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The North Carolina Good Better Best Academy wins eighth grade tournament.

Barbershop Academy: Mentoring in the barber's chair

By Anna Mudd

UNC MEDIA HUB

DURHAM – The sound of the clippers reverberated in the air — buzzing along as part of the soundtrack of Imperial Barbershop. As he shaved, snipped and cut, owner Derick Cagle listened to the chatter in the background. It was a back-to-school event five years ago, but he clearly remembers the dialogue he heard that day.

A group of teenagers sat in the metal chairs lining the wall by the front door. They were waiting for their turn in Cagle's swiveling chair.

"Oh, you ain't got no girls," one quipped.

"Why I need girls?" the other retorted "See that's your problem: you chasin' the girls and that's why you got a baby on the way."

"So? You think you goin' to college because you're an athlete, but you ain't even that good," the first shot back.

"Well at least I ain't out there sellin' bro, you here hurting other people's families just to help your own" the other replied.

Please see **ACADEMY/2A**

Another variant on the loose

By Jamey Keaten, Raf Casert and Mari Yamaguchi

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GENEVA — The World Health Organization warned Monday that the global risk from the omicron variant is "very high" based on the early evidence, saying the mutated coronavirus could lead to surges with "severe consequences."

The assessment from the U.N. health agency, contained in a technical paper issued to member states, amounted to WHO's strongest, most explicit warning yet about the new version that was first identified days ago by researchers in South Africa. It came as a widening circle of countries around the world reported cases of the variant and moved to slam their doors in an act-now-ask-questions-later approach while scientists race to figure out just how dangerous the mutant version might be.

Japan announced it is barring entry to all foreign visitors, joining Israel in doing so. Morocco banned all incoming flights. Other countries, including the U.S. and members of the European Union, have moved to prohibit travelers arriving from southern Africa.

WHO said there are "considerable uncertainties" about the omicron variant. But it said preliminary evidence raises the possibility that the variant has mutations that could help it both evade an immune-system response and boost its ability to spread from one person to another.

"Depending on these characteristics, there could be future surges of COVID-19, which could have severe consequences, depending on a number of factors, including where surges may take place," it added. "The overall global risk ... is assessed as very high."

The WHO stressed that while scientists are hunting evidence to better understand this variant, countries should accelerate vaccinations as quickly as possible. While no deaths linked to omicron have been reported so far, little is known for certain about the variant, including whether it is more contagious, more likely to cause serious illness or more able to evade vaccines. Last week, a WHO advisory panel said it might be more likely to reinfect people who have already had a bout with COVID-19.

Scientists have long warned that the virus will keep finding new ways to

Plase see **VARIANT/2A**

All in the Family

COURTESY

Mother-son duo Nnenna and Pierce Freelon were both nominated for Grammy Awards in the categories of Children's Music and Jazz Vocal, respectively. Other Durham native nominees include 9th Wonder (with Terrace Martin, Robert Glasper and Kamasi Washington) for Best Progressive R&B Album, and Sylvan Esso for Best Dance/Electronic Music Album.

COURTESY

Quail Ridge Apartments in Midtown Raleigh.

Rezoning application raises concerns among Raleigh tenants

By Kylie Marsh

CORRESPONDENT

RALEIGH – Quail Ridge Apartment tenants expressed concern surrounding an application for rezoning the property at a virtual Q&A session hosted by Morningstar Law Group.

Morningstar is a North Carolina-based law firm offering a variety of legal services in business, intellectual property, litigation, and real estate and land use.

Attorney Molly Stuart said the property owners are simply planning for the long term. "This property has been serving residents for a very long time. The buildings were constructed in 1960 and 1970," Stuart said at Tuesday's meeting. "…What's happening is they're getting farther along in their useful life."

Stuart said the application for rezoning proposes to change the current property from a mixed-use residential, which is restricted to three stories, to a mixed-use office property, which allows five stories. At the time the property was built, Raleigh's population was around 123,000. Today, it has almost quadrupled, at 484,000. The population rise and new developments has raised the need for more affordable housing.

Stuart promised that "there is not a current plan to redevelop these properties."

One attendee asked how many units would be affected. Kellie Falk of Drucker & Falk Real Estate said there are 246 apartment homes on the block, which range in price from $900 a month to around $1450.

Raleigh Senior City Planner Jason Hardin said the city is very aware of the shortage of affordable housing. "I can say any time there's an opportunity to create more units with a dedicated subsidized source of funding, that's something that the city will pursue," he said. Last year, Raleigh's Affordable Housing Referendum was approved with an historic 72% affirmative vote. Hardin said this bond allows the city

Please see **RALEIGH/2A**

OPINION

Arbery verdict gives relief only

By Jay Bookman

GEORGIA RECORDER

There's no pleasure to be taken from the guilty verdicts returned last week by a Glynn County jury in the murder of Ahmaud Arbery; there is only relief and thanksgiving that in the end justice could be done, at least in a case in which the evidence was so well-documented and seemingly obvious. Given that they reached their weighty verdicts in just a matter of hours, the jury members – 11 white Georgians, one Black Georgian – must have thought it was obvious as well.

