

COASTAL OBSERVER

Vol. XXXVII No. 34

Pawleys Island, South Carolina ~ February 7, 2019

50 cents

Charter school sees fortunes rise with more state funding

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

Coastal Montessori Charter School will get nearly \$445,000 more in state and federal funds this year due to a rise in enrollment and government spending on education.

The increase includes \$180,275 more in elementary

funding, \$100,238 in primary funding and \$84,993 in Pupils in Poverty funding.

"It's a much better situation than we found ourselves in six months ago," said Ryan Fabbri, chairman of the charter school's board. "Everything's working in the right direction."

The money should begin to be distributed to the school with the

next payment from the school district, Fabbri added.

Coastal Montessori found itself in a financial crisis last year when the Georgetown County School District discovered an error in the way it calculated how much funding the school got and cut the funding by 20 percent. The school cut its operating budget and the charter board tapped

into its reserves. The county school board restored \$225,000 last fall and school and district officials have been meeting to come up with long-term solutions.

"An increase in enrollment is how you generate your money," Superintendent Randy Dozier said.

Fabbri said some of the in-

crease in funding is due to the fact that there are more low-income students and students with special needs enrolled, and it is unclear how much more it will cost to provide services for those students.

Brent Streett, the district's director of food service and procurement, said the funding

SEE "CHARTER," PAGE 6

OUTDOORS | The Great Loop

Paddling around America

Englishman wanted to do something significant at 60

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Steve Chard's friends dared him to wear the hat. They are policemen in the county of Dorset in the southwest of England so it was hard to refuse. But the hat wasn't a Bobby's familiar headgear. It was from a bachelor's party, bright pink and iridescent.

After almost 4,000 miles on the water from Nova Scotia, across Canada and south through the U.S., the broad-brimmed hat was still on Chard's head as he pulled up to a dock at Hagley this week. It has faded almost to white while his face and hands have turned brown under the sun of nearly 200 days on the water.

The Englishman, a veteran of the Royal Navy and a retired medical technician, is on the second leg of a journey he began last June. "I decided I wanted to do something significant for my 60th birthday," he said. He had been a runner all his life until a hamstring injury brought that to an end. He took up cycling. He tried open-water swimming. "Only once," Chard said. "Once was enough for that."

He wanted to do something different, so he turned to kayaking. "I used to kayak as a Sea Scout," Chard said.

All of his athletic endeavors were tied to fundraising. On this trip, he is raising money for nine charities. Those in the U.S. are Disabled American Veterans, the American Kidney Fund and the Submarine Force Museum in Groton, Conn.

His initial plan was to paddle in a four-day, 120-mile event through England that ended up in front of the Houses of Parliament. "Somebody gave me a book entitled 'Honey, Let's Get a Boat,' which is by Ron and Eva Stob, who actually later went on to found the American Great Loop Cruisers Association. I read that.

SEE "KAYAK," PAGE 3



Photos by Tanya Ackerman/Coastal Observer

Steve Chard heads north on the Waccamaw River on the final leg of his trip. Below, he unpacked his kayak during an overnight stop at Hagley.

What to pack on a 6,000 mile kayak trip

The only thing that holds Steve Chard back as he completes his 6,000 mile kayak journey around the Great Loop is a headwind over 20 knots. His fiberglass sea kayak is designed to cut through anything else.

The Explorer kayak - 17 feet, 8 inches in length - weighs about 45 pounds. "I've got about 150 pounds of gear in it," Chard said. "And there's me, who's also 150 pounds."

It's packed so tight that when a leak appeared after he cut the hull by dragging it up a ramp, it took two days for the water to make itself known. He has camping and cooking gear, a dry suit, a couple of changes of clothes and two gallons of water. There is also an iPad Mini and a solar charger, a storage battery and a hand-cranked radio.

The only modification he made to the kayak was to remove the backrest so he could stow more gear behind the seat.



"I do have about two weeks' supply of dehydrated food. I've also got a bag of pasta, a bag of rice, a bag of oatmeal, a few tins of ham, sardines," Chard said.

He weighed 180 pounds when he arrived in Nova Scotia from England last spring to start the trip. "I lost 46 pounds in the first two months," Chard said. "They put me on a protein supplement."

