

# HENRY COUNTY ENTERPRISE

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### Fitzgibbons reflects on fire that killed his wife, destroyed their home



Tom Fitzgibbons talks about the Feb. 22 fire in which his wife died and his family's home was destroyed.

By Ginny Wray

A month after his wife died in a fire that destroyed their home, Tom Fitzgibbons is back at work as executive director of King's Grant Retirement Community, and he is getting into a daily routine, albeit a new one, he said.

But his pain is not far away. His voice cracks and his eyes tear up when he recalls the day his wife, Lynn, died.

And he finds the house he is calling home for now is quiet, very quiet, in the evenings.

"The silence is deafening," Fitzgibbons said in a recent interview. "She used to wake

me up in the middle of the night to get her cheese toast."

Now, he would welcome that, he added.

Fitzgibbons' wife, Lynn, died Feb. 22 from smoke inhalation, according to the Martinsville Fire Department. The accidental blaze began in an upstairs bedroom of the couple's home on Country Club Drive in Martinsville as a result of "smoking exacerbated through the use of medical oxygen," the department news release stated.

"Smoking is a horrible habit. Smoking and oxygen are deadly," said Tom Fitzgibbons. "It just takes a few

seconds" for the oxygen to ignite and is why "No Smoking" signs are posted around health care facilities where oxygen is in use.

His wife had been on oxygen for 2 1/2 years, and she knew the dangers, Fitzgibbons said. But she would smoke a cigarette and then put her oxygen device back on, he said.

.....

Lynn Fitzgibbons, 63, was a 43-year veteran with the Henry County Schools who had a reputation for being a respected educator and a friend to students. Technically, she retired 10 years

(See Fire p. 5)

## Preserving the past by honoring graves



Desmond Kendrick, the archivist for Henry and Pittsylvania counties, points to an old grave off Irisburg Road in Henry County. Some old graves, like this one, are readily apparent, but others are visible only to the trained eye.



Lawrence Mitchell Jr.'s interest in old cemeteries combines his experience in archaeology, his desire to see the cemeteries cared for and his deep roots in the area.

### Old graves, cemeteries may hold keys to family histories

By Ginny Wray

An old cemetery is more than the final resting place for those buried there. For Desmond Kendrick, it is a key to the past.

"They are the records you start with. Sometimes they are the only record we have" of a family, said Kendrick, the archivist for Henry and Pittsylvania counties.

As a child, Kendrick became intrigued by old cemeteries when he spent time in Bates Store, which was operated by his grandparents, and heard people talk about who was buried where.

So it was only natural that he would accompany the late local historians Richard Gravely and O.E. Pilson as they traveled throughout the area and recorded the area's history. He learned from their insight.

For instance, he recalled driving with Gravely on the Iriswood Road and Gravely pointing out the gravesite of Jessee Wooten, a sheriff in Henry County in the 1800s.

Today, to the untrained eye, the location is a wooded area with a thick carpet of leaves.

But Kendrick sees depressions in the ground and stones that he said mark the locations of more than 100 graves of adults and children. Most headstones face east, he said, but the slaves' graves were placed in a different direction.

There are few tombstones with inscriptions in the cemetery. However, one for A.F. Wooten leads Kendrick to agree with Gravely that the sheriff is buried there. A.F. Wooten was married to William Wooten, the son of Jessee. She died on Nov. 17, 1883, according to her tombstone.

Another headstone there marks the grave of a woman who was born in 1865 and died in 1938. Her last name was Fontaine, but that is the only readable information. Another stone marks "The deth (sic) of B.R. Dec. 7, 1918."

Kendrick plans to make a map of

(See Kendrick p. 4)

### Mitchell honored for his work on African-American cemeteries

Lawrence Mitchell Jr.'s interest in old cemeteries combines his experience in archaeology, his desire to see the cemeteries cared for and his deep roots in the area.

As a result of that interest and a lot of legwork, three Martinsville cemeteries for African-American residents have been deemed historically significant.

Mitchell's efforts were recognized by Martinsville City Council on March 26 when it approved a proclamation thanking Mitchell "for his dedication and service, and for making this historic achievement a reality."

The bill would not have been possible without the efforts of Mitchell, "who pursued the recognition of these graves and who personally visited each cemetery to identify every eligible grave, cooperated with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources in finalizing the bill, and performed much of this work outside in inhospitable wintry weather," the proclamation states.

House Bill 2406 was approved in February to recognize the Peoples, Matthews and Smith Street cemeteries in Martinsville.

The Matthews Cemetery is off Roundabout Road, the Peoples Cemetery is off Second Street and the Smith Street Cemetery is near Albert Harris Elementary School.

All three cemeteries contain the graves of Africa-American people interred before 1900. But to be eligible for state funds of \$5 per grave for maintenance, they also must have headstones.

Only four local graves met the two criteria, so the available funds would total only \$20, according to Mitchell and Martinsville City Councilman Danny Turner, who has worked with Mitchell on the old cemeteries.

Mitchell said at this point, the bill is more about recognizing the cemeteries as historically significant than the money.

"The \$5 is like a payment to me-

(See Mitchell p. 4)

## CCAT building on tap to open for business in early summer

The Commonwealth Centre for Advanced Training (CCAT) likely will be completed in June or July.

That is the forecast of Henry County Administrator Tim Hall and Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corp. President/CEO Mark Heath. They spoke during a March 21 tour of the construction site for past and present members of the Harvest board, the foundation staff and guests.

When completed, the 25,889-square-foot, \$6.75 million CCAT building in the Com-

monwealth Crossing Business Centre (CCBC) will provide space for an industry locating there to recruit and hire its workforce and then train those employees on its own equipment that can be moved into CCAT and its high bay training space.

Once a company's permanent facility is constructed in CCBC, it will move its equipment out of CCAT to make room for the next industry.

The tour helped Harvest President Allyson Rothrock see the future of Commonwealth

Crossing.

"To be on the site and see the (CCAT) structure itself and see Press Glass coming to fruition (next to CCAT) is very exciting to me. I can almost see students and future workers in place at CCAT," she said after the tour. "To ride to Lot 4 (a graded lot nearby in Commonwealth Crossing), I could visualize what it can hold and what the future can be. ... I'm just thrilled."

The CCAT building, which is visible from U.S. 220 South, is under roof. (On the right

(See CCAT p. 5)



Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corp. President/CEO Mark Heath (right) and Henry County Administrator Tim Hall (second from right) address Harvest Foundation board members, staff and guests during a tour of the Commonwealth Centre for Advanced Training (CCAT) building. They are shown in the high bay area of the facility.

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# Trail plan to head to city council

After winning the support of the Henry County Board of Supervisors, the Martinsville-Henry County Rivers and Trails Recreational Use Plan will head to Martinsville City Council later this month.

The 80-page report was unanimously endorsed by the Henry County Board of Supervisors on March 26. It has been presented to the Martinsville Planning Commission, which will make a recommendation on it to Martinsville City Council.

Brian Williams, program manager of the Dan River Basin Association (DRBA), said he is scheduled to present the plan to city council on April 23.

The Martinsville-Henry County Rivers and Trails Recreational Use Plan is an update of the plan created in 2008. It was prepared by the DRBA in partnership with Henry County and Martinsville and was funded by the Harvest Foundation.

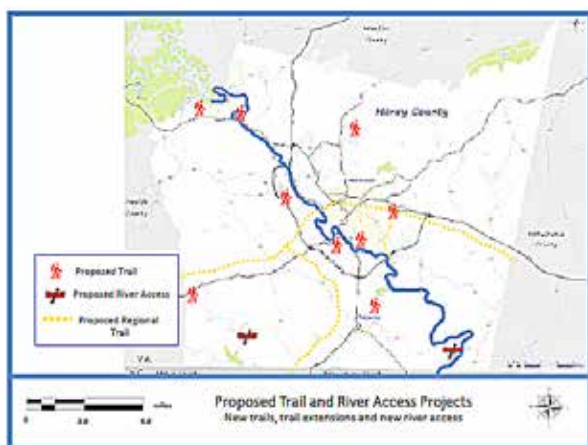
The original plan focused on implementing trail and river access projects when opportunities arose, Williams said. The updated version builds on that by adding to existing projects and making

connections. It also includes a trails plan for the Small Towns Collaborative in the Fieldale-Bassett area.

“A master plan for outdoor recreational amenities is a tangible statement of how a community values its natural resources, how it will protect and utilize them, and what is required to get there,” Williams wrote in an email. “It is a roadmap to developing outdoor infrastructure. It is also required in many cases to have some type of plan developed when applying for funding for blueway and greenways development.”

Following is a list of proposed new trails, river access points and additional outdoor recreational enhancements in the plan:

- Dick and Willie Passage
- Lanier Farms Connector Trail
- Jones Creek Connector Trail
- Fisher Farm Park / Marrowbone Creek Trails
- Beaver Creek Reservoir Lakeshore Trail
- Spencer Penn Trail Project
- Fieldale Connector Trail and Steps
- Doe Run — Marshland trail
- Mayo River State Park



This map shows proposed trails in the updated Martinsville-Henry County Rivers and Trails Recreational Use Plan.

- Philpott Lake trails
- Bassett Trout Park Concept
- Smith River Blueway
- Improvements and additions to current assets

William stated in an email that generalized maps of possible project locations and routes were developed, but the first steps would be talking with property owners and finding funding.

“Our primary hope is people will get involved but will not be put off by seeing a line on a map. We really want to avoid anyone thinking that these project proposals are a done deal and they have no say in them. That is not true. Projects on private property and any project utilizing county or city funding must meet with public approval so

that is very important to us. We want complete transparency on any possible project,” he stated.

The plan includes a summary of the projects, improvements and additions. The highest priority, for projects ready or under development, is placed on the Dick and Willie Passage Rail Trail; Small Towns Collaborative Trail connector Bassett to Fieldale; Fisher Farm Park/Marrowbone Creek Trails; Smith River Blueway; Uptown Connector Spur Trail restroom signs; Smith River Sports Complex connection to Dick and Willie; Smith River access ramp at Morgan Ford.

Listed at medium priority level, meaning they are feasible but need more research, are the Fieldale Trail

Extension; Jones Creek Connector Trail; Beaver Creek Reservoir Lakeshore Trails (Patrick Henry Community College and Rock Ridge); Textile Heritage Trail extension and bridge; Bassett Trout Park; Lauren Mountain Preserve interpretive signs and benches; Chatham Park trail extensions; Fieldale Connector Trail and steps; Mitchell Bridge River Access improvements.

Low level priority projects are feasible but funding is needed. They are Dick and Willie extension to Fieldale Trail via Smith River Bridge; Lanier Farms trail and river access; Jones Creek Connector Trail and Pond Loop; Mayo River State Park; Spencer Penn Trail Project; Gravelly Nature Preserve kiosk and sign replacement; Smith River Paw Path additions and connection to the Dick and Willie; Doe Run Park rework signage/water quality station; Great Road River Access handicap dock and boardwalk; Fieldale River Access rework steps; J. Frank Wilson Park trail signage.

Economic goals of the plan, such as attracting new business and tourists and retain-

ing existing business; environmental goals, including protection of waterways, preservation of green space and improved habitat; and health goals, such as improved community health, perceived mental health and increased citizen active lifestyle also are part of the plan.

It notes that the Smith River Trail System is based upon the development of small localized trails in communities across the county which will connect where possible to larger spines or trunk trails. That ensures that, at a minimum, each area would be in relatively close proximity to at least one major trail system.

It also states that other trails may, in time, branch off from the central spines.

There is no timeline for the projects or specifics on how the work would be funded. Funding sources could include grants, capital campaigns, in-kind donations, monetary donations and government funding, the plan states.

Implementing the proposed projects will require the help of local, regional and statewide partners and the support of residents,

(See Plan p. 9)

## DRBA honors Paul Johnson with group's highest 'Spirit' award

Since 2002, Paul Johnson has helped create and grow the Dan River Basin Association. Recently, the association honored him with the Spirit of the Dan River Basin Award for “dedication, diligence and guidance in service to DRBA.”

Those are the words on the glass award presented to Johnson by DRBA Vice President Wayne Kirkpatrick at the Members Day Celebration held March 2 at the Chatham Community Center.

The award is not given every year, said Kirkpatrick, who noted that it recognizes someone who goes above and beyond volunteering for the organization.

Johnson, 65, of Fieldale, was on the DRBA



Paul Johnson (left) receives the Spirit of the Dan River Basin Award from DRBA Vice President Wayne Kirkpatrick at the Members Day Celebration in March.

board when the group started in 2002. Since then he has served 14 years on the board, including terms as vice president and secretary. He also served as chairman of the Outings Committee and arranged many if the organization's First

Saturday outings, and he did the DRBA newsletter, called Dan River Currents, for the group's early years.

Johnson said he was unaware that he would receive the spirit award and was stunned by it.

“As I understand

it, and I was not involved in the deliberations (to create the award), I think this is juxtaposed with the volunteer of the

(See Johnson p. 9)

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## Uranium ruling is awaited

The U.S. Supreme Court's ruling on a challenge to Virginia's ban on uranium mining could come at any time.

That is the expectation of Mark Sabath, senior attorney with the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) in Charlottesville, who gave an update on the court's consideration of the lawsuit challenging the ban at the Dan Riv-

er Basin Association's (DRBA) Members Day Celebration on March 2.

Virginia Uranium is seeking to mine the 119 million-pound uranium deposit near Coles Hill in Pittsylvania County.

The court's justices heard the case in November and “you never know” what they are thinking, said Sabath. He added that a ruling could come now or before the current court term ends in June.

Proponents of uranium mining cite its potential for job creation, an economic boost, energy independence and other issues, Sabath said. Opponents cite the possible exposure to radiation, water contamination, disturbed land and radioactive waste, he added. The suit also raises the issue of state versus federal powers over min-

ing, he said.

The SELC is supporting the state and its ban in the case, focusing on the contrast between the possible mining operation and the rest of Pittsylvania County and the possible environmental problems associated with mining, Sabath said.

If the court rules for Virginia Uranium it would not necessarily mean the ban would be eliminated, he said. The case could be sent back to district court, he added.

Also at the meeting, Nancy White was named Volunteer of the Year for.

White, of Stokes County, N.C., received the Volunteer of the Year award for her help with river clean-ups and for being a resource for DRBA on hydrology matters in

(See Uranium p. 9)

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# Kendrick

(cont. from page 1)



Pat Ross (left), director emeritus of the Bassett Historical Center, and Fran Snead, director of the center, go over records of early graves in Henry County.



These are among the old headstones local archivist Desmond Kendrick has located in this area. At left is the headstone for A.E. Wooten, the wife of William Wooten. William was the son of Jesse Wooten, a sheriff in Henry County in the 1800s. Next is a headstone in a slave cemetery at Sandy River. The next is the headstone for Mary Reynolds with an interesting epitaph, and the headstone for Jabej Gravely is on the right.

those graves, something he has done at other old cemeteries in the area. He refers to those records when people from throughout the nation contact him about locating a relative's grave.

There probably are thousands of old, abandoned graves in the area, Kendrick said. "I'll never find them all," he added.

But he does what he can when he hears about an old cemetery or people ask him about cemeteries they have heard of. For instance, several people contacted him recently after he posted pictures of old headstones on Facebook. Sometimes people's comments will give him clues of where to find a cemetery and/or gravesite.

Sometimes a cemetery was in a field and the current owners were not aware of it and bulldozed the land. Some are small cemeteries that people forget about, Kendrick said.

And there are cemeteries such as the one at Centenary Methodist Church in Irisburg that probably has more than 100 graves, he said. The church has burned and the cemetery now is in a wooded area. "You won't know it's there unless someone told you," he added.

Periwinkle also gives clues about graves. Kendrick said periwinkle grows differently in cemeteries, sometimes with black spots on the leaves.

Many people searching for the graves of their ancestors visit the Bassett Historical Center, according to Pat Ross of the center. One

of the most unusual cases she can remember involved the grave of a man who was buried in the cemetery at the area's first Episcopal Church across from where the Martinsville Municipal Building now stands.

When the Episcopal Church constructed a larger building at its present site on Church Street, the graves were moved, Ross said. Many were buried around the perimeter of Oakwood Cemetery in Martinsville since there were no designated plots for them, she added.

Years later when the Georgia family of the man who had been buried at the church returned here to look for his grave, they there had no idea where he was. Finally, Ross said they found a small marker with his initials at the perimeter of Oakwood.

Kendrick said the oldest marked grave he has found probably was that of Gen. Joseph Martin, who died in 1808. It is on private property in Leatherwood with Martin's name inscribed in the soapstone marker.

The most unusual inscription he knows of is on the stone for his fourth grandmother's aunt, Mary Reynolds, who died in 1857 in her early 20s while giving birth to her seventh child. Kendrick said it reads: "Dear Mary left a mourning husband and six little children to weep and took one in her arms to sleep."

In addition to mapping the cemeteries, Kendrick cares for some, including those of Gen. Joseph

Martin, Maj. John Redd and John Salmons, one of the first justices in Henry County.

Caring for a grave may involve clearing brush, cleaning the stone and more. Stones can be cleaned with a mild detergent mixed with water and a soft brush or even a toothbrush, he said.

But, he warned, "the only safe thing to do with a headstone is leave it alone."

In a recent Facebook posting, Kendrick wrote about the grave of Henry Hundley, a slave born in Sandy River on the W.B. Hundley farm. Hundley died in 1926.

