

## HENRY COUNTY ENTERPRISE

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## Pencils down: DeVault looks back at life in academia

Brandon Martin  
Staff writer

After dedicating 12 years of service to the Henry County School Board, Dr. Joseph DeVault, At-Large Board Member, is closing another chapter of his storied career in education.

The man -- fondly remembered in his capacity as a teacher, coach, principal and board member -- was recognized at a Dec. 13 meeting of the Henry County School Board, which unanimously, including a joking DeVault, passed a resolution thanking him for his service.

"It was a great career," DeVault said a few days later. "I have no regrets. I am very happy with the time that I spent in education. Students, teachers, and people that I've met, I look back with no regrets. It was a very rewarding career."

DeVault explained that he didn't originally want to pursue a career in education, but "both my mother and father were involved in education," which may have indicated that he was destined for his chosen career all along.

"When I went away to college, I didn't really plan on going into education. Due to their (parents) encouragement, I did take enough credits to be licensed," he said.

Even though he took a slight detour after graduating college when he "worked for one year in the shipyard in Newport News, Va.," he would inevitably find his way back to the school system when he met his wife who "was a teacher, and I decided maybe that's what I wanted to do."

Once he had made that decision, DeVault and his wife Jerri, decided to settle in Henry County, where they both could find work.

"Then we came here in the fall of '65' and I've just been with it ever since. I taught high school government and I coached football, basketball and track. When I was offered the opportunity after five years of teaching and coaching, I was offered a position as an Elementary School Principal at Rich Acres Elementary where I spent three years," DeVault said.

Following this milestone, DeVault went on to become the

principal of Drewry Mason High School, where he held the position until it was consolidated with George Washington Carver High School to make Magna Vista High School.

"I was the principal there when it first opened until '97, and I had enough years to retire in Virginia at that time," he said. "Not too long after that, I went to North Carolina and served as principal at McMichael High School until I retired in 2006. After I retired, I took on the position with the school board."

Over his time in the school system, DeVault says that he has about seen it all, but there were a couple movements that he found most startling.

"I saw a lot of changes from 1965 up until the present," he said. "I guess the emergence of all the technology involved in education now. The emphasis on technology and accountability over time has been interesting to watch."

Currently, Virginia schools must strive for "state-wide accreditation,

See Pencils down, page 7



PHOTO BY BRANDON MARTIN

Dr. Joseph DeVault (left), Member-at-Large of the Henry County School Board, and Sandy Strayer, division superintendent following DeVault's final school board meeting.

## Natural History's Christmas bird count most successful in years



From left to right, Dr. Kal Ivanov, Dr. Joe Keiper, Dr. Jim Beard and Jonathan Martin keep a close eye on a variety of ducks in a Henry County pond.

Ben R. Williams  
Contributing writer

With a total of 53 different species observed, the Virginia Museum of Natural History's Christmas bird count was the most successful count in years.

On Dec. 18, five museum staff members -- Curator of Earth Sciences Dr. Jim Beard, Associate Curator of Invertebrate Zoology Dr. Kal Ivanov, Executive Director Dr. Joe Keiper, CFO Jonathan Martin and Administrator of Science Ben Williams -- explored Martinsville and Henry County, taking note of the

different species of birds in the area and their numbers.

Such counts take place nationwide, generally around Christmas.

According to Beard, who is the museum's resident ornithologist (bird expert), the Christmas bird count is a national tradition dating back more than 100 years. In the 19th century and earlier, he said, people would venture out on the day after Christmas and shoot as many creatures as they could. The Audubon Society suggested an alternative -- why not just record the birds you see instead of shoot-

ing them? -- and the Christmas bird count was born.

While the VMNH count is not an official Audubon count, Beard said, it is conducted around the same time and records are kept each year. These records provide an overview of the bird species that can be found in Southside Virginia during the winter.

While there were official Audubon counts at VMNH in the '90s, Beard said, these counts eventually tapered off. Beard, Keiper and Ivanov resumed the Christmas bird counts in 2014, and while no count was conducted in 2015,

the count has resumed every year since.

The group counted 53 species for 2019, and the next highest tally was in 2017 when 51 species were sighted. Heavy winds made 2018 the worst year with just 37 species spotted.

Beard said he attributes this year's success to cooperative weather and more time spent out in the field. The count began at 7:30 a.m. and -- with the exception of a lunch break in which a truly staggering amount of fried chicken was

See Bird Count, page 10

Brandon Martin  
Staff writer

An outgoing member of the Henry County School Board was honored during the board's final meeting on Dec. 13.

The school board also adopted a resolution thanking Dr. Joseph DeVault for his service.

DeVault served as the board's Member-at-Large for 12 years. His tenure included a stint as chairman -- between 2013 and 2018. He dedicated his life to education, also serving as a teacher, coach and principal.

"My very first memories of Dr. DeVault came when I was a young child in elementary school. He took time out of

his busy day to come out into the lobby and speak to me," said Sandy Strayer, division superintendent. "I can't remember exactly what he said, but I'll never forget how important and special he made me feel. I do remember he was wearing those stripped tube socks and I thought he was so cool. Dr. DeVault is a wise servant-leader who is humble, kind, understanding, fair but firm. He is always the calm in the store. He carries himself with grace, dignity and yes, he is cool."

Various students also were presented awards for extracurricular excellence throughout the school year.

"It is our privilege to honor

See DeVault, page 6

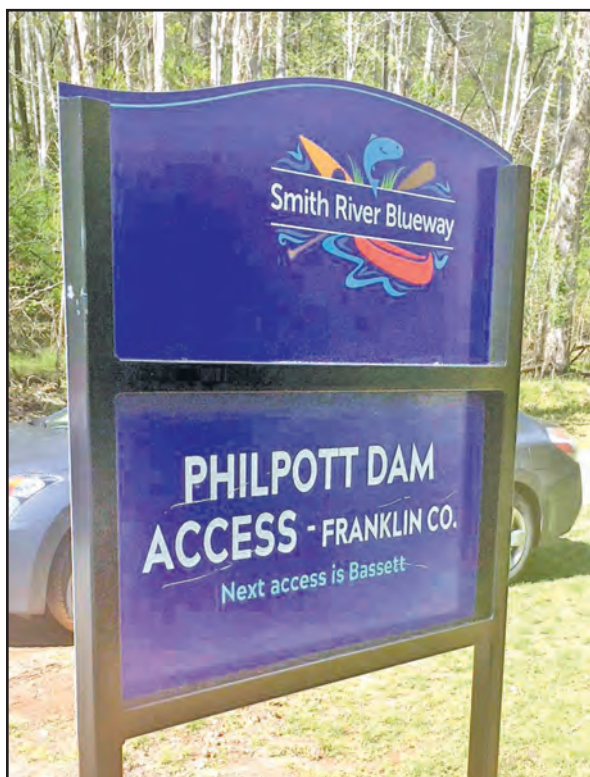
## DeVault honored at year end meeting



Dr. Joseph DeVault (left), member-at-large for the Henry County School Board, and Sandy Strayer (right), division superintendent for Henry County, present an award to Magna Vista High School's Distributive Education Clubs of AmericaTeam.

## 2019: Year in Review

Enjoy some of our most popular highlights from 2019.



Smith River Blueway sign.

## May

Water trail is created  
A new trail has been created to help people navigate the Smith River. The Smith River Blueway is a water trail that connects the communities and river access points in Henry County. It is marked at 11 access points by large blue signs that provide information to help enhance recreational experiences and opportunities on the river, according to Brian Williams, program manager for the Dan River Basin (DRBA).

See Year in Review, page 9

## A white green Christmas for PC teachers, schools with \$510,000 anonymous gift



Mrs. Roberson was in shock after receiving her Christmas gift from an anonymous donor.

Cory L. Higgs  
Staff Writer

Patrick County teachers will have a green Christmas, after an anonymous donor contributed approximately \$400,000 to give \$2,000 to each teacher in the county.

The bonus, in recognition of the critical work teachers do in our community, was in honor of Hazel Young Clark, a second-grade teacher for more than three decades at Stuart Elementary School. She also was a committed volunteer at the local hospital, nursing home and her church.

See Gift, page 6



# Virginia denies vast majority of parole requests, data shows

**Emma Gauthier and Anna Madigan**  
*Capital News Service*

Jen Soering and Elizabeth Haysom received parole last month after serving 30 years in state prison for the sensational murder of Haysom's parents in 1985.

Soering, a German national who had been given two life sentences, and Haysom, a Canadian who had been sentenced to 90 years, were turned over to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement for deportation.

"The Parole Board has determined that releasing Jens Soering and Elizabeth Haysom to their ICE deportation detainees is appropriate because of their youth at the time of the offenses, their institutional adjustment and the length of their incarceration," Adrienne Bennett, who chairs the board, said in a statement at the time.

Soering and Haysom each had been denied parole several times before being granted parole in late November. Their release from the prison system may have given the impression that Virginia has become more lenient in granting parole.

And that's true: The percentage of parole requests approved jumped from around 3% in 2014-16 to 13.5% in 2017, according

to a Capital News Service analysis of Parole Board decisions.

But parole is still pretty rare in Virginia. Between January and October of this year, the Parole Board granted parole 5% of the time. Of more than 17,000 cases considered over the past six years, about 6% received parole.

The system's critics say Virginia should grant parole more often.

"Considering that parole is a conditional release of an individual, this rate should be much higher," said Jwa'n Moore, director of Taking Back Our Youth. "I believe that parole was created to prove that incarcerated people can learn from the mistakes that they have committed."

Taking Back Our Youth is a nonprofit organization dedicated to "breaking the cycle" of juvenile incarceration.

Almost 30,000 people are serving time in prison in the commonwealth. In addition, 1,922 people were on parole as of October, according to the Virginia Department of Corrections.

The newest member of the Parole Board, Kemba Smith Pradia, was appointed in September. At age 24, Pradia was sentenced to 24

years in prison for her participation in her boyfriend's illegal drug activities. After serving a quarter of her sentence, she was granted clemency by President Bill Clinton in 2000.

Following her incarceration, Pradia earned college degrees in social work and law and started a foundation that raises awareness about drug abuse, violence, rehabilitation of ex-offenders and other social issues.

"She would probably bring compassion and empathy to the board," Moore said. "People who have a personal history with the system have a unique vantage point that those who have historically served on the parole board haven't had."

Virginia abolished parole in 1995, but inmates still can get parole if they were sentenced before the law went into effect; were sentenced under the Youthful Offenders Act; or are eligible for geriatric parole. Inmates can apply for geriatric parole if they are older than 60 and have served at least 10 years or are older than 65 and have served at least five years.

Since 2014, of the approximately 2,900 applications for geriatric parole, 147 — about 5% — have been granted, the data indicated.

Of the 151 inmates older

than 80 who have applied for parole, six have been granted. The offenders were denied for various reasons, including the seriousness of the offense and risk to the community. The Parole Board's decisions generally do not list the crimes that the applicant was convicted of.

The oldest inmate to apply for parole was 92 years old; he was denied.

Of the 182 inmates under 21 who have applied for parole, four have been granted.

