

BRE Line Technicians Help Bring First-Time Electricity to Rural Bolivian Village

LENOIR, NC (May 29, 2019) -- Two Blue Ridge Energy line technicians have completed a volunteer project to bring electricity to a rural Bolivian village for the first time.

Eddie Stephens of Watauga District, and Jerry Gregg of Caldwell District, served as part of the Brighter World Initiative team to build power lines and infrastructure to connect the village of Laphía to the electric grid. More than 120 people in the mountainous, agricultural community in central Bolivia now have access to improved education and economic opportunities, as well as power for their homes and the local school.

The Brighter World Initiative brought together 13 expert lineworkers from seven North Carolina electric co-ops to build about five miles of power lines.

Most of the work, including pulling long spans of wire and lifting heavy transformers, was done by hand, as access to trucks and machinery was limited. Local villagers worked with the team to help navigate the most challenging terrain, including crossing a 2,000-foot ravine.

Stephens had the honor of being selected as crew leader for the entire NC crew. At the completion of the 18-day project, Stephens also had the honor of flipping the switch to illuminate lightbulbs throughout the village school building for the first time. Cheers, applause and fireworks rang out from community members, local leaders and volunteers as the lights came on during this special ribbon cutting ceremony and celebration. Blue Ridge Energy Chief Operating Officer Alan Merck also attended the ceremony.

"We're very proud that Blue Ridge Energy can continue our long history of electrification in Bolivia that began in the early 1960s," Merck said. Local Blue Ridge staff helped electrify what was then the remote Santa Cruz area of Boliva to form what is now the largest cooperative in the world: CRE (Cooperativa Rural de Electrificación). "Helping improve the lives of others is what cooperatives like Blue Ridge are founded upon."

Continued on page 2...



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**Our Deadline Is On Friday At 5pm
For Next Week's Paper**

Caldwell Journal

Caldwell Journal Weather

Thursday (30th): Mostly sunny; very warm.
High 91 Low 62
Precipitation: 0.00 in.

Friday (31st): Strong afternoon t-storms.
High 83 Low 55
Precipitation: 0.30 in.

Saturday (1st): Mostly sunny; nice.
High 84 Low 57
Precipitation: 0.00 in.

Sunday (2nd): Partly sunny; comfortable.
High 86 Low 57
Precipitation: 0.00 in.

Monday (3rd): Mostly sunny; pleasant.
High 82 Low 48
Precipitation: 0.00 in.

Tuesday (4th): Mostly sunny; pleasant.
High 81 Low 52
Precipitation: 0.00 in.

Wednesday (5th): A t-storm possible.
High 83 Low 57
Precipitation: 0.00 in.

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While there are many memories of the time in Laphia this spring, Gregg noted that "Some of the biggest challenges were working in the terrain and elevation. A span of line was a 1,200 foot pull," adding that the elevation of the Laphia village was 12,000 feet compared to elevations of 1,200 and 4,000 feet in Caldwell and Watauga counties, respectively.

Village leaders told cooperative representatives that having electricity will create new economic and educational opportunities and a stronger community, as young people will be able to stay in the village, rather than moving to the city.

"Our cooperative was founded 83 years ago to bring much-needed electricity to our rural areas, and this project brings us back to our roots," said Blue Ridge Energy Chief Executive Officer Doug Johnson. "We commend Eddie Stephens and Jerry Gregg for traveling long distances and working in challenging conditions to make a life-changing difference for others."

More than one billion people live without electric power around the world, according to the International Energy Agency, and only 66 percent of rural Bolivians had access to electricity as of 2016.

The Brighter World Initiative was coordinated through NRECA International, a national cooperative philanthropic group that has brought electricity to more than 120 million people in 43 developing countries since 1962.

Blue Ridge Energy serves some 76,000 members in Caldwell, Watauga, Ashe and Alleghany counties as well as parts of Avery, Alexander and Wilkes counties. Learn more at www.BlueRidgeEnergy.com.

Museum photo contest schedule change

GRANITE FALLS, NC (May 23, 2019) -- The Granite Falls History Committee has extended by three (3) weeks the 120th Anniversary Photo Contest currently being held at the Granite Falls History and Transportation Museum. Visitors to the museum between 2 p.m. on May 4th and 4 p.m. on Saturday, June 22nd may vote on their choice of photos in four (4) different categories - The Town at Work, Doing Business in Granite Falls, Transportation, and Events/Activities. The photos celebrate the 120th Year since the Town was incorporated. The public reception and awards presentation have been moved from Sunday, June 2nd to Sunday, June 23rd between 2 and 4 p.m.

