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High-speed chase ends with arrest

By M.A. Lewis
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A high-speed chase that began in Jackson County ended in Macon County last Friday night with a local man

behind bars as a result. Ian Alexander Neal, 23, of 105 Bobbie Neal Dr., was charged with fleeing to allude arrest, a felony charge, and driving while impaired after Macon County deputies put

spiked stop sticks in his path on the U.S. 441 bypass to stop his vehicle.

An incident report by Sgt. Chris Stahl said Jackson County officers started their pursuit of Neal when he

failed to stop and continued into Macon County.

Sheriff Robert Holland said Neal was intoxicated and was clocked by radar at one point going 115 m.p.h.

"Our officers put stop

sticks down on the four lane near the Dowdle Mountain intersection," Holland said.

Holland said after Neal's vehicle came to a stop, he ran from the vehicle into a near-

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Neal

Reading program: Students advance in just one month

By M.A. Lewis
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Readers made great strides while spending their vacations in the classroom at East Franklin Elementary this summer, according to data revealed last Thursday.

Matthew Gardner, regional director of school partnerships for Lindamood Bell

Learning Processes presented the testing results. The company was contracted by the Macon County School System to train teachers to identify and teach children with reading difficulties.

"They (students) received about half of what they would receive (in a full complement of the program)," Gardner told school officials

and community members.

Gardner explained that the 54 students got an average of 68 hours of instruction. Typically, to get the full extent of the program, students are recommended about 110 hours.

Even so, he said, the results were impressive. Reading comprehension was a welcome by-product.

"Comprehension increased even though comprehension was not specifically addressed," Gardner said.

Comprehension is the silver bullet in reading education. Many can't read, others can read but can't comprehend what they've read. Neither scenario makes for success — which makes the results particularly promising, given that comprehension

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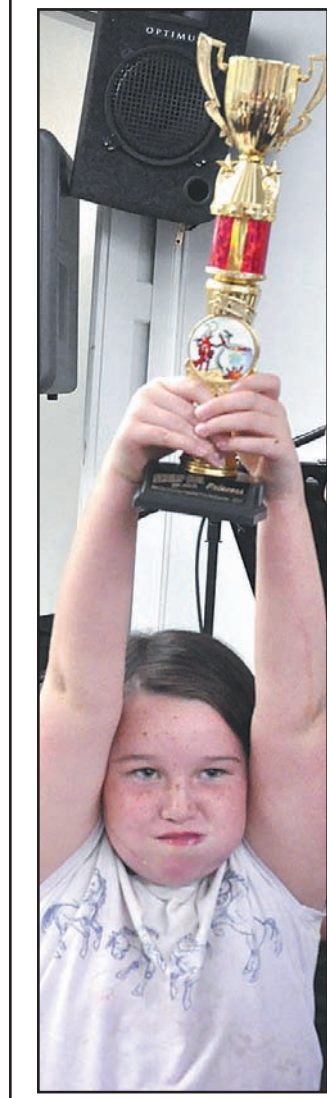


Photo/M.A. Lewis

Former U.S. Department of Education assistant secretary Robert H. Pasternak speaks with community and educational leaders about the Lindamood Bell process.

Shrimp Boil 2011

A big crowd came out to First Baptist Church Saturday night for the annual Habitat for Humanity Shrimp Boil. Among the diners was Madison Hatch, 7, shown left, holding up her trophy for the junior shrimp eating contest. Below, Donnie Bishop refills the shrimp boat.



Press photos/Linda Mathias

Durden explores the economic promise of local food movement

By Colin McCandless
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Macon cooperative extension director Alan Durden opened his talk about the local food movement with a tribute to farmers.

"Farmers are really special people," said Durden, who spoke on local foods at the League of Women Voters' Aug. 11 program.

"They're good growers. They're good marketers. They have a number of skills. They've got a hard job and they've got to really love farming in order to stay in it. I think farmers deserve our respect. And they produce our food."

What are local foods?

The "Local Food Movement," is a phrase we hear thrown around a lot lately. So, just what do we mean when we say local foods?

According to Durden, the definition of local foods varies depending on whom you ask.

The "10 Percent Campaign," a crusade promoting the purchase of local foods in North Carolina defines it as food grown within the state.

This explanation doesn't always suffice for everyone. In Macon County's case, Rabun County, Ga., is much closer to home than Raleigh, for example.

Durden, whose specialty area is in horticulture, said his own personal definition is the "closer the food is to you and the less hands that handle it before you."

"Real, real local food is food grown in your garden," he said.

When we talk about local foods, Durden says we mostly think of produce, but it also encompasses dairy products and

See Food on page 9A



A montage of the produce available at the Franklin Farmers Market shows why the local food movement is gaining in popularity. Photographer Bob Scott said he was entranced by the colors — as are buyers of the fresh foods and flow-

MVI to get outdoor research shelter

By Colin McCandless
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A project at Mountain View Intermediate (MVI) School to provide outdoor learning opportunities for children received funding from Macon County commissioners and the school board on Aug. 9.