According to the data, the youngest inmates to apply for parole were 16 years old: One applied in 2014 and the other in 2018. Both were rejected.

"Minors are still learning and making mistakes that they have to learn from," Moore said. "They should be held accountable for their actions, but parole gives our youth another chance at a positive lifestyle."

In 1995, the Virginia General Assembly abolished parole on grounds that doing so would lower the frequency of reincarceration after release. State and federal officials say Virginia has the lowest rate of reincarceration nationwide: 23% of Virginia inmates are reincarcerated within three years of their release from prison.

"Virginia's latest recidivism numbers are the result of a lot of hard work on the part of both the Department of Corrections and the incarcerated offenders," Gov. Ralph Northam stated in a press release.

In 2000, in *Fishback v. Commonwealth*, the Virginia Supreme Court ruled that juries must be told that parole has been abolished. Between 1995 and that court decision, 471 prisoners were sentenced without their juries knowing that they would not be eligible for parole, according to the Governor's Commission on Parole Review.

In 2015, the commission recommended that those inmates receive an opportunity for sentence modification. The panel said juries might have had a misconception that offenders could receive a shorter sentence through parole.

"This misconception likely had real consequences, since juries typically hand down harsher sentences than judges," the commission stated.

During the General Assembly's 2019 session, legislators filed two bills to allow parole for those convicted before the *Fishback* ruling. One bill died in a House committee, and the other was defeated by one vote in a Senate committee.

A similar bill has been

submitted for the legislative session that begins Jan. 8. In addition, Sen. John Edwards, D-Roanoke, has proposed reinstating parole, and Sen. Dave Marsden, D-Fairfax, has filed legislation to study that idea. Other legislators have suggested expanding the possibility of parole for inmates who committed crimes as juveniles and have served at least 25 years in prison.

The parole process begins with an interview in which an examiner compiles a summary and recommendation for the Parole Board. The board then evaluates the case based on a number of factors, including compatibility with public safety and the offender's criminal history and conduct in prison.

Since 2014, the parole board has provided more than 2,000 unique reasons to explain its decisions not to grant parole. The most common reasons include:

- \* "Serious nature and circumstances" of the offender's crime.
- \* "Release at this time would diminish the seriousness of crime."
- \* "The Board considers you to be a risk to the community."
- \* Extensive criminal record
- \* History of violence

# Ferrum College to offer graduate programs in fall



After a century of educating students as a training school, junior college, and four-year institution, Ferrum College will now offer graduate degree programs, which will begin in fall 2020 and will be administered as online courses.

The Southern Association of College and Schools Commission on Colleges has approved Ferrum College as a level four school, allowing the addition of two graduate

programs: a Specialist in Education (EdS) in teacher leadership and coaching, and a Master of Science in psychology.

"This is an important and historic moment for Ferrum College," said President David Johns. "We have been listening to our students and to our region, and as we have in the past, we grow and change when there is need. We are part of this community, and we are committed to helping the community thrive."

"Ferrum College is excited about offering graduate-level programs which will provide access to advanced education in the areas of psychology and teacher education. In the coming weeks and months, the faculty will be creating additional programs and certificates to meet the needs within our community," said Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Aimé Sposato.

Alumna Sandra Via has been named director of the

School of Graduate and Online Studies. Via is a 2004 graduate of Ferrum College and has served the College for ten years as an adjunct professor, an associate professor of political science, and as the program coordinator of international studies. She will direct the implementation and logistical coordination of the graduate programs.

Via earned her Bachelor of Arts in political science from Ferrum College. She holds a Master of Arts in political science from Virginia Tech and a doctorate in planning, governance, and globalization, also from Virginia Tech.

"I am honored and excited to be able to implement Ferrum College's first graduate programs," said Via. "Our new graduate degree programs embody our mission by promoting the intellectual, ethical, and civic growth of students into leaders that serve their community and the world. Like our

undergraduate programs, these graduate programs incorporate a personalized learning experience, specialized and caring attention from faculty, and an experiential learning experience for which Ferrum College is known."

The Master of Science in psychology will attract graduate students who wish to prepare for research and teaching careers that require an advanced degree, such as working at non-profit organizations, for-profit companies, governmental agencies, social services agencies, educational institutions, and community outreach organizations.

The Education Specialist degree is geared toward students who already hold a master's degree and wish to advance their professional knowledge in either teacher leadership or coaching.

Both programs could also serve as a stepping stone to a doctoral pro-

gram in either discipline.

Ferrum College will begin accepting applications for enrollment in its graduate programs in January. The College plans to launch additional graduate degree programs within the next two years.

Ferrum Training School was founded in 1913 as many young people in the Blue Ridge area had no access to public education. The training school's first classes began in September 1914 under the leadership of its first principal, Dr. Benjamin Beckham. In 1939, the Virginia Department of Education accredited Ferrum Junior College and its name officially reflected this level change in 1948. Ferrum Junior College was then accredited by the Southern Association of College and Secondary Schools in 1960 and instituted a two-plus-two four-year academic structure in 1974. The first four-year degree was awarded in 1976.

## CROSSWORD PUZZLE

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					11							
12	13		14			15						
16		17				18			19	20	21	
22						23						
24					25	26			27			
				28		29			30			
31	32	33		34			35		36			
37			38		39							
40				41		42		43	44	45	46	47
48				49				50				
51								52				
								54			55	
			56			57		58				
			59					60				

**CLUES ACROSS**

1. Hair care product
4. Looped
10. It's present in all living cells
11. Choose
12. South Dakota
14. Cash machine
15. Of the pia mater
16. Ancient Egyptian documents
18. Layers at the back of the eyeballs
22. Not perceived
23. Look over
24. Improve a tire
26. Time zone
27. Main branch of Islam
28. Bark of the mulberry tree
30. Sea eagles
31. Records heart muscle

activity (abbr.)

34. Famed Hollywood producer
36. Yuck!
37. Reject outright and bluntly
39. \_\_ 500, car race
40. Small heap or pile
41. Type of degree (abbr.)
42. Contagious skin disease
48. Erases from a surface
50. In an enthusiastic way
51. Begin again
52. Intricately produced pattern
53. It flows NW to the Seine
54. Be obliged to repay
55. Southeast
56. Slip in
58. Leisure time activity
59. Breastbones
60. Sun up in New York

**CLUES DOWN**

1. More cloudy
2. Main course
3. Protect with plastic
4. Equally
5. Rebukes
6. Friend to a salesman
7. Warms up
8. Overshadow
9. Interior lineman in football
12. San Antonio hoopster
13. Comedian Cook
17. Time zone
19. First PM of India
20. Performing perfectly
21. A way to hide
25. Former NBA commissioner
29. Peter's last name
31. Outlying suburb of London
32. Used to cut steak
33. Deep inlets
35. Type of tree
38. Done openly and unashamedly
41. Indigenous person of N. Africa
43. Confessed openly
44. A way to separate with an instrument
45. Influential journalist
46. Manning and Roth are two
47. One who cares for horses in India
49. Something to believe in
56. Form of "to be"
57. Atomic #73

## How fast must you go to draw a speeding ticket?

**Erica Mokun and Catalina Currier**  
*Capital News Service*

"Nine you're fine, ten you're mine." A Reddit user recently quoted that saying in an online discussion about speeding in Virginia. The conventional wisdom is that you probably won't get ticketed unless you're going at least 10 mph over the speed limit.

Is that true? Pretty much, according to an analysis of speeding tickets processed in General District Courts across Virginia last year.

Almost 98% of the tickets involved going 10 or more miles an hour over the limit. Even where the posted limit was 35 mph or less, 97% of the speeding tickets were issued to people accused of exceeding the limit by at least 10 mph. The average speeder was going 17 mph over the limit.

Now, we're not suggesting you should have a lead foot while driving. As the Reddit user noted, "Technically anything over the limit is illegal." But statistically, if you're speeding only by single digits, you're unlikely to draw a ticket, the data indicate.

Of the approximately 590,000 speeding cases handled by General District Courts in 2018:

§ About 13,750 involved going less than 10 mph over the limit. Forty of those cases involved going less than 5 mph over the limit.

§ About 174,000 involved going 10-14 mph over the limit.

§ About 283,000 involved going 15-19 mph over the limit.

§ More than 118,000 involved going 20 or more miles per hour over the limit — which is one definition of reckless driving in Virginia.

The cases include 98,000 drivers who

were going more than 80 mph, another definition of reckless driving that is grounds for being charged as a Class 1 misdemeanor.

Going 80 mph would be slow by the standards of some Virginia drivers. Seventeen defendants in General District Court were accused of going at least 130 mph — and 2,135 were charged with going 100-129 mph.

Driving like that can be expensive: More than 1,050 defendants were fined at least \$1,000 — including about 150 who had to pay \$2,500 or more. The average fine, including court costs, was about \$190.

For safety and financial reasons, motorists should slow down, said Karen Rice, who has operated a driving school in Richmond for 19 years.

Her business, called The Driving School Inc., offers eight-hour driver improvement classes for court, DMV and voluntary purposes. Rice said registration typically spikes in December.

"After the holidays, business will be booming because of all the tickets written in this season, as well as people procrastinating because of the holidays," Rice said.

Rice explained why she thinks many drivers go too fast: "I feel the majority of people speed because they are running late and just are not paying attention."

Besides driving school, people accused of reckless driving may need a lawyer to help them in court. A conviction can have a significant impact on a person's driving record and car insurance, said Will Smith, an attorney at the Bowen Ten Cardani law firm.

He noted that reckless driving, as a Class 1 misdemeanor, is a criminal offense. When drivers understand that, "they realize that that is something that they don't want on their record," Smith said.

# GoodCare offers 'hand up' to aspiring healthcare professionals



Logo for Goodwill's "GoodCare" program

Goodwill is currently looking for candidates, interested in long-term career growth in the healthcare industry, to enroll in their training program "GoodCare."

Through a partnership with Community Colleges and Adult Education or Literacy programs, individuals who participate in GoodCare benefit from supportive services, life skills training, education, and assistance to obtain employment in the healthcare industry.

According to their website, "people served will enter an in-demand occupation and have the opportunity to grow and advance their career through healthcare pathways."

After receiving a Health Professionals Opportunity Grant (HPOG) from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in October 2015, the GoodCare program began

in 2016.

GoodCare serves individuals who are Temporary Assistance for Needy Families recipients, as well as other low-income individuals. Seats are limited and interested individuals will have to meet certain eligibility requirements.

HPOG conducts a study to determine how these training opportunities help people improve their skills and find better jobs. During the study, all new eligible applicants will be selected by lottery to participate in these training opportunities. Not all eligible applicants will be selected to participate in these opportunities.

While there is no cost to be enrolled into the program, GoodCare Regional Coordinator Crystal Hairston says there are other assessments that must be completed.

"There are introductory assessments individuals must complete before

starting the program to ensure they have the skills needed to be successful in the program," Hairston explained. "Goodwill can provide assistance in basic skills training if necessary, to help individuals to be prepared to enter the GoodCare program."

Hairston spoke more on the benefits of the program.

