

From: Moore, Camlin <CamlinMoore@gov.sc.gov>
To:
Date: 12/22/2016 9:01:39 AM
Subject: SC Front Pages – Thursday, December 22, 2016

SC Front Pages – Thursday, December 22, 2016

The Post and Courier

FOUNDED 1803 •  WINNER OF THE 2015 PULITZER PRIZE FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

Thursday, December 22, 2016

POSTANDCOURIER.COM

Charleston, S.C. \$1.00

Report finds local VA appointment glitches

Unrelated Charleston whistleblower complaint pending

BY LAUREN SAUSSER
lsausser@postandcourier.com

A new federal report has determined that patient appointment requests at Charleston's Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center were sometimes marked "discontinued" or "completed" when it was not clear that veterans had been seen yet by outside health care providers.

In one case, an elderly patient with advanced liver cancer was referred by the VA to an outside radiation oncologist in mid-2012. But he had to wait 77 days for an appointment and almost two more weeks for actual treatment. Meanwhile, staff at the VA had marked his consult "completed," even as he waited months to see a doctor.

Once he arrived at the hospital for radiation treatment, the patient was

in critical condition, the federal report found.

"He was admitted briefly but died two days after being discharged," according to the report.

Further review of the case determined the patient likely did not die due to the delay in treatment.

He reportedly refused chemotherapy

Please see VA, Page A5



FILE PHOTO

The Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center is in Charleston.

The beat catches on

Drumline practice, safe haven attracts at-risk kids to Music Battery



PHOTOGRAPHS BY WADE SPEEDS/STAFF

Members of The Music Battery in North Charleston practice their drumming technique on paint buckets. The students, who meet after school at the Ferndale Community Center, must do their homework before practicing under the direction of DeAndre Lee.

BY GREGORY YEE
gyee@postandcourier.com

DeAndre Lee cast a commanding presence inside North Charleston's Ferndale Community Center.

The burly 25-year-old's voice reverberated inside the gymnasium as he counted down from 10. The students fumbled with their gear — bass, tenor and snare drums — in a race against the clock. Lee took a moment after reaching "one," letting silence, save for the clatter of a marching harness hitting the floor, envelop the room.

"You should be at attention," he said. "I didn't call it because half of you aren't strapped up. That's two laps after practice."

Scenes like this play out every school night for the duration of the academic year. The students are members of The Music Battery, a

North Charleston nonprofit that works with at-risk youth by providing homework help, meals and musical instruction in a drumline. Lee is their head instructor.

Kayla Dorsey, a seventh-grader at Morningside Middle School, has been a part of The Music Battery for the past six months. She plays the tenor drums and is a captain.

"Personally, (my) favorite part is being the captain. You just help everybody," Dorsey said. "If you have musical experience or just like music at all, come down and join."

Ryan Lee, a seventh-grader at Morningside Middle School who plays the snare drum, said being a part of the group helps him set goals and is a fun way to spend time after school.

The fledgling organization has grown tremendously in the three years since it was founded, said Kris

Online

For more photos and a video, go to postandcourier.com/multimedia

How to help

For more information, to donate or to get involved, visit www.themusicbattery.com or email kris@themusicbattery.com.

Manning, one of its co-founders. Now they're looking to take the next steps.

The mission, Manning says, is simple: Give at-risk kids a safe place to get their homework done, provide healthy meals and make sure they're

Please see DRUMLINE, Page A5

Will city pay high price for groceries?

Developers will add market to complex if demands are met

BY ABIGAIL DARLINGTON
adarlinton@postandcourier.com

Developers have a plan to lure a new grocery store to the former Bi-Lo site on Meeting Street, but getting the city's help could be a tall order.

The owners of the property — Anthony McAlister of McAlister Development Co. and Sean Litton of the Peninsula Co. — want to raze the single-story building and replace it with a tall mixed-use complex mostly dominated by apartments and a parking deck, with a small market and a pharmacy on the ground floor. They said this week it's the only plan that makes financial sense to bring another grocery store to the property.