"I have cared for this marker for over 30 years. About 30 years ago, timber was cut on the property. I had to move the marker to a safe location so the timber company would not break the stone during their operation. For many years it lay flat on the ground. After the timber operation ceased, the marker was returned and reinstalled in its original location. This is the only tombstone marked grave of approximately 50 graves at this location," Kendrick wrote.

He especially enjoys learning about people such as Hundley, whom he calls "little people," with no disrespect.

"Little people like Henry Hundley helped make the history we have know," Kendrick said. "People know about the Globmans and the Pannills. They don't think about the little people who bought things from the Globmans" at the

family's department store in uptown Martinsville or wore sweatshirts produced by Pannill Knitting in textile mills here.

When he finds graves of Civil War veterans, he calls them his uncles.

"In my mind I adopt them," Kendrick said. "If you work on them long enough you feel a connection to them."

That connection keeps him caring for the graves.

"To me, it's more of a respect thing. Most little cemeteries are forgotten about. Growing up around Richard Gravely and that country store, it didn't matter if they were black or white. They were all family," he said of people in that area.

## FINDING HISTORY

The hunt for ancestors' graves can start with the online search services, Kendrick recommended. If possible, people should seek information from old family members and check records such as deeds and church cemetery lists, he said.

In Henry County, two volumes of cemeteries called "Follow the Periwinkle" were compiled in the 1970s by the Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society, headed by the late Dr. John Bing.

"If you want to find where a family member was buried prior to the mid-1970s, this is where you go," said Ross of the Bassett Historical Center.

The books list 250 cemeteries that the society could find and the people buried at each one, and Ross has

kept records of those found since then.

She also recommends the website findagrave.com.

"If you find a grave it usually has birth and death dates," she said. "It also may have a picture of the stone or marker, especially if they were military."

Newspaper obituaries can be helpful with information on someone's parents, other relatives and funeral and burial arrangements.

But, Ross cautioned, sometimes information leads to further searches. For instance, "many times they say they were buried in the old Smith cemetery. There are a lot of Smith cemeteries. You have to read who the parents were and what family it was to figure out which cemetery" has the grave.

In addition, O.E. Pilonson published two books on gravesites in Patrick County, called "Tombstone Inscriptions of the Cemeteries of Patrick County, Va." However, Ross warned again, road names and numbers have been changed since those books were written so further investigation may be needed.

These sources list many of the cemeteries but not all, Ross said, and finding the one where a particular person is buried can be involved. For instance, she said a map may have "cemetery" written on it, but the map may be old.

"There is a lot of information on it but you have to piece it together," she said. "It's a puzzle, and I love puzzles."

# Mitchell

(cont. from page 1)

morialize that particular grave, which memorialized the whole cemetery," Mitchell said.

He added that no one is in charge of maintaining the cemeteries so he is not sure how the state money would be handled.

Turner questioned if the city would become legally obligated to maintain the cemeteries, which would cost considerably more than the \$20 from the state. He also said it may be possible to amend the bill later to add graves of veterans from World War II or earlier or maybe those of people born before 1900, which would increase the state funding.

Mitchell is a native of Martinsville who has 12 relatives buried in a private plot next to the Peoples Cemetery. His oldest relative buried there is his great-grandmother Harper.

He grew up on Second Street in a home his father built in 1953, and Mitchell and his wife, Deborah, still live in that house. He played in the Peoples Cemetery area when he was a child, and today he walks there every morning.

In the years in between, he had a 25-year career with the United States Department of Justice in Washington, D.C. When he retired and moved back here in 2012, he found Peoples Cemetery was "in bad shape," he said. Most of the families that had cared for the land were gone, and the upkeep "was too much" for the six families who re-

mained, Mitchell added.

With a Memorial Day service approaching, he showed the area to Turner, who was the city's mayor at the time, and Vice Mayor Jennifer Bowles, and Turner's interest in the veterans buried there was piqued. With the help of veteran W.C. Fowlkes and Martinsville Sheriff Steve Draper, city inmates helped clean up the area. The cleanups continued for future services and even more veterans' graves were found, Mitchell said.

Turner said Martinsville City Council put state legislation to help with the maintenance costs of African-American cemeteries on its legislative agenda, a wish-list of issues for the General Assembly.

This year, Del. Les Adams introduced legislation in the Virginia General Assembly to add city cemeteries to the list of historical African American cemeteries and graves. To prepare for that, a survey had to be done to determine what cemeteries were eligible for the list. After information was submitted to the state, the state's archaeologist for this region came to the city to look at the Peoples and Smith Street cemeteries and at Bowles' suggestion, he contacted Mitchell.

The two expanded their survey to include the Matthews Cemetery, Banister Cemetery off First Street, the William Hobson cemetery off Pine Hall Road and the Lightfoot and Dodson cemetery, also in the Pine

Hall area, Mitchell said.

He and the archaeologist went to each cemetery to identify eligible graves. They did it early in the year when the indentations of graves were visible and snakes were not, Mitchell said.

The archaeologist was knowledgeable about cemeteries, Mitchell said. For instance, he noted that two headstones in the Matthews Cemetery have the same shape, and there was only one plant in Virginia where that shape was made. At Peoples Cemetery, he said he had never seen such a variety of headstones and he planned to trace some of their origins, Mitchell said.

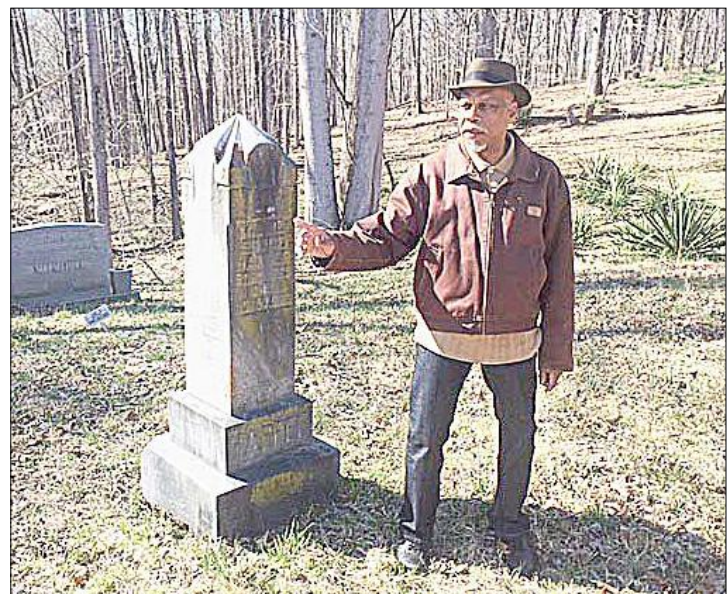
Many headstones were overturned and/or difficult to read, and some graves were marked with Yucca plants, as was tradition, he said.

The Peoples, Mitchell and Smith Street cemeteries qualified for the list and were named in the bill. However, Mitchell said all the cemeteries were documented and if he learns of others, he will document them as well.

The measure has passed both the House and Senate and according to Mitchell and Turner, it is awaiting Gov. Ralph Northam's signature.

Mitchell added that the state officials were so impressed with City Attorney Eric Monday's paperwork on the cemeteries that it has become the standard for documenting cemeteries.

Mitchell said these efforts give him the satisfaction of "knowing all these cemeter-



Lawrence Mitchell shows the marker for the grave of his great-grandmother. It is in a private cemetery adjacent to the Peoples Cemetery. Below are headstones and markers that are so old that a tree has grown around one of them. The cross-shaped marker on the right bears the name of John P. Turner and the year 1925.



ies are being taken care of."

That effort will continue April 10 when the Grace Youth of Grace Presbyterian Church are scheduled to help clean up the cemeteries as a service project. Mitchell also mows grass in the area, and he and his wife put flags on veterans' graves.

Despite their age, the graves remain important to

some descendants of people buried there. "I've had lots of calls since then" from people inquiring about other cemeteries and people looking for their relatives' graves, he said.

His wife agreed. "It gives me so much joy to help bring back" the old cemeteries, Deborah Mitchell said. "Let them rest in peace."

# Fire

(cont. from page 1)

ago but she continued to work on a per diem basis, said her husband, who also previously worked in the Henry County and Martinsville school systems.

Gradually, as Lynn's health worsened, she cut back on her work, stopping altogether last October.

Mostly, she stayed upstairs in their home on Country Club Drive in Martinsville. She was not bedridden but climbing stairs was difficult so they created a den near her bedroom to give her a suite of rooms on that floor. Often, she canceled appointments with her doctor and her hairdresser because she could not get there, Fitzgibbons said.

Feb. 22 started like any day, Fitzgibbons said. Lynn had not slept well the night before and had been awake since around 2 a.m. Before he left for work around 7 a.m., he fixed her breakfast and left it on a table. Lynn wanted to go back to bed, and when he left "she was half eating, half sleeping" with her oxygen device on, he said.

Fitzgibbons went to work but then had to run out to take his wife's ventilator to a county business. That's when his neighbor texted a message to call him immediately. Fitzgibbons did and learned his house was on fire.

"He said 'is anyone inside,' and I told him Lynn was upstairs in the bedroom on the far left. He (the neighbor) yelled to the firemen" to let them know that, Fitzgibbons said, adding that a contractor driving on the street had called 911 about the fire, as did someone else who had seen the smoke.

Fitzgibbons said he called his wife's cell phone but she didn't answer.

"I knew it wasn't good. She was good about answering," he said.

He then called their son, John, who lives in Atlanta; Lynn's sister; and Jerri DeVault, also a retired educator who, with her husband Joe, are close friends of the Fitzgibbons.

"When I pulled down Hunting Ridge (Road), I saw the emergency vehicles. I drove past everyone. By then it was pretty bad," Fitzgibbons said. With the extent of the fire and his wife's limited mobility, "she probably couldn't have gotten out anyway."

Fitzgibbons said he sat in a car with Jerri DeVault and Lynn's sister, and Martinsville firefighter Joe Haynes, a former student of Fitzgibbons at Bassett High School, kept them informed about the fire. Fitzgibbons also told the firefighters that there were oxygen tanks in the house so they could remove them



Tom and Lynn Fitzgibbons are shown in a family photo at the wedding of their son, John and his wife, Jessica.

before they exploded.

But by then, he said he knew Lynn was dead.

He waited in the car until Haynes and Sandy Hines of the Martinsville Police Department "came out and officially informed me, but I knew," Fitzgibbons said. Hines also told him that one of the family's dogs had died in the fire but another survived.

They stayed in the car until he learned the rescue squad was coming to move the remains from the house, Fitzgibbons said, shaking his head to indicate he had not wanted to see that.

He said he was not sure what to do next, but he was advised to go to a funeral home to make arrangements. He also retrieved Lynn's dental records and then he went back to King's Grant.

There, he found the staff had gone shopping to get him clothes since he lost everything in the fire except the

clothes he was wearing. They got a crib from King's Grant's Memory Care Unit for when his son and his wife Jessica arrived with their new baby. And the residents and staff brought food.

"The outpouring from the community is just beyond words," Fitzgibbons said, referring to that day and those that followed. "I appreciate the prayers and the concerns."

For instance, he said, "First United Methodist Church sent a book on grief. It meant a lot."

A total of 408 people signed the memorial book at the funeral held at First Baptist Church in Martinsville, and the crowd was so large that some people could not get inside.

"I don't know how many people were there. I was totally shocked," Fitzgibbons said.

The house is a total loss, he said, though he still is awaiting the final report from his insurance company. He

would like to have the house demolished and leave the lot empty, he said.

Some family pieces such as china and silver were recovered, and his son was able to get a secretary that had belonged to his mother's family. But most things were lost in the fire, and anything of value now has been removed from the house, he added.

The firefighters were able to retrieve a few picture albums, and Fitzgibbons said "people have been super nice" about giving him pictures they had of the family.

He is living at King's Grant for now, but he cannot work and live there permanently according to the retirement community's rules, he said. But he is grateful that he is allowed to stay there now.

The DeVaults have helped him furnish the living quarters, and "it's working out great now," he said.

Above all, Fitzgibbons, 55, said he plans to stay in Martinsville and keep working as executive director at King's Grant, which he called "a great job."

"I've been here (in the Martinsville area) since 1985. I'll probably visit my son more often but I can't imagine starting over. I love this area," he said.

At first Fitzgibbons said he tried to do something every night to stay busy and keep

his mind occupied. People often invited him to do things, and he went along to feel better and because he realized that friends wanted to help.

Now, he said, he is getting into a routine.

He also talks with his son "all the time," and they are planning two family trips — to the beach this summer and to the mountains this fall — to spread Lynn's ashes.

"Those are the two places she loved the most," he added.

He also has established the Lynn Woody Fitzgibbons Fund at the Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia. The fund will support educational opportunities in the Henry County Public Schools with an emphasis on student academic and career growth.

"This is the perfect way to keep Lynn's memory alive in this community. She would want to be remembered as an educator, but more so, as someone who loved people and someone who gave back," said her husband. Gifts can be made to Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia and mailed to P.O. Box 1124, Martinsville, Va. 24114, with the name of the fund on the memo line. Donations are tax deductible. Contributors also can visit [www.cf-weaternva.org](http://www.cf-weaternva.org) and click on "Donate Now".

# CCAT

(cont. from page 1)

side, offices, a conference room, a break room and shower facility are being created. The left side of the building will have a glass front and behind that, a gathering space. Next will be a room with about 50 computer stations for training.

Across the entire back of the building is the 15,336-square-foot high bay training space where new industries can place advanced manufacturing equipment. The CCAT high bay is empty now, but natural light pours in, something that industries want more and more, Heath said.

Construction of CCAT is about two months behind schedule due to the epic rains of 2018, Hall said. "If we can get a break on the weather it will make a big difference," Heath added. The building is being designed to make a statement.

"We want people to walk in and say, 'This is first-class. This is a community that knows what it's doing' and is committed to helping industries succeed," Heath said. He added that businesses today face a challenge in finding employees and "we want to give them every advantage" in hiring and training their workforce.

The training center is a partnership of the EDC, which will own the building with the Henry County Industrial Development Authority (IDA); Patrick Henry Community College, which will conduct workforce training there; Henry County, which owns Commonwealth Cross-

ing Business Centre through its IDA; and The Harvest Foundation, which provided a \$5 million grant for the project.

PHCC President Dr. Angeline Godwin attended the tour and said the community college is teaching "foundational skills" and then will customize training programs for companies using the training center.

CCAT is located on part of Lot 1 in Commonwealth Crossing. Next to it but still on Lot 1, work has begun on the business center's first industry, Press Glass. The Poland-based company is investing \$43.55 million to establish a 280,000-square-foot manufacturing operation that will create 212 jobs. It is expected to be operational in the first quarter of 2020, Heath said.

Hall observed that coincidentally, the investment by Press Glass in Commonwealth Crossing matches the amount spent to create and develop the business center.

"Things are going in the right direction," with increased interest in the area as a result of the progress on CCAT and Press Glass, Heath also said.

Contributing to this progress was the Virginia General Assembly, which approved a pilot program allowing electric utility providers to build substations within business parks that meet a list of strict criteria. Commonwealth Crossing meets those requirements, which include being a designated Opportunity Zone; having a listing of "Tier 4" as

Virginia Economic Development Partnership; and having all other infrastructure in place.

Del. Danny Marshall, who represents the 14th District in the Virginia General Assembly, championed the legislation. Gov. Ralph Northam signed it into law March 20. It takes effect July 1.

"We thought it (the legislation) had no chance" but it was successful because of the planning and investments already made, primarily by the Harvest Foundation, the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission, Henry County; and Martinsville, Hall said.

Appalachian Electric Power (AEP) will construct the CCBC substation, at an estimated cost of \$27 million, and up to two others within its service footprint. AEP will fund construction of the three stations through a not-to-exceed 50 cents per month surcharge on customer bills, which will come off customer bills by the end of the three-year pilot designation.

Once the CCBC substation is in place and when natural gas lines are installed the site would qualify as a Tier 5 industrial park, which is the highest ranking and certifies that the park is fully developed, according to Hall and Heath. Hall said there are some smaller lots at the Patriot Centre that are Tier 5 but no large industrial parks in this region, and possibly beyond, qualify for that level.

Heath and Hall both said the area has been able to develop assets such as Commonwealth Crossing

and CCAT due to the support of Harvest and others. The result is surprising to some outside the area, they said.

For instance, Heath told of hosting developers from Greensboro, N.C., who "thought they were going to the dark side of the moon" by coming to Henry County and Martinsville. But after seeing the development here, they wondered why they had not been here before, Heath said.

"We are in 5 percent of communities our size that can pull off things like this," he added as he stood in CCAT's high bay area.

But there is more work to be done. Amenities such as green spaces will be created as the CCBC develops, they said. The growth of surrounding businesses, such as gas stations, banks and restaurants, will be done by the private sector, they added.

Also, as Press Glass ramps up and more of its trucks are on the roads, improvements to nearby highways and access lanes will need to be addressed, Hall said.

Commonwealth Crossing's Lot 4, with a 55-acre pad, also is being marketed, in part with a new website, [www.commonwealthcrossing.com](http://www.commonwealthcrossing.com). The shell building in the Patriot Centre also remains vacant, and future shell buildings will be smaller, around 40,000 square feet, Heath said. He added that most of the private-sector buildings in Henry County are filled with clients, which is creating a need for additional options.

