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Christmas
HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

LOOKING FOR THE
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A6 - 7

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Holiday weekend to usher in season

By Alice Keyes
SPECIAL TO THE
BLACK MOUNTAIN NEWS

Twinkling lights and holiday decorations adorn buildings and trees, giving an outside representation of the Christmas spirit contained within Black Mountain.

The commencement of the town's holiday festivities will occur on Friday, December 5, with Holly Jolly, followed by the Black Mountain Christmas Parade and the Circle of Lights the next day. All three events reflect the ambience surrounding this season of giving.

"It's the sense of community and togetherness that exists in Black Mountain that I like," Montreat College student Josiah Satterfield said. "The shops stay open later and I just really like the atmosphere. It's just a good place to take your family or a date."

The holiday weekend beckons, offering inexpensive fun and outdoor entertainment. Although the weather outside may be frightful, bundle-up and join in the revelry.

Holly Jolly

Warmth from open shop doors ushers potential customers into local stores, along with promises of baked goods and hot cider. While Holly Jolly is about supporting local businesses, it is also a way for merchants to give back to the community.

"The event is for locals to come in and do a little pre-shopping for Christmas," said Debbie Wanser, owner of C.W. Moose Trading Company and Black Mountain Merchants Association president. "But it's also a way to thank our customers for shopping here year-round."

Area stores plan to stay open late on Friday, December 5, until



File Photo

(above) Don't be surprised to see a few elves on the streets of Black Mountain this weekend, as a full line-up of holiday events is scheduled, including Holly Jolly and the Black Mountain Christmas Parade.

9 p.m., to prolong the shopping frenzy.

"I can increase my sales up to 50 percent in that one day," Wanser said. "We actually see people who can't get to my register on that night because the store is so packed and they'll come back later hoping that I still have whatever it was that they wanted to buy. We see that happen throughout the month of December."

Santa is scheduled to take a break from the workshop to stop by and receive present requests

from children. After traveling from the Chamber of Commerce and down State Street and Cherry Street, Santa will take up residence at the train caboose, located next to the Old Depot on Sutton Avenue, from 5:30 - 9 p.m.

Besides offering refreshments, Holly Jolly also includes live entertainment. The Montreat Choir will be traveling along the streets throughout the evening spreading Christmas cheer, and Appalachia Song will be performing at the train caboose until

■ See Holiday on page A12

School board to fill Owen seat

By Andy Grabel
STAFF WRITER

The Buncombe County Board of Education is expected to select a representative to serve the Owen District at their monthly meeting Thursday, following a decision by the Buncombe County Board of Elections to declare the seat vacant last month.

The Buncombe County Board of Elections voted 3-0 to vacate the seat after Mark Crawford, who formally dropped out of the election in October, won the non-partisan race and announced his intention to serve on the board. School board members from five of the six Buncombe County districts and an at-large representative will select the Owen district representative, who will serve a four-year term.

Under school board procedure, sitting board members are charged with filling the vacant seat, as they did in a similar situation years ago when a school board member left the board prematurely, school board chairman Richard Greene said. Roberson District representative Steve Sizemore was appointed to the board in June 2006 to fill the remaining term of his predecessor, Dianne Shepherd Sharpe.

Crawford, an adjunct professor of political science at Western Carolina University, won 34.16 percent of the vote in the November election, followed by Chip Craig - 26.82 percent, Ryan Stone - 21.36 percent, and Chris Bradford - 17.25 percent, according to results on the Buncombe County Board of Elections Web site. Crawford's margin of victory was nearly 4,000 votes. Out of 67 precincts that voted in the election, nearly 54,000 votes were cast throughout Buncombe County in the election of a new Owen



Crawford



Craig

■ See School board on page A12

FLS Energy powers needs for the new century

By Andy Grabel
STAFF WRITER

Tucked in an industrial park off Highway 70, a flourishing Black Mountain business is shaping the future of energy consumption in Western North Carolina and the southeast.

It isn't as much what FLS Energy has achieved within its office walls that has set the company apart, but the projects it has completed on the rooftops of hotels, homes, and businesses. The company has established itself as a prominent player in the growing solar energy business since its inception two and a half years ago. The company has shifted its focus from primarily installing residential solar hot water systems early on to larger commercial and industrial projects.

The business has grown to include 18 full-time and three part-time employees.

With solar technology still fighting its way into the mainstream, FLS Energy has established its position through educating clients about the benefits of solar technology and energy savings.