City officials mostly agree with that part. But McAlister and Litton said the deal can only go through if the city agrees to meet certain demands, like generous zoning exceptions and a

Please see BI-10, Page A6

Obamacare sign-ups on rise in S.C.

Enrollment still strong despite threat of repeal

BY LAUREN SAUSSER
lsausser@postandcourier.com

Obamacare sign-ups in South Carolina are increasing, even as Republicans keep repeating their intention to repeal the law early next year.

A new federal enrollment snapshot published Wednesday

Poll
 Should Republicans



SPORTS, 1C
**RENFROW'S
KNACK**



METRO, 3A
**Tajh Boyd
on the big
stage, again**

The Greenville News

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

THURSDAY,
DECEMBER 22, 2016
GREENVILLEONLINE.COM

USA TODAY LITTLE SIGN OF US UNITY PAGE 1B

CEO must talk about gas leak

Lawsuit claims Kinder
Morgan ruined land

MIKE EADS
MICHAEL.EADS@INDEPENDENTMAIL.COM

GREENVILLE - A federal judge ruled Wednesday that Kinder Morgan CEO Ron McClain can be deposed for a lawsuit that alleges his company ruined several hundred acres near Belton with a 2014 gasoline leak from its Plantation Pipe Line.

U.S. District Court Judge Henry Herlong said attorney Gary Poliakoff could question McClain as part of the lawsuit he has brought on behalf of Eric and Scott Lewis against the Houston-based pipeline operator regarding the December 2014 leak. State officials and environmental watchdog groups have said that more than 369,000 gallons of fuel spilled into the soil and groundwater on and around the Lewises' 350-plus-acre farm northwest of Belton, near the Cheddar community.

At the preliminary hearing Wednesday in Herlong's court in downtown Greenville, Poliakoff argued McClain was a party to several communications with federal regulators regarding pipeline maintenance and other issues related to the Plantation line.

Herlong dismissed the argument from Rick Morton, one of the attorneys representing Kinder Morgan in the case, that McClain has no special knowledge of the Belton spill or the case brought by the Lewis brothers.

Poliakoff told Herlong he intends to show at the trial — which could begin as soon as next June — that there were long-standing maintenance issues with the Plantation line that McClain and other Kinder Morgan officials were aware of and failed to properly address. That information is part of what is expected to be a claim for punitive damages beyond the damage done to the Lewis farm.

"We know that the Plantation Pipe Line has had 291 sleeve repairs. ... That's a lot of sleeve repairs," Poliakoff told Herlong.

Herlong also ordered Morton to hand over other information before

See CEO, Page 9A

WHERE ARE THEY NOW



Rita Burns reaches down to touch a cracked headstone in the Orchard Crest subdivision in Greer on Dec. 13.

PHOTOS BY LAUREN PETRACCA/STAFF

Subdivision rises around cemetery

It was discovered after land was bought and work began

MICHAEL BURNS
MJBURNS@GREENVILLENEWS.COM

Col. John Thomas Sr. hasn't moved since he was buried in the upcountry clay he knew as New World frontier and Revolutionary flank, but the city of Greer has come to him, and the circumstances surrounding the construction of a subdivision around his gravesite amount to what some see as a missed opportunity.

The former leader in the American War of Independence is one of at least 20 people buried several hundred yards west of State 101 on the northern end of Greer.

The exact number of remains on the site has never been determined, but others believed buried there include Thomas' wife, Jane Black Thomas, who protected a Patriot ammunition cache during the war, according to historical accounts; Thomas Nathaniel Edwards,



Rita Burns holds a brick from a pile that may contain stones once used as grave markers.

a judge who served in the American Revolution as a teenager, and Matthias Rush, who served as a state militia captain soon after the war. Other family members and slaves are believed buried there, too.

Their gravesites haven't been identified, but an area roughly covering the ground known to include burials has been fenced off while an Orchard Crest subdivision of more than 100 homes is being built all around.

Debris, stones, broken tombstones and bricks from modern times are piled in two locations inside the fence.

