



John Clark/The Gazette

Pearl Harbor survivor Thomas ‘Gene’ Reinhardt listens during Belmont’s Veterans Day ceremony at the American Legion Post 144 building in 2013. Belmont’s Veterans Day event this year will begin at 11 a.m. Tuesday.

# A chance to say thank you

Veterans Day events around Gaston

By Adam Orr  
aorr@gastongazette.com

No matter where you are in Gaston County, you’ll have a chance to say thank you to the men and women of our armed forces Tuesday.

Veterans Day can be traced back to Nov. 11, 1918, the famed eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month when the armistice was signed that brought an end to the fighting of World War I.

The following year, President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed Nov. 11 as the first commemoration of Armistice Day, a celebration that became a legal holiday in 1938. The word “Armistice” was changed to “Veterans” in 1954 to reflect the sacrifice of the men and women who served in World War II and the Korean War.

Local events include:



### ► GASTONIA VETERANS DAY PARADE

**When:** Lineup begins at 10 a.m., parade starts at 11 a.m.  
**Where:** Downtown Gastonia  
**Details:** Beginning at Main Street and Broad Street, the parade will march west to South Street, cross Franklin Boulevard, continue onto Second Avenue and end at Memorial Hall at 109 W. Second Ave. The parade will conclude with a service remembering Gaston County residents who died during the Vietnam War.  
**Contact:** Tony Sherrill at 704-616-2002



### ► BELMONT VETERANS DAY CEREMONY

**When:** 11 a.m.  
**Where:** Stowe Park’s “Fighting Yank” statue  
**Details:** Veterans will be honored in a ceremony at the new site of Belmont’s “Fighting Yank” statue, which was first erected at Belmont Middle School in 1946. The Veterans Day ceremony will be the first since the Yank statue was moved to Stowe Park earlier this year.  
**Contact:** Ron Self at 704-825-9022



### ► KINGS MOUNTAIN VETERANS DAY PARADE

**When:** 10:45 a.m.  
**Where:** War Memorial on Railroad Avenue across from the Joy Performance Center  
**Details:** All veterans and their families are invited to join the parade. The Kings Mountain Police Department Color Guard will step off the parade with the Loch Norman Pipe Band. Marchers will proceed to Patriots Park, where the observance will take place at the Patriots Memorial. Address will be given by retired U.S. Army Sgt. Maj. Abraham Ruff. All veterans are invited to be part of the observance. There will be limited seating in front of the stage, and participants are encouraged to bring portable chairs. Parking will be available at the park. In the event of rain, the program will be moved inside to City Hall.  
**Contact:** Kings Mountain Director of Public Relations Ellis Noell at 704-734-0333



### ► MOUNT HOLLY HISTORICAL SOCIETY VETERANS DAY PROGRAM

**When:** 7 p.m.  
**Where:** First Presbyterian Church on Main Street in Mount Holly  
**Details:** The historical society will display more than 300 photos of Mount Holly area veterans in uniform. Historical Society Vice President Gary Brinkley will discuss the significance of many of the images, and the name of every veteran will be read aloud. After the program, guests are invited to the historical society’s museum next door for a reception with refreshments.  
**Contact:** Sandy Carter at smc1221@bellsouth.net or the Mount Holly Historical Society at 704-951-3046



33 military brides say ‘yes’ to Poffie Girls dresses

★ DETAILS ON HOMETOWN, PAGE 1B ★

# The Gaston Gazette

75¢ • Monday, November 10, 2014

## Back on the road

Truck driver doesn’t let leg amputation slow him down



Mike Hensdill/The Gazette

Chip Briggs poses in the cab of his tractor-trailer on Oct. 11. Briggs had his lower left leg amputated recently but is still able to do his job as a truck driver.

By Diane Turbyfill  
dturbyfill@gastongazette.com

Chip Briggs spent 60 to 70 hours a week behind the wheel of his truck before a small scratch knocked the man off his feet 11 months ago.

But Briggs refused to be kept down even after his left leg became infected last year and was amputated at the knee.

With strength, determination and a little help, Briggs climbed back into his big rig this month and is back on the road.

### SHOCKING SURGERY

Briggs’ leg started to feel sore and tender about a year ago. He let it go for a little while but ultimately ended up at the doctor.

