan. The family received friends prior to the service, beginning at 9:00 am at the church. Condolences may be sent by visiting [www.royalhallfuneralhome.com](http://www.royalhallfuneralhome.com). Royal-Hall is honored to serve the Straughan family.



**CLINTON**  
**Angela Renee Tyndall Vaught, 40**, of 74 Lisa Lane, Clinton, NC passed away on Saturday, February 6, 2021, at her home. Born in Wayne County to Anna Marie Tyndall on August 8, 1980, Angela worked with Food Lion Foods. She is preceded in death by grandmother: Louise Tyndall and aunt: Sharon Cox. A Memorial Service was held at 2:00 pm on Thursday, February 11, 2021 at Hope Valley Hawkins Funeral Service, 1246 Hobbton Hwy. Clinton, NC with Pastor Larry Barnhill officiating. Angela leaves to cherish her memories, sons: Robert Lynn Vaught Jr., Theodore James Vaught, daughter: Leona Louise Marie Vaught, mother: Marie Melvin, all of the home. She also leaves behind an aunt: Lisa Herring of Mt. Olive, and an uncle: James Faucett of Kenner.



**CLINTON**  
**Mrs. Virginia Florence Cannady Boyette, 90**, passed away Thursday, February 4, 2021 at Kitty Askins Hospice Center in Goldsboro. A Graveside Service will be held Saturday, February 6, 2021 at 3 PM in the Clinton Cemetery with Rev. Michael Shook officiating. Born on December 22, 1930 in Sampson County, Virginia was the daughter of the late Vernie and Nellie Stewart Cannady and the widow of the late Herman Boyette. She was a member of Grove Park Baptist Church. She worked in the childcare field for thirty-five years before retiring in 2010. She loved working with all the children



she came in contact with through the years and truly made a difference in their lives. The children, and their parents, loved "Mrs. Virginia" for her kind, gentle nature, and for the way she cared for each child. Virginia loved her family and friends and cherished the time they shared together. She will be greatly missed by all who knew her. Virginia is survived by her son, Tommy Boyette and wife, Libby of Clinton; two daughters: Kay Boyette Royal and husband, Carroll of Clinton; Lori Boyette Lewis and husband, Ardell of Wilmington; four grandchildren: Keith Royal (LeCarla), Brian Royal (Donna), Carley Lewis and Melinda McCullen; three great-grandchildren: Meghan, Zannah and Reid; one great great-grandson: Sawyer Royal; one step-granddaughter, Carley Ward (Hunter); two step great-grandsons: Matthew and Ryan. She is also survived by two sisters: Jean Litchfield and companion, Ronnie Long of Wilmington, Alice Cannady Lockerman of Clinton; and several nieces and nephews. In addition to her parents and husband, she was preceded in death by her brother-in-law, Ted B. Lockerman. The family will receive friends following the graveside service at the cemetery. Please practice social distancing and wear a mask. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made in Virginia's memory to the American Cancer Society by mailing to the local office: 1901 Brunswick Ave., Suite 100, Charlotte, NC 28207; online by visiting [www.donate3.cancer.org](http://www.donate3.cancer.org); or to Grove Park Baptist Church, 609 Northeast Blvd., Clinton, NC 28328. The family wishes to express their gratitude for all acts of kindness shown to them. Your love, prayers and concern has meant so much to the family at this time of great loss and is greatly appreciated. Condolences may be sent to the family by visiting Mrs. Boyette's obituary page online at [www.royalhallfuneralhome.com](http://www.royalhallfuneralhome.com). Royal-Hall is honored to serve the Boyette family.



**CLINTON**  
**Edna Frances Wiggins, 90**, of 5435 Keener Road, passed away Sunday, February 7, 2021 at UNC Health Care in Chapel Hill. A graveside service was held at 2 PM, Friday, February 12th at Keener United Methodist Church with Rev. Leanne Calhoun officiating. A walk-through viewing was held from 1 PM - 5 PM, Thursday, February 11th at Crumpler-Honeycutt Funeral Home. Edna, born May 23, 1930 in Sampson County, was the daughter of the late Clarence Jordan and Sula Westbrook Jordan. She was a member of Keener United Church. She was a cosmetologist and owned her own beauty shop. In addition to her parents she was preceded in death by her husband Frank Wiggins, and sisters Maude Sutton, Margie Jackson and Marie Merritt. Survivors include; son, Stephen Wiggins, Jr. (Shelley) of Clinton; daughter, Katherine Gardner of Bellevue, WA; sisters, Annette Price and Jean Honeycutt; brothers, Clarence Ray Jordan and Thomas Jordan; grandchildren, Megan Gardner, Benjamin Gardner, Stephen Wiggins, III and Lauren Rowell; and great-grandchild, Amiah Rowell. Online condolences may be sent to the family at [www.crumpler-honeycutt.com](http://www.crumpler-honeycutt.com). In lieu of flowers memorials may be made to Keener United Methodist Church, 6700 Keener Road, Clinton, NC 28328.

