



## AN EARLY JUMP ON LOVE



PHOTOS BY TED FITZGERALD/The Pilot

The Cupid's Crawl took place in Southern Pines on Sunday afternoon, where multiple stores and vendors got together at Sunrise Square to host a Valentine's themed marketplace.

PAT CORSO

# Business Leader Retiring

BY LAURA DOUGLASS  
Staff Writer

Pat Corso, Moore County's lead economic development officer and executive director of Partners in Progress (PIP) since 2011, announced plans Tuesday to retire this spring.

PIP is a two-person operation with a big mission. Its purpose is to increase economic prosperity, and improve the quality of life for area residents through the creation of quality jobs and capital investment in our communities.

Corso announced his pending retirement this May during a virtual meeting of the PIP board of directors on Tuesday morning.

"We very much appreciate the effort you've put in over the time you've been involved," said PIP's board chairman, John May. "The level of enthusiasm, the energy you brought, I don't know if anyone could have expected the (outcomes) to be as dramatic as they have been."

From the onset, Corso was not a typical economic developer and approached the job from a unique, more entrepreneurial mindset.

Corso spent 17 years as president and CEO of Pinehurst Resort during a period of immense transformation leading up to and through the 1999 U.S. Open, before forming a resort management partnership. He was also a founding member of PIP, which began as a breakfast club of local business leaders. When the original executive director, Ray Ogden, resigned a decade ago, Corso was tapped for the role.

The days of Moore County's large textile and manufacturing mills were long gone by the time PIP was established in 2003. Instead, the region is better known and has continued to flourish because of its golf courses, agriculture and military interests, and expanding health care industry.

Some of the successes that PIP has overseen during Corso's tenure include:

- Recruiting First Bank to relocate its headquarters from Troy to Southern Pines;
- Assisting with the creation of the Sandhills Farmers Cooperative and the Sandhills AGInnovation Center;
- Developing a four-part strategic plan;

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## VACCINE INFORMATION

## Health Officials Reaching Out to Minorities

BY JAYMIE BAXLEY  
Staff Writer

The Moore County Health Department is calling on community leaders to help ensure equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines.

O'Linda Watkins, president of the Moore County NAACP, was recently asked by the department to assist with pre-registering Black residents for vaccination, which is currently open to people aged 65 and older under the state's multi-phase inoculation plan. She is advising health officials to address concerns about the vaccine's safety in marginalized communities through education.

"I don't think there's any problem with getting older people on board, but the younger ages are telling

me they want to be more educated about the potential side effects," Watkins said in a phone interview. "I think that education is definitely key when it comes to reaching younger people because they're scared. A lot of them are pointing to Tuskegee and things like that."

She was referring to the infamous Tuskegee syphilis study, an unethical science experiment in which 600 Black men in Alabama were denied treatment for the disease while doctors studied its long-term effects. The study ran for 40 years and was conducted in part by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

While Watkins herself trusts the science used to develop both vaccines currently authorized for

emergency use by the Food and Drug Administration — "I would rather take the vaccine than die of COVID-19," she said — she believes the health department must assuage younger residents' anxieties in order to distribute shots equitably in the months ahead.

One way to accomplish this, she said, is by doing "contactless literature drops" in historically marginalized communities and distributing educational materials in the places that serve those communities.

"People need to get the information where they are," she said. "The information needs to be posted at Walmart, local barber shops and churches. The education needs to

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## 'GODMOTHER' OF THE SANDHILLS GARDENS

# McPhaul Left a Lasting Legacy of Improvement

BY FAYE DASEN  
Features Editor

Whether it involved gardens, history and genealogy, education, health care or the arts in Moore County, Jane McPhaul was part of it.

McPhaul, a longtime resident of Southern Pines, died Thursday, Feb. 4, at the age of 94.

"Jane was a pleasant force of nature," says Katherine McRae, of the Arts Council. "Most of the good causes in Moore County felt her grace in some way.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Christine Ganis, left, with Jane McPhaul in 2019.

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## MOORE COUNTY SCHOOLS

# Split Board Decides Building Priorities

BY MARY KATE MURPHY  
Staff Writer

The Moore County Board of Education nearly sidelined an \$8.4 million list of building priorities on Monday night over the question of where to rank a new Pinecrest High running track.

After 70 minutes of discussion and several failed motions on various iterations of the list, board members in a split vote approved it as Superintendent Bob Grimesey proposed earlier in the meeting — with the Pinecrest track project at

the bottom of the 37-item priority scheme along with a new track for North Moore High.

Much of the projected funding for those building repair projects will be made available to Moore County Schools over the next year or so as the district sells off retired elementary school campuses and frees up "contingency" funds built into the construction budget for the three new elementary schools.

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## OPINION

### Lawmakers Seek To Hide Information

They need to understand the significance of printing public notices - now.

### PUBLIC SPEAKING A Good Investment

Readers share their views on a number of current events.



## SANDHILLS SCENE

### Supporting the Artists

When choosing artwork for its renovated lounge, a local club shopped local.

## BUSINESS

### Outstanding Performance

For Black's Tire and Auto, keeping essential workers on the road defined 2020.

## WEATHER FORECAST

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
55° 44°	53° 31°	37° 30°	40° 31°
<b>Mostly Cloudy</b> Feels Like: 55° Precip: 25% Winds: E at 6mph	<b>Rain</b> Feels Like: 55° Precip: 60% Winds: NNE at 5mph	<b>AM Rain</b> Feels Like: 33° Precip: 80% Winds: NNE at 8mph	<b>Freezing Rain</b> Feels Like: 36° Precip: 55% Winds: NNE at 7mph

