February 24 is National Tortilla Chip Day
New Employees

(L-R): Denise McNeill, Information Technology; Andy Moore, Emergency Services; Shawndora McNair, Social Services; Taylor Harper, Sheriff’s Office; Rex Lilly, Sheriff’s Office

(L-R): Lauren Wells, JDRC; Sidney White, EMS; Sarah Minter, EMS; Zoe Welch, EMS; Mary Thorsen, TDA

(L-R): Jonathan Gordon, Sheriff’s Office; Olivia Goodwin, EMS; Diana Benitez, Sheriff’s Office; Tucker Daughtrridge, Sheriff’s Office; Savannah Keeling, Sheriff’s Office
New Employees

(L-R): Adison Cosolito, EMS; Sarah Vold, DSS; Victoria York, Sheriff’s Office

(L-R): Valery Dambreville, DSS; Bill Alexander, EMS; Kenneth Fulk, EMS; Brianna Coontz, EMS

(L-R): Paul Buchannan, DSS; Timothy James, Sheriff’s Office; Catora Gregory, DSS; Caroline Knight, EMS
New Employees

(L-R): Addison Salisbury, Tyzie Morning, Virginia Zell. All are from Public Health.

Amber Cranford, Library
PROMOTIONS
Sgt. RYAN WELCH is promoted to Lieutenant and remains assigned to Criminal Investigations.

Dep. ADAM BAIRD is promoted to Sergeant and remains assigned to Criminal Investigations.

Dep. JOHN LAMBE is promoted to Sergeant and remains assigned to Criminal Investigations.

CONGRATULATIONS:
Congratulations to Detention Officer LAUREN STANLEY on the birth of her son on November 5, 2021.

Welcome to new employees:
REX LILLY Detention Center
SAVANNAH KEELING Detention Center
DIANE BENITEZ-DOMINGUEZ Detention Center
TAYLOR HARPER Patrol
TUCKER DAUGHRIDGE Patrol
JOHNATHON GORDON Patrol
VICTORIA YORK Detention Center
TIM JAMES Detention Center.

Dep. SCOTT KING spent a week in Kentucky with his National Guard unit in December to help with clean up from the tornados and locating missing persons.

A local citizen donated a large flag to Sheriff Seabolt. Thanks to County Maintenance, we were able to display it on the county building for a few weeks that included Veterans Day.

-Amanda Varner
Medal of Valor:

The Medal of Valor Award is a way this Office recognizes those Deputies that voluntarily put their lives on the line each and every day. Valor – “Great courage in the face of danger, especially in battle.” Recipients were: JIMMY BARNES, EDDIE SLAFKY, ADAM HICKS, CODY JORDAN and EVAN SMITH

Volunteer Service Awards:

Special Thanks to the Volunteers who have given many, many hours towards making the Sheriff’s Office a better place.

L-R: BUDD KAUFFMAN, CHRIS DORSETT, KEN RHODES, ED COLLINS

Congratulations to our annual award winners:

Outstanding Community Partner – New Horizon Buildings and Concrete
Division Awards:

Each Division Captain submitted a name from their Division that recognized Exemplary Performance and Professional Conduct.

Dep. JAMIE GURLEY – Patrol

Ricky Allen – Detention Center

Cpl. NEIL BLACKMON – Civil Division

Dep. BRANDON BURGER – Bailiff Division

Cpl. GREG DEATON – Fleet Maintenance

-Amanda Varner
The Sheriff’s Office hosted a Christmas Open House again in 2021. We discovered that Santa was working a side hustle for County Maintenance but we were sure glad he was able to join us for the Open House. We appreciate Randy Dunlap (County Maintenance) and Darnell McMath (NC Guardian ad Litem Randolph County).

-Amanda Varner
Emergency Services

Congratulations to **BILL ALEXANDER, ADDISON COSOLITO, AUSTIN MINISH, and OLIVIA GOODWIN** who have completed their oral board requirements to practice at the paramedic level.

Congratulations to Telecommunicator **FANNI TORRES** and Freddy Huerta on the birth of their daughter, Rosalie Sol Huerta. She was born September 16, 2021, 7lbs 3 ounces, and 21 inches long.

Congratulations to Telecommunicator **CAROLINE KNIGHT** who has been released from training. **CAROLINE** is now a full-time Telecommunicator assigned to D-shift.