Doctors suspected that a small scratch between his toes had gotten infected. The infection spread, and Briggs was told he would have to go under the knife. The surgeon planned to remove some of his toes.

“I said, ‘You can’t take more than two or three because I have to work tomorrow,’” Briggs said.

When Briggs woke up, he saw that doctors had to take his leg at the knee.

### UNDERINSURED

Until he needed it, Briggs had no idea about the limitations of his medical insurance.

Medical bills mounted, and many things

### DID YOU KNOW?

The N.C. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services is a nationally-funded program with an office in Gastonia. The federal program has helped disabled people get back to work for a century.

Gastonia has had an office for about 40 years. Last year, 6,723 people found employment in North Carolina through the program.

About 150 to 175 achieved employment with help from the Gastonia office in 2013.

**Source:** The N.C. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

weren’t covered.

Briggs got around using crutches, but he wanted to be able to walk again. A prosthetic leg cost \$14,000.

Searching for help, Briggs found the N.C. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, a federal program that helps disabled people get back to work.

Briggs said his caseworker at the Gastonia office was like a guardian angel. The organization paid for his prosthetic leg and helped him with other medical supplies.

“Those people are golden. Anything I’ve needed, they’ve helped,” he said.

➤➤ See **ROAD**/Page 3A

### FORECAST

HIGH

LOW

68°

37°



For complete weather, see **Page 2A**

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### TODAY’S OBITUARIES | 3B

**Cedric Edwards**, 62, Charlotte  
**Clifford Scruggs**, 63, Gastonia  
**Betty Jean Huffstetler**, 78, Lincolnton  
**Sheri Allen**, 43, Kings Mountain  
**Peggy Pickelsimer**, 83, Gastonia  
**Leonard Benfield**, 68, York, S.C.

**Lester Kimble**, 79, York, S.C.  
**Janice Mashburn**, 54, Bessemer City  
**Debra Pegg**, 55, Bessemer City  
**Tammy Hice**, 41, Dallas  
**Jo-An Forney**, 95, Belmont  
**Shirley Hullett**, 80, Clover, S.C.

**William McDaniel**, 59, Bessemer City  
**Martha Neely**, 90, Gastonia  
**Joann McKinney**, 56, Gastonia  
**Sanunu Ajetunmobi**, 78, Charlotte  
**Edward Campbell**, 55, Gastonia  
**Jeannie Smith**, 72, Lincolnton

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Delivery questions: 704-869-1800



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The Gaston  
Gazette

\$1.50 • Sunday, February 16, 2014

RESIDENTS SHARE QUAKE STORIES

Rare tremor shook Gaston area Friday night. 2B

Food stamp  
caseload rising

Number of Gaston County households enrolled in program has nearly tripled over past 10 years

By Michael Barrett  
mbarrett@gastongazette.com

Robin Walker's peripheral vision kicks into high gear these days as she's checking out at the grocery store.

When she pulls out her EBT card to buy nutritional staples with the help of the federal food stamp program, she's used to people silently judging her.

"I'm not saying everybody feels that way, but you can see it on some people's faces," the Gastonia resident said. "When you slide your card, it's like they're disgusted. It's just a certain attitude some people have because they think we're undeserving. But they don't know our circumstances."

Walker said she only turned to the federal government's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, also known as SNAP, because she has no other options — not because she enjoys relying on the government. She is disabled and depends on the \$73 a month she receives to buy groceries, which supplements what she can acquire from local food pantries.

Officials with the Gaston County Department of Health and Human Services say she's not alone. More and more people have turned to food stamps for help as the economy has soured in recent years,

>> See **FOOD STAMPS**/Page 3A

Gaston food stamp cases by the numbers

Here's a look at how Gaston County food stamp cases have increased substantially over the past decade:

YEAR	TOTAL CASES	INDIVIDUALS BEING SERVED
January 2004	7,682	18,086
January 2009	12,676	28,027
January 2014	21,212	43,134

Source: Gaston County Department of Health and Human Services



Mike Hensdill/The Gazette

Friends Sarah Hall and Robin Walker look through coupon booklets Saturday afternoon. Walker is on disability and relies on food stamps to buy groceries. She says there is a stigma attached to receiving food stamps. 'It's just a certain attitude some people have because they think we're undeserving,' she said. 'But they don't know our circumstances.'