However, it's crucially important to remember that this just and necessary resolution almost didn't happen, that if justice was served in the end, it came almost accidentally. For 74 days after Arbery's murder in February of 2020, no charges had been filed; no arrests were made, no presentment was made to a grand jury. Even though law enforcement possessed the now-famous video as well as much of the testimony that the jury found so convincing, two different district attorneys looked at the case and basically determined that Arbery deserved his fate, that if anything Travis McMichael, Greg McMichael and William "Roddie" Bryan should be lauded rather than prosecuted.

The local district attorney, Jackie Johnson, knew McMichael from his work as an investigator for her office. She allegedly forbid police officers from making an arrest, and then arranged for the case to be transferred to the neighboring Waycross Judicial District, where George Barnhill worked as district attorney. As she was aware, she was referring the case to someone who had already made known that he too had no desire to pursue the case.

According to a memo written by Barnhill at the time, after what he called an "extensive" review, the actions by the McMichaels and Bryan had been "perfectly legal." It was Arbery "who attacks Travis McMichael" in the video, it was Arbery "who initiated the fight," it was Arbery's "apparent aggressive nature" that drove him "to attack an armed man."

"Given the fact that Arbery initiated the fight, at the moment Arbery grabbed the shotgun, under Georgia law, (Travis) McMichael was allowed to use deadly force to defend himself," Barnhill advised the Glynn County Police Department.

Johnson was defeated for

Please see **ARBERY/2A**

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STEPHEN B. MORTON/AP

Ahmaud Arbery's mother, Wanda Cooper-Jones, is hugged by a supporter after the jury verdict.

Guilty verdicts in Arbery killing give no pleasure, only relief

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reelection in November of 2020; two months ago, she was arrested and charged with interfering with a police officer in the case and with violating her oath of office. Barnhill remains in office.

I've called this a modern-day lynching, an evocative phrase that should not be employed lightly. However, it meets the two-part test: One, it was a brutal act of vigilante violence; two, the local political elite stepped in afterward to protect the perpetrators.

Only when the video was leaked to the public and reached an audience outside the local corridors of power was the cover-up thwarted.

And, if a case like this, with its obvious evidence of criminality, could come so close to being covered up, think about how many other such cases had been handled over the years, not just in the Waycross and Brunswick districts but all across Georgia, all across the country.

Think about the effect that those cases, the cultural memories of those cases, have had on the mindsets and power relationships in these communities. The McMichaels were not unusual in thinking that they had the right to treat Arbery as they did, that they had the power to tell this Black man what to do and that he had the obligation to obey. The attitudes and the arrogance that they demonstrated that day in the Satilla Shores neighborhood did not come from nowhere, it came from everywhere.

Over their lifetimes, they had been taught that it was their right to act in that fashion, that it was their duty to enforce the unwritten code, that people like themselves had power while others did not, and that they would be protected for defending that system.

They were right.

Until they finally weren't.

Jay Bookman is a regular contributor to the Georgia Recorder, which first published this essay.

LUCAS PRUITT

Derick Cagle cuts a client's hair at Gentlemen Quarters Barbershop Academy.

Barbershop Academy mentors in the barber's chair

Continued from page 1A

On the other side of the room, some of the other guys were joking around talking about how tough they were, boasting of getting in fights and beating people up. Cagle felt like he was watching a playground Double Dutch contest, standing on the sidelines, waiting for the perfect moment to jump in. Then a voice boomed over the others, turning the heads of Cagle and the teenagers.

"You want to know something about killing, then ask me. I thought I was bad, but the moment after I did it, I was at the police department, they slid over the autopsy and I cried. I didn't care about being a gangster or being a thug. Y'all young boys sitting around here talking about how you're bad…well for 14 years I was scared to go to sleep in case the man I killed visited me in my dreams."

Everyone fell silent. The middle-aged man's story was raw, unabridged. And, the teenagers listened. In that moment, Cagle realized how powerful the barbershop, with its assortment of people and experiences, could be, especially for young men. He thought, "what if I created a space where boys could get this kind of advice and where they will all teach one another by giving each other different diameters of their lifestyles?"

A few years later, he sold Imperial Barbershop, and in 2019, Cagle started Gentlemen Quarters Barbershop Academy, a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating a safe space for teenage boys to talk about everyday challenges. The idea was to formalize what he experienced every day in the barbershop over the years – men from different walks of life connecting, sharing advice, and teaching one another. The academy is donation-based, raising money for their events from contributions they receive.

Shekema Crawford is the mother of two teenage boys. "I'm a divorced single mother, and my boys' father is not a part of their life," she said. "But the barbershop was my boys' way of having that connection with males being able to see positive male role models. Mr. Cagle was one that really took that interest in my sons."

Shekema's son, Da'Shaun James, says what he learns with Cagle helps him think about how to approach difficulties he may face in the future. Hearing advice from a male perspective is something he doesn't get at his house.

At its core, GQ Barbershop is male bonding. "A lot of these kids are going to school hungry because they don't have food, or they are a victim of a domestic violence household," Cagle said. "They have to grow up faster than they should because their parents aren't around."