Congratulations to part-time Telecommunicator **NICOLE KLUBA** who recently completed BLET. We wish you good luck in your future career in law enforcement.

Congratulations to our newest full-time EMS team members: Paramedic **BILL ALEXANDER**, EMT **BRIANNA COONTZ**, EMT **KENNY FULK**, and Paramedic **Tiffany Luther**.

Congratulations to **Larry Hicks, Jr.,** who is our new full-time Logistic Coordinator at Emergency Services. **Larry** has been with the department part-time for 2 years in our Tech Services division and was previously with the Sheriff’s Office.

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Emergency Services Cont.

Great job to every public safety and public works/utilities employees who worked during our January 3rd snow/flood/wind storm. We didn’t expect it to be that much of an abnormal call volume day, but it sure was. Our 911 staff answered a total of 1,358 telephone calls, entered 822 calls for service into Spillman (new record), and dealt with statewide radio issues that made communication with field personnel difficult. At one point, we had more than 60 known road closures across the county and more than 10,000 households without power. It was all done with great teamwork from everyone involved.

-Jared Byrd

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Tax

Congratulations to **Teresa Mitchem** on her retirement on July 31st.

Congratulations to **Stephanie Thompson** as the new Personal Property Billing Supervisor as of August 16th.

We would like to welcome **Jackie Massie** who began her new job with the Tax Department on September 1st as a Tax Data Entry Specialist.

We would like to extend our sympathy to **Jackie Massie** in the passing of her father on November 8th.

Congratulations to **Melissa Martin** on the birth of her granddaughter, Layla Hope Brown, born December 17th, weighing 5lbs, 2oz, 18.5 in.

-Gail Routh

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Juvenile Day Reporting Center

Congratulations

The Juvenile Day Reporting Center would like to welcome our new Case Manager, **Lauren Walls**! **Lauren** started her journey with us as a transportation aide and was promoted to case manager! **Lauren** has extensive history working with youth and is excited to help build positive relationships with youth in our community. She is a lifelong resident of Randolph County and is excited to give back to her community!

**Lauren** has made a great addition to our team! We are excited to have her!

Sympathy

Our condolences to **Cindy Heaton** on the passing of her sister on January 6, 2021.

Our condolences to **Sandra Michael** on the passing of her brother in law on December 19, 2021.

-Pam Resch
Tourism Development Authority

2021 Hospitality Hero Award Recipient

The Hospitality Hero Award began in 2018 as an effort to recognize our organization’s staff members that exemplify excellent customer service, outstanding work ethic, and overall influence on team morale. We present this award annually to honor the hard work and dedication of a special staff member.

This treasured employee has been with our organization since October 2020 – was hired during such uncertainty within some frightening days of the pandemic. Through a bit of hesitation, breathing, and training this employee has proven that you just cannot teach customer service and the other details can be learned in time.

Throughout her time with the TDA, this employee has been eager to help her fellow employees, excited to share the knowledge of her home, Randolph County with her deep roots of Level Cross, and thrilled to learn something NEW every day! She sincerely wants to share her passion for all things Randolph County with each person she speaks with.

This year’s award winner is no stranger to customer service, hard work, and genuine hospitality. A dedicated, loving mom to two children and grandmother to five; she has also revolved into a mother hen for our Visitor Center team!

Her coworkers say, “this employee always has a positive attitude and can get a smile or evoke laughter from every visitor interaction. With a contagious smile, we have learned so much from working together. The knowledge of our communities and pottery amazes the staff, to the degree of us asking questions when working together. I have never met anyone that could make friends as easily as this employee does. We have visitors that stop back in just to check on our employee. That’s the kind of impression she leaves. We are so lucky to have her!”

The recipient of the 2021 Hospitality Hero Award is VIVIAN HUNT. VIVIAN has proven hard work, dedication, and a lot of kindness - by waving from a distance - can inspire greatness in the travel and tourism industry. Congratulations on this recognition in the Heart of North Carolina.

2021 Mary Joan Pugh Excellence in Hospitality Award Recipient

The Mary Joan Pugh Excellence in Hospitality Award was established in 2018 as an effort to recognize our community partners, organizations, events, and people in the tourism industry that have contributed to the growth and success of Randolph County’s tourism mission. Mary Joan Pugh was an instrumental member of our founding TDA Board of Directors, witnessing growth and development of our organization from its inception in 1997.

