



JEFF TAYLOR/THE WINCHESTER STAR

Kisha Brown, mother of Kansas City Chiefs defensive back Nazeeh Johnson, a 2016 Millbrook High School graduate, walks with her son Jihad Brown, a Millbrook sophomore, during a Walk the Halls event for Johnson's family members at the high school Thursday to honor and celebrate his appearance in the Super Bowl on Sunday.

'Amazing feeling'

Millbrook High School honors Johnson and his family in advance of Super Bowl

By ROBERT NIEDZWIECKI The Winchester Star

WINCHESTER — Less than two weeks before Nazeeh Johnson was selected in the seventh round of the National Football League draft by the Kansas City Chiefs in April of 2022, he was at Millbrook High School, lifting weights and sharing words of wisdom with the school's football players. Millbrook will clearly always have a special place in the heart of Johnson, who graduated from the Frederick County school in 2016. On Thursday, Millbrook's faculty and its 1,459 students showed just how much love they have for him. Millbrook held a Walk the Halls recognition for more than a dozen family and friends of Johnson in

advance of the 24-year-old's appearance in Super Bowl LVII on Sunday against the Philadelphia Eagles at State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Arizona. Johnson was drafted as a defensive back with the Chiefs but has made his mark on special teams this year with nine tackles, including eight tackles in the last seven games. Johnson is the first player in Millbrook's 20-year history to participate in the NFL. Among the family members of Johnson who were present on Thursday were his parents Kisha Brown and Brian Brown of Winchester. Just before they walked the halls lined with applauding students and faculty, they expressed appreciation for

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JEFF TAYLOR/THE WINCHESTER STAR

Millbrook High School students cheer the family members of Kansas City Chiefs defensive back Nazeeh Johnson on Thursday during a Walk the Halls recognition event before Johnson's Super Bowl appearance on Sunday. Johnson graduated from Millbrook High School in 2016.

U.S.: China balloon could collect intelligence signals

By MATTHEW LEE and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The China balloon shot down by the U.S. was equipped to detect and collect intelligence signals as part of a huge, military-linked aerial surveillance program that targeted more than 40 countries, the Biden administration declared Thursday, citing imagery from American U-2 spy planes.

A fleet of balloons operates under the direction of the People's Liberation Army and is used specifically for spying, outfitted with high-tech equipment designed to gather sensitive information from targets across the globe, the U.S. said. Similar balloons have sailed over five continents, according to the administration.

A statement from a senior State Department official offered the most detail to date linking China's military to the balloon that was shot down by the U.S. last weekend over the Atlantic Ocean. The public details outlining the program's scope and capabilities were meant to refute China's persistent denials that the balloon was used for spying, including a claim Thursday that U.S. accusations about the balloon amount to "information warfare."

On Capitol Hill, the House voted unanimously to condemn China for a "brazen violation" of U.S. sovereignty and efforts to "deceive the international community through false claims about its intelligence collection campaigns." Republicans have criticized President Joe Biden for not acting sooner to down the balloon, but both parties' lawmakers came together on the vote, 419-0.

In Beijing, before the U.S. offered its new information,

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U.S., states weigh restrictions on foreign ownership of domestic farmland after Chinese balloon | A8

Pasta plant celebrates 30 years of feeding the nation



BRIAN BREHM/THE WINCHESTER STAR

Executives from 8th Avenue Food and Provisions' pasta manufacturing plant — Vice President of Pasta Jeff Schryver (from left), Human Resources Manager Betsy Hyson and Plant Manager Richard DeHaven — are seen Thursday afternoon inside the plant at 300 Park Center Drive. The production facility is celebrating its 30th year of operations.

By BRIAN BREHM The Winchester Star

WINCHESTER — Just outside of Winchester, tucked behind the Northwestern Regional Adult Detention Center, a massive production facility has been churning out delicious food for 30 years. Many residents of the Northern Shenandoah Valley don't even know the plant exists, but there's a 99.9% chance you've eaten what it has been making 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for the past three decades. "In the last 30 years, we've made over 5 billion pounds of pasta," company executive Jeff Schryver said on Thursday. The facility we're speaking of is a pasta manufacturing plant owned and operated by 8th Avenue Food and Provisions of Fenton, Missouri. You may not have heard of the company, but you certainly know its premier pasta brand, Ronzoni, which is the second most

In the last 30 years, we've made over 5 billion pounds of pasta.