Cagle's influence was especially apparent to a Crawford a few years ago.

Her older son, Da'Mon was at a law camp. He was one of the only African American males there, and several other campers made racially charged comments, making him uncomfortable.

"He didn't want to talk to me about it," Crawford said.

"Momma, I wanna talk to D," Da'Mon said.

When the camp ended, she and Da'Mon drove to Cagle's barbershop. He was there cutting someone's hair, but as soon as he saw Da'Mon he knew something was wrong.

"D took a few moments to talk to my son, I didn't ask any questions but whatever he said gave my son the confidence to continue his drive to be in law and politics and to know who he is," Crawford said.

That was when Da'Mon was in eighth grade. Today, he is a sophomore at North Carolina Central University studying political science and law, and that conversation still holds strong for him.

WHO warns that new virus variant poses 'very high' risk

Continued from page 1A

exploit weaknesses in the world's vaccination drive, and its discovery in Africa occurred in a continent where under 7% of the population is vaccinated. "The emergence of the omicron variant has fulfilled, in a precise way, the predictions of the scientists who warned that the elevated transmission of the virus in areas with limited access to vaccine would speed its evolution," said Dr. Richard Hatchett, head of CEPI, one of the founders of the U.N.-backed global vaccine sharing initiative COVAX.

Days after the variant sent a shudder through the financial world nearly two years into the pandemic that has killed over 5 million people, markets had a mixed reaction Monday. European stocks rebounded and Wall Street steadied itself, while Asian markets fell further. President Joe Biden called the omicron variant a cause for concern but "not a cause for panic." He said he is not considering any widespread U.S. lockdown and instead urged mask-wearing and vaccinations, even as a federal judge blocked his administration from enforcing a requirement that thousands of health care workers in 10 states get the shot.

Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, reacted to the potential threat by urging everyone 18 and older to get booster shots, because "strong immunity will likely prevent serious illness."

Earlier this month, the U.S. opened boosters to all adults but recommended them only for those 50 and older or people in long-term care. The omicron infections have underscored the difficulty in keeping the virus in check in a globalized world of jet travel and open borders.

Yet many countries are trying to do just that, against the urging of the WHO, which noted that border closings often have limited effect and can wreak havoc on lives and livelihoods.

Rezoning raises concerns among Raleigh tenants

Continued from page 1A

to acquire more properties for affordable housing.

Other viewers asked if the redeveloped property would still be affordable, to which Stuart answered, "it's fairly clear there is no plan," and restating that her client "is an owner and property manager and not a developer."

Without answers about the future of the property, tenants risk losing their housing. Stuart said the rezoning change is only the first step of a months-long application process, but there are no plans to redevelop. Participants feared this would be like giving developers a "blank check."

"Without even a concept for development plan, there really isn't anything I know about what would go there. We simply don't know that today," Stuart said.

"This is obviously, as I'm sure you're aware, part of a much bigger problem – city-wide, statewide, nationwide; we've got a big housing shortage that certainly needs to be addressed," Stuart said. She suggested that changing the zoning of the area would allow for affordable housing development.

"The idea of increasing height and density would hopefully be able to help address the supply crunch that we're having. This is one property owner doing what we can there, but we're not far enough to say what specifically would happen."

Hardin said though Quail Ridge is private, selling it to the city is a possible prospect for the owner to provide subsidized housing.

"How will the owner deal with the current residents if zoning is accepted? Will tenants be allowed to stay?" one participant wrote.

"Rezoning by itself won't change anything, so there's no redevelopment plan at this time. That doesn't change with or without the rezoning," Stuart answered. "Will residents be allowed to stay? I think that's a phasing question."

At least three more opportunities for the public to give feedback in the application process will be held. Residents will be notified by signage and mailed packages in increasing radiuses from the property.

CURTIS COMPTON/AP

Honorary starter Lee Elder, left, is applauded during introductions for the ceremonial tee shots to begin the Masters golf tournament at Augusta National Golf Club in April.

Lee Elder, 1st Black golfer to play Masters, dies

By Paul Newberry

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Lee Elder played through the scourge of racism. He broke down enormous barriers. He carved a path for Tiger Woods and others to follow. Finally, in the waning months of his life, he took his rightful place at Augusta National. Alongside the greats.

Elder, who fought through numerous obstacles to become the first Black golfer to play in the Masters, died at the age of 87, the PGA Tour announced Monday. "The game of golf lost a hero," 18-time major champion Jack Nicklaus said.

His death was first reported by Debert Cook of African American Golfer's Digest. No cause was given, but Elder had been in poor health and wore an oxygen tube when he attended the Masters in April. The tour said he died early Sunday in Escondido, California.

At this year's Masters, Elder was given the honor of hitting a ceremonial opening tee shot alongside Nicklaus, a six-time Masters champion, and Gary Player, who won the green jacket three times. Sadly, Elder was not well enough to take a swing at a ball he once hit with so much power. But he stood briefly to acknowledge the cheers of the gallery, holding up his driver, and watched proudly from a chair at the first tee as Nicklaus and Player hit the shots that traditionally open the first major championship of the year.