Sassy's choice

Freddy Willoks wasn't looking for a new dog. But little did he know, one was looking for him



John Clark/The Gazette

Freddy Willoks gets a friendly lick from Sassy in front of the Quick Stop store in Mount Holly.

By Diane Turbyfill  
dturbyfill@gastongazette.com

Sassy may be the most well-known dog in Gaston County, or at least in Mount Holly.

The orange-and-white canine lives along Main Street. The Quick Stop Convenience Store is her home base and she weathered the recent snowstorm in a nearby building. But Sassy makes her rounds each day.

Sassy sometimes gets beef jerky from a place down the street. She naps beside nearby duplexes, and trots over to the convenience store from time to time.

But the highlight of her day is obvious. The 13-year-old dog springs to her feet when she sees Freddy Willoks.

Willoks met Sassy when she was a puppy. Someone abandoned her by a house where one of Willoks' friends lived. Sassy didn't like it there, so she relocated to the convenience store.

Willoks tried taking Sassy home a couple of times, but the stubborn dog kept going back to the store. But he still felt like he should take care of the dog.

"I started looking after it, and it had a couple of litters of pups. That was real costly so I took her and got her fixed," he said.

>> See **SASSY**/Page 10A

FORECAST

HIGH 53° LOW 28°



For complete weather, see Page 2A

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Virginia Medford, 90, Dallas  
Frances Glenn, 82, Gastonia  
Master Brown Jr., York, S.C.  
Jerry Lee Hand, 80, Belmont  
Alyssa Taylor, 57, Crouse  
Frances Pinion, 64, Dallas

Georgia Sizemore, 91, Charlotte  
George Morgan, 72, Gastonia  
Dr. John James, Maiden  
Harold Pasour, 79, Dallas  
Hubert Lee Gilbert, 85, Newton  
Keith Thompson Sr., 58, Charlotte  
Lloyd Hudson, 86, Charlotte  
Brandon Hahn, 26, Gastonia

Teddy Brooks, 70, Dallas  
Nancy Carpenter, 58, Grover  
Rhonda Mullinax, 34, Crouse  
Jack Heavner Sr., 67, Lincolnton  
Danny Woten, 74, St. Joseph, Mo.  
Evelyn Wehunt, 92, Cherryville  
Shirley Frix, 55, Lawndale

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Local News Wrap-up

Sunday, February 16, 2014  
Page edited by Eric Beam



Photos courtesy of Crowders Mountain Fire and Rescue

Firefighters responded to a blaze at a Bessemer City residence Saturday afternoon. The residents were not at home at the time of the fire, officials said. The exterior of the home is shown far right.

# 3 fire departments respond to blaze at Bessemer City home

A Bessemer City home caught fire Saturday afternoon sending three fire departments to battle the blaze.

Firefighters were dispatched at 3:55 p.m. to the one-story home at 709 W. Virginia Ave., according to Crowders Mountain Fire and Rescue.

Crews arrived to find smoke and flames coming from the rear of the home. When firefighters went inside, they found the back of the home fully involved with fire.

Firefighters battled the flames for 20 minutes. In addition to Crowders Mountain Fire and Rescue, crews from Bessemer City Fire Department and Tryonota Volunteer Fire Department responded.

Fire officials said no one was injured in the fire. The residents were not home when it happened.



The home sustained about \$30,000 in damage.

The Gaston County Fire Investigations Task Force will investigate the cause of the fire.

— Wade Allen

## << Food stamps

Continued from Page 1A

and the number of families enrolled in the program only seems to be rising.

Ten years ago, Gaston County was overseeing 7,682 food stamp cases, which at the time was aiding 18,086 people. By 2009, that caseload had nearly doubled.

Today, the county is handling 21,212 cases, benefiting 43,134 residents. Based on total cases alone, that's an increase of 276 percent.

Even a reduction late last year in the amount of money people can receive through the food stamp program hasn't tapered off the growth, said Cindy Little, food and nutrition services administrator for Gaston County DHHS.

"For us, it really has been

as steady as it's always been," she said.

### Clearing backlogs

For North Carolinians who receive food stamps, the good news is that the vast majority are getting their benefits on a timely basis these days.

A year ago, that wasn't the case for Walker and many others. The hiccups were tied to new software — known as NC FAST — that the state was implementing to improve the distribution of DSS benefits.