"There is no ready market," Hardy LeGwin, chief executive officer for FLS Energy, said. "It's an education process in developing our market. We will go where the opportunities are, whether that is working with more businesses or projects like what we will be doing in Canton. I think that over the next few years there is a potential for more solar farms."

The company took a giant step forward last month when it announced plans for an \$8 mil-

lion solar farm that it would construct for Progress Energy on the former site of Evergreen Packaging's landfill in Canton. When complete, the 3,288 photovoltaic panels will generate one million watts of energy annually, enough to power 1,200 homes.

The company gained national attention after it installed 100 solar panels on the top of the Proximity Hotel in Greensboro in late 2006. The project, North Carolina's largest solar water heating system, provides the hotel with two-thirds of the hotel's hot water needs, and saves the hotel an estimated \$14,000 annually.

"The 'low hanging fruit' of solar energy is solar hot water systems, according to Frank Marshall, director of sales and marketing for FLS Energy.



Photo by Andy Grabel

(above) FLS Energy's Frank Marshall, left, director of sales and marketing, and Hardy LeGwin, chief executive officer, test a solar panel at the company's Black Mountain headquarters.

■ See Energy on page A12

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News

School board, *continued from Page A1*

District representative. Craig filed a formal protest to Crawford's election to the school board on November 7, noting that the reason that Crawford appeared on the ballot was because there was not enough time to reprint the ballots after his withdrawal. Both Crawford and Craig have notified the board of their

desire to serve the Owen District since the election. "Through it all, I knew that I might still be called upon to serve in accordance with the information provided to me from the state board of elections and transmitted through the auspices of a staff member of the Buncombe County Board of Elections," Crawford wrote in a

statement to the Black Mountain News. "Despite the potential conflicts that had caused me to withdraw, I had resolved myself to serve if nevertheless elected by the citizens of our county." Craig said that he hopes that the board will consider his experience as a business owner and background in finance and appoint him to the position.

"I expected that the voters were going to be the ones who decided the election, but at least the school board members that fill the seat will be able to make an informed decision," he said. "I expected to know after November 4 who would serve the Owen District, so the fact that we are still waiting a month later is surprising. We just need

to get through the process, so that the board can refocus on the school system's business." The Buncombe County Board of Education will hold an open session at 4:30 p.m. to consider the appointment to the Owen District in the Administrative Services Building, 175 Bingham Road, in the board auditorium. The

swearing in of new and re-elected school board members will occur at 6 p.m.

Staff writer Andy Grabel can be reached at andy@blackmountainnews.com

Holiday, *continued from Page A1*

9 p.m. Bob Hinkle and Kim Hughes, from White Horse Black Mountain, also plan on making a 7:30 p.m. appearance at the caboose.

The square dance team from W.D. Williams Elementary School will perform at White Horse Black Mountain at 6 p.m.

Take note that both Sutton Avenue and Cherry Street will close at 5:30 p.m., so alternate parking should be found.

For more information, call 669-0707.

Black Mountain Christmas Parade

The resounding melodies of Christmas tunes will ring down the crowded streets during the Black Mountain Christmas Parade bearing the theme "Music of Christmas."

The parade will begin on Saturday, December 6, at 4 p.m. on Flat Creek Road and end at Craigmont Road by St. James Episcopal Church.

"The parade is a show of community and contains the spirit of celebration that comes with the Christmas season," said Bob McMurray, executive director of the Black Mountain-Swananooa Chamber of Commerce. "It's a way for churches to witness to the community and for non-profit organizations to show their presence in the community."

The Owen High School band will lead the parade with the man of honor, Santa Claus, making his appearance at the end. Over 100 floats are scheduled to participate with Johnny and Jane Raines as the reigning grand marshals of the parade. Take note that the Swananoos Valley Christian Ministry will be collecting canned goods as they travel down the street.

For more information, call 669-2300.

Circle of Lights

The glow from 250 luminaries will illuminate Lake Tomahawk on

Saturday, December 6, from 5-7 p.m.

"It used to be that people would buy a light in remembrance of a loved one," Black Mountain recreation program supervisor Renee Mastrangelo said. "Now the event is used as a way to beautify the lake and usher in the holiday season."

The 24th annual Circle of

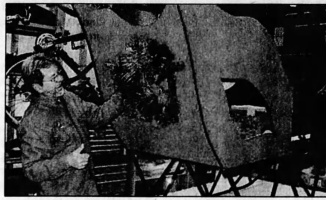
Lights will feature live music, hayrides, gift bags for the children, healthy snacks, and hot cocoa.