The property was sold to Mark III Properties and annexed into the city limits of Greer in 2015. It was after work for the subdivision had begun that the new owner and city officials discovered the Thomas-Edwards-Rush family cemetery, according to Glenn Pace,

See CEMETERY, Page 4A



Gatlinburg's Christmas wish: Visitors return

MICHAEL BURNS
MJBURNS@GREENVILLENEWS.COM

The smell of stale smoke still wafts through Gatlinburg, Tennessee, as the

and trapped some victims ordered to evacuate.

Cleanup is underway. Wounds are beginning to scar. Shopkeepers and residents are beginning to return, but they



HOLLY JOLLY TICKETS

Stuff the stockings with event tickets. **Current-Inside**

Independent Mail

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2016

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

INDEPENDENTMAIL.COM

Kinder Morgan CEO to be deposed

Federal judge rules on Belton leak case

MIKE EADS

MICHAEL.EADS@INDEPENDENTMAIL.COM

GREENVILLE - A federal judge ruled Wednesday that Kinder Morgan CEO Ron McClain can be deposed for a lawsuit that alleges his company ruined several hundred acres near Belton with a 2014 gasoline leak from its Plantation Pipe Line.

U.S. District Court Judge Henry Herlong said attorney Gary Poliakoff could

question McClain as part of the lawsuit he has brought on behalf of Eric and Scott Lewis against the Houston-based pipeline operator regarding the December 2014 leak. State officials and environmental watchdog groups have said that more than 369,000 gallons of fuel spilled into the soil and groundwater on and around the Lewises' 350-plus-acre farm northwest of Belton, near the Cheddar community.

At the preliminary hearing Wednesday in Herlong's court in downtown Greenville, Poliakoff argued McClain was a party to several communications with federal regulators regarding pipe-

line maintenance and other issues related to the Plantation line.

Herlong dismissed the argument from Rick Morton, one of the attorneys representing Kinder Morgan in the case, that McClain has no special knowledge of the Belton spill or the case brought by the Lewis brothers.

Poliakoff told Herlong he intends to show at the trial — which could begin as soon as next June — that there were long-standing maintenance issues with the Plantation line that McClain and other Kinder Morgan officials were aware of and failed to properly address. That information is part of what is expected to

be a claim for punitive damages beyond the damage done to the Lewis farm.

"We know that the Plantation Pipe Line has had 291 sleeve repairs. ... That's a lot of sleeve repairs," Poliakoff told Herlong.

Herlong also ordered Morton to hand over other information before year's end, including the name of the company that owned the gasoline that leaked from the line — Kinder Morgan transports fuel owned by its customers — and just how long the leak lasted before the company took action.

See BELTON, Page 4A



Live Nativity scene returns

Marett Fisk, 2, left, and her mother, Ashley Fisk, of Clemson watch sheep Wednesday with Hayley Carver, middle, of Anderson and her daughter, Haven Dunn, and Mason Andrews, right, near a nativity scene at Trinity United Methodist Church in Anderson.

KEN RUINARD@INDEPENDENTMAIL.COM

Three-day event begins at Trinity UMC in Anderson

KEN RUINARD

KEN.RUINARD@INDEPENDENTMAIL.COM

Online

Visit independentmail.com to see photos and watch video

want to give the community a visual representation of what it's like."

Cold weather has been a part of the scene for most of the 40 years the

Bid fails in NC to repeal LGBT law

GARY D. ROBERTSON AND EMERY P. DALESIO

ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH, N.C. - A deal to undo the North Carolina law known as the "bathroom bill" fell apart Wednesday night when legislators couldn't agree on a plan to repeal the measure, a sign of the bitter political divide within the state.

The North Carolina General Assembly was called into a special session about nine months after they passed the law, which tarnished the state's national image as major corporations decided to pull up stakes, entertainers canceled concerts and the NCAA and Atlantic Coast Conference moved sporting events away.

The wide-ranging law's best-known provision required transgender people to use restrooms in many public buildings corresponding to the sex on their birth certificates. Opponents of the law called it discriminatory.

The special session was set in motion this week when Democratic Gov.-elect Roy Cooper successfully lobbied the Charlotte City Council to gut a local nondiscrimination ordinance that Republicans had blamed for necessitating the statewide law.