"For me and my family, I think it was one of the most emotional experiences that I have ever witnessed or been involved in," Elder said.

"That morning, you could see the joy in Lee's face," Nicklaus said Monday. "Gary Player and I were honored to enjoy that moment with him."

A Texan who developed his game during segregated times while caddying and hustling for rounds, Elder made history in 1975 at Augusta National, which had held an all-white tournament until he received an invitation after winning the Monsanto Open the previous year. Elder missed the cut at his first Masters but forever stamped himself as a groundbreaking figure in a sport that had never been known for racial tolerance.

Twenty-two years later, Woods became the first Black golfer to capture the green jacket, launching one of the greatest careers in golf history. "Lee Elder was a pioneer, and in so many ways," Nicklaus wrote on his Twitter account. "Yes, he was the first Black golfer to play in the Masters Tournament, but that simply underlined the hard work Lee put in to further the cause of everyone who has a dream to play on the PGA Tour and perhaps thinks there were too many barriers before them."

After Woods' record 12-stroke victory in 1997 — the first of his five Masters titles and 15 major championships overall — he reflected on the contributions of Black golfers such as Elder and Charlie Sifford, the tour's first Black player. "I thought about those guys coming up 18," Woods said that evening. "I said a little prayer and said thanks. I wasn't the first. I wasn't the pioneer. I thank them. I think that's why this victory is even more special. Lee, because of what he did, I was able to play here. Because of Charlie, I was able to play on the PGA Tour. I lived my dream because of those guys."

Elder got into golf as a caddie, since that essentially was the only conduit Black players had to be permitted on the course. He was able to polish his game while serving in the Army and, after his discharge, joined the United Golf Association Tour for Black players in the early 1960s. He developed into one of the UGA's best players, winning 18 of 22 tournaments in one dominating stretch, but meager prize money made it tough to earn a living. Finally, at the age of 33, Elder had saved up enough to afford PGA qualifying school, where he earned his first tour card for the 1968 season.

The highlight of his rookie year was a memorable loss to Nicklaus on the fifth hole of a sudden-death playoff at Firestone Country Club in Akron, Ohio. Elder would go on to capture four PGA Tour victories and eight more wins on the PGA Tour Champions for 50-and-over players. He played in all four major championships, tying for 11th at both the 1974 PGA Championship and the 1979 U.S. Open. His best finish in six Masters appearances was a tie for 17th in 1979. That same year, he was a member of the winning U.S. team at the Ryder Cup.

But Elder's impact on the game went far beyond wins and losses, even if it took decades for his legacy to be fully appreciated. "It always amazed me that presidents of the United States would be giving these different awards to athletes for their athletic prowess, and here was a man that ... was never given the awards that he actually duly deserved," Player said.

Judge won't order restart on NC legislative redistricting

By Gary D. Robertson

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH — A North Carolina judge refused on Tuesday to essentially force state lawmakers to start over on this year's redistricting of General Assembly districts, saying he can't turn back the clock on the process that led to new seat boundaries.

But the trial judge, who denied motions in litigation from advocacy groups and voters complaining about how the Republican-controlled legislature ignored race-based voter data, emphasized he wasn't making any judgment on the actual lawfulness of the enacted maps. At least three other pending lawsuits challenge North Carolina's legislative lines, U.S. House map or both as partisan or racial gerrymanders. A hearing in one of those suits is scheduled for Dec. 3, three days before candidate filing for the March primary under new districts is set to begin.

"Nothing I have said, nor should this order be construed as any opinion of the court on the constitutionality or validity of the maps that have been passed," Superior Court Judge Graham Shirley said while also dismissing the lawsuit as moot. "This is a very narrow issue."

The state NAACP, Common Cause and several voters sued in late October, days before legislators started voting on state House and Senate plans. They alleged Republicans were poised not to follow a recipe set in the 2000s by the state Supreme Court designed to ensure legislative district lines could comply with both the state constitution and the U.S. Voting Rights Act.

They cited in large part the legislators' refusal to consider data such as the percentage of Black voting-age population in a region or to evaluate the presence of racially polarized voting in the state while drawing maps.

Common Cause provided evidence that "voters of color were going to be denied their ability to elect candidates of choice, and the legislative defendants ignored it just like that," plaintiffs' attorney Hilary Harris Klein told Shirley. "So here in this case, the process matters, and this case shows why."

Shirley said the state House and Senate maps, enacted by voters in the first week of November, are presumed to be constitutional, and pointed out the lawsuit doesn't challenge the actual boundaries that were approved. Instead, the plaintiffs are "essentially asking this court to undo what has already been done," Shirley said in rejecting requests to send lawmakers back to the drawing board and to delay the primary until May.