In the long run, it's aimed at making things run more efficiently. In the short run, it was doing the opposite, due to the complexities of converting tens of thousands of food and nutrition cases over to the new system.

For a time, Walker was among those wondering how they would afford basic

necessities when their EBT cards weren't being credited with more money. Many across the state were having to wait weeks or months for food stamps.

But state DHHS Secretary Aldona Vos said Tuesday that a "herculean effort" from state and county social services workers whittled down the number of emergency cases in the state from more than 23,000 to just 25 cases in less than three weeks. The U.S. Department of Agriculture had set a deadline of last Monday for the state to handle high-priority case, and those more than 90 days old or face the revocation of more than \$88 million North Carolina receives to run the federally-funded program.

Little said in Gaston County, DHHS workers began multitasking to take food stamp applications and also

perform case maintenance.

"There are still some issues with the system," she said. "But we're diligently working on it to make sure everything can be handled through NC FAST. We're trudging through."

"Here in Gaston County, we've been in relatively good shape."

### Getting by with less

One in seven Americans rely on federal food and nutrition services.

In November, more than 21,000 Gaston County families that depend on food stamps saw a reduction in the monthly assistance they receive. The cut affected more than 47 million people across the country.

It stemmed from the expiration of funding from the American Recovery and

Reinvestment Act, which provided a temporary increase of benefits beginning in 2009.

The average decrease for food stamp recipients was 5.4 percent, according to the state of North Carolina. For an average household of four, that translated into an estimated decrease of \$36 a month, according to the USDA.

Walker, who lives at the senior housing complex ARP Manor, was getting \$83 a month in food stamps before, and saw a monthly reduction of \$10. Her Section 8 housing rental assistance also decreased by \$7 about that time.

"I'm getting by. I know by no means am I the only one in this boat," she said. "I'm not prideful by any means, because I do what I have to do to survive."

Little said the income limits for eligible food stamp recipients typically increase every year as the poverty income level goes up. Right now, the maximum allowable gross income limit for a household of four is \$3,926 per month.

Walker said she and a number of other residents of ARP Manor make a monthly trip to a local food bank to get food donations. She said she knows there are people who abuse the system, but she wants critics to know that many people still need the federal assistance food stamps provide.

"Do you know what I would give to be independent and have an income that would enable me to maintain my life?" she said. "I just wish people understood."

You can reach Michael Barrett at 704-869-1826, or on Twitter @GazetteMike.

## A WELL-DRESSED SNOWMAN



Special to The Gazette

A 4-foot snow drift became a colorful snowman on the deck of Carol Berry's home in Gastonia. **See more reader-submitted photos from last week's snow storm on Page 2B.**

### ARREST REPORTS

The following is a daily arrest report provided by the Gaston County Sheriff, and Gastonia and Gaston County Police departments. An arrest does not imply someone is guilty of any alleged wrongdoing. These arrests occurred from midnight to 11:59 p.m. Feb. 13. Juvenile arrests (younger than 16) are not included. This report has been designed to capture as much data as possible based on the arrest date/time.

#### Gastonia Police Department

- **Alford, Jeremy Albert**, 27, 713 E. Park Ave., Gastonia, 10:05 p.m., assault-simple, 713 E. Park Ave.
- **Williams, Donta Durell**, 28, 2813 Mary Ave., Gastonia, 3:30 p.m., drug (IBR) narcotic violation, 2813 Mary Ave.

#### Gaston County Police Department

- **Hartley, Tracie Danielle**, 38, 1911 Alpine Lane, Gastonia, 11:30 p.m., OFA contempt of court/perjury/court violation, 1911 Alpine Lane

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\*To earn Double Points, you must make net purchases (less exchanges and returns) February 14-16, 2014 with your Dillard's Elite Card at Dillard's or on Dillards.com. Account must remain open, in good standing and not become delinquent when the points are posted to your account. Cash advances and balance transfers are not eligible for reward points. See Reward Program Terms for details. Purchases subject to credit approval.



# News Wrap-up

Monday, November 10, 2014

Page edited by Lauren Frame

## Iraqi officials: IS leader wounded

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraqi officials said Sunday that the head of the Islamic State group, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, was wounded in an airstrike in western Anbar province. Pentagon officials said they had no immediate information on such an attack or on the militant leader being injured.