"It's a good way to get out and be a part of the community," Mastrangelo said. "You'll see neighbors and friends and it's just a good way to kick off the holidays."

After making an appearance at the Black Mountain Christmas

Parade, Santa is heading to Lake Tomahawk for this free outdoor family event.

For more information, call 669-8610.



(above) Russ Wanser, owner of C.W. Moose, puts the final touches on Santa's sleigh before Holly Jolly, set for Friday night.

Photo provided by Debbie Wanser

Energy, *continued from Page A1*

These systems are designed to provide 90 percent of a building's hot water needs during peak production. The use of solar hot water systems has doubled in the past 10 years and could provide five percent of commercial and 15 percent of residential demand by 2015, according to the company's Web site.

"As the economy changes, businesses are trying to cut costs and increase the predictability of their energy costs," Marshall said. "Our challenge is to sell them on the idea that this technology is viable and going to save them money in the long run. Many businesses may know that solar is a good idea, but don't always realize that it is financially feasible for them."

The local company has also used its expertise on local projects and brought solar to one of Black Mountain's most historical conference centers. Over the last few months, FLS Energy installed six panels on the roof of a residential building at Blue Ridge Assembly for a solar hot water system. The system will provide energy for the building that can house up to 90

people. "Because the system was going on a building that didn't have heat or air conditioning, we had a tough time judging what the payback would be," Kurt Eckel, operations director for Blue Ridge Assembly, said. "The back of the roof faced south, so I knew that it would be a perfect candidate for solar. Now, the solar pre-heat is going to provide domestic hot water for the building. I think it will be a benefit for years to come."

Whether commercial or residential projects, FLS Energy will

grow wherever the sun is shining and solar energy needs arise.

"What's important is that people can see the value in solar as a long-term investment," Marshall said. "The value in cost savings and environmental benefit is there. Our goal is to find how solar power is going to help our customers meet their energy needs."

Staff writer Andy Grabel can be reached at andy@blackmountainnews.com

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Page D7



COLD NOVEMBER: It wasn't your imagination: Jack Frost really was nipping at your nose this November, the coldest in more than 10 years. **Page B1**

CATCH THAT CAR: Columnist Susan Reinhardt writes about a local couple whose car was stolen - and they decided to do something about it. **Page C1**

GRAMMY NOMINATIONS: Find out who's in the running for the annual music awards. **Page C3**

MAN ON THE LAM: Authorities continue their search for a man accused of attacking his grandfather with a machete and stealing his life savings. **Page B1**

YANCEY SHAKEUP: The newly seated Board of Commissioners didn't waste time shaking up county government, starting with the county manager. **Page B1**

COMMON THREADS: There are some similarities between Brett Chappell of East Henderson and B.J. Laughter of Hendersonville, the WNC coaches who still have teams alive in the NCHSAA football playoffs. **Page D1**

Today's forecast



Cloudy, showers
High 48, Low 31
WINTER, DE

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Detour expected to clog I-240

Bridge closure will affect West Asheville traffic

By Mark Barrett
MBARRETT@CITIZEN-TIMES.COM

ASHEVILLE — Workers on Wednesday closed the Brevard Road bridge over Interstate 240 in West Asheville for several days and will detour eastbound I-240 traffic around the bridge this weekend.

The closures will give workers room to repair a beam damaged Nov. 18 when a tractor-trailer carrying an oversized load struck the underside of the bridge.

The bridge work is sure to create traffic congestion over the weekend.

On Saturday and Sunday, traffic will be diverted off eastbound I-240 using the off ramp at the Brevard Road/I-240 interchange then back onto I-240 using the on ramp. That should enable motorists to keep moving east, but will squeeze two lanes of traffic onto one lane.

"I know it's going to cause some delays there. I'm hoping it'll be minimal because it will be on the weekend," when traffic levels are lower, said Ed Green, division maintenance engineer for the state Department of Transportation.

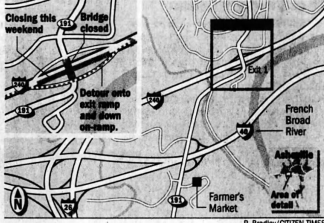
DOT officials said workers

will put the I-240 detour in place around 7:30 a.m. Saturday and they hope eastbound lanes will reopen by 6 p.m. Sunday, although it is possible the diversion could last until early Monday morning. Brevard Road, which is numbered N.C. 194, will be closed a little south of the interchange over the weekend so motorists on the detour won't have to contend with turning traffic.