See LGBT, Page 4A



THE BEST PLACES FOR CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

ESCAPE, D1



SDS STAR SETS SCORING MARK

SPORTS, B1

Herald-Journal

SPARTANBURG, SOUTH CAROLINA

Thursday, December 22, 2016



GoUpstate.com

75¢



GoUpstate



@GoUpstate

TODAY FRI SAT
63°/32° 51°/38° 57°/44°
Complete forecast, B8

UPSTATE



Working on old library's next chapter

Tucked away next to Woodruff's public library sits a small one-room building that served as the town's first library. And now a group of residents hopes to continue renovation and restoration efforts so people in Woodruff have the chance to learn about its history. **C1**

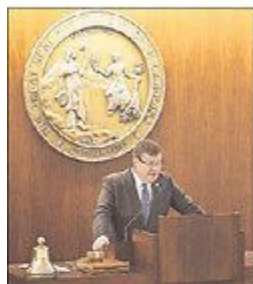
County development projects advance

Several economic development projects took another step forward this week after securing the next round of approval needed for incentives from the Spartanburg County Council. **C1**

Former Gaffney officer facing charges

A former Gaffney police officer has been charged following an investigation into an assault of a jail inmate in Cherokee County. **C1**

NATION & WORLD



Effort to repeal LGBT law fails

NEAR GAFFNEY

Licenses for 2 reactors awarded

Duke: No decision yet on whether Lee Nuclear Station will be built

From staff, wire reports

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has awarded Duke Energy licenses to build two nuclear power reactors near Gaffney, the federal agency announced Wednesday.

A Duke spokesman said

Duke is "pleased," but that the company still has not decided whether to build the \$11 billion William States Lee Nuclear Station, which would house the two reactors.

"Our ultimate decision on whether to build Lee Nuclear will be based on what's in the best interest of our customers and on factors such as energy needs, project costs, environmental regulations, natural gas prices and existing or future

legislative provision for cost recovery," said Duke spokesman Lee Freedman.

More than two months ago, an NRC spokesman said Duke had indicated that even if the licenses were issued, it could be "several years" before a final decision was made on whether to start construction.

The NRC action comes nearly a decade after the project was first announced.

The licenses, issued on

Monday, authorize Duke to build two 1,100-megawatt reactors in Cherokee County on 2,000 acres next to the Broad River off Highway 105, south of Gaffney and adjacent to the unfinished Cherokee Nuclear Plant that was abandoned in the early 1980s.

In approving the two combined construction and operating licenses, the NRC

SEE NUCLEAR, A3

CHRISTMAS MARKET ATTACK

Germany monitored suspect for months



People stay in front of candles close to a Christmas market beside a memorial church Wednesday in Berlin, two days after a truck ran into a crowded Christmas market and killed 12 people. MICHAEL SOHN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

By Frank Jordans
The Associated Press

BERLIN — German officials had deemed the Tunisian man being sought in a manhunt across Europe a threat long before a truck plowed into a Christmas market in Berlin



Amri

in Monday's deadly rampage — is raising questions about how closely German authorities are monitoring the hundreds of

hundreds of thousands of asylum-seekers to enter the country, allegedly without proper security checks.

Among them was Amri, a convicted criminal in both Tunisia and Italy with little chance of getting asylum who successfully evaded deporta-

SUCH AS SHARIA LAW Lawmakers' bill seeks to prevent 'foreign law'

By Zach Fox
zach.fox@shj.com

A trio of Upstate lawmakers has pre-filed a House bill that

would prevent state and national courts from enforcing any form of law that's not based on the Constitution.

The measure proposed by Spartanburg County Reps. Steven Long and Bill Chumley, along with Greenville

County Rep. Mike Burns, would "prevent a court or other enforcement authority from enforcing foreign law in this state," including Sharia law.

"We're using constitutional law instead of a law used in other countries," Long said. "It's very simple — it's making sure we're following the U.S. Constitution and the South Carolina Constitution, that we're not using precedent that came through foreign law or anything like that."



