

the high LIFE

“ Before people are issued gun licenses, they must know the steps to take in order to prevent such accidents. Parents must make sure their guns are in safe quarters, away from their children’s reach, and they should not advertise to others that they have them stored at home.” ”



Mary Claire Hurley
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Hillary Clinton steps down as Secretary of State, but her future in politics remains open to debate. page 2

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Issue of females on front lines in combat continues to draw mixed emotions from military and general public. page 3

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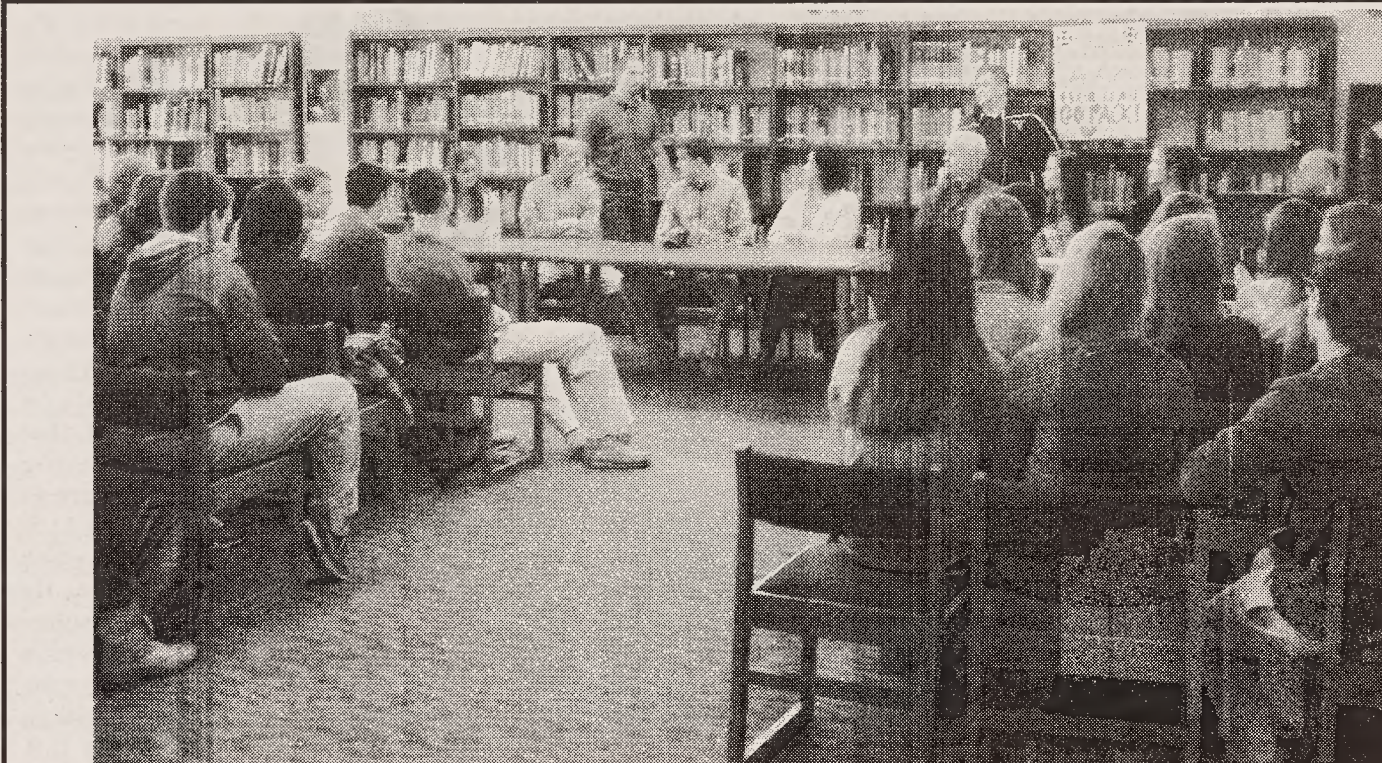
Celebrating its 11th year, FringeFestival wows crowds with local artistit showcasing their unique talents. page 8

Sports

As hockey players return to the ice, fans anticipate entertaining games, and business owners look forward to improved revenue. page 12

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National Signing Day hit home on Wednesday, February 6, as five student athletes signed their national letters of intent. NC State University: Natalie Labonge, swimming; Rachel Cox, soccer. NC A&T: Charlie Jones and Rayshaun Mayfield, football. UNCG: Hill Gwynn, soccer. Coaches, parents, fans, and athletes were grateful to the Whirlie Booster Club for their continued support of the school’s athletic program. Proudest of all were Coaches Kontoulas, Martineau, DeGraw, and Coiro. Woods photo

State of the Union pleases Democrats, leaves Republicans dissatisfied

BY LUKE SUMERFORD
Layout Design Editor

On an annual basis, the President speaks formally not only before the American people, but also, more specifically, members of Congress, his cabinet members, and the entire panel of Supreme Court justices. This oration, known as the State of the Union address, is a requirement within the Constitution of the United States. The purpose is for the President to inform Americans how the nation is functioning both at home and abroad, as well as to outline his policy agenda for the year, and in the case of re-elected Barack Obama, the next four years.

After concluding the traditional ceremonial “thank you,” the President initially addressed the elephant in the room, better known as the economy.

“It is our generation’s task, then, to reignite the true engine of America’s economic growth – a rising, thriving middle class,” said Obama.

Throughout his first term in the Oval Office, Obama stressed the importance of a

thriving middle class, yet since the economic recession hit in 2009, the middle class shrunk as did the conomy. Both Democrats and Republicans agree that the middle class needs protection. Such is not new or bold information, but what occurred next was not only unexpected, but also unprecedented.

Obama called on Congress to raise the minimum wage from what it is now \$7.25 to \$9.00 an hour.

“Tonight, let’s declare that in the wealthiest nation on Earth, no one who works full-time should have to live in poverty,” said Obama.

Knowing that he will be unable to pass a stimulus package through the House, political pundits speculate this increase in minimum wage is the President’s form of a stimulus bill.

Another important topic the President focused upon was education reform. He cited the nation’s low education rating on a global scale and persuaded his audience that the greatest nation on earth could do much better.

Obama also spoke about his desire for Congress to pass

bills rewarding high schools that prepare students for college and future careers in areas like science, math, technology, and engineering. He then proclaimed how important early education is for the development of the country’s youth, even before kindergarten.

“Study after study shows that the sooner a child begins learning, the better he or she does down the road. But today, fewer than three in ten four year-olds are enrolled in a high-quality preschool program,” said Obama, who then directed his attention to Georgia and Oklahoma, both states funding Pre-K programs. If implemented, the program could change education and help America become competitive in areas of science and math.

Next came one of the most emotionally inspiring moments of a State of the Union speech, as Obama focused on the issue of gun control, which has received much press recently.

“In the two months since Newtown, more than a thousand birthdays, graduations, and anniversaries have been

stolen from our lives by a bullet from a gun,” said Obama, emphasizing how such statistics should not reflect life in a modern country like the United States.

Families of the victims of the Newtown tragedy were in the audience, along with other victims of gun violence that occurred within the nation. Obama’s strategy was to win over not only the votes from members of Congress, but also the hearts and minds of the American people to support gun control laws that could prevent the murder of innocent people.

After the President concluded his speech, the Republican party’s rising star, Florida Senator Marco Rubio, offered a rebuttal. Somewhat overshadowing his choice words was his awkward pause in the middle of his speech to reach for a water bottle. Rubio hit all the points necessary to make a case for the Republican viewpoints. He criticized the President for increasing the deficit and trying to raise taxes on the rich.