"There is so much pride, dignity, and self-respect that comes from having a career and earning a paycheck," she said. "Think about when you meet someone. What is the first questions you are often asked? 'So, where do you work,' or 'what do you do?' If you don't have a response to those questions, it can be devastating not only to your ability to provide for your basic needs but to your self-esteem."

According to Hairston, Goodwill has made it their goal to help people asking these type of questions.

"Goodwill programs provide the 'hand up, not a handout' someone needs to get back to work and gain greater independence," she continued.

"Goodwill works with individuals to help them have a vision of a better life for themselves and help them discover how they can make that a reality. It may be that Goodwill provides the training, or can connect them

with training through a Goodwill partner but it is Goodwill's goal to help individuals achieve their greatest potential."

Hairston told the story of a woman named Carol, who personally benefitted from programs like these.

"In 2009, Carol and her husband made the difficult decision to leave the Amish faith," she explained. "While Carol flourished by obtaining her GED, having only completed the 8th grade which was customary for Amish girls, her husband struggled with his new freedom."

By 2016, Hairston said that Carol's husband was incarcerated. From there, Carol found herself divorced and alone to raise six children. According to Hairston, Carol began working as a housekeeper in a nursing home but when her hours were cut, she had trouble making ends meet until she found out about the GoodCare program.

"She met with Goodwill staff and began taking Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) classes," said Hairston. "Working as a CNA, Carol's income increased but she knew she wanted more for herself and her family. Carol enrolled, through the program, to earn her degree as a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN). Working and earn-

ing her degree was hard work but she was focused and determined to meet her career goals. Carol graduated from the nurse's program in May 2019."

From there, Carol went on to pass her LPN State Board tests and accept a full-time position as an LPN at Blue Ridge Home Health Care in Galax. She now owns a new car and her family has moved into a larger house.

"Through the challenges of the last several years, Carol sees a brighter future," Hairston said. "She is proud of the example she set for her children. And because of the help she received from Goodwill, her kids know that anything is possible if you just set your mind to it."

While Goodwill has made it a platform to help individuals like Carol, they assure that it benefits the community as well.

"For individuals who are struggling to make ends meet, often need skills training in order to find a job that will allow them to earn a paycheck and support their families," Hairston said. "The need for qualified healthcare workers in the Goodwill Industries of the Valleys service area is great, and the individuals served enter an in-demand occupation and have the opportunity to grow and advance their career through

health care pathways."

Hairston says that program representatives are eagerly waiting to respond to questions from interested applicants.

"The information sessions held a couple of times a month and are open to the public and we would like to share the information about GoodCare to as many individuals in the Martinsville area, who are interested in a career in healthcare," she said.

Applications are being taken on a continual basis, according to Hairston.

"GoodCare is currently recruiting new students for the program on an ongoing basis. Interested individuals should fill out an interest form or attend an information session. More information can be found at <https://www.goodwillvalleys.com/work-and-training-services/adult-services/goodcare-health-care-training/>."

Goodwill's mission is to help individuals with disabilities and disadvantages to get back to work and find greater independence. The GoodCare program was started through the grant opportunity from HPOG. The program was created to provide supportive services, life skills, education, training, and assistance for individuals to obtain employment in the healthcare industry.

## Great Expectations spreads holiday cheer

**Brandon Martin**  
Staff writer

Patrick Henry Community College (PHCC) Great Expectations recently wrapped up a toy drive for foster care children which was held on both campuses from Dec. 1-13.

This marks the third year that the program has collected toys for Virginia's foster youth.

Great Expectations is a nationally recognized program that assists children in Virginia's foster care system with gaining post-secondary credentials in order to lead an independent and successful life.

"My students often tell me their histories with foster care. They aren't always good stories. They often get taken away and left with nothing," said Dr. Janet Hairston, Great Expectations and College Success Coach at PHCC. "This is our way of making sure that they have a little something that they can call their own."

Collections sites were placed across both of PHCC's Patrick and Henry County campuses before being sent to various social services departments

in the region for distribution.

"For the past two years, PHCC has partnered with CVCC (Central Virginia Community College), DCC (Danville Community College), and SVCC (Southside Virginia Community College) and distributed donations to four social service agencies serving numerous county locations," Hairston said in an email distributed across campus. "This year, PHCC Great Expectations will be collecting donations independently and distributing care boxes to Henry-Martinsville, Franklin, and Patrick county DSS (Department of Social Services) agencies."

While all appropriate donations were accepted, items such as school supplies, soccer balls, dolls, toy cars, hygiene items, clothing, brain games and non-chocolate candy were seen as coveted objects.

In 2008, Great Expectations was created by Virginia's community colleges and patrons supporting the Virginia Foundation for Community College Education. The program started at five commu-

nity colleges under a pilot grant. Since the inception of the program, it has expanded to 21 community colleges across the Commonwealth.

The main goal of the program is to help high school foster children finish school and have the necessary education and skills to transition to independent life.

Among the main components of the program are individual tutoring, personalized counseling and providing student mentors. Students are also given help applying for college admission, financial aid and applying for and keeping a job. Life skills such as financial management are also offered.

According to the Great Expectations website, "aging out of foster care is like stepping off a cliff. One day your basic needs are covered, the next you are on your own. In most cases, you have had little or no preparation for finding an apartment, living on a budget, let alone applying to college or seeking financial aid. These are just a few of the reasons so many young people leaving fos-

ter care struggle."

In terms of permanent placement for children that age out of foster care, Virginia ranks at the bottom of the country. Approximately 500 youth age out of the system each year with 25 percent not finding a permanent home before the age of 18.

According to a study published by Chapin Hall, 54 percent of former foster youth in their mid-twenties are unemployed. Thirty-one percent of them had reported had been homeless or couch surfed since exiting foster care. Almost 60 percent of males surveyed, had been convicted of a crime with three-fourths spending time in jail. Only eight percent completed a two or four-year degree.

Since the program began, 163 Great Expectations students earned a two-year degree. The program had 183 students earned career studies certificates, 284 students enrolled in four-year colleges and 42 graduated from a four-year school.

Schools participating in the program are: Blue Ridge Community College, CVCC, DCC,



PHOTO COURTESY OF DR. JANET HAIRSTON

**Display of toy donations made to Patrick Henry Community College Great Expectations.**

Eastern Shore Community College, Germanna Community College, J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, John Tyler Community College, Lord Fairfax Community College, Mountain Empire Community College, New River Community College, Northern Virginia Community College, PHCC, Paul D. Camp

Community College, Piedmont Virginia Community College, Rappahannock Community College, SVCC, Southwest Virginia Community College, Thomas Nelson Community College, Tidewater Community College, Virginia Highlands Community College and Wytheville Community College.

## Harvest grant to establish local office for Virginia Legal Aid Society, Inc.



**Pictured from left are Cliff Glickman, grant writer and communications coordinator for the Virginia Legal Aid Society Inc. (VLAS), Sheryl Agee, impact officer and team leader at The Harvest Foundation, Rhonda Knight, VLAS director of development, and David Weillnau, managing attorney for the VLAS Danville office.**

The Virginia Legal Aid Society, Inc. (VLAS) will establish an office in Martinsville-Henry County to provide legal and advocacy support for residents through a three-year grant of \$300,000 from The Harvest Foundation. Sheryl Agee, impact officer and team leader at The Harvest Foundation, said this is part of a continuing effort to build a strong support system for the local workforce, and will focus on maintaining stable housing for individuals. "As local job opportunities are increasing, many people are new employees or may be coming back after a prolonged absence, and they need support as they may not have a strong financial foundation yet," Agee said. "Their path forward can easily fall apart if they run into a financial situation that leads to a housing issue or eviction. Virginia Legal Aid will have an attorney dedicated to Martinsville-

Henry County residents who will assist them in navigating those issues." High poverty rates, low median incomes and high eviction rates were cited as major barriers to safe and secure housing in the area, according to the grant application. Eviction rates for Martinsville are 7.23 percent and 4.38 percent in Henry County, compared with a national rate of 2.34 percent. The project's major goals are to improve the safety and stability of housing for low-income residents, supporting their ability to participate in the workforce. "Eviction rates in the Martinsville area, like much of Virginia, far exceed the national average," said David Neumeier, Executive Director of Virginia Legal Aid Society. "Our attorneys can provide critical services to tenants and creative solutions to landlords to reduce evictions and increase support for Martinsville's workforce. We are grateful to The

Harvest Foundation for funding our effort to help provide safe and secure housing options for the area." Virginia Legal Aid has provided free legal support to the community since its inception in 1977, but services are provided through the Danville office with an attorney traveling to Martinsville for appointments. The organization plans to have an office established in Martinsville in the first quarter of 2020 with the goal of serving 150 people in the first year. "This program is about being proactive," Agee added. "As we increase the capacity of housing and build the housing market throughout our community, we're also putting safeguards in place to ensure area residents have support in finding affordable and stable housing. Virginia Legal Aid also will tackle other legal barriers low-income residents face to help them with services they may not be able to afford otherwise."

## OPINION

## The best worst comic

Some years ago, I was the general manager of a playhouse in downtown Roanoke called Studio Roanoke.

For a period of time, Studio Roanoke hosted about three different open mic nights, one for poetry, one for spoken word performance, and one for comedy. It was at the comedy open mic that I met the one of the best stand-up comedians I have ever personally seen. He was also, paradoxically, one of the worst stand-up comedians I have ever seen.

I want to preface this by saying that I liked this kid. He showed up to the first comedy night about an hour before it started. His parents dropped him off, an amiable older couple who I expect had him pretty late in life. He was perhaps in his early 20s.

I can't remember his name, but I do remember it was an old man's name. We'll call him Chester.

Chester walked in wearing a black suit and tie that hung off his frame as though he'd robbed the world's fattest man. He was probably about 6'5", and he loomed over me, a giant grin on his face.

"Hi!" he said excitedly, sticking out his hand. "I'm Chester!"

"Hi Chester," I said, gripping his hand, "Ben Williams. Good to meet you."

"Great to meet you, Benny!" he said. "I'm here to do some stand-up comedy!"

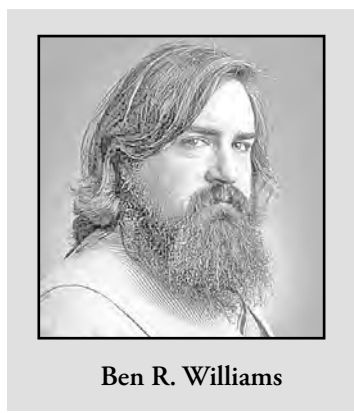
I added him to the list, and the four of us — me, Chester, and Chester's proud parents — sat in the lobby chatting for about 45 minutes until a couple more comedians and an audience arrived.

I opened up the show, did a comedy set myself, and then retired to the light booth to watch the rest. It was a pretty forgettable evening of comedy, with the exception of Chester's performance. It was terrible.

Now, when I say it was terrible, I need to clarify what that means. I have watched a tremendous amount of stand-up comedy in my life, and I've performed some from time to time. Chester's style was straight from the height of the 1980s stand-up boom, an era when every bar across America held a comedy night and every aspiring comic, no matter how lacking in talent, could take the stage and do five minutes of lame observational humor about airline food and Those Clowns in Washington.

