



FREE COVID-19 Testing
L P Frans Stadium in Hickory, N. C.
Monday - Friday from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m.

**HISTORY IN THE MAKING
COVID-19**

After climbing over the holidays, COVID-19 cases appeared to peak in North Carolina on January 13, 2022 with a report of 44,833 persons testing positive - up significantly from the previous year when a peak of 12,079 cases was reported on February 3, 2021. This number is troubling to persons who had expected the vaccine to stop COVID. Unfortunately, Omicron, the prevailing variant, was more contagious, and even vaccinated persons caught it. There were reports that some people had COVID more than once - even after being vaccinated.

Birthing Center: As COVID cases increased, more people needed hospital care. At the same time, a low birth rate in Caldwell County meant that Caldwell UNC Health Care could use beds in the birthing center by having obstetricians refer expectant mothers to other hospitals in the area. The hospital closed its birthing center in November 2021, but hopes to reopen it once COVID cases decrease. (source: Dawn Fleming of *The News-Topic* in a front page article on Thursday, February 10, 2022.)

Hospice: On December 28, 2021, AMOREM, our local hospice and palliative care provider, announced on its Facebook page that all clients requiring inpatient care would be housed at the Forlines Patient Care Unit in Hudson due to staffing shortages. There were also numerous "help wanted" postings designed to attract

(COVID-19 continued on page 2)

**GFHA TO MEET
Mark Your Calendars**

The Board of Trustees for the Granite Falls Historical Association, Inc. will meet on Tuesday, April 26, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. in the Granite Falls History and Transportation Museum. The group is working on several projects, and trustees want to include other members of the Association in the discussion and decision making. There will also be a special program. The meeting is for all members of the organization and anyone interested in joining. There will be more information in the March issue of *Tablet II*.

**Museum Update
Preserving History**

The Granite Falls History Committee, which oversees the Granite Falls History and Transportation Museum, is in the process of expanding and rearranging the permanent exhibits. The town recently purchased two new display cabinets, which have allowed the committee to enlarge its Shuford Mills exhibit, provide protective storage for school and sports memorabilia, and make better use of the space. On February 22nd, committee members set up the two new cabinets and repurposed the case originally used to display Shuford Mills artifacts. In doing so, they freed up a shelving unit that will soon house items currently stored in the office - making these available for the public to see.

The Baird House is not big enough to exhibit everything in the museum's collection, so the Committee has special displays from time to time. Among these hidden treasures are copies of *The Granite Falls Press*, a local newspaper published between 1952 and 1986. A part of our collection has been on exhibit since January and will remain in the museum through March. In pre-covid years, the museum celebrated National Quilting Month in March with a quilt

(MUSEUM UPDATE continued on page 3)



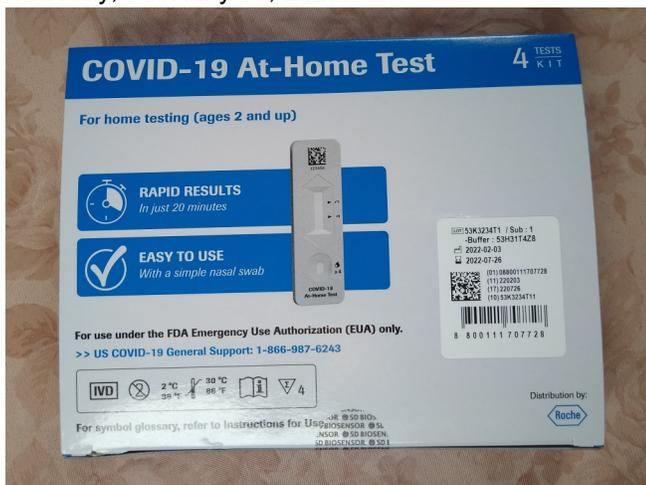
healthcare providers. In addition, there were photos showing contractors working to repair and update the facilities in Valdese.

According to an article by Sharon McBrayer printed in *The News Herald* on December 30th, employees will continue to work out of their offices in Valdese and Lenoir. AMOREM hopes the moves will be temporary. Once they can hire and train the necessary staff, they will reopen the 14 bed facility in Valdese and the six bed facility in Lenoir. The Hudson location is the newest building. It houses 12 patients. In addition to providing onsite care for end of life patients, AMOREM assists more than 300 families with hospice care and more than 750 families with palliative care everyday.

