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The Gaston Gazette WEEKEND

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TRIAL OF THE CENTURY American culture wars began 100 years ago at Scopes Monkey Trial

Opioid settlement funds going toward treatment



Capt. Brandon Miller, left, and Justin Greer are part of a GEMS program that connects people struggling with addiction with treatment. KARA FOHNER/GASTON GAZETTE

Kara Fohner
Gaston Gazette | USA TODAY NETWORK

Gaston County has received a little over \$12 million in settlement funds to combat the opioid epidemic, and so far, the funds have mostly gone towards programs designed to connect people with addiction treatment. Here's how the county has spent the money:

Implemented in 2023, the Community Paramedicine Program and the Medication Assisted Treatment Bridge Program provide post-overdose follow-up care by paramedics and immediate access to medication that treats opiate addiction.

"If they are able and wanting to get into treatment and medication-assisted treatment, paramedics can bridge that gap and make sure they're connected to

treatment in a timely fashion," said Stephanie Jamoulis, prevention strategies coordinator for the Gaston County Department of Health and Human Services, in an interview with the Gazette June 27.

"The goal is to get them into longer-term treatment to connect them with other providers," Assistant Health Director Abby Newton added.

The program has a 94% success rate and has resulted in a 40% decrease in opiate overdoses, according to the county.

Gaston Emergency Medical Services' Recovery Transportation Program then can provide transportation to medication-assisted treatment, medical appointments and court and residential treatment programs. The program has completed more than 3,600

See TREATMENT, Page 2A

Man pleads guilty in shooting at encampment

Kara Fohner
Gaston Gazette | USA TODAY NETWORK

A man was convicted in a shooting that sparked the closure of a controversial Gastonia homeless encampment.

Donald Beatty, 58, pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter and possession of a firearm by a felon in the shooting of 57-year-old Freddie Lee Byrd.

Beatty shot and killed Byrd on Aug. 20, 2023, at a homeless encampment at 418 N. Oakland St., which was owned by Faith, Hope and Love Community Enrichment Ministries. The city of Gastonia had been involved in a civil dispute with Faith, Hope and Love over the encampment.

The city of Gastonia had been taking measures to try to shut down the encampment.

The city filed a complaint asking that, among other things, Faith, Hope and Love be forced to comply with Gastonia zoning ordinances. In addition to the zoning ordinance violations, the city issued a nuisance violation for trash, scrap materials, and vegetative growth that accumulated on the property.

Shortly after the shooting, Moses Colbert, who operates Faith, Hope and Love with his wife, Monica, shut down the encampment.

Assistant District Attorney Stephanie Hamlin said during Beatty's court hearing that police found only one witness to the shooting, and after the encampment closed, police and prosecutors were unable to find her again. Police also were unable to find the gun used in the killing.

Beatty admitted to the shooting but said he shot Byrd in self defense, Hamlin said. The woman who saw what happened would have been vital to the criminal case against Beatty, Hamlin added.

Beatty and Byrd were both homeless at the time of the shooting.

Beatty's attorney, Onyema Ezech, said that Beatty had "a very strong case of self defense," and that Byrd was the aggressor.

Beatty "does not like fights. He stays away from trouble, avoids confrontation," Ezech said. "My understanding after reviewing this discovery was that this argument may have started because of an acquaintance, a female acquaintance, and that it escalated into why we are here today."

See SHOOTING, Page 2A

How Trump's tariffs may affect U.S.

Analysts say labor market not prepared for the shift

Bailey Schulz
USA TODAY

Winton Machine, an Atlanta-based manufacturer, is desperate to hire. So far, there are few takers.

CEO and co-founder Lisa Winton has been searching for a salesperson since March. A technical job has been open even longer, with fewer than a dozen applications over the past year – and none of those applying having

the skills required for the job.

Winton has done what she can to attract workers, like forming a relationship with local technical colleges, offering applicants flexible hours and rehiring retirees. Still, keeping her staffing up has been a challenge.

The push for more domestic manufacturing through tariffs, Winton worries, will only make matters worse.

"If more factories move into an area, who are they competing with? They're competing with other factories," she said. "Whether it be machinists or maintenance or assembly, all of the different types of jobs that are available – they have to come from somewhere."

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Building new manufacturing facilities can take up to 10 years, depending on the industry, and experts say the country's infrastructure isn't primed to handle additional factories.

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