— Jeff Schryver vice president of pasta, 8th Avenue Food and Provisions

popular dried pasta in the United States. Even if you don't eat Ronzoni products, there's still an excellent chance you've sampled the Winchester manufacturing facility's private-label pastas. That's because it also produces the store-brand pastas sold at major grocery store chains including Giant, Martin's, Food Lion, Kroger, Walmart, Publix and Aldi. "We feed the country," Schryver said. "It gives me great satisfaction to be part of that along with all the

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ON WINCHESTERSTAR.COM

So what are you thinking about? Let us know. Comment on stories or opinions you read in today's newspaper after each item on The Star's web page.



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TODAY'S FORECAST

Mostly sunny. West wind around 14 mph, with gusts as high as 21 mph. Mostly sunny Saturday. Chance of rain Sunday.

54 HIGH

Full report A14

33 LOW

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Precipitation

Month	2023	2022	Avg.
January	2.25	3.15	2.19
February	0.02*	2.45	2.47
March		3.53	3.42
April		4.94	3.17
May		8.50	3.82
June		6.45	3.66
July		4.01	3.59
August		5.85	3.23
September		9.05	3.91
October		1.19	2.94
November		3.43	3.15
December		2.60	2.47
Total	2.27*	55.15	38.02

\*Rainfall from the City of Winchester - Month to date

SUNRISE

7:10 a.m.

SUNSET

5:43 p.m.

Ultraviolet Index

0,1,2 minimal - 3,4 low - 5,6 moderate - 7,8,9 high - 10 up very high

Today's Outlook

TODAY

Mostly sunny.

West wind

around 14 mph.

54°

TONIGHT

Mostly cloudy.

Northwest wind

10 to 14 mph.

33°

Regional temperatures

OHIO

WVA.

PA.

KY.

TENN.

N.C.

Washington 64/52

Charlottesville 67/52

Richmond 68/55

Norfolk 71/59

Roanoke 64/48

Bristol 66/43

Across the country

	Highs/Lows
Anchorage	22/15
Atlanta	55/45
Boston	59/33
Chicago	34/20
Dallas	47/30
Honolulu	83/69
Los Angeles	78/48
New York	57/35

Winchester temperatures

	High	Low
Thursday	63	37
Year ago Thursday	54	23

Information from the National Weather Service and Weather Underground.

Map of the United States showing weather fronts and pressure systems. A high pressure system (H) is located in the Pacific Northwest, and a low pressure system (L) is located in the Northeast. Fronts are shown as lines with arrows indicating the direction of movement. A legend at the bottom identifies symbols for High, Low, Showers, Rain, T-storms, Flurries, Snow, and Ice.

# Johnson

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Millbrook’s recognition of their son. On social media, countless people in the Winchester community have posted about their pride in Johnson and extended their congratulations to him.

“It’s a humbling and amazing feeling,” Kisha said. “The fact that [Millbrook is] doing something like this when they don’t have to, it’s a blessing. It just shows that everybody is rooting for him as a hometown hero. It’s exciting.”

Josh Haymore began working at Millbrook as a math teacher and head football coach in the 2013-14 school year, when Johnson was a sophomore. Johnson earned All-Region and All-Conference honors on both defense and offense under Haymore, running for 1,093 yards and 19 touchdowns in the Pioneers’ shotgun wing-T attack as a senior. Johnson then enrolled at Marshall University as a preferred walk-on in 2016 and earned a scholarship two years later.

The day after the Chiefs beat the Cincinnati Bengals in the AFC Championship game on Jan. 29, Haymore suggested to Millbrook coordinator of student activities TJ Rohrbaugh and principal Joanne Altendorf that they do something to honor Johnson. In addition to the family recognition walk, Millbrook put together a video of various faculty members sharing their thoughts about Johnson, which was sent to him on Thursday. Haymore also was going to have Millbrook’s football team send Johnson a congratulatory video.

Haymore said Thursday that Johnson’s No. 22 Millbrook jersey will no longer be worn by any member of the football team and will eventually be hung on the wall outside the school’s Casey Gymnasium.

“We’re proud of him and his family,” Haymore said. “He just worked hard [to get where he is]. He didn’t want to disappoint anybody in his life. He just kept working and kept working and kept working.”

Kisha and Brian said Johnson’s care for other people is a big part of what makes him so special.

Kisha said when Nazeeh was growing up, it wasn’t always easy for the family financially. The family’s situation has improved as Kisha’s experience and skills as a nurse have grown over the years, but affording things like football gear for Johnson as a child took a lot of work. (Johnson has three younger siblings. His brother Trammell Anthony and sister Amari Anthony graduated from Millbrook — both played basketball, and Trammell also played football — in 2018. They excelled in those sports at Shenandoah University and Sienna College, respectively, and graduated last year. Brother Jihad Brown is a sophomore at Millbrook.)