Iraq's Defense and Interior ministries both issued statements saying al-Baghdadi had been wounded, without elaborating, and the news was broadcast on state-run television Sunday night.

The reports came at a time when President Barack Obama said the U.S.-led coalition was in a position to start going on the offensive against the Islamic State militants.

Al-Baghdadi, believed to be in his early 40s, has a \$10 million U.S. bounty on his head. Since taking the reins of the group in 2010, he has transformed it from a local branch of al-Qaida into an independent transnational military force.

He has positioned himself as perhaps the pre-eminent figure in the global jihadi community. His forces have seized large parts of Syria and Iraq, killed thousands of people, beheaded Westerners and drawn the U.S. troops and warplanes back into the region, where Washington is leading a campaign of airstrikes by a multinational coalition.

An Interior Ministry intelligence official told The Associated Press that al-Baghdadi was wounded by an Iraqi airstrike that came during a meeting Saturday with militants in the town of Qaim. The official cited informants within the militant group. A senior Iraqi military official also said he learned in operational meetings



Associated Press

**This image made from video posted on a militant website July 5, purports to show the leader of the Islamic State group, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, delivering a sermon at a mosque in Iraq. On Sunday, Iraqi officials and state television said al-Baghdadi was wounded in an airstrike in Iraq.**

that al-Baghdadi had been wounded. The operation was carried out by Iraqi security forces, both officials said, although they did not know how seriously al-Baghdadi was hurt. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss confidential material.

A statement posted Sunday on the official Facebook page of Defense Minister Khalid Obeidi also said al-Baghdadi was wounded, but added that he was targeted in the northern city of Mosul, currently the group's biggest stronghold in Iraq. A senior U.S. defense official said Saturday that the coalition conducted a series of airstrikes targeting a gathering of Islamic State leaders near Mosul, but he could not confirm whether al-Baghdadi was part of the gathering.

## Detergent pods pose risk to children, study finds

New York Times News Service

Since the introduction of colorful, single-load packets of laundry detergent in 2012 through the end of 2013, more than 17,000 children younger than 6 ate or inhaled the contents or squirted concentrated liquid from a packet into their eyes, researchers reported.

Their study is the first to compile all cases reported to the National Poison Data System, confirming fears that accidental poisonings with laundry packets, which many households choose for their convenience, are not uncommon. Because reporting to the database is voluntary, the figure is likely an underestimation, several experts said.

The study was published in the journal Pediatrics.

Critics contend that some brightly colored packets too closely resemble candy or a teething toy. Two years ago, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggested the packets "might represent an emerging public health concern."



Associated Press

**Laundry detergent packets are held for a photo in Chicago on Friday. Accidental poisonings from squishy laundry detergent packets landed more than 700 U.S. children in the hospital in just two years, researchers report.**

"These 17,000 children we found amounts to one child every hour being exposed to one of these laundry pod products," said Dr. Marcel J. Casavant, a study author and the medical director of the poison center at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio. "That's a very different order of magnitude than other hazards."

Most of the cases

occurred among children ages 1 or 2, and nearly 80 percent involved ingestion of the contents of a packet. Two deaths of children have been confirmed.

Most commonly, children vomited, became lethargic, irritated their eyes, coughed or choked, the researchers found. About 6,000 were seen in emergency rooms. About 750 were hospitalized, and half required intensive care. The laundry packets tend to burst in a child's mouth, and the concentrated contents can be swallowed all at once.

"They are made with almost like a very thin Saran wrap that dissolves when wet," said Dr. Cynthia Aaron, the medical director of the Regional Poison Control Center at Children's Hospital of Michigan, which contributes to the national database. "They bite on it, and the contents go to the back of their throat."

In recent years, federal agencies, poison centers, Consumer Reports and manufacturers have warned parents to keep packets out of children's reach and sight.

## Higher bar for health law in second sign-up season

WASHINGTON (AP) — With a bright look to its rebuilt website, version 2.0 of President Barack Obama's health insurance overhaul represents another chance to win over a skeptical public.

But more than possible computer woes lurk as www.HealthCare.gov's second open enrollment season begins Saturday.

The risks include an unproven system for those renewing coverage and a tax hit that could sting millions of people. Those tax issues are the result of complications between the health care law and income taxes, and they will emerge during next year's filing season.

"Things will not be perfect," said Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia M. Burwell, trying to set expectations. "We are aiming for a strong consumer experience, and it will be better."

