



A roadside memorial on N.C. 251 in Marshall honors Jacob “Jake” Hill and Leonard “Lennie” Antonelli, who were fatally struck by a dump truck while cycling July 1. JOSH BELL/ASHEVILLE CITIZEN TIMES

# UNSAFE FOR CYCLISTS?

Asheville leads state in bicyclist deaths per capita

Ryley Ober Asheville Citizen Times | USA TODAY NETWORK

ASHEVILLE – Alexander Rozos lounged on a climbing crash pad under a mid-July sun outside Cultivate Climbing, absorbing the heat and talking with his dad about joining the military in 60 days.

“My life is so dialed in right now with my training and personal relationships. If I died an hour from now, I didn’t waste a minute,” Michael Rozos remembered his son saying after a hard climb together on July 17, 2024.

After ruminating on what the future could bring, Michael hugged his son goodbye. Alex hopped on his white 2024 Specialized road bike to ride home. He hardly ever drove, his father said.

“I said, ‘I’ll see you here tomorrow.’ That’s the last time I ever saw him,” Michael Rozos said.

The next day, Rozos, 26, was struck and killed by a white box truck while riding a bicycle west along Swannanoa



Jacob Hill and Leonard Antonelli stand together on the podium at the Subaru Huntersville Cycling Classic in 2024. PROVIDED BY ANDREW CRATER

River Road. The Haw Creek resident, cyclist and athlete had been recruited by the military on a fast track to the United States Army Special Forces, according to his father.

With a weekly cycling goal of 225 miles, Rozos said his son exposed himself “to so much of a deeply flawed cycle safety system” that choosing practical routes was impossible.

From 2015 to 2024, Asheville ranked first in the state per capita in fatal bicyclist crashes with cars and second per capita in total bike crashes and crashes resulting in fatal, severe or minor injury, according to North Carolina Department of Transportation data obtained by the Citizen Times.

There have been seven cyclists killed on Asheville roads since 2021, as well as 165 injury-causing crashes and 211 total vehicle crashes with cyclists

See CYCLISTS, Page 2A

## Tensions up between trans rights, religious freedom

Jessica Guynn USA TODAY

Jocelyn Boden, 47, managed a Bath & Body Works store for 3½ years in West Valley City, Utah.

In March, she hired a transgender man as a retail associate and, during their first shift together, Boden said she twice referred to the employee as “she” in keeping with her faith as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which teaches that gender is an immutable characteristic of a person’s “eternal identity.”

After two associates corrected her, Boden informed her manager she would use the employee’s chosen name but would not “degrade my religious and moral beliefs by lying and calling this biological girl a he,” she told USA TODAY.

Boden was fired. Her termination notice cited “unwanted conduct directed at an individual based on their sex, which includes sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or transgender status.” She says her termination was religious discrimination.

Boden is at the forefront of a growing conflict between religious freedoms and transgender and nonbinary rights in the workplace.

While some say correct pronoun usage to affirm someone’s identity is a matter of basic respect, others view expectations they will use someone’s chosen gender pronouns as an infringement of their First Amendment’s protection of religious freedom. The standoff has only intensified as the political and legal landscape has shifted.

When an employee objects on religious grounds to using a colleague’s pronouns that are not consistent with their sex assigned at birth, “you have a clash of rights,” said Jonathan Segal, a partner with the Duane Morris law firm who advises companies on how to comply with discrimination laws.

“The question,” he said, “is which one gives?”

When employees refuse to use chosen pronouns

According to a discrimination complaint Boden filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, her supervisor “made no attempt to discuss my religious beliefs with me or to offer an accommodation.”

See TENSIONS, Page 10A

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Volume 131 | No. 210  
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