Rothrock praised area officials for their



Tour participants enter the Commonwealth Centre for Advanced Training (CCAT) building. Construction of the facility is expected to be completed by early summer.

persistence, patience and diligence in the decade it has taken to develop Commonwealth Crossing.

"They never wavered. They stayed with it, had a strong team and never gave up," and were flexible when needed, she said. "I'm

proud of their work. I'm so proud for this community." The Harvest board members also were pleased with what they saw in the tour, Rothrock said. "This is a big investment for the region," she added. "This is great news. It's a new chapter."

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## HENRY COUNTY ENTERPRISE

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**Michael Showell, Publisher**

**Debbie Hall, Editor**  
[dhall@theenterprise.net](mailto:dhall@theenterprise.net)  
(276) 694-3101

**Wendi Craig, Advertising Manager**  
[wendicraig@gmail.com](mailto:wendicraig@gmail.com)  
(276) 340-2445

**Sidney McClure, Advertising Consultant**  
[advertising@theenterprise.net](mailto:advertising@theenterprise.net)  
(276) 732-5177

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## COMING ATTRACTIONS ...

# Spencer-Penn to hold pig cookin, 'Barnival,' bike ride on April 13

Fans of barbecue, biking, "Barnival" and more, take note. The Spencer-Penn Centre's 8th annual Pig Cookin' Contest, fifth annual Pig Bike Ride and "Barnival" fun for children will be held April 13.

Last year, the events and food attracted about 3,000 people, according to Susan Sabin, assistant director of Spencer-Penn.

This year, "we're hoping for some good weather so we'll go beyond that," she said.

The fun actually begins the night of April 12, when the cooks for the barbecue competition are introduced at the Spencer-Penn Music Night Event. Last year, all past cooks were recognized and the previous year's winner was presented a pair of crocheted pig underwear made by Spencer-Penn bookkeeper Bonnie Freeman.

"They give each other a hard time," Sabin said of the dozen cooks — mostly from Virginia and North Carolina — who usually compete in the contest. During the competition, some team members have banners, wear funny hats or dress alike, she said. "They have a lot of fun."

The cooks then get their pigs and cook throughout the night outside Alumni Hall at Spencer-Penn. Each competitor has his or her own secret spices and method of cooking but all use gas heat.

The Pig Cookin' Contest is the only barbecue competition in the area that is sanctioned by the North Carolina Pork Association.

At 9 a.m. Saturday, April 13, three judges who are sanctioned by the pork association will go to work, following the association's strict rules on how to judge the meat and presentation. As soon as the judges leave a cooker's tent, the cooker immediately will begin stripping the meat and chopping it to take to the



The Spencer-Penn Centre's "Barnival" will include a pig train for children. The activities are part of the 8th annual Pig Cookin Contest to be held April 13 at Spencer-Penn.

kitchen for processing and selling to the public.

The winners will be announced and trophies will be presented at 11 a.m. First prize will be \$500; second prize, \$300; third, \$200; and a blind taste test award will be \$100. Winners also will use their points to qualify for the annual N.C. Barbeque Championship.

Food sales will begin at 11 a.m. in Alumni Hall. Eat in or carry out plates/sides, sandwiches, barbecue by the pound and homemade desserts will be available until 4 p.m.

Also, a "Piggy Shack" outside will feature sandwiches and hot dog meals for children. Woodmen Life also will bring a trailer and volunteers to help, Sabin said.

However, she cautioned that last year's crowd was so large that food supplies ran out.

"We encourage people to get here early if they want to eat. There are other attractions (at the event) but if they are coming for food, they should do that first," she said.

Those other attractions include entertainment, the "Barnival" for children, Spring Craft Fair, cruise-in and more from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Barnival will include Spencer-Penn's pig train for children's rides, a maze, "Piggy Putt-Putt" and other games on the ballfield of the community center, Sa-

bin said. Barnival admission is \$2 per child.

The event will be held rain or shine but if the weather is bad, she said it may be limited to indoor activities.

In addition, Spencer-Penn's fifth annual Pig Bike Ride will be held that morning, with about 50 riders expected to travel on three routes in the Spencer area. The Martinsville-Henry County Bike Club partners with Spencer-Penn to help organize the routes which are 16, 33 and 55 miles long, Sabin said.

Check-in will begin at the Ruritan Building, next to the Spencer-Penn Centre, from 8 to 8:45 a.m. The blessing of the bikes will be held at 8:30 a.m. followed by the ride at 9 a.m.

Registration is \$25 and include lunch, snacks and a gift bag.

The ride is sponsored by Schneider & Williams PC, Frith Construction, Hugo's Restaurant and Sports Bar, Chain of Fools and Martinsville Eye Care Center.

For more information, contact Tommy Smith at 618-0343 or tommysmith24055@yahoo.com.

Handicap parking spaces will be available in the lower parking area between Spencer-Penn and the Ruritan building.

For more information, check the Spencer-Penn Centre's website, www.thecentretreatspencerpenn.com.

## Free meals, snack program for kids available

Groups who are hosting students/children during the summer for any type of activities can receive free meals or snacks for the children at their site through the USDA Summer Food Service Program.

Eligible sites could be day camps, vacation Bible schools, tutoring and others, according to a release from the Henry County Schools, whose nutrition service is a sponsor of the food service program.

Sites that want to start serving meals/snacks as soon as school is out in May or by June 10 need to set up their site with the school division by April 26 so they will be approved in time.

Sites can be added later for service throughout the

summer. The school division will need at least two weeks' notice before the site begins its service so that there will be enough food and supplies on hand.

To get more information or to set up a site to receive food, call 638-1159 and ask about the Summer Food Service Program.

Free meals will be provided to all children age 18 and under. They will be provided to all children regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability, and there will be no discrimination in the course of the meal service.

To file a complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form (AD-3027), found online at

<http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint-filing-cust.html> and at any USDA office or write to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form.

To request a copy of the form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit a completed letter to USDA by: (1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or (2) Fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) Email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

## Summer class schedule set

Spencer-Penn Centre has released its Summer Camp Schedule, with classes ranging from building rockets to baking breakfast and from art to yoga.

Pre-registration is required one week before each class. Some classes have a minimum size. The ages for most classes is 6 to 12 years.

A \$5 per class discount is given for members of Spencer-Penn Centre. Membership is \$10 per person or \$25 for a family.

Each camp will have a mid-class snack. Children may enroll in a morning and an afternoon class and if so, lunch will be provided. If the 4 p.m. pickup time is difficult, Spencer-Penn can provide after-class care until 6 p.m.

Each camper and summer reading participant will receive a free ticket for the center's end-of-summer celebration on July 27. That event will include two shows by performers from Bright Star Theatre that will be open to the public. Call the center at 957-5757 for more information.

Following is the class schedule:

- Legos: June 10-13; 9 a.m.-noon; ages 8 and up; \$25/member, \$30/non-member.
- Exploring Nature with Art: June 10, 17, 24; 1-4 p.m.; ages 7 and up; \$20/member and \$25 non-member.
- Summer Reading Program: Tuesdays, June 11, 18, 25 and July 9, 16 and 23; 1-2:30 p.m.; grades K-5 at the Hylton Library; free.
- Baking — What's for Breakfast: June 12; 1-4 p.m.; ages 8 and up; \$10/member and \$15/non-member.
- Rock Painting: June 13; 1-4 p.m.; \$10/member, \$15/non-member.
- Jam for Kids: June 17; 9 a.m.-noon; ages 9 and up; \$10/member and \$15/non-member.
- Shoot for the Stars Rocket and Parachute Camp: June 18-20; 9 a.m.-noon; ages 9+; \$30/member, \$35/non-member.
- Shoot for the Stars Rocket and Parachute Camp: June 19-20; 1-4 p.m.; ages 5-8; \$20/member and \$25/non-member.
- Science Experiments: June 24-26; 9 a.m.-noon; \$30/member, \$35/non-member.
- Baking — Desert Anyone?: June 26; 1-4 p.m.; ages 8 and up; \$10/member and \$15/non-member.

- ber.
- Fairy Houses: June 27; 9 a.m.-noon; \$10/member; \$15/non-member.
- Beginning Photography: June 27; 1-4 p.m.; \$10/member, \$15/non-member.
- Sports — Exploring Football, Soccer, and Lacrosse: July 8-11; 9 a.m.-noon; ages 5 and up; \$25/members and \$30/non-members.
- Art: Painting: July 8; 1-4 p.m.; \$10/member, \$15/non-member.
- Clogging: July 9, 16, 23; 2-3 p.m.; ages 10 and older; \$10/members, \$15/non-members.
- Cook with Books — Wild About Animals: July 10; 1-4 p.m.; ages 8+; \$10/member, \$15/non-member.
- Coding: July 11; 1-4 p.m.; ages 8 and up; \$10/members, \$15/non-members.
- Outdoor Games: July 15; 9 a.m.-noon; \$10/members and \$15/non-members.
- The World of "Law": July 15, 22; 1-4 p.m.; ages 10 and older; \$15/member and \$20/non-member.
- Yoga for Kids: July 16; 9 a.m.-noon; ages 8 and up; \$10/member and \$15/non-member.
- Game Lab: July 17-18; 9 a.m.-noon; ages 8 and up; \$15/member and \$20/non-member.
- Cook with Books — Down on the Farm: July 17; 1-4 p.m.; ages 8+; \$10/member, \$15/non-member.
- Farm to Table — Underly Delicious: July 18; 1-4 p.m.; ages 8+; \$10/member and \$15/non-member.
- Making it Personal: July 22; 9 a.m.-noon; ages 8+; \$10/member and \$15/non-member.
- Cat Care with the SPCA: July 23; 9 a.m.-noon; \$10/member, \$15/non-member.
- Dog Care with the SPCA: July 24; 9 a.m.-noon; \$10/member, \$15/non-member.
- Cook with Books — Somewhere Over the Rainbow: July 24; 1-4 p.m.; ages 8+; \$10/member, \$15/non-member.
- Beginner's Sewing — Making a Pillow: July 25; 9 a.m.-noon; \$10/member and \$15/non-member.
- Edible Arrangements: July 25; 1-4 p.m.; ages 8+; \$10/member and \$15/non-member.

For more information about the classes, call the center at 957-5757.



## MUSIC NIGHT

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## 8th Annual Pig Cookin' Contest

Saturday, April 13, 2019 • 11:00am - 4:00pm

The Only BBQ Cookoff in Martinsville/Henry County VA Area!

Featuring cooks from Virginia and North Carolina who compete on the North Carolina Pork Association Circuit

FREE ADMISSION!!!

Entertainment for the Day

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## Calendar of Events

(The following information is from visitmartinsville.com, the website of the Tourism Office of the Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corp., and contributed items. See visitmartinsville.com for more information on these and other events. Also, events held more than once a month are listed each time but described only on the first event of the month.)

April 5

- Sock Hop Deja Vu fundraiser for Grace Network at The Heritage (formerly Bassett Country Club). Doors open at 6 p.m.; silent auction 6-7:30 p.m.; cash bar featuring Mountain Valley Brewing and Hamlet Vineyards; balloon raffle and more. Tickets are \$25 per person and are available at Grace Network. For more information, call Christy Hall, 790-3878.
- Ride 'N Dine on the Dick & Willie Trail, sponsored by the Henry County Bike Club, 9:30 a.m. Each week cyclists meet at the Liberty Street access point of the trail to ride and have lunch at a local eatery. A different lunch spot is chosen each week. Call Marti at 358-1312 for more information. Rides are year-round but are canceled if it's raining.

April 6

- Big Buffet breakfast at Spencer Ruritan Building, 40 George Taylor Road, sponsored by the Spencer Ruritan Club; 6-10 a.m. Admission: \$7 for adults; \$3 for children.
- Fab Lab Family Days: Customized T-shirts, at the PHCC Dalton IDEA Center, 26 Fayette St. Cost: \$15. Instructor is Christopher Wagoner. No experience or technical knowledge needed. Preregister at ph.augusoft.net or 656-5461.
- Fido's Basement Bargains Sale at Fido's Finds, 133 E. Main St., Martinsville, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. All proceeds benefit the Martinsville & Henry County SPCA.
- Board Game Day at Blue Ridge Regional Library, 310 E. Church St., Martinsville, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Free. Call 403-5430 for more information.

April 7

- Mountain Bike Ride at Mountain Laurel Trails, 361 Mountain Laurel Trail, Ridgeway, at 2 p.m. every Sunday. For more information, call 340-9144 or 618-0343. Check the club's website and Facebook pages for possible location changes.

April 8

- Storytime at Spencer-Penn Centre, 475 Spencer-Penn Road; 10:30-11:30 a.m. Carole Anne Penn will read a story and lead songs, crafts and play time. For more information, call 957-5757.

April 10

- Estate Planning: 5 @ 55, noon to 1:30 p.m. at the New College Institute. Robert W. Haley of The Estate & Elder Law Center of Southside Virginia will cover the basics of estate planning. This is part of the LIFE (Learning is ForEver) program. For more information, call Ruby Jones at 403-5605.
- Henry County Bike Club variety ride on the Smith River Trail System. Call 618-0343 or check the bike club's Facebook page for ride locations and times.

April 11

- Second Thursdays, 5-8 p.m., sponsored by Martinsville Uptown to encourage residents to get to know the uptown businesses. Many stores will extend their hours for the event; many restaurants will offer specials.
- Thursday Trail Trekkers, 1 p.m., Lauren Mountain Trail. Contact Paul Johnson at kpj24112@gmail.com with any questions. Seniors must register with Henry County Parks & Recreation Senior Services. Trail Trekkers is co-sponsored by Henry County Parks & Recreation and the Dan River Basin Association.
- Classes and groups at Spencer-Penn Centre, 475 Spencer-Penn Road. To sign up or clubs or for more information, call 957-5757:

- — Chair aerobics, 11:30 a.m.; sponsored by the M/HC Coalition for Health & Wellness and taught by Paula Battle.
- — Martial Arts classes, 6 p.m., taught by Sifu Kristian Gordon. All ages and all fitness and experience levels welcome. Monthly fee: \$40 for Spencer-Penn members, \$65 for non-members.
- — Aerobic exercise class, 6:30 p.m.; sponsored by the M/HC Coalition for Health & Wellness and taught by Anita Hooker.
- Tai Chi at the Library, noon at the Blue Ridge Regional Library in Martinsville. Free. For more information, call 403-5430.
- Second Thursday Science Talks, 6 p.m. at the Virginia Museum of Natural History, 21 Starling Ave. For more information, call 634-4141.

April 12

- Patrick Henry Community College Distinguished Alumni Dinner, 6-9 p.m. at Chatmoss Country Club. For more information, call PHCC at 638-8777 or the PHCC Foundation at 656-0250.
- Spencer-Penn Centre Music Night of bluegrass music, open mic 5:30 p.m., Over the Hill Gang 6:20 p.m.; and Skyline Drive 7:40 p.m. Concessions available. Fee: \$5. Call 957-5757 for more information.
- Ride 'N Dine on the Dick & Willie Trail, sponsored by the Henry County Bike Club, 9:30 a.m. (See listing above.)

April 13

- Spencer-Penn Centre's 5th annual Pig Bike Ride. Preregistration by April 1 guarantees the rider a memorabilia T-shirt. Check-in, 8-8:45 a.m.; blessing of the bikes 8:30 a.m.; rides begin at 9 a.m. Registration is \$25. Three routes available. The Pig Cookin festivities at Spencer-Penn Centre will be held that day. For more information, call 957-5757 or 734-2098.
- Spencer-Penn Centre's 8th annual Pig Cookin Contest with fresh-cooked barbecue, entertainment, "Barnival" for children, Spring Craft Fair, cruise-in and more; 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission: food prices vary; \$2 for "Barnival." For more information, call 957-5757 or 734-2098.
- Pickers and Fiddlers Bluegrass Gospel & Mountain Music Songfest, 10 a.m. to noon at Pocahontas Bassett Baptist Church, 120 Old Bassett Heights Road, Bassett. This is held the second Saturday or each month; bring instruments to join in. Free; refreshments provided.

April 14

- Henry County Bike Club's Sunday Road Ride, 2 p.m. starting at the Ridgeway Library. For more information, call 618-0343.
- Mountain Bike Ride at Mountain Laurel Trails, 361 Mountain Laurel Trail, Ridgeway, at 2 p.m. every Sunday. For more information, call 340-9144 or 618-0343. (See listing above.)

April 15

- Storytime at Spencer-Penn Centre, 475 Spencer-Penn Road; 10:30-11:30 a.m. (See listing above.)

April 17

- How Martinsville & Henry County Became an Industry Powerhouse delivered by Eric Monday, noon to 1 p.m. at the New College Institute. This is part of the LIFE program. Call Ruby Jones at 403-5605 for more information.
- Henry County Bike Club variety ride on the Smith River Trail system trails. Call 618-0343. (See listing above.)

April 18

- Thursday Trail Trekkers, 1 p.m., Smith River Sports Complex. Contact Paul Johnson at kpj24112@gmail.com with any questions. (See listing above.)
- Classes and groups at Spencer-Penn Centre, 475 Spencer-Penn Road. To sign up or clubs or for more information, call 957-5757:
- — Chair aerobics, 11:30 a.m.; sponsored by the M/HC Coalition for Health & Wellness and taught by Paula Battle.