Still, the judge questioned how lawmakers could ensure they drew legislative districts that comply with the Voting Rights Act without examin-

Please see **DISTRICTS/4A**

Judge won't order restart on NC redistricting

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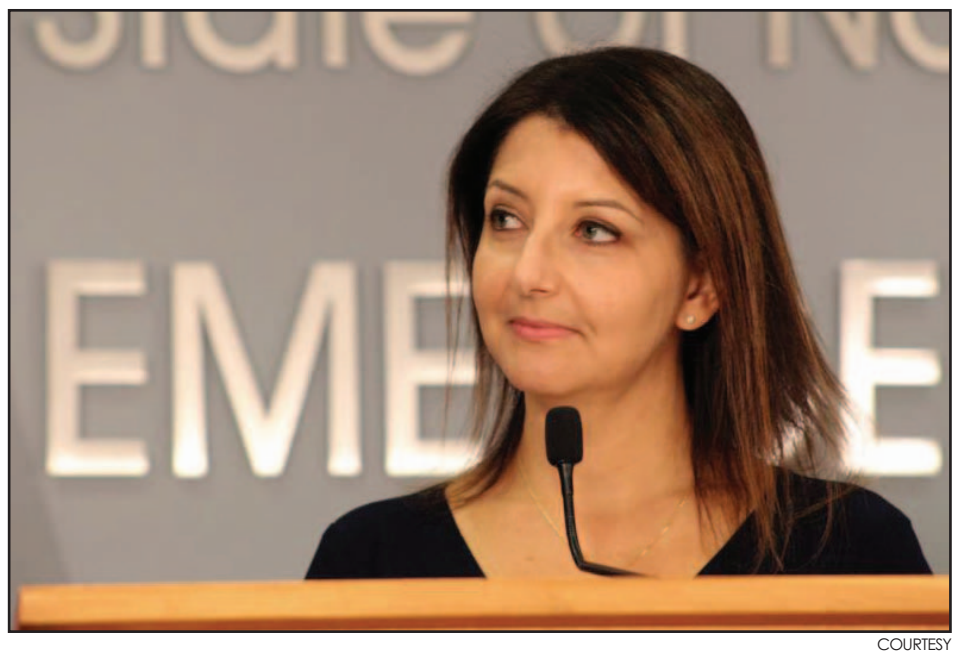
ing racial demographic data before the maps are completed. "So what you're telling me is someone threw a dart and it hit the intended target even though they had a blindfold on, and because of that, it complies?" Shirley asked Phil Strach, a lawyer representing Republican lawmakers who wanted the lawsuit dismissed. Republicans have pointed repeatedly to state maps drawn in the late 2010s that courts signed off on didn't use such data. The legislative defendants believe the latest maps, based on 2020 census figures, comply with the Voting Rights Act," and if a court tells us otherwise we'll modify them," Strach said.

Shirley has already been named to a panel of three trial judges that will hold a hearing in a lawsuit filed by the North Carolina League of Conservation Voters, mathematicians and voters after the legislative and congressional maps were completed. The lawsuit accuses GOP legislators of unlawful gerrymandering that would help Republicans retain their General Assembly majorities and hold at least nine of the state's 14 U.S. House seats in 2022, even as North Carolina is considered closely divided in statewide elections.



COURTESY

Head of NC health department stepping down

By Tom Foreman Jr.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WINSTON-SALEM — Dr. Mandy Cohen, the head of North Carolina's health department and face of regular updates on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the state for two years, is stepping down from her post, Gov. Roy Cooper announced Tuesday.

"Dr. Cohen, North Carolinians owe you a deep debt of gratitude," Cooper said during Tuesday's briefing by the state Coronavirus Task Force. "You have been such a blessing to our state."

According to the news release, Cohen plans to spend more time with her family while exploring new opportunities to carry on her work to improve the state's health and well-being. The news release didn't elaborate, and Cohen would only say "a bit of rest and recovery" was in store for her next, calling the past two years "quite a marathon."

She said she discussed her departure with Cooper several weeks ago. "While it's hard to step away, it's the right time for me, personally, and the right time for our team," Cohen said during the task force briefing. "It has been an honor of a lifetime to serve this state at such an important moment in history."

Cohen said she had no plans to run for public office, as some had speculated upon word of her departure. She said she hoped her next steps would keep her and her family in North Carolina, and she would be looking at a range of opportunities.

Cooper appointed Cohen, an internal medicine physician, as secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services in January 2017. She led North Carolina's response to COVID-19 and served as the governor's chief adviser and strategist on overcoming the pandemic. Before taking over at the agency, Cohen was chief operating officer for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services in President Barack Obama's administration.

Beyond her role carrying out North Carolina's COVID-19 response, Cohen became the governor's chief lobbyist for Medicaid, the state's $18 billion program that provides health coverage to roughly 2.5 million people. From the very beginning as secretary, Cohen pressed, albeit unsuccessfully, for Cooper's goal to expand Medicaid to cover hundreds of thousands of additional low-income adults through the 2010 Affordable Care Act.

Republicans in charge of the legislature remain divided over the idea. But repeated talks with longtime expansion opponent Senate Leader Phil Berger in part played a role in Berger's willingness this year to consider enacting expansion as part of negotiating with Cooper over a state budget.

In a statement, Berger credited Cohen with getting the state through the pandemic. "Secretary Cohen's leadership throughout her tenure at the DHHS has helped our state navigate turbulent times," Berger said. "She made herself available to legislators to answer questions and kept us informed about issues facing the department. She was also instrumental in successfully implementing Medicaid transformation. I want to thank her for her service to the state and wish her well in her future endeavors."