Lame observational humor was Chester's starting point, but he also had a touch of anti-comedy to his performance — best embodied in people like Andy Kaufman, Norm MacDonald and Neil Hamburger — where the humor comes from the fact that the jokes are deliberately bad, but delivered with fake sincerity.

In Chester's case, the sincerity wasn't fake. It was completely



Ben R. Williams

genuine, and he delivered his terrible jokes with zeal. He could easily have been mistaken for an anti-comedian, but when he did a Seinfeld-esque joke about how crazy shampoo is ("Lather, rinse and repeat? Who are these people who repeat?!") he believed it.

I saw Chester a couple of times at comedy night, and he was nothing if not consistent.

Sadly, the comedy night and spoken word night shows at Studio Roanoke were eventually cancelled. However, poetry night continued, in large part due to the support of a nearby women's college.

Every month, about 20-30 women from the college would come out and read their poetry. Generally, these were empowering, heartfelt poems about being a woman, finding yourself in the world, that sort of thing. I tend to prefer poems about awful men killing other awful men on whal-

ing ships, but I could dig some of it.

We did the poetry nights without incident for several months. And then, one night, Chester showed up, five minutes of new material in hand.

"Hey Chester," I said, "I'm afraid we had to cancel the comedy night, this is actually poetry night."

"Oh, I know, Benny," he said. "I just really wanted to try out some new material. Do you think anyone would mind?"

Outside, I saw Chester's parents' car pulling away from the curb. He stood before me, his characteristic grin on his face, an excitable golden retriever in the body of a lanky young man.

I didn't have it in me to break Chester's heart.

"Nah, I'm sure it'll be fine," I said.

The poets showed up, I announced the order, and the show began. I watched it from inside the light booth behind the audience. In front of me, I saw 30 young women sitting quietly, and seated in the middle of them like a looming tower, all 6'5" of Chester in his billowing black suit.

The women got up, one by one, and performed their poems. They were poems about finding your way in the world, poems about figuring out who you are, poems about moving on from bad relationships, poems about the complex beauty and beauti-

ful complexity of this thing called life.

And then Chester took the stage.

"Hiya folks!" he said. "You ever go to the grocery store? I was in Kroger the other day, and I went to check out the produce section. You know how they got those little sprayers that keep the produce fresh? Well, in Kroger, right before those things go off, they make the sound of thunder! I'm like, hey, who's this suppose to fool? Is somebody in Kroger turning to his wife and saying, 'Jeez Honey, we better get outta here, there's a storm brewing!'"

The women in the audience were silent. I could see their hatred for Chester radiating above their heads like the wavy effect on a hot desert highway.

Inside the light booth, I was hunched over and contorted, tears streaming down my face as I tried to keep my laughter at a manageable level.

I have seen good comics perform for a bad audience, and I have seen bad comics perform for a good audience, and in either case, the experience is unmemorable. But if a terrible enough comic performs for a wrong enough audience, the end result is one of the funniest things I have ever seen in my life.

Cheers to you, Chester. I'm sorry we lost touch, but I hope you're still out there knocking them dead.

## "Medal of Honor – Ordinary People Doing Extraordinary Things"



**Fran Snead**  
Contributing writer

This past November, in recognition of Veterans Day, Jerry Perdue, a Korean Veteran, presented a program at the Bassett Historical Center about the Medal of Honor, our nation's highest award for valor in action against an enemy force engaging in war against the United States. His program included facts, a brief history, and several personal stories of some of the recipients — just ordinary people doing extraordinary things. This prestigious personal military decoration known as the Medal of Honor is awarded by the United States President in the name of the U.S. Congress. There are three versions of this medal: one for the Army, one for the Navy, and one for the Air Force. Personnel of the Marine Corps and the Coast Guard receiving this award are presented with the Navy version. The medal itself has no respecter of person, only of deeds. It has been awarded over the years to both privates and generals; men of all races and faiths; immigrants from sixteen foreign countries; city boys as well as country boys of all ages. Of the forty two million men and women who have served our nation in the military since the Civil War, only 3,525 of these medals have been awarded to 3,506 individuals.

Here are some of the interesting facts associated with the Medal of Honor that were shared at the program. Forty percent of the total number of medals awarded was presented for actions that occurred during the Civil War. There have been a total of nineteen men that have been double recipients of the Medal of Honor; one being Thomas Custer, brother of General George Custer, and one being Robert Augustus Sweeney. Sweeney was a sailor in the U.S. Navy and is the only African American to receive the Medal of Honor twice, both awarded for peace time actions. There have been two sets of fathers and sons which include Arthur MacArthur and his son Douglas, and Theodore Roosevelt and his son, Theodore, Jr. There have also been five pairs of brothers that share this honor. The youngest recipient was Willie Johnston. At eleven years old, he enlisted in the Union Army with his

father and he served as a drummer boy in the third Vermont Infantry during the Civil War. His unit became overpowered by Confederate forces and had to retreat under the orders of General George McClellan. Along the way, men discarded their weapons and much of their equipment to quicken their pace. Willie kept his drum throughout the march and, when Abraham Lincoln heard about his bravery, he recommended him for the Medal of Honor. Willie received the medal in September 1863 at the age of thirteen. Only one female has received this recognition, Dr. Mary Edwards Walker who was a surgeon during the Civil War. She was rejected as an Army surgeon because she was female, but she chose to volunteer as a surgeon for the Union Army as a civilian. She felt that she had been awarded the Medal of Honor due to the fact that she had gone into enemy territory to care for those who were injured. Her medal was rescinded in 1917 along with several other non-combat awards, but it was restored in 1977 by President Jimmy Carter.

The total number of Medal of Honor recipients includes seventy four Virginians; seven being alumni from VMI and seven being Virginia Tech alumni. Closer to home, there has been only one Medal of Honor recipient from Chatham, Virginia by the name of Staff Sergeant Archer T. Gammon and three have been from Lynchburg, Virginia including Private First Class Desmond Thomas Doss whose military story has been told in the movie Hacksaw Ridge. Henry County is represented in this distinguished list with a Henry Countian by marriage, Technical Sergeant Robert Elwood Gerstung. Robert Gerstung was born August 6, 1915 in Chicago, Illinois to Fred Gerstung and Lillian Tramm Gerstung. He served in the United States Army during World War II as a member of H Company of the 313th infantry of the 79th division. Sergeant Gerstung witnessed severe fighting in France and in the invasion of Germany as his division saw 120 days of continuous combat action. On December 16, 1944, he and the other members of his company were paralyzed by enemy mortar, tank, and rifle fire near the Siegfried line near Berg, Germany. While wounded, Ger-

stung was able to single handedly hold off a counter attack from the enemy for eight hours, long enough to permit the safe withdrawal of his company with some sadly becoming casualties. He was able to maintain the operation of a machine gun until it jammed and then quickly crawled to another weapon of the same type to continue his fight. One hundred yards from safety, he was struck in the leg by a mortar shell; but with great effort and determination, he crawled the remaining distance to join the remaining members of his company. His Medal of Honor was issued on September 5, 1945 by President Harry S. Truman. Technical Sergeant Gerstung was honorably discharged from the Army on September 28, 1945 as a highly decorated soldier, the Medal of Honor being among his many awards. He met his future bride, Sallie Willie Kallam, daughter of William Franklin Kallam and Sallie Marshall Kallam of Martinsville, while working in Washington, D.C. Willie Kallam worked in the U.S. Military Intelligence Division War Department for a short period of time and also for the Signal Corps helping to manage communications and information systems for the command and control of the U.S. combined forces. The two were married on June 25, 1947 and lived in Chicago, Illinois. Robert Gerstung died at the age of sixty three on June 17, 1979 and was buried with military honors in Arlington National Cemetery. Willie moved back home to Martinsville shortly after the death of her husband and lived out her life on Corn Tassel Trail until the age of 94. She died on December 6, 2008 and was buried beside of her husband. Among the many displays and items that are housed here at the Bassett Historical Center, a display of citations, information, and medals belonging to Technical Sergeant Robert E. Gerstung which were donated by the family can be seen in the Center's War Room. Currently there are seventy one living recipients of the Medal of Honor — two from World War II; five from the Korean War; forty nine from Vietnam; fourteen from the War in Afghanistan; one from the War in Iraq.

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Serving Henry County, Martinsville, and Surrounding Area  
**HENRY COUNTY ENTERPRISE**  
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**Give us your view:**

The Henry County Enterprise encourages letters from our readers on topics of general interest to the community and responses to our articles and columns. Letters must be signed and have a telephone number where you can be reached to be considered for publication. All letters will be verified before publication. The Henry County Enterprise reserves the right to deny publication of any letter and edit letters for length, content and style.

If you have news about or an upcoming event for your organization, company or church, email dhall@theenterprise.net and/or call (276) 694-3101



# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Until January 7, 2020

**Startup MHC:** Sponsored by the Chamber's Partnership for Economic Growth (C-PEG). This program offers both an 8-week program for start-ups and a 4-week program for existing businesses. Accepted participants who complete the classes can also compete for prize packages to help grow their business. Deadline to apply is January 7! Contact: 276-632-6401

## Saturday, December 28

**Papa's Pizzeria:** Papa's Pizzeria invites you out every Saturday night for karaoke on the outdoor patio beginning at 8:30. Grab your friends, enjoy the great Italian food and then hit the stage! Everyone, including kids, is invited to sit out by the Smith River and enjoy their favorite songs. Outdoor seating including children's area available. Contact: (276) 629-6992; Address: 4288 Fairystone Park Highway Bassett, VA 24055

**Sportlanes:** Bowling a few games at Sportlanes is even more fun Friday and Saturday nights because it's "Rock-It" bowling time! From 9:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. the lights will flash and the music will fill the alley while you play. Enjoy a variety of music and dance along if you want! Contact: (276) 632-6060; Address: 10 Koehler Road Martinsville, VA 24112

**Stafford's Music:** Come out to Stafford's Music in Martinsville for

the Stafford's Saturday Morning Jam every other Saturday and enjoy the singin' pickin' and playin'. Talented, local musicians will lead the sessions but everyone that plays, is welcome to bring their instrument along and join right in! Pick and play every other Saturday at Stafford's Music from 11 am to 4 pm. Contact: (276) 656-1555; Address: 1320 S. Memorial Blvd. Martinsville, VA 24112

**A Night Uptown with Vanessa Ferguson:** Join us for a spectacular evening of soulful music and vibes, presented by G2 Auto Sales and Towing. The event will be headlined by international recording artist and NBC's The Voice finalist, Vanessa Ferguson. Also performing will be R&B sensation Andre "Smooov" Benton, who recently starred in the poignant short film "SELL." DJ Phattzz will be in the building as well spinning on the 1's and 2's. There will be food provided by Hylton's Wood Cooking Grill. Attire is casual dressy. Time: 8 - 11 p.m.; Tickets: \$30; Address: 20 East Church Street Martinsville, VA 24112