Kisha said Nazeeh’s concern for his family’s well-being was so great that in his first year at Marshall, he suggested leaving to go to a junior college to save his parents money on tuition.

JEFF TAYLOR/THE WINCHESTER STAR

Brian Brown, father of Kansas City Chiefs defensive back Nazeeh Johnson, rallies the crowd during a Walk the Halls event at Millbrook High School on Thursday for family members of Johnson, who graduated from the school in 2016.

It’s a humbling and amazing feeling. The fact that [Millbrook is] doing something like this when they don’t have to, it’s a blessing. It just shows that everybody is rooting for him as a hometown hero. It’s exciting.

— Kisha Brown

Nazeeh Johnson’s mother

“He said, ‘I just want to make sure you guys are good at home. I’m worried about you guys,’” Brian said. “That’s just the type of the person he is. He was more concerned about us and his siblings than himself. He has a big heart and worries himself to death about family.”

Brian assured Johnson that he would be OK, and the family would be OK. Johnson eventually earned a full scholarship from Marshall in the spring of 2018.

He graduated with his bachelor’s degree from the Huntington, West Virginia, school in 2020, then played in the fall of 2020. (Marshall used a redshirt season on Johnson in 2016.) Because of the COVID pandemic that altered the college athletic landscape dramatically, the NCAA granted players an extra year of eligibility in 2021. Kisha said Johnson considered not taking advantage of that extra year so he could contribute financially to his family, whether it was a pro football player or with another career. One of the things Johnson considered was becoming a firefighter.

Again, his parents told him to stay and keep developing. And obviously, Johnson’s decision to stay at Marshall couldn’t have worked out any better. Marshall hired a new head coach, Charles Huff, in January of 2021, a man who Johnson felt connected to immediately. Johnson spent the next 16 months improving himself as a football player

and an athlete, which helped him become Millbrook’s first-ever NFL draft selection.

Kisha and Brian are grateful Johnson was drafted by Kansas City. The Chiefs selected five defensive backs in the draft, and the group that calls themselves “The Fab Five” has developed a close-knit, family-type bond. Kisha said the veterans on the team have also treated the rookies well.

“They go to someone’s house and watch games when they’re not playing, things like that,” Kisha said. “I’m hoping he’ll be there [with the Chiefs] for a long time.”

At the Super Bowl, Johnson’s wife Kinsley, brother Trammell and Johnson’s close friend PK Kier (a former Millbrook and University of Virginia running back) will be in attendance. Kier lives in Florida and was able to watch Johnson’s NFL debut in October in Tampa, Fla., in person. It will be the first time Trammell has seen Johnson play live with Kansas City.

Kisha and Brian will not be at the Super Bowl, but they were part of a group of more than 10 family members at the AFC Championship game in Kansas City, Missouri. They got to be on the field and celebrate with Nazeeh in front of the Chiefs’ fans, which is something they won’t forget. “That’s why I was OK with not going to the Super Bowl, because I knew it would be a great atmosphere,” Kisha said.

Kisha and Brian will hold a party at 81 Bar & Grill in Winchester to watch the game at 6:30 p.m. Sunday on FOX. Kisha said anyone who wants to celebrate with Johnson’s family and friends is welcome.

If Thursday is any guide, Millbrook fans will be cheering on Johnson in full force, wherever they are. Pioneers sophomore girls’ basketball standout Jaliah Jackson is Johnson’s cousin. She was decked out in Johnson’s No. 13 Chiefs jersey on Thursday. “[This event is] unbelievable,” said Jackson as her fellow students roared for her relatives. “It’s amazing. It’s crazy. He’s worth it. He’s worked for it.”

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BRIAN BREHM/THE WINCHESTER STAR

Some of the products manufactured at the 8th Avenue Food and Provisions pasta plant are displayed Thursday in a conference room at the facility at 300 Park Center Drive. The plant has produced more than 5 billion pounds of pasta since opening 30 years ago.

# Pasta

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folks on the production floor and administrative staff. It’s an awesome experience.”

The plant at 300 Park Center Drive was opened in February 1993 by The Hershey Companies, a Pennsylvania-based corporation best known for its chocolate candies. Hershey, through its New World Pasta division, operated the facility until 1999, when it sold New World to a group of investors who kept the name. Ownership later passed to Ebro Foods, then Riviana Foods, before 8th Avenue bought the business about two years ago.