The Obama administration cannot afford to repeat last year's online meltdown. Congress will be entirely in Republican hands in 2015, and GOP lawmakers will be itching to take the case for repeal. The Supreme Court's decision Friday to hear another challenge to the law is also casting a shadow.

The health insurance exchanges offer taxpayer-subsidized private coverage to people who do not have access on the job. HealthCare.gov will serve 37 states, while the rest run their own markets.

This new sign-up period will be the first time that renewal has been tried for current customers, and also overlaps with the first tax-filing season that the law's requirements are in effect.

On the plus side, premium increases are expected to be modest in many, though not all, states. New insurers have come into the market, promoting competition, and regulators now take a close look at anything above a 10 percent increase.

The online application for most new customers is down to 16 screens from 76. Website security is better, thanks to aggressive monitoring. The government and insurers have added call center staff.

The administration had said last week that consumers would be able to get an early peek at 2015 plans and premiums this weekend. It looked like that early goal was slipping. Officials said Sunday



Associated Press

**This undated image shows the website for updated www.HealthCare.gov, the online portal for health insurance under President Barack Obama's health care law. The site has been revamped as its second enrollment season approaches.**

### WWW.HEALTHCARE.GOV

#### POTENTIAL ENROLLMENT PITFALLS

■ For those already signed up, coverage will renew automatically if you do nothing. Sounds good, but maybe not. You could miss out on lower premium options and get stuck with an outdated and possibly incorrect subsidy. Shop around, but don't dally. You have until Dec. 15 to update your income information or change plans if you want to have everything in place by Jan. 1.

■ New customers, be advised: The Nov. 15-Feb. 15 open enrollment is half as long as last time, and it overlaps with the holidays. Try to get familiar with some of the basic health insurance trade-offs. A low-premium silver or bronze plan may not make sense if you'll wind up with high out-of-pocket costs for the deductible and copayments. In that case, you might be better off going for the gold.

#### TAX COMPLICATIONS LURKING

■ Most current customers are getting a tax credit to help with premiums. Those subsidies are tied to income, so you'll have to file new forms with your 2014 taxes to prove you got the right amount. Too much subsidy and your tax refund will get dinged. Too little, and the government owes you. It's bound to cause anxiety because many people depend on their tax refunds to pay bills.

■ If you remained uninsured in 2014, you risk a penalty that will be deducted from your tax refund. It starts at \$95 for those uninsured all year. Millions of people may qualify for penalty waivers, but getting exemptions could be an ordeal. Some appear simple, but for others you'll have to mail in an application and supporting documents.

that window shopping would be available overnight, without giving a specific time.

This year, the bar will be higher.

The Congressional Budget Office has projected that 13 million people will be covered through federal and state insurance markets in 2015. That means retaining most of the 7 million people now covered and adding 6 million more. Many are skeptics who sat out last year's campaign.

One potential motivator: The law's tax penalty for remaining uninsured is rising, to a minimum of \$325 for 2015.

Melissa Dresler of Lexington, Ky., said she's lucky that she got covered, but she also learned some lessons that should make her a better shopper this year. The climate change

researcher unexpectedly found herself in need of a delicate operation. She woke up one day and something was wrong with her right eye. It turned out to be a detached retina.

Her surgery cost well into five figures, and she paid about \$1,000. The problem came when she had to go out-of-network because of a complication. To keep premiums in check, many plans restrict a patient's choice. The follow-up corrective surgery cost her about \$6,000.

"I may gripe once in a while, but I am so happy with Obamacare," Dresler said. "I feel so lucky I was covered."

She added: "If I had known that I was going to have a major emergency then I would have certainly invested more in a better plan."

### POLICE REPORTS

**The following is a daily police report provided by the Gaston County Sheriff, and Gastonia and Gaston County police departments. An arrest does not imply someone is guilty of any alleged wrongdoing. These arrests occurred from midnight to 11:59 p.m. Nov. 7. Juvenile arrests (younger than 16) are not included. This report has been designed to capture as much data as possible based on the arrest date/time.**



#### Gastonia Police Department

■ **Hurst, Crystal Robinson**, 36, 102 Big Ike Drive, Bessemer City, 8:30 p.m., shoplifting, 250 N. New Hope Road

■ **Necessary, Bradley Shane**, 17, 418 W. Fifth Ave., Gastonia, 4:09 p.m., damage to property/vandalism, 418 W. Fifth Ave.

