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CITIZEN TIMES

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Speakers: Border Patrol in NC to create fear

Lynn Bonner
NC Newline

A daycare center east of downtown Durham went on lockdown late Tuesday morning when federal immigration agents were spotted in the parking lot.

Staff at All My Children Childcare on Angier Avenue locked the doors, put up

signs saying agents could not enter, and called parents to tell them not to pick up their children.

Staff tried to shield the children from the disruption and fear that gripped Durham and other cities in the Triangle when U.S. Border Patrol agents arrived Tuesday and began apprehending people.

“We did not want them to be aware of what was going on outside,” said Elisha Muhammad, the childcare’s regional director. “It was very scary for not just me as a childcare provider, but for my staff that take care of these kids every day,” said Muhammad, who described the daycare’s children as mostly Black and brown.

Muhammad spoke at a news conference Tuesday evening organized by the immigrant rights group Siembra NC and attended by elected officials and clergy.

The aim of the Border Patrol operation is to instill fear, speakers said. The Trump administration has sent federal

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WORD FROM THE SMOKIES



Rhiannon Skye Tafoya keeps a variety of papers of various textures, weights and colors on hand to bring her visions to life. PROVIDED BY HOLLY KAYS, COURTESY OF SMOKIES LIFE

Cherokee artist weaves strands of place, culture

Holly Kays
For Asheville Citizen Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

In October 2019, Rhiannon Skye Tafoya was a year out of her master’s program and excited to begin an art residency at the Women’s Studio Workshop in Rosendale, New York. Tafoya, a member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and Santa Clara Pueblo, planned to use her time there to create an artist book.

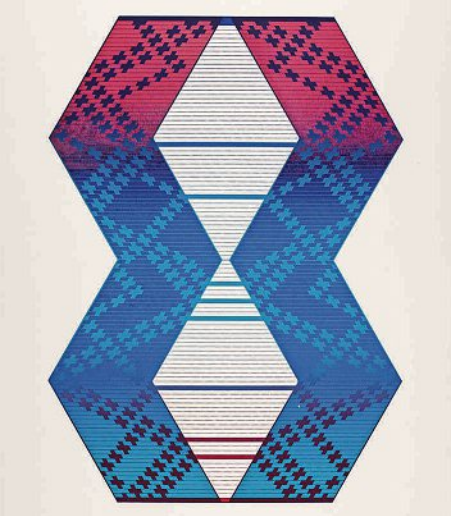
Her vision would mimic a basket design and honor her maternal grandmother, Martha Reed-Bark, who was an EBCI member and accomplished basketmaker. But shortly after she arrived in Rosendale, Tafoya discovered she was pregnant—and that changed everything.

“I started making it differently,” she said. The book’s design shifted, and so did the poetry that sits inside the basket it forms.

“The writing was very heavy toward lineage and seeing my granny and figuring out, ‘How do I pass on her values to my kid to make sure that they’re a Cherokee-strong person too?’” Tafoya said. “That book almost felt like it was gifted to me from my granny.”

It was a gift that transformed Tafoya’s career. Tafoya, 36, had been printmaking for years before she created *Ul’nigid’*—Cherokee for “strength”—but “nothing was sticking.” Every month, she struggled to keep making art while still covering her basic needs. *Ul’nigid’* didn’t sell well at first, but once

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The 2021 piece “Rhythmic” was created using woven, screen-printed paper. PROVIDED BY RHIANNON SKYE TAFOYA

Ukraine plan draws guarded response

Proposal calls for major concessions from Kyiv

Francesca Chambers
and Kim Hjelmgaard
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and a senior Russian official offered guarded reactions to President Donald Trump’s proposal to end Moscow’s war in Ukraine.

The 28-point plan would require Zelenskyy’s government to make significant concessions, crossing what Ukraine has previously and repeatedly characterized as red lines. It would recognize Crimea and other areas in eastern Ukraine as Russian, bar Ukraine from joining NATO and prohibit either country from using military force against the other once the plan is agreed upon. Ukraine would have to give up land that Russian President Vladimir Putin’s military does not currently control.

Speaking in his nightly address on Nov. 20, Zelenskyy said that American military officials currently in Ukraine had presented “their vision” for securing a peace deal and that his country was carefully studying the proposals.

“From the first days of the war, we have upheld one very simple position: Ukraine needs peace. A real peace – one not broken by a third invasion,” Zelenskyy said, adding that he expected to speak with Trump in the coming days.

In Moscow, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov downplayed the initiative, saying it was not clear whether Zelenskyy’s administration was willing to negotiate with his country based on the Trump plan.

“Consultations are not currently under way,” Peskov wrote on his Telegram channel on Nov. 21. “There are contacts, of course, but there is no process that could be called consultations.”

Axios was the first to report on the proposal, which U.S. officials stressed was a preliminary document. It was presented to Zelenskyy in Ukraine by Army Secretary Dan Driscoll, whose visit was cast as a shake-up in the administration’s negotiating strategy as it sought to refresh negotiations to settle the war.

