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Letter to the Editor

Seeking Justice for Brian Lee Gathings

Hi, my name is Faye Gathings. Anyone who knows who I am is aware that my son Brian Lee Gathings was shot and killed December 1, 2004, in Peachland. This is a plea to the people of Anson County who have any knowledge of the events leading up to his death to please come forward and tell what you know. I have spent the last 9 years and 11 months trying to find justice for him. Things that you might find insignificant could be critical in finding the truth about his death.

Brian was not a perfect person, but one thing he was not was an abuser of women. Anyone who knew Brian and Joy Burgess knew Brian was the one being abused.

On two different occasions Brian was taken to the Anson County Magistrate's Office with visible signs of abuse on his head and leg. Both times Ms. Gainey was on duty. Both times she refused to give him a warrant for assault by Ms. Burgess. On the second visit to her office Gainey said, "I'm not giving you any warrant. Nobody assaults one of my sisters and gets away with it." I'm not sure, but I do believe that was a violation of his civil rights, as well as North Carolina Law.

I would like for you to know some of the facts concerning his death. According to Brian's autopsy report and the SBI Ballistic Report, there was no gun powder residue on his clothes or body, meaning he was shot at a distance too great to judge. The Anson County Sheriff's Office reported to the news media that he was shot through his chest as he reached for the gun. Not true. Brian was shot through his right side - the bullet traveled through his body, lodging in his left arm which was down by his side. Brian was left handed. Had he been reaching for a gun his left hand most likely would not have been down by his side. Brian was unarmed.

There are people who know that Brian talked with Burgess hours before he went to her trailer, and that she told him to come. According to the Sheriff's Department Burgess admitted that she was under the influence of meth when she killed Brian. She had asked Brian to, "Bring my clothes when you come." Her clothes were in his truck. I was told that Brian had used a shovel to break into her trailer, but I was later told by an SBI agent they didn't believe that the shovel was used. The Sheriff's Office disagreed. Also, the shovel didn't belong to Brian. I was told that the shovel was the kind used in construction. The only shovel Brian owned was still at my house. The Sheriff's Office seemed not to care.

I went to the Clerk of Court's office to look at all the different warrants that Ms. Burgess had taken out on Brian and found some things that were very disturbing to me - there were items missing. None of the warrants were taken out when the incidents were supposed to have occurred. Example 1) On October 6, 2004, she took out a domestic violence warrant on Brian date of offense is missing from the records. Example 2) On November 10, 2004, she took out another warrant on Brian claiming that he pointed a gun at her on October 1, 2004. She made no mention of him pointing a gun at her on October 6, 2004. I think that if I was taking out a warrant on someone for domestic violence I would remember to tell them that he pointed a gun at me just 5 days before. There are no records where Joy Burgess ever presented herself with as much as a scratch on her.

When Brian was killed the Sheriff described him to the news media as a violent person who abused women. This was after we were asked not to talk with the media because it could jeopardize their investigation. Little did I know that the District Attorney at the time, Michael Parker nor the Sheriff wanted any of the facts concerning his death made public.

These are some of the facts they didn't want anyone to know about. Joy Burgess had been having an affair with a boy 10 years younger than she - it started when he was 15 - and she had committed crimes with inmates at Brown Creek Correctional Institute in Polkton where she worked. A few months after Brian's death Ms. Burgess was asked to resign from Brown Creek Correctional after being caught having inappropriate contact with an inmate.

Brian and Joy Burgess were supposed to be in court on December 2, 2004, just one day after she killed him. Brian had talked with an attorney and was going to tell everything he knew about her. He had intended to seek custody of their little girl. But, if he didn't get custody of the girl he would ask for a DNA test to prove him the father. More than a year before he found out Ms. Burgess was pregnant Brian had learned that it was unlikely that he could ever father a child. These medical records are at CMC in Charlotte. Brian loved that child and never cared if he was her biological father or not. He just didn't want to give Ms. Burgess another reason to keep him in court. The worst part was she never showed up for the court dates given her when she took warrants out on him, but he had to just keep going to court because every time it would be continued. He had warrants that had been on the court dockets for over a year without her ever appearing in court.

I talked to the Sheriff about these things and he told me that there was nothing that he could do because the DA (Michael Parker) refused to listen to any of the evidence. I ask him if he would arrange a meeting with Mr. Parker and me and he did. Every question I asked Parker I got the same response "I don't know I haven't reviewed the file." Parker knew I was coming, and the Sheriff went with me. When I finally asked him about his reason for not allowing an investigation into my son's death Parker said, "If there's a God I will answer to him and not you. I'm not jeopardizing my political career."

As some of you know, I made it my mission to make sure he never served another term in our judicial district. We deserved to have someone who cares about the people of this district and not about his own personal agenda.

I am pleading with you today to please come forward with any information that you might have. You can contact the current District Attorney or the SBI.

I am not looking for revenge, I am looking for Justice for Brian. I need to find a way to go on with my life and I can't do that until the truth is told about him. Please, any information that you might give, give only the truth, because truth will lead to justice.