■ **Norris, Lora Lynn**, 53, 427 Southside Ave., Gastonia, 2:07 a.m., motor vehicle theft, 968 Roberts Drive

■ **Rhyne, Michael**, 33,

515 W. Garrison Blvd., Gastonia, 4:03 p.m., shoplifting, 3000 E. Franklin Blvd.

■ **Russ, Marina Ann**, 24, 1511 Fostoria Drive, Gastonia, 8:15 p.m., resisting arrest or escape from custody, 1511 Fostoria Drive

■ **Session, Michael Ernest**, 27, 60 Covey Court, Gastonia, 11:30 a.m., simple assault, Wren Turnpike and Radio Street

■ **Tate, Francesca Savoy Danielle**, 24, 516 Queens Court, Gastonia, 8:15 p.m., fraud-impersonation, 1511 Fostoria Drive

### << Road

Continued from Page 1A

#### STANDING STRONG

The vocational program connected Briggs with a physical therapy group, but it wasn't covered by his insurance.

Briggs refused to be denied. He took some pointers from the professionals then conducted his own physical therapy sessions.

Six months after the day he lost his leg, Briggs was walking again. He retook the truck driving

test and revved back up his tractor-trailer on Oct. 1.

#### SUITING UP

Briggs said it's not in his DNA to stay at home and collect disability payments from the government.

"I was sick of sitting at home," he said.

People who go through the vocational rehabilitation program are bound to make good employees, Briggs said.

"They want to work. They want some kind of life back," he said.

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**How is your 2014 shaping up?**  
Business coach Tony Marder advises If you are not sure whether you are ahead or behind, you have some real work to do. **2D**

**Gaston County property sales, local new corporations:** See listings for both on **4D**



# Winery’s healthy growth

Doc told owner’s father to drink a glass of wine a day. Ten years later, Vale’s WoodMill Winery has grown, expanded and is shipping cases of vino to China.

**By Diane Turbyfill**  
dturbyfill@gastongazette.com

Larry Cagle hopes his locally made muscadine wine becomes the toast of China. The vineyard and winery owner sent off the first shipment of his product to a distributor in China three weeks ago. If the 1,260 bottles make it there safely, Cagle will soon send another batch.

The venture is the latest in a line of successes WoodMill Winery has experienced since opening for business eight years ago.

“I never expected to have events that brought in over 1,000 people. I never expected to be in a grocery store, and I certainly never expected to ship wine to China,” he said.

Cagle owns 12 acres of muscadine vines and a thriving winery that’s become a venue for festivals, weddings, parties and reunions.

Nestled in the rolling hills of Vale in western Lincoln County, the wine business began as an experiment Cagle launched as a way to help his father, who was struggling with health problems.

### Experimental beginning

More than 10 years ago, Cagle’s father was having heart trouble. His doctor gave him some advice: Drink one glass of red wine a day.

The prescription wasn’t well received, Cagle said.

“He grew up drinking sweet tea and Pepsi. A nice merlot tasted like vinegar to him,” Cagle said.

Then they discovered muscadine wine. The sweet-tasting elixir appealed to Cagle’s dad.

At that time, muscadine wine wasn’t often found on shelves in the area. So Cagle decided to try to make his own, using muscadines growing in the woods near his house.

It didn’t go well.

Professionally, Cagle worked for a research company writing safety manuals for nuclear power plants.

“It made me mad. I thought, ‘I can repair a nuclear power plant, but I couldn’t make wine,’” Cagle said.

Cagle took it as a personal challenge to perfect the process. Four years of experimenting and Cagle came up with a tasty concoction.

The recipe appeared to be a hit with family and friends, and Cagle’s father seemed healthier than ever. His heart stayed stable and his crippling arthritis let up significantly.

Cagle’s dad now works at the vineyard with the rest of the family.

“He now prunes the vineyard and mows the grass,” he said. “It was amazing, the difference in him.”

### Family affair

WoodMill’s vineyard began on a half-acre of land. Cagle planted 100 vines in the spring of 2001.

He worked on the process and the product before opening for business in 2006.

His primary employees include his parents, sister, daughter and son-in-law.

“Five of my key employees are family,” he said.