- — Martial Arts classes, 6 p.m., taught by Sifu Kristian Gordon. All ages and all fitness and experience levels welcome. Monthly fee: \$40 for Spencer-Penn members, \$65 for non-members.
- — Aerobic exercise class, 6:30 p.m.; sponsored by the M/HC Coalition for Health & Wellness and taught by Anita Hooker.
- Tai Chi at the Library, noon at the Blue Ridge Regional Library in Martinsville. Free. For more information, call 403-5430.

April 19

- Ride 'N Dine on the Dick & Willie Trail, sponsored by the Henry County Bike Club, 9:30 a.m. (See listing above.)

April 20

- Basket-Making Class at Spencer-Penn Centre, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the third Saturday of the month. Hazel Coleman of Ashboro, N.C., is the instructor. Preregistration required; cost \$25 for a small basket or \$35 for a larger basket. For more information, call 957-5757 or 734-2098.

April 21

- Mountain Bike Ride at Mountain Laurel Trails, 361 Mountain Laurel Trail, Ridgeway, at 2 p.m. every Sunday. For more information, call 340-9144 or 618-

0343. (See listing above.)

April 22

- Storytime at Spencer-Penn Centre, 475 Spencer-Penn Road; 10:30-11:30 a.m. (See listing above.)

April 23

- Volunteer Fair, 3-5 p.m. at New College Institute. Local non-profit and other agencies will be set up so area residents can browse and find which organization matches their passion or interest. Free. This is part of NCI's LIFE program. Call Ruby Jones at 403-5605 to attend.

April 24

- Henry County Bike Club variety ride on the Smith River Trail system trails. Call 618-0343. (See listing above.)

April 25

- Kiwanis Pancake Day, 6:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. at the Uptown Martinsville Free Parking Lot. Pancakes, sausage and drink (all you can eat) for \$5 in advance and \$6 at the door. Former information, call 252-4794.
- Mamma Mia! by the Patrick Henry Community College Patriot Players, 7 p.m. at Walker Fine Arts Theatre at PHCC. This is the story of a young woman's search for her birth father. Call 656-0244 for more information.

(See Calendar p. 12)

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# Photographer highlights beauty in abandoned Va. places, homes

By Bernadette B. Moore  
Piedmont Arts

People are obsessed with a sense of place.

That's how photographer John Plashal opened his recent talk at Piedmont Arts on the abandoned places he has photographed throughout Virginia.

Plashal presented more than 30 photographs of abandoned houses, churches, schools, secret societies, libraries and restaurants, all which he compiled for his coffee table book entitled, *A Beautifully Broken Virginia*.

Looking at the lilting facades and crumbling interiors — some of which still are fully furnished and stand waiting, as if for time to restart — one wonders how Plashal found such abandoned gems.



Photographer John Plashal explains photographs of abandoned houses, churches and other sites that he compiled for his book, *"A Beautifully Broken Virginia."* He discussed his work at Piedmont Arts in Martinsville recently.

old-fashioned way, by knocking on people's doors," he said.

When approaching neighbors of such places, he tells them, "I'm enamored with this place. Can you tell me anything about it?" And nine times out of 10 he finds himself sitting at a kitchen

table with a piece of pie "and they're telling me all about it."

When Plashal began photographing abandoned buildings, he found himself drawn by their architecture but not doing any more than photographing their exteriors. (See Photographer p. 12)

# Museum group accredits PAA

Piedmont Arts has again achieved accreditation by the American Alliance of Museums, the highest national recognition afforded the nation's museums.

Accreditation signifies excellence to the museum community, governments, funders, outside agencies and the museum-going public, according to a news release.

Piedmont Arts initially was accredited since 2004. All museums must undergo a reaccreditation review at least every 10 years to maintain accredited status.

Alliance Accreditation brings national recognition to a museum for its commitment to excellence, accountability, high professional standards and continued institutional improvement, the release stated. Developed and sustained by museum professionals for more than 45

years, the alliance's museum accreditation program is the field's primary vehicle for quality assurance, self-regulation and public accountability. It strengthens the museum profession by promoting practices that enable leaders to make informed decisions, allocate resources wisely, and remain financially and ethically accountable in order to provide the best possible service to the public, the release added.

"Piedmont Arts is honored to receive re-accreditation from the alliance," said PAA Executive Director Heidi Pinkston. "It is a fantastic achievement to be not simply awarded, but earned through countless hours of hard work and dedication from our staff and support from our board of directors. Piedmont Arts is committed to excellence and will continue to work to improve our accreditation program." (See PAA p. 12)

# Johnson

(cont. from page 3)

year given for particular performance and this given for lifetime achievement," he said in an interview the following week.

According to the DRBA website, the 3,300-square-mile basin includes all or most of eight counties: Patrick, Henry, Pittsylvania, and Halifax in Virginia, and Stokes, Rockingham, Caswell and Person in North Carolina. Smaller portions of eight more counties lie in the Dan River Basin: Floyd, Franklin, and Mecklenburg in Virginia, and Surry, Forsyth, Guilford, Orange, and Granville in North Carolina.

The award reminded Johnson of what he believes is so special about DRBA.

A couple of dozen paddlers and hikers had a "consciousness of living in a watershed," bound not by political lines but by environmental concerns, and that awareness has grown, he said. "What is remarkable is the spark that has spread. Local governments became part of the vision. A point of readiness has been reached. Whether it was going to be DRBA or something else, watershed awareness was on everyone's mind."

In its first year, DRBA attracted up to 100 members, Johnson said. In 2018, it had 267. "It seems miraculous that it expanded so rapidly and in so many different directions," he added.

The group was founded on three principals — protecting and promoting education, stewardship and recreation — and those priorities remain, Johnson said. At first when it was an all-volunteer group, its focus was more on recreation, he said. After several years and the addition of paid staff members, the missions of education and stewardship were expanded, he added.

"Ten to 15 years ago Henry County and Rockingham County were ripe for recreation expansion," Johnson said, a retired librarian who enjoys paddling and hiking and moved to Henry County from Danville 2013 because of DRBA and the natural attractions here. His favorite paddling spot is the city reservoir and his favorite hike is Fall Creek Falls.

"They (Henry and Rockingham counties) were a ready market for what DRBA was doing. ... The entire Henry County government at all levels was constantly supporting, advising and cooperating" with DRBA, he said, adding

that he is sure the City of Martinsville did the same.

As a result, those areas have the largest number of DRBA members and projects. At the Membership Day Celebration, DRBA officers and staff described a long list of programs, activities and achievements. They included educational efforts that reached 4,000 students as well as water quality monitoring training programs; an updated master plan for rivers and trails in Martinsville-Henry County; creation of blueways, river accesses and trails; and events, festivals, cleanups and related activities, among other things.

The organization also cosponsors the Trail Trekkers local hiking group with Henry County Parks and Recreation.

In Rockingham County, N.C., activities have included trails and river accesses, creation of a 3-mile bike trail and development of the High Rock River Access and Trail that will be unveiled April 27.

DRBA was active in dealing with the 2014 coal ash spill. "It brought visibility" to the organization, he said, and "caused DRBA to be taken more seriously throughout the region because of

the excellent work done by the staff."

DRBA also has been "front and center" in working to keep Virginia's ban on uranium mining, which is proposed for Pittsylvania County, he said.

Now, Johnson is on a committee that will work to update the decade-old Smith River Guide that includes maps as well as historical and recreational features along the river.

People interested in helping improve the area's environment can conduct water quality monitoring, which DRBA encourages by



Paul Johnson (right) hikes with the Trail Trekkers group, which is sponsored by the Dan River Basin Association and Henry County Parks and Recreation.

sponsoring training workshops, Johnson said. Workshop attendees do not have to be DRBA members.

Those workshops are announced on DRBA's website, danriver.org. That site also gives more information on DRBA and how to become a member.

# Plan

(cont. from page 3)

businesses and local officials, it states.

It recommends that an outside agency such as DRBA coordinate and implement the projects in the plan. Other recommendations include:

The plan also includes a history of planning and regional efforts; inventory of local assets, state and federal lands; proposed outdoor recreation assets; summary of projects and priorities; implementation suggestions; agreements, guidelines

and facilities; benefits of outdoor recreation assets, public input and additional resources.

Williams said the committee that updated the report included representatives of the city and county staff; Roger Adams, director of parks and recreation for Henry County; Susan McCulloch, formerly Martinsville's city planner; DRBA staff and board members; and private citizens.

The committee held public input meetings and had an online survey during its more than two years of work.

# Uranium

(cont. from page 3)

the area.

Service awards went to volunteers Tony McGee and the Merit Put Bull Foundation. Corporate partnership awards went to Coca-Cola for assisting with DRBA's rain barrel project and Bridgestone Tire Co. for picking up and recycling tires that DRBA collects at cleanups.

Paul Johnson was given the Spirit of the Dan River Basin Award. The Spirit of the Dan River Basin Award is given to someone who goes above and beyond volunteering for the organization that works to protect and promote the basin through recreation, education and stewardship. (See related story.)

Wayne Kirkpatrick, vice president of DRBA, and other DRBA officers and staff discussed the association's activities and accomplishments in 2018. Treasurer Shawn Gorman reported that DRBA's costs fell 2 percent and its income from donations and contracted services rose. There were 267 members that year, and DRBA continues to seek new members and partnerships.

Three new board members were elected — Cori Lindsay, Will Truslow and Tory Mabe.

Among the programs and activities discussed were water quality monitoring; an updated master plan

for rivers and trails in Martinsville and Henry County; development of blueways, river accesses and trails; events, festivals, cleanups and related activities; and educational programs that reached a total of 4,000 students, including Trout in the Classroom, Streamside Trees in Classrooms, Green Schoolyard at Albert Harris Elementary and rain barrel workshops.

In Rockingham County, N.C., activities have included trails and river accesses, creation of a 3-mile bike trail and development of the High Rock River Access and Trail that will be unveiled April 27.

DRBA Executive Director Tiffany Haworth gave the results of surveys on the need for and interest in outdoor recreation plans, water quality and forestry plans and outdoor classrooms. She also discussed programs for the coming year, including One Less Straw, in which metal straws are being sold to replace plastic ones; Floating Lotus; Art in Nature Auction; and creation of an eco-business council.

After the meeting, 25 participants toured several sites in Chatham, including a funeral home museum and the Pittsylvania County Historical Museum. The tour was led by Dr. William Black and his wife, Mary Lee.

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The home of Susan and Spencer Morten is located at 44 Dove Lane, Stanleytown.



The home of Dr. Edward "Chopper" Snyder and Kimberly Snyder is at 960 Deep Run Road, Martinsville. It is in the Hunt Country Farms neighborhood.



The home of Dr. Andrew and Anna Gehrken is located at 1 Dan-Lee Terrace, Martinsville.

## HISTORIC GARDEN WEEK IN VIRGINIA

### May 1 garden tour features 3 homes, other attractions

Southern antiques collected over three decades fill one home. Another reflects family. A third combines the old and new as the owners downsized.

These are the three Martinsville area homes that will be featured in the Martinsville-Henry County Garden Day Tour on May 1, part of Historic Garden Week in Virginia.

The local tours will be held from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. May 1. They are hosted by The Martinsville Garden Club and The Garden Study Club.

The self-driving tour includes 44 Dove Lane, Stanleytown, the home of Susan and Spencer Morten; 960 Deep Run Road, Martinsville, the home of Dr. Edward "Chopper" Snyder and Kimberly Snyder; and 1 Dan-Lee Terrace, Martinsville, the home of Dr. Andrew and Anna Gehrken.

The following excerpts of descriptions of the homes and sites are from a release from the local organizers and the tour's guidebook, which is available online at [www.vagardenweek.org](http://www.vagardenweek.org):

#### 44 DOVE LANE, STANLEYTOWN

This home is in a Stanleytown community planned by Thomas B. Stanley Jr. and near the Stoneleigh estate of his father, the late Gov. Thomas B. Stanley. It features spreading plumbago, azalea, boxwood, hydrangea, yew and crepe myrtle.

"Of particular note throughout are walnut and cherry antique furnishings inherited from the owner's parents, including dining room furniture, desk, sideboard and drop-leaf tables. A painting of Spencer Morten's great-grandfather, J.D. Bassett Sr., founder of Bassett Furniture and Bassett Mirror Co., hangs in the dining area. Artwork in the living room features a set of six original drawings of furniture designs for Bassett Mirror, where Morten is chairman and CEO."

Artwork includes a drawing by Leslie "Spy" Ward (1851-1922) who did caricatures for Vanity Fair magazine and a painting of flowers in a blue vase painted by Scisbrooke Langhorne Abbot of Lynchburg, nephew of Nancy Langhorne, Lady Astor.

A sunroom added in 2010 features a Steinway and Sons piano that once belonged to

Morten's mother and opens onto a garden. The Mortens also revamped the floors in the living, dining and kitchen areas with reclaimed wood from an old textile factory in North Carolina that was slated for demolition. The kitchen table's legs are made from beams from an old warehouse.

#### 960 DEEP RUN ROAD, MARTINSVILLE

This modified Colonial three-story brick home was built in 1998 on five acres in Hunt Country Farms and overlooks a lake with rescued swans that are cared for by neighborhood residents.

The unifying principle of the home is "all about family," Kim Snyder said. It features family portraits by regional artist Dottie Pierce, a grand piano and a collection of Easter eggs and memorabilia from the annual White House Easter Egg Rolls are in the living room.

A quilt depicting the waterfall at Looking Glass Rock on the Blue Ridge Parkway by award winning quilter Ann Harwell hangs in the family room. A Stickley grandfather clock and an heirloom chestnut cupboard with original glass also are notable pieces. The master bedroom features a collection of framed family wedding invitations, a four-story dollhouse and an antique cradle from the Ghent family.

A primitive cupboard with original glass is made of chestnut and belonged to Kim Snyder's grandparents. Wooden golf clubs that belonged to Dr. Snyder's grandfather also are featured.

On the upstairs landing are photographs and memorabilia from Troxler Furniture Co., which was owned by Kimberly Snyder's grandfather and was, in its day, the oldest and largest furniture store in Martinsville and Henry County.

#### 1 DAN-LEE TERRACE, MARTINSVILLE

This red brick Georgian home was built as part of a three-home complex for the Globman family. The Gehrken's bought it from the original estate in 2002.

Dr. Gehrken, who collects 18th century Southern antique furniture, has a particular interest in items from Eastern and Piedmont Virginia and North Carolina. His collection began after



The foyer of the Morten home is painted in coral and white stripes.

a house fire in 1987 led to a need for furniture. Anna Gehrken is a designer with experience in the furniture and fabrics industry.

Their home includes their antique furniture, murals, collections and contemporary art, including paintings by Dr. Gehrken's daughter, Greer. A mural in the dining room, painted by North Carolina artist Dana Holliday, depicts the Blue Ridge Mountains and features many of the family's favorite locations. A Piedmont Virginia cellarette, an Orange County corner cupboard and a set of chairs slipcovered in linen damask according to the 18th century practice are a part of the collection in this room. In the foyer is a pair of rare Virginia dressing tables.

In addition to the homes, several places of interest in Martinsville and Henry County will be available to tour participants. They are:

- Historic Henry County Courthouse

Heritage Center and Museum, 1 E. Main St. This building houses the Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society. Previously, the Garden Club of Virginia provided funds for the restoration of the courthouse grounds using proceeds from Historic Garden Week tours.

- Paw Path Pollinator Garden at the Smith River Sports Complex, 1000 Irisburg Road, Axton. More than 300 pollinator-sustaining wildflowers, trees and shrubs representing 50 native and non-invasive species fill the garden along a half-mile path. This project won the 2018 Garden Club of Virginia Besie Bocock Carter Conservation Award and is one of the finalists for the 2018 Garden Club of Virginia Commonwealth Award.

- Pollinator and Monarch Butterfly Habitat, Fairy Stone State Park, 967 Fairy Stone Lake Drive, Stuart. The habitat includes a variety of native plants that attracts native bees



The Gehrken home features a collection of furniture made in Eastern and Piedmont Virginia and North Carolina in the Age of Enlightenment.

and butterflies. The project was funded through a 2017 award from the Garden Club of Virginia's Centennial Project celebrating Virginia's State Park system.

- Virginia Museum of Natural History, 21 Starling Ave.

- R.P. Gravely-A.J. Lester Art Garden, Historic Little Post Office and Piedmont Arts, 207 and 215 Starling Ave. The garden has three free-standing sculptures by Virginia artists and is home to a 100-year-old Remarkable Tree of Virginia and the Historical Little Post Office. Piedmont Arts houses five galleries with temporary exhibitions.

- FAHI African American Museum and Cultural Center, 211 Fayette St. This center features the history of the Fayette Street area.

Tickets for the tours are \$20 for adults and \$10 for children aged 6 to 12. They will be available the day of the tour at the Martinsville-Henry County Visitor Center in the New College Institute building and at tour sites.

Advance tickets for \$15 per person are available at [www.vagardenweek.org](http://www.vagardenweek.org) or locally at the Visitors Center and the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce, Piedmont

(See Tour p. 11)

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# Funds are approved for new GO TEC

A new regional education/training program has been awarded Growth and Opportunity for Virginia (GO Virginia) funds. Great Opportunities

in Technology and Engineering Careers (GO TEC) Phase II was among seven projects approved for a total of more than \$6.7 million, according to a recent announcement by

Gov. Ralph Northam. The GO-TEC program targets five regional training areas of need: precision machining, welding, IT/cybersecurity, robotics/mechatronics and advanced materials, according to a press release from the Governor's Office.