In the article, AMOREM's Vice President of Community Engagement Kerri McFalls indicated that COVID played a major role in staffing shortages. Some employees were absent due to personal illness or quarantine, and some did not want to take the vaccine. She also noted that other healthcare providers were also struggling to find enough help.

AMOREM was formed May 1, 2021 by a merger of the hospices in Burke and Caldwell. The agency is looking to expand to Watauga County with a proposal to build a 7 bed facility there. Their service area includes Ashe, Alexander, Avery, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Cleveland, Lincoln, McDowell, Rutherford, Watauga, and Wilkes Counties.

COVIDtests.gov: Although the free covid tests website suggests shipment within 7 to 12 days, there is also a note stating that they are shipped as soon as received from the manufacturer. The photo below shows a test ordered on Tuesday, January 18, 2022 that arrived on Tuesday, February 15, 2022.



Masks: According to the Caldwell County website, N95 masks (two per person) became available at Caldwell County Public Library branches on February 2, 2022.

Vaccine: On January 31, 2022, the FDA announced

that it had fully approved the Moderna vaccine for two doses given one month apart. The brand name is Spikevax. Earlier, on January 7th, the FDA reduced wait time between the second shot of Spikevax and a booster from six months to five months. On January 3rd, the FDA announced that the Pfizer-BioNTech booster should be given five months after the second shot. The agency also gave emergency authorization for children 12 - 15 to receive a single booster and recommended that children ages 5 - 11 with compromised immunity receive a third initial shot.

While vaccines are generally seen as safe by the CDC and FDA, there were numerous reports that certain persons (especially younger males) have developed myocarditis after the second dose of the mRNA vaccines (Moderna and Pfizer). On February 22nd, the CDC added a footnote to its advice regarding the interval between the first and second doses of Pfizer and Moderna to allow for persons ages 12 to 64 (especially males from 12 to 39) to wait up to eight weeks for the second dose. The government agency still recommends 3 week intervals for Pfizer and 4 week intervals for Moderna for persons 65 and older as well as those with compromised immunity.

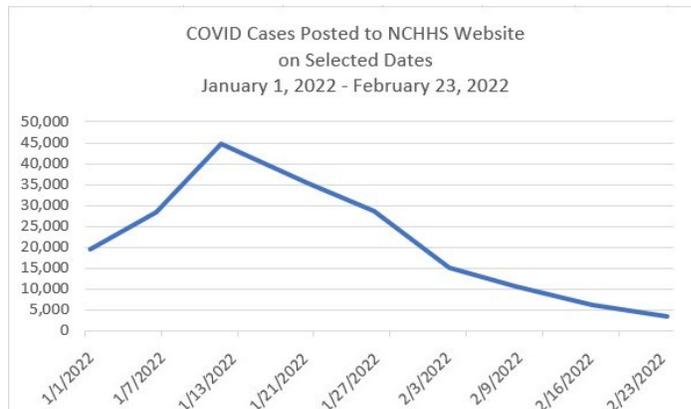


Chart made by the editor of this newsletter using data posted to the N C Department of Health and Human Services Website

Some good news: Before the federal government could deliver free masks and at home tests, coronavirus cases peaked and started to decline. In response, some state and local governing bodies began lifting mask mandates. On Thursday, February 10th, the N C Department of Health and Human Services updated its school toolkit to eliminate individual contact tracing for kindergarten through twelfth grade and to allow students and staff to return to school without isolating or quarantining unless they had symptoms or tested positive. Following this announcement, the Caldwell County Board of Education met on Friday, February 11th and decided to make masks optional at school except on buses, which fall under the federal government mandate for transportation. The CDC followed up with new mask guidelines on February 25th. The guidelines updated the metrics for determining low, medium, and high risk areas along with guidance for each level. The CDC advised everyone in high risk areas to wear masks indoor in public settings. The CDC website shows the risk level for each county in the country.

show, but the committee decided to hold the show at a later date. The next special exhibit will be in June. It will feature vintage clothing.



