



OUTHERE
Thadd White offers quotes that are important to him.

A4



FOURTH&LONG
David Friedman says plan isn't sustainable.

B1



GRACE&TRUTH
Pastor Webb Hoggard writes about a new hope.

B5



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THURSDAY · APRIL 28, 2022

Shepard gets four decades behind bars

LESLIE BEACHBOARD
Managing Editor

WILLIAMSTON - A Williamston man will spend at least 40 years in prison following a conviction of statutory rape of a child.

A Martin County jury convicted James Earl Shepard Jr., 53, of the charge following several days of testimony in Martin County Superior Court.

Senior Resident Superior

Court Judge Wayland J. Sermons Jr., sentenced Shepard to a minimum of 480 months and a maximum of 636 months in the North Carolina Division of Adult Corrections.

According to District Attorney Seth Edwards, the state presented evidence that Shepard raped a 12-year-old girl in 2015 in Williamston.

According to the District Attorney, Shepard was married to the

young girl's aunt. Initially, the victim only disclosed inappropriate touching by Shepard, who was charged in 2016 with indecent liberties involving this young girl and several other minors.

Shepard pled guilty to multiple counts of indecent liberties in 2017, and received an active sentence.

It was only after Shepard went to prison that the young girl reported to law enforcement that

an actual rape had occurred, according to the DA's office.

A forensic interview at the Tedi Bear Advocacy Center in Greenville corroborated the most recent disclosure.

"It is common in child sexual assaults for a child not to disclose all the details in the beginning. I want to commend — first and foremost — the young victim, now 18, for having the courage to come forward and then follow

through with prosecution," said Edwards.

According to Edwards, in addition, he singled out his prosecutors and staff in his Martin County office, along with the Martin County Sheriff's office, for teaming up for a successful prosecution in a very difficult case.

Leslie Beachboard can be reached via email at lbeachboard@apgenc.com.



DEBORAH GRIFFIN/FOR THE ENTERPRISE

During the ceremony, County Manager U. James Bennett read the state proclamation on child abuse prevention given by N.C. Governor Roy Cooper.

Ceremony highlights Child Abuse Prevention Month

DEBORAH GRIFFIN
The Enterprise

"If you see something, say something."

This message, from Martin County Department of Social Services (DSS), is a reminder to residents to protect the county's most precious resource — children.

On Tuesday, leaders and citizens

gathered in the Martin County Courthouse courtyard for a ceremony to highlight National Child Abuse Prevention Month, which is April.

About 40 people assembled in a solemn circle on a sunny, breezy day, where blue and silver pinwheels spun playfully nearby in a make-shift garden — in contrast to the weighty subject.

The pinwheel was selected as

the national symbol of child abuse prevention by Prevent Child Abuse America in 2008.

"A symbol of childhood happiness and whimsy, they are a poignant reminder of the bright futures all children deserve," according to preventchildabuse.org.

"Positive childhood experiences in nurturing

See **CEREMONY**, A6

MCC offers digital literacy

LESLIE BEACHBOARD
Managing Editor

WILLIAMSTON - Martin Community College now offers Northstar Digital Literacy Assessments, through its College and Career Readiness Department, formally known as Basic Skills.

The training is aimed at helping adults acquire the skills needed in today's workplace.

"People without basic computer know-how are at a disadvantage when it comes to finding a job because employers expect basic computer skills for most jobs, including many entry-level positions. We joined Northstar because

it will help our clients have a better chance at getting jobs and getting ahead," said Martin Community College Director of College and Career Readiness Catina Blake.

The free set of assessments includes self-guides modules: Essential Computer Skills (Basic Computer Skills, Internet Basics, Using Emails, Windows, Mac OS), Essential Software Skills (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) and Using Technology in Daily Life (social media, information literacy, creative job search).

Closed captioning is available and screen readers are

See **LITERACY**, A7

N.C. ranks 4th in strawberry acres

LESLIE BEACHBOARD
Managing Editor

Strawberry season is here.

With the arrival of spring and warmer weather, strawberry farms are opening for shoppers, and strawberry lovers are ready for local berries.

"Growers have done a good job protecting the crop from recent cool temperatures and because of



their hard work, this year's strawberry crop looks to be plentiful. In fact, some fields are opening up for pick-your-own guests this

See **STRAWBERRY**, A7



SARAH HODGES STALLS/MARTIN COUNTY SCHOOLS

Leland Pedraza has become the one to beat when it's time to step up to the line and shoot.

MCS Archery program teaches more than shooting bow and arrow

SARAH HODGES STALLS
Martin County Schools

A new opportunity has taken many Martin County Schools' fifth graders out of their comfort zones this semester.

Some are still a bit nervous, but others are hooked and going for the bullseye.

Earlier this semester, elementary physical education teachers around the district were trained to facilitate the National Archery in Schools Program, which is a joint venture between state education and wildlife agencies. In North Carolina, the N.C. Wildlife Resource Commission is the partner agency.

NASP teaches and promotes "inter-

national-style target archery as a part of in-school curriculum."