The project involves Patrick Henry (PHCC), Danville (DCC) and Southside Virginia (SVCC) community colleges as well as the New College Institute (NCI) in Martinsville, Southern Virginia Higher Education Center in South Boston and the Institute for Advanced Learning and Resources in Danville, all in Region 3, according to PHCC President Dr. Angeline Godwin. The project also extends into some neighboring areas, with Danville Community College as the fiscal agent.

There are two parts to the program, Godwin said.

"One focuses on the institutions using a hub and spoke model," she said. The hubs are institutions with above average capacity and expertise in a particular area. The spokes have capacity and expertise but they are more in support of the hub, she said.

"Each institution has the opportunity to build the capacity of their hub or build capacity as a spoke" that supports a hub, she added.

For instance, Godwin said Danville

Community College is well-known for its precision machining program. PHCC is developing a level one precision machining program to become a spoke for the DCC hub, she said. Also, "NCI has some precision machining capacity so it would be a spoke" to support the Danville hub, she added.

The second component of the program is the creation of Career Connection Labs in the middle schools served by the above institutions. For instance, PHCC will work with middle schools in Martinsville, Henry County and Patrick County, Godwin said.

The labs will focus on fundamental skills in robotics and automation which exist in all disciplines of modern business and industry, she said.

"The goal is to get students interested in these kinds of programs" and create a pipeline of students for the specific higher education programs, Godwin said. "We can build capacity in our institutions but we have to spark their interest way before those students would get to us."

"I hope three years from now we're talking about an elementary school connection," she said.

Phase I of GO TEC basically was a demonstration project to establish a Career Connection Lab in the



Dr. Angeline Godwin

Danville and Pittsylvania County middle schools, Godwin said. It also included some funds for a regional coordinator.

According to the state release, initial funding for the program is \$1.3 million and if benchmarks are met, total funding would be \$4,896,528. PHCC has applied for \$326,532 for Phase II and was awarded \$251,000 for equipment. The rest is for faculty in the second year of the grant, Godwin said.

NCI received about \$51,000 to focus on metrology (measurements in industry). Melanie Stowe, assistant director of academics and communications at NCI, said that institution has a metrology lab in its Center for Advanced Manufacturing.

"We propose to leverage our lab for pipeline development for high school and community college students to showcase metrology," she said. Students who are interested in pursuing that field then would go to Danville Community College or the Institute for Ad-

vanced Learning and Resources in Danville for further study, she said.

"It will fill in a space where we can help raise interest and awareness of the metrology program," Stowe added.

The grant covers the cities of Danville and Martinsville and the counties of Cumberland, Greensville, Halifax, Henry, Mecklenburg, Patrick, Pittsylvania, Prince Edward and Nottoway in Region 3. In Region 4, it includes Bland, Carroll and Grayson counties and the city of Galax.

The ability of the institutions in the region to come together to create the program "shocked reviewers," Godwin said. "I'm not sure people thought it was possible we would all agree on something with a focused strategy. ... That's the neat thing about this. We all came together" and saw the big picture and their roles in that picture.

"This is the way it should be. Every project should have this dynamic," she said.

"It's very exciting," Godwin added. "We've been working this a long, long time. We explored many options in precision machining and I feel like with our expertise in the region, it makes all of Region 3 in particular very competitive for economic development programs" where jobs are based in precision machining.

## Tour

(cont. from page 10)



The Snyder home features a collection of Easter eggs from the annual White House Easter Egg Roll.

Arts, Historic Henry Co. Courthouse, and the Patrick Co. Chamber of Commerce.

Lunch, for \$15 per person, will be available at Chatmoss Country Club, 550 Mt. Olivet Road, Martinsville, from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Contact Lynne Beeler, ldeb@comcast.net or 732-7016, for reservations before April 24.

The tour is self-driving with on-street parking in designated areas.

Kimberly Snyder is chairman of the local tours and Joanie Petty is co-chairman.

The local tours are part of Historic Garden Week in Virginia,

being observed from April 27 through May 4. Proceeds from the tours fund the restoration and preservation of more than 40 of Virginia's historic public gardens and landscapes, a research fellowship program and a Garden Club of Virginia Centennial project with Virginia State Parks.

"Historic Garden Week is unprecedented as a fundraiser that underwrites restoration projects and supports our centennial project with the state parks," said Jean Gilpin, president of the Garden Club of Virginia, which sponsors the event.

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# NCI recruiting interns for 2019

The New College Institute is recruiting for 2019 summer interns in career sectors including health care, social work, business, marketing, manufacturing, robotics, digital media, video production and public school administration.

NCI's summer internship program gives students hands-on work experience and introduces them to potential career opportunities in the region. This program is a win for students as they gain new perspectives, ideas,

and methods. For employers, NCI's internship program provides an opportunity to mentor, share expertise and access new talent to enhance the regional workforce.

Since 2007, 575 college students have completed internships through NCI in the Henry County-Martinsville region.

"Eastman has benefitted from NCI's internship program for years. We have come to rely on this program at Eastman," said Carl Ratliff, East-

man human resources manager.

"This program is one of many ways NCI strives to provide local residents with the insights, skills and connections to be successful. Because of NCI's location, college students don't have to travel far for a quality education and, hopefully, they won't have to travel far to work either upon graduation since NCI's programs are tailored to the needs of local employers," said Ryan Orton, NCI coordinator of business relations and alumni outreach.

This year, internships also will be available to college students who do not live in the region as NCI launches hybrid internship opportunities. These placements are similar to telework and will leverage NCI's technology to connect the regional workforce

with talent throughout the commonwealth.

"Without my internship opportunity at New College, I may not be here now. It sounds cliché, but it really did bring me home," said Marcus Stone, a 2007 NCI intern.

NCI has a one-stop shop for college students to apply for internship opportunities. The web address is <https://bit.ly/2MR51stH>.

In addition to the work experience, NCI interns have access to professional development opportunities, social networking and opportunities to apply what they are learning to real-world experiences.

For more information, contact Orton at 403-5615 or [rorton@newcollegeinstitute.org](mailto:rorton@newcollegeinstitute.org).

## Calendar

(cont. from page 8)

- Thursday Trail Trekkers, 1 p.m., Iron Mine Trail at Fairy Stone State Park. Contact Paul Johnson at [kpj24112@gmail.com](mailto:kpj24112@gmail.com) with any questions. (See listing above.)
- Classes and groups at Spencer-Penn Centre, 475 Spencer-Penn Road. To sign up or clubs or for more information, call 957-5757:
- — Chair aerobics, 11:30 a.m.; sponsored by the MHC Coalition for Health & Wellness and taught by Paula Battle.
- — Martial Arts classes, 6 p.m., taught by Sifu Kristian Gordon. All ages and all fitness and experience levels welcome. Monthly fee: \$40 for Spencer-Penn members, \$65 for non-members.
- — Aerobic exercise class, 6:30 p.m.; sponsored by the MHC Coalition for Health & Wellness and taught by Anita Hooker.
- Tai Chi at the Library, noon at the Blue Ridge Regional Library in Martinsville. Free. For more information, call 403-5430.

April 26

- Piedmont Arts Lights, Glamour, Auction! This is a Golden Age of Hollywood-themed fundraiser for the arts with signature cocktails, live music, art auction and more. Cost: \$75 per per-

- son; \$700 for reserved tables of eight. Call 632-3221 for more information.
- Mamma Mia! by the Patrick Henry Community College Patriot Players, 7 p.m. at Walker Fine Arts Theatre at PHCC. Call 656-0244 for more information. (See listing above.)
- Ride 'N Dine on the Dick & Willie Trail, sponsored by the Henry County Bike Club, 9:30 a.m. (See listing above.)

April 27

- Mamma Mia! by the Patrick Henry Community College Patriot Players, 7 p.m. at Walker Fine Arts Theatre at PHCC. Call 656-0244 for more information. (See listing above.)

April 28

- Mamma Mia! by the Patrick Henry Community College Patriot Players, 7 p.m. at Walker Fine Arts Theatre at PHCC. Call 656-0244 for more information. (See listing above.)
- Mountain Bike Ride at Mountain Laurel Trails, 361 Mountain Laurel Trail, Ridgeway, at 2 p.m. every Sunday. For more information, call 340-9144 or 618-0343. (See listing above.)

April 29

- Storytime at Spencer-Penn Centre, 475 Spencer-Penn Road; 10:30-11:30 a.m. (See listing above.)

## Three new degrees to be offered at New College

The New College Institute is offering three new degree programs this year.

They are:

- A master's degree in social work in partnership with Radford University.
- NCI and Averett University will launch a cohort for a master's degree of applied data analytics in May.
- An information session

will take place from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. April 10 for a doctorate in education from Virginia Tech. The doctoral program is planned to begin in the fall.

In 2018, more than 1,400 students enrolled in degree and certification programs at NCI. The institute has six bachelor's and master's degree programs as well as certificate programs.

NCI continues to support regional and statewide economic development efforts by providing opportunities for adults to earn degrees and certifications via a number of higher education partners throughout the commonwealth.

For more information, contact Sammy Redd at NCI at 403-5600.

## Photographer

(cont. from page 9)

ors.

The buildings were frozen in time, seemingly saying, "Welcome to Virginia's world of abandonment. Welcome to the afterworld," said Plashal.

But over time, he began to wonder what treasures lay inside these monuments to the past.

"The first time I was brazen enough to go in one of these places, I found prescription eyewear, jewelry, cash — almost 50 years later," he said. "And this place was abandoned in December of '69."

"How do I know that?" he asked the crowd. "The calendar, stuck up there above the kitchen plates, (was) turned to December 1969."

Once, inside a house in Westmoreland County, Plashal found a chest full of love letters.

"I felt like I was invading these people's privacy," he recalled.

But he has continued his search, because, he said, "these places deserve to be commemorated. They are full of memories."

In other houses, Plashal has found diaries, wedding albums, toys and pianos.

"Every house had a piano. You'd be surprised how many of these pianos I've

found," he quipped.

In one house, he found the uniform and gear of a World War II veteran neatly displayed in a long-forgotten attic.

Once Plashal began entering these houses and finding furnishings and belongings left inside, slowly being reclaimed by nature, he knew he had to learn more about the people who once lived in these homes.

"I just hit another junction," he said. "I needed to know about these places and the people who lived there."

At a talk at a retirement home in Essex County, Plashal said he told the story of a house he had found particularly intriguing. "I couldn't find anything about the house," he said. So, he went next door and asked a neighbor if she had any information about who used to live there."

The woman told him that she knew the house was once owned by the Johnson family and that Mrs. Johnson claimed to make the best coconut pie in Virginia.

During Plashal's story, an elderly man in the front row began to clutch his chest and cry. Thinking he was having a medical emergency, Plashal asked if

the man needed help. The man's nephew, who was sitting beside him, told Plashal "Everything's OK. He's just having an emotional response, because that is his childhood home."

"There was a collective 'ah' from the crowd," said Plashal.

The man turned out to be Charles Johnson, the son of the Mrs. Johnson in Plashal's story. When Plashal asked if someone in that house made a great coconut pie, Charles Johnson said, "Yes. I know because I was the one helping her crack the coconuts. She was my mother."

After that talk, Plashal accompanied the 95-year-old Johnson and his 69-year-old nephew to dinner where they talked for hours and looked at pictures of Johnson's childhood home.

"So many precious memories die with our elders," said Plashal. "It's up to us to get these stories out."

That's why Plashal suggests, "Always take back roads. Take the longest possible way through back roads." If you do, you just might find a new sense of place.

John Plashal's talk was presented by Piedmont Arts and is part of Virginia Museum of Fine Arts' Speakers on the Arts program, available to statewide partners of the VMFA. This program has been organized by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and is supported, in part, by the Paul Mellon Endowment and the Jean Stafford Camp Memorial Fund.

Piedmont Arts is a nonprofit art museum in Martinsville. It is a statewide partner of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. Piedmont Arts programming is partially supported by the Virginia Commission for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

## HJDB will sponsor Jamboree on April 19

The HJDB Event Center in Bassett will host ShadowGrass at the Friday Night Jamboree on April 19.

Admission is a \$5 donation. Concessions will be available and dancers are welcome.

The Jam Band begins at 6 p.m., with ShadowGrass scheduled to take the stage at 7 p.m.

The award-winning bluegrass group is made up of youthful talent steeped in the traditions of a bygone era.

Presley Barker, 14, was inspired by Doc Watson to begin picking

fiddle tunes and bluegrass music. Influenced and mentored by Steve Lewis, Wayne Henderson, and Bryan Sutton, Barker has quickly emerged as an astonishingly gifted flat-picker.

Kyser George, also 14, of Westfield, N.C., sat in on his father's band practices from the week his parents brought him home from the hospital. He received his first instrument, a mandolin, at the age of 6 and it quickly became evident that the rhythm section was George's niche. He is already considered one of the most solid bass players in the area.

Clay Russell, 18, has lived in Grayson County his entire life. He received his first banjo

when he was 4-years-old and learned to pick out song melodies using his thumb. Around the age of 10, he began using the three-finger method. A few years later he started entering local competitions and collaborated to help form the band ShadowGrass.

Luke Morris, 19, grew up in Galax and has always been surrounded by bluegrass music. He got his hands on a mandolin at the age of 12, while taking a guitar class. He quickly fell in love with the instrument, and enjoys playing and singing at each opportunity. He released his first solo album, "Further Down the Line," in 2018.

## PAA

(cont. from page 9)

tinue to inspire and engage the diverse Martinsville-Henry County community through visual arts, performing arts, and arts education, as leaders in the arts." More than 1,070 of the nation's estimated 33,000 museums are accredited. Piedmont Arts is one of 57 museums accredited in Virginia. To earn accreditation a museum must conduct a year of self-study and then undergo a site visit by a team of peer reviewers. AAM's Accreditation Commission, an independent and autonomous body of museum professionals, considers the self-study and visiting committee report to determine whether a museum should receive accreditation.

"Accredited museums are a community

of institutions that have chosen to hold themselves publicly accountable to excellence," said Laura L. Lott, alliance president and CEO. "Accreditation is clearly a significant achievement, of which both the institutions and the communities they serve can be extremely proud."

Piedmont Arts is a statewide partner of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Its programming is partially supported by the Virginia Commission for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Piedmont Arts is located at 215 Starling Ave., Martinsville. Museum hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturdays. Admission is free.

Learn more at [www.PiedmontArts.org](http://www.PiedmontArts.org).

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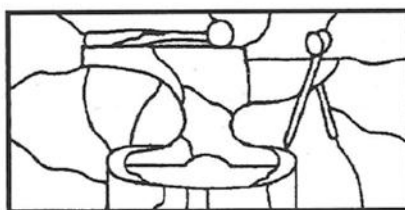


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# ON BEING AN IMPORTANT LITERARY FIGURE



By BEN R. WILLIAMS

On March 5th, my book finally hit the shelves.

Well, it's not my book. It's actually my friend Andy Parker's book. It's called "For Alison: The Murder of a Young Journalist and a Father's Fight for Gun Safety." However, I edited it and helped Andy polish it, and so my name appears on the cover right below Sen. Tim Kaine's name (he wrote the introduction).

Sharing a book cover with Sen. Kaine is my third brush with the esteemed Senator. The second was the time I played a game of "Monster Bash" pinball with him at Uptown Pinball a few months back, and the first happened about ten years ago when I started a small electrical fire in the upstairs of a movie theater while he was inside the building.

I don't think he knows about that last one.

At any rate, while "For Alison" is not the first book I've worked on, it is the first one to be published by an actual legitimate publishing house, and it is the first book I've worked on that doesn't involve weird monsters, parallel dimensions or crushing nihilism. Maybe these facts are related. It's hard to say.

When Andy handed me the final hardback copy of the book, hot off the presses from the good people at Apollo Publishers, it was an amazing and surreal moment. After two solid years of hard work, "For Alison" would finally be available in bookstores across the country.

As I stared in wonder at my name

printed on the front of the book jacket, I had a sudden realization:

I was finally an Important Literary Figure.

In the weeks since, many people have asked me, "Ben, what's it like being an Important Literary Figure?" I usually shoo these people away or strike at them with the pearl head of my fancy cane, since I'm very important now. But for this one column, I will share the myriad ways that my life has changed since I became a person of immense worth about a month ago.

For starters, I can't tell you how many autographs I have signed. For whatever reason, store clerks seem to love getting my autograph. Whenever I buy something, they always ask me if I can sign a little piece of paper, which I assume they later put in a shadow box and hang above the mantel. It's quite flattering.

I first noticed this trend while I was buying a scarf and beret at a local haberdashery. Now that I'm an Important Literary Figure, I have to spend at least 45 minutes per day standing on a wind-swept cliff, my beret cocked jauntily on my head, my scarf flapping behind me, squinting into the setting sun as I think about Important Things, such as whether Inspector Gadget was a cyborg or a robot.

It is difficult to find the time to stand on cliffs having important thoughts since I sold my car. I now ride a recumbent bicycle everywhere I go, as I have it on good authority that it is the single most pretentious mode of transportation available. I arrive to work three hours late every day, but the sacrifice is well worth it.

