2019 Bladen’s Best of the Best
Tips From The Determined
Thoughts While Shaving

BladenOnline.com
Print Edition
Cover Photos by Jamie Corbett
Thank You
Bladen County!
Your votes are greatly appreciated.
Thanks for electing us
Bladen’s Best of the Best
for Heating & Air Conditioning
Services!
Sincerely,
A. Daine Smith &
the rest of your HVAC Expert Team

FREE Estimates
Cape Fear
Heating & Cooling
Keeping You Comfortable.
Residential & Commercial
910-647-0221
capefearheatingandcooling.com
Call Us Today!
Thoughts While Shaving...

I moved to Elizabethtown from Bladenboro in the early 60s after a year in Charlotte, attending Carolina School of Broadcasting. My dream was to be a DJ at a radio station. I had visited 2 or 3 stations in the area before departing for school.

When I returned home, I visited WBLA and met Mr. Chatham Clark, General Manager and part owner. Mr. Clark was a distinguished gentleman. At the time, I did not know he was a former member of the CIA and spent some time working at the Pentagon and in various foreign countries. That is another story.

Mr. Clark told me he had no vacancies at the time but asked if I would be interested in working part-time at the radio station for a while if he could assist me in locating a full-time job, locally. That was my best offer. My answer was yes and I began working on weekends.

A short time later I was advised to visit Top Mode Manufacturing, Elizabethtown site, located a block off Poplar Street, behind what was then Potter Motor Company, now occupied by Taco Bell restaurant.

I soon learned what a sweatshop was, but it was better than cropping tobacco. It was air conditioned. About 100 females were employed, and maybe 5 or 6 males. Pay was based on production and I was to spread and cut out dresses from a pattern that, when completed would produce up to 120 dozen dresses that would retail for $3.95 to $4.95 each, so I was told.

Needless to say, I did not go to broadcasting school to cut out dresses, but what I discovered over the years changed my mind about the operation, the employees and citizens of the area. Employees, for the most part were hard working, dedicated folks working for not much more than minimum wages, but it was a job.

I learned later that area residents purchase stock, $10 a share to build the facility to create jobs, and Top Mode eventually occupied it. To make a long story shorter, I eventually secured a job at WBLA. After about 15 years, I became the owner, well with a lot of financial assistance from a bank and a local banker that took an interest in me and what I was attempting to do.

Moving back to my story about Top Mode and local investors. After many years, cut and sew operations began to fall out of favor as a workplace. Low wages and other work opportunities would eventually lead to the dismantling of Top Mode, as well as other such operations in the area, and a decision was made to sell the facility and return investments to the owners.

I was one of three asked to figure out how to get it done. We employed the services of a local attorney, Gary Grady, to find the investors and return their money. At about the same time, there was an effort by a local group to build a facility to attract a medical doctor and many asked that their money be used to support that project, again $10 per share.

Mr. Grady spent considerable time dismantling the original business, searching for investors, or heirs with no address and little but a name in a book, and agreed to do it for little more than expenses.

Continued on page 5...
I say all that to show how local folks, at that time, worked to provide jobs and services with little or no assistance from outside sources.

Eventually, the medical building was sold to a young doctor, Dr. Bruce Phillips, who agreed to come to Elizabethtown and served for many years. He purchased the facility and, as before, investor’s money was returned, no interest, principal only. Another task performed by Mr. Grady.

Says a lot about folks in the area. When there was a need, local folks responded, on at least two occasions that I am aware of. And what’s more important than jobs and healthcare?

That’s why I love calling Bladen County home. Folks do what needs to be done. And, bet they would do it again, if there was another such need.
Eighth Grade Job Shadowing a Success

In February the groundhog was not the only one looking for a shadow in Bladen County. Each year Bladen County Schools Career and Technical Education Department partner together with Bladen County 4-H to bring the annual Eighth Grade Job Shadow Day to life.

This year’s event was held on February 12, 2019 and around 94 youth qualified to participate in this annual event. Guidance counselors, teachers, and bus drivers from the middle schools serve as chaperones for some of the job sites.

To be considered to participate in the event, eighth graders wrote essays about their future career and why they would like to work in their chosen career field. Each middle school in Bladen County can recommend up to twenty students to take part in the job shadow day based on their submissions.

After students are selected the planning committee contacts businesses and professionals in our community to provide a couple of hours of shadowing on the job experience for the youth.

Students visit various departments at Bladen Community College, retail stores, the local veterinarian, Bladen County Sheriff’s Department, and many other local businesses and industries. Once the job shadowing was finished, the students traveled back to the NC Cooperative Extension office for a luncheon and a presentation.

Valerie Newton, Public Relations and Information Officer, Bladen County schools brought the welcome and words of encouragement and inspiration to kick off this year’s luncheon, which was sponsored by STAR Telephone. Tiina Mundy from Bladen Community College provided information about what not to wear to a job interview and discussed professional dress. Then, the staff of the Bladen County NC Works Career Center delivered an interactive presentation to teach the youth about soft skills needed to be successful.

Other financial assistance for this program was offered by Smithfield Foods and NC Farm Bureau Federation provided materials and items to help make the event complete. The planning team stated they were very thankful to all of the local business partners and local professionals that served as hosts to the eager eighth graders.

