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Hayes Bailey, 12, plays the violin at her home in Asheville. KARA FOHNER/ASHEVILLE CITIZEN TIMES

Asheville City Schools end orchestra program

Kara Fohner
Asheville Citizen Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

ASHEVILLE - When Hayes Bailey, 12, learned Aug. 4 that Asheville Middle School's orchestra program had been canceled, she was devastated. She was on vacation in Minneapolis when she received a text from a friend with the news.

"I was heartbroken," Hayes said. "I was just really angry when it happened."

Hayes, a rising seventh grader, joined the school's orchestra in sixth grade.

"I made a lot of friends that I wouldn't have made without it, and I'm in a community that I wouldn't have been in if I didn't join strings," she said. "And it's just really cool to be able to play the violin, like an instrument that's been

around for so long. It's cool that I get to continue that legacy."

In response to a call Aug. 7 from the Citizen Times, orchestra teacher Franklin Keel said that Asheville City Schools ended the program for the entire district, affecting Asheville Middle School, Asheville High School, and the School of Inquiry and Life Sciences at Asheville. The district announced the cancellation of the program Aug. 3, Keel said.

Keel said the program is being cut because it was too small to justify keeping a teacher on staff according to the allotment formula set by the superintendent.

A Board of Education agenda memo for an Aug. 3 meeting supports Keel's explanation. The memo states that Asheville City Schools provides one teacher for every 150 students enrolled in a music program at the middle and

high schools. Data included in the memo states that there were 39 students in the orchestra program at Asheville Middle School, compared to 97 in chorus and 322 in band.

The state of North Carolina does not provide a state level funding allotment for electives or music teachers in grades six through 12, and so Asheville City Schools must pay for those positions out of the district's local funding allocation, according to the memo.

The memo states that Keel was given a full school year with a reduced course load to try to recruit more students to the program, and at the end of the year, he had recruited 14 students.

"After further consideration, reflection on input from our families, and review of the staffing allotment numbers

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Nonprofit seeks to preserve Mountaineer Inn signs

Will Hofmann
Asheville Citizen Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

ASHEVILLE - Rugged and bathed in neon, the barefoot mountaineer toting a rifle has stood along Tunnel Road for over 60 years. Photos of the luminescent man are in the Library of Congress. The city has deemed it a "landmark."

Though it may not be technically considered historic, many Asheville residents may consider the Mountaineer Inn — and its signs — to be a piece of the city's history. Sitting vacant and listed for sale as the city meets with prospective buyers, preservationists are seeing what might be saved at the motel. Depending on the goals of the future buyer and whether the aging buildings are demolished, the signs, though turned off for several years, may be their top priority.

See SIGNS, Page 4A

Feds aiding Puerto Rico's response to water crisis

Christopher Cann
USA TODAY

Federal agencies are working with officials in Puerto Rico as the island contends with a water crisis that has left tens of thousands of residents without running water for days at a time, Puerto Rico Gov. Jenniffer González-Colón said Aug. 9.

The U.S. territory imposed a rationing program that shut off water service in the capital of San Juan and its surrounding neighborhoods for 48-hour intervals, according to Puerto Rico's Aqueduct and Sewer Authority. Officials say more than 180,000 households were being affected by the program, which began Aug. 7.

The rationing comes as Puerto Rico grapples with persistent drought conditions, unusually hot temperatures and long-standing infrastructure

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