In July, Cohen's agency also began carrying out a legislative mandate to shift two-thirds of Medicaid recipients from a traditional fee-for-service program to one that relies on managed care to improve health outcomes and control costs. Kody Kinsley, chief deputy secretary for health at the department and lead for COVID-19 operations, will replace Cohen on Jan. 1, 2022, the news release said.

Cooper's office said Kinsley, a Wilmington native, would be the first openly gay Cabinet member in state government history. He is subject to a confirmation vote by the state Senate, and all but one of Cooper's Cabinet choices have been approved by the Senate since he took office in early 2017.

SECU Foundation grant for Laurinburg education

Staff Reports

RALEIGH – A ceremonial check for $1 million was presented to Partners in Ministry recently by the SECU Foundation, representing a capital grant that will help the nonprofit begin construction on a new community education center at its campus in Laurinburg.

PIM works to improve the lives of underserved youth, families, and adults in the Sandhills region through programs that provide access to education, young adult mentoring, urgent housing repairs, job training/employment opportunities, and other community services.

The Foundation grant for the facility, to be named the SECU Community Education Center, will help the nonprofit expand campus programs with a multipurpose gymnatorium, youth center, counseling suites, and an enhanced computer lab.

"Partners in Ministry is an incredible organization providing a center for comprehensive programs and resources to serve North Carolinians from Richmond, Robeson, and Scotland counties," said Jo Anne Sanford, SECU Foundation board chair.

"The new SECU Community Education Center will assist the organization with continued growth and delivery of its programs and services for youth and families. We are excited to support this project and help Partners in Ministry expand its impact for communities across the region."

Partners in Ministry has served the Sandhills region for over 12 years, filling the gap for services which local government agencies and other nonprofits are unable to provide due to a lack of financial and human resources.

The organization is a one central center for residents to access community resources using a large volunteer network that has donated over 16,000 volunteer hours since 2008, along with 19 employed faculty and staff members to help administer PIM programs and services.

The future 20,000 square foot center will become the new face of the campus.

"The center symbolizes a deepened commitment to our community through the expansion of programs and social services, reaching over 8,000 youth and families," said Melba

Please see SECU/5A

SECU Foundation board chair Jo Anne Sanford presents a ceremonial check to Bishop Leonard Fairley, Melba McCallum and the Reverend Gypsie Murdaugh.

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McCallum, PIM executive director.

"These programs and services will foster community transformation and will provide opportunities for individuals and families to develop their physical, social, emotional, and reasoning abilities."

Civil War memorial honors Black Union soldiers

By Praveena Somasundaram
UNC MEDIA HUB

WILMINGTON, N.C. – On Feb. 20, 1865, on the eve of the Civil War's end, Union soldiers were sent to meet Confederate troops at Forks Road just south of Wilmington. They intended to take Wilmington. But late on Feb. 21, Union soldiers saw smoke billowing from Wilmington. Word spread that the Confederates were planning to abandon their stronghold. Union soldiers surged forward, fighting with more fervor than they had the day before.

Sixteen hundred Union men with few supplies and no gunboat support faced off in the swamps against 8,500 Confederate troops. For two days, the soldiers fought brutally. Before dawn the next day, Confederate troops retreated. But the Union troops faced severe losses, as they did in many Civil War skirmishes.

Even though the Civil War ended six weeks later, what is now known as the Battle at Forks Road wasn't a significant turning point. What distinguishes it is that it was fought mostly by Black Union soldiers of the U.S. Colored Troops, and its stories were hidden and unrecognized for more than a century.

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USCT reenactors kicked off the ceremony with a procession and presentation of the American flag.

Photo By Elise Mahon

Josiah Bennetone sat as still as he could. He breathed slowly through his nose and kept his eyes closed, so he would not mess up the plaster gauze covering his face. Bennetone, 37, is a descendant of U.S. Colored Troops soldiers. But for 27 years, he didn't know the full history of his ancestors in Wilmington, where he grew up.

Ten years ago, Bennetone's mother, Sonya Patrick, a leader of Black Lives Matter Wilmington, told him that four of his relatives had fought in USCT regiments — his great-great grandfather, Pvt. Henry Williams; great-great-great grandfather, Cpl. David Jackson; and great-great-grand uncles, Cpl. Dennis Perkins and Cpl. James Perkins.

Now, 156 years after the Battle of Forks Road, Bennetone's casting is part of the first physical memorial in Wilmington honoring USCT soldiers, which was unveiled Nov. 13 at the Cameron Art Museum. The memorial, a sculpture titled "Boundless," features 11 life-size figures — a flagbearer, drummer and three rows of soldiers, their arms linked together. Next month, the names of 1,820 USCT will be inscribed on the sculpture to honor all of the Black soldiers who fought in the Battle of Forks Road.

It was quiet as Bennetone sat for his casting, leaving him alone to think of the soldiers' — and his ancestors' — sacrifice and bravery.