Job Hosts for the 2019 Job Shadowing according to event organizers were: Ag Ext Office, Bruce McLean Extension Agent; Bladen Community College – Accounting Teacher, Biology Professor, Computer/IT, Cosmetology Department, Nurse Department, Professor; Becky Spearman Extension Agent-Livestock; Elizabethtown Veterinary Clinic; Bladen Online - Charlotte Smith; Campbell Oil Company - Brian Campbell; Burney’s Bakery; Cape Fear Fitness – Physical Therapy; Dean Hilton – Realtor; Dickerson’s Pharmacy; Dr. Dave Allen – Dentistry; East Bladen High School, Robby Priest – Sports and Coaching; Elizabethtown Family Dentist – Dr. Justin DeGarmo and Dr. Annie Green; Elizabethtown Fire Department; Elizabethtown Primary Counselor, Elizabethtown Primary Holly Meggs – School Psychologist; Karen Suggs – Animal Control; Larry Guyton – Bladen County Sheriff’s Office; Leinwand’s - Ricky Leinwand; Nikki Dennis – Clerk of Court; RMJ Logistics – Auto Mechanics; Sign Logic – Scott Walters; Smithfield Hog Production; and West Bladen High School – Art Teacher.
Calendar of Events
By Dora Brogdon

APRIL

April 5: The 30th annual Bladen We Care Gala will be held on Friday, April 5, 2019 at Cape Fear Vineyard and Winery in Elizabethtown. The band for this year’s gala will be the Legacy Motown Revue. The Gala is one of two main fundraisers that help to support Bladen We Care. The Annual Byron Gooden Bladen We Care Golf Tournament will be held on Thursday, April 25, 2019, at Vineyard Golf At White Lake. The golf tournament will be a 4-man Captain's Choice event with two tournaments, a morning tourney and an afternoon tourney.

April 6: Bladenboro Spring Fling - Penny Walters the event Chairman announced the band performing at the event will be Gary Lowder and the Smokin’ Hot. The band will entertain from 7:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m., while food and craft vendors on site offer up a large variety of items. The event will be held at the Bladenboro Farmer’s Market on Saturday, April 6, 2019. Everyone is invited to attend. Claudette Guy is the food vendor coordinator. Food vendor booths are $75. Craft and business vendors’ booths are $25.

April 9: The will be a meeting for Bladen County Relay for Life at the Bladen County Public Library in Elizabethtown at 6 p.m. All team captains are urged to attend.

April 18: On April 18 the Special Olympics will be held at Elizabethtown Middle School. The event will begin at 10 a.m. and will last until 2 p.m. Join others as they celebrate the amazing abilities of our Olympians!

April 25: A circus is coming to town. The Lewis and Clark Circus is coming to Lu Mil Vineyard on Thursday, April 25, 2019, with two show times, 5 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Advance tickets for the circus are on sale now at Lu Mil Vineyard.

Continued on page 9...

Ja’Tyra Moore-Peterson & Tyre Boykin Named All-District 4; Patty Evers Coach Of The Year
By John Clark

East Bladen senior Ja’Tyra Moore-Peterson and West Bladen junior Tyre Boykin have been named to the North Carolina Basketball Coaches Association’s All-District 4 teams.

Moore-Peterson, the Three Rivers Conference Player of the Year, was named to the All-District 4 Girls First Team. The UNC-Pembroke signee led the Lady Eagles to a perfect 18-0 conference record and 27-2 overall mark.

Moore-Peterson scored 1,649 points in her East Bladen career and averaged 15.6 points, 5 rebounds, 4.2 assists and 3 steals per game. A deadly long-range shooter, Moore-Peterson connected on 53 of 124 three-point attempts (43%).

The East Bladen star was slated to play for Lady Eagle Coach Patty Evers in Saturday's Carolinas Classic All-Star Game but was sidelined by a health issue.

Boykin was selected to the All-District 4 Boys Third Team. He poured in 21.1 points per game this season to lead the Knight offense.

The 5-11 guard scored over 30 points twice with a season-high of 35 points. Boykin scored 20 or more points in
April 27: The Bladen County Relay for Life event will be held from 11 a.m. until 11 p.m. at the Elizabethtown Middle School.

April 27: The annual Kelly Spring Fest will be held on Saturday, April 27, 2019, at the Kelly ball field. A parade begins at 10 a.m. on White Oak Road across from the Kelly ball field ending at Centerville Baptist Church. Parade entries should be lined up by 9:30 a.m. Local live entertainment will be provided by The Pink Slips band. The band will take to the stage immediately following the parade at the ball field. Food, arts and craft vendors are all welcome. All vendors will need to be registered by April 24th. Booth rental is $25 for craft vendors and $100 for food vendors. All vendors should be set up by 9 a.m.

MAY

May 2: The Bladen County Juvenile Crime Prevention Council will conduct their annual Youth Awards Banquet at 12 noon at the Powell-Melvin Agricultural Center, 208 Smith Circle, Elizabethtown.

May 4: May Day on May 4th starting at 10 am at the Baltimore Community Center in Council. The eighth grade classes that graduated from the facility back in 1946-1949 will be in attendance according to Ms. Jean Lloyd one of the event organizers.

May 17: The Elizabethtown Rotary Club has been distributing scholarships for years to local high school students. This year the club has a goal to award even more scholarships according to their President, Col. Roy Allen. Michael Leinwand, the club’s Golf Tournament chair, announced yesterday the specifics of the upcoming event. The Rotary Golf Tournament will be Friday, May 17, 2019, at Vineyard Golf located at 4723 US-701 in between Elizabethtown and White Lake.

May 17 & 18: The annual White Lake Water Festival is scheduled to take place. The event will kick off with a Classic Car Cruise-In and concert on Friday and events will take place all day on Saturday beginning with the annual parade at 11 a.m. There will be vendors in the Goldston’s Beach and live entertainment.