SHORTAGES AND HIGHER PRICES Supply and Demand

Product shortages that began in 2020 with toilet paper and disinfectants spread to other areas of the economy as COVID lingered and government efforts to stop it produced unwanted consequences

such as workplace absences, business closures, high employee turnover, and interruptions to supply chains. Low supply and high demand resulted in inflation that was made worse by increased oil/gas prices brought about by changes to the federal energy policy in 2021 and by Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 22, 2022.

PARKS AND RECREATION Play Ball

The Granite Falls Parks and Recreation Department has decided to drop its affiliation with Tarheel League, Inc. and to join the Foothills Athletic Association. The new organization accepts children between 4 (must turn 4 years old by May 1st) and 13 (cannot turn 14 before May 1st). Registration for tee ball, softball, and baseball began Monday, February 7th and will run through Monday, March 7th. The age groups are 4 - 6 tee ball, 7 - 8 softball, 7 - 8 baseball, 9 - 10 softball, 9 - 10 baseball, 11 - 13 softball, and 11 - 13 baseball. Granite Falls residents pay \$40.00, and persons who live outside the city limits pay \$60.00.

And/or Draw

There will be a Creative Kids Art Class for pre-k and elementary school students at the recreation center beginning March 17th with an introductory class. The pre-k class will be held from 3:15 until 3:45 p.m. A parent must accompany each child in the pre-k group. The class for children in elementary school will be held from 3:45 until 4:15 p.m. Contact Damon Helton at (803) 630-6093 for more information.

A NEW KIND OF FARMING IN GRACE CHAPEL Blue Ridge Energy Looks to the Future

On Tuesday, February 22nd, Blue Ridge Energy ceremonially "Flipped the Switch" to celebrate the opening of its new power source, a 55 acre solar farm on the Grace Chapel Road. A news release on the company's website stated that the Brighter Future Solar power plant should produce 19,000 megawatt hours of clean energy each year - enough to provide power for 1,600 homes. Blue Ridge officials expect the facility to save money while reducing the carbon footprint. The facilities are owned by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI) Group and OGUSA, a wholly

owned subsidiary of Osaka Gas Co. Ltd. Dr. Caryl B. Burns, Mayor of Granite Falls, and Mike LaBrose, Vice Chairman of the Caldwell County Board of Commissioners, were special guests at the "Flip the Switch" Ceremony.

A HIKE TO THE PAST A Spring Bubbling with History

In August of 1926, the Town of Granite Falls gave Dr. O. J. Corpening permission to install the first water lines in the town beginning from two springs located between South Main Street and the railroad tracks and running to two (2) wooden storage tanks before being pumped to homes and businesses. The Town began its own water system in 1934 and terminated the Corpening contract on September 1st of that year. (For more information, see page 66 of *Etched in Granite, the History of Granite Falls, North Carolina* by Maxine McCall.)

Over time, the springs became lost beneath an overgrowth of bushes and trees. In 2022, the land was partially cleared and the springs were rediscovered. On February 16th, one of Dr. O. J.'s grandsons, John Corpening, led four local history buffs - Linda Crowder, Jeanne Whisnant, Joe Kaufman, and Keith Foster - on a hike to see the springs. Vestiges of the spring boxes are shown in the photos below.



OH MOTHER OF OUR LEARNING

Long May Thy Presence Be - We'll Pray to Keep Thy Portals Wide for All Posterity

Work continues at Granite Falls Middle School. These photos were made on Sunday, February 6, 2022.



The Granite Tablet is a publication of the Granite Falls History Committee, which manages the Granite Falls History and Transportation Museum. The museum is located in the historic home of Andrew Baird, an early settler. The building is the second oldest residence in Caldwell County. The Baird House was built around 1795 with additions made over the next hundred years. The house remained a residence until 2001 when the owner sought permission to have it burned down due to the high cost of maintenance. Recognizing the historical significance of the building, the Town of Granite Falls purchased the home with the intentions of turning it into a museum. With the help of a grant from the North Carolina Department of Transportation and hours of hard work by dedicated people, the vision became a reality. The Granite Falls History and Transportation Museum held its grand opening and ribbon cutting on January 18, 2007. Visit us on Facebook under "Granite Falls History and Transportation Museum." Our website is www.granitefallshistorymuseum.org.

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