The Brevard Road bridge closure is scheduled to last until Dec. 12, although Green said

Please see DETOUR on A5

I-240/Brevard Road bridge repair



R. BRIDGES/CITIZEN-TIMES

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY GETS A LIFT IN FLETCHER



Workers use a helicopter to lift and install two cooling towers atop the 900,000-square-foot Fletcher Business Park on Wednesday. Vanir Solar Construction, formerly Appalachian Energy, is spending \$2.4 million to build the world's largest solar thermal heating and cooling system with 640 solar panels by Dec. 31. The project dwarfs the next largest solar system, built atop the Olympic Village in Beijing, according to a database maintained by the International Energy Agency in Paris. For a photo gallery, visit CITIZEN-TIMES.com.

Labor-green rift clouds auto aid bid

By Julie Hirschfeld Davis
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Watch out for family fights, Mr. President-elect. Though Democrats will control both the new Congress and White House, the battle over a multibillion-dollar auto industry bailout already is pitting two major party constituencies against each other: big labor and environmentalists.

The United Auto Workers, along with Detroit's Big Three,

ANALYSIS

are pushing for an infusion of emergency loans for the carmakers' immediate needs — even if that means diverting \$25 billion that had been set aside for creating cleaner vehicles. Environmentalists balk at that notion, saying the money is sacrosanct and insisting that any new help be tied to strict requirements for greener cars.

The intramural fight helps explain why President-elect

Barack Obama has stayed vague on his views on bailout details and Democratic leaders have seemed uncertain about whether to push one through. It's also at the heart of the disagreement between Democrats and the Bush administration over how to structure a carmaker rescue.

After rushing Congress back into session last month to consider an emergency auto aid plan, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Senate

MORE INSIDE

Autoworkers union willing to make some concessions to help Big Three. **Page D6**

Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., reversed course and called off the debate. They ordered the Big Three to submit elaborate loan applications to Congress before

Please see AUTO on A6

Hammer killer receives 24 years

Moore pleads to bludgeoning death of friend, arson

By Clarke Morrison
CMORRISON@CITIZEN-TIMES.COM

ASHEVILLE — A Swannanoa man will spend at least 24 years in prison for bludgeoning his friend to death with a hammer and burning the victim's trailer.

Donald Fred Moore Jr., 39, pleaded guilty Wednesday in Buncombe County Superior Court to second-degree murder and first-degree arson.

Gary Steven Buhrmaster, 49, was found dead on Oct. 22, 2007, outside his burning home. An autopsy showed he died from multiple blows to the head that shattered his skull.

Members of the victim's family sobbed in court during the sentencing hearing. "We've lost our brother," Mark Buhrmaster told Judge Marlene Hyatt. "He was brutally beaten. We would like to ask the court for the maximum sentence."

But Moore's fiancée, Cindy Pierce, testified she still intends to marry him. She described Moore as a gentle and kind person who was good to her two young sons.

Please see PLEADS on A6

Group: 1 in 3 toys still have 'elevated' levels of lead

By Mae Anderson
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — After the high-profile recalls of millions of lead-contaminated toys last year, a watchdog group said Wednesday its tests found fewer toys with high levels of chemicals in them this year. But about a third of the toys tested still contained a worrisome level of chemicals.

Healthytoys.org, a project of The Ecology Center, a nonprofit environmental group based in Michigan, in collaboration with other groups, tested about 1,500 toys for a variety of chemicals, including lead, arsenic, cadmium and others. About half were similar to toys tested last year.

About one-third were found to have a significant level of

chemicals, while two-thirds had low levels or none of the chemicals the group tested for. Lead was detected in 20 percent of toys, compared with 35 percent last year.

"We did see a reduction in the amount of lead this year, so I think the attention on the issue last year and throughout this year helped reduce the amount of lead in products,"

said Jeff Gearhart, research director for healthytoys.org.

"The bad news is that there are still far too many toys with elevated levels of chemicals."

The toy industry, however, took issue with the group's testing methods and said that toy makers, the government and retailers have been working to improve safety standards.

The Ecology Center, which also tests for chemical content in other products, began testing toys last year after a spate of recalls.

Most significantly, Mattel Inc. recalled more than 2 million Chinese-made toys on fears they were tainted with lead paint and tiny magnets that children could accidentally swallow.

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