JUNE

June 20: The annual Sunset Jams Concert Series will kick off with a performance by the Pizzaz Band at Goldston’s Beach at White Lake from 6 until 9 p.m. The concert will be held rain or shine. Admission is free and the public is welcome to attend.

Visit BladenOnline.com for more information and a full calendar of events.

East Bladen’s Lady Eagles dominated the Three Rivers Conference girls basketball play during the season and now they have won the league’s major post-season awards. Coach Patty Evers was selected as the league’s Coach of the Year.
Celebrated for making a difference
By Charlotte Smith

Bladen County still draws a large crowd when celebrating influential leaders who have helped shape communities. Recently a large group attended festivities to recognize two local leaders, Mrs. Shelby Patrick and Mrs. Berline Graham for their work with the Bladen County Senior Citizens with the Department on Aging at the Baltimore Community Center in Council. The Retirement Luncheon held on March 22, 2019 was organized by the Carvers Creek Citizens Association with Director, Ms. Quessie Peterson.

Mrs. Berline P. Graham served as the Director of the Baltimore Center’s Senior Community Service Employment Program for 15 years. Mrs. Shelby J. Patrick served as Supervisor for 12 years at the Baltimore Center’s Senior Community Service Employment Program. The Baltimore Center’s Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) provides part-time employment opportunities in community service activities for seniors aged 55 and older. Participants in the program contribute to the well-being of their community while they engage in training activities and develop job skills according to Ms. Peterson.

Over the years dozens of seniors have participated in the SCSEP program at the Baltimore Center, however, Mrs. Graham was the founding member. Mrs. Graham worked at the Center for over 30 years according to those in attendance.

Rev. Rachel Mitchell was the emcee of the event. She spoke highly of both honorees.

“I want to be just like Mrs. Graham when I grow up,” Rev. Mitchell said.

When Mrs. Graham was asked to give a few words, she first thanked the Lord for the day, the opportunity and the crowd.

Mrs. Graham then explained how the Community Center where the SCSEP program is housed came to be in existence.

She said, “First we had to do some things to get the building. Trees were growing in it, and look at it now. It is a blessing to the

Continued on page 11...
Mrs. Graham reminded the crowd before she closed, “While we are yet able to work and make people happy, we need to do it.” She closed giving thanks and love to all those in attendance.

Mrs. Shelby J. Patrick spoke as well giving thanks. Mrs. Patrick gave testimony to the work she and Mrs. Graham did together to make SCSEP a success.

“It’s been a pleasure working up here,” Mrs. Patrick said.

Others spoke and gave their kind words to Mrs. Graham and Mrs. Patrick as well. They also announced ways the center Mrs. Graham and Mrs. Patrick worked hard to obtain is still being used.

All were invited to attend May Day on May 4th starting at 10 am at the Baltimore Community Center in Council. The eighth grade classes that graduated from the facility back in 1946-1949 will be in attendance according to Ms. Jean Lloyd one of the event organizers.
Hubert Kinlaw celebrating 60 years at Sampson-Bladen Oil Company
By Erin Smith

It is not often one hears of someone staying with a company very long and it is very rare to hear of someone staying on the job for 60 years. On January 19, 2019, Hubert Kinlaw marked 60 years as an employee with Sampson-Bladen Oil Company, Inc.

“I want people to remember me as a man of his word. You treat me right and you’ll be treated right,” said Kinlaw as he recalled his time at Sampson-Bladen Oil.

Sampson Bladen Oil Company commemorated the occasion with a special reception held at Cape Fear Vineyard and Winery in Elizabethtown.

David Clark said, “We have quite a few more things that we are counting on Hubert to take care of before he leaves the company.”

He continued. “I have searched my mind and racked my brain and I cannot think of anyone anywhere else who has been with the same company for 60 years.”

Clark said the fact he has worked for the company for 60 years is a remarkable feat that makes Kinlaw stand out above anyone else.

“Hubert Kinlaw could have retired many years ago if he was not dedicated to the company and to the customers that he served. He stayed at work because he knew what he was doing was important and essential to this company and to the many customers that depended on him he also knew he could do a good job and do it right,” said Clark.

Clark said when Kinlaw first joined the company, most of the clients were filling stations and a few home heating oil customers and tobacco curing and farm services. He said that expanded into selling tobacco barns and would eventually turn into an LP gas business. He said Kinlaw also started another business. He converted two outlets—one in Riegelwood and another in Elizabethtown—to convenience stores and Handee Hugos was born. Handee Hugos now has 80 stores.

Kinlaw reminisced about his time with company on Monday afternoon. He said that he joined Sampson-Bladen Oil Company when he was 23 years old. He grew up in the community of Sandy Grove and graduated from Bladenboro High School. Kinlaw said he joined the US Air Force and served one tour of duty. When he returned home, he had 90 days to decide if he wanted to re-enlist. Kinlaw said by this time he had a family and he decided it was time to come home.

“I had reasons I felt like it was time to get out (of the Air Force),” said Kinlaw.

He said when he approached Sampson-Bladen Oil Company about a job, the only thing he knew about the company was that they had a blue and white truck and at that time, they had a Pure logo on their...Continued on page 13
vehicles. Kinlaw said the only question they asked was if he could drive a truck, to which he replied, “Yes.”

Kinlaw shortly after being hired, he was loading a truck in the yard and the manager came outside and asked him if he could type. Kinlaw said he could and the manager asked him how well he typed. Kinlaw recalled telling the manager he had some experience typing in the Air Force and the manager then gave him a job in the office.