## Sunday, December 29

**Hamlet Vineyards:** Sweeten your Sunday afternoons with a trip to Hamlet Vineyards in Bassett, VA. Every Sunday from 1-5 pm you can enjoy a wine tasting featuring Pinot Gris, Viognier, Petit Verdot, Old Virginia Red and others. Also offer-

ing local, freshly baked breads with gourmet spreads or lunch to complete your tasting. Contact: (276) 629-2121; Address: 405 Riverside Drive Bassett, VA 24055; Admission: Fee varies

**Henry County Bike Club:** The Henry County Bike Club will ride at the Mountain Laurel Trails in Ridgeway every Sunday afternoon at 2:00 p.m. Occasionally the Mountain Bike Ride may be held at Cedar Ridge Trails. In those instances, the Henry County Bike Club will post an update on the website as well as the Facebook page. For more information on the weekly Mountain Bike Ride, please call Bob Norris at 276-340-9144 or Tommy at 276-618-0343. Address: 361 Mountain Laurel Trail Ridgeway, VA 24148

## Tuesday, December 31

**Hardee's (Stanleytown):** The Hardee Bunch" invites everyone out on Tuesday mornings to enjoy Old Style Country & Gospel Music. The Jamboree started in 1994 as a birthday celebration for a member celebrating his 91st birthday. Because it was such a hit, the group decided to do meet each week to play. Contact: (276) 629-1122; Address: 933 Fairystone Park Hwy Stanleytown, VA 24168

**Mountain Valley Artisan Barn:** Join us for a New Years Eve Party that you won't forget! \$50/couple (\$25/single) includes live enter-

tainment, from Pine Moon and our MVAB house DJ, buffet and drinks. Call or text for reservations 276-220-6591. Party starts @ 7pm. Address: 1215 Collins Rd Axton, VA 24054

## Wednesday, January 1

**Henry County Bike Club:** Join the Henry County Bike Club for a weekly, evening ride along the many gorgeous trails of the Smith River Trail System. Mountain bikes are recommended but road bikes can be used as well. The Wednesday evening ride offers bikers the opportunity to ride either road, trail or both. Ride times will range from 30 minutes to an hour and locations will vary. A light is needed to participate in this ride. Check the Henry County Bike Club Facebook page, or contact Tommy at 276-618-0343 for ride locations and times. Address: 3521 River Road Fieldale, VA 24089

**Fairy Stone State Park:** Join our park's interpreter for a campfire before we depart down Lake Shore trail to the spillway. The hike is approximately 1 mile. Contact: (276) 930-2424; Address: 967 Fairystone Lake Drive Stuart, VA 24171

## Thursday, January 2

**Thursday Trail Trekkers:** Martinsville and Henry County are home to many miles of beautiful

hiking trails. This group, co-sponsored by Henry County Parks & Recreation and the Dan River Basin Association, will meet on Thursdays to explore a different trail every week at 1 p.m., weather permitted. Seniors interested in this program must pre-register with Henry County Parks & Recreation Senior Services at 276-634-4644. Contact: (276) 634-4601; Address: 3300 Kings Mountain Rd Martinsville, VA 24078

**Ride 'N Dine:** Ride 'N Dine every Friday afternoon with members of the Henry County Bike Club. Each week fellow cyclists meet at the Liberty Street access point of the Dick & Willie Trail to put in some miles and to refuel with a delicious lunch at a local eatery. A different lunch locality is chosen each week so that your Friday afternoon is always unique and interesting. For more information on Ride 'N Dine, contact Marti at 276-358-1312. Rides are year-round but are canceled if it's raining or if the temperature is below 50 degrees. Address: 699 Liberty Street Martinsville, VA 24112

**Books and Brews:** "Books and Brews" will meet at Mountain Valley Brewing at 5:30 pm. This month we will be selecting books to read for the year. Bring a list of suggestions and we will vote on them at the meeting. For more information, call the Martinsville Library at 403-5430. All are welcome.

# Spencer Penn Centre events, January 2020

**Music Night**  
Friday, January 10th, Concessions at 5 p.m., \$5 donation for admission. Open Mic at 5:30 p.m., Jus Cauz

**Big Country Buffet Breakfast**  
At the Spencer Ruritan Building, Saturday, Jan. 4, 6 - 10 a.m. Buffet includes: country ham, sausage, bacon, hog-jowl, eggs, gravy: red-eye and sausage, homemade biscuits, grits, apples, juice and coffee. Adults: \$7, Children: \$3.

**Barn Quilt Class**  
Our Barn Quilt class has taken off, contact the office, check Facebook or E-mail Susan at spc.susan@yahoo.com for the details. Spots

will be given on a first paid first served basis.

**Third Thursday Trivia Night**  
January 16th, at 6:30 p.m., \$10 per team. Teams of no more than 5 people. Winning team will go home with a prize. Concessions will be sold - cash only!

**Painting**  
6-9 p.m., Join Genie as she guides students through this three hour class. Pre-registration and payment is required. Cost is \$20/members and \$25/non-members. Call the Centre at (276) 957-5757 for more information.

**Open computer lab**  
Mondays, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Thursdays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Computer Lab will be open to the public. High Speed Internet Access is available.

**Story Time & Play Date**  
Mondays at 10:30 a.m. Carole-Anne Penn will lead story, songs, crafts and then play time with friends. Storytime and crafts are geared toward preschoolers, but all ages are welcome.

**Charles & Rose Hylton Library**  
Open Monday, Tuesday & Thursday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. We have lots of books to check out. Sign up for a

library card today. No charge.

**Book Club**  
Meets the third Thursday. Everyone is welcome. Call the Centre for the book selection.

**Martial Arts**  
Join Sifu Kristian Gordon for a series of Martial Arts classes at Spencer-Penn. Class occurs every Thursdays, from 6-7 p.m. Cost for the entire month is \$40 for members of the Centre or \$65 for non-members. All ages, fitness and experience levels are welcome. Call the Centre at (276) 957-5757 to sign up.

**Chair Aerobics**  
Thursday Mornings with in-

structor, Paula Battle. 11:30am, Free, M/HC Coalition for Health & Wellness

**Aerobics**  
Thursdays, 6:30pm, Instructor: Anita Hooker. This is a Free class with the M/HC Coalition for Health & Wellness

**Yoga**  
Balance Series: Jan. 7 - Feb. 11, Tuesdays, 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., instructor Sheila Hubbard of Just Breathe Yoga and Bodywork. This class is appropriate for all levels of experience \$40 for 6 weeks, drop-in at \$8 per class. Yoga mats provided.

# New athletic director named

Ferrum College announces John Sutyak will be its new director of athletics. Sutyak is the former director of athletics and recreation at Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts.

"I am pleased that John Sutyak will be joining our leadership team at Ferrum College. Athletics has played an important role at the College for years, and we are all looking forward to the next chapter under John's leadership," said Ferrum College President David Johns.

"As a former Ferrum College athlete, I am thrilled to have someone with John's broad experience and background as Ferrum's next athletic director," said Vice President of Institutional Advancement and External Relations Wilson Paine. "John's passion for college athletics and his commitment to supporting our student-athletes and coaches makes him the perfect fit to lead our athletics department and build on Ferrum's rich history in athletics."

After a national search, Sutyak arrives at Ferrum College with experience steeped in collegiate athletics. His career began in a dual role as the assistant sports information director and area coordinator in residential life at Wheaton College from July 2002 to August 2003. He then spent three years working in athletic facilities and varsity sports operations at Yale University before returning to Wheaton in July 2006 as the assistant director of

athletics. He eventually became the associate director of athletics and assumed the role of director of athletics and recreation in April 2012.

During his eight-year stint as Wheaton College's director of athletics, the college saw significant growth of donors and contributions to Wheaton's Lyons Athletic Club. Sutyak was also involved in the development and construction of the first artificial surface athletic field, a \$3.8 million project. Under his tenure, Wheaton's athletic teams qualified for 33 NCAA championship events and won 16 New England Women's and Men's Athletic Conference (NEWMAC) regular season and conference titles, highlighted by baseball's run to the national championship game in 2012, four top-10 finishes by the women's track and field program, and regional championships by softball in 2015 and baseball in 2017. Sutyak also served six years on the NEWMAC Executive Committee, including a two-year term as president, and was the New England Chair of the NCAA Division III Softball Committee from 2008 to 2012. Outside of collegiate athletics, he has worked at Gillette Stadium during New England Patriots home games since 2002, working both with the Patriots media relations team and the National Football League on its Player Participation crew.

"I am extremely excited and humbled to be named director of athletics at Ferrum Col-

lege. The moment I stepped foot on campus, I immediately felt at home and sensed that Ferrum is a very special place," said Sutyak. "I am looking forward to working with student-athletes, coaches, faculty, and staff to continue the proud tradition of Ferrum College athletes. Our goal as a Division III institution will be to work toward providing all our student-athletes with a first-class experience, on and off the playing surface, while simultaneously striving to compete for conference championships."

A native of Scarborough, Maine, Sutyak received his Bachelor of Arts in history from Wheaton College in May 2000. In 2002, he earned a Master of Education in athletic administration from Springfield College. During graduate school, he served as an assistant baseball coach at Western New England University during the 2001 and 2002 seasons, where he played a part in the team's first Great Northwest Atlantic Conference (GNAC) championship and first NCAA Tournament appearance in 2001. At Scarborough High School, he was a two-sport athlete (baseball and basketball) and a finalist for the Maine Mr. Baseball Award in 1996. A former four-year baseball player for the Wheaton Lyons, he was a member of the college's first varsity baseball team in 1997, the program's first two NEWMAC championship teams in 1999 and 2000, and a part of its first NCAA Tour-



PHOTO COURTESY OF FERRUM COLLEGE  
**John Sutyak has been named Ferrum College's new director of athletics.**

namment appearance in 2000. He also tied the NCAA record for home runs in one inning with two against the University of Southern Maine in 1998.

Sutyak will assume his role at Ferrum College on January 1, 2020.

# SCC sets Workers' Compensation premium level adjustments

The State Corporation Commission (SCC) has approved revisions to the premium levels charged for workers' compensation insurance in Virginia. Workers' compensation insurance provides medical care and wage replacement benefits to injured workers. Almost all Virginia employers are required to provide the coverage to their employees.

The National Council on Compensation Insurance (NCCI) sought the

revisions. The changes approved by the SCC will decrease the overall premium level for the industrial, federal, surface and underground coal mine classifications in the voluntary market and assigned risk plan.

The parties to the case collaboratively considered many factors affecting the overall decreases in premium level needed for workers' compensation insurance in Virginia, which resulted in more fa-

vorable changes for Virginia employers in this year's application. All employers may not see a premium decrease because many factors go into the final premium such as the employer's actual loss experience; however, the majority of employers will see some premium relief.