**ELIZABETHTOWN**  
**Ms. Debbie Faircloth Jones, 58**, of 830 Willard Tatum Road, Elizabethtown, formerly of Roseboro passed away Thursday, February 04, 2021 at Cape Fear Valley Medical Center in Fayetteville. Debbie was born December 16, 1962 in Sampson County to the late Frank and Carolyn Faircloth. She is preceded in death by one brother: Frank Faircloth. A graveside service was held at 2:00 PM on Monday, February 08, 2021 at Peniel Pentecostal Holiness Church Cemetery, 3645 Dunn Road, Roseboro. A viewing was held prior to the service at Carter Funeral Home in Garland from 9:00 AM-(Noon) 12:00 PM. Debbie leaves to cherish her memory her daughter: Danielle J. Smith and husband Tony of Garland, one grandson: Jason Ray Smith and her boyfriend: Nelson Dail of Elizabethtown.

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# NASCAR THIS WEEK

## SPEED FREAKS

**Which non-winner gets his first career victory in 2021?**

**KEN'S CALL:** Christopher Bell, Ross Chastain and Bubba Wallace are all worthy guesses, but Mr. Hunch is banking on Chase Briscoe in the No. 14, and it won't be a long wait.  
**DEAN'S DIRT:** My guess is it won't take long for Bubba to take a liking to that new, Gibbs-inspired horsepower.

**Who has the best chance of sweeping at the Daytona 500 and the following week's Daytona Road Course?**

**KEN'S CALL:** I'm pretty sure my young pal will go with Chase Elliott, and that's not a bad pick. But there's no monetary gain in betting the favorite, so I'll go with Ryan Blaney.  
**DEAN'S DIRT:** Sound the siren!

## ZACH'S DAYTONA 500 PICKS

**Winner:** Ryan Blaney  
**Rest of top 5:** Brad Keselowski, Denny Hamlin, Bubba Wallace, Aric Almirola  
**First one out:** Austin Dillon  
**Dark horse:** Matt DiBenedetto  
**Don't be surprised if ...:** There are about 12 cars left at the end.

## BY THE NUMBERS

- 3** Consecutive Daytona 500 wins Denny Hamlin is going for.
- 10** Number of races at Daytona over the next two weeks.
- 35** Laps in Tuesday's Busch Clash.
- 62** Age of the 500's oldest driver — Derrike Cope.
- 30,000** Expected grandstand attendance at the Daytona 500

## DAYTONA MOTOR MOUTHS

Zach Dean and Ken Willis cover NASCAR and other forms of motorsports for the Daytona Beach News-Journal. Reach them at zach.dean@news-jrnl.com and ken.willis@news-jrnl.com.



## THROUGH THE GEARS



It's time to start engines on the NASCAR season. Ready or not, here they come! ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTO

# SPOILER ALERT!

## Predicting the 2021 NASCAR season

**Zach Dean**

Daytona Beach News-Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK

The NFL's Super Bowl is in the rear-view, but NASCAR's is right up the road.

The shortest offseason in sports comes to an end Tuesday, with the 43rd Busch Clash at Daytona set to rev up NASCAR's 2021 season.

The 35-lap Clash on Daytona's Road Course will kick off two weeks of racing at the Speedway, including the Daytona 500 on Sunday, and another race on Daytona's road circuit Feb. 21.

So, with the season set to come to life this week, let's offer up some spoiler alerts.

It's prediction time!

### First gear

Let's start off with the regular season. Last year, Kevin Harvick rolled to a regular season championship, winning seven races and clinching those 15 extra playoff points a week before the regular season even ended.

This year, don't be surprised if Chase Elliott has that breakthrough regular season.

Thanks to NASCAR's revamped schedule, six of the races during the regular season will be on a road course. Elliott has already established himself as the best road racer in the series right now, so don't be surprised if he wins at least three of those.

Add in a few other wins — Martinsville, Bristol and Talladega come to mind — and your 2020 defending champ could be your 2021 regular season champ.

### Second gear

Now, to the playoffs. Of the 16 drivers who qualify, let's get the easy ones out of the way: Elliott, Harvick, Kyle Busch, Denny Hamlin, Martin

Truex Jr., Joey Logano, Brad Keselowski and Ryan Blaney will all make the playoffs. There, I said it!