The museum is open on Saturdays and Sundays between 2 and 4 p.m. except holidays (Memorial Day Weekend - Saturday, May 25th and Sunday May 26th and Father's Day - Sunday, June 13th). Groups may arrange private tours at other times during the week by calling the Town Office at 396-3131. Located at 107 Falls Avenue, the museum is located in the former home of Andrew Baird, an early pioneer who once owned all the land now occupied by the Town of Granite Falls and much of southern Caldwell County.



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Lenoir Police Department investigating multiple cases of reported overdoses

LENOIR, NC (May 28, 2019) -- The Lenoir Police Department is investigating multiple cases of reported overdoses from this past weekend. The first reported case was on May 25, 2019 and the last was on May 27, 2019. In total there were seven victims at six different locations. Investigators are still trying to determine if these incidents are related and to what extent.

On May 27, 2019 officers from the Lenoir Police Department responded to an address on Maple Place in Lenoir for a report of overdose. Upon arriving on the scene officers located two overdose victims. One of those victims Christopher Dorian Ducker (DOB 04/27/1975) of 223 Maple Place, Lenoir, died at the scene from an apparent overdose.

The investigation into these incidents is ongoing. It is too early in the investigation to have an identification of the specific substances involved which may have resulted in overdosing the victims, however illicit drug use is suspected in most of the cases.

Chief Brent Phelps stated "Overdoses have become all too common in communities across the country. These incidents are concerning and we are dedicating a large part of our manpower and resources into these investigations. Our folks continue to work diligently fulfilling law enforcement's role in combatting substance abuse for this community."

Anyone with information relating to this or any other crime is asked to contact the Lenoir/Caldwell County Crime Stoppers at 758-8300 or the Lenoir Police Department at 757-2100.

Mountain Grove Baptist Church "Bags of Blessings" holds a Food Pantry on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month from 5-7pm. If anyone is interested in doing some ministry work in our community, please come out and serve with us. It is a great time to share the love of Jesus, get some exercise, and give away some groceries to someone in need. You can contact Larry at 828-728-9557 or 828-381-2329 for details.

First Harvest Baptist Church is in need of 16 of the red-back Church Hymnals. If you have some you can share with them contact Tim Greene at 394-8812.

Crest View Baptist Church has 25 burgundy choir robes to give away...various sizes. Contact church at 828-758-8888 if interested.

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Caldwell Journal Weekly Recipe
Italian Sausage Stuffed Zucchini

Ingredients

- 4 large zucchini, halved lengthwise
- 2 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 links chicken sausage links, thinly sliced
- 1/2 c. Italian breadcrumbs
- 3/4 c. shredded mozzarella
- 1/2 c. shredded fontina
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 c. chopped fresh basil

Instructions

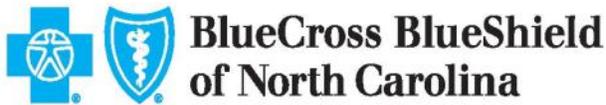
Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Score zucchini (like you're dicing an avocado) and scoop out insides into a large bowl.

In a large skillet over medium heat, heat oil. Add chicken sausage and cook until seared, 6 minutes.

Transfer to a large bowl and add breadcrumbs, 1/2 cup mozzarella, fontina, garlic, and basil.

Spoon mixture into zucchini and top with remaining 1/4 cup mozzarella.

Bake until zucchini is tender and cheese golden, 15 minutes.



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Agronomist explains the basics of soil pH and lime

RALEIGH, NC (May 21, 2019) -- Soils in our humid southern climate are naturally acidic and some old-timers often referred to soil needing to be “sweet” for good plant growth. This expression most often relates to the use of lime to correct our acidic soils.

Lime is commonly used by farmers and home gardeners to help soils obtain a proper pH level for optimal growth.

Acidity is usually referenced by the pH scale which indicates the intensity or concentration of acid. Values range from 0 to 14, with lower values being more acidic. Above a pH of 7, we refer to conditions being basic or alkaline. Pure water has a pH of 7, which is referred to as neutral, having an equal balance of acid and base. Vinegar, which is acidic, has a pH between 2 and 3. Bleach is a known basic/alkaline solution with a pH of around 12.

Lime is used to raise pH and lower soil acidity, plus it supplies calcium and magnesium depending on the source used. Too much soil acidity injures plant roots and affects their ability to take up nutrients and water. A lower than desired pH lessens nutrient availability and decreases populations of soil microorganisms that benefit plant growth.