We would like to honor Dr. Frances Jones and the Friends of the Randolph Public Library for the hard work and dedication to recovery in 2021. Throughout the uncertainty, demands, and disappointments resulting from COVID-19 – you have been a star to shine brightly in the Heart of North Carolina. I would like to recognize some of the qualities that we value so much in your partnership and understanding of the tourism industry.

Frances has served as President of the Friends of the Randolph County Public Library since 2018. She has successfully ushered in a new era of community outreach with an impact that has been significant to the Randolph County Public Library, its patrons, and the community at large.

Her flagship initiative was Randolph Books for Babies – a partnership among the Friends, the Partnership for Children, Randolph Health, and Randolph County Public Health. This program provides pre-literacy care packets for the family of each newborn at Randolph Health. ‘Books for Babies’ has recently been taken over by the Partnership for Children. Under your leadership, this project delivered 3,621 care packages and a successful fundraising of $41,000 to support it.

Frances has been vital in leading the Friends’ community engagement by developing new programming that has enhanced and elevated the level of cultural activities available in the area – while also raising the
Congratulations to Sara Rowland, daughter of MICHAEL and Judy Rowland, who graduated from UNC Wilmington in December 2021 with a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish and International Studies.

Information Technology

Congratulations to Sara Rowland, daughter of MICHAEL and Judy Rowland, who graduated from UNC Wilmington in December 2021 with a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish and International Studies.

- Michael Rowland
RANDOLPH COUNTY 9-1-1

Know someone looking for a career change or a part-time gig?
Applicants are being accepted for Full-Time and Part-Time Telecommunicators
(9-1-1 Call-Takers and Dispatchers)

Full-time available after on-the-job training is complete
Apply on the Randolph County Website on the careers page:

www.randolphcountync.gov/human-resources-careers

Deadline to apply - January 21, 2022
Upcoming Events:
Monday, January 17th—County Offices Closed
Wednesday, January 26th—HLPC Meeting
Monday, February 7th—Commissioners Meeting
Tuesday, February 8th—Planning Board Meeting
Thursday, February 10th—Joint Meeting with Asheboro City School Board
Thursday, February 24th—Commissioners Annual Planning Retreat
Monday, March 7th—Commissioners Meeting

Wellness News Teasers
Here is some of the exciting news in the latest edition of the Weekly Wellness News:

» See where your department placed in the 2021 Biometric Screening Wellness Cup rankings.
» Did you know that time management is a myth. Learn how to be more productive without “managing time.”
» Standing desk quarterly drawing winner announced.
» In this issue there is a spotlight on a confidential wellness initiative that can help employees and their families.
» Check out the new product in the healthy vending machines located in RCOB, PH, DSS and DSS Northgate.

Free COVID-19 Testing
StarMed Healthcare provides no cost drive-thru COVID-19 diagnostic testing Monday – Friday at both Randolph Community College locations (Asheboro & Archdale).

Furry Friends Available!
The Randolph County Animal Shelter has furry friends looking for new homes. Check out their Facebook page or website for more information about available pets. Don’t want to adopt, but still want to help out? Check out the Amazon wishlist for Shelter pets!

Big News for Randolph County
It’s official: Toyota is coming to the Megasite! $1.29 billion will be invested at the Greensboro-Randolph Megasite, where Toyota will produce batteries for hybrid electric vehicles.
This initiative will bring 1,750 jobs to the area, which will be a great impact on our local economy! Stay tuned for updates and other information regarding one of the biggest economic impacts from business that Randolph County has ever felt.