Faye Gathings

B. J. Tyson Named as Freshman of the Week by AAC

The American Athletic Conference has named East Carolina's B. J. Tyson Freshman-of-the-Week after he helped the Pirates to a pair of victories last week. It is the first weekly American conference honor for the ECU basketball program.

According to WNCT, Tyson, a 6-foot-3 guard from Wadesboro, averaged 16.0 points, 3.8 rebounds and 2.5 assists in four games in which he shot .514 from the field (19-of-37) and .793 from the free throw line (23-of-29). He finished the week by scoring double figures in each of the final three games with a pair of 20-point performances. He led the Pirates in scoring and assists twice during the week and rebounding once.

Tyson came off the bench to score 22 points in the 58-52 win over Fresno State, going 11-of-11 from the free throw line to set an ECU freshman record. He made 5-of-9 shots from the floor, grabbed five rebounds and handed out three assists, while scoring the Pirates' final eight points. The following night against Hawaii, Tyson poured in a season-high 24 points, shooting 57.1 percent from the field (8-of-14).

Against Central Connecticut, Tyson led the team in both rebounds (6) and assists (4), while scoring 14 points in 28 minutes. He was 5-of-10 from the field and 4-of-5 at the free throw line and moved his season point total (112) over the century mark.

Tyson is second in The American in scoring, averaging 16.0 points per game.

Task Force Backs Plan to Make School Buses Safer

Technology used to issue automatic citations to violators who speed past stopped buses

A plan to catch violators who speed past stopped school buses won support in November from a key group of legislators and experts. The plan was presented by NC Attorney General Roy Cooper at a meeting of a subcommittee of the Child Fatality Task Force, which includes state legislators and child safety experts from across North Carolina. The subcommittee voted unanimously to support the plan.

"This is a proven way to deter motorists from passing stopped school buses without cost to the taxpayers," Cooper said. "It will definitely make our kids safer when they ride the bus to school."

State law makes it illegal to pass a school bus while it is stopped to pick up or drop off children, but this fall North Carolina children have been injured and even killed while boarding or waiting for their bus. Cooper wants North Carolina to equip all public school buses in the state with cameras that would photograph the license plates of any vehicle that illegally passes a stopped school bus. He wrote to the Task Force last month seeking its support.



Photographs of offenders' license plates captured by the cameras would then be used to automatically issue civil citations to registered vehicle owners. Monetary penalties paid by violators would go to public schools under the state's Constitution, so the system could pay for itself.

A number of other states have enacted similar laws, including Georgia, Maryland and Virginia, and have found that this method improves student safety and deters potentially deadly violations.

Implementing the system in North Carolina would require state legislation to give local school boards the necessary authority. The North Carolina School Boards Association also backs the plan to improve school bus safety.

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Uptown Wadesboro, Inc. Presents the

Christmas Tour of Homes

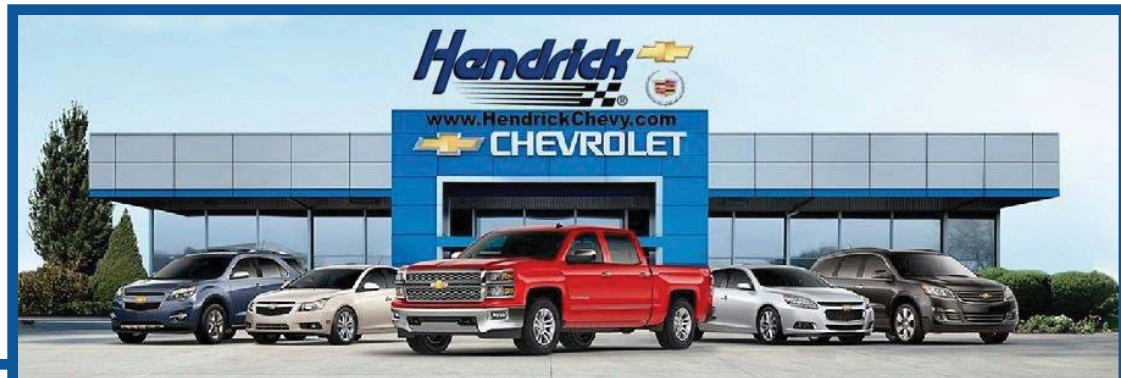
Sunday, December 7 12 noon to 7 p.m.

Uptown Wadesboro, Inc. proudly presents its Christmastime Tour of Homes ... Sunday, December 7. Tour local homes and businesses beautifully decorated for Christmas with your friends and family.

There will be a Free Concert for the community at First United Methodist Church by the Anson Singers at 3 p.m. The group is directed by Emily Litaker Privette.

There are three homes and three local businesses on the Tour. You may take the tour before the Anson Singers concert or after. Tickets are available the day of the Tour at the first stop, the James Holbrook Building, which is located beside BB&T on North Greene Street.

\$10 Advance Tickets at Lacy's, Wadesboro Town Hall, Southern Medley Wine Cellar & Buff Monkey



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