

9 vie for 4 CC Board of Education seats

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Politicking is picking up steam in the fall elections for four seats up for grabs on the Cleveland County Board of Education.

Danny Blanton, 61, 1827 Creek Ridge Road, Shelby, was the last to file before candidate filing closed at noon Friday, July 19, the fifth challenger for one of the four seats up for grabs.

Incumbent board members Kathy B. Falls of Grover, Phillip Glover, S. Dale Oliver, and George Litton, all of Shelby, had previously filed for reelection.

Filing last week were Darius Griffin, 36, 1575 Timberlake Road, Shelby, Donnie Thurman Jr., 29, 1414 Clearbrook Dr., Shelby, Jeff Gregory 55, 1400 Mooresboro Road, Shelby, and Kenneth Ledford, 66, 4102 Polkville Road, Polkville, also filed.

"I'm running for the school board because I owe a great debt of gratitude to the public educational system and Cleveland County community," said Griffin, a newcomer to politics. He added "Throughout my life this community has educated me and encouraged a desire for learning. This desire has evolved into a passion and commitment for advocacy and action.

He said that as a board member he will combine his leadership and experience to build and support relationships between schools and community program; collaboratively work with board members to align school board goals with the Cleveland County School and community goals; and contribute to strategic evidence based policies that will establish a safe environment where all students graduate and are career, college and citizenship ready.

Griffin is employed as Director of Environmental Safety and Health at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. He holds a bachelor's degree in Occupational Health & Safety and a Masters in Public Administration. He is an alumnus of Leadership North Carolina. He is married with two children.

"I'm for the teachers," says Danny Blanton whose family has been long active in education and many of them employed in the school system. "Cut corners somewhere else if we have to cut but don't cut the teachers," says Blanton.



Kathy Falls

If elected, he said his focus will be for the kids and the teachers. He said that no teachers should have to take money out of their pockets and buy supplies for students. "I would support an auditorium for Upper Cleveland County and research should begin to find funding for that much-needed auditorium," he said. Blanton added, "Technology is great but we also need to get back to the basics in school."

Donnie Thurman Jr. is a Shelby native who majored in Sociology and Psychology and played football at Gardner Webb University, and prior to that played football at Crest High School where the Chargers had an amazing record of 45-4. He was a team captain as a middle linebacker at Crest and All Conference. Regarded as a professional motivational speaker nationwide, he has spoken to over

850,000 youth at schools, churches and organizations. He became a licensed minister in February 2010 at Palmer Grove Baptist Church and was ordained as a preacher of the gospel by Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Association. He serves as youth pastor at Palmer Grove Baptist Church in Kingstown. He married Rachis Dowdy on March 2, 2013. She and her twin sister formed Today Mime in 2007 in the ministry, and she works as a bioprocess technician.

"I like to stay involved," says Jeff Gregory, a Kings Mountain native who is running for the school board. He advocates "no waste, money well spent, and kids being

safe and no bullying." He said he would push for what is best for students and teachers and recommends the board take a look at smaller schools and get community involvement.

A retired postmaster, he is a 26-year civil service employee and is a decorated soldier in the USAF where he served four years. He is married to the former Sonya McAbee of Kings Mountain and they have two children, Jeffrey Michael and Stephanie. They formerly attended Second Baptist Church in Kings Mountain and now live in the New House community of Cleveland County.



Phillip Glover



Danny Blanton



S. Dale Oliver



Darius Griffin



Kenneth Ledford



George Litton



Donnie Thurman Jr.



Jeff Gregory

What's showing at Real to Reel

A synopsis of the 34 films to be shown July 24-27 by the Cleveland County Arts Council at Joy Performance Center, 202 S. Railroad Ave., Kings Mountain follows. Great films, silent auction, raffles, Q&A-s with filmmakers, concessions, and awards party Saturday night.

The festival is co-sponsored by the Kings Mountain Little Theatre and the Historic Kings Mountain Tourism Development Authority.

Wednesday shows were reviewed in last week's Herald. An interview with the writer/director of one of the shows, "The New True Charlie Wu," rated PG, a 30-minute short film, is another story in this week's Herald.