Winter Weather
It’s that time of year where winter weather could sneak up on us—be prepared with water, shelf stable food items, and plenty of blankets! As a reminder, any County delays or closures will be posted on the Randolph County website homepage.
Wellness Update
By Sam Varner, NBC-HWC Wellness Administrator

2021 Wellness Cup Rankings

Listed below are department rankings for eligible employees qualifying for the 2021 Biometric Screenings and 2022 Wellness Incentive. The 7 top departments in bold scored a perfect 100%! All employees in these departments receive a special wellness prize. Since DSS—Income Maintenance has the highest number of employees (tiebreaker), they are deemed #1 and therefore the Wellness Cup Champion for 2021. Congratulations to all employees who qualified for the Wellness Incentive and especially the top 7 departments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Eligible Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DSS: IM-DSS</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>44/44</td>
<td>(Food Stamps, Energy Program, Childcare)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>16/16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning &amp; Zoning</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>9/9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Register of Deeds</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>7/7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elections</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative Extension</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>3/3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil &amp; Water</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>3/3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDA</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>3/3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Day Reporting</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>2/2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Buildings</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>19/20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Library</td>
<td>93.1%</td>
<td>27/29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Support Services</td>
<td>92.9%</td>
<td>13/14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>91.7%</td>
<td>22/24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Services</td>
<td>90.9%</td>
<td>10/11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>86.6%</td>
<td>58/67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax</td>
<td>86.2%</td>
<td>25/29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSS: IM-DHB</td>
<td>86.1%</td>
<td>31/36</td>
<td>(Medicaid)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSS: CPS-WF</td>
<td>80.8%</td>
<td>21/26</td>
<td>(Child Protection, Work First)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ES: Management</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>8/10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ES: Fire Marshalls</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSS: Administration</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>24/32</td>
<td>(Admin, Legal, IT, Support, Accounting)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheriff’s: Administration</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>14/21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheriff’s: Civil &amp; Fleet</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>12/22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheriff’s: School Resource</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>16/24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Inspections</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>7/11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSS: CPA-SVS</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
<td>19/30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J DRC</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>3/5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheriff’s: CID</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>13/23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheriff’s: Courthouse Bailiffs</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
<td>12/22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ES: Communications</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>13/25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdiction/ Vice/ Narcotics</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>9/18</td>
<td>(Sheriff’s Office)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheriff’s Office: Jail</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>27/81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheriff’s Office: Patrol</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>14/46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ES: Medical Services</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
<td>17/65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterans Services</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0/3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**COVID-19 TEST SITES**

**StarMed**
RCC–Asheboro
629 Industrial Park Ave.
Monday, Wednesday, Friday
3pm–7pm

RCC–Archdale
110 Park Drive
Tuesday and Thursday
10am–2pm

First United Methodist
Church – Asheboro
224 N Fayetteville St
Monday–Friday 12pm–6pm
Saturday 11am–2pm

Pre-register by texting "COVID" to 704–850–6996

Your Primary Care Provider may offer testing

Call their office and ask about COVID-19 testing

To find more testing sites, go to
https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/about-covid-19/testing/find-my-testing-place

**First Health Convenient Care (Urgent Care)**
Asheboro
208 W. Salisbury St
336–523–0040

**Central Piedmont Urgent Care**
Randleman
1011 High Point St
336–498–0226

**White Oak Urgent Care**
608 W. Academy St, Randleman
336–495–1001

197 NC–42, Asheboro
336–625–2560

**Horizon Internal Medicine**
138 Dublin Square Rd.
Suite B, Asheboro
336–610–1300

**All CVS locations**
Must visit CVS.com to make an appointment
Join us on Zoom for FREE nutrition education classes with live cooking demonstrations!

COOKING MATTERS:®
At Home:

Lesson topics will cover buying healthy, affordable foods that families can prepare and eat together at home. Lessons are open to adults & families.

Mondays at 7pm
January 31 - March 7

FOR KIDS:

Lessons will teach kids about healthy eating and cooking. Lessons are open to all ages but are best suited for 3rd-5th graders.

Thursdays at 5:30pm
February 3 - March 10

For more information and to register visit:
CarolinaHungerInitiative.org/cooking

This material was funded by USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - SNAP
This institution is an equal opportunity provider.
TAKE A MINDFUL MINUTE

BREATHE IN, I DO MY BEST, BREATHE OUT, I LET GO OF THE REST

TAKE 5
STRETCH OUT YOUR HAND.
USE YOUR POINTER FINGER TO TRACE YOUR HAND.
BREATHE IN AS YOU GO UP.
BREATHE OUT AS YOU GO DOWN.
GO SLOWLY AND NOTICE HOW YOU FEEL.

