



May 4, 2009

The Report Card

The Report Card issues grades A through F, and incompletes where necessary, to a variety of news items in this space. Got an idea that makes the grade? Send it to DRussell@CITIZEN-TIMES.com.

A to Assistant Fire Chief Scott T. Burnette, who was recently appointed to be interim chief of the Asheville Fire and Rescue Department. Fire and Rescue Chief Gregory Grayson, who has been appointed to serve as chief of the Greensboro Fire Department beginning May 26, said of Burnette, "The appointment of Scott Burnette as interim chief will allow for a seamless transition for this outstanding department over the next few weeks. Chief Burnette is an incredible person and will lead this department in a positive and progressive direction." Asheville Fire and Rescue responds to more than 16,000 calls for emergencies each year. The department is comprised of 236 personnel, operating 11 fire stations and 16 response companies.

A to everyone involved in the expansion of Chimney Rock State Park, which grew by 300 acres when The Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina secured the two tracts to expand the park to Cane Creek Mountain. One 174-acre property was bought about a year ago, while an adjoining 156 acres was bought in February. The land cost \$6.5 million. A total of 4,320 acres has now been set aside for Chimney Rock State Park.

F to everyone involved in the what was supposed to be a photo opportunity — Air Force One flying majestically over the New York City skyline — that instead caused a panic that sent workers pouring out of buildings on both sides of the Hudson River. The flight cost around \$328,835 for Air Force One and two escort fighters. White House press secretary Robert Gibbs said the president was "furious" and was considering asking White House Military Office Director Louis Caldera, the man who authorized the flight, to step down. "It was a mistake. It was something we found out about along with all of you. And it will not happen again," the president said on Tuesday.

A to Progress Energy for helping 50 Western North Carolina homeowners install solar hot water heating in a pilot program aimed at saving energy. Statewide, the utility will offer a \$1,000 incentive to a total of 150 homeowners who agree to participate in the yearlong study, which will start this summer. Progress Energy will use the data to determine what energy savings would occur with a larger-scale program offered to more customers. A typical solar hot water installation for the home can run between \$7,000-\$8,000, and along with federal and state tax credits, the system can pay for itself with lower utility bills in a matter of years.

A to all the volunteers who showed up to paint over graffiti in downtown Asheville in a cleanup sponsored by everyone's favorite do-gooder group, Asheville GreenWorks. Groups of volunteers fanned out across the city on April 25, armed with cans of paint and graffiti-removal solvent. They cleaned eight different sites in downtown, the River Arts District and West Asheville. The anti-tagging teams also targeted telephone poles and signs in heavily trafficked areas around the city.

A to Laurey Masterton, who undertook a 3,100-mile journey to raise awareness about ovarian cancer. A 20-year survivor of ovarian cancer, Masterton left San Diego on her 58-day trek, along with the Womentours team of riders, on March 6 and arrived in Pensacola, Fla., in mid-April. Masterton planned to use the cross-country trip to grab the attention of anyone who'll listen about warning signs of the disease. She has handed out cards, spoken to groups and encouraged women to be more aware. "This ride is a metaphor for this whole journey I've been on for 20 years," she said. "It is frequently hard, very hard, but giving up is, for me, not an option."

C To Gov. Beverly Perdue for her move to cut the pay of state workers equal to a half-percent of their annual salary to help close the state's budget gap. It's not a great solution, but we suspect the folks howling about it would be howling just as loud if other solutions — outright layoffs or tax increases — were being ordered.