Long



Chumley

INSIGHT

How Mulvaney, a fiscal hawk, fits role as Trump's budget director 5A



SPORTS

Clowney breaks through to earn first Pro Bowl nod 1B



SERVING YORK, CHESTER AND LANCASTER COUNTIES

VOLUME 145, No. 357
STAY CONNECTED HERALDONLINE.COM

FACEBOOK.COM/THEROCKHILLHERALD
TWITTER.COM/19HERALD

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2016

\$1.00

Mostly sunny
59°/31° See 2C

The Herald



York Police Chief Andy Robinson takes the term "Toy drive" literally as he gave a test drive to this car before donated gifts for 87 children were given out by officers and volunteers.

CHRISTMAS TOY DRIVE

In York, Santa wears blue and tries to drive a pink car



BY ANDREW D'YS
ady@heraldonline.com

YORK

There was a line to get in the York Police Department Wednesday, but nobody got arrested.

There were gifts, lining the halls, filling the department conference room, spilling over into offices where cops normally interrogate suspects. Dolls and bicycles, stuffed animals and clothes, shoes and surprises all boxed and wrapped and ready for 87 kids in the city.

Parents who had been identified by volunteers and cops as needing a little help at Christmas came to pick up the gifts so, on Christmas morning, all kids would know Santa Claus is real.



Na'Ziya Cristea, 9, gets and gives a hug to York Police Officer Dale Edwards Wednesday at the department's Christmas gift drive.

Even if the elves wear badges, "This is what serving the community is all about," said York Police Chief Andy Robinson.

The department's officers, from the chief down to patrol and dispatch, work the toy

drive. Robinson himself is so involved that he tried — unsuccessfully because he is well over 6 feet tall — to test drive a pink toy car that a lucky girl took home.

All of the donations, which surpassed \$5,000, came from

the community, from individuals and businesses such as Title Max and people who volunteers and officers know. The gift drive has grown from two families at its start five years ago to serving 37 families this year. Melanie Thomas, a community volunteer, has worked with community policing officer Dale Edwards from the start to coordinate the program and identify families with children who could use a little help.

"What we do is show as many families as we can that the people here love them and care for them," Thomas said. "Every child deserves Christmas. There is a Santa Claus. The officers, the people who help, they all believe that."

And the families sure believe it.

Sisters Emily Bankhead and Sheila Bankhead were able to get toys for their grandchildren. Edwards is not a man in blue they run from.

"Officer Dale Edwards, he is out there in the community and he knows us and we know him, even his family," Sheila Bankhead said. "Great people who are on the side of the people here in York."

The Christmas program is another way to remind the public the police and the public are on the same team, Edwards said.

"There is far more to being a police officer than locking people up," Edwards said. "What matters is that people know we care about them and are looking

ROCK HILL

Local, state leaders act against violence

BY AMANDA HARRIS
aharris@heraldonline.com

ROCK HILL

Putting an end to gun violence in York County will take a team effort, say state and local leaders, who came together Wednesday to talk about what needs to be done.

A news conference by state and local officials came in the wake of two apparently unrelated Rock Hill shootings Monday in which two men were wounded. In a third shooting on Dec. 2, a 37-year-old Rock Hill man, Jerry Howard, died.

The past year "has been a year of too many news stories about gun violence, not only in our community, but in our nation," said state Rep. John King, D-Rock Hill. "We must not leave the burden to the police to fix it; it must be a community effort."

Two men were injured, one of them critically, in separate shootings Monday, Rock Hill police said. The victims were ages 25 and 20.

On Saturday, an 18-year-old student at York Comprehensive High School was shot in the face outside the home where a birthday party had taken place. York police are searching for information in that case.

"We see the age of our victims, a very young age," said York County Council member William "Bump" Roddey.

"We're starting to see more school-age kids bringing guns and weapons to school."

Last week, a student at South Pointe High School was arrested and charged by Rock Hill police with carrying three high-powered rifles and a handgun in his vehicle on school property.

Anthony Johnson, pastor at Mount Zion Baptist Church in Rock Hill, said the concern should be where teenagers are getting guns.

"What are we doing as a society to ensure they do not have such access to these types of weapons?" he said. "That's the question we are afraid to ask, because we live in a red state, but the problem that exists in our community is not red or black, it's about lives being lost."