The proper pH for plant growth is one that keeps the right balance of nutrients available for plant growth without being too acidic for root injury. This varies for different plants.

Tomatoes, boxwoods and roses are plant species known to prefer pH near 6.5. Flowering annuals and most other vegetable plants grow well at a pH level at or near 6.0. Typically, a pH range of 6.0 to 6.5 is considered preferable for most plants, except for acid-loving ones.

Blueberries, azaleas and rhododendrons are among the plants that desire a pH of around 5.0. Most turf grasses do well at pH level of 6.0 to 6.5, except for centipede where a 5.5 is preferable.

A question we often get asked is, “if I know my pH, how much lime do I have to add to get a pH of 6.0?” There is no way to accurately predict lime needs based only on soil pH. Soil pH is an indicator of soil acidity, but it is not a measure of potential acidity coming from the soil itself. The actual amount of lime will vary depending on the soil’s physical composition – sand, silt and clay plus the abundance of soil organic matter. “An accurate lime rate can only be determined by a soil testing lab that measures the acidity associated with the surface of soil particles, in addition to soil pH,” Kamalakanthan said.

Lime can be applied at any time of the year. Since lime takes about a year to fully react, it is ideally best applied a few months ahead of planting. “It will start reacting as soon as applied, especially if mixed with the soil,” Kamalakanthan said. Here in North Carolina, you can apply lime anytime of the year. If needed, liming ahead of planting a flower bed or vegetable garden is certainly advised. If soil pH is very low, surface applications of lime will not provide as much benefit as mixing into the soil.

Another misleading belief is that lime cannot be over-applied. Lime should typically not be applied every year and the correct rate is important. Usually soils will need lime application every two to four years. This will vary depending on soil type and management. Soil acidity in very sandy soils typically re-occurs faster than in more clayey soils, so sandy soils need to be tested for lime needs more frequently (every two years) than clay soils (every three to four years).

Lastly, let’s discuss lime sources. Calcitic lime contains only calcium limestone and dolomitic lime contains calcium and magnesium limestones. Magnesium is an essential nutrient and can be needed especially in sandy soils of our coastal plain region. Calcitic lime can best be used in soils with more clay that better hold nutrients. Soil testing can help identify the need for magnesium to help determine which lime source is best. To correct soil acidity, consumers should purchase only products sold as lime or limestone. Products that contain calcium, such as gypsum, do not correct soil acidity.

Now is a great time to get your soil tested since your samples are analyzed for free and turnaround times are often less than two weeks. For more information on soil testing, visit www.ncagr.gov/agronomi.

Guest column by Jagathi Kamalakanthan, NCDA&CS soil lab agronomist



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No tax increase in City of Lenoir budget

LENOIR, NC (May 24, 2019) -- City of Lenoir City Manager Scott Hildebran presented his 2019-2020 budget to Council Tuesday night, May 21, 2019.

There is no proposed tax increase in the general fund budget. Hildebran and Donna Bean, Finance Director, balanced the budget with current tax rates. The city property tax is \$0.58 cents and the Rescue Readiness Tax of \$0.0085 cents. The budget does include a \$1.00 per month increase in the solid waste fee to help fund a second brush truck.

The Water Fund and Wastewater Fund include a 1.1% water rate increase and 2.5% sewer rate increase. The increases would cost an extra \$0.87 on a monthly bill for 5,000 gallons of water. Hildebran said the increase will fund past and future improvements to both systems.

The 2019-2020 budget addresses priorities Council set earlier this year.

“This budget was developed based on priorities you [Council] set back in February and March at our council retreats,” Hildebran said. “Your highest priorities were employee compensation, housing, healthy infrastructure, economic development, US 321 and community beautification, and public engagement.”

Hildebran proposed a 3.0% cost of living increase to continue addressing employee compensation. The budget also funds a 1.2% increase for the state’s Local Government Retirement System.

Public Works will have \$385,000 for street resurfacing. The budget also allocates Community Development Block Grant Funds for improvements to the Lenoir High School auditorium, gym and Mack Cook Stadium.

Hildebran said his budget proposal does not use any city fund balance. Fund balance is the city savings account. The budget maintains a general fund balance of more than 50% exceeding Council’s goal of 24%.

The proposal includes funding for building demolition, nuisance removal, and strategic foreclosure expenses. Staff will address several infrastructure improvements next year. The budget funds roof repairs for Public Works, the Police department, Fire Station II, and the Rhodhiss Water Plant. Staff also plans to rehab the tennis courts at Martin Luther King Jr. Center.