Now, for the other eight. Let's go with ...

Alex Bowman, Kyle Larson and William Byron from Hendrick. Kurt Busch and Aric Almirola from Stewart-Haas. Matt DiBenedetto in that pretty No. 21 Wood Brothers Ford. Austin Dillon represents Richard Childress Racing. And, for the one newcomer to the 2021 playoff field, let's go with Bubba Wallace and the 23XI team — his new team's co-owner knows a thing or two about playoffs.

### Third gear

The playoffs begin in Darlington and end in Phoenix, just like last year.

Up until now, we've been pretty boring with these picks. So, let's go nuts (kinda).

The drivers who advance to the third round include: Elliott, Larson, Harvick, Kyle Busch, Truex Jr., Blaney, DiBenedetto, and Bubba.

That's right. No Logano or Keselowski, and no Hamlin. Something tells me Blaney is in for a big year, and don't sleep on DiBenedetto. This is his final year in the No. 21 car, so he'll be racing for his future.

### Fourth gear

Time to bring this season home!

The Championship Four this season will include: Elliott, Harvick, Blaney and Busch. So you get the defending champion, two previous champions, and a championship rookie in Blaney. I'll take those storylines for a final race.

In the end, though, it's the old guy who prevails. Much like Tom Brady did on Sunday, Kevin Harvick proves he's not done yet, and wins his second NASCAR Cup championship.

Alright, enough of the hypotheticals. Let's drop that green flag for real. Welcome to the 2021 season!

## Q&A

**What will we learn over the next nine months?**

A year ago, we had no idea of what we didn't know and how it would nearly derail sports seasons all around. Here's hoping this year's unknowns arrive in a better mood. Call it an educated hunch, but for starters I think we're going to see a breakout star jump into the front-pack mix. There are many accomplished young racers in good equipment this year; at least one will win multiple races.

**What about the ownership monopoly?**

It's been a while since a new (or nearly new) race team broke into NASCAR's ownership hierarchy. You get more turnover in the College of Cardinals. Whether it's Trackhouse, 23XI or that bustling garage at Rick Ware Racing, it's time for some organization to pull its team bus into the fast lane and run with the speedy company.

— Ken Willis

## CUP STANDINGS

**Final 2020 standings:**

1. Chase Elliott	5,040
2. Brad Keselowski	5,035
3. Joey Logano	5,034
4. Denny Hamlin	5,033
5. Kevin Harvick	2,410
6. Alex Bowman	2,371
7. Martin Truex Jr.	2,341
8. Kyle Busch	2,341
9. Ryan Blaney	2,336
10. Kurt Busch	2,287
11. Austin Dillon	2,277
12. Clint Bowyer	2,254
13. Matt DiBenedetto	2,249
14. William Byron	2,247
15. Aric Almirola	2,235
16. Cole Custer	2,202
17. Erik Jones	873
18. Jimmie Johnson	836
19. Tyler Reddick	780
20. Christopher Bell	678

## WHAT'S ON TAP

### Speedweek at Daytona

**Tuesday:** Busch Clash on the Daytona Road Course (Fox Sports 1, 7 p.m.)  
**Wednesday:** Daytona 500 pole qualifying (FS1, 7 p.m.)  
**Thursday:** "Duel" Daytona 500 qualifying races, 150 miles each (FS1, 7 p.m.)  
**Friday:** Truck Series season opener (FS1, 7:30)  
**Saturday:** Xfinity Series season opener (FS1, 5 p.m.)  
**Saturday:** ARCA Series season opener (FS1, 1:30)  
**Sunday:** 63rd Daytona 500 (Fox, 2:30)  
**Feb. 21:** Daytona Road Course race (Fox, 3 p.m.)

## KEN WILLIS' PRESEASON TOP 10 NASCAR DRIVER RANKINGS

<b>CHASE ELLIOTT</b> You must respect the champ	<b>KEVIN HARVICK</b> ... And a 9-race winner	<b>KYLE BUSCH</b> Bounce-back expected	<b>JOEY LOGANO</b> Perennial contender	<b>DENNY HAMLIN</b> Will ownership duties distract?	<b>KYLE LARSON</b> Another bounce-back guy	<b>RYAN BLANEY</b> Will breakout season ever arrive?	<b>BRAD KESELOWSKI</b> Drafting ace but just one Daytona win	<b>ALEX BOWMAN</b> Inherits the 48 jersey number	<b>CHRISTOPHER BELL</b> Now in No. 20, big things expected

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