“I’m very appreciative of what the Clarks’ did,” said Kinlaw.

In the 1970s, Rogers Clark moved to the Clinton office and Kinlaw was promoted manager over the Elizabethtown office.

The Elizabethtown office of Sampson-Bladen Oil holds many memories for Kinlaw. He said lately he has been coming into the office, making deposits, checking the mail and collecting on past due accounts.

Kinlaw also has served the Bladen County citizens through service to the community. Kinlaw has served as Bladen County Coroner since 1986 and retired in 2018. Kinlaw said he was a member of the Elizabethtown Jaycees until he “aged out” of the group. Kinlaw has served as a member of the Elizabethtown Rescue Squad which was strictly voluntary when he joined. He said the rescue service later moved towards having paid positions but there are still many volunteers who go on calls.

Kinlaw said he ended up in the position of coroner because of Wanda Campbell. He related that he got a call from Campbell one evening and she appointed him to be assistant coroner to Coroner Aubrey Flint. He was later approached about seeking election as Coroner.
Tips from the determined, Alyssa Bell

By Charlotte Smith

Overcoming odds is something Alyssa Bell, a 16 year old West Bladen High School student and athlete displays well in every aspect of her life.

Alyssa was born the premature daughter of Scott and Mary Bell, but even back then she had a fighting spirit according to her parents. Little did the family know, Alyssa’s health issues were not over.

In 2017, during a routine health screening at her school, Alyssa found out she had scoliosis. Alyssa being diagnosed in tenth grade with the spinal deformity was a shock to the Bell family.

Scoliosis affects about three percent of the population in the United States according to the Mayo Clinic. Diagnosing scoliosis in its early stages is important for treatment options according to specialists in the field. Sometimes bracing the spine may prevent the need for surgery, however, in Alyssa’s case, surgery was necessary, according to her mother, Mary.

In August of 2017, Alyssa underwent surgery on her spine. Two rods and some bolts were inserted into her back to help the curvature caused by scoliosis, Alyssa said.

Before her surgery Alyssa was a competitive athlete in cheerleading and tennis. She was also an active member of the Beta, Hosa, ECCLA, FCA, and the National Honor Society clubs. In addition to the clubs and sports Alyssa held positions as a beauty queen, a choir member and was active in her church’s youth group.

After her surgery, Alyssa came back even stronger many say.

“Alyssa is an example of resilience and determination for her fellow students. We have seen her courage and stamina increase in all areas of her life since the surgery.” West Bladen High School Principal, Mrs. Peggy Hester said.

“There was never a doubt that she would do great things, and this experience has shown that she will not be deterred from whatever path she chooses,” Mrs. Hester continued.

Alyssa not only continued in most of the clubs and sports she had participated in before the scoliosis diagnosis, but now she is doing even more.

In October of 2018, Alyssa with her tennis partner, Autumn Brisson won the Three Rivers Conference tennis doubles championship.

Alyssa did give up cheerleading and has put on her running shoes. This spring, Alyssa has already placed in and won some track events.

The title of Miss North Carolina Queen of Hope also hangs around Alyssa’s neck this year. The state pageant win comes with a scholarship as well.

Michelle Fisher, Director of the NCQOH Pageant, said, “Alyssa is one of the most focused and determined young
Best of the Best Teacher in Bladen County
1. Alley Rich
2. Patsy Moffat
3. Jennie Simmons

Best of the Best Supporting Staff Member in the Bladen County Schools
1. Greg High
2. Lynn Ransom
3. Smiley Butler

Best of the Best Coach
1. Robbie Priest
2. Patty Evers
3. Jay Raynor

Bladen County’s Best of the Best Athlete
1. Zach Meares
2. Larrell Murchison
3. Lacey Suggs

Best Overall Restaurant
1. Giorgio’s Restaurant & Pizza
2. San Jose Restaurant
3. Christopher’s Steak House

Best of the Best Steak
1. Christopher’s Steak House
2. Giorgio’s Restaurant & Pizza
3. Cape Fear Vineyard & Winery

Best of the Best Chicken
1. Melton’s
2. Giorgio’s Restaurant & Pizza
3. KFC

Best of the Best Burger
1. Melvin’s
2. Benson’s Grill
3. Cain’s Grill

Best of the Best Dessert
1. Burney’s Sweets & More
2. Glenda’s Desserts
3. Giorgio’s Restaurant & Pizza

Best of the Best Pizza
1. Giorgio’s Restaurant & Pizza
2. Pizza Hut
3. Pizza Palace

Best of the Best Coffee
1. Dragonfly Coffee House
2. McDonald’s
3. Over Yonder Coffee, Tea, Creamery & Much More
Best of the Best Wine
1. Lu Mil Vineyard
2. Cape Fear Vineyard & Winery
3. Giorgio’s Restaurant

Best of the Best Bar
1. Giorgio’s Restaurant & Pizza
2. Cape Fear Vineyard & Winery
3. San Jose Restaurant

Best of the Best Ice Cream
1. Over Yonder Coffee, Teas, & Creamery & Much More
2. Dairy Queen
3. Hershey’s Ice Cream

Best of the Best Hang Out
1. Giorgio’s Restaurant & Pizza
2. Cape Fear Vineyard & Winery
3. San Jose Restaurant

Best of the Best Place to Fish
1. Greene’s Pond
2. Cape Fear River
3. Black River

Best of the Best Place for Travelers to Stay Overnight
1. Cape Fear Vineyard & Winery
2. Elizabethtown Inn
3. Lu Mil Vineyard

Best of the Best to Workout
1. Healthworks
2. Bladen County Clerk of Court
3. Home