The changes will become effective April 1, 2020, for new and renewal workers' compensation policies, as follows:

Class	Voluntary Market Loss Costs	Assigned Risk Rates
Industrial	-10.7%	-8.4%
"F" (Federal)	-1.2%	-11.0%
Coal Mines (Surface)	-16.7%	-22.9%
Coal Mines (Underground)	-10.9%	-18.2%

**NCCI, a Florida-based rate service organization, represents insurance companies licensed to write workers' compensation insurance in Virginia. Virginia's workers' compensation rates remain among the lowest in the country.**



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# Gift

from page 1



**Principal Clement and Acting Schools Superintendent Dr. J. David Martin raced against the clock to hand out the gifts before an early dismissal Thursday.**



**Mrs. Tyndall and her class look on in disbelief.**



**Mrs. Hubbard and Mrs. Foley shed happy tears after receiving a surprise gift presented Thursday by Acting Schools Superintendent Dr. J. David Martin.**

All totaled, the anonymous donor gave the school division \$510,000, with \$100,000 earmarked to build a new baseball/softball fieldhouse at Patrick County High School. It will be named the Martin F. "Fill" Clark Fieldhouse. "Fill" Clark, a veteran of World War II, served as Commonwealth's Attorney for twenty-eight years, and also dedicated his time and talents to several community and civic or-

ganizations. The library at Patrick County High School will receive the remaining \$10,000, according to a release. Acting Superintendent Dr. J. David Martin, and newly appointed superintendent Dean Gilbert, visited the schools in the county Thursday to spread holiday cheer. The gift was for teachers only; however, the principals at each school seemed elated and satisfied to escort Martin around the school, and see their colleagues' faces light up with excitement. Kenzie Woods, principal at Hardin Reynolds Memorial School, commented that she was having a blast watching each person's reaction; seeing them light up. The same rang true for principals of other schools, as they

escorted Martin door to door to spread the good news. "Is this for real," many recipients asked Martin. Others were clearly elated, jumping for joy and praising the donor's generosity. Many teachers were overcome with emotion, their eyes brimmed with tears. Others said the gift could not have come at a better time, as they expressed gratitude to the donor and to God. "It is often said that teachers will never be repaid for their professional service. What a wonderful tribute to be recognized by an anonymous donor in memory of a remarkable teacher," Martin said. A few stories also pulled at Martin's heartstrings. For instance, a teacher at Hardin Reynolds Me-

morial School gleefully told him that she was going to use the money to fly to Belgium and see her son. That trip would not have been possible without the unexpected gift. A teacher at Stuart Elementary School said she was at a local store the day before, buying snacks for her classes' Christmas party when her card was declined. She said she had to put items back one at a time, prioritizing her selections on classroom necessities. She said she worked her way through her shopping cart and was 'lucky' to have enough change to pay for the soda she had opened while shopping. Standing in front of her classroom door, she was astonished and overwhelmed with emotions after receiving the bo-

nus; giving Martin one of the hundreds of hugs he received that day. Several teachers said they would put the money towards their children's college tuition or student debt. After a quick jot through Patrick Springs Primary Martin said, "these teachers are bringing tears to my eyes. The shock and tears are genuine reactions." As Martin delivered the bonuses to teachers in various classrooms, he said practically the same thing: "Merry Christmas! Please find enclosed a check in the amount of \$2,000 for your commitment and the vital role you play in the Patrick County community, but more importantly, in the lives of the students, you serve on a daily basis."

Each time felt like the first to observers who watched as joy flooded each teacher's face. A crowd followed Martin through the halls, and teachers could be seen leaving the classroom and shedding tears of joy in the hallways or celebrating with their colleagues. It was an emotional day in Patrick County schools, as one Stuart Elementary School teacher said. "It's not just about the money, it's the thought," she said, noting that unselfish giving is the true meaning of the holiday spirit. Although the donor asks to remain anonymous, teachers may send 'thank you' notes to the School Board Office. The notes will be delivered to the donor.

**CROSSWORD ANSWERS**

	GEL	ARCHED		
	RNA	SELECT		
SD	ATM	PIAL		
PAPYRI	RETINAS			
UNSEEN	INSPECT			
RETREAD	MT	SHIA		
	TAPA	ERNS		
EKG	EVANS	UGH		
SNUB	INDY			
HILL	BD	SCABIES		
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# DeVault

from page 1

several student groups for their achievements during the first semester," said Monica Hatchett, director of communications and organizational learning for Henry County Public Schools.

Students ranging from Magna Vista High School's (MVHS) Distributive Education Clubs of America team all the way to Bassett High School's (BHS) marching band received honors. The schools also were recognized for their workforce development achievements with an ACT Workforce Summit award.

Hatchett also briefed the proposed 2020-21 school calendar, which was developed with input from members of the school community and division staff members.

According to the Hatchett, information was sought from Pittsylvania County, Danville City, and Martinsville City school districts in an effort to align school holiday and break schedules. When drafting the calendar, feedback was taken into account in order to keep the Wednesday before Thanksgiving as a full day student-teacher holiday and to continue to end the first semester in December.

"Several groups also mentioned the priority of maintaining the Wednesday before Thanksgiving as a student-teacher holiday because a lot of families travel on that day," explained Hatchett.

In other matters, Director of Human Resources Christy Landon discussed potential revisions to School Board policies and regulations.

"Revisions to school board policies reflect efforts to bring school board policies into compliance with new or existing laws," Landon said.

Policy revisions were made to food services, regulations governing food services, internet privacy, student wellness and school meals and snacks.

The board also considered a consent agenda, approving minutes of past meetings, payment of bills, and an overnight and out-of-state field trip.

Several individuals were unanimously approved to serve on the Special Education Advisory Committee. The committee is comprised of parents of students with or without disabilities, teachers, administrators, and community partners.

The board also passed a motion to acquire new band uniforms for BHS and MVHS to be worn in the next school year. Piggy-backing on a pricing for Loudon County Public Schools, Henry County was able to buy the uniforms for approximately \$30,000 from DeMoulin Brothers and Company.

Wendy Durham, director of K-12 instruction, presented the case for approval of the High School and Middle School Program of Studies. According to Durham, no major changes were made to the programs outside of grammatical and aesthetic changes. Some changes that were made were the addition of the Cybersecurity Courses offered at the Career Academy, the addition of PHCC's ACE Health Sciences Track, updates and changes to PHCC's academy course offerings for Motorsports, IDEA, and Criminal Justice, and updates to the Academic and Career Plan section reflecting the implementation of Major Clarity, a software program used to develop student plans digitally.

"The program of studies outlines the course description and general policies about a school program of instruction," Durham explained. "There were no major changes made this year to the programs and courses offered. Modifications that were made were mostly grammatical."

The board also awarded a contract to upgrade to stage and auditorium lightning at BHS and MVHS to Stage Sound for the next phase of lighting upgrades in the amount of \$65,147.36 using Title IV grant funds.

Members also approved a new car rider loop connection at Laurel Park Middle School.

"As we continue our efforts assessing safety in and around our schools, one item from our list is a new car rider loop at Laurel Park Middle School," said Keith Scott, director of facilities maintenance. "Currently, the car riders line up in front of the building using a temporary stanchion with plastic chain which is difficult to maintain and creates unsafe conditions for arrival and dismissal times. Creating a permanent solution for our car rider traffic would be a much safer atmosphere for our students and staff," added.

Asphalt Consultants Inc., of Salem, Virginia, was awarded the contract not to exceed \$40,000.

**Dorothy Carter addresses the Henry County School Board during a Dec. 13 meeting.**

# Sex ed is key to reducing teen pregnancy, advocates say

Hannah Eason and Emma North  
Capital News Service

In the early 2000s, Martinsville, a city of about 13,000 near the North Carolina line, had one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in Virginia. In a typical year, nearly 75 of every 1,000 teenage girls got pregnant.

More than a decade ago, the school opened a teen health clinic, which provides birth control and treats sexually transmitted infections. Since then, the city's teen pregnancy rate has plummeted.

"It's just been amazing because I've seen success," said Beth Holyfield, the clinic's health coordinator. "I think everybody was a little nervous about it because it was Bible Belt area, you know, offering birth control for children."

Under the federal Title IX program, the Martinsville High School Teen Health Clinic can treat STIs and provide birth control without notifying the student's parents. Holyfield and two nurse practitioners don't discuss abortion, but they do routine checks on student weight and blood pressure and administer prescriptions.

According to new data from the Virginia Department of Health, among the state's 133 localities, Martinsville ranked 16th in teen pregnancy rates in 2018. For every 1,000 teen girls, there were about 21 pregnancies.

Martinsville's increased access to sex education and contraception coincided with the drop in the city's teen pregnancy rate. Experts say preaching abstinence over other methods — Virginia's official policy — has been ineffective. States with more schools teaching contraceptive methods tend to have lower teen pregnancy rates.

Localities vary widely in teen pregnancy rates

Virginia's teen pregnancy rate in 2017 was 15 pregnancies for every 1,000 teenage girls, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Thirteen states had a lower teen pregnancy rate than Virginia's. Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Connecticut all had fewer than nine pregnancies per 1,000 teenage girls.

Within Virginia, the rates vary widely, according to data obtained by Capital News Service from the Virginia Department of Health through a Freedom of Information Act request.

The data showed the number of pregnancies for every 1,000 adolescent girls in each city and county of Virginia. That way, it's possible to compare localities regardless of population.

Petersburg, 30 miles south of Richmond, had the highest teen pregnancy rate in the state in 2018: about 44 pregnancies for every 1,000 teenage girls.

Norton, a city at the southwest tip of Virginia, was second with 35 pregnancies per 1,000 teenage girls. Lancaster County, along the Chesapeake Bay, followed at about 30 pregnancies per 1,000 adolescent girls.

The cities of Roanoke, Richmond and Hopewell all had rates around 25 pregnancies for every 1,000 teen girls.

Sex education is optional in Virginia Under the Virginia Standards of Learning, the state's public school curriculum, schools in the commonwealth may teach sex education but are not required to do so. State law requires an emphasis on abstinence, but the SOL curriculum also includes recommendations for teaching about contraception and condom usage.

More than 90% of Virginia schools teach abstinence. Fewer than 40% of the state's high schools teach contraceptive methods recommended by the CDC, according to the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States, or SIECUS.

Virginia Department of Education spokesperson Charles Pyle says the curriculum is designed to promote parental involvement and help students cope with peer pressure during developing stages.

Pyle said classes "include age-appropriate instruction in family living and

community relationships, abstinence education, the value of postponing sexual activity, the benefits of adoption as a positive choice in the event of an unwanted pregnancy, human sexuality and human reproduction."

Dr. Samuel Campbell, an obstetrician-gynecologist at the Virginia Physicians for Women health-care service, says pregnant teens need more than that.

Pregnant teenagers encounter a specific set of problems because of limited resources and support, Campbell said.

"They have difficulty with transportation. They frequently will seek care later because they are afraid to tell their parents (or) family. They have to continue with their schooling," Campbell said. "And they have to deal with the social stigma of being a teen mom."

Most states require sex ed Thirty-two states require schools to teach sex education, according to the most recent statistics from SIECUS. Eighteen states — including Virginia — do not.

There are seven types of recommended contraception: the birth control pill, patch, ring and shot; implants; intrauterine devices; and emergency contraception. In 2017, no states reported that all of their schools were teaching about all seven methods as well as how to properly use a condom.