Thursday shows begin at 7 p.m. with a 14-minute, 24-second documentary from Georgia, "Ditching School to Whistle," rated G. In April 2012, filmmaker Len Chi set out to compete in the International Whistling competition and make a documentary about it. This short film explores not only the fascinating people who converge once a year for this quirky event but also tells the unexpectedly touching stories of people who discovered healing and therapy through what may be dismissed by many as silly whistling.

"Brightwood" is an 18-minute, 27-second short from LaDora Sella, executive producer of Washington.

It's a story of a young girl's real and imaginary lives, combining innocence with deeper themes of finding home and family. When Sparrow discovers a nest of baby mice in her sock drawer her need to find a family is revealed as she faces a challenger greater than any child should.

"Lil Tokyo Reporter" is a 30-minute short film from writer, director and producer Jeffrey Chin of California and is 29 minutes, 27 seconds in length and rated PG. Keiko Agena is the lead actor. 1935 Los Angeles, community leader, Sei Fujii uncovers the corrupt activities of his community's underground mafia. He must choose between saving the face of his deteriorating community and confronting the issues head on through his newspaper. Based on a true story.

The animation "Parks," 5 minutes 7 seconds, is from North Carolina animator, director and writer Meredith Hannah. Rated, G, it's the story of a scientist who places the heart of his dead wife into a new creation. When the creation comes to life, she tries to revive the old love.

After intermission four films will close out the

evening. "Maiden Flight" is a 2-minute, 48-second animation, rated G, from Dwayne Martin, writer, producer, director from North Carolina. It's a story about the strength it takes to let go of what you loved most.

"Bathanti" is a 72-minute documentary rated G. Pittsburgh native and North Carolina Poet Laureate Joseph Bathanti travels with filmmaker Kevin Balling to the places that inform Bathanti's poetry, novels, short stories and essays. From the streets of Pittsburgh to the rural landscapes of North Carolina, the film reveals Bathanti's influences, inspirations and literary style. Interviews with the author are blended with the insight and perceptive of writers Michael Parker, Robert Morgan, Kay Stripling Byer, Heather Ross Miller and Abigail DeWitt. This film also presents readings of the author's work, interspersed through location footage, photos, archival film, text and soundtrack.

"Wicked Silence," is a 33 minutes, 14 second documentary rated PG by co-writers, directors and producers Jessica Pic and Sana Haq from Winston-Salem. The story is about

Elaine, Ann and Willis, three of some 8,000 victims of forced sterilizations sanctioned by the Eugenics Board of North Carolina from the 1920s to the 1970s. Falsely accused of feeble-mindedness, promiscuity and being a burden on society they were sterilized without their knowledge. All three of them were under the age of 14. For years now they have been fighting for justice and reparations for the wrong that was done them. Behind them stands a journalist and an advocate for their rights, John Railey, who has helped spread the word about this atrocity through his columns and consistent campaigning for compensation. "Wicked Silence" is a story of the victims suffering but it is also a story of hope and resilience.

"Franky and the Ant," a 9-minute 7-second short from Billy Hayes, writer,

See REAL TO REEL, 5A

FNB to switch to Bank of the Ozarks August 1

First National's branch bank on West Mountain Street will soon have a new sign - Bank of the Ozarks your hometown bank.

First National shareholders approved the bank's merger into Bank of the Ozarks and expect to close on the deal July 31 with First National Bank branches to open August 1 as Bank of the Ozarks.

In recent months the \$67.8 million bank deal, first announced in January, was approved by federal and state regulators and the U. S. Securities and Exchange Commission. Shareholder approval was one of the final steps to be completed.

City to continue seeking grants

The city has applied for and received a number of job grants over the years from the North Carolina Rural Center but last week the N.C. General Assembly eliminated state funding for the nonprofit which was stung by a negative audit, triggering the resignation of its longtime president.

Mayor Rick Murphrey said the city will continue to submit applications with the N.C. Department of Commerce.

Murphrey said that numerous businesses have been successful in obtaining grants from the Rural Center, bringing jobs to Kings Mountain. "They have been good to work with and we have been pleased to help with applications for the grants," he said. "It seems it just got to be too political."

By action of Governor Pat McCrory and the legislature a new division was created with the N.C. Department of Commerce to focus on improving services to the state's rural counties.

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