The family prunes the muscadine vines, processes the fruit and bottles the wine. They also run the winery.

The Cagles call in help at harvest time in the fall.

They use a van to distribute their 20 different varieties to 111 locations in Lincoln, Gaston and surrounding counties.

Cagle said he feels incredibly fortunate to work with his family and reach such a level of success.

WoodMill Winery’s vineyards



Gazette photos by Mike Hensdill

Larry Cagle prunes some of the muscadine grape vines at the 12-acre WoodMill Winery, located in the rolling hills of Vale in western Lincoln County. The vineyard recently sent off the first shipment of 1,260 bottles to a distributor in China. ‘I never expected to have events that brought in over 1,000 people. I never expected to be in a grocery store, and I certainly never expected to ship wine to China,’ Cagle said of his business venture, which is a little over 10 years old.



Prior to starting up his vineyard, Cagle worked for a research company writing safety manuals for nuclear power plants. He recalled the disastrous first attempt of trying to make his own muscadine wine, using muscadines growing in the woods near his house. He took it as a personal challenge to perfect the process of making wine.

now span 12 acres and produce 65,000 bottles of wine a year.

Unlike at many North Carolina wineries, Cagle said wine enthusiasts can be assured the product is local.

Cagle said 90 percent of his fruit is grown on site. The remaining 10 percent, including blackberries and blueberries, is purchased from growers in the area.

He and his family spend their nights putting labels on the 20 varieties of wine.

“We are truly a homegrown winery,” Cagle said.

### Visit from China

In recent months, Cagle started seeing newcomers to the winery.

He was visited by delegates from Hong Kong and Beijing. Then he got a call. A translator was on the other end. His client was flying in from California the following day and wanted to meet with Cagle.

Cagle met with the man, who was from Shanghai. He told Cagle that people in China were particularly interested in muscadine wine because of recent research that says the product has health attributes.



WoodMill Winery has 20 different varieties of wine, which have won several awards, as shown above. The wines are sold in 111 locations in Lincoln, Gaston and surrounding counties. The winery produces 65,000 bottles of wine a year.

After spending half a day together, the two men decided to go into business.

Exporting wine is new for Cagle. He built shipping crates by hand, and he’s still waiting to see if the first batch arrives intact.

Cagle says the man found him online. And the two hope to form a profitable partnership.

### Looking ahead

Cagle grew up in Alexis and graduated from Gaston College.

Once his winery business took off, he retired from his full-time job at the age of 44.

The past decade has been anything but a relaxing retirement.

Cagle labels himself a farmer, talking about the 10- to 12-hour days and working seven days a week. But he loves it, and he relishes the way the community has embraced his venture.

Since opening for business,

WoodMill Winery has been expanded four times. And it’s still running out of space, Cagle said.

Cagle plans to expand in the years to come, moving the wine production operation into a separate building from the entertainment venue.

The winery hosts two main festivals a year — the WoodMill Grape Stomp and the Muscadine Jubilee.

The jubilee has become so heavily attended that it’s been expanded to two days, said Cagle.

Festivals include vendors, wine tastings and activities for children.

“We try to offer a community event for Vale,” Cagle said.

Just how far out of the community Cagle’s wine will reach remains to be seen.

He’s hopeful. He looks at the venture with a wine glass half full mentality.

*You can reach Diane Turbyfill at 704-869-1817 and Twitter.com/GazetteDiane.*

### ► PROSPECTS PIPELINE

Prospects Pipeline will be held this Thursday from 3:30 to 5 p.m. at the Gaston Regional Chamber office. The members-only program is a referral group dedicated to expanding business opportunities for members and assisting each other in methods that work to grow their business. Go to [www.gastonchamber.com](http://www.gastonchamber.com) to register.

## THE DAILY PLANNER | A LOOK AT THIS WEEK’S NOTABLE BUSINESS HAPPENINGS

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
► No events of note.	► Alco will release first-quarter earnings report.	► Central Bank releases the minutes from Federal Open Market Committee, which may signal a rise in interest rates.  ► Gaston Chamber's Let's Do Lunch at String Bean in Belmont, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.	► Rite Aid releases its first-quarter earnings.  ► Weekly unemployment data and mortgage rates released.	► J.P. Morgan Chase and Wells Fargo both release first-quarter earnings.  ► Consumer sentiment and producer price index numbers are released.