“I would like to recognize the efforts of Finance Director Donna Bean, as she has been instrumental in the preparation of this document. Her thoroughness and guidance are appreciated,” Hildebran said. “I would also like to express my thanks to the Department Directors, Team Lenoir and City Council for their patience, understanding, and dedicated work. Our primary goal, each and every day, via our employee-led customer service initiative, remains to provide “Service Beyond Measure.”

Hildebran’s budget message and budget proposal are available online at www.cityoflenoir.com/budgetproposal.

City Council will hold a public hearing on the budget during the June 4 Council meeting.



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Grandfather Mountain State Park Makes Big Changes to Camping Policy

LINVILLE, NC (May 21, 2019) -- Starting June 1, 2019, Grandfather Mountain State Park's 13 campsites will become available for advanced reservation with a fee, consistent with the camping policy of all other North Carolina State Parks.

Going forward, all campers will be required to reserve their campsite in advance by calling 1.877.722.6762 or going to the Reserve America Reservation System at www.reserveamerica.com. Of the 13 primitive campsites on the mountain, 10 accommodate up to six campers with a \$15.00 fee, and three accommodate 7 – 12 campers with a \$35.00 fee. Park staff strongly recommends making reservations ahead of time as cell service on the mountain is not reliable and visitors may not be able to connect with Reserve America at the trailheads as a result.

When the state park opened in 2009, camping fees were waived while park operations were being established, and camping was registered on a first-come-first-served basis with no advanced reservations available except for the Daniel Boone campsite.

"The new camping policy will better enable out-of-town visitors to plan their trips. With the previous first-come-first-served system, there was no guarantee that a campsite would be available by the time campers arrived at the trailhead," said Beatrice Murray, administrative specialist for the state park. "While there is no longer free camping, we hope that our 10 campsites at \$15 a night will accommodate any budget."

Over the years, park staff has observed the frustration of campers who traveled long distances and arrived at the trailhead only to find that all sites have been taken. With advanced reservations, this will no longer be an issue.

All 13 individual campsites in the state park are located along the trail system and are hike-in backcountry, primitive sites; there is no car-camping, and there are no facilities. The terrain is rugged and the shortest hiking distance to a campsite is one mile. Camping is only permitted in the designated sites, which are identified by signs at the campsites and with a camping icon on the trail map. Specific site information is available on the state park website www.ncparks.gov/grandfather-mountain-state-park and on the Reserve America site at www.reserveamerica.com.

Due to damage from heavy rains, the Nuwati and Cragway Trails and the four campsites on the Nuwati Trail are closed until further notice.

Up-to-date information on the state park will be posted on Grandfather Mountain State Park's website (<https://www.ncparks.gov/grandfather-mountain-state-park>) and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/grandfathermountainstatepark). Any questions may be directed to the Grandfather Mountain State Park office at 828-963-9522, or grandfather.mountain@ncparks.gov.

Hickory Fire Department Presented Award

HICKORY, NC (May 21, 2019) -- During graduation ceremonies, Catawba Valley Community College presented Hickory Fire Department with a Community Partnership Award. The City of Hickory Fire Department has partnered with CVCC for many years in the development and delivery of fire, rescue, and emergency medical programs. Involvement spans from serving on the advisory committee for the Fire Protection Technology and Emergency Management degree programs to hosting fire and rescue certification classes.

CVCC Fire & Rescue Director Wes Lail said "Despite being their own state-approved delivery agency for fire and rescue certification programs, they routinely reach out to CVCC to partner with those respective classes. This particular partnership allows CVCC to expand its fire and rescue course offerings and enhances the opportunities for students outside of their organization to experience different courses and environments."

Last year, the City of Hickory Public Works Department supported the development of water distribution lines to CVCC's new public safety training complex on Sweetwater Road. After completion, the new public safety training center and its City of Hickory-enabled water supply system will provide emergency services training to all of the agencies in Catawba and Alexander counties as well as contiguous counties.

Most recently, the City of Hickory Fire Department has demonstrated their willingness to partner with CVCC by donating fire-related equipment and potentially a reserve apparatus to CVCC's new fire academy. Hugely needed and appreciated, this equipment will go a long way in developing firefighters of the future for this region.

