

2021 NEWSMAKERS

For the love of sports



Caleb Hill, right, is thankful that Jake Tuggle supported him and his goals. MARY BETH WESTGARTH-TAYLOR

Jake Tuggle makes wishes come true with Dream on 3

Petrucce Jean-Charles
Asheboro Courier-Tribune
USA TODAY NETWORK

Jake Tuggle's love for athletics fostered a passion for volunteering with Dream on 3, a nonprofit organization that brings children with life-altering conditions joy, turning their sports dreams into a reality.

Tuggle was first introduced to the or-

ganization at his old high school. When ever there was a chance to volunteer, he would participate. When he transferred to Wheatmore High School in Trinity, he decided to talk with the principal and front offices about bringing the opportunity there.

Tuggle said Dream on 3 supports wishes for kids with life-term conditions such as down syndrome or paralysis.

"They grant a sports dream where the sports player they look up to spends a couple of days with them. It's really a life-changing experience for the kids," he continued.

Tuggle's personal life struggles during his childhood also fuel his passion to

bring joy to those facing their own challenges. Tuggle spent most of his life in casts and braces as a child. This condition resulted from being born with bilateral club feet, a birth defect where an infant's feet are deformed.

However, that did not stop him from playing soccer or finding his passion in basketball at 10 years old after surgery, recovery and rehabilitation.

After practicing and making a name for himself as a successful basketball player at Wheatmore, he was accepted to Pfeiffer University in 2019. But the college student still works with the organization to build community in

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Inaccurate certificates hide true toll of COVID

The Documenting COVID-19 project and USA TODAY Network
USA TODAY

In late January, the official death toll from COVID-19 in Lafayette Parish, Louisiana, stood at 210.

At a makeshift memorial at a local Episcopal church, friends and relatives planted small, white flags representing how many people had died. Some inscribed flags with the names of those they had lost.

But a couple hundred flags were missing. Those people almost certainly died from COVID-19, according to an examination of newly released data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, but their death certificates don't mention it. Instead, they list conditions with symptoms that look a lot like COVID-19, such as Alzheimer's disease, hypertension and diabetes.

Nationwide, nearly 1 million more Americans have died in 2020 and 2021 than in normal, pre-pandemic years, but about 800,000 deaths have been officially attributed to COVID-19, according to the CDC data. A majority of those additional 195,000 deaths are unidentified COVID-19 cases, public health experts have long suggested, pointing to the unusual increase in deaths from natural causes.

An investigation by Documenting COVID-19, the USA TODAY Network and experts reveals why so many deaths have gone uncounted. After overwhelming the nation's health care system, the coronavirus evaded its antiquated, decentralized system of investigating and recording deaths.

Short-staffed, undertrained and

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RANDOLPH RUNDOWN

Leaving 2021 behind with multiple New Year's Eve events

Petrucce Jean-Charles
Asheboro Courier-Tribune
USA TODAY NETWORK

Hindsight Bluegrass NYE Concert at Sunset Theatre

On Dec. 31 at 8 p.m. Sunset Theatre is ringing in the new year with North Carolina's Bluegrass band Hindsight. Hindsight plays a variety of bluegrass that is fun for all ages.

Tickets are \$10 and are available at Monroe's Music and Silver Dollar Pawn in Ramseur.

Hurricane Jane's New Year's Eve Party

On Dec. 31 at 7 p.m., bar and grill Hurricane Jane's, located at 61 S Greensboro St, Liberty, will host a New Year's Eve event.

Hurricane Jane's is known for its array of dishes such as burgers, hot dogs and homemade specials. Residents can also expect singing, dancing, giveaways and party favors to bring in the new year with a bang.

For more information, visit

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On New Year's Eve, Sunset Theatre will be blasting with music from bluegrass band Hindsight. HINDSIGHT BLUEGRASS

Newsmaker

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Randolph County.

"I wanted to bring it here, not only because this spreads their organization to a wider range of schools and communities, but if we start with Wheatmore, it could be in other schools in the county," Tuggle said.

The state office is located in Charlotte, but other offices are in Maryland, Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, The Rocky Mountains and Washington, D.C. Tuggle admired the group's efforts to provide different programs for their children. Since 2012, the organization has served children ages five to 21.

Programs include dream experiences, where the team creates a multi-day activity customized to the child's favorite athlete, team or sporting event. In addition, Day Dreams serve larger groups of children at in-person sporting events.

The team also provides dream boxes for children currently in ongoing medical treatment. Each box is filled with specific sport-themed gifts, personalized for each child.

The organization wants to create a lasting impression on these children. Through a box of goodies or meeting their favorite athlete, people such as Caleb Hill can say their dream came true.

Caleb Hill: A dream come true

In Randolph County, a dream was brought to Caleb Hill, a 21-year-old with Trisomy 21, a common form of Down Syndrome and Grave's disease.

Hill likes sports, especially baseball and basketball. He played baseball for the Miracle League of High Point for 10 years, but his favorite sport has always been football.

His mother, Teresa Hill, said he wanted to play in high school but never got the opportunity. However, he was chosen to be team manager his senior year at Wheatmore, which he loved because he was on the field.

"Tim Tebow being the ballplayer he is



Caleb Hill will never forget his interactions with Tim Tebow. He looks up to Tebow for his faith and generosity. TERESA HILL

and being so bold and passionate with his faith and love for Jesus, that's what made Caleb want to meet him," Hill said. "Caleb is very bold about his faith and love for Jesus. He is very passionate about both."

When Caleb heard he would meet Tebow, he was shocked but ready to go.

Hill said the dream started with Tuggle's mother and assistant principal of the school.

The assistant principal called Hill about wanting to send an application to the foundation to see if Wheatmore could be chosen as a dream school. She told Hill that she wanted to nominate

Caleb as a recipient.

Once Wheatmore and Caleb were chosen, the organization connected with The Tim Tebow Foundation (TTF) to submit Caleb as a recipient to become part of the W15H family. This program works with children with life-threatening illnesses.

"DO3 is absolutely amazing in what they are doing for our kids. It gives our kids the confidence that no matter the circumstances, anything is possible," Hill said. "Our kids have goals and dreams just like everyone else. And even though there may be some limitations, DO3 makes it possible for our kids to be front and center and granted a chance of a lifetime."

Caleb and his mother are honored to have been granted this opportunity. According to Hill, Caleb had been a part of the Wheatmore family for four years and this journey is another moment with the school.

"The people we've met, friends we've made, relationships that will last a lifetime. Being part of the DO3 family and the Tim Tebow Foundation. These things are priceless," Hill said.

Hill thanks Tuggle for wanting to bring joy and excitement to Caleb. Hill said Caleb is very lucky to have a caring school body and community. She further believes Tuggle has the biggest heart out of anyone she's met.

"He is so genuine, full of love and kindness that just shines through him. Jake, along with the other children of the Jr. Dream team, always treated Caleb just like he was a part of them," Hill said. "Jake is one of those people who will always stand up and fight, and defend for those who may not be able to fight for themselves."

Hill believes Tuggle looks at the abilities, instead of the disability. Tuggle is the type to not only bring a smile with him but also cause someone to smile before he leaves.

Petruce Jean-Charles is a Government Watchdog Reporter. They are interested in what's going on in the community and are open to tips on people, businesses and issues. Contact Petruce at pjeancharles@gannett.com and follow @PetruceKetsia on Twitter.