According to SIECUS, 19 states reported more than half of school districts teaching students about a variety of contraceptive methods. Fifteen of those states had teen pregnancy rates below the national average of 18 pregnancies per every 1,000 adolescent girls.

Of the 10 states with the lowest teen pregnancy rates, eight required sex ed in all school districts. They include New Hampshire, Wisconsin and Minnesota, which had pregnancy rates under 15 per 1,000 teenage girls.

The six states with the lowest teen pregnancy rates — Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Vermont, New Jersey and Rhode Island — reported that

three quarters of their schools taught students how to use a condom.

On the other hand, of the 10 states with the highest teen pregnancy rate, seven do not require sex ed in schools. Those states include Arkansas, Texas and Alabama.

Nationwide, 89% of school districts teach abstinence, which recommends that teens put off having sex until marriage. Many schools teach both abstinence and contraceptive methods. That is the case in New Jersey and New Hampshire, where teen pregnancy is below the national average.

Dr. Elizabeth Broderick, a pediatrician in Newport News, calls abstinence education "insufficient information."

"Abstinence is an excellent way to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections," Broderick said. "But eventually, many people choose to become sexually active, and they should have accurate and complete information so they can make the best decision that fits their beliefs and values."

Broderick says long-acting and reversible contraceptives are generally best for adolescents, but they can be hard to get.

"Access to contraception is difficult for most teenagers," Broderick said. "Education about anatomy, physiology, contraception, sexually transmitted infections and consent is appropriate at school and at home."

'Educate them on the facts' to make good decisions

The CDC's teen pregnancy prevention guidelines say implants and intrauterine devices, or IUDs, are the most effective and reversible birth control methods. Broderick says these are more difficult to obtain than condoms or spermicide because they require a trip to the doctor and a prescription.

Dr. Natalie Dogal, an OB-GYN with Virginia Physicians for Women, said talking about contraception is important for preventing teen pregnancy. She said she discusses contraceptive options with all her teen patients.

## Pencils down

from page 1



PHOTO BY BRANDON MARTIN

Dr. Joseph DeVault is presented a resolution by the Henry County School Board during their December meeting.

whereas 20 years ago we didn't have that," according to DeVault. He said that when he first started out teaching, accountability in education results was largely a locally-driven effort.

"We had accountability for the individual schools, the individual teachers and the individual division," he continued. "Now, the state holds people to standards of accountability."

DeVault was quick to say that he didn't necessarily agree that the push for state-wide standards was a bad thing for the schools.

"I think even though we may often worry about it, it's been a good thing. It has meant that the schools, universally, across the state, are held to the same standards. It's all a matter of accountability," he said.

Even though he agrees with the push towards standardization, he stopped short of saying that test scores were all that mattered in education.

"I don't want to see schools compared to each other," DeVault stressed. "The students in Henry County and Southside Virginia are different from the students in Northern Virginia. I prefer that schools be measured by growth with students that they have rather than against one another."

When asked about the difficulties of a life dedicated to education, DeVault said that "seeing a student not quite reach the potential that you know they had" was one of the hardest aspects of being a teacher.

"As a teacher you struggle with that. I guess that would be the most difficult part," he said. "On the flip side of that, the most rewarding part is to see students that have really achieved. They have gone on to have outstanding careers, whether or not it be in higher education, the military or just being great citizens in the community. I guess that is the most rewarding thing. When you have kids come back that you

worked with years ago, and they thank you for helping them, that's a great reward too."

As he looked back at his career, DeVault noted that probably his greatest accomplishment can be seen in his coworkers, who he still affectionately calls his former students.

"I look at our Henry County staff and even our superintendent, those our individuals that came up through our schools and then came back to work because they thought, 'hey, I love school. I love the area and I want to come back to work in the area.' I like to think that I helped inspire that in them to some degree," he said.

When DeVault was presented the resolution, Henry County Public Schools Superintendent Sandy Strayer explained the impact DeVault had on her life.

"My very first memories of Dr. DeVault came when I was a young child in elementary school," Strayer recalled. "He took time out of his busy day to come out into the lobby and speak to me."

While Strayer says that she can't remember their conversation exactly, she does remember how special she felt in that moment. She said she also remembered his patented "stripped tube socks" and that she thought that "he was so cool."

"Dr. DeVault is a wise servant-leader who is humble, kind, understanding, fair but firm," Strayer continued. "He is always the calm in the storm. He carries himself with grace, dignity and yes, he is cool."

Seeing how far his former students have come is validation for DeVault.

"Our superintendent is a product of our county schools, most of our principals are products of county schools and it makes you think that 'maybe I did something right,'" DeVault said.

As our discussion shifted to-

wards the future, DeVault sees bright spots.

"I know that the city is considering seeking reversion and becoming part of the county," he said. "I think that is something that will probably be beneficial to both variants. I know it causes some hardships for some people but it's always kind of made sense to me as an administrator that we have one school system."

DeVault says that he can hold his head high as he walks into retirement once more because he is "very proud of the Henry County Schools."

He does however, wish that more people could see the improvements in the community. He said that it has always kind of "bothered me when I go to all these conferences, and all these people always ask me 'why Henry County gets all these awards' and wondering what we are doing here that's helping bring that about."

DeVault said "I think sometimes when you hear people from outside the area ask you about the success or strength of the system," that is diametrically opposed to locals who "don't think our system is any good. They base their opinion on one incident or one thing they heard instead of looking at the overall success," he explained. "Our students have lots of successes, and we don't always cover those as much as some of the downsides."

Now that he can step back and enjoy his retirement, DeVault will continue making a difference in the community.

"I plan to remain active in the community," he said. "I do volunteer work and serve on a few boards. I think that while one of the joys of being in retirement is that you have time for relaxation, you also have time to give back in other ways that you may not have had time for once you were working."

## Resources for Teen Mothers in Virginia

The Virginia Department of Health has resources for first-time teen mothers. In the

"Resource Mothers" program, a community health worker develops a supportive mentoring relationship with the teen and her family.

The free resources include information about prenatal care and health care, assistance finishing school and tools to avoid drugs and alcohol. Mothers can also sign up for free text messages on prenatal and infant care.

The Healthy Teen Network has a variety of resources for teen parents across the country, including #NoTeenShame, "Mom, Dad — I'm Pregnant" and Healthy Families America.

To find a health assistance program near you, call 1-800-311-BABY. This will connect you to the nearest health

department. For information in Spanish, call 1-800-504-7081.

The U.S. Bureau of Maternal and Child Health has resources for women nationwide. The programs and initiatives include home visiting, which provides at-risk pregnant women tools for mother and child health, raising children and preventing neglect. The bureau seeks to promote child development and encourage positive parenting.

Planned Parenthood has a webpage for teens to get information about sex, puberty, pregnancy and birth control as well as a private chat function for additional questions.

Planned Parenthood has health centers in Charlottesville, Richmond, Hampton and Virginia Beach. There are also two health centers in the Washington, D.C., area.



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The County of Patrick is accepting applications from qualified applicants for the full-time/temporary position of Reassessment Clerk. The position provides data entry and clerical support for the upcoming general reassessment of real estate in Patrick County. The duration of employment will be from January 2020 through the completion of the reassessment in early 2021. The position will work under the general supervision of personnel from the professional firm conducting the real estate reassessment process. Duties of the position will entail extensive data entry of real estate records and will provide general clerical support to the staff of the reassessment firm.

The desired candidate must possess excellent office skills and be proficient with the use of a computer. The ability to set priorities, keep confidential information, and work cooperatively with other members of an office staff are essential. The successful candidate must be able to work with the public in a courteous and tactful manner and to work independently without direct full-time supervision.

The rate of compensation for the position is \$9 per hour. The regular work week will be forty (40) hours per week. Hours will vary, however, depending

### HELP WANTED

on the requirements of the reassessment firm.

Applications are available online at [www.co.patrick.va.us](http://www.co.patrick.va.us) and at the County Administration Office. Interested candidates may submit a Patrick County employment application and resume to the Patrick County Administration Office, Room 218, by mail to Patrick County Administration, Attn: Tom Rose, P.O. Box 466, Stuart, Virginia 24171, or by email to [gghazelwood@co.patrick.va.us](mailto:gghazelwood@co.patrick.va.us). Applications must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. on Friday, January 10, 2020.

Published by direction of Tom Rose, County Administrator

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# Year in Review from page 1



**Heather Hoffman is shown with her son Nathaniel, then 7 1/2 months old. Hoffman was pregnant eight times before she delivered Nathaniel, who now is 1.**



**Wanda Deering shows her allegiance to her alma mater, Old Dominion University, after earning her bachelor's degree.**



**DeWitt House (standing) helps Harvest Foundation Youth Board members Elli McGovern (left) and Sophia Esdaile (right) transfer food from coolers to refrigerators at Grace Network.**

**Journey to Motherhood:** Local woman's dream finally fulfilled after nine pregnancies

The name "Nathaniel" means "God has given." It is the perfect name for the child of Heather and Clifford Hoffman of Martinsville. Heather Hoffman has been pregnant nine times, but only Nathaniel survived to his first birthday. He was born on March 20, 2018. It was the 12th anniversary of the day when the Hoffmans lost their first child.

"I'm very happy and beyond blessed to be a mother," said Hoffman, of Martinsville. "We're more or less effectively first-time parents, and even if you ... never had an issue or situation like mine, when it's a first baby, you're learning. It's been a fun time learning and growing. We were a little anxious but I think all parents are."

## June

**Milestones in education:** Deering worth decades-long quest

Wanda Deering's bachelor's degree was 45 years in the making.

Deering, 63, of Axton, received her degree on May 11 from Old Dominion University. It was the culmination of a journey that began in 1974 at Ferrum College.

In between, she was married twice, had six children and followed her dreams.

"The desire has to be in you to really want to do it. If you really want to do it, you will have the perseverance to continue. I can't say it was smooth sailing or was easy. You've got to have that perseverance to keep pushing," she said of earning her bachelor's degree.

"It is worth it because you have that satisfaction of something only you could complete, and you completed it," she added.

**Unused food now helps the hungry**

Thousands of pounds of food that might have ended up in the garbage now are helping feed needy residents of Henry County and Martinsville.

The program, called Feeding Hope in MHC, uses volunteers to collect unopened, prepackaged food from area school cafeterias and other sources and deliver it to Grace Network and the

Salvation Army, which distribute it to people in need.

It began in mid-January and by the time school ended in late May, an estimated 8,564 pounds of food were collected and redistributed, according to figures compiled by Tracy Hinchcliff, executive director of Grace Network.

"We have been extremely pleased with the outcomes of the project," Hinchcliff stated. "The schools were very accepting of the process and we have been able to redistribute so much of the product that would otherwise have been discarded."

## July

**New lease on life:** Bassett depot renovations nearing completion

Renovations to the historic Bassett train depot are in the final stages, with completion hoped by mid to late summer.

The inside of the building is essentially done, the outside has a fresh coat of paint and the town clock has been installed at the southern end of the site. Plans have been approved for curbs and gutters around the building and once that is done and the landscaping is in place, the project will be finished.

