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‘There was nothing that could come between us’

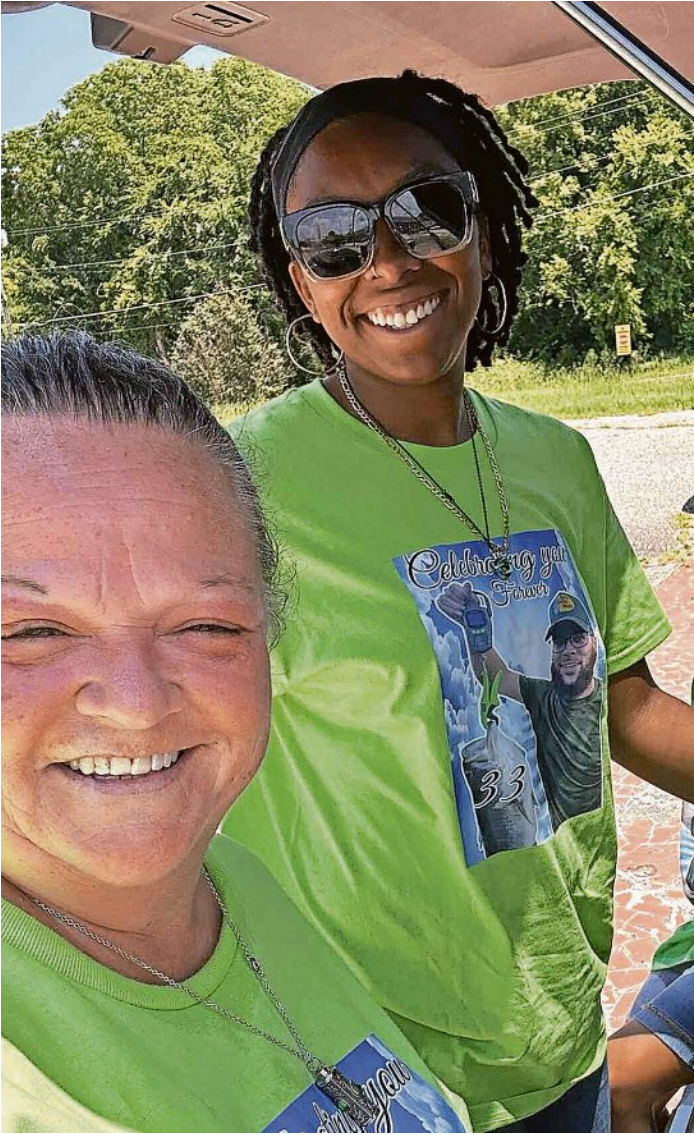
Mother of Cumberland County homicide victim honors him on his birthday

Joseph Pierre Fayetteville Observer | USA TODAY NETWORK

On June 23, when Wendy Johnson should have been celebrating her son’s 33rd birthday, she was instead honoring his memory. • Jefferson Taylor Duggins and co-worker Arthur Knight Acosta, 21, were shot to death Oct. 15 by a man they had a spat with earlier that morning. The dispute was over pressure washing. • The men were working a job for NC Window Cleaning near Cross Creek Mall when Desmond Louis Moore, 42, of Fayetteville, got upset because his vehicle was hit by splash back. • Moore followed the duo to their next job on Yarborough Lane, a county road near Grays Creek, where homes are separated by acres of land and the only witnesses are the oak trees. • When the work truck pulled up to the gate of the property, Moore opened fire. The owner of the company, Chris Graham, was talking with the homeowner a good ways from the road and when he went to the gate to let them in, he found their bodies. • The following day, 150 miles northwest of Fayetteville, after Moore was identified as the suspect, police in Mount Airy spotted his vehicle there, and a high-speed chase ensued. It ended in a multi-vehicle wreck and a shootout. Moore was killed, but not before he killed a police dog that tracked him into the woods.

‘There was nothing that could come between us’

Johnson said her son, who went by his middle name, Taylor, was the oldest of her two children. She said their relationship was always close but after Duggins first child was born in 2014, they were inseparable. “There was nothing that could come between us,” she said. Duggins went on to have five children, three sons and two daughters, who Johnson said he cared for deeply. She said her son would often take his children fishing or riding on four-wheelers when he wasn’t working to provide for them. After Duggins’ death, Johnson said she and her daughter-in-law, Crystal Duggins, formed a tight bond to help raise the children, ages 7 to 10. “There’s never come a time I haven’t been there and there won’t come a time that I won’t be, until I cannot be,” she said. Johnson said her son was known for his caring personality



Wendy Johnson, mother of Jefferson Duggins, and her daughter-in-law, Crystal Duggins, wear T-shirts with Duggins’ face and hand out pizza and groceries in Fayetteville on June 23. PROVIDED BY WENDY JOHNSON

and his faith. She said he often helped those less fortunate, trying to give them hope and spreading the word of God. On more than one occasion he used his own money and fed the hungry. “He went and bought pizzas from Little Caesars, and he went to Sam’s (Club) and bought groceries to go out and hand to the people when they lived under the Person Street bridge,” she said. To honor her son’s memory on his birthday, Johnson and a group of others set up beneath that same bridge and handed out pizza and groceries. She said this will be how she spends her son’s birthdays moving forward.

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Trump-Putin bromance flowered and then soured

Kim Hjelmgaard, Francesca Chambers and Cybele Mayes-Osterman USA TODAY

President Donald Trump said he would end the war in Ukraine within his first 24 hours in office. But now, more than 4,000 hours in, Trump’s patience with Russian President Vladimir Putin, whom the U.S. president in June called “very kind,” appears to be wearing thin. Relations have hit a wall as Russia’s leader has pushed forward with intensifying drone and missile attacks on Ukrainian cities while appearing to repeatedly rebuff Trump’s attempts to broker a ceasefire. “We get a lot of (expletive) thrown at us by Putin, if you want to know the truth,” Trump told reporters on July 9, summing up what Ukrainians and other seasoned Russia watchers have

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Another forecasting tool is scrapped

Dinah Voyles Pulver USA TODAY

The heart-wrenching July 4 flooding in Texas served as a stark reminder of the importance of accurate and timely weather forecasts. As extreme rainfall events grow more intense, such tragedies are expected to increase. Further improvement to forecasts is critical, but meteorologists worry that with the additional cuts planned by the Trump administration, the nation’s weather and climate research programs won’t be able to keep up. The latest blow was the announcement by the U.S. Navy that it would no longer transmit data from aging satellites past June 30, roughly 15 months earlier than expected. Later, the

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