

# GLOUCESTER-MATHEWS GAZETTE-JOURNAL

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## Missing woman's body found Friday

BY KIM ROBINS

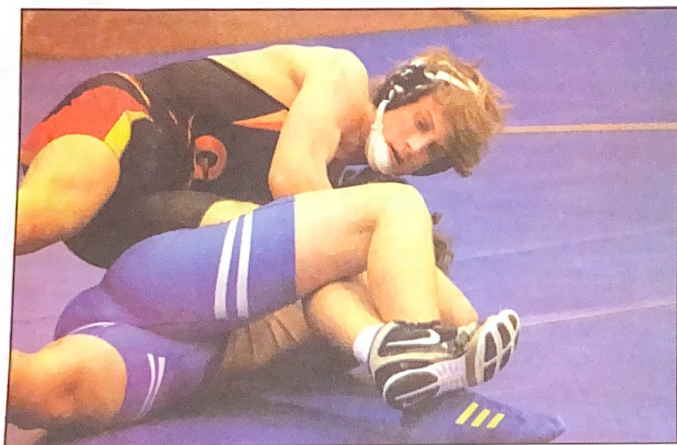
The body of 29-year-old Ashley Cerasole was found Friday near Fox Mill Run, according to the Gloucester Sheriff's Office. Cerasole was a resident of Cary Adult Home and had been reported as a missing person on Dec. 3, 2020.

The GSO said Friday that Cerasole was located at about 11:30 a.m. by a Virginia State Police Dive Team and VSP investigators working in conjunction with the GSO and the Virginia Department of Emergency Management.

The body was found in a swamp area on the back side of the Fox Mill subdivision,

according to the GSO, and was positively identified as Cerasole on Saturday by the Chief Medical Examiner's Office in Norfolk.

The medical examiner's office is still investigating the manner and cause of Cerasole's death. The result of the investigation is pending a full autopsy.



CHARLIE KOENIG / GAZETTE-JOURNAL

## Dukes on the mat

Gloucester High School resumed its sports seasons this week, competing in basketball and wrestling. Here, GHS junior Ethan Baker went 2-0 on Saturday in a tri-meet at Mathews High School. A returning 2019 state placer, Baker scored a pin against Poquoson and a 17-2 tech victory over Mathews (above). As a team, Gloucester defeated both Mathews and Poquoson. For more on Gloucester's return to sports, see pages 14A-15A.

## Virus claims 7 more residents' lives

BY SHERRY HAMILTON

Six Gloucester residents lost their lives to COVID-19 during the past week, bringing the total number of deaths in the county to 24, double the number of deaths of two weeks ago. Mathews saw one additional death over the week, for a total of six, while the number of Middlesex deaths remained the same, at 15.

New COVID-19 cases continue to be identified locally, as well. In Gloucester, the

rate of rise has slowed, with 138 new cases identified during the past week, compared to 151 last week and 174 the week before. Two Gloucester patients were hospitalized during the past week, for a total of 40 since the pandemic began.

Mathews added 25 new cases during the week, for a total of 415, while the number of hospitalizations remained the same, at 16. In Middlesex, the case count increased by 37, for a total of 397, and there were two new

hospitalizations, for a total of 18 since March.

The Three Rivers Health District has recorded 94 deaths from the virus, with 12 of them during the past week, while case numbers increased by 500, for a cumulative total of 6,959 cases thus far. Hospitalizations increased by 12, for a total of 281 district residents hospitalized since the pandemic began.

Statewide, the numbers

SEE COVID-19 UPDATE, PAGE 5A

## Board addresses Hole in the Wall issues

BY SHERRY HAMILTON

Two issues concerning the county-owned Hole in the Wall restaurant on Gwynn's Island—the septic system and parking—came again before the Mathews County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday.

Supervisor Jackie Ingram raised questions about the cost of pumping and hauling

effluent from the septic system, while three residents insisted that something needs to be done about parking conflicts.

### Hole in the Wall septic

Ingram questioned whether water use at the business is being monitored to determine how much of the effluent is sewage and how much is groundwater that has entered the system.

"We need to know whether we're pumping water or waste," she said. "Every month we wait it's another \$3,000. We need to do something now."

She suggested that a water meter be installed, and Mathews Building Official Kevin Zoll said that a meter could help determine the

SEE MATHEWS SUPERVISORS, PAGE 5A

## Voter fraud case ends in district court

BY MELANY SLAUGHTER

A Hayes resident was convicted in Gloucester General District Court earlier this month on a misdemeanor charge of obtaining services by false pretense after being charged with attempting to

vote twice in the 2020 presidential election.

Jonathan Meade West Sr. was originally arrested on a felony charge of attempting to cast more than one ballot in the election. According to a probable cause statement filed in the case, West is al-

leged to have said that he was "testing the process."

The 50-year-old, who is a voter in Gloucester's York District, cast his absentee ballot on Friday, Oct. 9 at the Gloucester County Voter

SEE VOTER FRAUD, PAGE 13A



## VOTER FRAUD

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A)

Registrar's office. West filled out a check-in page where he wrote his name, address and reason for visiting the office as "absentee." He also signed and dated the form.

Lisa Hawks, Assistant Registrar, handwrote on West's check-in form that she verified his identity by his driver's license. After casting his absentee ballot, Hawks confirmed that his vote had been successfully cast and then he left the office.

West returned to the registrar's office four days later, accompanying his girlfriend, who was voting that day, the statement read. He was greeted and provided a check-in sheet by Hawks, who did not recognize him from before. He filled out the form once again.

The VERIS (Virginia Election and Registration Information System) was not functioning properly on West's second visit, though it had been working on his initial visit on Oct. 9. The office was using a back-up system that day which involved taking the information manually and verifying he was a registered voter. Hawks checked the list and discovered he had already cast his ballot for the 2020 presidential election.

Hawks confronted West immediately and he admitted that he had voted before. He said he had "heard the system was down" and was "testing the process."

Steven H. Perry, senior criminal investigator with the Gloucester County Sheriff's Office, interviewed West on Oct. 26. At that time, West admitted that he had voted on Oct. 9 and then went back to the registrar's office with his girlfriend on Oct. 13. Once there, West "heard the system was down" and decided to check and see if the election officials were correctly doing their jobs, the statement said. West also admitted to submitting another check-in sheet.

West further told Perry about "the left" cheating in the election and that he was an "unabashed conservative" and simply wanted to make sure that the process was working.

West's alleged attempt to

vote twice came after then-President Donald J. Trump encouraged his North Carolina supporters on Sept. 2 to attempt to vote twice in the presidential election, once by mail and another time in person, in order to test the system.

West was found guilty of the amended misdemeanor charge on Jan. 14 and given a suspended jail sentence of 12 months and a \$500 fine.

West and his attorney, Steven D. Barnette, declined to comment on the case. Gloucester County Voter Registrar Bobbi Morgan also declined to comment.