Best of the Best Model Citizen
1. Mac Campbell
2. Charles Ray Peterson
3. David Clark

Best of the Best Fitness Trainer
1. Mary Caitlin Clark Campbell
2. Cameron Hatcher
3. Christian Campbell

Best of the Best Pastor or Minister
1. Pastor Cameron McGill
2. Pastor Jason Williams
3. Pastor Dale Hester

Best of the Best Bladen County Elected Official
1. Sheriff Jim McVicker
2. Commissioner Charles Ray Peterson
3. Clerk of Superior Court Niki Dennis

Best of the Best Firefighter
1. Chad Sholar
2. Tony Higgins
3. Chase Lancaster

Best of the Best Emergency Responder Service Member
1. Stephen Hester
2. Bradley Kinlaw
3. Heather Ellis

Best of the Best Law Enforcement Officer
1. Sheriff Jim McVicker
2. Dwayne Cheshire
3. Mark McMichael
Best of the Best Nurse
1. Patricia Smith
2. Melissa Edge
3. Nathalie Gore

Best of the Best Physician Assistant / Family Nurse Practitioner
1. Allison Priest
2. Ashley Marlowe
3. Shelly Brown

Best of the Best Doctor
1. Dr. Stephen Bridgers
2. Dr. Robert Rich
3. Dr. Pearly Graham Hoskins

Best of the Best Pharmacist
1. Bruce Dickerson
2. Rebecca Hester
3. Gene Anderson

Best of the Best Dentist
1. Dr. Dave Allen
2. Dr. Tracie L Vestal DDS
3. Elizabethtown Family Dentistry

Best of the Best Dental Hygienist
1. Melissa McNeil
2. Melanie Wheeless
3. Amy Britt

Best of the Best Farmer
1. Dan Ward
2. Billy Augustine
3. Steven Smith

Best of the Best Real Estate Agent
1. Dean Hilton
2. Ginger Tatum
3. Ryan Godwin

Best of the Best Attorney/Lawyer
1. Gary Grady
2. Cynthia Adams Singletary
3. Leslie Johnson

Best of the Best Vehicle Sales Associate
1. Clint Hester
2. Bobby Gooden
3. Amanda Stewart

Best of the Best Vehicle Mechanic
1. Steve Roy
2. Scott Gordon
3. Floyd Edge

Best of the Best Manager/Boss
1. Reynold Hester
2. Dan McQueen
3. Eddie Madden

Best of the Best Insurance Sales Agent
1. Richard “Sling” Shaw
2. Eddie White
3. Melissa Singletary

Best of the Best Hair Stylist
1. Joseph D Price
2. Ashley Everette
3. Marcia Clark
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1st Place</th>
<th>2nd Place</th>
<th>3rd Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Best of the Best Nail Technician</td>
<td>Kendal Yates</td>
<td>Tyler Strickland</td>
<td>Beverly Hester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best of the Best Sales Associate</td>
<td>Tony Higgins</td>
<td>Morgan McQueen</td>
<td>Adam Jordan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best of the Best Barber</td>
<td>Trip Willoughby</td>
<td>Russ Bridgers</td>
<td>Rodney Baxley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best of the Best Accountant</td>
<td>Bryon Scott</td>
<td>Amy Butler McQueen</td>
<td>Phil Byrd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best of the Best Photographer</td>
<td>Limelight Photography</td>
<td>Galyean’s Gallery</td>
<td>Vanessa G. Photography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best of the Best Massage Therapist</td>
<td>Judith Brogdon</td>
<td>Carrie Kelly</td>
<td>Tyler Strickland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best of the Best Non-profit</td>
<td>Bladen We Care</td>
<td>Boost the Boro, Inc.</td>
<td>Bladen’s Bloomin’ Agri-Industrial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best of the Best Pharmacy</td>
<td>Dickerson’s Pharmacy</td>
<td>Anderson’s Drug Store</td>
<td>The Medicine Shoppe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best of the Best Medical Center</td>
<td>Bladen Medical Associates</td>
<td>Southeastern Regional Medical Center Clarkton</td>
<td>Southeastern Regional Medical Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best of the Best Small Engine Repair Service</td>
<td>Thompson’s Small Engine Repair</td>
<td>Bladen Off Road</td>
<td>Hudson Radiator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best of the Best Real Estate Company</td>
<td>Hilton Auction &amp; Realty</td>
<td>Tatum Realty and Property Management Service</td>
<td>White Sands Properties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best of the Best Auto Parts Store</td>
<td>Advance Auto Parts</td>
<td>NAPA</td>
<td>O’Riley Auto Parts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best of the Best Place to be Employed</td>
<td>Bladen County</td>
<td>Giorgio’s Restaurant &amp; Pizza</td>
<td>Campbell Oil Company &amp; Hester Tire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best of the Best Gas/Propane Company</td>
<td>Bobby Taylor Oil</td>
<td>Cape Fear Propane</td>
<td>Campbell Oil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Best of the Best Pest Control Company
1. Down East Pest Control
2. McDuffie Pest Control
3. Terminix

Best of the Best Bank
1. State Employees Credit Union
2. First Citizens
3. BB&T

Best of the Best Golf Cart Company
1. Dan’s Golf Carts
2. Coaches
3. Strickland’s Golf Carts

Best of the Best Insurance Company
1. Farm Bureau
2. Eddie White, State Farm
3. Lacy West Insurance

Best of the Best Hardware Store
1. Bladen Hardware
2. Bladen Builders Supply
3. Big Blue Store