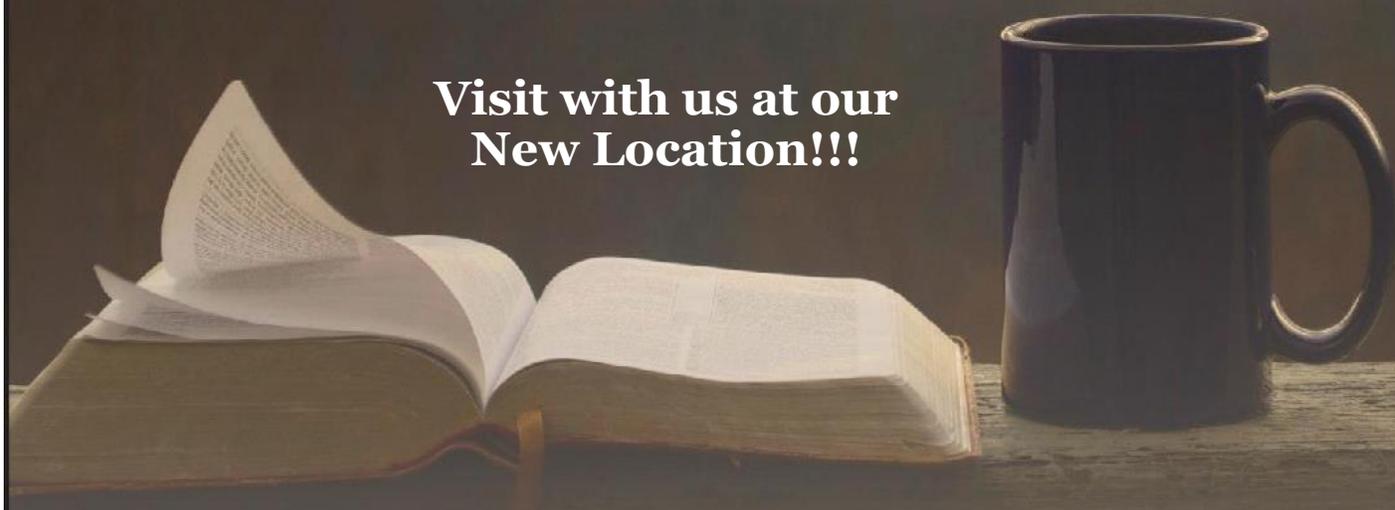


Hickory Fire Chief Matt Hutchinson stated "We are very appreciative of this award; but more thankful for the collaboration with the college and their efforts to provide valuable lifesaving training to emergency personnel."

Photo included: (left to right) Battalion Chief Brian Carswell, Fire Chief Matt Hutchinson and Catawba Valley Community College Dean, School of Health and Public Services, Robin Ross.

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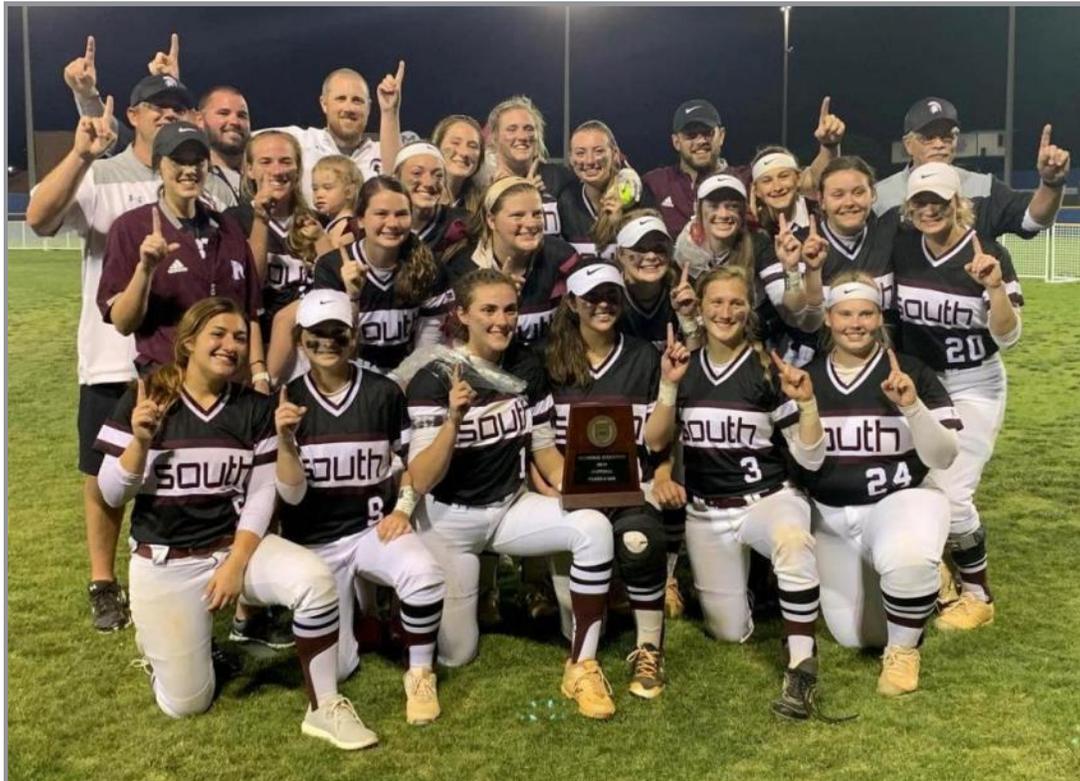
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Down to the Wire...or Fence by Dan O'Neal