According to Trump’s plan, a copy

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MOUNTAINS

Pedestrian dead after Asheville semi-truck accident

George Fabe Russell
Hendersonville Times-News
USA TODAY NETWORK

A man is dead after being struck by a semi-truck on I-40 in West Asheville over the weekend. Daniel Gardner, 44, was killed while on foot on I-40, at around 11 a.m. Nov. 16, according to a Nov. 19 Asheville Police Department news release.

He walked into the westbound lanes near Exit 44, which is at the junction of U.S. 19, southwest of Sulphur Springs and northeast of Enka, the release said. Gardner was taken to Mission Hospital where he died from his injuries, the release said. There have been more than a dozen traffic deaths in Asheville this year alone, the Citizen Times previously reported. The driver remained at the scene after the accident

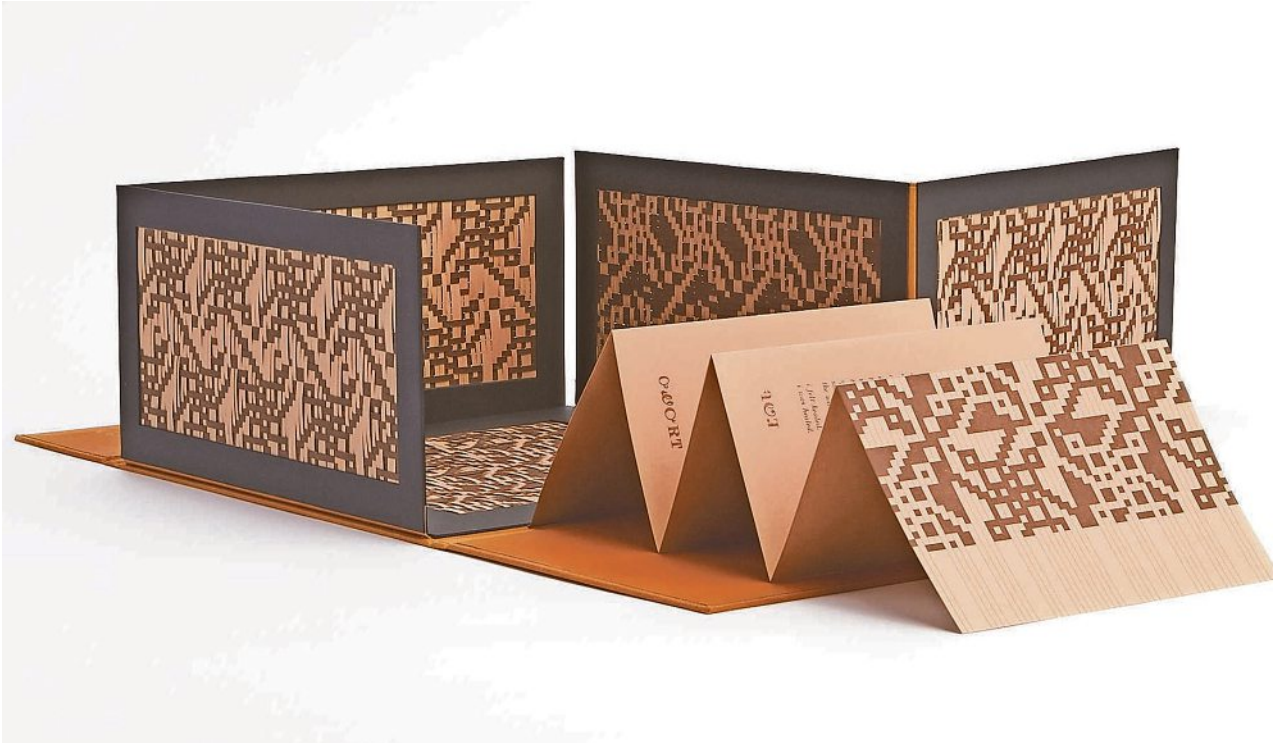
and police and the Buncombe County District Attorney’s Office decided not to file charges against them, the release said. The police investigation is ongoing. *George Fabe Russell is the Henderson County Reporter for the Hendersonville Times-News. Tips, questions, comments? Email him at GFRussell@gannett.com.*

Artist

Continued from Page 1A

the initial panic of COVID-19 subsided, “everyone just started buying it,” including, in 2022, the Museum of the Cherokee People on the EBCI’s Qualla Boundary. For the first time in a long time, Tafoya’s finances felt stable. “It’s been a really good journey since 2019,” she said. Art is central to Tafoya’s earliest memories, her artistic development continually encouraged and inspired by her family and the land that birthed them all. Artistry ran in the family; her grandmother, father, brother, and cousins all had their own artistic endeavors, ranging from painting and drawing to woodcarving and pottery. But when she was young, Tafoya never saw art as her future. A runner on her high school’s cross-country team, she planned on a career in sports medicine. However, shortly after starting college she discovered that science was not her strong suit. She failed out of the program and changed schools, and that’s when she got interested in painting. Tafoya took her newfound passion to the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where she found a discipline that enthralled her still—printmaking. “There’s so much to investigate,” she said. “There’s always layers. There’s always textures. There’s colors. There’s just a vast amount of ways to make a print.” But for several years after graduating from art school, Tafoya wasn’t making art at all. She was “just trying to figure out how to make a living.” She began working retail for Nike and later moved to Portland, Oregon, hoping to embark on a design career with the company. “It didn’t work out, and thankfully it didn’t,” she said. Instead, she enrolled in the master of fine arts program at Pacific Northwest College of Art, earning a print media degree in 2018. In addition to honing her printmaking and book-art skills, the program introduced her to letterpress printing. She’d never known about that medium before, but now it’s the biggest part of her practice.