Best of the Best Building Contracting Company
1. DeVane Builders
2. Eric Davis Construction
3. Still Water Creations

Best of the Best Electrician/Electrician Company
1. Wire Nut Electric
2. Ellis Robeson Electric, Inc.
3. Alton Johnson

Best of the Best Plumbing Company
1. Bo Pharr Plumbing
2. Eric Bryan’s Plumbing
3. Vick Shaw Plumbing

Best of the Best Heating and Air Conditioning Company
1. Cape Fear Heating & Cooling, LLC
2. Benson’s Heating & Air
3. B. S. Carroll’s Heating & Air

Best of the Best Roofing Company
1. Willie Hemingway
2. Mike Shaw Metal Roofing
3. MKE, LTD

Best of the Best Car Dealership Company
1. Affordable Auto & Tire
2. Nissan of Clinton
3. Dan’s Golf Cars

Best of the Best Barber Shop
1. Bridger’s Barber Shop
2. Bladenboro Barber Shop
3. Rodney’s Barber Shop

Best of the Best Furniture Store
1. Kinlaw Furniture
2. Ray’s Furniture
3. Badcock & More

Best of the Best Boutique
1. Lolli’s on Main
2. Yia Yia’s Gifts & More
3. Smellie Bloomers
**Best of the Best Grocery Store**
1. Food Lion
2. Dublin IGA
3. Fresh Foods

**Best of the Best Salon**
1. Joseph D. Salon and Boutique
2. New Attitudes
3. Uptown Roots Hair Salon

**Best of the Best Place for Pet Care**
1. Barking Lot, Inc.
2. Elizabethtown Veterinary Hospital
3. Bladen Animal Hospital

**Best of the Best Place to Buy Men’s Clothing**
1. Leinwand’s
2. Fisher’s Mens Shop
3. Walmart

**Best of the Best Place to Buy Women’s Clothing**
1. The Ladies’ Shop
2. Leinwand’s
3. Goody’s

**Best of the Best Place to Buy Shoes**
1. Leinwand’s
2. Shoe Show
3. Fisher’s Mens Shop & The Ladies Shop

**Best of the Best Jewelry Store**
1. Fowler’s Jewelry
2. Ray’s Inc.
3. Bob’s Jewel Shop

**Best of the Best Place for Accounting Services**
1. Till & Butler CPA
2. Thompson, Price, Scott, Adams & Co., PA
3. S. Preston Douglas & Associates

**Best of the Best Place to Purchase Tires**
1. Hester Tire
2. Bladen Off Road
3. T & T Tire

**Best of the Best Place to Purchase Lawn & Garden Equipment**
1. Big Blue Store
2. Thompson’s Small Engine Repair
3. Tractor Supply
Bullard honored with Scouting award
By Erin Smith

During the recent Cape Fear Council-Boy Scouts of America Council Recognition Banquet held on March 14th, 2019, Walter Bullard was recognized as the 2018 Eagle Class Honoree. The banquet was held at the Hotel Ballast Wilmington in Wilmington, NC.

Bullard has been involved in Scouting throughout his life and is the founder of Bladen Office Supplies in Elizabethtown.

“I was a Boy Scout then went to college and came back to Bladen County and started the Dublin Scout Troop back up,” said Bullard.

He said he has served as Cubmaster, Assistant Scoutmaster, Scoutmaster, Explorer, Adviser, Roundtable, Commissioner and District Commissioner. Bullard also achieved the rank of Eagle Scout. During his tenure as Scoutmaster, he has seen 29 Scouts achieve the rank of Eagle Scout.

Bullard is also the recipient of numerous merit badges and community awards for his volunteer efforts.

When asked what he thought when he learned he was being recognized, Bullard said, “I was just humbled.”

He said he currently assists the Dublin Scout Troop whenever he is needed.

Robin Summerlin, who attended the banquet, said he was happy to learn Bullard was the honoree for the 2018 Eagle Scout class.

“He had a big impact on my life and Troop 622 in Dublin,” said Summerlin.

Summerlin was not the only Scout who Bullard influenced greatly. Allen Johnson, also recalled how Bullard would encourage his Scouts to achieve the rank of Eagle Scout.

Johnson said the things that stand out to him the most about Bullard being the Scout Master in Troop 602 was “how he pushed you to learn the most from scouting.”
Johnson said, “I remember at the first scout meeting I had, he told us new scouts that we were crossing over from being little boys to young men, and that we can no longer dismiss our actions or inactions on being a kid—basically it was time to grow up and be responsible.”

Johnson said he knew then, that Mr. Bullard as the Scout Master, was not going to hold your hand, or “baby you,” but rather he would teach you and lead you.

“If you wanted to eat your eggs and bacon that cold and rainy morning while camping, you had to get up and get that fire going yourself,” Johnson recalled.

Johnson also said Bullard was also a remarkable woodsman and he taught his Scouts a lot—from tying knots to knowing which plants were edible, he knew it. Lastly, if you were serious about getting your Eagle, he would push you to try to get it before you turned 16 and other distractions got in the way, stated Johnson.

Summerlin explained that each year, the Eagle Scout class chooses an adult to honor and noted it was fitting that Bullard should be the honoree. Summerlin said that Bullard has done a lot for the Scout troops in both Elizabethtown and Dublin. He noted a lot of Bullard’s former Eagle Scouts attended the banquet.

David deAndrade presented Bullard with the honor during the ceremony.

Summerlin said the Council Recognition Banquet also recognized the largest class of Eagle Scouts in the history of the Cape Fear Council. According to the Cape Fear Council website, 117 Scouts achieved the rank of Eagle Scout.