MOORESVILLE, NC (May 24, 2019) -- The first eight innings of Game 3 in the Western Regional Final of the NCHSAA Class 4A Softball Championship were...scoreless. That is correct. This is not a misprint or a typo. Usually, seven innings are the standard. However, you had two very unyielding squads who refused to go down in defeat, hence the need for...nine innings.

Between the two starting pitchers, Anna King for the visiting South Caldwell Spartans and Kali Morton for the host Mooresville Blue Devils, there were nine strikeouts and only five base hits. Between these two excellent teams, there was solid defensive play. And unmistakably, King, a junior (that's correct sports fans, she coming back!), is a natural talent who is very capable of throwing strikes and retiring batters.



Had it been the bottom of the ninth when Regan Weisner hit the game winning home run, I would be referring to her four-bagger as a “buzzer beater”. Since the Spartans were the visitors, and with the tone of the contest going scoreless back and forth, this game very much went down to the wire. It was a 3-0 pitching count when Weisner KO'D the softball over the fence. In a valiant attempt by the Blue Devils center fielder to rob Weisner of this glorious moment, the outfielder and the makeshift fence went down simultaneously. Might there be a safety issue there? Thank goodness the ball dropped and the Mooresville player was not injured. Needless to say, I am not a fan of portable fences. They looked like you could grow your rose bushes around them.

From there, the Spartans combined great pitching and field play in the bottom of the ninth to maintain the 1-0 victory. With the win in the Western Regional finals, South Caldwell will travel to NC State University in Raleigh to face the Eastern Regional Champions, the Hoggard Vikings from Wilmington, The best of three Class 4A State Championship series begins this Friday, May 31st at 5pm.

There are those observations of games, like keeping up with hits, walks, strikeouts, etc. Then again, there is nothing better than getting the perspective from participants of the winning school. When asked about her game winning home run, Regan Wesiner commented, “It was an amazing feeling. I knew I had a job to do. It was a 3-0 count and I knew she (Morton) was going to throw a good one”. Added Anna King, “I was pumped. Those Mooresville players talked junk about me. It's great to be going back to state. The game was too valuable to let go.”

Regarding the team performance assessment, head coach Casey Justice commented, “We struggled with the bats tonight but we were playing against a very good team. Anna (King) battled; she did not falter. And with the 3-0 green light, Regan hit that home run and now we're going back to the state title game. South Caldwell High School Principal Chad Smith also spoke of the way he was “extremely proud of the coaches and student athletes for their accomplishments. We look forward to an exciting next weekend.”

With the trip to the state finals last year, the Spartans knocked on the door. This year, Coach Justice and his outstanding squad have great plans to “kick the door “down this time around. Best wishes and safe travels to all.

**New Fire Inspector
for Hickory Fire Department**

HICKORY, NC (May 28, 2019) -- Chad Houston has been hired as a Fire Inspector for the Hickory Fire Department. He began his career in 2000 as a volunteer firefighter with Icard Township Fire Department, where he still remains as a volunteer. In 2003, he began working full time for the Long View Fire Department. In 2013 he was hired at Burke County Fire Marshal's office as a Fire Inspector. Houston attended Coastal Carolina Community College and graduated with an Associate degree in Fire Protection Technology. He has received certifications and training in both firefighting and inspections including: Inspector level III, Fire Instructor II, Educator III, Juvenile Fire Setter II, Fire Officer II, Certified Fire Investigator, Firefighter, Driver Operator, and Emergency Medical Technician. Houston and his wife, Megan, have two sons, Rhett and Sawyer. He is also the Vice President for Hildebran-Icard Little League and enjoys coaching his two sons.



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