COUNTERING BREATHS
BREATHE IN & OUT, “ONE.”
BREATHE IN & OUT, “TWO.”
AND SO ON TO TEN.
REPEAT COUNTING BREATHS (1 TO 10) AS OFTEN AS YOU LIKE.

4-7-8
BREATHE IN FOR 4 SECONDS,
HOLD FOR 7 SECONDS,
EXHALE FOR 8 SECONDS

SMELL THE FLOWERS, (INHALE)
BLOW OUT THE CANDLES (EXHALE)

5-4-3-2-1
5 THINGS YOU SEE
4 THINGS YOU FEEL
3 THINGS YOU HEAR
2 THINGS YOU SMELL
1 THING YOU TASTE
TYPES OF SELF-CARE

PHYSICAL
- Sleep
- Stretching
- Walking
- Physical release
- Healthy food
- Yoga
- Rest

EMOTIONAL
- Stress management
- Emotional maturity
- Forgiveness
- Compassion
- Kindness

SOCIAL
- Boundaries
- Support systems
- Positive social media
- Communication
- Time together
- Ask for help

SPIRITUAL
- Time alone
- Meditation
- Yoga
- Connection
- Nature
- Journaling
- Sacred space

PERSONAL
- Hobbies
- Knowing yourself
- Personal identity
- Honoring your true self

SPACE
- Safety
- Healthy living environment
- Security and stability
- Organized space

FINANCIAL
- Saving
- Budgeting
- Money management
- Splurging
- Paying bills

WORK
- Time management
- Work boundaries
- Positive workplace
- More learning
- Break time
Winter weather will be here before we know it! In the event of anticipated snow, ice, or other unsavory precipitation, please move all vehicles that are normally parked in the RCOB parking lot to one of the highlighted locations below. Having these vehicles parked in the highlighted areas allows our Maintenance department to salt/scrape the parking lot without the risk of damaging the vehicles. If you have any questions about this request, please contact the County Manager’s office at x 6300. Thank you for your cooperation!
Hello fellow film enthusiasts! It's been awhile. COVID ruins everything, and so I spent almost two years watching films on streaming services and on demand. Finally, I'm back in the theater! Here's what I've seen recently:

**Ghostbusters: Afterlife**

To be honest, when I first started seeing the trailers for this one, I was skeptical. After all, *Ghostbusters* holds a very special place in my adolescent heart. Even *Ghostbusters II* (released a mere 5 years after the original) was a letdown. The female version that came out a few years ago had moments but was disappointing overall. So how could this new addition, released 37 years after the original, fare any better? One way, perhaps, is to get Dan Aykroyd (who co-wrote the original) to co-write this one. Another idea is to tap the son (Jason Reitman) or the original director (Ivan Reitman) to direct. The plot is fairly simple. A single mom inherits an old house from her absent father; and, facing eviction from their current home, she and her two children take up residence. Weird things start to happen, and the kids soon discover a connection to the original *Ghostbusters*. The kids are great, particularly McKenna Grace. It also stars the always fun Paul Rudd (currently the People Magazine’s Sexiest Man Alive) as a nerdy science teacher. There are a LOT of nods to the original film, including the use of the original score. I don’t want to say too much since I don’t want to give away some of the surprises in this movie. All in all, *Ghostbusters: Afterlife* is a delightful love letter to the original film. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

**House of Gucci**

The minute I saw the trailer for this one, I knew I’d have to go see it. And take my Mama. She LOVES Lady Gaga. The story is both fairly cliché and also true (clichés are clichés for a reason, folks). Lady Gaga plays Patrizia Reggiani. When Patrizia, daughter of a guy who runs a trucking company, marries into the Gucci family (yes, the Italian fashion empire Gucci family), her ambition and social-climbing greed begin to tear the family apart, ultimately culminating in murder. This movie is pretty good—not great. The thing is—it shoud’ve been great. It has a great cast. Whatever you think of Lady Gaga’s singing career,
she’s a really good actress. You’ve also got Adam Driver, who is also great in everything he’s in. Jared Leto is nearly unrecognizable but also gives a great performance. And of course, the legend Al Pacino. The subject matter is pretty great, too. I mean, it follows the downfall of a rich, dynastic family due to the greed and manipulation, and that’s always a good draw. But the pacing seems off. The movie feels slow at times and then, at other times, it seems rushed. Don’t get me wrong . . . I didn’t hate this movie; I wasn’t bored. But I wasn’t wowed either.