“Everything is so intricate in the whole process,” she said. “You have to learn it in order to do it, and that’s what’s beautiful about it. There’s always that connection of learning from someone and then teaching someone else, and the same with basketry. That’s how you make baskets. You have to know your materials before you can actually make something.” Basketmaking is intrinsic to Cherokee culture, and to many other Native cultures throughout North America. Each tribe has its own traditions, its own process, its own materials. And the basket—the artistry of it, the usefulness of it, the heritage of it—represents something special to Tafoya. “I like that there’s a history that’s within it, the way that cutting a tree isn’t just to cut a tree,” she said. “There’s so much knowledge in understanding why that tree is going to make a good basket.” In this way, Tafoya sees parallels between the basketmaking process in her work as a printmaker and paper weaver. “I’ve been thinking about paper weaving as an analogy for the past couple years,” she said, pondering how the process of working in different print shops and using the unique metal ornaments available at each is similar to the way a basketmaker must visit a specific landscape to gather materials for weaving or dying. The selection of paper and ink is akin to dyeing. Then, like a basketmaker does, she takes all her materials home and begins to process them, cutting them to size and weaving them together. In every piece Tafoya creates, her Cherokee culture—and the Great Smoky Mountains region where it flourishes—shines through. But it’s a fine line, she says, between expressing her cultural identity and exploiting it. She works hard to stay on the right side of that divide. Tafoya has been learning about basketry for more than three years now, and last fall she embarked on a formal apprenticeship funded by a North




The artist book *Ul’nigid*, published in 2019, launched Tafoya’s contemporary art career. It has a moveable structure that, when opened fully, mimics a basket. Inside the basket is an accordion-fold pamphlet with five letterpress-printed poems. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY WOMEN’S STUDIO WORKSHOP

Carolina Arts Council grant. Though the grant has been completed, the mentorship will continue for as long as possible. Tafoya’s prints and weavings are so heavily influenced by basket motifs that she would “feel like a fraud” if she wasn’t making baskets at the same time. But unlike her contemporary art, the baskets are not for sale. Her grandmother earned her living through basketry, and few of her pieces remain with the family—a point of sadness for Tafoya. “My baskets are only going to be gifts,” she said. “They’re only going to be within my family, so that no one’s looking for my baskets later on in life and cannot find them.” These days, Tafoya is staying busy with a bevy of contemporary art projects. In June, she completed her second artist book for Women’s Studio Workshop, *Relational Sentience*, about her relationship to four specific natural dyes. A LIFT award from Native Arts + Cultures Foundation will fund creation of a third book, to be completed by August 2026. This fall, Tafoya did a two-person show at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center and a solo show at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tennessee, where she also curated a show. Over the summer, she completed an artist fellowship and residency at Forge Project in New York and taught a weeklong class at Shakarag Workshops in Sewanee, Tennessee. Between her apprenticeship and her flourishing contemporary art career, Tafoya stays busy. But perhaps her most important role, she said, is as a wife and mother. Her son, Otis, now five, fueled the creative muse that made her first book so successful, and in a way she’s indebted to him for the career she now has. But with success comes sacrifice. She completed nine different artist residencies in 2022 and 2023 in locations ranging from Marshall, North Carolina, to Halden, Norway. All that travel was “really, really hard” for the entire family, and she made a commitment to stay home much more in 2024 and 2025. “Staying relevant in your field and prioritizing your family and your career is such a hard thing to balance, and I understand that there’s not really a balance,” she said. Instead, there are just choices, and she believes it’s important to talk about those challenges. “There’s a lot of different things that you have to figure out for yourself, and no one is telling you how to do them.” But that independence is also what Tafoya loves about life as an artist. She cherishes “having the freedom to do what I want, when I want, not having to answer to anybody,” and she does her best work in her home studio, up a little-traveled road in Cherokee’s Wolfstown community, nestled at the foot of the Plott



Tafoya works on a print during her 2019 residency at the Women’s Studio Workshop.

Balsam Mountains. “I’m always looking for the next opportunity,” she said. *Learn more about Tafoya and how to purchase her work at SkyeTafoya.com . An earlier version of this story was originally published in the spring 2025 issue of Smokies Life Journal, a twice-yearly magazine that is the primary benefit of joining Smokies Life. To read more stories like this while supporting Great Smoky Mountains National Park, visit SmokiesLife.org/Membership and become a Park Keeper. Holly Kays is the lead writer for the 29,000-member Smokies Life, a nonprofit dedicated to supporting the scientific, historical, and interpretive activities of Great Smoky Mountains National Park by providing educational products and services such as this column. Reach her at hollyk@smokieslife.org.*



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