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## Myrtle Beach considers how to deal with beachfront crime problem

Myrtle Beach, the city at the heart of South Carolina's \$20 billion tourism industry, is trying to figure out how to deal with crime at beachfront businesses.

The Sun News of Myrtle Beach reported that city officials and shop owners agree more police could help.

There have been eight incidents involving guns since April 15.

City Manager John Pedersen has suggested the culture needs to change.

"It's not illegal, but it certainly contributes to the atmosphere when you go down there and you can buy things that can be used as drug paraphernalia," Pederson said. "You can buy things that are smutty T-shirts, you can buy smutty shorts, you can buy things that are weapons."

Bargain Beachwear manager Sasha Keldo said the merchandise at shops like hers aren't causing violence.

"I don't think that the shootings or whatever happened are affected by the store at all," Keldo said. Her store carries knives, pipes and trinkets like small glass jars with the words "my stash."

She said that fights erupt from a chaotic environment outside, filled with loud music and people openly smoking marijuana.

Rob Mack works at the Welcome Center next door and said undercover officers could catch criminals in the act. He said people just hide when marked cars patrol the streets.

— ASSOCIATED PRESS

## Man sentenced in 2015 murder of newlywed couple, unborn child

A man pleaded guilty Thursday on charges he murdered, dismembered and attempted to burn remains of a newlywed couple and their unborn child in 2015 in the North Carolina mountains.

In a plea deal allowing him to avoid the death penalty, Robert Joseph Owens, 37, will serve at least 60 years in prison for the murders of Cristie and Joseph Codd outside their home in Leicester, west of Asheville, according to the Asheville Citizen-Times.

Owens was arrested in 2015 after telling investigators he accidentally ran over the couple, who were his neighbors, with his truck. The Citizen-Times

reported Owens then dismembered both bodies and attempted to burn them in a wood stove at a mobile home on his property.

Owens wanted to make the killings appear as a robbery, so he broke into the couple's home and stole some belongings before selling some of the items.

The Citizen-Times reported attorneys initially sought the death penalty. In his plea deal, the Leicester native pleaded guilty to three counts of second-degree murder and two counts of dismembering bodies, reported WNCN North Carolina.

Cristie and Joseph Codd had previously worked in the film industry, the Citizen-Times reported. Cristie Todd, a chef, was a contestant on season eight of the Food Network's "Food Network Star."

— LAVENDRICK SMITH

## Ex-cheer coach charged in case with minor

A former cheerleading coach in Concord has been accused of taking indecent liberties with a minor.

Grant Taylor, 19, is charged with two counts each of indecent liberties with a minor and first-degree child exploitation. Taylor coached for Impact One Allstars in Concord, the Cabarrus County Sheriff's Office said.

Impact One released a statement Thursday evening about the investigation. "Grant Taylor was terminated by IMPACT1 for inappropriate communication with a minor," the statement read. "There is an ongoing police investigation that we are fully cooperating with."

Taylor was released on a \$30,000 bond.

— WBTB

## 4 charged after meth labs found in Mountain Dew bottles

Authorities say four people have been charged after a traffic stop led to the discovery of a pound of methamphetamine, drug-making materials and portable meth labs in Mountain Dew bottles.

Officers with the York County Multijurisdictional Drug Enforcement Unit stopped 40-year-old Carey Simpson on Tuesday, The (Rock Hill) Herald reported.

Simpson is charged with trafficking and manufacturing meth and drug and weapon possession. Officers then arrested Donna Cearfoss, 61, Crystal Lucas, 36, and 38-year-old Crystal Anderson after conducting a home search.

— ASSOCIATED PRESS



PHOTOS BY MOLLY MATHIS mmathis@charlotteobserver.com

Volunteers work on landscaping at a house on Double Oaks Road in Charlotte as part of the Realtors Care Day on Friday. The volunteers worked on 18 sites across Mecklenburg and Iredell counties.

## PAINTING AND PLANTING WITH CARE

More than 750 volunteers came out to Realtors Care Day, a day in which Realtors volunteer to work on houses that needed external repairs.

This is the ninth annual Care Day and it was held in celebration of National Fair Housing Month, where the goal is to sustain affordable workforce housing. Volunteers worked on repairing the outside of houses and also provided safety modifications for the elderly and disabled.

During the past seven years, more than 5,000 volunteers have helped 205 families and non-profits.

The nonprofit Hope House in Huntersville, which serves women and children in need of a transitional shelter, also was in line to receive help with landscaping and property improvement.



Jernel Sanders smiles as he helps paint the front porch of a house on Double Oaks Road.

# CMS warns students not to skip for march

BY MARK PRICE  
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147,157  
students in CMS

40,752  
come from homes where  
English isn't the first  
language

33,878  
are Hispanic

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools is asking that parents not allow students to skip classes Monday for a planned immigrant rally and march in uptown.

Organizers of the march want students to skip classes and workers to leave their jobs to attend the affair at Marshall Park. Backers of the event are also asking for businesses to stay closed, and they want supporters to avoid shopping at any business that stays open.

A similar immigrant-backed march in uptown Feb. 16 attracted 8,000 supporters and 250 immigrant businesses stayed closed for the day.

CMS reported it had about 16,000 more absences that day than the day before, suggesting many students skipped classes to participate in what was being called A Day Without An Immigrant.

grant.

The district is hoping to avoid a repeat. Monday's event runs from noon to 4 p.m. and includes a rally and march.

"Academic achievement is strongest when students are safe and secure and in class... For this reason, CMS is not in support of any community effort planned for May 1, that encourages students to skip school," said a statement from the district.

"All students are re-

SEE MARCH, 5A

## Hickory man picked to lead FEMA; no McCrory post yet

BY CHRIS CIOFFI  
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President Donald Trump's administration

Friday's announcements didn't include Pat McCrory, who has been mentioned several times as a candidate for a Trump administration post.