### Spiderman: No Way Home

Now here’s one that wowed me! I mean . . . WOW! If you’ve seen it, you know. If you haven’t, you’re missing out. I don’t want to give anything away with this review, because part of the joy of this film is the surprises the ensue. So my description of the plot is going to be pretty vague. If you saw the last Spiderman film, you know that it ended with Spiderman’s secret identity being revealed to the public. That, of course, is a big problem for Peter Parker. When he enlists the help of Doctor Strange to make the world forget that he is Spiderman, things go horribly wrong with unexpected results. Tom Holland is back as, in my humble opinion, the best Spiderman that the franchise has ever seen. He gives his most emotional performance to date, as the film is alternately funny and heartbreaking. Everyone in it does a good job. The movie’s is fast-paced and filled with the jaw-dropping special effects that you expect from a superhero movie. If you’re a fan of Spiderman, you owe it to yourself to see this installment in the franchise. Well-done, Marvel! Well-done.

### Nightmare Alley

This is a remake of a 1947 movie of the same name starring Tyrone Power and Joan Blondell. The current edition features Bradley Cooper and Cate Blanchett. Both are the story of an ambitious young man who takes a job as a carny with a traveling circus in the late 1940’s and who rises to fame as a mentalist before he meets a female psychiatrist with a dangerous idea. Both are examples of the film noir genre, movies marked by a mood of pessimism, fatalism and menace (so not filled with sunshine and happiness). I haven’t actually seen the 1947 film, but I did some research on it in preparation for this review, and it seems like the new film is a straight remake of the original with very few changes. One marked difference is that the original film was one hour and 50 minutes long; the new one clocks in a two and a half hours. All this additional time serves
to do is to slow things down in a story that didn’t need to be any slower. I looked at my watch SEVERAL times during this movie, and that’s never a good thing. I also saw the “twist” coming before we ever got there, something else that takes away from its effect. My advice—skip this and look for the original on Turner Classic Movies. It’s got pretty decent reviews on IMDB (the Internet Movie Database) and won’t take up as much of your time.

**Licorice Pizza**

This is the latest from filmmaker **Paul Thomas Anderson**, which all by itself makes me interested in seeing it. **Anderson** is a filmmaker who is hit or miss for me, but when he hits, he hits with something completely original. By way of example, one of my personal favorites from him is the 1999 film **Magnolia**. It’s an odd one, but sooo good. So when I saw the trailer for **Licorice Pizza**, which features two essentially unknown leads falling in love to the tune of **David Bowie’s** Life on Mars (another personal favorite) and I saw that it was from **Anderson**, I was intrigued to say the least. This is another odd film. In fact, it doesn’t feel as much like a conventional movie as it feels like various random episodes of these characters’ lives strung together. It tells the story of Gary Valentine, a 15 year-old child actor and his “romance” with a young woman named Alana who is 25 or 28 (depending on which time you believe her when she states her age). While the age difference is unsettling to me, that is never addressed in the film. Also, their romance really consists mostly of them just hanging out and engaging in various business opportunities together (like running a waterbed sales business). It turns out that Gary Valentine is loosely based on real-life child star turned waterbed salesman turned movie producer **Gary Goetzman**. Another real-life character that appears in the film is Jon Peters (played hilariously by **Bradley Cooper**). In case you aren’t familiar with Peters, he was a hair stylist in Hollywood who rose to fame as **Barbra Streisand’s** boyfriend turned movie producer. **Bradley Cooper** plays him as a violent ego-maniac who steals every scene he’s in. The other standout performance is from **Cooper Hoffman** (as Gary). Cooper is the son of the late, great **Phillip Seymour Hoffman**, and he gives a performance that his father would’ve been proud of. For a movie that has little in the way of plot, this is not a short film. It runs two hours and 13 minutes, but I never once looked at my watch. It’s not something I need to see again, but I was entertained by it. Take that for what it’s worth.

That’s it for now, folks! I’m really hoping that this latest COVID surge is the beginning of the end of all this. I’m ready to get back in the theater without having to worry about it, and I know you are, too. And I’m ready for Hollywood to get back up to full strength in putting out good, quality movies. Until next time, happy viewing!
# February 2022 Birthdays

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