Of course, I have also been invited to speak at a number of esteemed educational institutions. I recently gave a terrific speech regarding the amelioration of metadiscourse in the composition of epic poetry. When several students seemed to be losing interest, I angrily sent them outside to split wood. I had expected far more professionalism from Mrs. Cumberdale's first grade class.

I have also changed my dietary habits to reflect my newfound importance. I have noticed that important people tend to eat very old things, such as cave-aged cheeses and wines that have spent decades in cellars. Now when I go to restaurants, I toss the menu aside and simply ask the server to bring me the oldest food and drink in the place. Last week I enjoyed a bottle of T.J. Swann Stepping Out that rolled under a chest freezer in 1979 and something that I'm pretty

sure was a crab cake once. It was a sumptuous repast, and I hope to return to that restaurant when I'm discharged from the hospital.

Yes, ever since I began acting like the Important Literary Figure that I am, I have found that I have been embraced by the community. Everywhere I go, people raise their hands to show me that they think I'm "Number One."

For some reason, they aren't using their index fingers, but it's the thought that counts.

## Hot Rod Power Tour to make speedway stop

Thousands of hot rods, customs, street machines, muscle cars and more will come the Martinsville Speedway on June 9 as part of the 2019 Hot Rod Power Tour.

The Power Tour is a seven-day, seven-city, 1,000-plus-mile road trip through America. This is the first time it will stop at Martinsville Speedway, Bristol Motor Speedway, Kentucky Speedway and Allen County War Memorial Coliseum in Fort Wayne, Ind. "We are always looking for ways to utilize Martinsville Speedway for things outside of racing, and the Hot Rod Power Tour is something that really checks all the boxes," said Martinsville Speedway President Clay Campbell. "To bring historic cars to a place with so much history, particularly history with cars, is a natural fit and we are looking forward to hosting the event."

This is the 25th annual Hot Rod Power Tour. It is expected to bring together more than 6,000 vehicles and 100,000-plus spectators; making this event the largest traveling car show in the world.

"HOT ROD is excited to bring the legendary Power Tour to Martinsville," said John Mc-

Gann, executive editor of HOT ROD. "Our historic 25th anniversary brings us to one of the most historic speedways in the world. Join us on June 9 for the world's largest traveling car show."

The 2019 event will take place from Saturday, June 8, through Friday June 14. The schedule follows:

June 8 – zMAX Dragway, Concord, N.C.

June 9 – Martinsville Speedway

June 10 – Bristol Motor Speedway, Bristol, Tenn.

June 11 – Kentucky Speedway, Sparta, Ky.

June 12 – Lucas Oil Raceway, Indianapolis, Ind.

June 13 – Allen County War Memorial Coliseum

June 14 – Summit Motorsports Park, Norwalk, Ohio

Spectator admission is free. Vehicle registration and information is available at: <https://www.hotrod.com/events/power-tour/>.

Additional information on the Hot Rod Power Tour and Martinsville-Henry County can be found online at [www.VisitMartinsville.com](http://www.VisitMartinsville.com), at the MHC Visitor Center inside The Baldwin Building at 191 Fayette St. in Martinsville, or by calling 276-632-8006.

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## BUSINESS NEWS ...

# Web design, marketing firm rebrands itself into 'Momenta'

What is the plural of "momentum?" Masha Edelen and Beth Deatherage want everyone to know it's "Momenta."

Momenta is the new name of HD Web Studio in Martinsville, founded by Edelen in 2002. The new name was adopted to reflect that the company is a full-service marketing firm as well as web design company, according to Deatherage, the chief operating officer of Momenta.

The name was unveiled March 21 at a reception at Shindig in Uptown Martinsville. About 65 others were present. After weeks of giving clues to the name on social media,



Masha Edelen (left) and Beth Deatherage unveil a banner for "Momenta," the new name of HD Web Studio. The company rebranded itself to better reflect that it is a full-service marketing firm as well as a web design company.

some of those present at the reception guessed at the name

(See Momenta p. 18)

# Lester Building, Southern States now are under the same roof



Lester Building Supply in Martinsville has added a sign on the side of its building to show that it has become a stocking dealer for Southern States.

Lester Building Supply in Martinsville now is a stocking dealer for Southern States.

As a result, Lester is stocking equine and poultry feed and seed, electrical fence supplies, large and small

animal health supplies, gates and accessories, dog and cat food with accessories, dog kennels, and bird feed and feeders for Southern States. The bulk feed bulk seed, chemical and lime

spreading needs will be sold out of the Chatham location.

Lester Building Supply also now is a stocking dealer with Stihl power equipment with in-house service and repair.

According to a letter from Lester to customers, "We recently were made aware that there was going to be a gap in service with Southern States in our area. We discussed this with Southern States and were approved to open a dealership inside Lester Building Supply in Martinsville.

"After reviewing the potential, we decided to move forward with putting both businesses together under one roof. We believe this combination will give you the many benefits of one-stop shopping for all the products you have come to know from Southern States as well as our large selection of home improvement projects," the letter states.

"All in all, a majority of the products found in Collinsville location (at Southern States) and with some familiar faces" now will be at Lester Building Supply.

# City says water safe despite level of byproduct

Martinsville's water is safe to drink despite a level of a disinfection byproduct that exceeds allowable standards, according to the head of the city's water resources department.

"I drink the water all day" with no concerns about its safety, said Andy Lash.

The city has been sending a notice titled "Important Information About Your Drinking Water" to its water customers with the latest billing cycles, Lash said. It states that the city water system has levels of Total Trihalomethane (TTHM) that are above drinking water standards.

TTHM and other disinfection byproducts are formed when trace amounts of natural occurring organic compounds in the raw water source combine with chlorine that is used to disinfect the treated water, the notice states. Its concentration can vary because of changes in source water quality, water temperature, distribution storage time and other factors.

Lash noted that TTHMs occur in any water with chlorine, such as swimming pools. They also occur in coffee and tea, he said.

The city is required to monitor for TTHM on a quarterly basis, the notice states. During the first quarter through the fourth quarter of 2018 — basically the entire year — the system's average concentration of TTHM was 0.081 mg/L at the testing station at 916 Corn Tassel

Trail, the notice states.

The standard, called the Primary Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL), for TTHM is an average of 0.080 mg/L, the notice states.

Lash said the higher level was found only at the Corn Tassel Trail site, which is one of four where monitoring is done. The others were within the standards, he said.

"This is not an immediate health risk. If there had been, you would have been notified immediately," according to the notice. "However, some people who drink water containing TTHM in excess of the MCL over many years may have an increased risk of getting cancer."

Alternative water supplies are not needed, the notice states. However, it advises that anyone with specific health concerns should consult their health care provider or the Henry Martinsville/Health Department at 638-2311.

Calls are referred to that department's Office of Drinking Water. A spokesman there said to the best of his knowledge, no calls had been received about the TTHM levels in Martinsville.

The city will continue to monitor drinking water for TTHM, according to the notice. It adds that the next sample will be collected during the first week in May.

Lash added that he does not know how long it will take to get results of that monitoring.

# Chamber of Commerce earns reaccreditation

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has renewed the Five-Star Accreditation of the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce.

Accreditation is the only national program that recognizes chambers of commerce for their effective organizational procedures and community involvement. To receive accreditation, a chamber must meet minimum standards in operations and programs, including governance, government affairs and technology.

The self-review can take 6-9 months.

"This designation for the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce is significant to our organization as less than 2 percent of local cham-

bers in the country are accredited at the 5-Star level," said Lisa Watkins, president of the local chamber. "We are extremely proud to serve our members as one of three local chambers in the Commonwealth of Virginia with this rating."

Local chambers are rated accredited, 3-Stars, 4-Stars or 5-Stars. The final determination is made by the Accrediting Board made up of U.S. Chamber board members.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is the world's largest business federation representing more than 3 million businesses of all sizes, sectors and regions as well as state and local chambers and industry associations.

# Crawford & Power to perform at fest

A regional favorite band, Crawford & Power, is returning to Smith River Fest this summer.

The band is set to play from 1 to 4 p.m. at the Aug. 10 festival to be held at the Smith River Sports Complex, 1000 Irisburg Road in Axton. Festival admission and parking are free.

With roots in country, Americana and southern rock, Crawford & Power seeks to spark a classic country music revival. Its unique approach to a fading genre has been lauded as a breath of fresh air amidst the commercialization of sacred American music genres.

The two have already opened for a variety of artists including The Marshall Tucker Band, Luke Combs, Cody Johnson,

High Valley, Joe Diffie and Jerry Douglas, to name a few.

"We are excited to bring Crawford and Power back to Smith River Fest," said Brad Kinkema, chief executive officer and executive director of the Martinsville-Henry County YMCA. "We know that fans were disappointed after their show was rained out last year, so we wanted to try to make it happen again. If you have not heard Crawford & Power, I encourage you to come out and see them Aug. 10."

The Smith River Fest also will feature the Smith River Boat Race, the Helgramite Hustle 5K Mud Run and the Kids Mini Mud Run. Other activities include the new Paddling Demo Pool presented by

Sova Health, the Casting Pool, the Kids Cycling Station, fly tying demos and more.

Activities will be posted on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/SmithRiverFest](http://www.facebook.com/SmithRiverFest) and at [www.SmithRiverFest.com](http://www.SmithRiverFest.com) as they are announced.

Smith River Fest is a collaborative effort between Henry County Parks & Recreation, Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corp.'s Tourism Division, Smith River Sports Complex, Dan River Basin Association, Martinsville-Henry County YMCA and Martinsville Parks & Recreation.

Vendor applications, race registrations and additional information can be found at [SmithRiverFest.com](http://SmithRiverFest.com) or by calling 632-8006.

# Provision company to be fest's title sponsor

The Smith River Provision Company, based in Bassett, will be the title sponsor for the 2019 Smith River Fest in August.

"Smith River Provision Co. is extremely excited to be a part of this great event. We hope to continue working with Smith River Fest and all things Henry County, Va., in the future. The Smith River is a natural resource and truly a

beauty of this area that needs to continue to be celebrated and protected. Hoping for a great turn out this year and look forward to seeing you all there," said Mark Brogan, owner of Smith River Provision Company.

The company is an online apparel and outdoor gear company that offers fishing performance shirts, hoodies, long sleeves, head-

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## Local pastor pens book on undocumented immigration

The Rev. Libby Grammer's father is a minister of music. After college, she worked in a law office, on immigration issues, while pursuing advanced degrees. An ordained minister, she pondered the question of "How do we live out our faith in real life?"

Grammer combined all those experiences, influences and more — including two masters' degree theses — and wrote a book, "Privilege, Risk, and Solidarity: Understanding Undocumented Immigration Through Feminist Christian Ethics."

The book was published in February 2017 by Wipf & Stock Publishers of Eugene, Ore. It is aimed at students of Christian ethics and academics as well as educated lay people, she said, adding that her goal with the book is to teach and spark a conversation. It's not a novel but contains good information, she added.

The six-chapter, 109-page book examines the issue of undocumented immigration through the lens of Christian feminist ethics. It tells the stories of some undocumented immigrants and comes to the conclusion that "we need to love and care for our neighbors. Part of that is solidarity in standing up for folks" without voices, said Grammer, who is the senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Martinsville.

Grammer, 33, is a doctor of ministry student at McAfee School of Theology at Mercer University and has almost a decade of experience as an immigration legal assistant at a large law firm in the Southeast. She also holds a master's degree in theology, ethics and culture from the University of Virginia as well as a master of divinity degree from McAfee School of Theology. McAfee, in Atlanta, is part of Mercer University, based in Macon, Ga.

Christian ethics applies faith to real issues, Grammer said. "How do Christians respond to issues of modern importance," she asked rhetorically, citing issues such as war, poverty, the death penalty, abortion and others.

"As a faith community we have to think it through, not from a political standpoint but from faith. ... We are citizens of the kingdom of God first; secondarily the United States" or some other country, she said.

At the University of Virginia, Grammer studied Christian ethics with the goal of getting her doctorate and becoming a professor. She expected to teach and write about ethical issues.

"There, I realized I didn't want to do that. My calling is not to do academics (that are) above everyone's head. I want to bring it back to earth," she said. "How do we live out our faith in real life? That's what a pastor does, work with the local community. How do we do this?"

When she wrote her thesis for that degree, Grammer said she "fell in love with feminism. ... feminist theology and ethics. Feminism asks us to listen to those who are oppressed and marginalized. Women's voices



The Rev. Libby Grammer, the senior pastor at First Baptist Church in Martinsville, shows her book, "Privilege, Risk, and Solidarity: Understanding Undocumented Immigration Through Feminist Christian Ethics."

have been silenced. Feminism calls that out. It names it and overcomes it. It says, 'We can do better and here's how.'"

When feminist theology is applied to ethical issues, it means listening to stories of real people, Grammer said.

The result was that her thesis dealt with feminist theology and the subject of immigration that she had worked on as a legal assistant. Her book includes a legal history of immigration as well as real stories of some of the people she worked with at the law firm and others.

Grammer clarified that in the book, she wrote about undocumented immigrants, not refugees or those seeking asylum. Undocumented immigrants are those in this country without immigration status, she said, which could include those who sneak across the border or those who come with legal status but overstay that status.

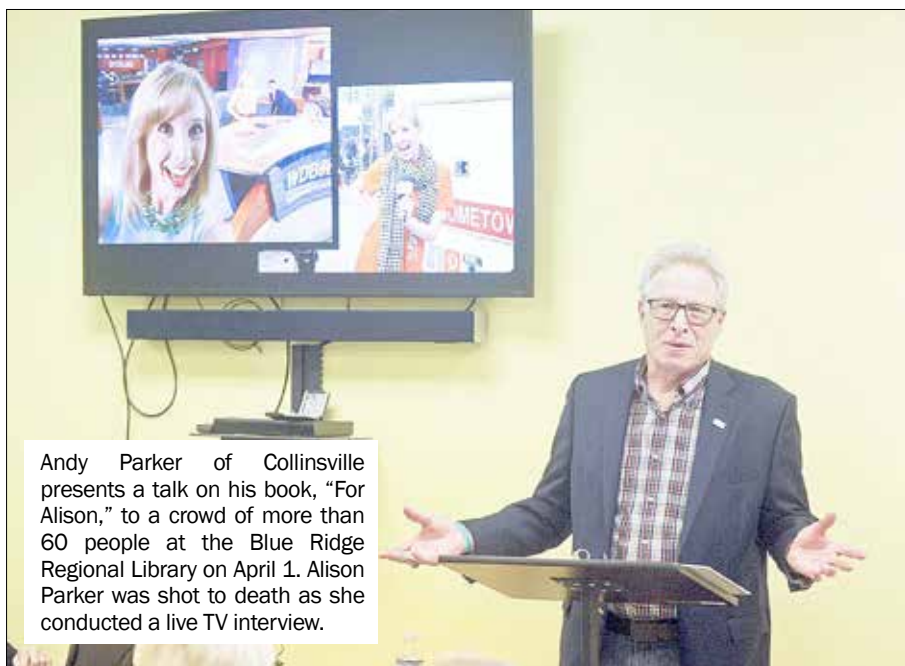
The book includes some political aspects of the immigration issue because "changing immigration law is political," Grammer said. Its publication actually was delayed briefly so some changes could be made as a result of Donald Trump's election as U.S. president, she added.

She said she leans toward being hospitable to undocumented immigrants, but she does not simply advocate for open borders. "Part of providing for the stranger (immigrant) among us is advocating for ways to integrate them into society, which can include pathways to residency and citizenship. Those pathways come with security checks, and that ensures safety to protect our own citizens."

"Those of us with a political voice must become advocates. It begins with understanding the issue, thinking through moral beliefs and actions. The book won't give every answer. It is one step of many in a journey to care and compassion. I would like the book to start a conversation," she added.

After completing her two master's theses, Grammer said she picked her favorite parts of each and created the book. She said it took at least a year to complete the first draft and get a proposal to publishers. Another seven to eight months passed before the book was published.

(See Book p. 18)



Andy Parker of Collinsville presents a talk on his book, "For Alison," to a crowd of more than 60 people at the Blue Ridge Regional Library on April 1. Alison Parker was shot to death as she conducted a live TV interview.

## Parkers discuss book, campaign to honor their murdered daughter

Andy Parker brought his campaign against gun violence, the National Rifle Association (NRA) and Google to a hometown crowd on April 1.

More than 60 people crowded into the meeting room of the Blue Ridge Regional Library in Martinsville to hear Parker talk about the shooting death of his daughter, journalist Alison Parker, as she conducted a live WDBJ7 television news interview on Aug. 26, 2015. Alison Parker and WDBJ cameraman Adam Ward were killed in the incident and Vicki Gardner, who was being interviewed, was wounded by a former WDBJ colleague who later died.

That tragedy prompted Andy Parker to write a book, "For Alison: The Murder of a Young Journalist and a Father's Fight for Gun Safety."

Parker told the local audience about how he came to write the book, with initial encouragement from Roanoke author Beth Macy. He didn't immediately dismiss her suggestion that there was a book in his experience, but he thought the story was one everyone already knew.

So he traveled for a year, talking about gun violence and the toll it takes on everyone it touches. But Macy's idea kept coming back to him, and he thought about how Alison always was determined to report stories that were important. He read books on writing and learned that he had to start with the hardest part.

Aug. 26, 2015.