There were four recipients honored with the Silver Beaver Award. They were Judge Kent Harrell from Burgaw, Mr. Chris Smith from Lumberton, Mr. Steve Holmstrand from Southport and Dr. Robert Zambrowski from Hampstead.
Retiring after 31 years in medicine
By Erin Smith

A crowd of friends, colleagues and neighbors gathered on a Friday in January this year at Cape Fear Vineyard and Winery in Elizabethtown to celebrate a milestone. After giving 31 years of her life to working in the field of medicine, Dr. Pearly Graham Hoskins has decided it’s time to retire.

Dr. Hoskins was welcomed to the podium with a standing ovation as she greeted her guests and colleagues.

“I’m speechless,” said Dr. Hoskins as she looked around the room at the large audience that had gathered to thank her and to celebrate her career.

She related how she had attended Howard University and UNC Medical School before traveling to and residing in Trinidad. When she returned home she was looking for a place to set up her practice. She related David Clark called her and encouraged her to contact Leo Petit who was the Administrator of Bladen County Hospital at the time. Dr. Hoskins said after talking with him and Clark, she decided to open a solo practice in Bladen County.

“I came. I started a private practice—solo practice, which you did then,” said Dr. Hoskins. “It has been a wonderful, wonderful 31 years.”

She recounted that part of her reason for staying in Bladen County was her father, the late Artis Graham and her mother, Berline Graham. Dr. Hoskins said, “Daddy would ask us, ‘how are you paying the rent to God? How are you paying him rent for enjoying his creation?’”

Dr. Hoskins said she told her father she would work for two years at Bladen County Hospital and help to improve it. She laughed as she said that was 31 years ago and she told her father she had paid the rent to God.

Dr. Hoskins credits God with ordering her steps and allowing her to return to her native Bladen County. She said when she initially graduated from college, she did not think she would return home.

Her brother Jerry Graham spoke on behalf of the family. He said the family is proud of Dr. Hoskins accomplishments throughout her career. Not only is she a licensed physician, she is also a minister and volunteers her time in the community.

continued on page 24...
“We love her,” said Graham.

Her colleagues also shared their love and deep respect for Dr. Hoskins. Cape Fear Valley CEO Mike Nagowski also spoke.

“She has meant more to this community than any other individual has meant to any community. To have a physician grow up in our community and return to take care of our community is truly unique,” said Nagowski.

He added the manner in which Dr. Hoskins cares for her patients and the level of health care in Bladen County is truly remarkable.

Cape Fear Valley Chief Operating Officer Dan Weatherly echoed Nagowski’s sentiments. He spent several years at Bladen County Hospital immediately following the merger of Cape Fear Valley and Bladen County Hospital. Weatherly said it is very unique to have someone to decide to come back and offer medical care in their community where they grew up.

“She practiced what she preaches. She gives her time, her talents and her treasures, both to the foundation and to the citizens of this community,” said Weatherly.

He thanked her for her dedication and hard work for 31 years of service.

Current President of Cape Fear Valley-Bladen Healthcare Dr. Roxie Wells also spoke. “Dr Hoskins has served many many years in this community and hospital as well,” said Dr. Wells.

Dr. Wells said Dr. Hoskins was graduate of East Arcadia High School and earned the rank of Valedictorian and earned a bachelor’s degree in chemistry at Howard. She graduated from the medical school at UNC Chapel Hill. Dr. Hoskins performed an internship at Howard University and then moved to Trinidad where she studied Psychology and then returned home. Dr. Hoskins completed her residency in Wilmington.

“I think that we are extremely blessed that she made the decision all of those years ago to return home. It is rare. It is difficult to get individuals who are well educated, well learned to come back and serve their communities,” said Dr. Wells.

Dr. Hoskins did not elaborate on her plans for the future.
Excelling at school and in life
By Erin Smith

Often times, life can give us unexpected surprises. For one East Bladen High School student the loss of his mother motivated him to not only succeed, but to excel in life.

Recently, Kahlil McKoy, 16, walked into East Bladen High School teacher Cheryl West’s classroom with a large smile on his face. It’s a smile that West and other teachers and staff say is infectious.

McKoy moved to Bladen County from New Jersey to reside with his aunt and uncle after his grandmother became ill. It was while he was in middle school McKoy learned his biological mother was battling breast and bone cancer.

“I really started slacking in school and I really didn’t care about anything any more because my focus was on my mother,” said McKoy.

He said that shortly before his mother passed away, he made her a promise that he would work harder and do better academically.

“When I got to high school, I asked myself what can I do to make my record look better than what it did,” said McKoy.

He explained that he wasn’t a terrible student. McKoy said he was an A-B student but felt he could have been a straight A student. He explained that when he got to high school he decided he was going to join some of the clubs and work to better his grades and strive to be successful at everything he did. McKoy said he joined Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), Future Farmers of America (FFA) and he joined the Beta Club in his sophomore year.

He is also a dual enrollment student at Bladen Community College (BCC). “The offer came up to take BCC classes and my GPA was there, so I did it,” said McKoy proudly.

During his junior year this year, McKoy is serving as President of Key Club, the Vice-President of FBLA, the Vice-President of FFA, and he is also a member of Beta Club. He is also taking courses at BCC and has one Chemistry course at East Bladen High School. McKoy also enjoys performing community service projects and is an active member of his church.