Martin County Schools chose to launch the program via fourth and fifth grade physical education classes at E.J. Hayes Elementary School, Jamesville Elementary School, Rodgers Elementary School and South

See **ARCHERY**, A7

In this edition...



GOOD MORNING,
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OF ROBERSONVILLE
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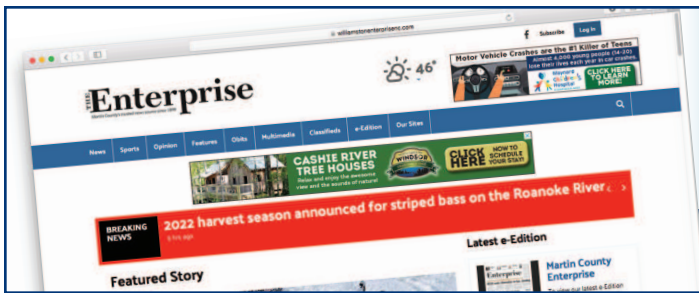
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FROM PAGE ONE



SARAH HODGES STALLS/MARTIN COUNTY SCHOOLS

Not wanting the students to have all the fun, Dalvin Worsley, who was also trained as a program facilitator, steps in to shoot and challenge the students.

ARCHERY

Continued from A1

Creek Elementary School. The core context of the course covers history, safety, technique, equipment, mental concentration, physical fitness and self-improvement. Brian Swift, who teaches physical education at Rodgers and Jamesville Elementary Schools, has been excited to teach something new and see his students learning something new. “A different skill set is exposed in archery,” according to Swift. “This is new for everyone.” Rodgers Elementary School students entered week nine of the course just prior to Spring break. Leland Pedraza, a fifth grader, has become the “person to beat” when classmates take to the shooting line. Pedraza sees the experience as much more than simple competition. “It’s exciting,” he said. “Safety has to come first. If you mess up, someone could get hurt.” He relies on his training, which included work on things like safety well before the students picked up a bow and arrow. Friendly challenges were issued as Pedraza prepared to shoot during a recent visit. When he once again walked away

with the best score of the day, sportsmanship abounded as he was congratulated by students and staff alike. “Some people are a little afraid of it at first,” Pedraza explained. “But they shouldn’t be, as long as everyone remembers our training.” Now a bow-hunter in the making outside of school, Pedraza said one of the best parts about the class for him was learning the safety rules he did not know before. Once they reach that portion of the class, all students are encouraged to try shooting. Swift makes related assignments for those intimidated by the bow such as that of scorekeeper, where math can work into the exercise. According to NASP, there has never been an archery accident in the program. Teachers and administrators like the fact this program puts all students on a level playing field from the beginning. Bonuses include building math skills, learning history and culture, stressing responsibility and encouraging social interaction. Martin County Schools has plans to expand the program. This may be to add additional grade levels and administrators hope to have district archery tournaments in the years to come.

STRAWBERRY

Continued from A1

weekend,” said North Carolina Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler. Strawberry season typically runs from mid-April

through May. Although the addition of high-tunnel and greenhouse-grown strawberries in the state has moved up the availability of local berries to March in some locations. “There are a lot more ways to grow strawberries,

and we are seeing farmers use greenhouses, high-tunnels and other forward thinking production methods to move up the time when we have fresh, locally grown strawberries,” North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consum-

er Sciences Horticultural Marketing Specialist Kevin Hardison added. North Carolina ranks fourth nationally in strawberry production, growing 1,100 acres of strawberries annually. “Farmers open when the

strawberries are plentiful enough to create a memorable experience. Always contact your local grower to verify times and availability of strawberries before you go,” Hardison closed. For fun family or group outings, go to the North

Carolina Strawberry Association’s listing at www.nc-strawberry.com/farm-locator to find a local you-pick strawberry farm and contact information. Leslie Beachboard can be reached via email at lbeachboard@apgenc.com.

LITERACY

Continued from A1

supported. Anyone can access the modules, and take the tests online at digitalliteracyassessments.org. At the end of each test, the user received a page of results, which lists the skills that have been mastered and the areas that need improvement. Many community organizations offer computer classes that are aligned with Northstar Digital Literacy Standards. “The modules are based on a set of basic computer competency benchmarks developed by a diverse group of literacy providers, business representatives and nonprofit agencies. These standards help ensure that computer classes are teaching adult learners the exact skills they need to succeed in the workplace,” Blake added. To earn a certificate for one or more of the modules, adults must take the tests in a supervised setting at an approved test site.

Martin Community College is among the community organizations using the standards as part of its programming and offering the certificates. The next class starts on Monday, May 16 at Martin Community College, 1161

Kehukee Park Rd. in Williamston. The session will be a hybrid class that meets both on campus and online, from home or in the Martin Community College computer lab. For more information of

to register, contact Catina Blake at 252-789-0288 or via email at cb77098@martincc.edu.

Leslie Beachboard can

be reached via email at lbeachboard@apgenc.com.

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