If you need help keeping all that straight, ask Schryver. He has been at the pasta plant from Day 1, with his first job being in production. Today, he’s vice president of pasta for 8th Avenue.

“I started in 1992 when we were still building the factory,” said Schryver, one of seven people who have been with the Winchester pasta plant from the beginning. “I’ve been fortunate enough to see employees have little children who have now graduated from high school and college.”

Today, the facility offers 130 jobs to area residents and annually funnels tens of thousands of tax dollars into the coffers of Frederick County’s government.

“We’ve added one production line and modernized some of our equipment over the years, but for the most part, the equipment that was here when we opened is still running today,” Schryver said. “There’s still a high

demand for pasta. It’s a relatively inexpensive food staple for folks and we have not seen a slowdown since the [COVID-19] pandemic.”

Keeping the machinery in peak condition so it can crank out the simple yet tasty blend of water and semolina wheat flour is the responsibility of plant manager Richard DeHaven, who said routine maintenance is key.

“We have cycle downs that we rotate through to make sure the equipment is always where it should be,” DeHaven said. “And we have people who work very hard to keep it clean every day.”

“We also do regular equipment rebuilds throughout the year,” Schryver added. “There’s been a significant amount of capital put into the factory to keep the machinery up to standards.”

Plant management also strives to take care of their employees. To thank them for their service, a special open house for workers and their loved ones will be held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Feb. 18.

“We want to give families the opportunity to see what their significant others do on a day-to-day basis,” Schryver said. “We did an open house for our 25th anniversary and it was a really big, fun hit for our employees. ... Thirty years is pretty special.”

The pasta making at 300 Park Center Drive never stops, which means production won’t pause for the open house. Regardless, DeHaven said he’ll make sure

all employees on shift Feb. 18 will get to step away from their stations and have fun with their loved ones, even if that means he has to get on the manufacturing line himself.

“Whatever it takes,” he said, adding that he’ll also be leading tours of the factory.

Next weekend’s open house will also celebrate the vendors whose products and services keep the plant running, and corporate executives from 8th Avenue will be traveling to Winchester to mingle with event attendees.

“We’re also giving back to the community in the form of monetary and food donations,” Schryver said, noting that food will be given to the Congregational Community Action Project (CCAP) and Bright Futures Frederick/Winchester, and checks will be presented to The Laurel Center, the Winchester Rescue Mission and the Winchester Salvation Army.

While the open house is exclusively for employees, vendors and their family members, that doesn’t mean you can’t join in future company celebrations. Human Resources Manager Betsy Hyson said the pasta plant is currently hiring. To see what jobs are available and to apply, visit [8ave.com](https://8ave.com).

When asked if she would like to find a few more employees like Schryver who will stick around for 30 years or more, Hyson smiled and said: “That’s our goal.”

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# Balloon

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Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning repeated her nation’s insistence that the large unmanned balloon was a civilian meteorological airship that had blown off course and that the U.S. had “overreacted” by shooting it down.

“It is irresponsible,” Mao said. The latest accusations, she said, “may be part of the U.S. side’s information warfare against China.”

Underscoring the tensions, China’s defense minister refused to take a phone call from Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to discuss the balloon issue on Saturday, the Pentagon said. Secretary of State Antony Blinken canceled a planned weekend trip to Beijing.

The U.S. flatly contradicted China’s version of events, saying that imagery of the balloon collected by American U-2 spy planes as it crossed the coun-

try showed that it was “capable of conducting signals intelligence collection” with multiple antennas and other equipment designed to upload sensitive information and solar panels to power them.

Jedidiah Royal, the U.S. assistant defense secretary for the Indo-Pacific, told a Senate Appropriations subcommittee that the military has “some very good guesses” about what intelligence China was seeking. More information was expected to be provided in a classified setting.

Senior FBI officials who briefed reporters on the condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the bureau said just a few pieces of the balloon had arrived at the FBI’s Quantico, Virginia, lab for investigation. So far, investigators have parts of the balloon canopy, wiring, and what one official called “a very small amount of electronics.” The official said it was “very early

for us to assess what the intent was and how the device was operating.”

According to two U.S. officials, the balloon recovery efforts were temporarily suspended on Thursday due to high seas. They said some balloon debris was intact on the ocean floor and divers had recovered potentially high-value equipment over the past day and a half.

Much of the debris is concentrated in two separate sections of an area that’s 15 football fields long and 15 football fields across, according to the officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the collection process.

The State Department official, providing details to reporters by email, also on condition of anonymity, said an analysis of the balloon debris was “inconsistent” with China’s explanation that it was a weather balloon that went off course.