McKoy also shared his experience at the State Beta Club
Convention. He said that in order to succeed or to overcome obstacles, you have to create and implement a plan. He said that he had thought about ways to help grow the Beta Club through tutoring other students. McKoy explained that many students are on the cusp of having the grade point average needed to join Beta Club. McKoy said he believes, if fellow Beta Club members would work to tutor those students, those students will then be able to improve their grade point averages enough to join Beta Club.

“We can help them and, in turn, it can help us,” said McKoy.

He also advised students who have issues at home to become involved in activities outside of the home and to not be afraid to speak with a teacher or another adult. McKoy explained when he finds he needs advice, he often comes to the campus and speaks with Mrs. West or Mrs. Willington.

“Just talk to somebody. Everybody has a story and everybody has to come from somewhere,” said McKoy.

West explained that she and McKoy would have conversations about life and things of that nature. West said through their conversations she learned McKoy’s aunt had completed an Effective Teacher Training course at Bladen Community College that West taught.

“She (McKoy’s aunt) kept talking about her nephew and how wonderful he was. I didn’t realize she was talking about him and how he had gone through so much. That is how I found out his mom had passed,” said West.

McKoy said when he first arrived at East Bladen High School, his freshman and sophomore years were not that difficult academically. McKoy said high school is really about “knowing people and interacting with people.” He advised these interactions are what will help a student later on at school.

McKoy’s teachers describe him as a very motivated and talented student. Cheryl West said when she first met McKoy, he was enrolled in her Honors Biology class during his sophomore year. She described McKoy as initially being a quiet student but as that academic year progressed, she said McKoy began to open up. West said as she learned continued on page 27...
women I’ve met. She sets goals and works hard to meet them.”

Fisher continued, “She has accomplished so much already. With her kind spirit and determination to succeed, I know her future is bright and she will continue to impact the community for good; she’s quite special.”

Many agree Alyssa has a servant’s heart and sets a great example for those around her.

Pastor Jason Lee and his wife, Krista Lee spoke highly of Alyssa, who not only participates in youth group at Dublin First Baptist Church, but is a leader to many.

She spends her weekends serving others, the couple said.

“She has a big heart,” Krista continued, “She has the confidence to lead and follow. She doesn’t have to be in a group to do things.”

Ambitious and adventurous are two words the couple used to describe Alyssa. They recounted the mission work Alyssa volunteered for over the summer and her willingness to always show up to help.

“One thing I love about Alyssa is that beyond her busy schedule, she remains Christ focused and lives with Him at the center of everything she does,” Fisher added.

more of McKoy’s story, she said he amazed her with his resiliency and his dedication to his academic endeavors. She described McKoy as very driven and determined.

“I figured out really quickly that he would get everything done, but that he was very vocal. So, he was very helpful when it came to helping other students,” said West.

Mrs. Vera Melvin, McKoy’s mathematics teachers, agreed. She said McKoy was always willing to help his fellow students which enabled her to work more with students that were struggling.

“Kahlil is a very hardworking student. He’s inquisitive and he doesn’t mind helping other students,” said Melvin.

She said she realized early on that she had to challenge McKoy with his assignments. Melvin said he thrived when she gave him more challenging coursework.

Anita Willington, who is the Beta Club sponsor, said, “Learning his personality through Beta Club, he is just outstanding.”
In February, McKoy campaigned for Senior Beta Club president. His slogan was “Vote for Kahlil. He's the Real Deal!” While he didn’t win the presidency, McKoy said he has made many new friends through this campaign. He added they still keep in touch with one another.

“It was really fun and it was a really great experience,” said McKoy.

Willington said recounted that while attending the Beta Club Convention, it was exciting to watch McKoy as he competed and ran his campaign for President. She said his infectious personality was also evident in the skit competition.

“One of the things that I discovered while learning the skit for Beta Club, he has the ability to command the room and get people to work and he is very respectful,” said Willington.

West added that while at the State Beta Club Convention, McKoy had a lot of people who gravitated to him because of his personality. “He's quick witted so to speak but also matter of fact, too,” said West.

McKoy is not only focused on what he plans to do while in high school, but he also is thinking ahead to college. McKoy said he plans to attend North Carolina State University when he graduates from East Bladen High School. When asked what advice he has to offer. McKoy said be the best you can be and then strive to do even better than that.

Visit BladenOnline.com for more articles about lifestyles in Bladen County.
Alyssa is also a dual enrollment student at Bladen Community College. She was recently inducted into the English Honor Society of Sigma Kappa Delta and has been selected to participate in the Semper Fidelis All-American Program.

“With everything she has been through, she is truly an inspiration as she excels in school and community. This young lady is impacting lives all around her,” Fisher said.

Alyssa is very modest about her ability to overcome and all of her accomplishments. However, she did give some advice to share about overcoming difficulties in life.

Alyssa’s three tips are as follows:

Have confidence.

Think of the bright side of things.

Surround yourself with positivity.

Alyssa explained the outlook she keeps on life, “Push through and persevere because it will get better.”

The Bell family are big supporters of scoliosis awareness. In the United States, June has been declared Scoliosis Awareness Month to help promote discussions and awareness about the spinal deformity.
Working together after Hurricane Florence Photographs
Elizabethtown Massage R & R

Thank you for voting us the Best Massage Therapists in Bladen!

Judith Brogdon
(910) 840-4459
Carrie Kelly
(910) 604-3091
e-townmassage.com

Protecting families & property for over 50 years.
Call 910-862-3635.

Welcome Back, Spring!
Warm sunshine and gentle breezes, backyard gatherings with family and friends, laughter and memories to last for years.

mcduffiepest.com
Bladen County’s local indie news outlet owned and operated locally by committed community members.

Cover Photos by Jamie Corbett