"It was agony," he said. "I would write a few hundred words and then melt down," repeating that process over and over until that chapter finally was finished. Macy complimented him on it.

Ultimately, Parker collaborated with Ben Williams, a Martinsville journalist. Parker wrote about the significant events and Williams polished his work and tied it together, they said.

But they were stunned at the reaction of major publishers, Parker said. They loved the subject but hated the issue — guns, according to Parker. But "it's more," he countered. "It's about Alison" and his stories about her and those people shared with him.

Finally he signed with Apollo Publishers and the book was published in March with a forward by U.S. Sen. Tim Kaine, one of several politicians with whom the Parkers have become friends.

Since Alison's death, Parker and his wife Barbara have channeled their grief into action to honor their daughter, Parker said. He promotes what he calls common sense gun laws, such as uniform background checks for gun buyers and closing loopholes for flea market gun sales. Such measures are vigorously opposed by the NRA, Parker added.

They also have been vocal critics of social media platforms, urging them "to take action against people posting videos of his daughter's murder and conspiracy theorists who thrive on their platforms," the Roanoke Times reported recently. To help, Parker has enlisted the help of Georgetown Law's Civil Rights Clinic.

And he wants to "weaponize this book" because it is a call for action, he said of "For Alison."

Parker said the issue of gun legislation is partisan, and the "Republican Party is the party of the NRA." He added that all gun control measures that have come up in the Virginia General Assembly in the past two years were killed.

"If you can't change their minds, you change their seats," he said. "It may take a while but it's happening" with the election of candidates who support common sense gun laws.

"Elect people who keep us safe," not ones who offer only prayers and thoughts, Parker said.

Several people in the audience asked what the public could do to help the Parkers in their efforts. They suggested that people write to their congressional representatives and the Brady Campaign, which was created after President Reagan's Press Secretary, James Brady, was shot in the head during the Reagan assassination attempt.

They also said they thank businesses that have stopped selling assault weapons.

Parker said he has told other people who have survived similar tragedies to find a purpose. "You'll never be whole again" but you can function and make a difference," he added.

## Carlisle students to collect books for African children

Buoyed by the success of a book collection drive to help start a library in a school in Kenya, students at Carlisle School are poised to start another drive to aid the African Library Project.

The African Library Project of Pittsburg, Calif., delivers donated books to help establish libraries across the continent of Africa. Since 2005 the project has developed more than 2,620 libraries in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Cameroon, Lesotho, Nigeria, Botswana, Swaziland, Malawi, Ghana, South Africa, Sierra Leone and Kenya.

Carlisle's latest collection will kick off on April 15 and coincide with the opening day of the school's Scholastic Book Fair, which will allow donors to purchase new books to send in addition to donations of gently used books.

There will be collection boxes at the Book Fair and in Carlisle's Middle School lobby for book donations. Beth Gammons, Middle School director at Carlisle, noted that

books must be for primary or secondary students and cannot be titles associated with holidays, religions, or American history.

Over the next few weeks, students will learn about the various countries in Africa to determine which school they would like to support this year. In addition to books, the students will collect donations of cardboard boxes, trash bags to weatherproof the books, shipping tape and approximately \$500 in shipping costs to fund the library.

In the fall of 2017 middle school students in Carlisle's Community Service Club partnered with the African Library Project to collect books to help start a library at the Ngodhe Primary School in Kenya.

The students reached out to their student body, parents, and grandparents to collect more than 1,000 new and gently used books. In June 2018 the books were taken by a team from the African Library Project to



Carlisle students sort books they collected in 2017 to help start a library in Africa. They will hold another collection, starting April 15, to aid the African Library Project.

Kenya and delivered to students and teachers at the primary school.

Sharon Allen, a Project Humanity volunteer with the organization, was among the travel party who delivered Carlisle's shipment of books. According to Allen, the school is on a small island an hour away from the

mainland and on the day that the organization visited, "many students were away from the school participating in a competition."

Since the remaining children were having a free day, Allen said they "got to help unpack the books (Carlisle) sent and spend lots of time reading to the kids." She

noted that the students also entertained their travel party and added that the donation of books made a wonderful impact on this school and community.

Allen sent Carlisle School photos and videos of students enjoying the donated books. According to Beth Gammons, Middle School director at Carlisle School, "the project gave our students a deeper appreciation for our own library and the need to help other children in the world have the same opportunities."

Community service is an integral part of the curriculum at Carlisle and starting in early grades, students perform service projects throughout the year. Projects often are student-led and can range from food and coat drives for the needy to collections of pet supplies for animal shelters.

More information on the African Library Project is available at [www.africanlibraryproject.org](http://www.africanlibraryproject.org).

# Odyssey of Mind challenges kids

A new regional education/training program has been awarded Growth and Opportunity for Virginia (GO Virginia) funds.

Great Opportunities in Technology and Engineering Careers (GO TEC) Phase II was among seven projects approved for a total of more than \$6.7 million, according to a recent announcement by Gov. Ralph Northam.

The GO-TEC program targets five regional training areas of need: precision machining, welding, IT/cybersecurity, robotics/mechatronics and advanced materials, according to a press release from the Governor's Office.

The project involves Patrick Henry (PHCC), Danville (DCC) and Southside Virginia (SVCC) community colleges as well as the New College Institute (NCI) in Martinsville, Southern Virginia Higher Education Center in South Boston and the Institute for Advanced Learning and Resources in Danville, all in Region 3, according to PHCC President Dr. Angeline Godwin. The project also extends into some neighboring areas, with Danville Community College as the fiscal agent.

There are two parts to the program, Godwin said. "One focuses on the institutions using a hub and

spoke model," she said. The hubs are institutions with above average capacity and expertise in a particular area. The spokes have capacity and expertise but they are more in support of the hub, she said.

"Each institution has the opportunity to build the capacity of their hub or build capacity as a spoke" that supports a hub, she added.

For instance, Godwin said Danville Community College is well-known for its precision machining program. PHCC is developing a level one precision machining program to become a spoke for the DCC hub, she said. Also, "NCI has some precision machining capacity so it would be a spoke" to support the Danville hub, she added.

The second component of the program is the creation of Career Connection Labs in the middle schools served by the above institutions. For instance, PHCC will work with middle schools in Martinsville, Henry County and Patrick County, Godwin said.

The labs will focus on fundamental skills in robotics and automation which exist in all disciplines of modern business and industry, she said.

"The goal is to get students interested in these kinds of programs" and

create a pipeline of students for the specific higher education programs, Godwin said. "We can build capacity in our institutions but we have to spark their interest way before those students would get to us."

"I hope three years from now we're talking about an elementary school connection," she said.

Phase I of GO TEC basically was a demonstration project to establish a Career Connection Lab in the Danville and Pittsylvania County middle schools, Godwin said. It also included some funds for a regional coordinator.

According to the state release, initial funding for the program is \$1.3 million and if benchmarks are met, total funding would be \$4,896,528. PHCC has applied for \$326,532 for Phase II and was awarded \$251,000 for equipment. The rest is for faculty in the second year of the grant, Godwin said.

NCI received about \$51,000 to focus on metrology (measurements in industry). Melanie Stowe, assistant director of academics and communications at NCI, said that institution has a metrology lab in its Center for Advanced Manufacturing.

"We propose to leverage our lab for pipeline development for high school and



The Martinsville Middle School Odyssey of the Mind team coached by Greg Hackenberg includes (back, from left) Kimberly Santiago, Holly Nguyen, Alondra Machuca-Tiznado, Olivia Hankins, Karlee Shively, (front, from left) Skyllar Miller and Monserrat Machuca-Tiznado.

community college students to showcase metrology," she said. Students who are interested in pursuing that field then would go to Danville Community College or the Institute for Advanced Learning and Resources in Danville for further study, she said.

"It will fill in a space where we can help raise interest and awareness of the metrology program," Stowe added.

The grant covers the cities of Danville and Martinsville and the counties of Cumberland, Greensville, Halifax, Henry, Mecklenburg, Patrick, Pittsylvania, Prince Edward and Nottoway in Region 3. In Region 4, it includes Bland, Carroll and Grayson counties and the city of Galax.

The ability of the institutions in the region to come

together to create the program "shocked reviewers," Godwin said. "I'm not sure people thought it was possible we would all agree on something with a focused strategy. ... That's the neat thing about this. We all came together" and saw the big picture and their roles in that picture.

"This is the way it should be. Every project should have this dynamic," she said.

"It's very exciting," Godwin added. "We've been working this a long, long time. We explored many options in precision machining and I feel like with our expertise in the region, it makes all of Region 3 in particular very competitive for economic development programs" where jobs are based in precision machining.

# Murals added to trail list

Three public art murals in Martinsville have been added to the Appalachian Mural Trail.

They include the Circus Mural on the wall of the New College Institute's King Building; "The Baldwin Block Canvases" on the Market Street side of the Baldwin Building (NCD); and Old Glory, the American flag mural on the side of the Theatre Works building in uptown Martinsville.

The Appalachian Mural Trail (AMT) organization was created to bring "world attention to mural art that tells the story of the people. Our mission is to shine a light on public art murals that tell community stories which help increase the pride of the local people by beautifying and showing respect for their community," its web page states.

Communities and organizations with public cultural murals can become AMT members with a landing page on its website, muraltrail.com, which showcases the art, tells the stories of the murals, features the artists' biographies and gives directions to the murals.

AMT also places rack cards in state welcome centers, chambers of commerce and other visitor centers, and it has a mural map and a Facebook page.

In Martinsville, the Circus Mural shows a parade of elephants and other performers advertising the arrival of a circus in Martinsville around 1920. Graphic designer and artist John Stiles used a contemporary style to design the mural based on a picture owned by Dr. Melvyn and Virginia King.

Jessie Ward, a third-generation farrier, painted the mural. In addition to shoeing horses, Ward produces oil, acrylic and watercolor paintings; works with stained glass; creates etchings, batiks, printmaking and wall-hung sculptures. She recently completed a 600-pound "Love" public art sculpture made of horse shoes for the art garden at Starling Avenue and Mulberry Road in Martinsville.

"The Baldwin Block Canvases" were created after artist Amanda Honore' Donley and representatives of NCI and the New College Foundation met with staff and board members of the Fayette Area Historical Initiative. Their recollections of the vibrant African-American community on the Baldwin Block in the early 1900s inspired the murals.

Old Glory was painted by artist Scott LoBaido, whose depictions of the American flag can be seen across the U.S.

For more information on AMT and the murals, go to mural-trail.com.

# LOVE letters get sporty look

In Henry County, LOVE comes with a soccer ball and golf tee, a goal post and kayak paddle.

Those are just some of the sports equipment positioned on the community's first life-sized LOVE letters artwork at the Smith River Sports Complex.

The artwork is an extension of the 50-year-old "Virginia is for Lovers" brand. It is one of more than 130 giant LOVE letters, called LOVEworks, in towns and cities across the commonwealth.

"Virginia is for Lovers is about doing the things you love to do on vacation with the people you love most," said Rita McClenny, president and CEO of the Virginia Tourism Corporation. "The new LOVEwork at Smith River Sports Complex captures that idea perfectly and gives you an authentic sense of place as it showcases Martinsville-Henry County's dedication to sports tourism and outdoor recreation. We are excited that Martinsville-Henry County will help us share the LOVE with travelers, helping them to discover for themselves why Virginia is for Lovers."

The LOVE letters were unveiled in early March by Sarah Hodges and Beth Stinnett of VisitMartinsville,



A recent Ultimate Frisbee tournament at the Smith River Sports Complex forms a backdrop for the new LOVE letters erected there. There are more than 130 giant LOVE letters, called LOVEworks, in towns and cities across the commonwealth.

the tourism office of the Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corp. The letters are located in the traffic circle at the entrance to the sports complex's parking area.

"So far the reaction has been very positive," Hodges said three weeks later. "Athletes love taking team pictures in front of it. We even had a family from northern Virginia contact us about coming down to see" the letters.

The artwork was produced locally by Lawless Welding in Fieldale and painted locally by Jamie Adams of Creative Paint Works. A small group of

area residents met last summer and worked on theme concepts, and the actual design and build took about five months, Hodges said.

"It was exciting for our team to work on such a creative project that will be a permanent attraction for our community and visitors for years to come," said Chris Lawless, owner of Lawless Welding.

Lloyd Barber, executive director of the sports complex, said the facility is proud to be home to the letters.

"We are a natural fit with over 45,000 visitors to the sports complex annually. It is the perfect setting for the placement of

the LOVEwork with our close proximity to the scenic Smith River and the visibility and convenience form the bypass. Having the LOVEwork at the Smith River Sports Complex will highlight the vitality of our community," she added.

The project was funded by VisitMartinsville with the help of two grants. The cost was not disclosed.

Visitors to the LOVEwork are encouraged to take photographs with it and share them on Facebook at Facebook.com/VirginiaisforLovers and on Instagram and Twitter, using the hashtag #LOVEVA, #VisitMartinsville and #SRSC.

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**HUGE 2-DAY ESTATE & PERSONAL PROPERTY AUCTION**  
**OVER 150 LOTS! FRIDAY - TOO MANY ITEMS TO LIST!**  
 Friday, April 5, 2019 @ 6:00 pm &  
 (Preview is 4:00 p.m. to Time of Auction)  
 Saturday, April 6, 2019 @ 10:00 am  
 (Doors open at 8:00 am)  
 GUNS, KNIVES, GOLD & SILVER JEWELRY, FURNITURE,  
 LLADRO, ROYAL DOULTON LADY FIGURINES,  
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CIVIC NEWS ...

# Taiwanese residents visit through Rotary exchange

Five residents of Taiwan visited the Martinsville area in March as part of a Group Study Exchange of the Martinsville Rotary Club.

Susan Guu, the team leader, said the group arrived in Washington, D.C., on March 1 and remained in this country until April 1. Team members visited Winchester, Danville, Bristol, Roanoke and Blacksburg as well as Martinsville, Henry County, Patrick County and other locations.

The Group Study Exchange program is sponsored by Rotary District 7570 in cooperation with the District in Taiwan 3510. District 7570 runs along the I-81 corridor from Winchester to Bristol.

According to Rotary, the Group Study Exchange (GSE) program is a cultural and vocational exchange opportunity for business and professional men and women in their initial years of professional life. Rotary districts in different countries are paired to send and receive professional study groups of four team members and one Rotarian team leader to travel for about four weeks, staying in the homes of Rotarians when possible.

The recent Taiwanese visitors stayed with Rotarians from the Martinsville and the UpTown clubs. They were 8,044 miles from their homes in Taiwan, which is an island in the East China Sea, east of China, according to Google Maps.

The group came to the Martinsville area from Bristol, Va., on March 21. Members toured the Virginia Museum of Natural History, biked on the Dick & Willie Passage trail and



The Taiwanese delegation is shown with some local Rotarians and others during their recent visit to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) On the Road art mobile. From left are Sukenyal Best of VFMA; Anna Lester, area governor for Area 15 of Rotary; Maggie Luo; Billy Liu; Susan Guu, the team leader; Champion Wang; Brett Tseng; and Dennis Reeves of Martinsville, a Rotary Foundation advocate.

visited the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts On the Road art mobile at Piedmont Arts.

On March 23 they drove to Stuart and attended a barn quilt workshop. They later hiked at Buffalo Mountain and had dinner at Chateau Morrisette. On March 24 they spent time at the Spa at Primland and also had a golf lesson. They left on March 25.

Guu said things the team members learned about American culture were "remarkable, unforgettable. It is broadening their horizons."

They were impressed with the museums they visited in Washington, she said.

One team member, Billy Liu, said among other things, he found the people in the United States to be "very warm" and friendly, he said.

What surprised him most about this country was the portions of food

served at meals, Liu said. As he gestured, Guu explained that the group had been served a 28-inch pizza.

The team members' backgrounds are varied. Several are studying for their doctorates and several are in business; some are in both business and academia.

Guu, the team leader, is a charter member of Pingtung Bai-Ho Club of Rotary District 3510. She is chairman of the District's Youth Service Committee.

She has been a member of Rotary since 1999. In 2003 she was president of the Pingtung Bai-Ho Club, and she has held numerous positions within the district.

Guu has a major in accounting and has held several positions in that industry. In 1988 her family moved to Ithaca, N.Y., while her husband studied for his Ph.D. at Cornell University. (See Exchange p. 18)

## Rotary takes over TGIF series

The TGIF concert series will be under new management this summer.

For the first time, the Martinsville Uptown Rotary Club will present the series, taking it over from the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce.

The change was initiated last winter when the Rotary Club was looking for ways to get more involved in the community and generate more revenue that it could give out to local efforts when it was approached by the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce about taking over TGIF.

The chamber wanted to focus more on business recruitment and retention than events, said Lisa Watkins, president of the chamber.

"It was a win-win," said Brad Kinkema, president of the Rotary Club.

The result is a three-concert series this summer. The Worx band will perform June 21; Stone Canyon will take the stage on July 19; and Pizazz will entertain on Aug. 16. Kinkema said the location has not been determined yet but it likely will be either the Farmers Market area or the uptown parking lot across from Martin Plaza.

Watkins noted that TGIF concerts are held in the evenings when some uptown restaurants are open and they benefit, but most retail businesses are closed so they do not.

"In our contract with the city, that's one of the things we discussed with the staff, with the blessing of city council, that we spend more staff time on business recruitment for uptown versus events," she added.