"They weren't free, but they were still fighting for freedom, which they didn't have themselves," he said.

North Carolina state controller wants education spending order halted

By Gary D. Robertson
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH — The chief bookkeeper for North Carolina state government's finances has asked an appeals court to block a trial judge's recent decision that ordered her and other officials to allocate $1.75 billion to address education inequities.

An attorney for State Controller Linda Combs wrote to the state Court of Appeals that complying with Superior Court Judge David Lee's order would force her to violate the state constitution and other laws that leave it only to the General Assembly to appropriate state funds.

Lee's Nov. 10 order told Combs' office and other state finance officials to send taxpayer funds to two education agencies and the health department to cover two years of a remedial spending plan that targets at-risk children.

The enforcement date in the Leandro lawsuit — named after an early student plaintiff — was delayed for 30 days, which gave time for appeals.

The plan is designed to address a 2004 state Supreme Court ruling that found that while North Carolina's children have a fundamental right to the "opportunity to receive a sound basic education" under the constitution, the state had not lived up to that mandate.

Lee said Supreme Court decisions, along with education-related language in the North Carolina Constitution approved by voters, give Lee authority to order funds be spent without a specific law passed by the General Assembly.

But Combs or her staff could be subject to misdemeanor charges if they withdraw state funds for any purpose that's not authorized by a law the General Assembly has passed, Combs attorney Bob Hunter wrote. T

he state controller keeps the state's books, monitors cash flow and manages state payroll.

"This double bind stems from orders which were never served on them, and on which they were never given an opportunity to be heard, issuing from a proceeding in which they never were parties," Hunter wrote y as he asked the state's intermediate-level appeals court to vacate Lee's order or prevent Lee from compelling Combs to act, or both.

The remedial plan, which is based on an outside consultant's report and input from Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper and the State Board of Education, calls for at least $5.6 billion in new education funding by 2028.

The state budget approved by the legislature earlier this month fell well short of the $1.75 billion in additional funds that the plan demands through mid-2023. Cooper sought unsuccessfully for the remedial plan to be in the final budget bill, which he signed into law anyway because he said the good within it outweighed the bad. "The courts got this right — the legislature did not," he told reporters Nov. 16. Republican legislators have said Lee lacks authority to act and that the litigation has devolved into an end-around to carry out Cooper's preferred levels of education spending.

Combs was initially appointed as controller in 2014 by then-Gov. Pat McCrory, a Republican. She was controller of the U.S. during President George W. Bush's administration and served as chief financial officer at the Environmental Protection Agency. Lee's order also directed the state treasurer and state budget office to allocate the $1.75 billion once the 30-day delay ends.

KEMET™

SPACE ACTIVITY SHEET

Hi Everyone!

I bring you greetings from outer space! I just returned from exploring the vast universe in Sankofa 82 and we had a blast! I even got to visit my friend and mentor, Benjamin Banneker! Human beings have always wondered, "what's out there?" Well guess what, Black men and women, as early as the 1790s, have been helping to find the answers to that question. Black Americans have made groundbreaking contributions in the fields of astronomy, astrophysics, mathematics and space exploration!

HIDDEN FIGURES REVEALED...

The book and movie Hidden Figures offered the opportunity to learn more about the contributions of Black women in the exploration of space. Match each woman's description with her name.

A Katherine Johnson **B** Dorothy Vaughan
C Christine M. Darden **D** Mary Jackson

___ NASA's first Black woman engineer

___ one of the first Black women to work at NASA; John Glenn refused to fly without her verification of the calculations for his orbit

___ called a "human computer"; first black person to supervise staff at West Area Computers at NASA

___ although not highlighted in the movie, "Hidden Figures", but in the book, she was Director of the Program Management Office of the Aerospace Performing Center at Langley Airforce Base

BENJAMIN BANNEKER IS BACK!

If you remember, he was part of our first July activity sheet! Not only was he a great mathematician but the first Black astronomer in the United States! It's amazing how a mostly self-taught person was able to accomplish so much. Unfortunately back then, people were too focused on his race to celebrate his accomplishments, such as the inventor of the wooden clock, author of the almanac, mathematician, surveyor and astronomer.

WHAT'S THE MEANING OF...

Fill in the blanks with the science vocabulary words and their definitions.

[astronomy, astrophysics, mathematics, space exploration]

_____ is called the "language of science". It studies and explains the relationship between numbers, quantities and measurements.

_____ is the study of the universe and everything in it, including planets, stars, galaxies, comets and black holes.

_____ _____ is sending people or machines into space to visit other planets and objects in space.

_____ is the study of planets, stars and other objects in space.

ONE MINUTE SPACE MADNESS

CONTRIBUTION	NAME
The first Black astronaut	• Bernard A. Harris
The first Black person into space on STS-8 mission	• Stephanie Wilson
The first Black woman to fly in space	• Guion Bluford
The first Black person to perform a spacewalk	• Mae C Jemison
Has spent the longest in space of any Black female	• Robert H.Lawrence Jr.
First Black person as a NASA administrator	• Charles Bolden

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT!