MVI teacher Jennifer Love addressed county commissioners about the plan to build an environmental research pavilion on the campus along Porter Creek, where student scientists can explore the schoolyard and learn about the local envi-

ronment. Dubbed the MVI Environmental Research Project, the outdoor shelter would provide shade for students to gather information from the schoolyard garden and riparian area.

It would also be used for storytelling, outdoor art projects and as a gathering place for students for other academic activities. There would be seating for 45 to 50 students, and it would be handicap accessible so students with special needs could access the facility.

Outdoor learning activities at MVI have been well received by students.

Love said they have been doing environmental science studies on site and started a science club last year that saw more than 100 children sign up. However, there is no shade for outdoor studies and it can be hot in the late summer/spring months, she said.

The estimated cost of construction is \$18,000. Love told commissioners she had already secured enough grant funding to cover all but \$8,000 of the cost, but most of the grant funds will expire if not expended by October. Coweeta's LTER (Long-Term Ecological Research)

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States may get waivers for 'No Child'

By M.A. Lewis
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With 2014 looming, states can now ask for a waiver from the requirements of No Child Left Behind, though they'll still have to adhere to high academic standards.

Melody Barnes, director of the Domestic Policy Council at the White House, and U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan announced President Barack Obama's order Aug. 8.

Ahead of the White House announcement, Barnes explained that the administration's proposal to fix NCLB has been in Congress for 16 months, been the topic of numerous meetings and hearings, and been subjected

to partisan politics in the House.

"America's future competitiveness is being decided today, in classrooms across the nation. With no clear path to a bipartisan bill in Congress, the President has directed us to move forward with an administrative process to provide flexibility within the law for states and districts that are willing to embrace reform," she said.

But the move does not signal an end to accountability.

"There will be a high bar for states seeking flexibility within the law. We'll encourage all states to apply and each one should have a chance to succeed," Barnes said. "But those that don't

will have to comply with No Child Left Behind's requirements, until Congress enacts a law that will deliver change to all 50 states."

The administration's proposal for fixing NCLB calls for college- and career-ready standards, more quality teachers and principals, strong use of data and a more flexible and targeted accountability system based on measuring annual student growth.

While not asked specifically about it, during a presentation on the Macon County school system's summer reading program last week, former U.S. Department of Education assistant secretary Robert H. Pasternak, who was on board with the

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Rants & Raves (Call 369-0568 after 5 p.m.)

FYI, just last month: Three killed and one injured in a shooting at a biker rally in Mormon Lake, a small town in Arizona.

You can now buy food at the Indian Mound. Now all we need are some carnival games and cheap trinket vendors.

So the fire chief is now the town's highest paid employee? Wow.

The TDA paid to paint a commissioner's bus for the Hiker Bash, so what will they pay to paint for the Biker Bash?

Instead of Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and welfare why doesn't the government just give everyone \$1 million each? \$365 million is a small drop in the bucket and would really help stimulate the economy.

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Food: The 10 Percent Campaign could generate \$3.5 billion for local NC economies

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meat. Additionally, local foods don't have a particular way of being grown, and can be done organically or using standard agricultural practices.

"The local foods movement has grown faster than any movement that I've seen in agriculture," Durden said. "There's a lot of support and promotion for local foods. Plus we've got people who are willing to actually produce local foods, and if we didn't have those folks, we wouldn't have local food production."

Durden cited some of the benefits of local food:

- It's fresher.
- There's less packaging.
- It takes less energy to ship.
- It promotes personal contact between grower and consumer.
- It let's you see the work and input that goes into production.
- It brings money into the local economy. Recent estimates show Macon County brings in \$12 million a year in agriculture production.
- It supports local family farms and farmlands.
- It keeps farming skills alive. People partner up to learn skills.

"In times like we're in right now, we need the income for the local economy," Durden said.

He added that more local food producers means a more

reliable supply. "If our production was just in the hands of a few large farms, if something happened to one of those large farms it would be a massive blow to food," Durden said "But if every community has a large number of small producers then the things that affect one producer may not affect all of them. So that gives us a local sustainable supply of food."

It's not all peachy though. There are some downsides to local food production, he said. One is that you can't buy everything local. Some foods, like bananas, citrus products or rice, don't grow in our climate.

Additionally, with local markets the food is seasonal and available in limited quantities.

Durden said that perhaps the biggest downside to buying local food is the convenience factor compared with shopping at grocery stores. "You can't buy all your food that you need when you go to a grocery store," he said.

Where can you get local food?

Although buying local food may not be as convenient as using the grocery store, the good news is local food can be procured at your neighborhood grocery store.

Durden noted, for example, that Ingles grocery markets make a point to purchase local produce.

Local food venues include local produce stands,

farm produce stands (a marketing source for farms), tailgate markets, u-pick farms (where you pick your own produce) and local agricultural fairs (where you can purchase livestock that can be delivered to a packing house).