While Chard has rolled the kayak in training and wears a spray skirt, stability isn't an issue, he said. Nevertheless, he wears a tow line around his waist that would keep him connected to the boat in a mishap. "The main safety thing was to make myself safe," he said.

He also has the required safety gear - whistle, white light, flares and life jacket - along with a marine VHF radio and a throw line. A bilge pump is strapped to the deck. He also has a helmet for insurance purposes. Chard said

SEE "GEAR," PAGE 3

PAWLEYS ISLAND

Town starts searching for new funds

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

At the first meeting held in Pawleys Island's new Town Hall, built primarily with private donations, the topic was public finance.

A committee of property owners and town officials is looking for ways to close a projected shortfall in the town's operating budget and find a source of funds to pay for future beach nourishment projects.

Pawleys Island has no municipal property tax. A presentation to Town Council last month about a business license drew a mixed response, raising concerns that it would add to the cost for people who rent their property while at the same time failing to generate enough revenue.

"The good news is we actually have some cash reserves," said Josh Ricker, an island resident who chairs the committee formed by the council to consider the town's financial options.

The town had revenues of \$2.3 million in 2018. A third of that came from local and state taxes on short-term rentals. The town ended the year \$10,000 in the red, but it also had \$7.2 million on hand.

The town's operating budget is due to average deficits of about \$110,000 a year over the next 10 years, based on projections by Administrator Ryan Fabbri. The town also plans to start a beach nourishment project in the fall with the Army Corps of Engineers. The town has to commit to fund half of future projects and estimates it will need to raise \$7 million over the next 10 years for that portion.

"The gap we need to bridge in operations is nickels and dimes compared to what we need for beach renourishment," said Glenn Kornahrens, an island property owner.

Council Member Guerry Green questioned the need to

SEE "PAWLEYS," PAGE 2

WACCAMAW HIGH | Athletic Booster Club

Fundraising is a team sport for the Warriors

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

Having five children who played a sport at Waccamaw High School gives Scott Eddy a vested interest in supporting athletics at the school.

Eddy has settled in as president of the WHS Athletic Booster Club since taking over the position from Brian Henry in May. As a member of the club's board, Eddy was so impressed with Henry's work he wanted to make sure it continued.

"I felt like I didn't want to backslide," Eddy said. "My job at that point was just to keep the train going. Keep it on the tracks and keep it going in the same direction. I didn't have to recreate the wheel."

Eddy supervised his first Booster Bash on Saturday night, and watched as more than \$30,000 was raised through donations and a live auction. One-third of that money will go to pay for items on the coaches' wish lists, which were posted at the bash, and the rest will go into the club's general fund, Eddy said.

"It was fantastic. It fully ex-



Tanya Ackerman/Coastal Observer

"We're not going to sit back and wait for the district to give us what we need," says Scott Eddy, right, the club president.

ceeded our expectations," Eddy said. "It's as much about celebrating student-athletes and coaches as it is a fundraiser. We want folks to have a good time so next year

they'll come back."

Eddy also visited Tideland Ford on Friday to pick up a check for \$7,200, the proceeds from a "Drive 4 UR School" event in

December. Ford donated \$20 for every test drive, and Eddy said the club will host another event this spring for people to test drive Lincolns.

"Tidelands has been a huge supporter," he added.

The booster club will use 20 percent of the Tideland's donation to furnish the school's new weight room.

"Our equipment is so out of date. It's a travesty the weight room that we have," Eddy said. "If we're ever going to compete with a school like Bishop England, our kids have got to get stronger and faster and they've got to be better trained. It starts in the weight room."

The weight room will double in size as part of renovations being funded with the school district's \$165 million bond referendum, but Eddy said it is unclear whether there will be enough money left to buy the new equipment. He expects the price tag to be around \$45,000.

"We're not going to sit back and wait for the district to give us what we need," Eddy said.

The club saved about \$20,000

SEE "WHS," PAGE 5

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



Beyond the fourth wall: Theater workshops take students behind the scenes. **SECOND FRONT**

Nonprofits: New director for Habitat for Humanity has an eye for fixer-uppers. **PAGE 4**

Crime..... 7
Opinion 8
Crossword12
What's On.....13
Classifieds.....14
Sports18

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