I would like for you to meet one of our loyal 'Activity Sheet' readers, Angel Smith!

Angel is a12-year-old from Greensboro, NC. Angel, we loved your drawing -- it's awesome! Keep up the good work and never give up on your dreams!

Draw your own version of KEMET and send it in to:
WWW.KEMETCOMIC.COM/GALLERY

YOU might be in our next artist spotlight!

www.KEMETCOMIC.com

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WHAT'S THE MEANING OF... ANSWERS
Mathematics
Astronomy
Space Exploration
Astrophysics

ONE MINUTE SPACE MADNESS ANSWERS
Robert H. Lawrence Jr
Guion Bluford
Mae C Jemison
Bernard A. Harris
Stephanie Wilson
Charles Bolden

HIDDEN FIGURES REVEALED ANSWERS
D, A, B, C

Google

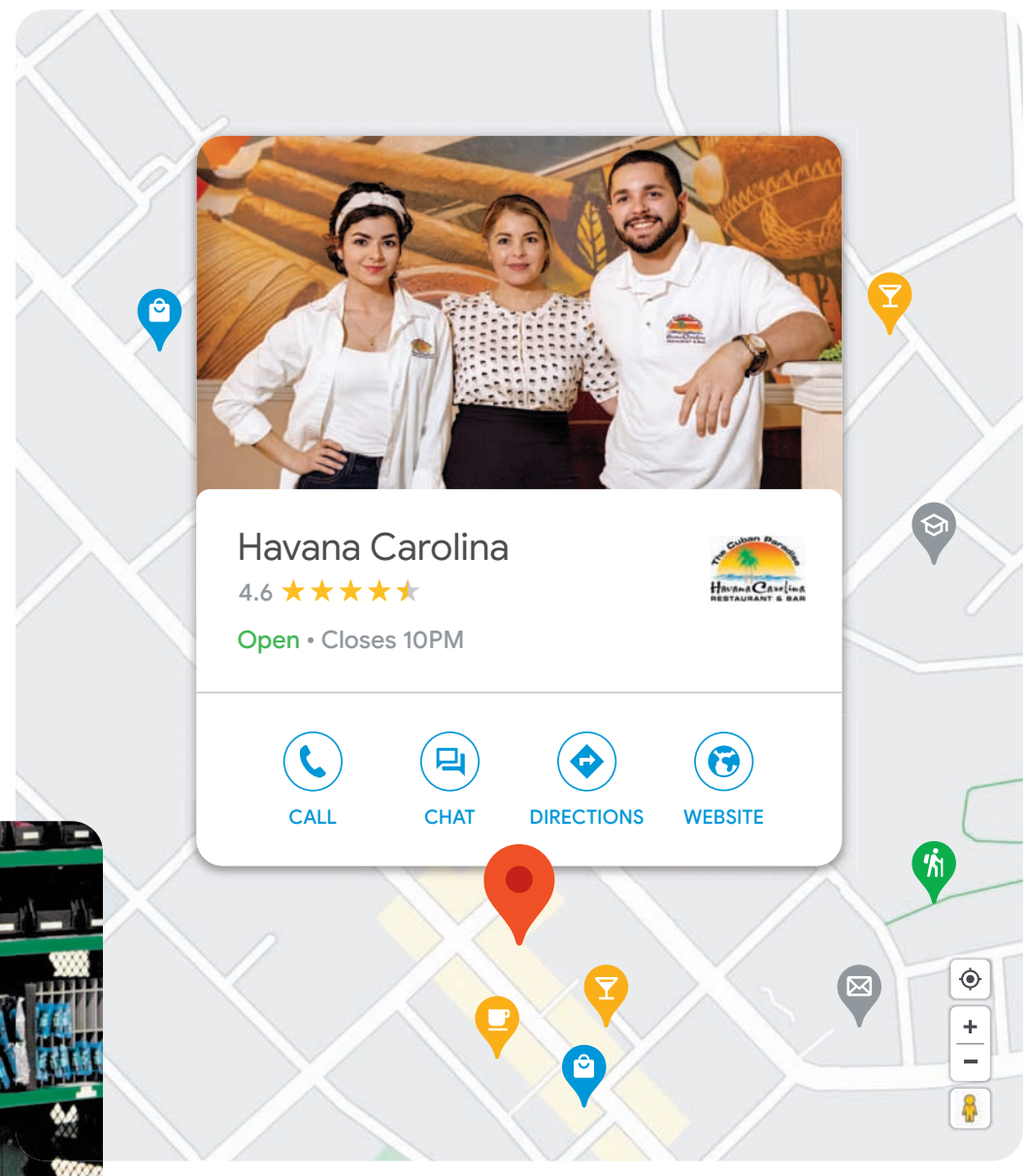
Helping North Carolina grow for more than a decade

600+
full-time employees at Google

10 years
calling North Carolina home

$6.92B
of economic impact generated locally

We've helped over 535,000 North Carolina small businesses like Havana Carolina in Concord connect with customers.



Our Lenoir data center enables us to provide fast and reliable services around the clock to millions of people.

Learn more about our impact in North Carolina at g.co/economicimpact/northcarolina