Rock Hill Police chaplain Seth Crosby said the problem also stems from parents' communication with their children.

NORTH AUGUSTA TAKES TITLES

Girls and boys win Savannah
River Shootout, 1B, 3B



Aiken Standard

YOUR LOCAL NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1867

75¢

THURSDAY, December 22, 2016

AIKENSTANDARD.COM

Vol. 150, No. 356 || AIKEN, S.C.

Safety tips for holiday season

BY TRIPP GIRARDEAU
tgirardeau@aikenstandard.com

Whether people are traveling, heading to Christmas parties or enjoying time with their families over the holiday weekend, police are asking residents to stay safe during the holiday season.

While local law enforcement officials are offering safety tips for the road, SCE&G is offering some energy efficient cold weather tips for the home.

"Christmas is a busy time for many people in the area," said Lt. Jake Mahoney, with the Aiken Department of Public Safety. "If you plan on traveling a great distance, make sure your vehicle has been serviced properly. Check your tire inflation and top off all your fluids. Also, plan your trip and make sure you check the weather prior to leaving."

Also, officers will be out in full force checking the roads for drunken drivers, Mahoney said.

"Don't drink and drive," he said. "There is no problem with having a good time over the holidays — just be responsible. If you have a few drinks, find a designated driver, stay where you are or call a cab. It's that simple. Don't spend Christmas in jail."

Mahoney's tips extended beyond the road.

"Be aware that criminals are out there and will be looking for places that may have some nice, new electronics, guns or jewelry inside," he said. "If you get a brand new, flat-screen television for Christmas, do not place the box out on the street all week for trash pick-up. All that does is show people

Please see **SAFETY**, Page 10A

Hoofbeats and carols



STAFF PHOTO BY DEDE BILES

Aiken enjoyed a holiday celebration with an equine theme during the eighth annual Hoofbeats and Christmas Carols parade Wednesday afternoon.

Aiken celebrates the Christmas season

BY DEDE BILES
dbiles@aikenstandard.com

Aiken celebrated its rich equestrian heritage and the holidays at the same time during the eighth annual Hoofbeats and Christmas Carols parade Wednesday afternoon.

Organized by the Hatchaway Hounds Mock Hunt, the procession featured horses of many breeds and sizes.

Some wore reindeer antlers and Santa hats while others were decorated with red bows and tinsel.

They pulled carts, carried riders

Please see **HOOFBEATS**, Page 10A



STAFF PHOTO BY DEDE BILES

Brynn Turner, left foreground, and Robinson Adams meet a horse during the eighth annual Hoofbeats and Christmas Carols parade in downtown Aiken on Wednesday.

Area deaths

Effie Burroughs, Trenton
Juan Hamilton, Graniteville
Richard Hazen, Aiken
Dr. James Kauffman, Aiken
William Howard III, Aiken
John Owen, Aiken
Clarence Palmer, Burnettsville
Fred Robison Jr., Aiken
Rosalind Walker, Macon, Georgia

Deaths and Funerals, 6A

Weather

Advanced manufacturing center awaits approval

BY THOMAS GARDINER
tgardiner@aikenstandard.com

Nine months have come and gone since the campus of USC Aiken was selected as the new home for the proposed Aiken Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative. Still, details remain scarce.

The project was announced in March as a collaborative partnership between the Economic Development Partner-

The project proposes a new laboratory to be built on the university's campus to advance material science and advanced manufacturing understanding, all while bolstering the university's industrial engineering degree program.

USCA Chancellor Dr. Sandra Jordan said the degree program is growing.

"The industrial process engineering

in industrial process engineering."

In late September, the South Carolina State Fiscal Accountability Board approved the funding mechanism for the new lab. The construction will be driven by bonds, and according to previous reporting by the *Aiken Standard*, the price tag is not to exceed \$51 million.

But there has been little evidence of progress since, including after last week's meetings between the Depart-

ment/CEO Will Williams.