It will result in a town square that will set the tone for the style of signs and benches in that area, Jeb Bassett, senior vice president of Bassett Furniture Industries and co-chairman of the Smith River Small Towns Collaborative. Renovations to the depot and surrounding area are part of that collaborative's efforts to revitalize Bassett. The collaborative also is working to make improvements to Fieldale, Stanleytown and Koehler.

**Center's new director has deep roots at Spencer-Penn**

Susan Sabin not only has family ties to the Spencer-Penn Centre. Now she is the center's executive director.

Sabin who had been assistant director of Spencer-Penn since 2017, became its executive director on June 15. She succeeds Mary Jordan, who formerly taught at the center when it was a school, spearheaded the movement to have it become a community center after the school closed and guided it through 15 years of growth.

"Mary was the driving force" behind the center, Sabin said recently. To have started with nothing and grown to the point where it is financially stable and hosts thousands of people each year "is huge. It's a big deal to see how far it has come. ... It's a testament to her (Jordan) and all she's done."

## August

**Norris hosts mountain bikers for Sledgehammer**

Bob Norris spends hours each week on his mountain bike, enjoying nature and staying fit, but he doesn't compete in mountain bike races. However, he knows how to host those who do.

On July 13, about 100 mountain bike enthusiasts competed in the first annual Sledgehammer race, part of the Southern Classic MTB Series. It was the first time the series was held in Ridgeway and the final race in the USA Cycling Virginia State Championship Series.

"It went off without a hitch," said Norris, who created the Mountain Laurel Trails off Horsepasture-Price Road where the race was run.

**'Run until you're done' in 100-mile challenge**

Ashley Crouch's idea of crossing off a bucket list item is to run for more than 29 hours straight through the mountains and canyons of California.

Crouch, 38, of Bassett, took part in the Western States 100 Mile Endurance Run on June 29-30. She finished 294th out of 319 runners with a time of 29:31:25.

For non-runners, that is 29 hours, 31 minutes and 25 seconds. With no breaks and no stops.

She can eat a five-course meal on the run, carrying food in a pack and grabbing items at aid stations along the route. And answer the call of nature in the woods.

"You run until you're done," Crouch added.

## September

**Bassett Heritage Festival serves up old favorites, new features**

Expect the older traditions that members of the community have grown to love with a mix

of new experiences at this year's Bassett Heritage Festival, coming Saturday, Sept. 14 in the area across from Bassett Furniture Industries.

Sponsored by the Stanleytown Ruritan Club, the festival is a community staple, making its 27th appearance. Betty Scott, president of the Ruritan Club, said while the festival will have many familiar features, there will be plenty of exciting happenings for everyone to enjoy.

"The entire local community is involved in making this event a success," said Scott. "Our businesses are a great support for this event. Many people don't know how much they do, and how important it is to us."

**Rives Theatre legacy to remain intact**

"The show must go on." Losing the historic Rives Theatre to fire on Sunday night has been devastating for the community, but it won't stop Rooster Walk from bringing live music to Martinsville, the organization's leaders said.

Just the day before, on Sept. 7, East Church Street was filled with hundreds of revelers gathered in front of the Rives Theatre for the fifth annual Brewster Walk Craft Beer Festival.

Twenty-four hours later, the street was blocked off with yellow caution tape and filled with emergency vehicles as the building burned. Flames could be seen through the charred wooden rafters of the attic, and people as far away as Collinsville reported seeing the column of smoke.

The building was empty when the fire broke out, and no one was injured in the blaze. Fire crews contained it before it could spread to neighboring businesses. However, the theater was a total loss.

## October

**Oktoberfest attracts thousands to Martinsville**

An estimated 8,000 people filled the streets of uptown Martinsville on Saturday, October 5 for Oktoberfest.

It was the 40th anniversary of the free street festival, and "one of our best," said Kimberly Keller, Uptown Entrepreneurial Development Manager for the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce.

"We have heard many, many great comments about the large number of individuals who attended the festival, and the wide variety of things to do at the event," she said.

**First Building Opens in Commonwealth Crossing**

CCAT to provide training for employees

Government and business leaders celebrated a pair of positive economic development announcements recently at a new advanced manufacturing training site in Henry County.

During a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Oct. 23, local officials and their funding partners praised the teamwork and partnerships that led to the opening of the \$6.75 million, 26,000-square-foot Commonwealth Centre for Advanced Training (CCAT) in Ridgeway.

CCAT is the first building to open in the Commonwealth Crossing Business Centre, a publicly owned industrial park that sits along the southernmost border of Henry County where Virginia and North Carolina meet. The park's main entrance is located off of highway 220 on the Carolina side, but the actual industrial site -- and its tax revenue -- reside in Virginia.

## November

**Perry wins reelection bid, at-large seat on school board filled**

Henry County Sheriff Lane Perry has been re-elected to a fourth term with more than 53 percent of the vote.

Unofficial election results Tuesday evening showed Perry winning with 7,287 votes. This made for a comfortable lead of about 1,600 over challenger John W. Cassell, who garnered 5,683 votes or 41.78 percent. Candidate Jerry W. Farmer trailed with 625 votes, or 4.6 percent.

Cheered by his supporters as he watched the election results from EMI in Bassett, Perry thanked God, his family, and voters for their support.

"It's a blessing to have this behind us, and I just look forward to serving people, and serving with y'all, for the next four years," Perry said.

See Year in Review, page 10



**Jeb Bassett explains renovations done to the former train depot and the surrounding area in Bassett.**



**Susan Sabin (left) is the new executive director of the Spencer-Penn Centre, succeeding Mary Jordan (right), who retired. They are shown at the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce luncheon in May when Sabin received Young Professional of the Year honor.**



**Bob Norris is shown at the start of the trail.**



**A Pancake Breakfast, prepared by the Stanleytown Family Ruritans, will begin at 8 a.m. on Saturday, Sept. 14, to help kickoff the Bassett Heritage Festival.**



**Fire crews extinguish a fire at the Rives Theatre.**



**About 8,000 people filled the streets of uptown Martinsville on Saturday, October 5 for the 40th annual Oktoberfest. The free festival featured music, kids' activities, a beer garden, and numerous vendors selling food, art, crafts, holiday decorations, jewelry and more.**

# Year in Review from page 9



Government and economic development officials celebrate after cutting a ribbon for the official opening of the Commonwealth Centre for Advanced Training (CCAT) on Oct. 23.



Incumbent Henry County Sheriff Lane Perry celebrated his reelection to another four-year term in Tuesday's election. Perry fended off two challengers – John Cassell and Jerry Farmer.



Local officials, funders, and staff who worked on construction of the new trail section gathered Monday afternoon at the Smith River Sports Complex for ribbon cutting ceremony celebrating the opening of Section 6B of the Dick and Willie Passage Rail Trail.

**New trail section now open**  
The newest section of the Dick and Willie Passage Rail Trail has officially opened to runners, cyclists, and nature lovers after nearly two years in the making.

Flanked by bicycles on either side of the paved trail, officials gathered Monday afternoon at the Smith River Sports Complex to cut a ribbon signaling the opening of section 6B. The 2.5-mile route connects the sports complex to Spruce Street, where it ends with a trailhead near the city/county line that includes a paved parking lot and restrooms.

Henry County Administrator Tim Hall said the trail network is just one way the city and county are "literally and figuratively connected." The two localities collaborate on many projects, and "this is just the latest and the prettiest," he said.

## December

### Martinsville takes steps towards township

The City of Martinsville unanimously voted to move forward with the process of reversion during a public hearing on Dec. 10.

The decision came after the city's legal firm, Troutman Sanders, presented studies on the financial impact of reversion and the consolidation of school divisions. The studies revealed a pressing need for the city to relieve financial burdens through the process of reversion.

"A reversion would result in a \$31.7 million reduction in operational expenses that the city is currently having to fund," said Stephen Piepgrass, the Troutman Sanders attorney who gave the presentation. "Once you're a town, those operational expenses are the coun-

ty's responsibility rather than the city's."

### Support affirmed for second amendment

Martinsville City Council adopted a resolution to reaffirm the city's commitment to respect, preserve and enforce the Second Amendment during a Dec. 10 meeting at the Municipal Building.

Martinsville was the latest of 57 other localities to approve similar resolutions that reaffirm their stance to oppose unconstitutional and unlawful legislation and proposed restrictions that infringe upon the right of its citizens to keep and bear arms. Such localities have adopted the name of "Second Amendment Sanctuaries."

The resolution passed with a 3-1 vote, with Council Member Danny Turner voting against the resolution and Council Member Jennifer Bowles abstaining.



Stephen Piepgrass, legal counsel for the City of Martinsville on reversion, gives a presentation to City Council on Dec. 10.



Martinsville residents gather for a City Council meeting. Many urged the council to reaffirm support for the Second Amendment.



Ashley Crouch crosses the finish line at the Western States 100 Mile Endurance Run.

## Bird Count from page 1



A great blue heron wades through a chilly creek.



A bluebird peers at a photographer.



A turkey vulture rests on a fence post as it contemplates its next move.



Seven hooded mergansers fly past the moon on a cold December morning.

consumed – continued until 4 p.m. (the chickens were not included in the count).

"We got off to a really good start and kept at it," Beard said. "Every place we went, it seemed like we picked up one or two new things. I think it was a combination of hard work and a little bit of luck."

Several species were spotted that had not been seen in previous years, such as the wild turkey, the pine warbler and the hermit thrush.

The hermit thrush was spotted by the author of this piece, who successfully identified it as "a little somethin' in that bush" before the experts completed the identification process. Vermont's state bird, the hermit thrush is a medium-sized thrush with a particularly beautiful song.

"The hermit thrush is a really cool bird," Beard said. "Not unexpected, but they can be kind of hard to find."

Another highlight was

multiple species of woodpecker, Beard said. T

he group spotted six species of woodpecker, including the red-bellied woodpecker, the hairy woodpecker, the northern flicker, the yellow-bellied sapsucker, and the pileated woodpecker.

In fact, Beard said, there are only two species of Virginia woodpecker that were not spotted during the count: the red-headed woodpecker,

which was spotted on the bird count two years ago in the Chatmos area, and the red-cockaded woodpecker, which is an endangered species that cannot be found in the Martinsville/Henry County area.

"Red-cockaded woodpeckers aren't going to be within 150 miles of here," Beard said. They like heart-rotted longleaf pines, he added, and logging has significantly restricted their range over the years.

A number of finches, such as the purple finch, were notably absent this year, although Beard said this has been a bad year for finches nationwide. Many of the northern migratory species have lingered in the north for longer than usual because of a bumper crop of pine nuts in Canada this year.

Beard said that he hopes to make the count an official one next year, and possibly bring in some more birder friends to help out. With just one group, Beard said, it's hard to cover the area thoroughly.

"I think on a really good day, if we had more than one party, we could easily top 60 species," he said. "The first Christmas count we ever did, many years ago in the early '90s, we had 74 species. But we had half a dozen parties. There were people concentrating on small areas and tramping through the brush and the bushes and the fields. ... But considering that we only had one party this year – of which only three of us had binoculars – I think 53 is a pretty good total."

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