For its part, the Rotary Club had volunteered manpower for TGIF in the past, so its members were interested when Watkins approached them about taking over the popular concert series that has been held in the city's business district for decades. TGIF previously was part of MURA, the Martinsville Uptown Revitalization Association, which around 2015 became part of C-PEG, the Chamber's Partner for Economic Growth.

"We get a lot of requests to help nonprofits, do scholarships (and other efforts), and the amount we can give back is directly related to how much we bring in so we want to be more involved" and raise more money to give out, Kinkema said.

It also is a great way for the club to get its name out and help recruit new members, he said.

TGIF, Kinkema said, is "something the community loves. It is well supported and something people look forward to and hopefully will bring in money to help other nonprofits."

Kinkema said he was not certain yet how much revenue the series will generate, but there should be some savings because the club's 21 members will share the workload rather than a paid staff.

## SAR presents fire safety, medical service awards



The Colonel George Waller Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution recently presented its Fire Safety Award to Ridgeway Volunteer Fire Department Head Engineer Eddie Sheppard, and its Emergency Medical Service Award to Ridgeway Volunteer Rescue Squad EMT Ryan Mize. The two medals and certificates were awarded for outstanding accomplishments and contributions serving the community in the areas of public safety and emergency response. Shown in the photo at left are (from left) Mike Bass, SAR chapter public safety chairman; Sheppard; and Bob Vogler, SAR chapter president. Shown in the photo at right are (from left) Rescue Squad Captain Travis Pruitt; Mize; and Bass.

## Chase's Chance aids backpacks



Chase Clark of Chase's Chance (left) presents a donation to Travis Adkins, executive director of the Community Storehouse, for its Food for Kids: School Backpack Program.

# PHCC pantry gets \$5,000 boost

Patrick Henry Community College students should not have to worry about where their next meal is coming from.

The PHCC food pantry, which offers nonperishable food items as well as campus meals and grocery gift cards, recently received a nearly \$5,000 donation to restock its shelves.

The donation came from the Virginia Foundation for Community College Education (VFCCE) and the Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation.

According to college officials, food insecurity and hunger issues trouble dozens of PHCC students. Since the college began the food pantry in 2017, it has helped about 75 students every semester.

"We do have a surprising number of students who face hunger or food insecurities, said Amanda Broome, public relations specialist/social

media manager at PHCC. They may be students who are living with their parents and the parents are unemployed or underemployed, or they might not be facing hunger issues but may have had to skip a meal, she said.

"The pantry is the security that they can always have a meal available if needed," Broome added.

The pantry does not serve hot meals but it has gift cards and will offer vouchers for the food trucks that visit the campus, Broome said.

The pantry is not intended to become a student's main source of food. "We want them to get to the point where they are able to support themselves. The pantry is a last-minute resource," she added.

Students are given points, and pantry items are marked with points. That way, students "shop" using points much as they would cash, Broome said.

"It's a system to keep abuse from happening," she said, adding that to her knowledge, no one has been suspected of taking advantage of the system.

"If students are hungry, they will get food," she added.

Hunger is an issue on campuses around the nation, Broome said. At PHCC, Pell Grants, the Harvest Foundation-funded SEED program that pays for two years of community college for local students and other programs have resulted in many nontraditional students in colleges, she said.

"They never imagined college in their future but they're here now. That poses interesting problems" with issues such as transportation and hunger, she said.

To keep the pantry stocked, PHCC mainly relies on donations from the community and college personnel.

"This is a huge blessing," said Christy Stocks, Student Success Center director and pantry manager at PHCC. "With this donation, we should be able to get enough supplies to last an entire semester."

With the funds, the college intends to purchase nonperishable food items as well as toiletry and household items for the pantry; campus meals; and grocery gift cards as needed, according to a press release and Broome.

In a letter to the college, the VFCCE and Anthem expressed that this donation may be the beginning of a new partnership. Both organizations intend to continue supporting food emergency relief efforts and other student success initiatives at PHCC.



## Power Hour

The Rotary Club of Martinsville completes service projects for many nonprofits and other organizations each month as part of its Power Hour of Service. In March, Rotarians visited the Spencer-Penn Centre to work on outside beautification ahead of springtime. Shown above are (from left) V. Rod Berry, Larissa Rash, Latala Hodges, Bob Button, Glenn Wood, Denny Casey and Randy Smith. (Contributed photo)

## Seafood Fest 2019 set May 7

The Rotary Club of Martinsville is gearing up for its first spring fundraiser, Seafood Fest 2019.

The event will be held on May 7 at New College Institute, Baldwin Building from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Tickets are \$30 and available from any Martinsville Rotarian or at the Martinsville-Henry County Visitors Center.

The menu includes shrimp, tilapia, baked potato, coleslaw, hush puppies and dessert. Tea, water, beer and wine also will be available.

Proceeds from the fundraiser will be used to support the club's annual service projects, such as providing washers and dryers to low-income families through a partnership with the United Way of Henry County and Martinsville.

The Rotary Club of Martinsville meets at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesdays at Rania's Restaurant, 147 E. Main St. in Uptown Martinsville. Visit us on Facebook or email rotaryclubofmartinsville@gmail.com for additional information.

# Homestead announces student art show winners

Several area students won honors at the 4th annual Stuart Art Show at the Reynolds Homestead.

The 2019 show hosted 162 artists and 258 works of art. A reception was held March 3rd to honor the participants, and awards were presented.

The Best in Show award for eighth through 12th graders went to Brianna Nicole Milner of Magna Vista High School for her work entitled "This Is Me!".

For sixth- and seventh-graders, the Best Emerging Artist award went to Raeli Moran of Stuart Elementary School for his piece entitled "Pastel Sky."

Awards, by category, were presented to:

- Category I – Painting
  - First place – Aubrey Schofield, Martinsville High School, for "The Raven"
  - Second place – LeAnna Whitlow, Patrick County High School, for

- "Self-Portrait"
  - Third place – Hannah Trent, Patrick County High School, for "Study of Woman with a Parasol"
  - Category II – Drawing
    - First place – Heidi Pinnix, Magna Vista High School, for "Sisters"
    - Second place – Jennifer Santos, Bassett High School, for "Empowered Woman"
    - Third place – Isabelle Beasley, Patrick County High School, for "Self-Portrait"
  - Category III – Photography
    - First place – Breanna Hutcherson, North Stokes High School, for "Day Dreaming"
    - Secod place – Angel Marler, North Stokes High School, for "Behind the Shadows"
    - Third place – Wesley Diggs, Patrick County High School, for "Querencia"
  - Category IV – Three Dimensional
    - First place – Anna Hatchett, Bas-

- sett High School, for "Women"
    - Second place – Emily Maxey, Magna Vista High School, for "Rainey Sundae"
    - Third place – Meesa Wimbush, George Washington High School, "Leaf Pile"
    - Category V – Computer Graphics
      - First place – Tristan Shelton, Bassett High School, for "The Bug Lady"
      - Second place – Brianna McClain, North Stokes High School, for "Poppin Blue"
      - Third place – Victorian Janey, Bassett High School, for "Words of Truth"
- Merit Awards were given to:
- Autumn King, Woolwine Elementary School, for "Under the Stars"

- Kaitlyn Puckett, Stuart Elementary School, for "Kaleidoscope"
  - Adrianna Minter, Martinsville High School, for "Untitled (Flowers)"
  - Savannah Carr, Martinsville High School, for "Bowie"
- Also, the Bull Mountain Arts Award went to Gage Handy, Magna Vista High School, for "Dryer Deto Vito"

## Exchange

(cont. from page 17)

University. After returning to Taiwan in 1991, she started a private English tutoring business. She retired after 24 years as a tutor and now is a full-time volunteer.

Liu is a marketing manager at the Photon Aesthetic Cosmetology Clinic and also a consultant at Manhattan International Study Abroad Consultancy in Kaohsiung. His main focus is online marketing, with experience in digital gaming/apps marketing and customized website buildup projects.

He spent nine years studying abroad, through high school to the completion of a master degree from Manchester Metropolitan University in England.

Other team members were:

Champion Wang, a Ph.D. student in computer science, specializing in artificial intelligence and e-learning at National Chiao Tung

University. He is a manager of a learning lab and a lecturer of game design, computer system administration and computer network administration.

He received his master degree in information technology from Queensland University of Technology where he did extensive research on game design. His interactive multimedia platform designs are largely exhibited in museums and galleries in Taiwan.

He also lectures for World Leadership Education Foundation, which seeks to empower young leaders to find innovative solutions to world problems.

Maggie Lo, a business manager for an immigration consultant company and also a representative for a German hardware company. Her primary responsibility at the immigration company is to help clients with identity planning and immigration planning, which includes education, taxation, re-

retirement and property. The hardware firm focuses on importing high technology automation equipment and QEM business.

Brett Tseng is pursuing a Ph.D. in biomedical sciences at National Sun Yat-Sen University. His main study focuses are genomics, cancer medicine, molecular biology and precision medicine. He also is interested in business management, marketing and intellectual property law.

In 2017 he helped a company develop products to reduce the blood glucose level of people

with diabetes, so he became the firm's research and development consultant. He also created Endomers Biotech company to develop products to prevent medical-related diseases and cancer in women.

Rotary launched the exchange program in 1965. Since 1980, the local district has taken part in group study exchanges with Korea, Southern Caribbean, India, Canada, Australia, Taiwan, Argentina, Czech Republic and Slovakia, Italy, Tasmania, Australia, Bolivia, and other countries.

are thrilled to be celebrating '50 years of Love' with partners from around the commonwealth in 2019," said Rita McClenny, president and CEO of Virginia Tourism Corporation. "This grant program provides an engaging opportunity for destinations across the state to showcase what makes a vacation in Virginia so special, and helps to show travelers why 'Virginia is for Lovers' still rings true 50 years later."

"The '50 Years of Love' planning has been fun and I can't wait to see everything come together," said Beth Stinnett, assistant director of tourism and film office coordinator for the EDC. "We are thrilled to celebrate alongside the VTC and we are ready to show people why they will love Martinsville-Henry County."

Find details on local "50 Years of Love" plans at [www.VisitMartinsville.com/love](http://www.VisitMartinsville.com/love).

In total, VTC awarded \$390,000 to 39 tourism marketing programs across the commonwealth to help increase visitation and revenue. Each recipient received a \$10,000

grant for its "50 Years of Love" project. Recipients were required to engage 10 or more tourism partners to receive grant funds.

The Virginia Tourism Corporation is the state agency responsible for marketing Virginia to visitors and promoting the "Virginia is for Lovers" brand. In 2017, visitors to Virginia spent \$25 billion, which supported 232,000 jobs and contributed \$1.73 billion in state and local taxes.

The Virginia is for Lovers slogan was inducted into the Madison Avenue Advertising Walk of Fame on Sept. 21, 2009. It was included in the Advertising Icon Museum alongside fellow 2009 inductees, the AOL Running Man, the Budweiser Clydesdales and State Farm's slogan, "Like a Good Neighbor, State Farm is There." This recognition came on the heels of Forbes.com tapping Virginia is for Lovers as one of the top 10 tourism marketing campaigns of all time.

For more information about 50 Years of Love, visit [www.virginia.org/virginiaisforlovers](http://www.virginia.org/virginiaisforlovers).

## Farmer's market to open April 13

The Uptown Martinsville Farmer's Market will open for the season on Saturday, April 13.

From that day until Nov. 9, the market will be open on Saturdays from 8 a.m. until noon. One exception is Oct. 5 when the market will be closed for Oktoberfest 2019, which is held uptown.

From July 3 through Sept. 25, the market also will be open from 8 a.m. to noon on Wednesdays.

About 25 vendors had signed up to take part in the market as of mid-March, according to Kimberly Keller, uptown entrepreneurial development manager with Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce, which oversees the market. She added that more vendors are likely to take part as the season begins.

When it opens April 13, the market will have early produce as well as baked goods, jams and jellies, pork and beef and possibly crafts, including homemade soaps, Keller said.

The market is located at 65 W. Main St., across from the Martinsville Municipal Building and Fire Department. It is sponsored by Sovah Health, Martinsville, and Martin Plaza Furniture Outlets/The Showroom. EBT Match sponsors are Virginia Fresh Match and the Martinsville-Henry County Coalition for Health and Wellness.

For more information, call 632-5688.

# Tourism grant awarded

The Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corp.'s Tourism Office (VisitMartinsville) has received a \$10,000 grant from the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) "50 Years of Love" grant fund.

"50 Years of Love" is part of VTC's efforts to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the "Virginia is for Lovers" tourism slogan, which was created in 1969 by Richmond-based advertising agency Martin & Woltz.

VisitMartinsville partnered with Bassett Historical Center, Cocoa Trail Chocolates, Dipper's Ice Cream, Hamlet Vineyards, the Jeweler's Edge, Miles in Martinsville, Martinsville Speedway, Mountain Valley Brewing, Piedmont Arts, Rives Theatre, Rooster Walk Music & Arts Festival, Smith River Sports Complex and the Spencer-Penn Centre to celebrate Martinsville-Henry County. Special events are being planned throughout the year between the partners and VisitMartinsville.

"Virginia is for Lovers" is one of the most iconic tourism slogans in the world, and we

are thrilled to be celebrating '50 years of Love' with partners from around the commonwealth in 2019," said Rita McClenny, president and CEO of Virginia Tourism Corporation. "This grant program provides an engaging opportunity for destinations across the state to showcase what makes a vacation in Virginia so special, and helps to show travelers why 'Virginia is for Lovers' still rings true 50 years later."

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For more information about 50 Years of Love, visit [www.virginia.org/virginiaisforlovers](http://www.virginia.org/virginiaisforlovers).

## Book

(cont. from page 15)

The reaction has been 'overall really positive,' she said. "Most people are looking for a way to learn about an issue like this. They are looking at the world and politics and saying they feel a certain way and don't know why. There is a disconnect between what Jesus teaches and what's happening" in the nation now.

For Grammer now, life is full. She is the

senior pastor at First Baptist, which is a full-time job, and she has spoken publicly on the immigration issue. She also is working to finish her thesis — hopefully this fall — for her doctorate, and then she will focus her writing on short writings, such as blogs, rather than another book, she said.

She is married to William Underwood and they have a 6-month-old daughter, Elena.

## Provision

(cont. from page 14)

wear and more.

Smith River Fest will be held from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 10, at the Smith River Sports Complex (SRSC), 1000 Irisburg Road in Axton.

According to Beth Stinnett, assistant director of tourism for Martinsville-Henry County, "Smith River Fest is a day to celebrate not only the Smith River but all of the outdoor recreational opportunities that are available to enjoy in our area. We will have a lot of the same elements at this year's event, but with several new additions to enhance the fun, such as the Paddling Demo Pool."

The Paddling Demo Pool, sponsored by Sovah Health, will offer inexperienced boaters the opportunity to feel what it is like to get on a kayak while having the security of a shallow pool beneath them instead of the intimidation of the depth of a river. This will allow many first-timers to get a feel for the basic of paddling and maneuvering through water.

Sovah Health also will have staff

on-hand to provide medical services as an in-kind donation to the festival.

Last year, more than 1,500 guests from 11 states participated in the event, and festival organizers expect those numbers to grow. Main events for the upcoming 12th annual event include a 4.8-mile long river race and the Helgramite Hustle 5K Mud Run. Activities also will be offered throughout the day to give participants a taste of various outdoor activities.

Details of the festival will be posted at [www.SmithRiverFest.com](http://www.SmithRiverFest.com) and on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/SmithRiverFest](http://www.facebook.com/SmithRiverFest) as they are announced.

Smith River Fest is a collaborative effort between Henry County Parks & Recreation, Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corp.'s Tourism Division, Smith River Sports Complex, Dan River Basin Association, Martinsville-Henry County YMCA and Martinsville Parks & Recreation.

Vendor applications, race registrations and additional festival information can be found at [SmithRiverFest.com](http://SmithRiverFest.com) or by calling 632-8006.

## Momenta

(cont. from page 14)

but only Valerie Harper of the Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corp. got it right.

The company has five employees in three offices in Martinsville, Danville and Charlotte, N.C.

Its services now include logo and brand development, graphic design, custom web design and development, social media support, online marketing, promotional products, creative services and project management.

According to a timeline on its web page, herDesign began in 2002 as a one-person operation offering web design services in Martinsville. It opened an office in the West Piedmont Business Development Center (incubator) in 2004 and added one employee.

Four years later the company graduated from the incubator and moved into a new location above the Post Office in Uptown Martinsville. By then, herDesign had four full-time employees.

It also changed its name to HD Web Studio and offered graphic design, custom web development and

marketing. The Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce named HD Web Studio the Small Business of the Year in the service sector.

In 2010 HD Web Studio received a C-PEG (Chamber's Partner for Economic Growth) grant in recognition of its impact on economic growth in the area. A fifth employee was added that year and the company began offering marketing services.

It won Exhibitor's Choice honors at the Fast Track trade show in both 2010 and 2015. It also received the STAR Award at the Southside Show-Biz Trade Show in 2015.

HD Web Studio expanded to Danville in 2013, opening a second location on Bridge Street in the former Old Belt tobacco building. The following year its school report card design won Best Summary in the My School Information Design Challenge hosted by The Foundation for Excellence in Education.

The EDC gave it a development grant in 2016.

Edelen was invited to represent women in technology at Google I/O in 2017.



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