

# THE SYLVA HERALD

## AND RURALITE

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## Coffee Shop changing hands

Veteran employee buys iconic eatery



By Dave Russell

About the only thing to change about Sylva landmark The Coffee Shop has been the prices. Until now.

The 91-year-old diner soon will have a new owner and a tweak or two to the menu – fresh fruit alongside its signature dishes, including the meatloaf, hamburgers and pie.



Barnes

Ten-year-employee Barbara Barnes is purchasing the business from Gary Gibson and his wife, Phyllis.

Gary Gibson has been at the restaurant for 52 years in one capacity or another.

"I started washing dishes there in 1967," he said. "Cicero Bryson and Bill Collins owned it when I went to work there. They hired me part-time for 50 cents an hour. That first week, I worked 60 hours for \$30, with taxes held out. That's what they called 'part-time' back then."

The Coffee Shop then was one of only four or five restaurants in town, he said.

He began working the front grill when the cook was absent, then the kitchen, baking the pies and cooking dinner.

►see **Business**, 7A



QUINTIN ELLISON/THE HERALD

The Coffee Shop's veteran work crew on Tuesday, cooking and serving food to lunchtime customers.

Has served as dispatcher; trooper; deputy; officer

## Longtime lawman Gallardo to retire from Sylva PD

By Dave Russell

Fifty-two years, nine guns and three retirements later, Sylva Police Officer J.P. Gallardo is ready to catch some bass and trout.

His last day with the department will be June 25, capping a 48-year career as a gun-toting lawman.

Gallardo began his career in 1967 as a dispatcher for the N.C. Highway Patrol, serving four years.

"I got out of high school, and I was too young to be a trooper," he said.

In 1971, Gallardo climbed into a 1970 Plymouth Fury and took to the roads as a trooper, first working at the Banner Elk station. In 1974, he moved to the Bryson City office and to Charlotte in 1980.

He came to the Sylva station in 1982 and stayed until he retired from the Highway Patrol in 1996.

"After I retired from there, I went to work for the Jackson County Sheriff's Office in administrative staff, first as a captain and eventually a major," he said.

He stayed at the sheriff's office until retiring with 15 years service in 2011.

Davis Woodard, then chief of the Sylva Police Department, hired Gallardo to patrol downtown and enforce parking ordinances, he said.

That duty included enforcement of a newly enacted rule prohibiting workers, merchants and apartment dwellers from parking in prime parking spaces from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

►see **Gallardo**, 7A

School might add program to aid recruiting

## WCU wrestling with new plan to lure local athletes

By Tanner Hall

Leaders at Western Carolina University say reviving its men's wrestling program could be the key to recruiting more local student athletes.

"Consistent with our mission to serve Western North Carolina and our mission and desire to recruit first-generation college students, I think there's some pretty good data out there to say men's wrestling is the sport that does both of those," WCU Board of Trustees member Casey Cooper said. "Right now, you have to be a pretty elite athlete to play at WCU in football or basketball, and there's such a small, small percentage of those kids that are coming from the far-western counties. That would not be the case with men's wrestling."

Athletic Director Randy Eaton agreed with Cooper's assessment. "It's big here," he said of the sport. "It's huge."

Adding wrestling to WCU's list of athletic programs could prove difficult, however.

"From a Title IX standpoint, I would not grow men's sports. I can't," Eaton said. "Well, I take that back. If I added wrestling, I'd need to add three or four women's sports, just for participation rates."

Title IX requires universities to maintain equal ratios between the number of male and female students and student

►see **WCU**, 7A

## Honed merging skills required to get to Sylva

Roadwork taking place on main routes to town

By Dave Russell

Lane closures and orange construction cones and barrels are common to travelers to Sylva – seemingly, from every direction. The N.C. Department of Transportation has been busy in this area, with project completion dates yet to be determined in some cases.

Here's an update:

### Cowee Gap

A contractor for DOT started repair work in May on U.S. 23/441, fixing large cracks in the northbound lanes near Cowee Gap.

These latest cracks are in a section that crosses the path of an ancient landslide. Heavy spring rain saturated the landslide material, causing it to move downslope, cracking the pavement.

Crews for the contractor are currently repairing drainage along the southbound side of the highway.

Additional repairs will include anchoring a wall below the road, according to Jonathan Woodard, staff maintenance engineer for 10-county Division 14, including Jackson County.

"A specialty contractor has been re-



QUINTIN ELLISON/THE HERALD

Cars on Monday navigate a portion of U.S. 23/441, marked with orange cones and barrels. Construction crews are fixing a culvert and pavement cracking.

tained to install the anchors and they are in the process of negotiating the details of the work," Woodard said.

That will be the first phase of the work, according to DOT spokesman David Uchiyama.

"The second phase is still being designed," he said. "That will include more extensive repairs to the wall."

A design discussion meeting is planned this week, Uchiyama said.

Traffic is funneled into one lane in each direction for the foreseeable future, creating safe travel lanes for drivers and safe zone for the workers, he said.

►see **Construction**, 7A

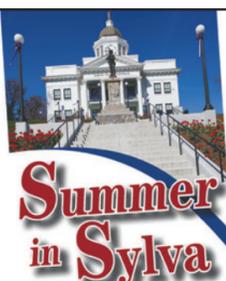
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**Sylva-Webster Golden Eagle Champions**  
on page 5B



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