"The AMC project remains unapproved, and there are mixed messages coming out of both (the Office of Management and Budget) and DOE as to who will ultimately be approving the AMC," Williams said following the meetings. "My speculation is that the project will remain in its current status until a new Secretary of Energy is confirmed."

This month, President-elect Don-



Morning News

THURSDAY DECEMBER 22, 2016

TODAY'S WEATHER

Sunny to partly cloudy.
High 66, low 34.
DETAILS 2A

www.scnw.com

The Voice of the Pee Dee

75 cents

Partnership for healthy growth



A partnership with Williamsburg Regional Hospital, Lake City Community Hospital and Palmetto Health could lead to a new hospital in Williamsburg County.

Williamsburg, Lake City hospitals eye pact with Palmetto Health

BY SHAMIRA MCCRAY
The Weekly Observer
smccray@florencenews.com

KINGSTREE — Williamsburg County Attorney Billy Jenkinson says the Williamsburg Regional Hospital board will consider a memorandum of understanding that will entitle the hospital to \$8 million in state funding. He hopes the board will approve the memorandum.

At Tuesday's Williamsburg County Council meeting, Jen-

kinson said the memorandum of understanding would be a step to a three-way partnership with Williamsburg Regional Hospital in Kingstree, Lake City Community Hospital and Palmetto Health.

"The state has said if two hospitals, rural hospitals, will merge into one hospital, we will fund you at a rate of \$4 million each for a total of \$8 million," Jenkinson said. "Well, to really make that platform work, you need a major partner."

Palmetto Health, based in Columbia, has stepped in. Jenkinson said it is the largest medical provider in the state.

"Why is Palmetto Health so critical to the equation? Financial stability," Jenkinson said. "They provide expertise that we can't buy into. For example, insurance coverage for our employees."

Insurance for employees is something that kills small

See **HOSPITALS**, Page 3A

City gets grant for tennis

Instruction to be given children in Florence schools

From staff reports

FLORENCE — The Florence Recreation Department has received a three-year grant of almost \$70,000 from the United States Tennis Association Southern Section to provide tennis instruction to children in public schools and neighborhood parks.

The "Play it Forward" grant for \$69,996 will provide funding over three years to support an ambitious attempt to introduce the sport to almost 3,000 youth in the local community, according to Rob Hill, the city's director of tennis.

In-school lessons are scheduled to start in January at three elementary schools with three additional schools to follow later in the year, according to Hill.

"The schools are set to go and we will be announcing which ones will be participating in the near future," Hill said in a media advisory.

At each school certified teaching pros from the Florence Tennis Center staff will work with students, show teachers how to do follow-up classes and provide racquets, balls and indoor nets so the teachers can run programs of their own.

"We hope to use the school programs to expose kids who might never have been interested in tennis to a sport they can enjoy their entire lives," Hill said.

The parks programs, also taught by certified pros, will begin in early February at Levy, Lucas, Timrod, and South Park. A second round of programs will take place at the same sites later in the year.

Each program will consist of eight weekly clinics taught after school hours or on Saturdays. Unlike the school programs, which will focus on kids 12 and younger, the park

FALCONS TAKE CHAMPIONSHIP



Darlington basketball players and coaches react after an offensive play by Darlington during the Little Caesars Invitational championship game against South Florence on Wednesday.

FLORENCE

Three days of the Little Caesars Invitational girls' basketball tournament at South Florence High School wrapped up on Wednesday with the Darlington versus South Florence championship game. The Darlington Falcons beat the Bruins, 40-36. For the photo gallery from the game visit scnw.com.

Salvation Army

671 kids receive gifts during annual Distribution Day



BY JESSICA IMBIMO
Morning News
jimbimo@florencenews.com

FLORENCE — The Salvation Army provided Christmas gifts to 671 children on Wednesday during its annual Distribution Day for the Angel Tree program.

Distribution Day is the

by the Christmas Center on South Irbey Street on Wednesday to pick up their donated gift bags.

Gifts, toys, games and bicycles were donated by individuals, businesses and organizations around the community toward both the Angel Tree Program and the Empty Stocking

--

Camlin Moore

Cell: 803-206-8236

Office: 803-734-8044