In terms of tailgate markets, the Franklin Farmers Market opened in 2001 at Whistle Stop Mall, then it grew and moved to downtown Franklin.

"Every year it grows and grows and grows," Durden said.

The Friends of Rickman Store also hosts a tailgate Fridays from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. in the Cowee Community. Additionally Holly Springs Community has just started hosting a tailgate at the old Holly Springs Elementary building.

North Carolina boasts 217 tailgate markets statewide, according to Durden.

A community garden also launched in Macon in 2010. Individuals or groups can sign up to purchase 20' X 25' plots in the garden. They started with 16 plots and expanded to 24 this year. Plot holders donate 10 percent of their produce to the nonprofit crisis relief agency Macon CareNet.

Durden estimated that community gardeners donated at least 1,000 pounds of produce to CareNet last year. A CareNet representative recently informed Durden that according to their records, virtually every day someone from the community garden is donating produce to them. "It's been really successful. We're glad to have it," Durden said.

There's also another source of local food that may be literally right in your own backyard—or at least next door—yours, your friend's or your neighbor's gardens.

Macon County's Cooperative Extension has thrown its support behind the "10 Percent Campaign," whose main goal is to encourage consumers to commit 10 percent of their existing food dollars to support local food producers, related businesses and communities.

On their website they feature a link to the "10 percent Campaign," where you can sign up and pledge to spend 10 percent of your food dollars on local foods.

It sends participants an e-mail once a week asking about local food purchases and keeps a record of these.

To date, 4,101 North Carolinians and 324 businesses recorded more than \$6.5 million spent on local food purchases within the year that the "10 Percent Campaign" has been up and running, Durden said.

"And that is not anywhere near what could be spent in North Carolina or really what was spent in North Carolina on local foods," he said.

According to the Center for Environmental Farming systems, if every North Carolinian dedicated 10 percent of their food purchases or a \$1 a day to local foods they could generate \$3.5 billion a year for local economies in North Carolina.

"It can be a huge effect," Durden said. "That money circulates here in the county and here in the state."

Trends in Agriculture

Reading: The essential skill

continued from 1A

wasn't formally addressed.

Pre-testing showed readers to be in the 23rd percentile for comprehension. After the program, they tested in the 34th percentile.

"I can't tell you how phenomenal that is," Gardner said.

Symbol imagery, the ability to recall and manipulate symbols, and phonemic awareness, the ability to recognize sounds in isolation and within words, were the areas taught during the summer.

Pre-testing in those areas showed readers in the 12th and 14th percentiles respectively. Post-testing showed them in the 27th and 30th percentiles.

Across the board, students showed marked improvement in all phases of reading.

"What you're seeing here is growth in one month," said Robert H. Pasternak, former assistant secretary for special education and rehabilitative services for the U.S. Department of Education during the George W. Bush Administration.

Pasternak attended the program as a guest of Gardner and Paul Worthington, ex-

ecutive director of school partnerships for Lindamood Bell.

Pasternak said the program differed from many other reading programs out there.

"The Lindamood Bell program deserves a special place in the hierarchy of what we're trying to do," Pasternak said. "Anything can be researched-based. Lindamood Bell is research-validated."

Worthington said Lindamood Bell addresses three vital areas: Diagnosing the reading disorder, customizing a program based on that diagnosis and modifying the environment by creating classrooms where students need the same kind of instruction as opposed to cramming them all together.

Worthington, Pasternak and Gardner all stressed the importance of being able to read. If one can't read, they can't learn math, science, history or any other subject.

"The acquisition of reading skills is not in a syllabus," Worthington said.

The results of the summer reading program will be presented to the school board at its August meeting later this month.



Photo/Provided

New WCU chancellor

New Western Carolina University Chancellor David O. Belcher spoke to members of the Rotary Club of Franklin at the Aug. 3 meeting. Belcher talked about programs the university offers as well as success stories. He also spoke about taking the university to the next level of excellence. Belcher replaces long-time chancellor John W. Bardo.

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Durden explained that the majority of agriculture in the U.S. is still produced through large corporate farms.

The trend in agriculture is that medium-sized farms are decreasing, while large farms and small-scale producers with farms of five acres or less are increasing.

"Local foods is a trend," Durden said. He noted that local food has received widespread support from a variety of areas including the NC Cooperative Extension, the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP) and locally by groups like Friends of the Rickman Store and the Holly Springs Community Club.

ASAP's website asap-connections.org offers a local food guide that allows you to conduct an online search of farms, markets, grocers and restaurants in your area that use locally grown food products.

"I don't think it's going to displace large farming ventures unless really large changes occur in society. But it is a segment of agriculture that is growing and it does benefit us all," Durden said.

"We can promote it, but ultimately, it's up to the public continuing to shop locally and to accept that little bit of inconvenience... to build and grow local agriculture and local food production."

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